

The Flu, by Any Other Name ...

Russian, Spanish, Chinese – whatever nation gets the credit, influenza packs a global punch. Like its predecessors in 1889-90 and 1918-19, the 2020 coronavirus pandemic has sickened millions, killed thousands, and halted commerce and community life wherever it has spread.

With lots of time on our hands on the first day of Spring, we did some backward glancing to see how previous outbreaks affected our area and how people dealt with illness, quarantine and the uncertainty of combatting an invisible foe.

La Grippe

“‘La Grippe,’ or the Russian Influenza, is heard from all parts of the world and creates the greatest public interest,” reported the *Delaware Gazette* Jan. 1, 1890. “The fatal cases are very few, but the number of cases is very great and many of them very distressing. There seems to be none yet in this region.”

Two weeks later the Delhi correspondent of the *Hobart Independent* claimed “nearly every family in this community has been suffering more or less with the prevailing epidemic. Several hundred cases have come under the doctors’ care.” At least one proved fatal – Norwood Bowne, the



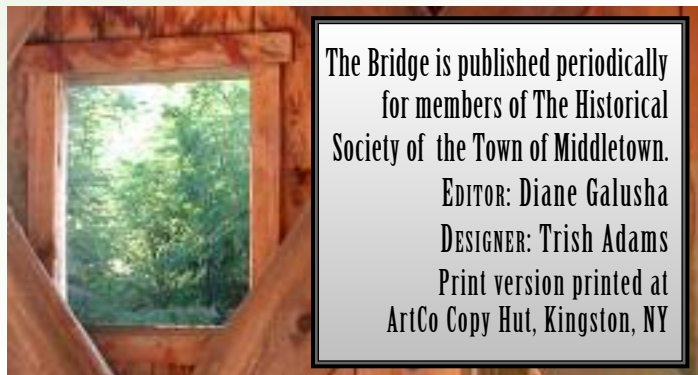
Ros Sanford, 4 years old, faced a daunting foe in the flu in 1918. His father Clarke, Publisher of the *Catskill Mountain News*, reported on the hospitalization of his son and many others.

editor of the *Delaware Express* newspaper for 51 years, died of bronchitis which took over where the flu left off.

Bowne was among one million people who died in the 1889 pandemic, which began in Russia and spread rapidly throughout Europe aided by railroads and steam
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A note on our 2020 season

We have a great line-up of events and programs for 2020. We're not sure yet whether the Covid-19 pandemic will require us to cancel or reschedule any of them. As soon as we know, we will send you the season's confirmed calendar. Stay tuned, and stay healthy!



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ships. It reached North America in December 1889 and spread to Latin America and Asia in February 1890.

Locally, the illness claimed bank presidents, teachers, laborers and physicians. In a time when people were accustomed to periodic epidemics – diphtheria, meningitis, typhus, scarlet fever – there was a ho-hum, dismissive tone in some of the accounts. Said the *Delaware Gazette* January 8, 1890, “La Grippe has become such a fashionable disease that very many have already laid claim to the distinction of having been afflicted with it. Many have colds and suffer greatly, but weather is favorable for such cases, and if a new name had not been introduced we would all be suffering in the good old fashioned way and that would be about the end of the matter.”

Then as now, fear and misinformation spread as quickly as the virus. A report about a Sidney man being taken to the Utica Insane Asylum noted “It is said La Grippe is the cause of his mental derangement.” Another article declared “It is no longer good manners for a gentleman to raise his hat when he meets a lady on the street . . . uncovering the head in the open air (has) caused a number of cases of influenza.”

In May the State Board of Health reported 7,262 deaths during the month of March 1890, exceeding the average of the previous five years by 844, the increase attributed to the pandemic.



Frank Kittle, shown here with unidentified child, and Harrison Osterhoudt (below) were among local soldiers who died of pneumonia brought on by the Spanish flu.



The Spanish Flu

Thirty years later, with the world in the midst of The Great War, a simultaneous health cataclysm unfolded.

The Spanish Flu pandemic may have begun in Spain or Austria, in France or the Far East, or in Haskell County, Kansas; its origin has not been definitively proven. It lasted from June 1917 to December 1920, spreading even to the Arctic and remote Pacific islands. Between 50 and 100 million people died, making it one of the deadliest natural disasters in human history. Some 500 million people, or 28% of the world's population, were infected. The pandemic engulfed the world in two waves, the second even deadlier than the first, most people succumbing from lung-filling pneumonia that followed the virus' introduction.

Most victims were healthy young adults. It is thought that exposure by older people to the earlier Russian Influenza (La Grippe) provided them some immunity from the Spanish Flu.

