

When the Spanish flu shut down Seaside

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



In 1918, in the U.S., about 28% of the population of 105 million became infected with Spanish influenza, and 500,000 to 675,000 died — estimated at more than half of the nation’s entire population.

Of the almost 117,000 U.S. soldiers who died in World War I, more succumbed to the flu than died in combat.

On Jan. 21, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Washington State Department of Health announced the first case of 2019 Novel Coronavirus in the United States, also known as COVID-19.

Almost six weeks later, on Wednesday, Feb. 27, Oregon Governor Kate Brown launched the Coronavirus Response Team, tasked with coordinating state and local agencies and health authorities in preparation for response to coronavirus.

Two days later, California public health officials reported more than 9,380 people self-monitoring after arriving on commercial flights from China through Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Oregon confirmed its first coronavirus case that same day.

On Saturday, the CDC and public health officials in the state of Washington reported the first coronavirus-related death in the U.S. The number grew to six by the end of the weekend and steadily moved higher through the week.

By Monday, three presumptive COVID-9 cases had been identified in Oregon — two Washington County residents and one Umatilla County resident.

While Clatsop County has yet to record a coronavirus case, the health department, along with county management and the emergency management division, consider the COVID-19 outbreak their No. 1 priority.

Seaside, 1918

We’ve been here before — 102 years ago.

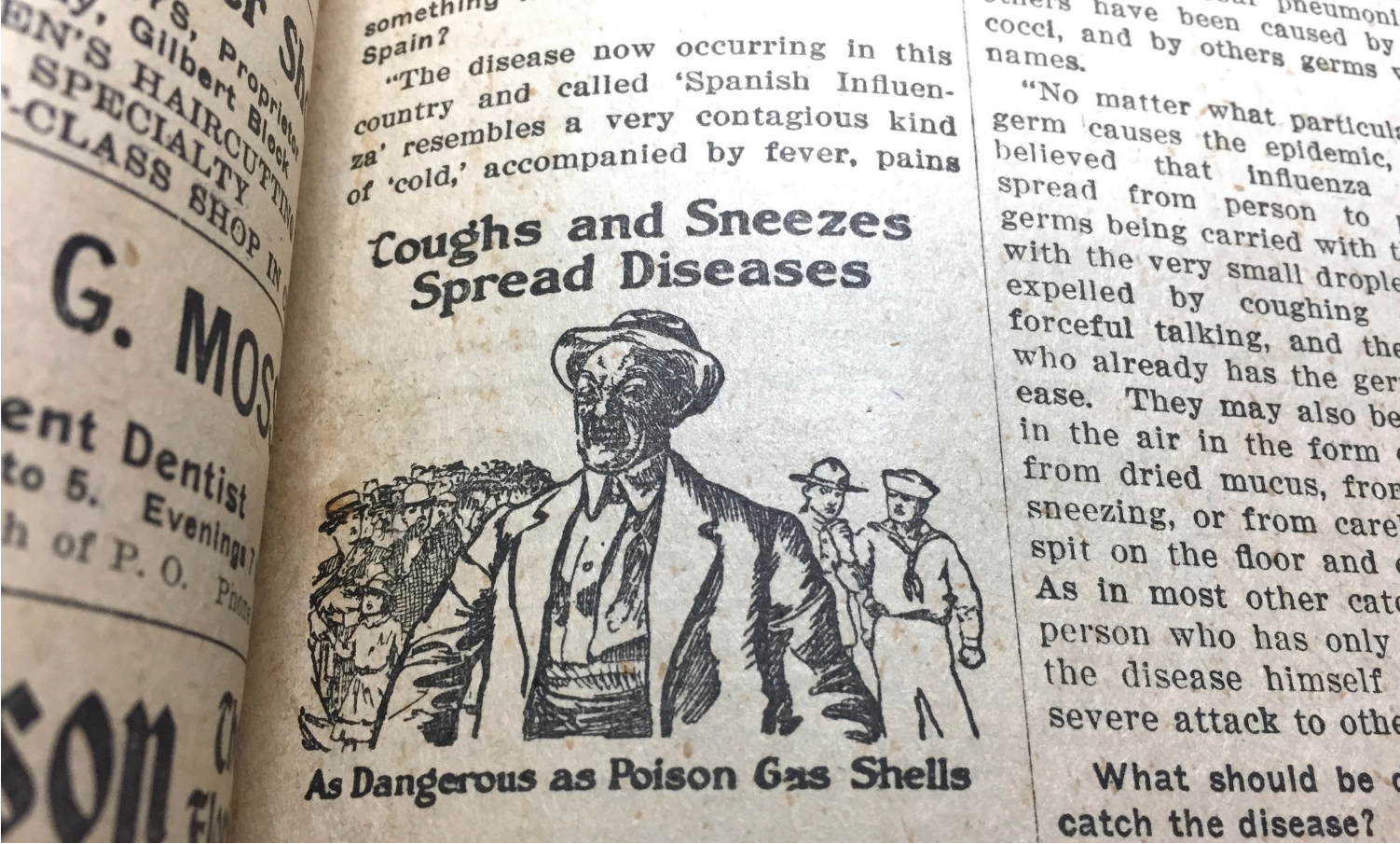
During the midst of World War I, Spanish flu came to Portland through a private on his way to a cavalry officers’ training camp in Texas.

