

Remembering Perinton's Past Pandemic **The 1918–1919 Spanish Influenza**

By William Allen



A police officer directs traffic in New York City during the Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918.

From the National Archives Collection

As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, there has been much interest of late on the influenza pandemic of 1918–1919, the last major pandemic of this type to affect daily life in such a way as coronavirus has. Indeed, the subject has never seemed as relevant as it does now, as we all search for something to compare our situation to.

The Global Context of Spanish Influenza

Before I discuss how the Spanish Influenza pandemic affected Perinton, I want to address the disease's overall severity and explore why the flu pandemic in 1918–1919 was so devastating. In total, it is generally believed by historians that around a third of the earth's population came down with the disease during this outbreak, with a death rate of around 5 percent. This is compared to the yearly influenza mortality rate of 2.5 percent in years before, and the relatively low rate nowadays of under 1 percent. Much of the reason for this was due to World War I, which helped this disease spread more than it would have otherwise. With the allies' emphasis on raising war bonds, and the large gatherings that took place after Armistice Day, the already emerging flu was given perfect opportunities to spread. The allies' blockade of food imports into Germany led to massive starvation for both military units and civilians, and both sides during the latter part of the war felt the impact of the disease. It has been argued by some historians that the second wave of flu helped push the Kaiser to sign the armistice and end the war. The war also helped the flu by allowing it to be spread to humans, as it originated in livestock, which

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~ Bob Hunt ~

Comments from your President

June 15, 2020:

Once again I am writing from my office in the carriage barn. I sincerely hope that everyone is staying safe and healthy—please be careful. We have pretty much stayed home since the pandemic started. However, for a break, a couple times a week we hop in

the car and head out, with no destination in mind and no plans to stop anywhere. Once in the car, we'd decide to go north, south, east, or west. Our longest trip thus far has been a drive around Seneca Lake.

Yesterday on June 14th, we celebrated Flag Day, and this caused me to do a little research. On June 14, 1777, the Second Continental Congress took a break from writing the Articles of Confederation and passed a resolution stating that “the flag of the United States be 13 stripes, alternate red and white,” and that “the union be 13 stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation.”

More than 100 years later, in 1916, President Woodrow Wilson marked the anniversary of the decree by officially establishing June 14th as Flag Day.

It is widely believed that Betsy Ross, who assisted the Revolutionary War effort by repairing uniforms and sewing tents, made and helped design the first American flag. In a press conference held in 1870, her grandson, William Canby, recounted the story, passed down from relatives, primarily his Aunt Clarissa, of Betsy's involvement in making the flag.

In the 1950s, when it seemed certain that Alaska would be admitted to the Union, designers began retooling the American flag to add a 49th star. Meanwhile, a 17-year-old student from Ohio named Bob Heft borrowed his mother's sewing machine, disassembled his family's 48 star flag and stitched on 50 stars in a proportional pattern. He handed in his creation to his history teacher for a class project, explaining that he expected Hawaii would soon achieve statehood as well. Heft also sent the flag to his congressman, Walter Moelier, who presented it to President Eisenhower after both new states joined the Union. Eisenhower selected Heft's design, and on July 4, 1960, the president and the high school student stood together as the 50-star flag was raised for the first time. Heft's teacher promptly changed his grade from a B- to an A.

A few flag facts:

- Unlike setting a flag on fire, flying one upside down is not always intended as an act of protest. According to the Flag Code, it can also be an official distress signal.

- Despite the preponderance of “patriotic” gear ranging from tee shirts to swimsuits to boxer shorts, the code stipulates that the flag should not appear on apparel, bedding, or decorative items.
- Etiquette calls for American flags to be illuminated by sunlight or another light source while on display.

Another holiday in June falls on the third Sunday—Father's Day. Father's Day was founded in 1910 at the YMCA of Spokane, Washington by Arkansas-born Sonora Smart Dodd. The first celebration, on June 19, 1910, was held in remembrance of her father, Civil War veteran William Jackson Smart. He was a single parent who raised six children.

