

Adams Historical Society Newsletter

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Adams, Massachusetts

September 2018

War, Patriotism, Disease & Death

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In springtime 100 years ago, Adams men were in Europe fighting on the front. By autumn, the pandemic that spread through the armed forces began to infect the civilian population here at home.

One hundred years ago, summer passed to autumn during a time of crisis in world history. The battlefields of Europe were an ocean away but the ripples of the war's destructive forces reached Adams. Company M, the local unit of the Massachusetts National Guard, left town on July 4th 1917. More than 140 area men were in Europe by October and in the thick of battle by April. Two Adams men, Henry Caron and Edward Wlodyka, died in action before summer ended. And the worst was yet to come.

In September 1918, the front pages of *The North Adams Transcript* chronicled the advance of the allied forces against the Kaiser's army. Inside the paper, there were long lists of Massachusetts casualties and long columns of draft registrants and their draft numbers. In the "Adams News" section, families shared letters from boys over seas. Work aiding the war effort or the preparations for the 4th Liberty Loan war bond drive were reported daily. And then, distressing news concerning deaths from influenza began to appear in print.

The content of this newsletter is taken from newspaper accounts, the town clerk's death certificates, the board of health's register of contagious diseases and the annual town report of 1918.

As a memorial to the epidemic's victims, they are listed with their age and, if applicable, their spouse's name.

SEPTEMBER 12

In May 1917, men between the ages of 21 and 30 were required to register for a draft (a word still tainted by images of Civil War draft riots), recast as the "Selective Service." A second registration in June 1918 covered those who had turned 21 the previous year, and a third (September 12) reeled in men aged 18 to 45.

On that day, fire and factory whistles blew and church bells rang to remind all eligible men to sign up at Town Hall. That morning, the White Eagle Band, on the back of a truck, cruised the town to spread the word. And for two hours after dinner, the mills shut down and donated clerical help to process the requisite paperwork. The number of men who registered was very close to those officials deemed eligible: 1,550. That evening, young men aged 18 to 21 led a torch-lit parade of the new registrants from the armory down Hoosac, Summer, Center and Park Streets.

SEPTEMBER 15

The Transcript reported that an automobile driver and his family, failing to observe "gasolineless Sundays," drove to church. They were chastised by church members; children called them "slackers," a term coined during the war to deride those not sufficiently patriotic in supporting the war effort.

SEPTEMBER 19

One week after the draft registration, the first Adams victim, a soldier, returned home to die.

1. ★ Jan Witkos, 23, -Apolonia, died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital

SEPTEMBER 21

2. Katherine (Andler) Tower, 42 -Charles H.

SEPTEMBER 23

3. ★ Leo Decelles, died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital

SEPTEMBER 24

4. Annie (McCartney) McCroary, 65 -James
5. ★ Delore Caron, 29 -Emma, died at Camp Devens, Mass.

SEPTEMBER 26

Leo Decelle was buried from Notre Dame Church. The newspaper noted that it is the "second funeral in which all autos were used" and not the customary horses and carriages.

SEPTEMBER 27

Only 16 new cases reported. Schools remain open.

6. ★ Lambert Lenhardt, 25, died at Camp Upton, N.Y. after only 4 weeks in the service. He was survived by a wife and a young son.
7. ★ John Urbanski, 25, died at Camp Devens, Mass.



Lambert Lenhardt

SEPTEMBER 28

Schools, movie houses, and Sunday schools closed until further notice.

SEPTEMBER 29

8. ★ John Malloy, 28, died at Camp Devens, Mass.
9. Charles Barthe, 28, died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital

SEPTEMBER 30

October rosary devotions were cancelled at St. Thomas Aquinas Church.

OCTOBER 1

51 new cases reported. Board of Health ordered that "there be no more public funerals."

10. Edward Gannon, 29

OCTOBER 2

32 cases reported.

11. Katrina Herzig, 69 -James

OCTOBER 3

72 cases reported.

12. Edna Biron, 2

OCTOBER 4

13. ★ Margaret Morton, 31 a nurse, died at House of Mercy, Pittsfield

14. Laura Rolland, 18

OCTOBER 5

34 cases reported.

OCTOBER 6

56 cases reported.

OCTOBER 7

55 cases reported.

