

SUFFERIN' IN

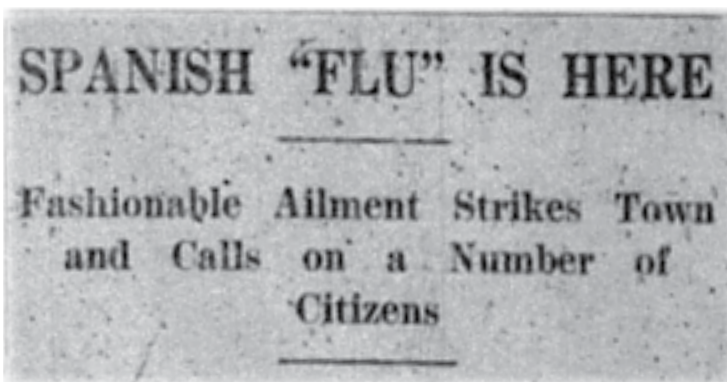
DUFFERIN

THE SPANISH FLU
1918-19

Introduction

The years 2018-2019 mark 100 years since the Spanish Flu swept across the world. This document has been developed to acknowledge its impact and significance on the citizens of Dufferin County, Ontario.

In six months, the Spanish Influenza pandemic killed about 30 million people around the world and some 30-50,000 people across Canada. This nearly forgotten pandemic was among the worst in modern history in terms of rate of illness and death. The Spanish Flu epidemic made its way to Dufferin County by October of 1918, likely along common transportation routes, especially through railway hubs like Toronto. The epidemic peaked in November, lasting until February of 1919.



Headlines from the *Orangeville Banner* and *Orangeville Sun* newspapers, October 3, 1918.

Important Terms and Definitions:

Influenza:

An infectious disease caused by a virus, which is highly contagious. The word is derived from the Latin word "Influentia" meaning influence.

Spanish Influenza:

This was the influenza pandemic of 1918. It lasted from January 1918-December 1920. It was the first of two pandemics involving the H1N1 influenza virus, killing 3-5% of the world's population. The exact origin of the pandemic is not certain, but since Spain did not censor reports in the same way as other nations, it led to the widespread belief that Spain was the source.

Epidemic:

The word is derived from Greek meaning "upon people" or "above people". It refers to the rapid spread of infectious disease, to a large number of people, within a short amount of time. The main triggers for an epidemic include: increased virulence and increased host susceptibility to the infectious agent.

Pandemic:

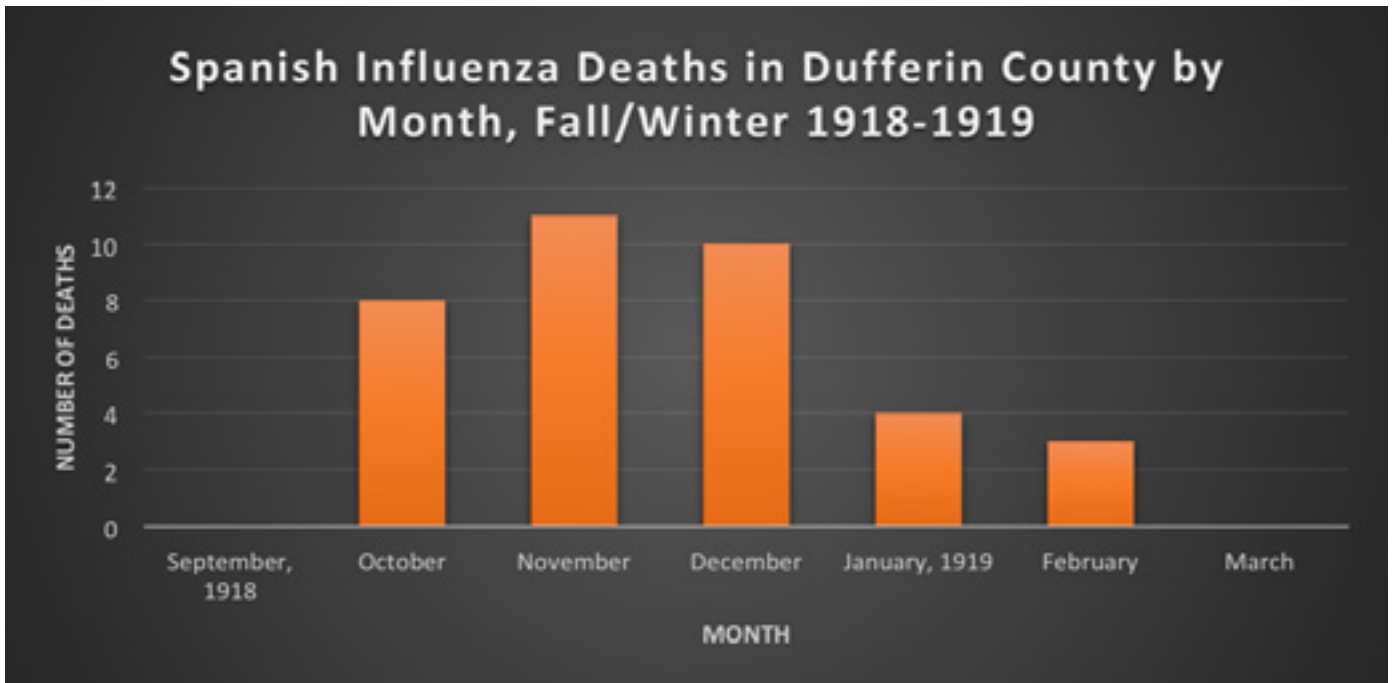
The word is derived from Greek meaning "all people". A pandemic is an epidemic of infectious disease that has spread across a large region, such as multiple continents.

