

‘When the air is pure, breathe all of it you can’

Dispatches from 1918, Part II

Early this month, just before “everything changed,” the Signal took a look back at another world health crisis, in 1918.

In the U.S., about 28% of the population of 105 million became infected with what was called the “Spanish influenza” — 500,000 to 675,000 Americans died.

Of the almost 117,000 U.S. soldiers who died in World War I, more succumbed to the flu than died in combat. Quarantines, closures, social distancing were all considered part of the tool box to control the flu pandemic.

Local coverage at the time indicates offers some striking similarities and odd differences.

Like today, blame fell on foreign nations and their people.

“Although King Alfonso of Spain was one of the victims of the influence epidemic in 1893 and again this summer, Spanish authorities repudiate any claim to influenza as a ‘Spanish disease,’” Surgeon General Rupert Blue of the U.S. Public Health Service wrote in an Oct. 17 column published in the Signal. “If the people of this country do not take care the epidemic will become so widespread throughout the United States that soon we will hear the disease called the ‘American’ influenza.”

Epidemics have visited this country since 1647, the surgeon general wrote. Epidemics also came to our shores in 1890 and 1893, and both times the epidemic spread widely over the United States.

The next week, Oct. 24, 1918, local district commander Lt. Ray C. Hill sent an open letter to the mayor and city of Seaside: “Urgent warnings are being sounded to the general public to take all precautions contracting the disease.”

The most dangerous and frequent complication for the disease was pneumonia, Hill wrote.

Among advice to avoid crowding and cover your sneeze or cough, Seaside residents received additional precautionary advice, some sound today, some more questionable.

- “Try to keep cool when you walk, and warm when you ride and sleep.”
- “Open the windows when home at night, at the office when practicable.”
- “Remember the three ‘C’s’: a clean mouth, clean skin and clean clothes.”
- “Don’t let the waste product of digestion accumulate: Drink a glass or two of water upon getting up.”
- “Avoid tight clothes, tight shoes, tight gloves. Seek to make nature your ally, not your prisoner.”
- “When the air is pure, breathe all of it you can. Breathe deeply.”

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

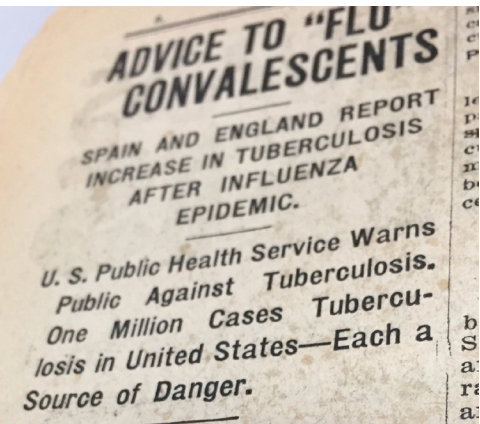
R.J. MARX



MESSAGE FOR TODAY

“If the people of this country do not take care the epidemic will become so widespread throughout the United States that soon we will hear the disease called the ‘American’ influenza.”

— U.S. Surgeon General, October 1918



Seaside Signal

The Signal in 1918 warned of the risk of tuberculosis in the aftermath of the flu.

A danger awaits

The flu pandemic lingered until the summer of 1919, when those infected either died or developed immunity.

But another killer hid in its wake. “U.S. Public Health Service warns against increase in tuberculosis,” read a Signal headline.

There were more than 1 million cases in the nation — one out of every 100 people in the population. If exposed to the flu, the U.S. Public Service called “each a source of danger.”

In the year of the pandemic, the health service reported an increase in the prevalence and deaths from pulmonary tuberculosis. “Persons whose resistance has been weakened by an attack of influenza are peculiarly susceptible to tuberculosis,” the Signal reported on Dec. 5, 1918. “With millions of its people recently affected with influenza, this country now offers conditions favoring the spread of tuberculosis.”

While vaccines were developed in the 1920s, it was not until the 1950s that the wide spread of tuberculosis was curbed. The Oregon State Tuberculosis Hospital in Salem closed in 1959.

