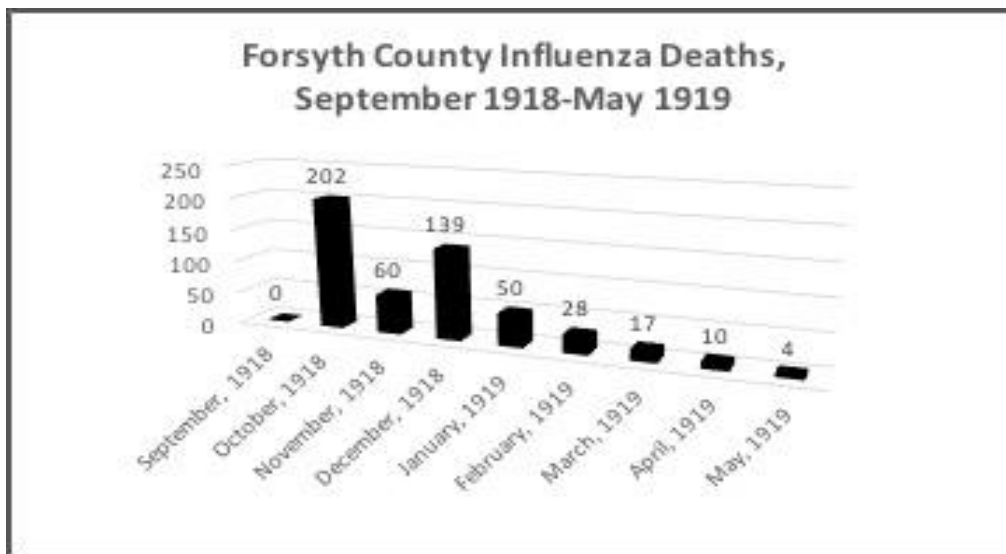


The Influenza Epidemic of 1918 in Forsyth County, NC - Part 3 How Winston-Salem & Forsyth County Coped

By Rebecca Wall

(The Fall 2018 issue of this Journal included an article about the nature and extent of the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 in Forsyth County and a narrative about how it affected the family of my grandparents, Charlie and Mary Alice Wall, who lived in Rural Hall. A list of residents of Forsyth County whose death certificates said they died of influenza-related causes during the 1918-1919 epidemic appeared in the issue for Spring 2019. This final part of the series describes how the city and county coped with the epidemic, using newspapers published in the county at the time as a source.)

The influenza epidemic of autumn 1918, which didn't really end until late the following spring, presented a considerable challenge to Forsyth County's health-care resources, particularly during the months of October and December. In October, 202 people in Forsyth County died of influenza – equivalent, for today's population, to losing over 1100 people to one cause in one month. The epidemic seemed to be ending in November, when only 60 people died of influenza, but in December the numbers went up again, with 139 deaths attributed to the disease. The January number, 50, was only slightly lower than that of November. Numbers decreased after that, but they did not reach single digits until May of 1919. If the spring 1919 deaths are included, 506 people died in Forsyth County in the "1918" epidemic, about .7% of the population. An equivalent percentage of the current population would be more than 2600 people.¹ And of course most of the people who contracted influenza did not die, so the total number of very sick people requiring care would have been a great deal larger. How did the people of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County cope?



¹ The numbers of influenza deaths come from my examination of death certificates filed in Forsyth County during the relevant months. I used census figures to compute comparative numbers from today's population.

Contemporary newspapers like the *Winston-Salem Journal*, the *Twin City Sentinel*, and the *Union Republican* can provide a snapshot of community actions during the epidemic, but their use is complicated by the fact that the nation was deeply involved in World War I, and the local part of the epidemic came during the same months when the war was coming to an end. (The Armistice took effect at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918.) Most of the headlines in the local papers for October 1918 have to do with the war or with the campaign to sell war bonds.

