



Lincoln Newsletter

Memorial Day Edition, May, 2020

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La Grippe in 1918 Covid-19 in 2020

No one wants to experience a pandemic, but by now almost everyone is aware of the many ramifications of the Covid-19/Coronavirus. Countless media persons have tried to put it in perspective, many of them turning to 1918 and 1919 to the Spanish Flu that wrought such terrible deaths throughout the world.

Finding information about Beardstown's experience during this time period has proved fruitless. Local newspapers are missing, and local people who survived the flu have long since passed.

Fortunately, however, a prolific writer, Norman V. Kelly, has researched and written about the influence of the 1918 Spanish Flu on the city of Peoria, IL., an Illinois river town not that far from Beardstown. Mr. Kelly has graciously given permission to reprint his article in full. Reading it will help us understand what Beardstown and many towns in Illinois experienced during this trying time.

Peoria's 1918 Spanish Flu Terror

by Norman V. Kelly

Here in Peoria, Illinois the local newspapers reported the war news daily, listing casualties from the city and county of Peoria, Illinois. Just over 5,500 of our young men went off to 'Fight the Hun,' resulting in the death of 211 of them. However, on October 6, 1918 the headlines and stories reported a threat to the folks right here in town. They called it 'La Grippe,' the Spanish word for the flu which was at that time reaching epidemic status and apparently heading our way.

Health Commissioner Dr. George Parker reported that Spanish influenza cases in Peoria were growing in leaps and bounds and he warned that the epidemic would only get worse. The news terrorized the area and folks began to retreat inside their homes as much as they could. Still the flu spread and on October 8, 1918 the good doctor ordered theaters, churches, and

public gathering places to close. To add to our local problem, thirty-seven of our physicians were in the United States Army. Parker asked that every nurse in the area report to his office so he could get help to the folks that were in dire straights. They responded along with retired nurses and women that had nursing experiences. 'Hospitals' were opened up in vacant buildings and masks were handed out by the hundreds to worried Peorians. Still the epidemic spread.

A CLOSED CITY

More orders were issued banning gatherings of any kind, including funeral services. All of the city hospitals were overcrowded and more vacant buildings were used to open up temporary, make shift hospitals to care for the influenza victims. Peorians, as always, from service clubs to single volunteers banded together to help wherever they could. Most businesses were closed, and the city took on a vacant look as the disease spread along with the fear and isolation.

Physician's offices were besieged with new patients even though there was little if anything the doctors had in the way of proper medicines. The patients were advised to stay warm, try to remain isolated, and drink plenty of juices and water.

One set back as far as the epidemic was concerned was a huge gathering of folks downtown when the false news of the war ending became a wild rumor. These people broke the ban on assembling, and Parker was certain the epidemic would destroy the city. The number of flu cases did indeed increase but not as badly as the doctor had predicted. Mayor Woodruff ordered the inhabitants of the city to clean up their area, including the alleys, declaring that filth was a way for the disease to spread. This order did not come from Dr. Parker who doubted that cleaning up around the house would help. But...it did keep the healthy folks outside and away from their sick relatives.

As the city darkened, the factories began to close, the libraries and many of the restaurants and downtown businesses turned off their lights as well. By now there were 510 confirmed cases of Spanish Influenza in one stage or the other. Parker stated that there were probably many more unreported cases.

(continued, page 2)

Peoria's 1918 Spanish Flu Terror, continued

Throughout the ordeal the local authorities, led by Dr. Parker reminded people to stay calm, warm and hydrated. They asked every citizen to wear the gauze masks and simply avoid human contact if possible. The real heroes were the nurses that worked above and beyond the call of duty to help keep their city free of additional cases of influenza. Of course, many of them fell victim to the disease as well.

Within three additional weeks 525 more cases were reported, but mixed with the bad news was the fact that the disease seemed to be slowing down. That was good news to the beleaguered medical workers, but the fight was far from over.

MORE GOOD NEWS

Local newspapers reported that the Germans had agreed to treaty terms and it looked like it "Was over over there." Still there were reports of Americans being killed and our local casualty flu count went up. The final count was 400 communities in the State of Illinois affected by the epidemic, and reports of deaths were coming in from all over. The big weapon against the flu seemed to be Vicks Vapor Rub, which of course was not a cure by any means. The final count here in Peoria, Illinois was 40 dead, many by complications of pneumonia.