Today, the Oregon Health Authority reports, mycobacterium tuberculosis infects an estimated 1.8 billion people, or roughly

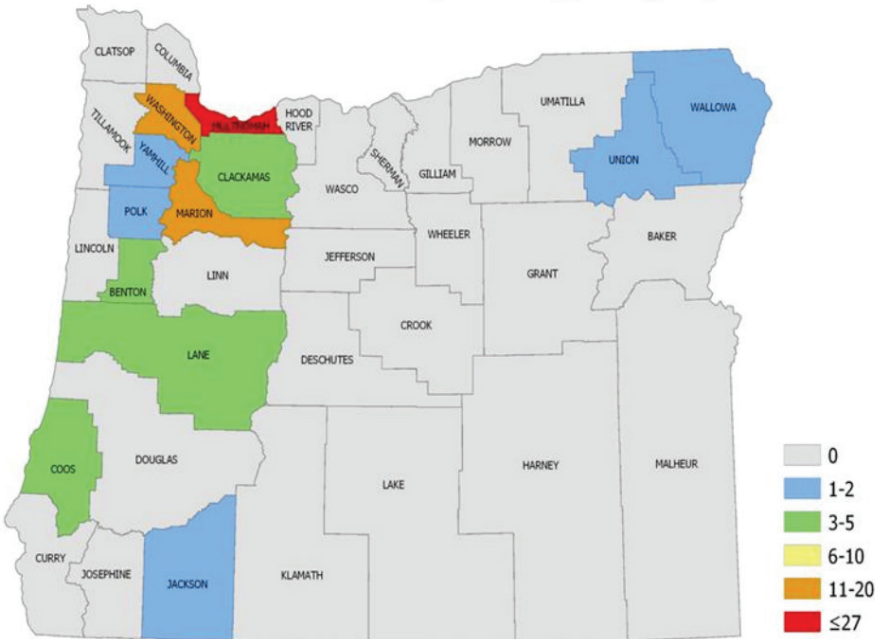


R.J. Marx

Seen near the intersection of Roosevelt Drive and Broadway.

FIGURE

Tuberculosis disease cases by county, Oregon, 2018



Source: Oregon Reportable Diseases Database

Oregon Health Authority

25% of the world’s population.

TB is uncommon — but not unknown — in Oregon.

Oregon’s TB disease rate of 1.9 cases per 100,000 residents is still well below the United States rate of 2.8 cases per 100,000 population.

When quarantine lifted

As we write this, deep in a modern crisis, it is tempting to feel helpless, hopeless and as if it’s never all going to end.

Fingering through the archives, on Nov. 14, 1918, it is encouraging to read “Quarantine raised Friday.”

“The city school will open on Monday,” the Signal reported, “and all scholars who have not had influenza and those who are not just getting over the disease will attend

as usual.”

Attributing the reopening to the positive effect of strict observance of quarantine laws, “Seaside has about rid itself of the dreaded disease and with proper care there will be little danger, as only four mild cases are now in the city.”

To make up for lost time, students came in to school 15 minutes earlier — at 8:45 instead of 9 a.m. — and classes were extended until 3:45 p.m.

Alas, some students didn’t return to class, the Signal reported. “After an enforced vacation of five weeks, high school reopened Monday, Nov. 18. A few of the pupils who were there before the vacation did not come back, some finding work that seemed so tempting that school work did not appeal so much as the immediate dollar.”

‘Her Quiet Revolution’

Just before everything began shutting down and events, even modest events, were being canceled, over a delicious lunch of salad and sandwiches prepared by Seaside Coffee House, Astoria-based author Marianne Monson came to Seaside to talk about her new historical novel, “Her Quiet Revolution,” just out.

Monson, an established author of women’s history and children’s books, teaches at Clatsop Community College and leads writer’s retreats in France, Spain, and Portugal. On March 11 she was the featured author at Lunch in the Loft at Beach Books.