15. Grover Burnett, 34 -Florence, father of WWII hero, Sterling Burnett

OCTOBER 8

16. Julia Burke, 14

OCTOBER 9

17. Napoleon Dargie, 57
18. Eva (Therrien) Besner, 24 -James

★ denotes those who died while in service to our country

19. Lillian (Yarter) O'Neil, 24 -Edward

20. Emma Kelly, 24

OCTOBER 10

21. Orine Lubowicz, 1

OCTOBER 11

22. Joseph Frank, 63 -wife's name not recorded

23. Claud Decoigne, 24 -Marion

OCTOBER 12

54 cases reported

24. Bronislaw Kaszyk, 8 months

25. Robert Baker, 18

OCTOBER 13

35 cases reported

OCTOBER 14

54 cases reported

OCTOBER 15

45 cases reported

26. Philomene Major, 27

27. Maryanna (Walczak) Rymarski, 40 -Jan, died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital

OCTOBER 16

28. Jan Wojcik, 4 months

29. Josephine (Hepburn) Carpenter, 34 -Lester, died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital

OCTOBER 17

"Physicians in town report that they think that the epidemic of influenza...is the worst since it started and that the cases of pneumonia are especially severe." Most victims of the epidemic died of lobar pneumonia. This differs from bronchial pneumonia which is characterized by patchy spots in the lobes of one or both lungs. Lobar pneumonia is an acute inflammation of the entire lobe or lung.

30. Tekla (Budnik) Koszinski, 26 -Jan

OCTOBER 18

Under the headline "Buying Bond Averts Strike," published in *The Transcript*, a story recounted how fellow workers in a factory pressured a German employee to buy a war bond. The workers threatened to walk out if he didn't comply. The account ends with this sentence – "Mill officials would have been compelled to choose between keeping one German suspected of being pro-Kaiser and hundreds of employees who purchased liberty bonds."

31. Anna (Marko) Hanleck, 36 -Paul

32. Petronela (Robakowski) Bloniarz, 35 -Antoni

33. Zofia (Glowacki) Bury, 23 -Frank

OCTOBER 19

The Transcript estimated that "2,000 people are sick; 850 are reported ill; and 350 have recovered." C. T. Plunkett, president of the Berkshire Mills, announced that "700 hands are out," and one third of the plant's machinery is idle.

34. Julia Martoski, 7 months

35. Foster Jones, 25 -Anna, died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital

OCTOBER 20

36. Redmond Burke, 16

37. Henry Dion, 29 -Emily, died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital

OCTOBER 21

A kitchen was set up at the Adams High School to prepare meals to be delivered to the homes of sick families.

The nuns from St. Stanislaus Kostka and Notre Dame schools volunteered to help the sick.



The 4th Liberty Loan war bond drive was completed. Its goal was \$500,000 but \$808,150 was raised. According to online inflation calculators that amounts to over \$13 million in today's money.

OCTOBER 21

- 38. Ralph Major, 13
- 39. Walter Carr, 35 -Mary
- 40. Mabel Moriarty, 26

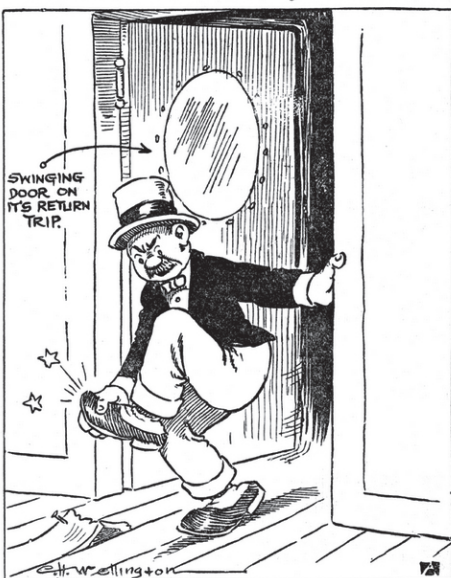
OCTOBER 22

With several nurses, two doctors from the State Health Board and one from a Federal agency arrived in Adams to alleviate the workload of the local healthcare system. They ordered all saloons, soda fountains, and pool halls closed. They banned the sale of bottled liquor, required all influenza fatalities to be buried within 24 hours and limited people attending funerals to 15.

- 41. Mieczyslaw Zoltek, 3
died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital

The Transcript regularly ran the syndicated comic strip, shown below, that depicted an individual in a bad situation which, unbeknown to him or her, was always going to get worse.