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The pandemic appeared in the pages of the *Catskill Mountain News* starting in the summer of 1918. Names of the afflicted and of grieving families were reported with increasing frequency for the next year: Margaretville attorney Andrew Fenton laid up for six weeks, forbidden to ‘discuss business or see clients’ . . . Nellie Rifenburg, 28, of Grand Gorge dies of flu-induced pneumonia, followed hours later by her husband, leaving 6-week and seven-year-old daughters . . . Ward DeSilva, 32 of Millbrook and his wife Margaret die two days apart, orphaning two young children . . . Mrs. Verner Marks and her four children of Belleayre on the sick list . . . the Fairbairn families of Dry Brook, too.

On October 25, 1918, 45 cases had been reported in Margaretville, while in Kingston, 6,559 cases had been tracked. Church services were cancelled, shops closed, one-room schools throughout Middletown and vicinity were closed, some for five or six weeks.

“The influenza epidemic has greatly affected business, and industry is almost at a standstill,” reported the News on Nov. 1. “Last Friday, not a ticket was sold at the Margaretville station for any train.” In that issue a few new cases were announced, as was Margaretville’s first flu-related death: nine-year-old Hilda Delameter.

The Ladies Aid Society opted not to hold their chicken pie dinner on election day, but voting went forward,

with many women showing up at the polls for the first time in New York State.

The death from influenza in October of Arena’s Frank Kittle at Army training camp in Syracuse had cast a pall over the area. He would not be the last local soldier claimed. Orville Baker and Harrison Osterhoudt, both of New Kingston fell to the disease in France.

The signing of the Armistice in November prompted parades, parties and large gatherings, including ‘the biggest crowd Andes ever saw.’ Not surprisingly, there were relapses in the spring. “Perhaps the March winds will blow some of the germs out of the atmosphere,” a News correspondent suggested optimistically on February 28, 1919.

By the fall of 1919 the emergency had diminished locally. But health officials warned those convalescing from influenza to beware of the onset of tuberculosis. “Have your doctor examine your lungs several times at monthly intervals. Build up your strength with right living, good food and plenty of fresh air.”

In December, the Red Cross turned its attention to the sale of Christmas Seals to raise funds for anti-tuberculosis work. “The seriousness of the TB problem has been greatly increased by the stress of wartime conditions and the influenza epidemic,” related the appeal. It hoped to raise \$6.5 million nationwide during 1920.

GROG AND GRIPPE

Many of the Paris doctors believe a stimulating regimen to be the best prophylactic against the influenza. The official oracle of the Gaulois lately advised its readers to begin the day with a thimbleful of rum or other spirit, according to their tastes, and to take two or three “grog” in the course of the afternoon. A lady reader of the paper writes to say that she has escaped the well-nigh universal affliction, thanks, as she believes, to acting on this advice, which she has induced several of her friends to take, with equally good results. So firm is her own faith in it that she has decided to replace her 5 o’clock tea by a “5 o’clock grog” while the epidemic lasts.

— *Hobart Independent*, Jan. 22 1890

TREASURY DEPARTMENT
UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

INFLUENZA

Spread by Droplets sprayed from Nose and Throat

Cover each **COUGH** and **SNEEZE** with handkerchief.

Spread by contact.
AVOID CROWDS.

If possible, **WALK TO WORK.**

Do not spit on floor or sidewalk.

Do not use common drinking cups and common towels.

Avoid excessive fatigue.

If taken ill, go to bed and send for a doctor.

The above applies also to colds, bronchitis, pneumonia, and tuberculosis.



Arthur Bussy, barnstormer, test pilot and airplane racer, in the cockpit.



Art Bussy carried aviator Beryl Markham (left) from Cape Breton Island to New York after her successful solo flight across the North Atlantic in 1936.

Oh, to have been a fly in the cockpit on September 6, 1936 as pilot Art Bussy, in a small plane that had been dispatched to fetch her, welcomed aboard the most famous woman in the world: British adventurer and socialite Beryl Markham.

The day before, Markham had crash landed her monoplane “Messenger” in a peat bog on Cape Breton Island, becoming – barely — the first person to fly across the Atlantic from east to west. It had been a harrowing 21-hour journey in sleet, heavy rain and high winds. It ended when her plane’s fuel tank vents iced over and she was forced to ditch. She’d been rescued by startled fishermen and bandaged by a local doctor. Now, on the hop-scotch flight to New York, Arena native Art Bussy would be the first person to hear the story from Markham herself.

“It was simply terrible,” she told the reporters who were waiting with thousands of excited fans when Bussy taxied the plane to a stop at Floyd Bennett Field. Markham was given a heroine’s ticker tape parade, and would later detail her adventure in her autobiography, *West with the Night*.