In the late spring and early summer of 1918, the *Journal's* notices about influenza had seemed to be talking about something far away, a footnote to the war effort. On June 27, an Associated Press item noted that influenza "of the new Spanish type" was "now epidemic all along the German front."² A little over a week later, on July 6, a *Journal* article detailed the spread of flu from Spain to Germany and then to England, and suggested that an epidemic in the United States was likely to happen.

The epidemic continued to spread rapidly, and the *Journal* tracked its progress in articles tucked in among much longer articles about the war. By August 6, influenza was reported to be all over Europe. The German army had suffered badly, as had civilians, but allied troops, it was claimed, had been little affected. On August 7, the *Journal* printed a reassuring letter from a local soldier stationed in France, George Whaling, Jr., who said he had come down with influenza but had recovered quickly and completely. An August 21 *Journal* article, however, included the disquieting news that this influenza seemed to attack well-fed, strong young American soldiers as easily as it attacked Europeans run down from years of war and poor food. In a refrain that would become very familiar, the article claimed that the disease was not dangerous, but then warned that it easily turned into pneumonia if not treated promptly.

On Saturday, September 14, the *Journal* announced that Spanish influenza had reached the United States. There had been outbreaks in Mobile, Newport News, Philadelphia, New York, New London, and New Orleans. The next day, the *Journal* reported that the disease had appeared at Camp Lee in Petersburg, Virginia. By the end of that week, the front page of the Sunday *Journal* announced that "Spanish Influenza Is Reported from Many Sections of Country." The calm and reassuring tone of reports from locations up and down the east coast could not obscure the fact that the epidemic was spreading quickly and many people were dying, so it must have felt ominous to read in the September 24 *Sentinel* that local doctors were being asked to report cases of "grippe" or influenza to the United States Public Health Service.

During the last third of September, all the local papers continued to carry reports and warnings about the approaching infection. There were many reports from Virginia,

² *Winston-Salem Journal*, Thurs., 27 June 1918, p. 8. Downloaded from Newspapers.com on 4 Feb. 2018. Note: In quotations from the *Journal* and other newspapers, I have silently corrected obvious typographical errors to avoid distraction. I have tried to identify newspapers and dates within the text. All such references are to the newspapers available online at Newspapers.com.

and on September 29 the *Journal* gave its first report of influenza in North Carolina, 40 cases at Bladenboro. Influenza was now rampant both in southeast North Carolina and to the north in western Virginia. Forsyth County was slowly being surrounded.

On October 1, a front-page article trumpeted the opening of the "Winston-Salem and Forsyth County Fair," which was expected to draw "an unusually large crowd." Two columns over, however, was an item headed "Spanish Influenza Is Spreading Rapidly in North Carolina Now," and next to that item's continuation on page 5, a small but significant item announced that the influenza epidemic had also arrived in Winston-Salem:

Eighteen Cases of Influenza in City

City Health Officer R. L. Carlton stated last night that while eighteen cases of Spanish influenza have been reported in Winston-Salem, it is by no means epidemic here.

However, the citizens of Winston-Salem should read the instructions sent out from Raleigh last night by the State Board of Health telling how people may avoid the disease, which has become epidemic in other North Carolina cities and towns.

The continuation article including the instructions from Raleigh, one of which read "Don't go to unnecessary public gatherings." There was no suggestion that a fair might be such an unnecessary gathering.

The first Forsyth County death in the fall 1918 epidemic came on Friday, October 5. The victim was J.R. Evins (or Evans), a barber from Kernersville, who worked in Winston-Salem. His obituary appeared that same day in the evening paper, the *Twin-City Sentinel*:

Death of Mr. John Evans. -- Mr. John Evans, who has held a position in the barber shop of Jack Spry in this city, died this morning at his home at Kernersville after an illness of two days with Spanish influenza. Mr. Spry [Evans?] left for his home Thursday. He is survived by Mrs. Evans, three sons and one daughter. . . The message announcing the death gave no information with reference to the funeral.

