

‘The withering hand of a widespread infectious disease’

A look at Hermiston’s handling of the Spanish influenza pandemic

In 1918, 1919 and 1920 the *Hermiston Herald* covered another global pandemic of a disease known as the Spanish influenza. The following excerpts of the *Herald’s* coverage of the beginning of the pandemic give a glimpse at what life was like in Hermiston during that pandemic, just over 100 years ago.

Dairy and Hog Show has been postponed

Oct. 19, 1918
Right on the even of peace rumors from Europe, was in the shape of the Spanish influenza broke out in the United States and spread with such rapidity that it struck around Hermiston at the eleventh hour of the holding of the Dairy and Hog Show, and thereby put a quietus on an annual event that is always heralded with pride and joy by ranchers and citizens alike.

Elaborate preparations had been made this year by the management of the fair to make the event one that would go down in the annals of Hermiston History as being on a far more stupendous scale than any of the five proceeding Dairy and Hog shows. But the withering hand of a widespread infectious disease had to step in at an inopportune time and put a stop to these well laid plans that meant so much to the dairymen, hog raisers and agricultural people of this community, who have yearly taken just pride in exhibiting the products of their farms.

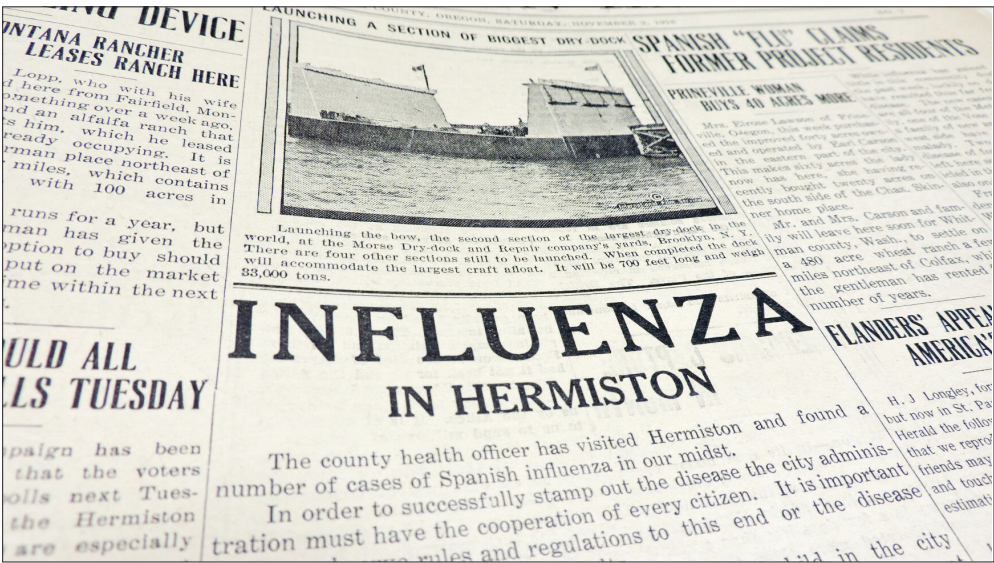
But with good grace all bow to the precautionary measures enjoined by a rigid quarantine, and agree that the mayor’s proclamation closing schools, the Movie, abandoning church services and stopping all public gatherings is the best method of safeguarding the public against the spread of influenza in this neighborhood.

Pendleton is under strict quarantine, as are many other towns in the county, including Echo, Stanfield and Umatilla. These places, like Hermiston, are following a mandatory order from the state board of health, which has issued an order under instructions from the surgeon general of the government board of health, to put all towns in the state of Oregon under quarantine, with a view to stamping out the disease at as early a date as possible.

Influenza in Hermiston

Nov. 2, 1918
The county health officer has visited Hermiston and found a number of cases of Spanish influenza in our midst.

In order to successfully



The *Hermiston Herald* reports on an outbreak of the Spanish influenza in Hermiston in November 1918.

THEREFORE, BY AUTHORITY IN ME VESTED, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRESERVING THE HEALTH OF THE COMMUNITY I DO HEREBY ORDER THAT ALL CHURCHES, RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, LODGES, POOL AND BILLIARD HALLS, PICTURE SHOWS, LIBRARIES, DANCE HALLS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DANCES BY HEREBY CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER ORDER.