La-Grippe:

Is French for "influenza". It was the term used in the late 1700s for the illness we now call the flu. It may have been in reference to constriction of the throat felt by sufferers. The flu outbreak of 1889-1890 was commonly called la-grippe.

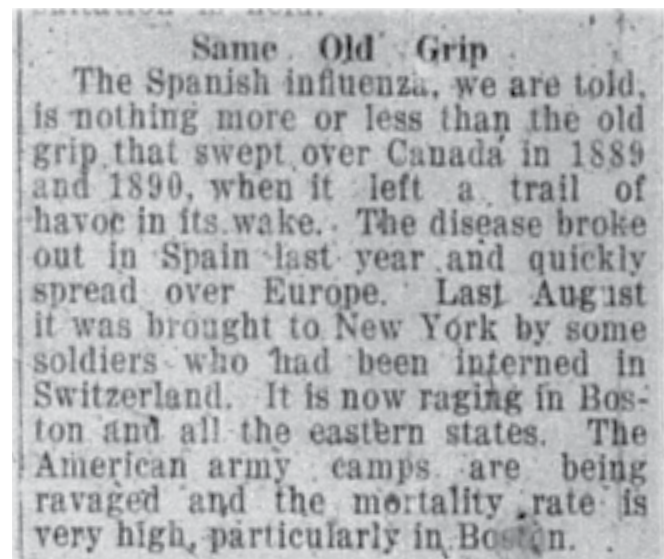
The Same Old Grippe?

The 1918 pandemic spread in three waves: the spring wave of 1918, the fall wave (starting in late August of 1918), and the winter-spring wave of 1918-1919. By late 1918, four years of war had set the stage for a world-wide pandemic. Factors such as fatigue, reduced nutrition, and enhanced movement of people by land and sea made people more vulnerable to illness. In addition, the mild winter of 1918-1919 allowed the virus to spread rapidly.



Information is based on data from Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas 1869-1946 for Dufferin County 1918-1919. This does not include victims who resided in Dufferin County, but died outside its borders.

Early on in the outbreak, it was widely believed that the Spanish Flu was no different than the annual fall flu or the outbreak of 1889-1890, commonly referred to as “la grippe”. The similarities, however, caused problems as people underestimated the much more virulent and contagious nature of the 1918 epidemic. This led to an apathetic response in terms of preparation and passive attempts to contain the spread. For the most part, people in Dufferin County kept going on about their lives as usual. That is, until local Board of Health officials started imposing restrictions on public spaces and gatherings once the epidemic had set in.

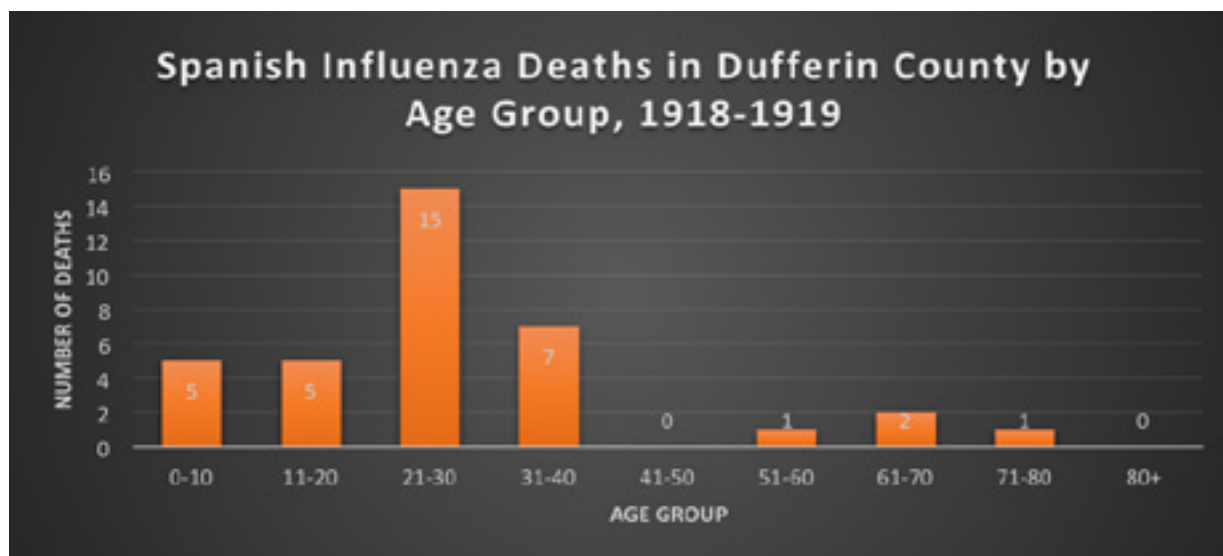


Orangeville Sun newspaper, October 3, 1918.