Another item in the Oct. 5 *Sentinel* said that the Winston-Salem aldermen would meet that evening to deal with an order from the state department of health calling for the closing of churches, schools and theaters and the cancelation of public meetings. The article noted that the city's health officer, Dr. R. L. Carlton, had reported 118 cases of influenza in the city, while Dr. A.C. Bulla of the county health department had reported 16 cases outside the city. The epidemic had reached Forsyth County.

A headline on the front page of the next morning's *Journal* read "Churches, Schools, and Theaters of Winston-Salem Closed to Combat the Spread of Spanish Influenza Here." By order of the Board of Aldermen, church meetings, including Sunday schools, were to be canceled on Sunday, Oct. 6 (the date of publication), and all other public meetings (including schools) were to be cancelled for that day and also for Monday, the 7th. The *Journal* had been asked to feature the notice in order to help notify

church leaders. An item elsewhere in the paper announced that officials at St. Paul's Episcopal Church had already decided to cancel all meetings until further notice, no matter what the aldermen decided.

On an inner page (p. 12), the *Sunday Journal* also carried an article headlined "How to Prevent Influenza from Spreading" which was identified as a reprint of a government bulletin. The article gave a description of this version of influenza:

In most cases a person taken sick with influenza feels sick rather suddenly. He feels weak, has pains in the eyes, ears, head or back, and may be sore all over. Many patients feel dizzy, some vomit. Most of the patients complain of feeling chilly, and with this come a fever in which the temperature rises to 100 to 104. In most cases the pulse remains relatively slow.

In appearance one is struck by the fact that the patient looks sick. His eyes and the inner side of his eyelids may be slightly 'bloodshot' There may be running from the nose, or there may be some cough. These signs of a cold may not be marked; nevertheless, the patient looks and feels very sick.

Most patients, the article reassured, would recover after three or four days, but in some areas, there had been many deaths from complications. One might protect oneself from complications by doing the same thing that would help protect others from infection: "It is very important that every person who becomes sick with influenza should go home at once and go to bed. This will keep away dangerous complications and will, at the same time, keep the patient from scattering the disease far and wide." In the following days there would be many articles and advertisements that gave advice, some of it conflicting, but most emphasizing the that anyone who was sick should go home, go to bed, and stay there even after the fever went down. This was probably good advice. Modern sources vary in their assessment of the effectiveness of the various ways doctors and other tried to treat Spanish influenza, but all agree that what was most needed – possibly the only thing that really helped – was bed rest and the careful nursing that helped make complications less likely.

The *Journal* for Tuesday morning, Oct. 8, announced that the city closings would continue and that the Forsyth County Board of Health had ordered a similar closing of schools, churches, and other public meetings in the county. Even "the Colored Fair," which would normally have followed the "Winston-Salem and Forsyth County Fair" held earlier in October, would have to be postponed. There was also a notice of what were apparently some new sanitary regulations:

Use Individual Cups, or Sterilized Ware! *At a meeting of the Health Committee of the Board of Aldermen in session yesterday, it was ordered that all soda fountains and cold drink stands and other places where soft drinks and ice cream are served, shall use only individual paper cups for drinks and paper saucers for ice cream. Spoons must be sterilized by boiling or by a recommended form of disinfectant. This order does not*

prohibit serving soft drinks in original bottles and ice cream in cones if handled in a sanitary manner.

On October 10, barbershops were added to the list of public gathering-places ordered to close, and it was decided that the city's teachers should continue to be paid even though schools were closed. School personnel would be available to "help with governmental and charitable work while not in school." By October 16, all soda fountains in the city would be ordered to close.

An article in the *Journal* for Sunday, October 13, noted that not only were churches and schools still closed, but the open-air meetings some groups had been substituting were also to cease and there would be no sales in the city's tobacco warehouses during the following week. The suspension of farmers' tobacco sales was in response to a request from the state board of health, and the article went on to explain how tobacco markets in particular presented a danger not only of spreading the infection from person to person, as any assembly might, but also of spreading it from infected regions to areas the infection had not yet reached, since farmers from many areas met and mingled at the markets.