Thanks for your support of the Perinton Historical Society. It is appreciated. I look forward to chatting with you again next month.

Bob Hunt, President

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100 Years Ago This Month

From the Monroe County Mail



Perinton Historical Society

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MUSEUM

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Upcoming Programs & Events

Saturday, August 1 from 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Fairport Historical Museum reopens. Masks required for all volunteers & visitors.

A Message from Vicki

The months following the Fairport Historical Museum's March 14th closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic have, at times, seem to have flown by. At other times, the days have dragged on. Now we find ourselves with a new normal, which includes face masks, social distancing and gallons of hand sanitizer.

The first few weeks of the shutdown, I took time to just breathe. For the first time in years, I was not driving from job to job or carting any of my three kids around. Once the weather warmed, days were spent in my sunken patio reading, gardening and reflecting as I looked out at my lilacs and watched the antics of the many critters who live in my yard.



A view of Vicki Proffitt's garden in June of this year

After that period of rest came a whirlwind of activity. I began taking webinars pertaining to the museum world. It was comforting to meet so many people in this industry who were in various stages of the pandemic and, ultimately, reopening. During one of the webinars 7,000 people from all over the world were in attendance. Many attendees work at large museums such as the Smithsonian and Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, but there were plenty of small museums just like ours, represented as well. A group of small museum representatives have even started our own Facebook page so we can bounce ideas off each other.

As expected, it has been challenging to plan for the upcoming program season with the uncertainty that is COVID-19. The annual PHS House Tour, which was quite far along in the planning stages, has been postponed until 2021. The cemetery tour will now also take place next year.

I am in negotiations with the Fairport Public Library to host our fall programs. The hope is that the presentations may take place in person at the library with an audience limited to an as-yet-unknown number. The library will be able to stream the presentations live for those unable to attend in person. We just do not have enough information yet to determine how this will work but we will keep our PHS members informed through email, the *Historigram* and social media.

As we prepare to reopen the Fairport Historical Museum on August 1, we have taken many precautions to keep our volunteers and visitors safe. All people entering the museum will be required to wear masks and to utilize the new hand sanitizing stations. Signage and social media posts will remind everyone of the importance of social distancing.

These times have been difficult for everyone. The Perinton Historical Society is fortunate that it does not rely upon admission fees to cover our operating costs. Memberships, donations, bequests, grants, gift shop sales and special events like *Yuletide Traditions* help us pay our bills. However, the closure has already dramatically affected our receipt of donations and gift-shop sales. The postponement of the house and cemetery tours will lead to fewer memberships and the annual *Yuletide Traditions* event may not happen as planned. As we move toward membership renewal time, the PHS board appreciates your support more than ever.

Congratulations to museum volunteer Jordyn Bagley as she graduates from Fairport High School, Class of 2020! Jordyn began volunteering at the Fairport Historical Museum last year and has been a wonderful addition to our volunteer roster. She plans to attend college locally and major in history.



often shared close quarters with soldiers at various military bases, providing many opportunities for animal-to-human spread. In the end, the Spanish influenza pandemic would cause more deaths than those killed from the war itself.

No one quite knows where the Spanish flu originated. A commonly cited hypothesis is that the disease originated in Kansas at Camp Funston, but historians have also postulated that it might have originated in China, where cases might have been inaccurately diagnosed as pneumonic plague, or in the Etaples region of France. Despite the name of "Spanish flu," it did not originate in Spain. This phrase came to be due to Spain's neutrality during the war. Spain did not censor its press as did other countries including the United States during the war, and as such, Spain was the first country to release statistics on the pandemic, and the name "Spanish flu" stuck.

What made this outbreak of influenza so devastating partially relies on the biology of the virus. It is common for the genetic makeup of a virus to change very frequently, which is why a new vaccine must be made every year. The typical seasonal flu undergoes a genetic variation called *antigenic drift*, in which only minor genetic alteration occurs. Less frequently, and as was the case with this outbreak, *antigenic drift*, happens, in which the virus is significantly different and as such, more dangerous to a population.