Unlike Any Other Epidemic

Unlike today, there was little that could be done to limit the spread. A complete understanding of viruses still eluded the medical community, no vaccine existed, and attempts at quarantine elsewhere really hadn't worked. The Spanish Flu was an unseen and unpredictable force moving with little opposition.

One of the most notable characteristics of the Spanish flu was that it primarily affected the young adult population — otherwise healthy people in the prime of their life, who made up a large portion of the working and school-aged population.



Information is based on data from Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas 1869-1946 for Dufferin County 1918-1919. This does not include victims who resided in Dufferin County, but died outside its borders.

DEAD.—John Lindsay, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Lindsay of the west half of lot 29, con. 1, Mono, died on Friday of last week, Dec. 13th, after an illness of ten days from influenza, followed by pneumonia. Deceased was a bright and promising young man in his 23rd year and is survived by his parents, one brother, Robt. G. Lindsay, at home; and two sisters, Miss Hannah Lindsay, at home, and Mrs. Ben. Newton of Mansfield. His remains were interred in Shelburne cemetery on Saturday morning last, services being conducted at he house and grave by Rev. M. C. Pritchard of Shelburne. The pall-bearers were Herbert Lindsay, Perry Lindsay, Herbert Fines, John Wilson, Thos. Lindsay and Robt. Lindsay. The sympathy of the entire community goes out to Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay in their sad bereavement.

The flu of 1918, like others before it, greatly reduced resistance to other diseases. These subsequent illnesses were, in most cases, what did the killing. With the Spanish Flu, it was usually pneumonia that led to death.

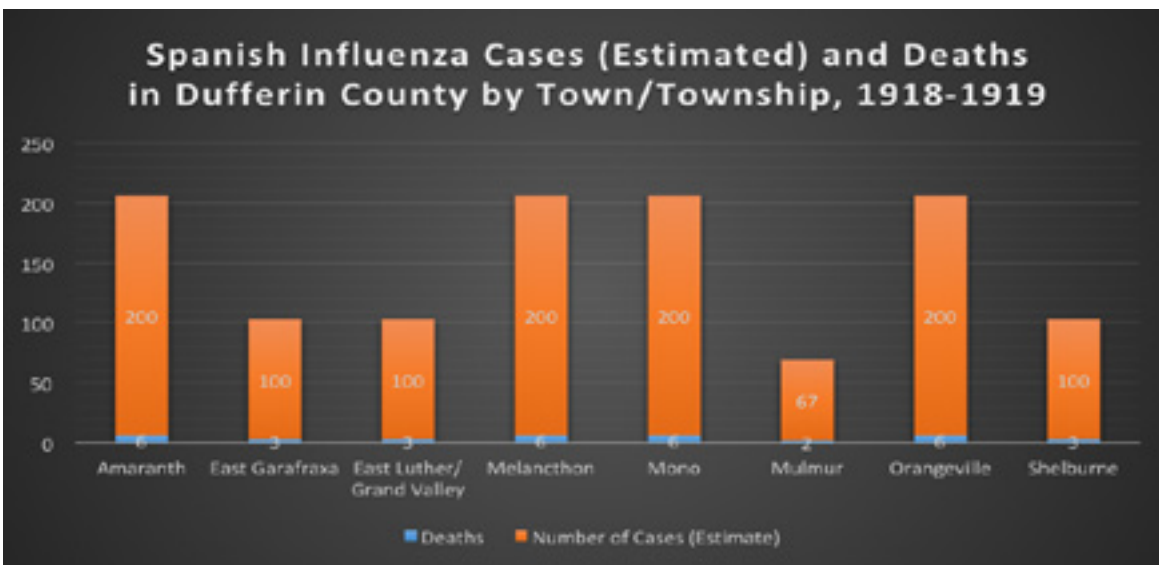
Victims of Spanish Influenza were stricken with a sudden onset of shivering, severe headache, pains in their back and legs, and a general feeling of weakness. This was followed by a sore throat, cough and fever. Within as little as a few days to a week, pneumonia would set in. Most deaths resulting from pneumonia took place between one and two days following the onset of symptoms.

Obituary for John Lindsay,
Shelburne Free Press newspaper,
December 19, 1918.