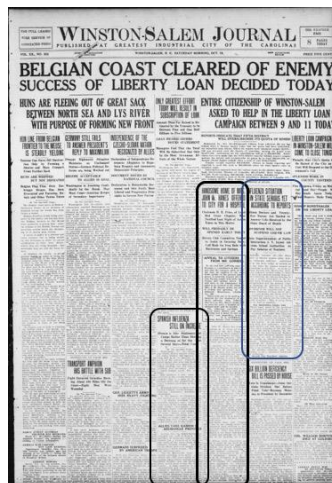
In spite of the city and county efforts to remove sources of infection, influenza continued to spread, and the number of deaths mounted, even as the war seemed to be coming to an end. On October 17, the headline at the top of page 1 of the *Journal* gave an unconfirmed report that Germany had capitulated. War news predominated, but one of the column-level headlines said "Spanish Influenza Has Claimed 26 Persons in City of Winston-Salem." There had been 5,000 reported cases during the two weeks the epidemic had been in progress. The final paragraphs of the front-page part of the article suggests that Winston-Salem was fortunate to have Dr. Carlton as its health officer:

Dr. Carlton issues a word of warning concerning the indiscriminate taking of medicines by those, who fear they may take influenza. A great many persons are taking aspirin in frequent doses as a preventive, which is a serious mistake. Aspirin is not a preventive and, on the other hand, really lowers the resistance of the body by disturbing digestion and by depressing the heart. Do not take aspirin unless prescribed by a physician. . . .

According to some modern authorities, aspirin, which was a relatively new medicine, was indeed being used at dangerous levels, and it has even been suggested that some of the deaths attributed to influenza were actually caused by aspirin poisoning.³ Dr. Carlton was wise to warn against its indiscriminate use.

³ Karen M. Starko. "Salicylates and Pandemic Influenza Mortality, 1918-1919 Pharmacology, Pathology, and Historic Evidence." *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, Volume 49, Issue 9, 15 November 2009, pp. 1405-1410, <https://doi.org/10.1086/606060>. Accessed 10 Jan 2019. This article was called to my attention by Laura Spinney, who mentions it in chapter 10 of her book *Pale Rider* (Newark: Audible, 2017). Spinney goes on to discuss the possibility that for some patient's excessive doses of quinine also caused some of the symptoms attributed to influenza.

On October 18, a front-page, above-the-fold article (in other words, an article in a very prominent place) was headlined “Emergency Hospitals to Be Established in Schools in This City[.] Influenza Patients Will Be Treated at North Winston School, for Whites, and Depot Street School for Colored[.]” The article described a meeting on Oct. 17 at which “Mrs. H. L. Riggins, Mrs. J.K. Norfleet, Mr. H.E. Fries and others presented the need of the emergency hospitals They told of the numerous cases that had come under their observation since relief work had been started. Many families do not have adequate beds to care for the sick. In many instances entire families have been stricken.” Although readers were reassured that “This action does not mean that the disease is beyond control in the city,” the seriousness of the situation is shown by the list of groups that were meeting together in an attempt to deal with it: “the health committee of the Board of Aldermen, representatives of the Associated Charities, Medical Association, Red Cross, Council of Defense and city officials” were all involved. Another article later in the same issue noted that courts were to be added to the list of public assemblies that were closed.



Influenza News on Page 1, October 19, 1918

By October 19, there had been 69 deaths, and the usual health-care resources must have been under a severe strain. A notice on the front page of the *Journal* for that morning elbowed the war news aside to announce the opening of emergency hospitals. A substantial part of the *Journal*'s front page was given over to three articles about the epidemic, though war news still filled most of the page.⁴ The way the newspapers continued to focus on the war, rather than the epidemic, may look wrong-headed from our perspective, but it is understandable. By fall 1918 the war had reached a critical stage, and the nation's attention was focused on war news and efforts to sell bonds.⁵ As those writing about the epidemic often note, the spreading illness was “only the flu,” and then

⁴ *Winston-Salem Journal*, Sat, 19 Oct 1918, p. 1. Downloaded from Newspapers.com on 3 Jan 2019.