Currently many are wondering if there will be a resurgence of COVID-19 during the fall, and if you are to look to the past for comfort, unfortunately you will not find it. In total, the 1918–1919 pandemic had three waves, with the first happening during the spring and summer months of 1918, the second which was the deadliest, happening immediately after the first, and lasted into the fall months. The third wave occurred during the spring months of 1919.



The Red Cross Motor Corps in St. Louis, Missouri
October, 1918

From the National Archives Collection



The caption for this 1918 photo from the National Archives Collection states: "To prevent as much as possible the spread of Spanish influenza, Cincinnati barbers are wearing masks. Barbers all over the country took this precaution."

The Flu's Effect on Perinton

Nowhere was safe from the disease during the 1918–1919 pandemic. It traveled every part of the globe, including such unlikely regions as the cold Canadian subarctic and even the island of Western Samoa, and Perinton was no exception. When scanning through various newspaper articles from the time, one can see the impact the flu had. In the Oct. 23, 1918 issue of the Fairport Herald it reads that the "Second death from influenza" was Mrs. Pietro Moretti. The article goes on to say since all churches were closed due to the pandemic, no public funeral was held. Another article from November 6, 1918 in the Fairport Herald tells of a six-year-old named Dorothy Kitts who died from pneumonia that was contracted after having influenza. There were also cases where Fairport residents who were serving in the war contracted the virus and died before they could come back home. In the November 6, 1918 issue of the Fairport Herald, it tells of a Martin J. Larwood, from Egypt, New York, who died from influenza at Camp Wheeler, located in Georgia. He was only 21 years of age. In the October 23, 1918 issue of the Fairport Herald, it tells of a similar case of Jesse Moyer who died from influenza while stationed in the Columbus Barracks, Ohio.

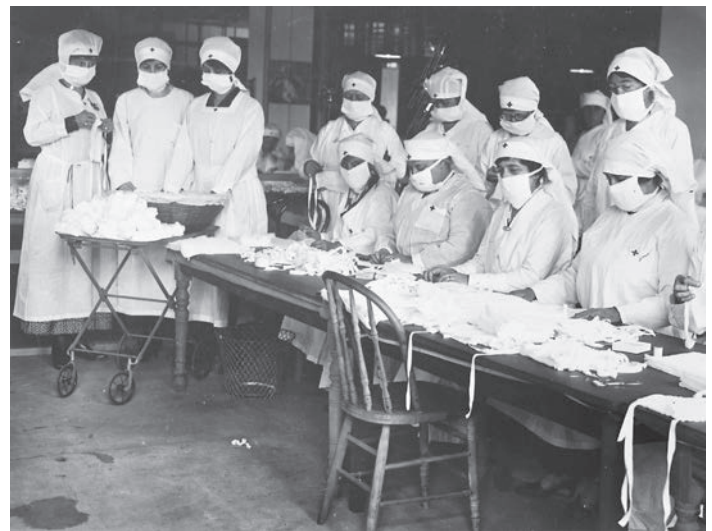
Just as we are stuck inside, and are often recommended to self-quarantine, the same thing happened with the Spanish flu. In the October 17, 1918 issue of the Monroe County Mail, it tells of all public gatherings being cancelled in the Fairport area for that week because of the surge of flu cases. That week, the Board of Education similarly closed all schools. Around the same time, the Sanitary Can Company issued a statement that they were experiencing many cases of influenza among their workers. In the November 14th, 1918

issue of the Monroe County Mail, in an article titled “How to Fight Spanish Influenza,” one can see the emphasis on “social distancing,” combined with the war time mentality. The article advises that one should “avoid crowds, coughs and cowards, but fear neither germs, nor Germans!” One also can see how the ongoing war affected people’s understanding of the flu in various illustrations that littered Perinton newspapers during the period. One reads, “Coughs and Sneezes Spread Diseases: as Dangerous as Poison Gas Shells.” Other illustrations advising the public on how to stop the spread of disease were common, such as ones advising people to cough into handkerchiefs.