Flu by the Numbers

For various reasons a precise death total and rate of illness (morbidity) can never be known. It is, however, possible to estimate the number of cases based on population census data and figures provided by historians. Ontario is estimated to have experienced 9000 deaths out of 300,000 cases. This equates to 3 deaths per 100 cases. If this mortality rate is applied to the death totals for Dufferin County, we can estimate the number of cases for the county in the Fall/Winter of 1918-1919.

Municipality	1918 Population (Estimate)	Spanish Influenza Deaths (Fall/Winter 1918-1919)	% of Population Dead From SI (Fall/Winter 1918-1919)	Estimated # of Cases	% of Population Ill Fall/Winter 1918-1919
Amaranth	1949	6	0.3%	200	10.25%
East Garafraxa	1131	3	0.27%	100	8.80%
East Luther/Grand Valley	1827	3	0.16%	100	5.50%
Melancthon	2781	6	0.22%	200	7.20%
Mono	2371	6	0.25%	200	8.40%
Mulmur	2441	2	0.08%	67	2.70%
Orangeville	2030	6	0.30%	200	9.90%
Shelburne	826	3	0.36%	100	12.11%
Total	15356	35	1.94% (Avg. 0.24%)	1167	7.6% (Avg. 8.10%)



The number of cases in Dufferin County appears to have been fairly high (an average of 8% of the population or 1 illness for about every 13 citizens). The percentage of the population that died as a result of Spanish Influenza/Pneumonia is much lower (an average of 0.24% or 1 death for about every 440 people). This means that Dufferin County sustained a high morbidity (rate of illness), but low mortality (rate of death). In comparison to more densely populated areas of Canada, such as Toronto or Montreal, Dufferin County had a relatively light brush with the Spanish Flu. While the 1918 influenza epidemic may have been mild in Dufferin County compared to other regions, it still had a significant impact on the social and economic aspects of life.

The Aftermath

What was the impact of the Spanish Flu and how did it shape history?

Family loss and bereavement. You would be hard pressed to find a person living in Dufferin County in 1918 that hadn't lost a loved one, relative, friend, or colleague as a result of the 1918 Flu. Even though the death total within Dufferin County's borders was quite low, local citizens had relations living near and far who succumbed to the deadly virus. According to the funeral register for J.H. Hulse's Undertaking business in Orangeville, two-thirds of funerals between October and December of 1918 were Spanish Flu related. Some victims were locals, however, many were being sent home to be buried in family plots outside the county.

The after-effects. For those that survived, the 1918 Flu often left a lasting mark. Those recovering often found that symptoms ranging from general weakness to nerve damage or heart conditions affected their ability to return to a normal life.



Photographs:

1. Armistice Day Celebration, Orangeville Town Hall (Boardway and Second Ave.), Nov. 1918, P-1178. The celebration went ahead as planned, leading to crowds of people, which contributed to the spread of the flu.

3. Theatre Group, Shelburne Town Hall, 1918. P-3147A. Halls and other social gathering sites were shut down during the worst of the epidemic in an attempt to contain the spread.

The Aftermath - Continued

A maxed-out medical system. At the height of the epidemic, medical facilities and staff were pushed to their limit. There was no protocol for events on a scale such as this. This led to mixed responses and uneven reporting. In the aftermath of the pandemic, medical professionals were able to learn from the experience. On a federal level, the 1918 Flu led to the establishment of the Canadian Department of Health.

Economic impacts. During the height of the epidemic, many businesses, especially those related to entertainment, were closed down. As a result, citizens running theatres, billiard/pool halls, social clubs and the like, suffered the loss of several months income. This would have been especially difficult during the Christmas shopping season in November/December of 1918. On the other end of the spectrum, pharmacies, drug stores and undertaking businesses did exceptionally well.

Social impacts. Socially, the 1918 Flu was an inconvenient nuisance for local citizens. Most kids, if healthy, probably didn't mind missing out on school. However, most people were likely annoyed by the way the epidemic disrupted normal activities such as church, getting their mail, visiting with friends, or seeing a play. When it had run its course, people were keen to forget and move on!



Photographs:

1. Lord Dufferin Hospital, Orangeville, 1918, P-1838. Opened in 1912, the hospital played a critical role in treating sufferers of the Flu in 1918. Several medical staff took ill during the epidemic.
2. Orangeville High School, circa 1945, P-0533. Schools were shut down and exams cancelled during the epidemic.

Spanish Flu Stories

Dufferin County's First Victim

That I had not been alive in	18
That the Death occurred on	October 15 th 1918
CAUSE OF DEATH.	
Primary	Spanish Influenza
Duration	10 days
Immediate	Laryngitis
Duration	48 hours
Physician's Name	Geo. J. Campbell.
Address	Grand Valley.
Date	Oct. 15 th 1918

James Henry Ritchie, a farmer from the 10th Line of Amaranth Township was the first person to die from Spanish Influenza in Dufferin County at the age of 20 on October 15, 1918.

According to local papers, Amaranth Township was hit particularly hard by the epidemic, with over ninety cases in October of 1918 and whole families taking ill. Local doctors would make house calls, but there was very little they could do to offer relief to those suffering.