⁵ The way war news and bond sales efforts overshadowed not just the epidemic but also most of the rest of life is clearly depicted in Katherine Anne Porter's short novel *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*.

as now, influenza epidemics came along during most winters. On the other hand, World War I required the nation's first military draft since the Civil War, and over 50,000 American military personnel died in battle as it continued. That an equal or greater number of soldiers died of diseases, primarily influenza and the pneumonia that often followed,⁶ and that thousands of other Americans also would also die in the 1918 epidemic, are things we know now, but they were not obvious at the time.

Thus, the presence of three substantial articles about the epidemic on the front page of the Oct. 19 *Journal* indicates that the medical emergency was now severe enough to require attention from everyone. Two of the articles described the influenza situation in the nation and in the state, but the third article dealt with the local epidemic and the efforts citizens of Winston-Salem, particularly the Rotary Club and the Red Cross, were making to see to it that the sick were cared for. The article is worth quoting at length:

*HANDSOME HOME OF MRS. JOHN W. HANES OFFERED TO CITY FOR A HOSPITAL
Chairman H. E. Fries, of Local Red Cross Chapter, Was Notified Last Night of Action Taken
in This Matter*

WILL PROBABLY BE OPENED EARLY TODAY

*Rotary Club Committee Named to Assist in Securing Beds; Call Made for Iron Beds with
Mattresses and Springs*

APPEAL TO CITIZENS FROM MR. GORRELL

To the end that suffering may be brought to a minimum in this city, and that the humane spirits of the age may be applied to our own home people in the present emergency, I earnestly request all citizens having single iron beds, mattresses and springs which they will loan to the emergency hospital to be located in the home of Mrs. J. W. Hanes, notify me after 8 o'clock this morning at the Farmers' Warehouse, telephone No. 108.

These beds are to be used in the hospital for the treatment of patients suffering with influenza. The beds in Mrs. Hanes' home will be used but quite a number of additional beds will be needed.

The influenza epidemic has caused many deaths and much suffering and it must be met with effective and immediate action.

P. A. GORRELL,
Chairman Rotary Club Committee

Mrs. John W. Hanes has tendered to Chairman H. E. Fries, of the local chapter of the Red Cross, her beautiful home on West Fourth street to be used as a hospital for the treatment of influenza patients. The offer was made to Mr. Fries last night at 8 o'clock and was immediately accepted.

⁶ US Department of Veterans Affairs, "America's Wars," May 2017. Retrieved from https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs_americas_wars.pdf on 6 January, 2019.

The article goes on to praise Mrs. Hanes and her offer. It also lists those who have volunteered to serve as nurses. Experienced nurses "Miss Mollie Spach," and "Miss Lippard" were to be in charge, and "assistant nurses" would be "Mrs. J.S. Fiery, Misses Emily Gray, Helen Keith, Sarah Anderson, Jessie Lupo, M.C. Carson, Edna Bolling and Virginia Moir."

Information about the Depot Street hospital and its staff follows:

The hospital for the treatment of colored patients will be opened in Depot Street school building, and on account of considerable preparations to be made it will hardly be ready for the reception of patients today.

Davie Teer and Annie Saunders, two experienced colored nurses of the City Hospital, have volunteered to give part time to the work in the emergency hospital.

The final item in the article is an urgent request for more nurses.

Articles elsewhere in the October 19 *Journal* provide an image of a city mobilizing to meet an emergency. Many new cases had been reported, and there were "more desperately ill patients in this city than at any time since the epidemic broke out." Dr. Carlton was urging people to wear gauze masks when they cared for those who were sick. Associated Charities (led by secretary "Miss Annie Grogan") was providing soup and milk for those too sick to cook, particularly young people living in rooms outside families and boarding houses. On the previous day food had been provided for 135 people. A letter from the superintendent of city schools, Dr. R. H. Latham, urged school personnel to find some volunteer work to help the sick while the schools were closed. Physicians in the city and county were urged to report all cases of influenza and especially all deaths. In addition, Dr. Bulla, the county health officer, reported that there were at least 100 influenza cases outside the city. Even many of the advertisements focused on influenza. Vicks VapoRub provided detailed and reasonably good information about treating influenza patients, and Anchor Stores announced that the practice of sending clothing out on approval had been suspended at the request of health authorities.