On Oct. 10, 1918, Portland Mayor George Luis Baker ordered stores to close at 3:30 p.m. and offices to close at 4 p.m. Only businesses supplying food or medical supplies could bypass the rules.

Portland stationed police and firemen on the streets to prevent people from congregating, and enforced a 4-foot distance between them.

Closer to home, by Oct. 24, 1918, Astoria had 500 reported flu cases and a staggering 20 deaths.

“In Seaside,” the Signal wrote at the time, “the number has been held down to



Graphic in the Signal in November 1918, at the height of the Spanish flu.

about 30 cases.”

But in one week, a 32-year-old Goodrich Rubber Co. employee died of the flu in Seaside; so did a 34-year-old mother of three and teacher in the Central school and a 35-year-old employee of the Noble Lumber Co.

Seasiders were told “to avoid needless crowding,” and to “smother your coughs and sneezes.”

The city kept a “sick list,” and Seaside’s Union High School closed for five weeks of “enforced vacation.”

Public health efforts to check the disease paid off. The spread was drastically slowed.

“Through strict observance of quarantine laws,” wrote the Signal, “Seaside has about rid itself of the dreaded disease, and with proper care there will be little danger.”

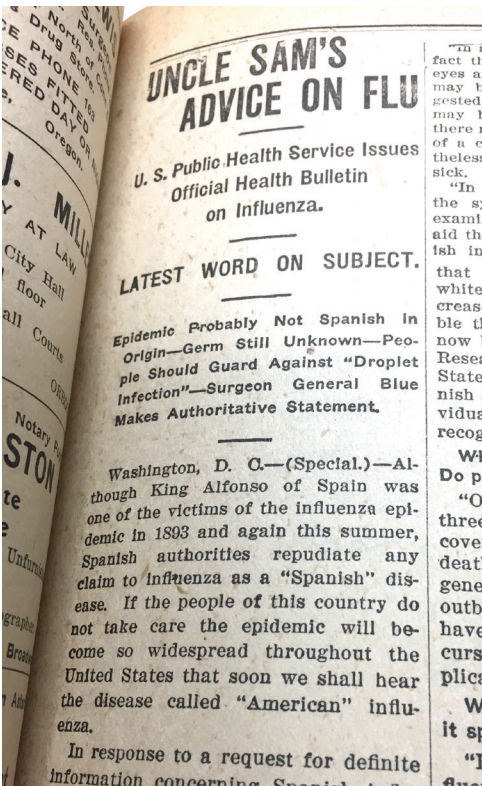
Meanwhile, World War I was heading to a conclusion.