James was laid to rest in Union Cemetery, Grand Valley.

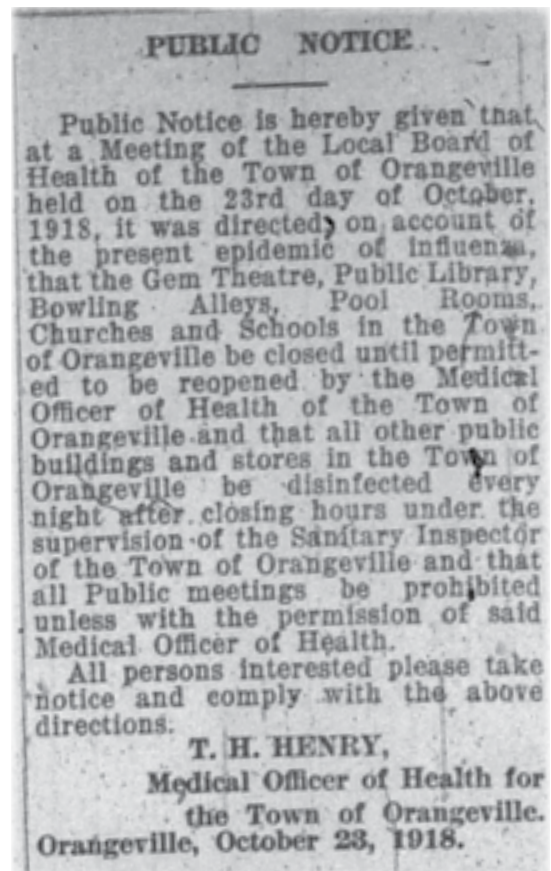
Image: Excerpt of Death Record for James Henry Ritchie. Note the primary cause of death was Spanish Influenza (10 days), but the immediate cause was laryngitis (48 hours).

Dr. Thomas Herbert Henry (1868-1925)

Dr. Henry was born and raised in Orangeville. In addition to providing medical care in the community, he was a member of the boards for the local schools he had attended.

Beyond his practice, he acted as physician for the County Gaol and surgeon for the C.P.R. When the influenza epidemic of 1918 took hold in Orangeville, he became the Medical Officer for the Board of Health. His efforts, including regular notices in the paper were critical in seeing Orangeville through the epidemic.

A meeting was held by the Local Board of Health for the Town of Orangeville. At this meeting, it was decided that public facilities would close and remain closed until further notice. Among the facilities to close were the Gem Theatre, the Public Library, Bowling Alleys, Pool Rooms, Churches and Schools. Any public meetings were prohibited unless granted permission by the Medical Officer of Health (Dr. Henry). All other public buildings and stores in the town were to be disinfected every night after closing. Inspections were carried out by the Sanitary Inspector.



Orangeville Sun Newspaper,
November 7, 1918.

A Cure for What Ails You?

During the Spanish Flu epidemic, drug stores such as Jeffer's or Fairbain's in Orangeville were an important resource for people in need of medical supplies. During the epidemic pharmacies likely saw a significant increase in business. Several drug companies offered remedies for the flu, but whether they would work or not was another matter.

In general, many flu remedies offered or available would have merely masked the symptoms. Some remedies containing narcotics like cocaine or opium, would have been down-right dangerous. Advertisements for remedies in local newspapers often used fear-mongering tactics to sell their medicines. This ad encourages flu sufferers to take medicines like Penslar's Laxative Cold Breakers. This product contained quinine (good for leg cramps), two painkillers (one similar to aspirin (salicylate) and one for muscle or nerve pain), capsicum oleoresin (used today to treat pain from shingles), camphor (often used topically as a cough suppressant), and podophyllin (used as a laxative).

The more effective remedies of 1918 had an alcohol base. Alcoholic beverages, especially brandy, could be beneficial in aiding sufferers and historically were relied upon as a go-to remedy. However, in 1918, the Temperance and Prohibition laws were in effect, which meant not only was alcohol consumption frowned upon, but it was illegal. The only legal method of acquiring alcohol was with a doctor's prescription.

On November 7, 1918, the *Shelburne Free Press* reported that "quite a number in Shelburne are being inoculated with the newly discovered serum in order to ward off the Spanish influenza. Two applications are necessary and the treatment does not have any ill effects on those who submit to it." Vaccines were prepared and distributed across Canada in the fall of 1918. The problem was that any vaccines developed in 1918 and 1919 for the flu were merely experimental.

It was not possible for scientists to create an effective vaccine until the development of a more powerful microscope in 1933. Before this, experimental vaccines were concocted from the organisms found in the respiratory tract of sufferers.



SPANISH INFLUENZA!