--And the Worst is yet to Come



OCTOBER 23

54 cases reported.

Store proprietors selling bottled liquor protested the ban, stating, "many families use bottled liquor medicinally" and with the advice of some physicians.

OCTOBER 24

38 cases reported.

State doctors were now in control of managing the epidemic. They urged people to stay out of the sick rooms and to go back to work.

- 42. Zofia (Bogusz) Przystas, 35 -Wojciech
died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital
- 43. Franciszek Gritz, 29 - Weronika
died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital

OCTOBER 25

40 cases reported.

The newspaper reported that Dr. J. F. Crowley, head of the Adams Board of Health, was suffering from "nervous exhaustion" and "needed absolute quiet and rest." He was in the care of Dr. Luhan, the physician sent here by the federal agency.

- 43. Isaie Giroux, 65
died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital
- 45. Joseph Girard, 51 -Marie
died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital. His two sons also died in the next 16 days.

OCTOBER 26

- 46. Joseph Rouillard, 43 -Jessie
- 47. Anna (Lawson) Blake, 33 -Henry

OCTOBER 27

- 48. Henry Ruhm, 27 -Anna
- 49. Iwan Mileticz, 35
died at Plunkett Mem. Hospital
- 50. Irene Lemieux, 1
- 51. Wladyslawa Czarnik, 2

OCTOBER 28

- 52. ★ Martin Lauer, 29 died at Syracuse Recruiting Camp, Syracuse, N.Y.

OCTOBER 29

- 53. Maryanna (Galuszka) Ordyna, 22 -Jan

OCTOBER 31

Catholic churches were allowed to open for the observance of a holy day of obligation, All Saints Day. Schools were also reopened.

- 54. George Girard, 12

NOVEMBER 1

- 55. Agnieszka (Duza) Fryc, 27 -Antoni

NOVEMBER 2

- 56. Tadeusz Loc, 8
- 57. Walerya (Cisek) Piwko, 30 -Wojciech

NOVEMBER 6

- 58. Helena Wilusz, 3

NOVEMBER 9

- 59. John Kelley, 3, -Rose

NOVEMBER 10

- 60. Emile Girard, 18
- 61. Francis Martin, 28 -Dorothy

NOVEMBER 11

- 62. Florence (McConnell) Hennon, 28 -John

NOVEMBER 12

- 63. Michael Elkas, 33

NOVEMBER 17

- 64. Wiktoria (Kaszyk) Laniak, 22 -Antoni

NOVEMBER 28

- 65. Jennie (LaPlante) Dolan, 44 -Michael

NOVEMBER 30

- 66. Stanislaw Wlodyka, 1

DECEMBER 4

- 67. Pietro Ravazza, 30

DECEMBER 6

- 68. Marguerite Ford, 1

DECEMBER 26

- 69. Tiz infant, still-born, premature birth due to influenza in mother

DECEMBER 29

- 70. Margaret (Betz) Tiz, 25 -Jacob

JANUARY 1, 1919

- 71. Katarzyna (Gucwa) Wilusz, 26 -Jan

JANUARY 6

- 72. Helena Wilusz, 9 days, premature birth due to influenza in mother

JANUARY 22

- 73. Henry Howland, 27

JANUARY 28

- 74. Maude (Hiser) Gould, 30 -Claude

Who was the Board of Health?

In 1918, The Adams Board of Health was composed of Dr. Jeremiah F. Crowley, Herman Klammer and Anthony Bloniarz.

Dr. Crowley was born in Thorndike, Mass., received his medical degree in Baltimore, Md., and opened his practice in Adams in 1896. He lived most of his life in town on Edmunds Street, was married and had one son. He committed suicide on July 4, 1934, after suffering a "complete nervous breakdown" three months earlier.

Herman Klammer was a plumber and tinsmith in the Berkshire Mills. He was an officer in the Alert Hose Co. He was the father of Louise Klammer, Irma Tabor and Inez Muggles. He died at the age of 86 in 1975.

When Anthony Bloniarz was elected to the Board of Health, he was the first Adams resident of Polish ancestry to be elected to public office. He became a funeral director in 1914. During the pandemic of 1918, he was not only burdened by the number of bodies to be buried but also by the death of his wife, Petronella, on October 18, and the care of their seven children. He is the grandfather of historical society board member Juliette Wilk-Chaffee.

SEPTEMBER 2018

Centennial of the Pandemic
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