

Influenza epidemic closed down town in December 1918

"Mrs. Emma Barrett, 66 years old and wife of Isaac Barrett, died of influenza yesterday at the home one and a half miles south of Harrodsburg. *Bloomington Evening World*, Nov. 21, 1918.

As the influenza epidemic spread across the Midwest, it paid no heed to a person's status or standing. Though the local newspapers duly reported all deaths, there was one in particular that received particular notice — that of the wife of a local minister.

Announced the *Bloomington Evening World* in a lengthy front-page article:



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

"All Bloomington is in tears because of the sad death at 11:55 this morning of Mrs. C.H. Taylor, wife of Dr. C.H. Taylor, pastor of First Methodist Church. Only a week ago she and the two children, Phillip and Harriet, were stricken with influenza . . . all that could be possi-

bly done seemed to avail nothing and this morning just before noon she was no more."

Taylor's death prompted the country health officials to have an emergency meeting to discuss the epidemic. On Dec. 7, the local physicians had reported there were 27 new cases within the past 24 hours. As a result, the council voted to close movie houses, theaters, churches, Sunday schools, and public meetings of all kinds until Jan. 1.

In the same issue (Dec. 7) of the *Evening World* another front-page article pointed out the seriousness of the epidemic. "Indiana's death

rate increased nearly 100 percent in October 1918, over that for the same month in 1917."

By Dec. 10 the sad news of additional epidemic victims was reported in the newspaper. The front-page headline was, "INFLUENZA-PNEUMONIA CONTINUES TO TAKE HEAVY TOLL." Each obituary had its own separate headline. The dead were: Mrs. Alice Chambers, First and Washington streets; 6-year-old child of W.J. Burch, who lived near Stanford; and Mrs. Chester Taylor (Ruth), age 19, Vernal Pike.

Bedford got its share of flu cases, too. Town officials took some rather

drastic measures to help prevent the spread of the epidemic. Reported the *Evening World* on Dec. 11, "Residents of Bedford are prohibited from stopping and talking when they meet in the street under the terms of an order put in effect there yesterday in an effort to prevent a further spread of influenza. The situation in that city and Lawrence County with regard to the disease is described as alarming."

The rapid spread of influenza across the United States is profiled in a wire service article from Chi-

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