Just as recent news articles have told of fraudulent remedies being sold, which claim to prevent or cure COVID-19, a similar situation happened during the Spanish flu. In the October 31, 1918 issue of the Monroe County Mail, in large letters an advertisement reads “Spanish Influenza Rages in U.S.,” which then goes on to recommend that people use a supplement called “Fruit-A-Tives,” which claims to be a “wonderful fruit medicine—Greatly helps to resist this disease.” A year later the company that made “Fruit-A-Tives” faced legal action for making false claims, as this supplement did not help resist the flu and it did not even contain fruit. Other false cures that were advertised in various Fairport newspapers included “Dr. Pierce’s Pleasant Pellets” and “Iron tonic tablets,” both published in the Monroe County Mail for November 14, 1918. Other, more intricate remedies include one advocated in the October 17, 1918 issue of the Monroe County Mail, which, upon first flu symptoms, advocated a daily water enema while fasting for three days, and consuming hot water (and if desired some lemon) every hour.

The Spanish influenza pandemic was similar in many ways to our current situation, such as the closing of schools and businesses, and the good likelihood of knowing someone affected by the disease. In other ways it was much different, as it began during the end of World War I and continued shortly after. It can be seen in some ways as a continuation of the daily disruption that wartime caused to both those in the trenches and homes. Many are now wondering how we will remember this current pandemic. We all know that we are witnesses, and for many, taking an active role in history in the making, but how significant will our current struggles seem to later generations? In the decades following the flu pandemic, it was seldom a topic of historical inquiry. It was only in the mid-1970s that historical interest in the Spanish flu emerged and has only experienced wide-scale interest in more recent years. Although just because this was the case for Spanish flu, that does not mean that the coronavirus will have the same fate, as we are not eclipsed by the ending of a world war. But for now, we can only wonder, try to stay safe and sane, and do our part to alter history by wearing masks, social distancing, and remembering the gravity of our situation.

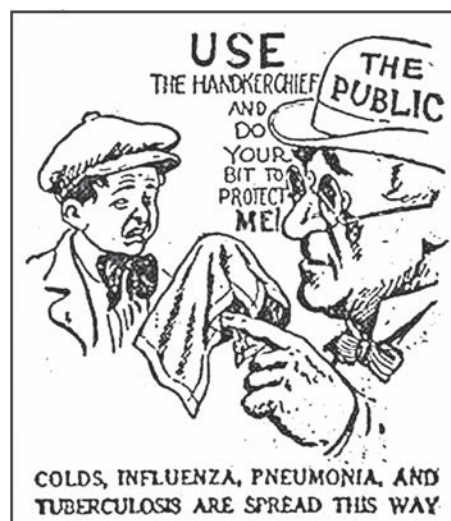
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From the National Archives Collection, the caption for this photo states: “Red Cross workers making anti-influenza masks for soldiers in Camp Boston, Massachusetts.”



Court proceedings being held outdoors in San Francisco, in an effort to minimize the spread of what was commonly referred to as the Spanish flu. *From the National Archives Collection*



This public service announcement was published in Fairport’s Monroe County Mail on December 12, 1918.

Artistry on South Main Street

By Lucy McCormick

The pandemic has necessitated canceling the 2020 House Tour. The planning committee will feature homes on South Main Street on a tour in September of 2021. In the meantime, enjoy meeting two more of the remarkable people who once called South Main their home.

Every home has a story to tell. This grand house at 199 South Main Street could tell many tales, including two about women who made their mark in the artistic world.