HERE IS YOUR REMEDY.
Purchase a Bottle of

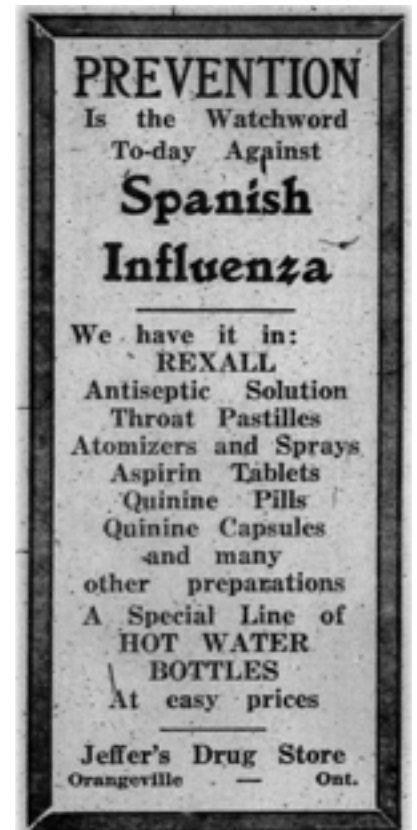
Penslar

WHITE PINE AND SPRUCE BALSAM, 50c, AND
25c PACKAGE OF LAXATIVE COLD BREAKERS

Be sure you are equipped with a HOT WATER BOTTLE. We can supply you with guaranteed bottles at \$2.00 to \$3.50.

Call and See Our Complete Stock, or Phone Your Order. We Deliver Free of Charge.

R. FAIRBAIRN
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UP-TO-DATE DRUG STORE, ORANGEVILLE



PREVENTION
Is the Watchword
To-day Against
**Spanish
Influenza**

We have it in:
REXALL
Antiseptic Solution
Throat Pastilles
Atomizers and Sprays
Aspirin Tablets
Quinine Pills
Quinine Capsules
and many
other preparations
A Special Line of
HOT WATER
BOTTLES
At easy prices

Jeffer's Drug Store
Orangeville — Ont.

Medicine Advertisements, Orangeville Banner & Orangeville Sun Newspapers, multiple dates.



Some medicines frequently advertised during the epidemic:

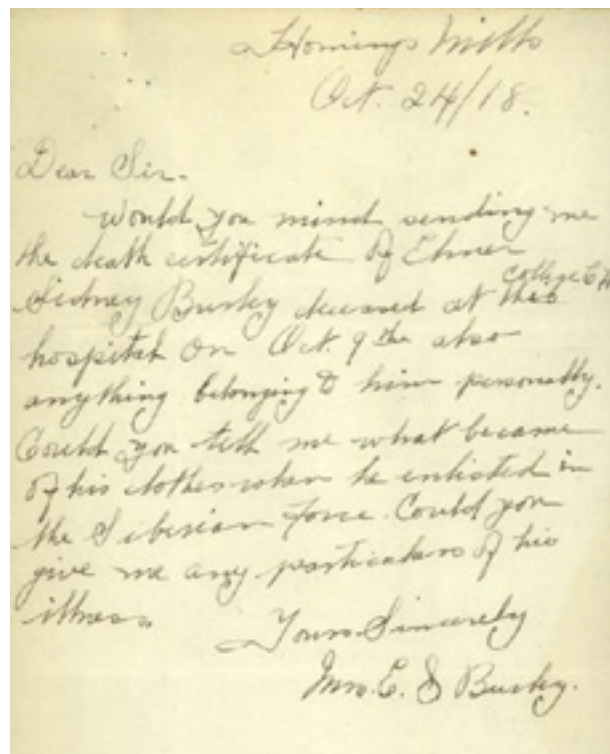
1. Penslar's Laxative Cold Breakers,
2. Dr. William's Pink Pills,
3. Tanlac Stomach Tonic.

Elmer Sidney Burley

On October 24, 1918, Alice Burley wrote a letter from her parent's home in Horning's Mills. She wished to inquire about the death and personal effects of her husband Elmer Sidney Burley, a returned soldier in the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

During his service, Elmer was exposed to prolonged bombardments and shelling, which led to a severe case of shellshock. He was sent to several convalescent hospitals, ending up finally at the College Military Hospital in Toronto. In early October, Elmer became ill with Spanish Flu. He died at 3pm on October 7th, 1918.

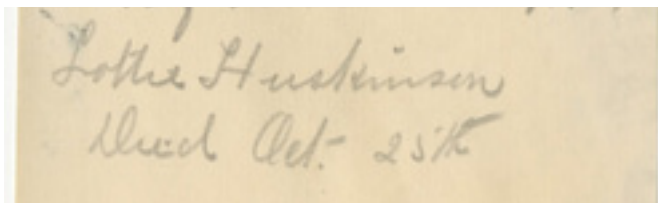
Following his death, Alice continued to live with her parents in Horning's Mills until 1921 -- a widow with an infant daughter (Alice) born in 1917. Correspondence letters regarding his death are viewable in Elmer Sidney Burley's Service Record held at Library and Archives Canada. To view his Service Record go to this link: <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records>.



