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## 1918 Influenza pandemic fades away by end of year

By WARREN D. HUSE, for The Laconia Daily Sun  
Apr 16, 2020

*Part 6 of a series*

LACONIA — By December 1918, the “Spanish Flu” pandemic of 102 years ago was more or less over, here, but the effects and losses were emotionally draining and long lasting.

The City Report issued in early 1919 contained the following assessment by the Board of Health:



“About the middle of September [1918] influenza and pneumonia began to make their appearance, and by October an epidemic such as Laconia had never known was upon us.”

Appeals for doctors and nurses “began to be so frequent that the demand could not be filled, and it was evident that some measures must at once be taken by this department to meet the urgent need.”

At a meeting of the Board of Health held with the mayor and Board of Public Safety, it “was decided to close all public and parochial schools and all places of amusement, churches, etc.”

Trustees of the Laconia Hospital “decided to give the hospital over to epidemic patients, and fifty-four influenza and twenty-three pneumonia patients were taken care of without regard as to ability to pay.”

Two “of our physicians and nearly all the city nurses were in government service. “



It “was very difficult to obtain any assistants on account of fear of contracting the disease. Otherwise churches could have been utilized for temporary hospitals, as was done in many places in the state. “

The Board of Health “called for volunteers, women to do nursing and otherwise assist. Only two answered this call, Miss Louise Mowbray and Miss Beatrice Wallace. These two young ladies gave valuable and intelligent service at the hospital, and helped throughout the epidemic without remuneration.”

Board of Health President Dr. J.A. Wrisley’s report continued, “We employed the only available trained nurse, Miss Mary Hurley, who gave up private nursing to help.”

She “called on people unable to get a doctor, making 170 calls, and giving some care and medicine to 298 patients under the direction of doctors.”

Two diet kitchens “were established, and suitable nourishment was prepared and taken regularly to poor people by our Boy Scouts and young ladies who had cars, members of the Red Cross assisting.”

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*Note: Information about the 1918 pandemic was taken from “The Deadliest Flu: The Complete Story of the Discovery and Reconstruction of the 1918 Pandemic Virus,” available on-line at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://tinyurl.com/stqg3tr>) and from the CDC’s “1918 Pandemic Influenza Historic Timeline” (<https://tinyurl.com/y83bp7od>).*

*The local references were taken from the microfilm files of The Laconia Democrat at the Laconia Public Library.*



#### MORE INFORMATION

1918 Influenza pandemic felt directly in U.S., military, Laconia

Surgeon General issues instructions for coping with 1918 Influenza pandemic

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