Ida Marion Dougherty Aylward
(1878–1955)



Kate Cox Goddard
(1900–1956)

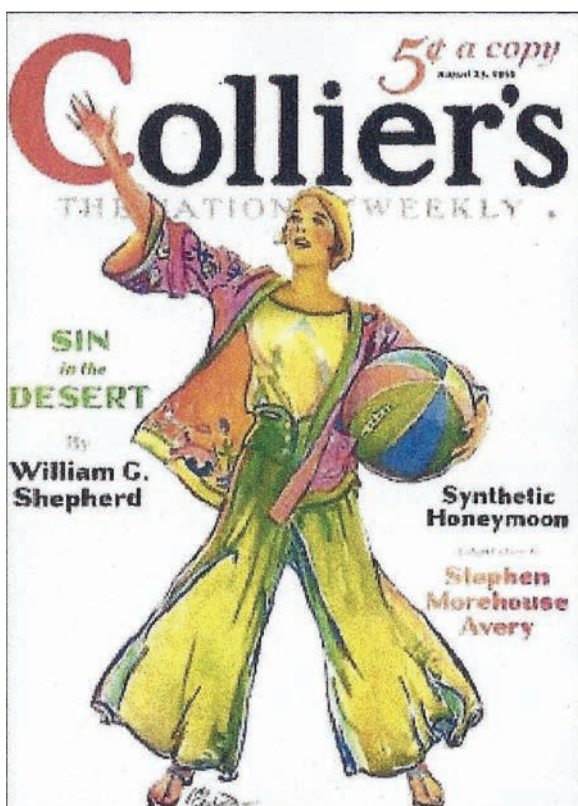


Ida Marion Dougherty Aylward (1878–1955)

“While studying painting at Boston, she (Ida Marion Dougherty Aylward) was sent for by Louis Comfort Tiffany, the famous Favrile glass artist, who asked her to be his assistant. She, however, was finished with glass. She was interested in painting. And so, with the independence of youth and art, she refused.” This anecdote from Hazel Myer’s “Personalities” column in a Port Washington, NY, newspaper, depicts the confident nature of a woman born in Fairport who became a renowned painter, portraitist, illustrator, and stained-glass artist.

Ida Dougherty was born in 1878 and grew up on 199 S. Main Street, at the top of “Piety Hill.” She traveled by train on Saturday mornings to take classes at the Mechanics Institute (later the Rochester Institute of Technology) in Rochester. She graduated from Fairport High School in 1896, one of three in her graduating class. She graduated in 1900 from Mt. Holyoke College in Hadley, MA, and studied at the Art Students’ League in New York City and at American illustrator Howard Pyle’s Brandywine School in Delaware between 1903 and 1905. She created stained glass windows for cathedrals and churches, and illustrations for several magazines, including Collier’s. In 1912 Dougherty married fellow artist William James Aylward, who served in World War I as a commissioned war artist.

Note: Ida Dougherty wrote a lengthy essay on her reminiscences of Fairport, published as “Back Home Letters” in the Fairport Herald in 1933. Edited portions of her essay can be found in the May 2015 and July 2015 editions of the *Historigram*: “Ida Dougherty Remembers Fairport” and “Baptists, Congregationalists and Piety Hill,” by Perinton Town Historian Bill Poray.



Kate Cox Goddard (1900–1956)

Her father was a dealer in musical instruments in Rochester for many years. Perhaps Kate Cox Goddard acquired her interest in music from him. She composed motions for music for disabled children. They were used in therapy in clinics and hospitals nationwide in a field that became known as musical therapy.

Kate Cox Goddard was recognized for her work with parents of disturbed children and became an authority in this new field. In 1948 she was the guest speaker at the Fairport Business Women's Association, a meeting held at the Potter Memorial. Her topic: musical therapy.

Goddard was also a well-known children's author, writing poems, books, and song lyrics. She sometimes wrote under the pen name of Almeda Babcock, the names of her grandmothers. She wrote for her son, Mark, and called him her lab: "What he likes, other children seem to like." Her books were endorsed for supplementary reading in schools. In 1953, she traveled to Paris to translate children's literature for the publisher Silver Burdette.