Monson entertained the lunch bunch with her current favorite topic, the life and accomplishments of the real life personage, Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon. A natural storyteller, Monson quickly swept the audience into Cannon’s world.

To write her story, Monson engaged in serious research, traveling across the Atlantic to Hughes’ birthplace in Llandudno, Wales. She became obsessed with the woman she called “Martha,” who she described as one of Utah’s most influential people.

“Martha’s story is remarkable; it’s dazzling,” Monson said.

Martha Hughes Cannon was born in Wales in 1857. A medical doctor and member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, she practiced polygamy right alongside of medicine. One of Utah’s original women’s rights advocates, she was of course a suffragist who went on to become the first woman to be a Utah state senator.

She came to the United States as a child when her parents converted to the LDS Church, the family eventually heading west to settle in Utah territory with other LDS Church members. She enrolled in the University of Deseret, now known as the University of Utah at the age of sixteen, receiving her Bachelors in Chemistry before going

VIEW FROM THE PORCH

EVE MARX



on to the University of Michigan where she received her M.D. She became the fourth of six wives to the prominent LDS leader, Angus M. Cannon, and during an anti-polygamy campaign, returned to the country of her birth in exile after the birth of her first child.

Returning to Utah, she took up her work as a doctor while at the same time fighting for women’s rights in the Utah territory. She was instrumental bringing women to the forefront and writing them into the constitution when Utah was granted statehood in 1896. That same year, she became the first woman to be elected to the state senate, defeating her own husband, who was also on the ballot. Cannon authored Utah’s sanitation laws and was a founding member of that state’s first Board of Health.

Monson shared with her audience her own ancestors were Mormon pioneers. As a student, she attended Pacific University, Vermont College of Fine Arts, and Brigham Young University. Her earlier literary works include the books, “Frontier Grit,” and “Women of the Blue and Gray.”

Monson spoke about 2020 as the 100-year anniversary of women’s suffrage, a 70 year struggle in the United States that began in 1848 and continued until 1920. She spoke of the anti-suffrage society in Astoria and noted the suffrage bill went before Oregon voters six times before passing in 1912, a full eight years before the national amendment.

The real-life subject of Monson’s novel, Martha Hughes Cannon, died in Los Angeles on July 10, 1932 at the age of 75. She is



Eve Marx

Marianne Monson, Astoria-based author, dazzled lunchgoers at Lunch in the Loft at Beach Books.

interred in the Salt Lake City cemetery. A statue of her designed by Utah sculptor Ben Hammond will be placed this August in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C. during a celebration of the 19th Amendment’s 100th anniversary according to a statement from the Utah Senate and House.

The subject of Cannon’s polygamous lifestyle came up at the bookstore loft lunch. Polygamy, after all, is a fascinating and controversial subject.

“Martha herself was ambivalent about polygamy,” Monson said. “She understood the freedom it afforded her, and the autonomy. At the same time she was in denial her husband loved his other wives. And he did love them, that was clear.”

“Her Quiet Revolution” is available at Beach Books. By the way, if you’re self-quarantining or just don’t want to go out, shop via the store’s website at www.beachbooks37.com or call 503-738-3500 or DM them on social media. The store is happy to deliver books to your car outside the store, or even your doorstep.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Many meetings are postponed, canceled or being presented remotely. Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.

Monday, March 23

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., 989 Broadway.

Tuesday, March 31

7 p.m., Gearhart City Council, work session, 698 Pacific Way.

Wednesday, April 1

Seaside Improvement Commission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., 698 Pacific Way.

Thursday, April 2

Gearhart Budget Committee, 5 p.m., 698 Pacific Way.

Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 7 p.m., 989 Broadway.

Friday, April 3

Gearhart Budget Committee, (if necessary), 5 p.m., 698 Pacific Way.

Tuesday, April 7

Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., 989 Broadway.

Seaside Library Board, 5:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway.

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, board workshop, 5:15 p.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Thursday, April 9

Gearhart Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

Monday, April 13

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., 989 Broadway.

Seaside Signal

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