The emergency hospital in the Hanes home opened to white flu victims on October 20, and on October 21, the "Depot Street Hospital" opened for the African American population of Winston-Salem. An article on the front page of the *Journal* for October 22 was headlined "Hospital for Colored People Is Opened in Depot Street School":

At 12 o'clock last night patients had been admitted to the emergency hospital for colored people, located in the Depot street graded School building. The hospital will be known as the Depot Street hospital. Dr. H. S. Lott has agreed to give a part of his time to the supervision of the work, while Dr. A. H. Ray, a local colored physician, will be permanently stationed in the building. Dr. Ray will be assisted by Dr. J. R. Henry and Dr. J. C. Williamson, colored physicians of the city.

The hospital was opened at 7 o'clock last night with Flora Belle Johnson as head nurse. The assistant nurses are Lorene Upthegrove, Lillian M. Mebane, Gertrude Pope, Ella Haith, [and] Laura Minnes. Prof. J. W. Paisley will serve as night registrar and Prof. R. W. Brown as day registrar. Elsie Montgomery and Ira McClenan are serving as orderlies.

The hospital has been fitted up with 60 beds and ample physician and nurse service can be secured to take care of that many patients.

The article went on to praise “the fine spirit of cooperation” with which both African American and white volunteers had worked to get the hospital ready. It noted that “Prof. S. G. Atkins and teachers of Slater Normal School” (later Winston-Salem State University) were among those assisting.

The October 22 article also noted that the Red Cross was assuming responsibility for the emergency hospitals and that the flu situation in the city seemed to be improving. Forty patients were currently being treated at the Hanes Emergency Hospital, and although more trained nurses were needed to provide direction, there were enough volunteers of both sexes to attend the patients. Another item on the front page of the October 22 *Journal* apologetically informed readers that the relative lack of “telegraphic news” in that day’s paper was caused by the *Journal*’s inability to find someone to operate the Associated Press wire after midnight, a problem caused by the influenza epidemic and common to many papers in the region.

On October 24 an article in the *Journal* noted the setting up of a third emergency hospital in the county, at Hanes.⁷ Some of its nurses were teachers from the local school:

The emergency hospital at Hanes was opened yesterday and four patients admitted during the day. Several others will be taken in today. Miss Singletary is acting as head nurse, and she is being assisted by Misses Ruth Hanes, Johnstone and Reinhart, the two latter being members of the Hanes school faculty.

Miss Rachel Speas, county home demonstration agent, has opened the domestic science rooms of the school and is preparing soup and food for those who are not able to prepare it for themselves. [She was also providing food for the hospital's patients.]

The *Union Republican* for October 24 mentioned yet another emergency hospital to be established at Mrs. R. J. Reynolds’s “city home on West Fifth St.” It would be “for the employees of the R. J. R. Tobacco Co., not exclusively but preferably.” Whether this hospital ever actually opened is not clear.

Thus, citizens of the city and county geared up to care for their neighbors during the epidemic, establishing at least three emergency hospitals and working to make sure the sick were fed and cared for. Schools were closed, store hours were cut, streetcar

⁷ William Powell’s *North Carolina Gazetteer* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1968) identifies “Hanes” as another name for Hanestown, which was not then within the city limits.

service was curtailed (and streetcar windows were left open), volunteer nurses were sought and found, health regulations were tightened, and public meetings were forbidden. Even church services were cancelled, and tobacco markets were closed. A shortage of telephone operators led to the request that people use telephones only for emergency calls, primarily influenza-related ones. Boy Scouts were asked to volunteer to work (for \$2 a day) in the Hanes Emergency Hospital. (The article did not specify whether they would be attending patients or helping in other ways.) Soup, milk, and stew were provided to sufferers who were unable to prepare food for themselves. The United Charities and the Red Cross apparently worked harmoniously with city and county officials to meet what was accurately perceived as a very serious emergency.