Lottie Huskinson

Lottie Huskinson lived with her parents Edmund Alfred and Cora May Huskinson on East Broadway. She was the oldest of five children. Lottie was a 13 year old school girl who attended Orangeville Public School when she died of the Spanish Flu. She passed away just after the schools were closed in order to prevent the spread of the illness. Lottie was likely not the only child from Orangeville Public School to have taken ill, but she appears to be the only child who attended the school to have died.

Tragically, the Huskinson family also lost their 6 year old son, Alfred Wesley Huskinson, to Spanish Flu on October 30th, 1918.



A handwritten note contained in the attendance record for Orangeville Public School, October 1918. Notes about the school closure due to the epidemic take the place of student attendance numbers. Daily Registers, Orangeville P.S., 1910-1929, AR-6196 A.

Right: Orangeville Public School, 1909, P-1795.



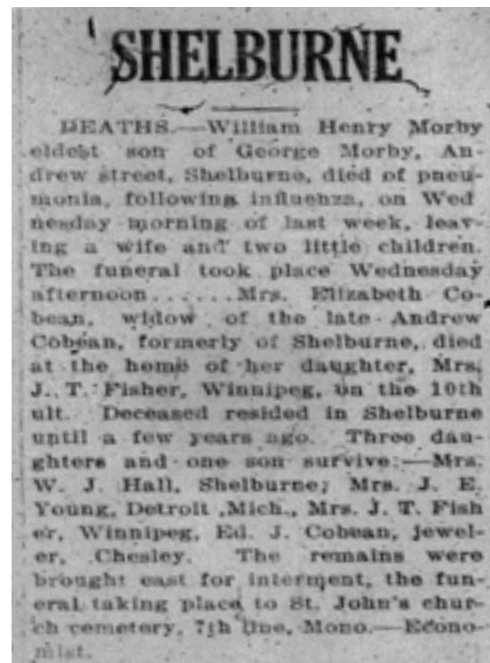
William Henry Morby



Image Source: Ancestry.ca
Public Member Photographs
and Scanned Documents.

William Morby was a Barber from Shelburne. He died of Spanish Flu at the age of 26 on November 20, 1918.

William, his wife Virginia and their two children (John and Myrtle) lived on Andrew Street with his father, George Morby. William's grandfather, also named William Morby, died on November 9th of complications from a hernia. William Jr. died of the Spanish Flu only 11 days later, adding to the family's grief. Other members of the family were reported as ill of the flu but survived. William Sr. and William Henry are buried together in Shelburne Cemetery.



Obituary for William Henry Morby,
Orangeville Sun, December 5, 1918.

The Walker Family

John and Martha Jane (nee McCullough) Walker lived at Lot 22, Concession 9 of Amaranth Township. They had 11 children (6 boys and 5 girls). The Spanish Flu wreaked havoc on the Walker family. The entire family fell ill. By the time the flu had run its course, three members of the family were dead. On November 20th, 1918, at the age of 17, Dela May Walker passed away from pneumonia caused by the flu. Over the course of the next two days, the Walker family lost two of their sons, Ernest, at the age of 24 and Samuel at the age of 27. On November 28, 1918, the *Orangeville Sun* reported that seven in the household were still laid up with the flu.

DEATHS			
County of <i>Dufferin</i>		Division of <i>Amaranth</i>	
RESIDENCE of Deceased	<i>Walker</i>	<i>Walker Dela ?</i>	<i>Walker</i>
Christian Name	<i>Samuel</i>	<i>Dela May</i>	<i>Ernest</i>
Sex	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Age	<i>27</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>24</i>
Date of Death	<i>Nov 27th 1918</i>	<i>Nov 20th 1918</i>	<i>Nov 21st 1918</i>
Place of Birth	<i>Amaranth Lot 22 Con 9</i>	<i>Amaranth Lot 22 Con 9</i>	<i>Amaranth Lot 22 Con 9</i>
Place of Birth, City, State (Foreign, in Colonization and Ex.)	<i>Amaranth Lot 22 Con 9</i>	<i>Amaranth Lot 22 Con 9</i>	<i>Amaranth Lot 22 Con 9</i>
Place of Burial	<i>Shelburne 012054</i>	<i>Shelburne</i>	<i>Shelburne</i>
Occupation	<i>Farmer</i>	<i>housewife</i>	<i>Farmer 012053</i>
Single, Married or Widower	<i>Single</i>	<i>Single 012052</i>	<i>Single</i>
Name of Father	<i>John Walker</i>	<i>John Walker</i>	<i>John Walker</i>
Maternal Name of Mother	<i>Martha Jane McCullough</i>	<i>Martha Jane McCullough</i>	<i>Martha Jane McCullough</i>
Cause of Death, if known	<i>Pneumonia</i>	<i>Pneumonia</i>	<i>Pneumonia</i>

Death Record for Samuel, Dela, and Ernest Walker, Amaranth, Dufferin County, Source: Ancestry.ca

Harry Conlin



Harry Conlin during training, 1916, P-2613A.

