

1918 epidemic replaced war deaths with flu deaths

In November of 1918, when the peace treaty was signed in Europe, it ended the hostilities between the allied nations and Germany. But even as the armistice went into effect on the other side of the Atlantic, a deadly war was being fought in America — against influenza.

Monroe County did not escape the epidemic that took many lives. In fact, war bulletins that had been posted in the windows of newspaper offices were replaced by news of the deaths of local people.

Just prior to the armistice, the *Bloomington Evening World* on Nov. 7 reported that six Indiana University coeds with the flu had been sent to what was popularly known as the "Pest House" on South Henderson Street. The newspaper politely called it the university hospital.



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

The greatest danger with the flu was that it frequently degenerated into pneumonia, making it a deadly disease, since the medical profession did not have the advantage of the antibiotics in use today.

In the same article, the *Evening World* noted that some 30 IU male students were also suffering from the flu. Unfortunately, most of them had contracted the flu germ because of their patriotism. They were members of the Student Army

Training Corps and were living and studying together and sharing the germs with each other. IU had set up a temporary hospital to separate them from the other students.

Because of the epidemic, the Bloomington schools had been closed, but on Nov. 7, Professor E.E. Ramsey, superintendent, announced that he had hopes of re-opening them in the near future. Dr. J.K. Luzadder, the city health officer, also announced that the only new cases were in families where another member had already been infected.

All of that optimism was of little consolation to Monroe countians who were caring for family members fighting for their lives. At the university, students who were suffering from the flu received were nursed by volunteers, as well as

medical personnel.

In a brief statement on Nov. 6 in the *Evening World*, IU President William Lowe Bryan expressed his gratitude for the volunteers from the community who had come forward to help out in the emergency. He noted that not all of those volunteers were entirely selfless. "In contrast with all this (help) I record the fact that a few of the soldier boys while in the hospital had money stolen from their clothes."

On Nov. 9, the *Evening World* regretfully announced, "Chester Lee Hawkins, the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Russell Hawkins, was born on June 4, 1916, and departed this life November 6, 1918, age 2 years, 6 months and 2 days, having influenza followed by pneumonia. Chester Lee was a very kind and loving little fellow and was loved by every-

one with whom he became acquainted."

A major effort imposed by the health officer in keeping the flu from spreading was a quarantine. The official notice in the Nov. 14 edition of the *Evening World* gives the extent of the quarantine. "THE BAN IS LIFTED. This is to give official notice that the order because of influenza closing Churches, Schools, Theatres and all other meetings is hereby cancelled, and they may continue as usual. Also there will be no limit on business hours placed by the board of health."

The lifting of the quarantine may have brightened the spirits of Monroe countians, but it did not stop the deaths from influenza and pneumonia.