J. D. Watson, acting mayor during the illness of F. C. McKenzie, Dec. 28, 1918

stamp out the disease the city administration must have the cooperation of every citizen. It is important that we observe rules and regulations to this end or the disease will spread rapidly with sad results.

I therefore ask that every man, woman and child in the city use every precaution possible in a vigorous attempt to prevent further spread of the epidemic.

Do not congregate in any building.

Do not allow children to play in groups, and when two or three play together be sure none have been near exposure. It is especially important to guard children.

Do not travel on trains any more than absolutely necessary. Try to avoid coming into contact with

the breath of others.

Keep your homes, offices and business houses well aired. Keep well otherwise. Keep the body well fed and properly clothed. With children the use of milk is recommended. Sneeze in a handkerchief.

Most persons take sick rather suddenly with the “Flu.” They feel weak, have pains in eyes, ears, head or back or are sore all over. Some feel dizzy and vomit. Most complain of feeling chilly followed by high temperature. Sometimes before these symptoms they look sick, have blood shot eyes, running nose or some cough. The fever lasts three or four days.

When you take it go home and go to bed at once. No one should sleep

Staff photo by Jade McDowell

in the same room with the patient. All discharges from eyes, nose or mouth should be collected in gauze or rag as precaution. It is well for attendants to wear a wrapper or gown and gauze mask.

— Mayor F.C. McKenzie

Influenza quarantine to be lifted tonight

Nov. 16, 1918
After a battle of three weeks in an endeavor to stamp out Spanish influenza in this neighborhood, Mayor McKenzie this Saturday evening will proclaim the lifting of the quarantine, which will admit of church-going people to attend worship

on Sunday and everything resume normal condition Monday.

Simultaneously Chairman J.D. Watson of the local school board will serve notice of the re-opening of the Hermiston school on Monday morning of the coming week. Mr. Watson also desires to notify teachers and pupils that school will take up fifteen minutes earlier each morning and the lunch hour shortened that much at noon. This will add an half hour to normal school time, and is being done to make up for lost time on account of the enforced vacation.

The careful following of the quarantine regulations as laid down has completely stamped out the flu here it is thought, for only one new case has appeared in Hermiston within the past week, that being W.F. Smith on the Dishon place in the western part of down, and at this writing he has almost fully recovered.

Out in Columbia district, however, there are several cases yet, and on this account quarantine on school and gatherings may remain in force there for a week or ten days to come.

Hermiston in throes of real influenza epidemic

Dec. 28, 1918
After having been fairly well immune from the influenza epidemic that broke out in the state of Oregon in the fall of the present year, the city of Hermiston is now in the grip of the disease for fair, with a sprinkling of pneumonia thrown in. Isolated cases there have been right along, but early precautions taken by the city authorities by placing of the city under rigid quarantine regulations had

cleared up the Flu situation, and it looked as if the town was going to get by without an epidemic. A week ago health prospects were rosy, there being very little sickness in the community at the time. But with one fell swoop influenza broke out and spread with alarming rapidity until now there are many cases reported here. The doctors are on the go day and night, and it is hard to get nurses to take care of the sick.

... The disease had gained such headway by Tuesday that at a conference of the council it was decided to place the city under strict quarantine regulations, and as a result the Flu ban went into effect at noon on Christmas day with the issuing of the following proclamation by J.D. Watson, acting mayor during the illness of F.C. McKenzie:

Whereas, influenza is breaking out in our city to a greater extent than before, it behooves the City of Hermiston and its inhabitants to adopt measures to check the further spread of this disease in our midst.

Therefore, by authority in me vested, for the purpose of preserving the health of the community I do hereby order that all churches, religious organizations, lodges, pool and billiard halls, picture shows, libraries, dance halls, public and private dances by hereby closed until further order.

I further recommend that all stores, restaurants, meat markets, hotels, offices, banks and other places of business where people are in the habit of assembling for the purchase of merchandise or transaction of business shall use diligence in ventilating and otherwise rendering hygienic their places of business.



DID YOU KNOW...