Kate Goddard was the originator and manager of the children's book department at Forman's in Rochester. She made numerous speaking engagements promoting children's literature.

Kate and John Gilbert Goddard married in 1925 and lived in the historic house at 199 South Main Street for many years. Later, their son and his wife lived there.



Special Recognition Level Memberships

As of June 15, 2020

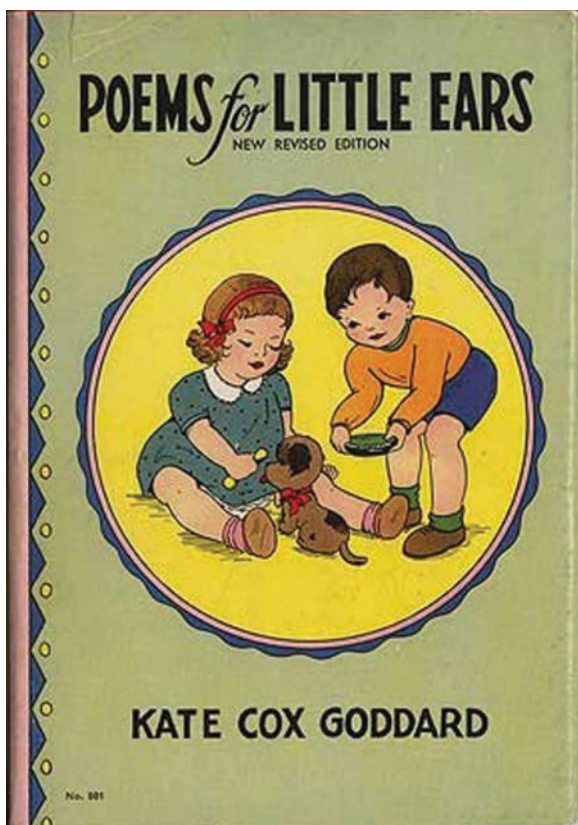
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Robert Ruhland (aka Mr. Perinton), **Keller Williams Realty**
2000 Winton Road S. Bldg. 1, Rochester, NY 14618
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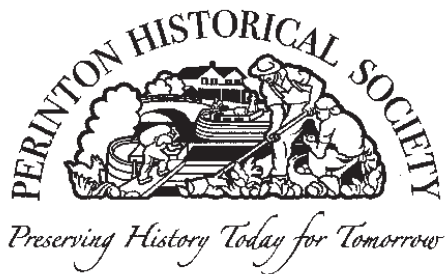
Barranco's Clothing and Shoes
32 North Main Street, Fairport, NY 14450
Phone: 585-388-1270

The Inn on Church
11 West Church Street, Fairport, NY 14450
Phone: 585-678-1106
Web: www.facebook.com/theinnonchurch

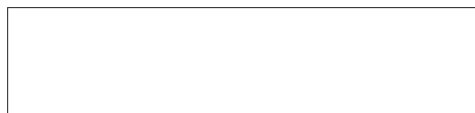
Fairport Village Inn, Wayne and Patty Beckwith
103 North Main Street, Fairport, NY 14550
Phone: 585-388-0112, Web: thefvi.com



Kate Cox Goddard created illustrations for several magazines, including Collier's. She was also a well-known children's author, writing poems, books and song lyrics.



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We look forward to seeing our members, as we implement plans for reopening the Fairport Historical Museum on Saturday, August 1st. Until then, visit us at www.perintonhistoricalsociety.org or on our Facebook page, **Perinton Historical Society & Fairport Museum**.

Fairport Historical Museum, 18 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY 14450

The museum reopens to the public starting August 1st. Please wear a face mask and practice social distancing.
Hours are Saturdays from 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. plus Sundays and Tuesdays from 2:00–4:00 p.m. Free admission.
Group tours, presentations and special projects are by appointment. Please call and leave a message at **585-223-3989**.

www.PerintonHistoricalSociety.org