By the end of October the major storm appeared to have passed. It was remarkable how a few sturdy doctors and nurses managed to take care of so many sick people. The volunteers, the Red Cross, the churches and the missions worked hundreds of hours to stop the spread of the plague here in town. It was a proudfest time for Peorians and officials praised the folks that fought in the front lines to save their city. Personally, I can tell you that the spirit of this town was lifted far beyond what any miracle drug could have provided. Of course, we could have used one during those scary days of October 1918.

Editor's Note: Norm welcomes your comments and you can also e-mail him: norman.kelly@sbcglobal.net

- Randal Reichert



Photo from internet site of the CDC, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Other Accounts of the 1918 Spanish Flu

According to the website *Genealogy Trails*, World War I was a major contributor as soldiers being transported spread the disease from port to port. In the city of Chicago, over 8,500 people succumbed to the flu.

Genealogy Trails describes the preventative measures taken to limit contact between individuals: "theaters, lodges and dance halls, for example, were closed, though churches and schools remained opened. Wearing masks was encouraged. Smoking was prohibited in places to prevent spitting in public, and those caught spitting were arrested."

Each town in the state, however, was free to take its own precautions. Steve Kastorff posted an article on the internet from *The Geneseo Republic* [Geneseo, IL], Feb. 16, 2018, describing the actions taken in Geneseo: "it is deemed wise and for the general welfare of the community to issue this proclamation ordering all the churches and schools closed, forbidding all gatherings, entertainments, lodge meetings, social functions, public sales on streets or otherwise."

He continues, "It is also ordered that all places of business in the city excepting the drug stores, the two eating houses and physicians' offices be closed every evening at 7 o'clock. All pool and billiard tables must be covered and no playing on them allowed. All children must be kept off the streets unless on an errand. All barbers, clerks, waitresses, and those who come in contact with the public are urged to wear masks." All houses with influenza cases should be quarantined and all cases of influenza must be promptly reported, that place cards may be placed on the homes."

In the internet article "Some Local Newspaper Stories of the Time, The Oct. 17, 1918 *Henry News Republican* cited Dr. C. St. Clari Drake, director of the state department of public health as estimating over 170,000 cases in the state outside of Chicago. Chicago was reporting a total of 17,943 in just three weeks.

Other towns were also reporting: Assumption in Christian County had a population of 1,918 has 500 cases and is asking for help as they have only four doctors and one registered nurse to treat all their cases. Bloomington had 1,200 cases with 11 deaths, and Nokomis, population, 1,973 has over 600 cases and no hospital. World-wide death totals of 30 million were later revised by the CDC to over 50 million.

- Randal Reichert

2020 Friends Contributions to Date

The adage, 'Everyone Needs a Friend' could not be truer. These Friends annually help us maintain the history of Beardstown and the integrity of the Museum & Courtroom collection. **Have you sent your 2020 membership renewal?** Thank you.

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Annual Gift \$25.00 - \$49.00**

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Name(s): _____

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The amount of the memorial is \$ _____.

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Please forward your payment (payable to **Friends of the OLCM**) along with this information form to:

**Friends of Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum
PO Box 381
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I would like to receive my newsletter in the form of
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Please charge my

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120 Years Ago...

from *The Beardstown Enterprise*, June 2, 1900

Each Memorial Day weekend, BHS alumni gather in Beardstown to celebrate their graduation. Most classes celebrate every five years, but a number of alumni also like to attend the activities of friends who graduated a year ahead or after their own class as well. Many people from other cities are amazed at how dedicated BHS graduates are about returning for their alumni reunions. This is not surprising when we see how important commencement exercises and the Alumni Annual Meeting were as early as 1900, 120 years ago. The following accounts were taken from the June 2, 1900, issue of *The Beardstown Enterprise*.