A measure taken in late October provides some idea of just how extensive the epidemic actually was and how many influenza patients requiring care lay behind the death statistics. In the *Journal* for October 24, H.E. Fries, who was leading the Red Cross response to the epidemic, announced that it had been decided to canvas the city to get an accurate picture of what was happening. Interested ministers and others were asked to meet later that day. A detailed report of what they found appeared in the *Journal* for October 27, and a more compact summary of the results was published in the (weekly) *Union Republican* for October 31. The volunteers had surveyed 6,575 households containing 33,869 people. In those households, 3,161 people had recovered from flu, 104 had died, and 2,302 were still sick. Of the people surveyed, 16.5 % had been affected by influenza. As was mentioned in the first article in this series, census figures suggest that the population of Forsyth County in 1918 was about 71,277 people. If that is accurate, the canvas (which was limited to city neighborhoods) had reached just under half of the residents of the county as a whole – not at all a bad sample.

All of the local papers were full of obituaries during October, but a particularly poignant one from the *Union Republican* for October 24 underlined the risks those who cared for the sick were running:

At Reynolda, near this city, Oct. 20, after a brief illness, Miss Jessie B. Hill, of Jefferson Hospital, Philadelphia [died]. The remains were sent to her home at Scranton, Pa. The deceased nursed the late R. J. Reynolds [who had died in July, before the local epidemic began] and when little Miss Nancy Reynolds became ill two weeks ago, Miss Hill came to nurse her, was taken ill and died.

By the end of October, the epidemic seemed to be winding down, and during November many articles and comments from health officials said hopefully that the epidemic would soon be over. The emergency hospitals closed and schools began reopening. Dr. Carlton's official report stated that 5,590 cases of influenza had been reported in the city. Official thanks were voted to those who had volunteered. Churches were allowed to hold services on November 10 and were very well attended. Tobacco markets and theaters reopened. In the middle of the month, however, the *Journal* published some disquieting reports that influenza seemed to be returning in Raleigh and Greensboro.

On December 6, the *Journal* reported that influenza cases had begun increasing again in Winston-Salem. People were urged to avoid unnecessary crowds, particularly events like birthday parties and other social gatherings. Theaters and stores were urged to avoid letting crowds form, with a warning that mandatory closings might be reinstated if these requests were ignored. A small item in the Dec. 7 *Journal* reported that Dr. Bulla had ordered schools in Waughtown and Centerville to close again because influenza was spreading in those areas, and the next day he was quoted as saying that influenza “appears to be spreading quite rapidly in several portions of the county.” Mandatory closings for theaters were ordered again, over considerable objections from their management. According to a small item in the *Journal* for Sunday, Dec. 15, 1620 cases of influenza had been reported in the previous week. Once again, the community was doing what needed to be done, but shortened store hours and cancelled church services must have put a considerable damper on many people’s plans for Christmas. (For example, Calvary Moravian announced in the Dec. 22 *Journal* that there would be no children’s lovefeast and only one lovefeast for communicant adults. The children’s services would, however, be held later, when the epidemic had abated.)

Happily, the new health department measures appear to have been effective, and the December return of the infection was relatively brief. Only 483 new cases were reported for the week ending Sunday, Dec. 22, and by the end of the year schools and theaters were reopening. This time the improvements lasted, although deaths from influenza and its complications continued until summer.

Some sources say that the emergency hospitals had to reopen in February of 1919, but I can find no reference to such reopenings in contemporary newspapers, and only 28 death certificates related to influenza were filed in Forsyth County that month. There is a great deal of discussion of influenza and emergency hospitals in the newspapers for February of 1920 (when Miller Emergency Hospital opened at the intersection of Fifth and Summit), but that information belongs to a different winter and a separate epidemic.