On Nov. 7, when news of the surrender of Germany to the Allies was “flashed over the wire,” Seaside’s citizens “went wild with joy, bells were rung, whistles blown and autos paraded the streets, making what noise could be made with horns,” the Signal reported. “During the afternoon flags were displayed in profusion and the streets decorated for the greatest of all occasions.”

Four days later, on Nov. 11, the Armistice was signed.

“Our boys are back,” the Signal declared at the time.

It is hard to imagine today the exhilaration Americans must have felt at the time



Seaside Signal

The Seaside Signal contained information from the government to curtail the spread of Spanish influenza in 1918.

to have turned the tide in war and on the home front, and a renewed sense of optimism after four years of war and disease. The nation had turned the tide against enemies seen, and unseen.

Stopping the surge

COVID-19 is a new variety of flu and more is being learned daily about its impact on human health and how it is spread, Seaside School District Superintendent Sheila Roley said in a letter sent to families last week.

“The Oregon Health Authority and the Clatsop County Health Department will provide guidance if we were to have a confirmed diagnosis in our area,” she wrote. “Our district will diligently follow the recommendations of the health officials. This would include any recommendations regarding possible exclusions from school or potential school closures.”

Roley reiterated everyday precautions, similar to those delivered a century ago. She also stressed that “fear, rumors and stigma do not stop the spread of disease and can create difficulties in sharing accurate information.”

At Providence Seaside Hospital, doctors and staff are “working in conjunction with clinicians and caregivers across our broader seven-state Providence St. Joseph Health system,” Providence’s chief medical officer Steven Freer said Monday.

The team is ready with a “surge plan,” in case community needs exceed current capacity.

U.S. officials offered this recommendation in 1918: “In all health matters, follow the advice of your doctor and obey the regulations of your local and state health officers.”

Good advice today.

Seaside’s downtown art scene shows big-city vigor, talent

VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX



Beach Books

“Low Tide Stars” acrylic on canvas by April Hoff in the Loft Gallery at Beach Books.

said. “He’s best known for his local beach scenes, Haystack Rock, wildlife. He’s versatile.”

She said people like to take a piece of the coast home with them, and Bartholet’s work speaks to that.

“Being in a gallery of this quality is truly an honor and to have it right in my home town is icing on the cake,” Bartholet said. “I’m most grateful Angi took a chance on me and has afforded me this opportunity. I can’t wait for this summer so the people from out-of-town can enjoy my artistic efforts at the Angi Wildt gallery.”

Bartholet has a prominent social media presence and an enviable following. Wildt noted when Bartholet posted on his own page he was coming to her gallery, there were over 300 comments.

“He’s going to put me on the map,” Wildt said.

She’s featuring his work in the First Saturday Seaside Art Walk on March 7, taking



“Threatening Rain” oil by Richard Burke at the Angi D Wildt Gallery.

place in downtown Seaside from 5 to 7 p.m.

Her show is called “Reflections,” and is a mixed medium showing featuring artists inspired by the reflections on the Oregon Coast shores and other bodies of water.

It’s a group show exhibiting the work of Dave Bartholet, Richard Burke, DC Yorksie, Ty McNeeley, Quata Cody, Christine Kende and Wildt’s own photography work. Michelle Lindlom’s mixed-media monotypes depict another kind of reflection, that of looking into the soul.

If you haven’t attended a First Saturday Art Walk you’re missing big. Seaside Yarn and Fiber is unveiling a new collection of handmade weavings.

The Whet Spot is showcasing the art of Billy Lutz, another Seaside treasure. Lutz is a self-employed artist and sign painter who has provided for his family of five as a painter. Shine Fair Trade, SunRose Gallery, Blue Bond, Pacific Heirloom Art and Collectables, Fairweather House and Gallery, Art-in-the-Loft at Beach Books and Westport Winery are participants of the art event, as well as the Starry Night Art Hotel and Inn, Seaside Coffee House, the Seaside Antique Mall and Dough Dough Bakery.

Wildt said she’s proud to be part of Seaside’s burgeoning gallery scene.

“There’s a lot happening in Seaside,” she said.

SEASIDE
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