THE COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

Seventeen Pupils Complete The High School Course

Grand Opera House Crowded to Overflowing Thursday Evening – An Excellent Program Was Rendered

The twenty-fifth annual commencement of the Beardstown High School took place Thursday evening at the Grand Opera House, which was filled with relatives and friends of the graduates. The class was composed of seventeen young people, ten girls and seven boys, namely:

Verna W. Baujan, Hazael Knight, Mabelle El. Shaw, Marie E. Spicker, Margaret D. Heinz, Bertha A. Dickens, Maude L. Berry, Flora B. Doyle, Corinne B. Baders, Olive G. Huss, Frank D. Golden, Ralph E. Mohlmann, Benjamin F. Hamilton, Milton W. Shute, and Louis Thron.

These with Supt. H. J. Jokisch, Principal Paul Yates, Rev. J. A. Burchit and Rev. R. J. Schmidt occupied the stage, which was beautifully decorated with potted plants, and the glorious red, white and blue of the American flag which was draped on either side. The motto of the class, "Out of School Life into Life's School," was placed across the front of the stage at the top. Of course the graduates, that is to say, the young lady graduates, were attired in faultless costumes, while the young men wore the usual black.

The exercises were opened with a selection by the Mandolin Club under the direction of Prof. C. W. Darby, after which the Divine blessing was invoked by Rev. R. J. Schmidt of the 4th street Lutheran church. Then came the program in the following order.

Salutatory.....Verna Winstanley Baujan
 Oration, "Why Universal Peace is Impossible".....
Parker Frederick Fletcher
 Mellophone Solo.....Will C. Williams
 Essay, "Americanism in Music".....Hazel Knight
 Declamation, "Penelope's Christmas Dance".....
Mabelle Edna Shaw
 Essay, "Nature's Martyrdom".....
Marie Elizabeth Spicker
 Vocal Solo.....Miss Olive J. Schultz
 Oration, "United States and South America".....
LeRoy Garfield French
 Essay, "Ruskin".....Margaret Dorothy Heinz
 Oration, "Arbitration—The Approach of a New
 Era".....Frank Dana Golden
 "Phrenological Observation".....
Ralph E. Mohlmann
 Cornet Solo.....Maurice Riley
 Oration, "Our Interests in China".....
Benjamin Franklin Hamilton
 Declamation, "Belsbazaar's Feast".....
Bertha Amela Dickens
 Essay, "Wit and Humor of American Literature.....
Maud Louise Berry
 Oration, "Industrial Combinations".....
Milton Warner Shute
 Autoharp Solo.....Rev. J. A. Burchit
 Valedictory, "Out of School Life into Life's School.
Olive Grace Huss

Each number was presented with ease and grace and perfect enunciation. The essays showed deep thought and much study on the part of the writers and the declamations were each one suited to the voice and expression of the ones who delivered them. On the whole, the class of 1900 proved, by the part which each took in the exercises and the excellent thoughts presented, that their school days had not been spent in vain.

After the valedictory, Supt. H. J. Jokisch made a short and appropriate address to the class, speaking of the need of being educated for the humbler duties of life as well as the higher ones. He expressed a hope that the graduates were leaving school fully prepared for whatever situation might befall them, be it one of magnitude or of humble nature. He then presented each member with a diploma as evidence that they had successfully completed the prescribed course.

The Commencement Exercises, continued

The benediction was pronounced by Rev. Richardson of the Congregational church and the program was concluded with a selection by the Mandolin Club.

Thus closed another successful school year and another class of young people leave school life and enter into the stern duties of life's school. It would be a difficult matter to find a class which contained as great an array of talent and energy as the class of 1900 and the teachers who have guided them thus far on their preparation of life's work may well be proud of the results of their work.

ALUMNI ANNUAL MEETING

Seventy Guests in Attendance Last Night

The seventh annual meeting of the Beardstown High School Alumni was held last evening in I. O. O. F. hall. About seventy past graduates including the class of 1900 were present. The hall was beautifully decorated with flowers and plants arranged in a most artistic manner.

The meeting was called to order at 8:45 by the president, Miss Anna V. Smith, '96. The first number on the program was an instrumental duet by Misses Florence, '92, and Winifred Harris, '94, which was rendered in a manner which seemed almost inspired.

Supt. H. J. Jokisch then introduced the class of 1900 and Miss Anna V. Smith, '96, delivered the address, which welcomed them to the membership of the Alumni, in well chosen words and appropriate sentiment. Parker Fletcher responded in behalf of the class in a manner that left no doubt as to the sincerity and pleasure of the class in becoming a part of the organization.