Bussy, meanwhile, went back to running an air charter service, barnstorming, racing planes and perfecting the art of aerial photography.

Arthur Bussy (1903-1969) was born to Arena feed store operator Arthur Bussy and Adaline Forgee. He had two brothers, Lewis and Charles. He graduated from Margaretville High School and Union College where he earned

an engineering degree. He married Elizabeth Etta Fulmer and they had one son, Richard.

In 1927 Bussy learned to fly in Oneonta. Piloting a Curtiss Condor and a Ford Tri-Motor, he landed at area airfields and thrilled many locals with their first

airplane rides. As a pilot for Fairchild Aerial Surveys, he gave his neighbors a new perspective with images of Arena, Margaretville and other communities as seen from the air.

In 1939, he competed in the transcontinental Bendix Trophy Race from Burbank, CA to Cleveland, finishing second in a time of 8 hours, 21 minutes and 8 seconds. (Famous competitors for this prestigious trophy included Jimmy Doolittle, who won the first race in 1931, and Amelia Earhart who took fifth place in 1935.)

During 1939 and 1940, Bussy flew for TWA in a DC-3. At the end of 1940, he relocated his family to San Diego to work for Consolidated Aircraft Company (later to become Convair and then General Dynamics). As a test pilot, he at one time reportedly suffered ‘the bends’ from high altitude flying.

During the war years, Bussy delivered B-24s to England, and seaplanes to Hawaii and the Philippines. When he could no longer fly due to severe arthritis, Art Bussy took to route planning for several airlines.

He died in 1969 in California. His papers and photographs are held in the archives of the San Diego Air and Space Museum whose Flickr site has an album of Arthur Bussy images.

To see vintage footage of Beryl Markham’s return to New York with Art Bussy at the controls, visit <https://youtu.be/O4Hpy79gyqI>

By Collin Miller

Mountain Athletic Club player/ manager

On July 26, 1899, the Delaware Gazette reported the following in a column called "Millionaire Fans":

"Baseball was a go. Church deacons, farmers, country sports and summer sports all became wild over it. So Charles Fleischmann looked about and finally found a four-acre tract that did not have more than a dozen hills and valleys on it and purchased it for his sons (Julius, 24 and Max, 18). Many thousands of dollars were spent in leveling this ground and blasting out the boulders so that in the summer of 1895 the team had a real ball ground to play upon."

Thus, we now regard the year 1895 as the start of the Mountain Athletic Club (MAC), a Fleischmanns ball club and playing grounds that were as grand as the hotels of the day.

For our 125th anniversary season, an ambitious slate of 16 games is scheduled at home on the Wagner Avenue field and throughout the county and beyond. In addition, we are working to get the MAC Grounds listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places, and plan to publish an illustrated history of the club with acclaimed baseball historian and graphic artist Gary Cieradkowski. We'll be producing a set of vintage-style trading cards of the current club members, and hosting two home games as fund raisers for the Fleischmanns Fire Department and the Museum of Memories.

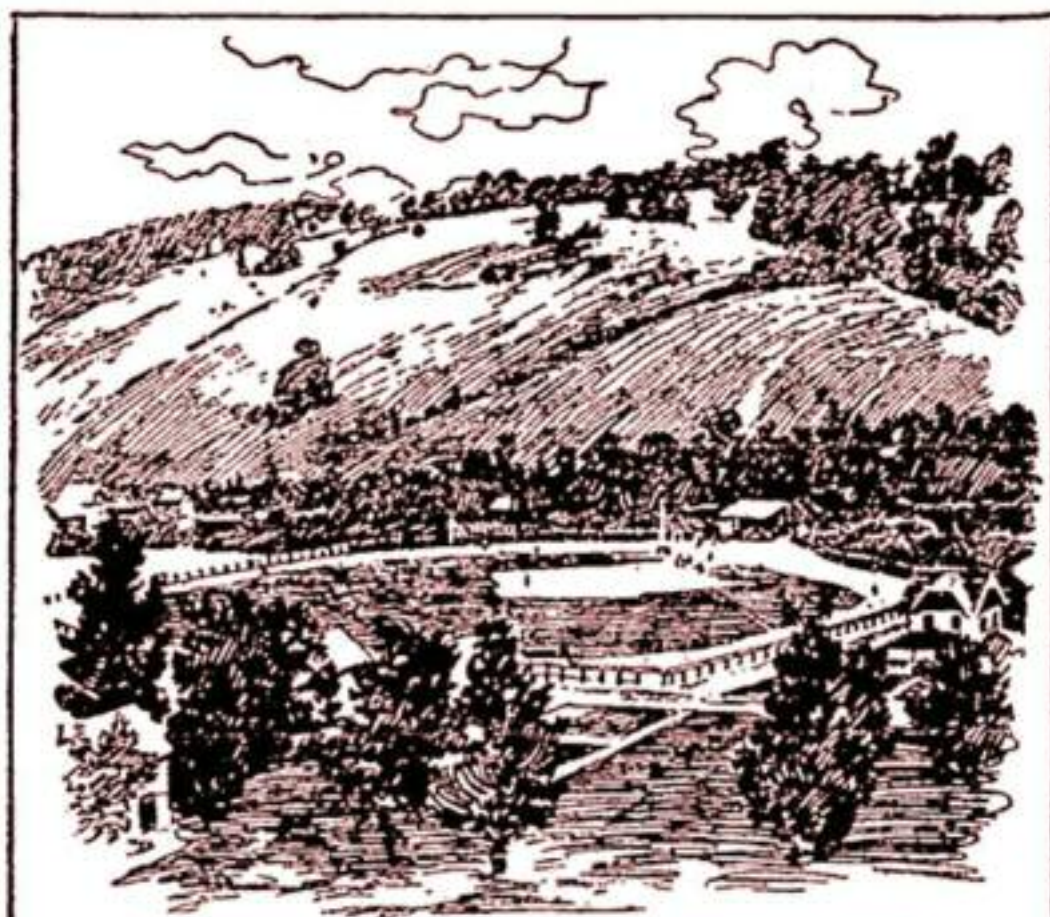
Admission is free at Fleischmanns Park, just as Julius stipulated when he donated it to the community in 1914.