Corporal Harry Conlin died of Spanish Influenza overseas while serving in the military. Harry Conlin was born in East Garafraxa Township (Lot 11, Concession 11) to Thomas and Etta Conlin. Harry joined the military on December 16th, 1915 at the age of 25. He travelled overseas with the 153rd and 25th Reserve Battalions. He was “taken-on-strength” to the 18th Canadian Battalion for active service on December 15, 1917, and was sent to the front in February of 1918. As the 18th Battalion moved through Belgium, they were greeted by crowds of cheering citizens. On November 19, a dance was held by villagers for the members of the battalion. Unfortunately the celebrations of the armistice were short-lived for Harry and some of his fellow soldiers. On November 23, 17 members were admitted to hospital. The following day, 15 were admitted to hospital and an additional 27 over the next six days. While not all may have been influenza cases, it is likely that several were. Harry Conlin was sent to the 14th Canadian Field Ambulance on November 24 with P.U.O. or Pyrexia -- a fever with unknown

origin. The next day (November 25) he was sent to the 36th Casualty Clearing Station, and finally the 51st Casualty Clearing Station. On November 28, 1918, Harry was listed as “dangerously ill” and one day later he succumbed as the result of broncho-pneumonia. Harry was laid to rest in Tourney Communal Cemetery in Hainaut, Belgium.

According to the war diary for the 4th CCS, on November 14, 1918, they received nearly 200 cases, mostly influenza between 4pm and 7pm. Again on the 18th of November, they were flooded with more cases of the flu. By the 22nd of November, many of the hospital staff were ill. By the 25th, the hospital was filled with some 800 patients, mostly influenza cases. This pushed the clearing station into crisis and severely delayed evacuation to hospital. The prevalence of Spanish Flu compromised military forces on both sides. While it was not a major factor in ending the war, it sure made for a forlorn conclusion. Had it not been for this terrible illness ravaging tired troops, men like Harry Conlin may have had the chance to go home.

The Atkinson Family

The Atkinson family lived in Melancthon Township (Lot 299, Concession 2 S.W.). John and Rachael (Donkin) Atkinson had seven children, three which died of Spanish Influenza. Wilbert Henry was the second oldest child in the Atkinson family. He helped to run the family farm. He died January 28, 1918 at the age of 24 from pneumonia shortly after becoming ill with Spanish Influenza. Robert Roy was the 6th child (or second youngest) in the Atkinson family. He too helped on the family farm. He passed away at the age of 17 on February 1, 1918. Mary Ethel was 3rd child in the family. She died February 3rd at the age of 23. With nearly half of the Atkinson children having died from the flu, it is quite likely that the entire family had been ill. As with most cases, the virus progressed quickly leading to pneumonia and causing death within a few days. The three children are buried in the Shelburne Cemetery.



Atkinson Family headstone, Shelburne Cemetery. Credit: Laura Camilleri, MoD Archivist.

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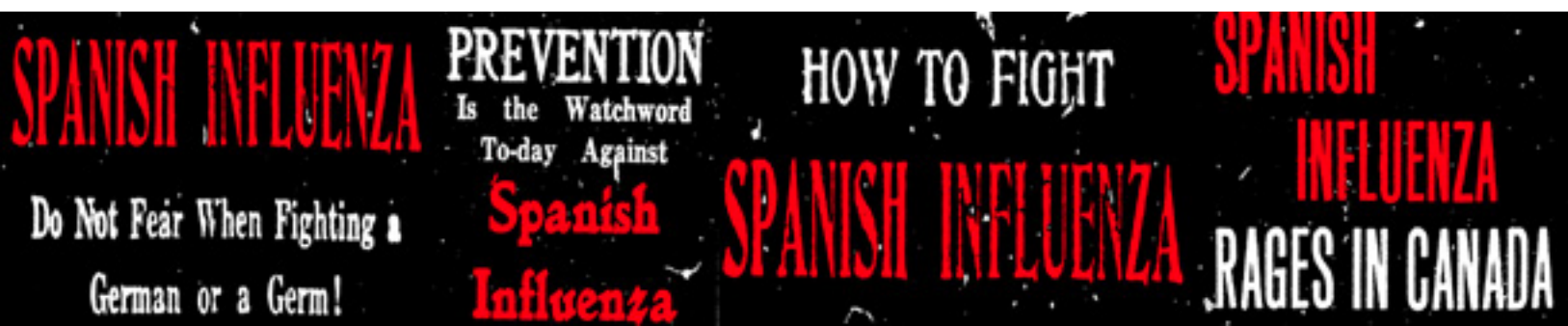
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Orangeville Banner. September 1918 – March 1919. Microfilm. Museum of Dufferin.

Orangeville Sun. September 1918 – March 1919. Microfilm. Museum of Dufferin.

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Shelburne Free Press and Economist. September 1918 – March 1919. Microfilm. Museum of Dufferin.



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Researchers

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