Miss Olivia Schultz, '96, next sang a song, after which the roll was called by the secretary, Miss Nellie Baujan, '96. Each member responded with a few words on education. The closing numbers of the program were an instrumental solo by Miss Nora Hagen and a vocal solo by Mrs. Harry Benson.

The guests then adjourned to the hall where a sumptuous banquet was spread. The banquet was prepared by the well-known caterers, Henschen & Thron, and a mere contemplation of it was a very forcible suggestion of the truth of the lines at the top of the menu card: "O hour of all hours most blessed upon earth, blessed hour of dinner."

The tables with their snowy linen, dainty napkins and shining silver, china and glass, formed a very pretty scene, and their arrangement was perfect. The menu follows:

MENU

Turkey.	Cold Tongue.	Sliced Ham.
Green Peas.	Potato Chips.	Sliced Tomatoes.
Radishes.	Rolls.	Iced Tea.

Chicken Salad with Lettuce.		Olives.
Salted Almonds.		Wafers.

Strawberries.	Ice Cream.	Assorted Cake.

Roquefort Cheese.	Wafers.	Coffee.

When all were seated, the viands were served by the skilled waiters and waitresses and all partook to their heart's content. A more excellent spread could not have been wished for, or indeed, hardly imagined.

After the banquet the guests again entered the reception room where the various toasts were proposed by the toast-master, J. Edward Garm, '86. "Our Goat" was responded to by Miss Nellie McLane, '96, and "Expansion" received an ovation from Albert Whiteford, '95. Miss Hattie Fischer, '88, delivered a response to "Saratoga Chips," while the "High Hurdle" was responded to by Walter Hamilton, '98. The last was "Uncle Sam," and Joseph Folonie, '97, with a few words expressed the sentiment of all present in his response.

The business meeting of the Alumni Association was then held at which the following officers were elected for the ensuing year: Joseph Folonie, president; Miss Emma Fischer, vice-president; Miss Nellie Baujan, secretary and treasurer.

This closed the seventh annual meeting, and all present are willing to be authority for the statement that it was the best ever held.



1894

2020



- Randal Reichert

Visitors Guide

The photo of the 2019 Visitors Guide to ALNHA can be found on the back page. The guide itself is in the brochure rack in the hall of the courthouse. The 2020 edition is currently on hold and will be out as soon as is available and will be distributed to all Looking for Lincoln sites and various tourism offices in Illinois. It, too, contains our advertisement.

So, if you are looking for places to visit within driving range this summer, come to the museum and get a Visitors Guide!
- Paula Woods

Commercial Growth of “Mile Eighty-Eight”

Just as Thomas Beard had foreseen, the young frontier town of Beardstown grew rapidly because it was ideally located for its citizens to capitalize on the newly developing Illinois River trade and transportation boom. By 1837 the town was considered one of the chief import and export centers on the Illinois and the head of navigation for the largest class of New Orleans steamboats.

Since distances in the interior of Illinois were often measured in terms of river mileage (for the river provided the most common means of travel), the townspeople soon adopted the colloquial phrase "mile eighty-eight" to identify their town. In the terminology of the river man, this meant the number of miles from the mouth of the Illinois, or the location of the town of Beardstown.

The prairie around Beardstown was very well suited for farming and the early settlers raised a great variety of crops including corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley, buckwheat, potatoes (Irish and sweet), and many vegetables. Farms in this rich prairie section sold for forty dollars an acre in 1837 and sometimes for as much as sixty dollars. In addition, many farmers in the area raised cattle and hogs and drove them into the town to be slaughtered, and an extensive pork and beef packing center developed.



A pork processing plant. Photo from the Minnesota Libraries Publishing Project.

The pork-packing industry, in time, became the town's chief enterprise. After the hogs were slaughtered the meat was packed in barrels and shipped via steamers to New Orleans and ports

east. Flour mills also had a flourishing business, for the farmers brought their grain to the river port to be ground and shipped up and down the river. The exporting of flour to New Orleans remained important until 1837 when the mills could no longer meet the demand at home.



Original on display in the Beardstown Room.