This series has focused on the influenza epidemic of 1918 as it was experienced in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. A sampling of obituaries in the local papers shows that some people from elsewhere (like Jessie Hill, who nursed “little Miss Nancy Reynolds”) died here, and some citizens of this area died of influenza elsewhere, either because they were living or traveling there, or because they had gone to nurse a sick relative. One group of local residents, however, was in a different category. Many Forsyth County men were serving in the armed forces, and the 1918 influenza epidemic was particularly hard on men in military camps, nearly all of whom were likely to be in the age group (healthy young adults) for whom this flu was most dangerous. The memorial to Forsyth County residents who died in World War I lists 69 names. (The memorial is on the corner of Third Street and Liberty.) The causes of death for all but twelve of them can be identified in the FamilySearch database called “North Carolina, World War I Service Cards, 1917-1919” (<https://www.familysearch.org>). Of the 57

whose records can be found, only two are specifically said to have died of influenza, but the deaths of another 17 are attributed to some form of pneumonia, probably (in a population of healthy young men) a complication of influenza. This suggests that 19 local men, at least a fourth of the Forsyth County men who died in World War I, were also victims of the 1918 epidemic.

As was mentioned earlier, the epidemic often seems to have been forgotten, possibly because it was so traumatic while it was going on. However, it stayed alive in the memories of those who survived it, even if they rarely spoke of it. Sometime in the 1970s (possibly 1976), a major flu epidemic was predicted for the winter, but there was some question about the safety of the flu vaccine being offered. At that time I knew a number of older adults, including my parents, who remembered the influenza of 1918. Every single person I knew in that age range, even a father-in-law who rarely agreed to see a doctor, decided to be vaccinated. They had not forgotten.

Some Resources for More Information

Printed Materials

There are a number of good recent studies that discuss the epidemic. Look for these and others, including several books for children or young people, at the Forsyth County Public Library:

- Austin, Lauren A., and William P. Brandon. "Pandemic and War, 1918-1919: Preliminary Analysis of New North Carolina Influenza Data." *North Carolina's Experience During the First World War*. Ed. Shepherd W. McKinley and Steven Sabol. Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 2018, pp. 263-83.
- Barry, John M. *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History*. New York: Viking, 2004.
- Crosby, Alfred W. *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989.
- Kolata, Gina. *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus that Caused It*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.
- Prichard, Robert W., M.D. *Medicine. Winston-Salem in History*, vol. 11. Winston-Salem: Historic Winston, 1976. A brief but interesting section on "Temporary Hospitals" appears on pp. 36-37.
- Spinney, Laura. *Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How It Changed the World*. New York: Public Affairs, 2017. (According to its catalog, the Forsyth County Public Library does not yet own this one. It can be borrowed through interlibrary loan.)

Film

Influenza 1918. A Robert Kenner Films production for *American Experience*; produced by Robert Kenner; written by Ken Chowder. PBS Home Video, 2005. Forsyth County Public Library has the DVD, and the film is also available through the PBS app. It is episode 5 of season 10 of *American Experience*.

Article

Adams, H. Garrett. "A Local Chronicle or the Influenza Epidemic of 1918 as Gleaned from Newspaper Accounts of the Day." *North Carolina Medical Journal*, volume 25, no. 8, August 1964, pp. 351-400. Ask a librarian for help in accessing this. (I can't remember how I found it!)

Literary Sources

Porter, Katherine Anne. *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. Originally published in 1939 as the title piece in a collection of three short novels. It has been reprinted many times, often as a very long short story. Porter actually had influenza in 1918, and this story is generally considered to be one of the best first-hand accounts of what it was like.

Wolfe, Thomas. *Look Homeward, Angel*. Chapter 35. Many editions and reprintings. The protagonist's brother dies of influenza in this chapter near the end of the novel, which is closely based on the death of Wolfe's real brother Ben. While Porter's story gives a window into the experience of the influenza sufferers themselves, this narrative puts us in the sickroom with watching relatives.