9.3 MILLION PEOPLE experience thoughts of suicide EVERY YEAR

SUICIDE AWARENESS WEEK IS SEPTEMBER 6-12, 2020

Join us for a **FREE** Virtual Lunch & Learn on Suicide Awareness presented by UCo Health: **September 10th at 12pm**

Contact 541-667-3509 or healthinfo@gshealth.org to register

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PET OF THE WEEK

MEET REECE

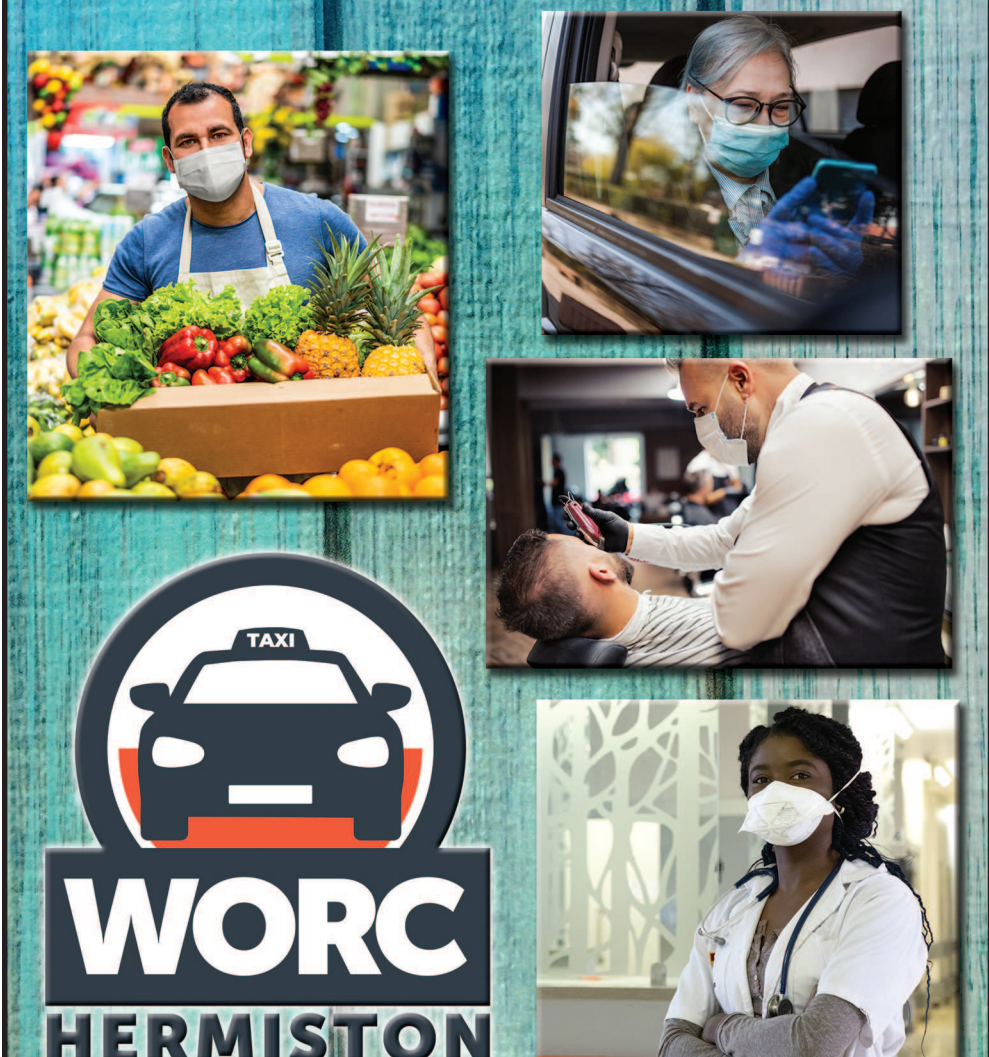
Reece is a very chill & sweet old man that is about 10 years old. He loves to be around his people, but not super cuddly, but he loves to have his ears rubbed. He loves to sit outside in the shade and feel the wind on his face. Reece does have some aging issues, is on a strict diet for his weight and will need regular grooming. Due to his age and health, we prefer he isn't around young children.

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, animal shelters need our help more than ever. Please donate to your local shelter, or offer to foster an animal in need.

If interested please go to fuzzballrescue.com and fill out an application. If you are not able to adopt, but would like to foster or donate, visit fuzzballrescue.com or you can mail in donations to Fuzz Ball Animal Rescue, PO Box 580, Hermiston, OR 97838

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WORC HERMISTON

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A WORC taxi will get you to and from your job anywhere in western Umatilla County. Anyone who comes in through the end of December, can get four FREE punch cards, which equals 40 one-way rides to/from work.

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