The growth of these early businesses were a result of the peace and prosperity which came to the rapidly expanding West after 1815. Land sales were limited only by their proximity to waterways, with the result that the lands closest to the navigable rivers and streams were bought up first.

**50,000 Bush's Grain
WANTED.**

At the Store of GEO. PLAHN & CO.
Having ample Store Room for the above
quantity of Grain. We take this method
to inform the farming community that we
are prepared to purchase for CASH.
Corn, Wheat, Rye, Oats, Potatoes. And
pay the highest market prices for the same
on delivery.

GEO. PLAHN & CO.,
Beardstown, June 14, 1866-tf

This advertisement in Beardstown's *The Central Illinoian* January 24, 1867. It had been running weekly since June 14, 1866.

Commercial Growth of “Mile 88”, continued

The period 1815-1860 saw a rapid increase in the sale of grain, particularly wheat and especially corn, the latter which was used as feed for livestock. The sale of wheat to be ground into flour for export to distant points was an important part of the economy.

The South provided the largest market for Illinois grain producers, and many farmers, including those in the environs of Beardstown, sent their produce downstream via the Illinois to the Mississippi and south to New Orleans.



This model of the “Comanche” river packet paddle wheeler is on display in the River Room.

Because of the rapidly growing export business, manufacturing trades and services developed along with the river towns in order to serve the needs of the local residents. Thus, the export trade resulted in the expansion and diversification of regional economy, and this was the case at Beardstown. There was a large variety of exports, but wheat and corn remained the most stable grains.

The export trade further resulted in a variety of subsidiary industries, some of which, in turn, became important export commodities also. There were advantages in locally processing corn and wheat into flour, corn meal, or whiskey, and salting pork to be shipped south. These products then required provision for storage and transportation, and it became a great deal more economical to produce these facilities in the West rather than to have them built and brought in from other areas.

Furthermore, since most of the grain and pork shipped from this region was raised on "family-sized" farms, there was a consequent growth of small town industries, including retail trades and services, machine and tool shops, tanners, blacksmiths, and even publishing and advertising firms to serve both the settlers in the surrounding area and the townspeople.

The early settlers also brought sheep, and when they could protect their flocks from the wolves, they sheared the sheep and carded the wool by hand. They even raised a considerable amount of cotton until the

time of the deep snow in 1830; but after that severe winter, cotton crops were a failure. Years when unusual weather conditions happened were easy incidents to reckon from, such as the records of the deep snow in 1830 revealed.

Another such example was the "cold day" in 1836. It had been raining for some time when the temperature suddenly dropped. Locals reported geese and chickens that died and a drove of eight hundred hogs that were left in the field by the drivers where later they were all found frozen to death.

There were also many references to the devastating "big flood" in 1844. The commercial growth of Beardstown in the early years was the primary reason for its rise from a remote frontier settlement to a thriving and industrious packing and shipping center, "Mile Eight-Eight" on the Illinois River. (Martin, History of Cass County, pp. 642- 661; Inventory...Cass County, pp. 19-20; North, The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860, pp. 66, 73, 150)

- Judy Hager Carlsen

Visitors

Since no volunteers are on duty except for scheduled tours from December through March, there are usually only a few visitors for four months.

This year, thanks to the COVID19 crisis, vacation for the volunteers was extended through April and probably May. We have missed the usual spring tours of the Fourth Grade and Beardstown Christian Academy. A tour sponsored by Lincoln Land Community College has been postponed until sometime . . .

Opening date is uncertain, depending how Illinois is “opened up.” We will announce the opening on our website and Facebook page, so please keep looking!

- Paula Woods

ALNHA News

Although the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Steering Commission, and the LFL/ALNHA office has closed during the COVID19 crisis, the staff is busy at work from home. In fact, several matters have been presented and discussed via email.

Of immediate concern is the status of the grant from the Illinois Office of Tourism Marketing Partnership. This grant money for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2019 has been diverted to support loans to businesses impacted by COVID19. We hope that ALNHA will be able to access grant money in FY 2020 which begins July 1. This money is used for the promotion of the heritage area, of which the Old Lincoln Courtroom and Museum is an important part.

- Paula Woods

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& Museum Commission
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Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area Official Visitors Guide