Learn more about the

club's history, check out our 2020 schedule, and find out how to support us at macvintagebaseball.org.



MAC Grounds illustrated in *Riverside Daily Press*, Riverside, CA, June 24, 1899, below, and at a recent vintage game at part of Fleischmanns Memorial Day festivities.



FLEISCHMANN'S PRIVATE BASEBALL PARK.

Julius Fleischmann is the banner baseball crank. At his summer home in the Catskills he maintains a baseball park that has all the "fixin's" of the most complete home of the national game. A team, upon which Mr. Fleischmann and his brother play and which contains men who have made reputations in the minor leagues, holds forth all summer at the Mountain Athletic Baseball club grounds. Julius pays all the freight.

If you had a hankering for ham back in the day, Hills Restaurant in Arkville could satisfy your craving.

Thomas and Viva Hill established the eatery (now Oakleys) along Route 28 in the early 1930s. They operated it for 32 years and were known far and wide for their baked Virginia ham, smoked on the premises and slathered with a secret-recipe glaze. They'd make you a whole one to take home for Sunday dinner, and the rest of the week they'd prepare mouth watering ham sandwiches for restaurant patrons (a small one cost a quarter; the hungry-man variety was 35 cents).

How Tom Hill came by his specialty isn't known. He was born in Indiana in 1870 and married Viva, from Illinois, in 1906. They lived in Chicago and New York before coming to the Catskills for a vacation in 1928. They stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Harry Stark at their Arkville boarding house, "The Stardale," where they impressed the owners and other guests by staging a sparerib barbecue in the back yard.

Smitten by the mountains, the Hills packed up their belongings and moved to Arkville, where in 1930 they bought a building lot from the owners of the Locust Grove resort on Route 28. They had a home constructed, named it Solitude after the previous name for the Locust

Grove, and began taking in guests. The house still stands on the hillside adjacent to Oakleys.

By 1934 they had added a bar and restaurant and proudly advertised "Old Virginia Ham" sandwiches. Hamburgers, toasted cheese and other favorites were on the menu, too, as was Dobler Beer and an assortment of liquor at 25 to 75 cents a drink. (Tom, the story goes, was a 'rum runner' during Prohibition, which may explain how he could afford to establish a home and restaurant in the depths of the Depression.)

Three cabins and a couple of gas pumps were added to the compound, which attracted a steady stream of customers. In May of 1938, the Catskill Mountain News reported that Teddy Roosevelt, Jr. and a party of friends "were motoring through the Catskills and dined at Tom Hill's restaurant on Tuesday afternoon."

Tom and Viva Hill presided over their



Viva (below, left) and Tom Hill, and employee Eleanor Burger with some of the whole Virginia hams for which Hill's Restaurant was famous.

Facing page: Hill's Restaurant and roadhouse c. 1950, when Route 28 was being concreted.

The topper to the gas pump, above, from the collection of Gerard and Corinne Debari.



popular roadhouse through the 1950s. Tom died at the age of 90 in 1960, after which friends Lester and Lillian Davis moved into the house to care for Viva, who turned the restaurant over to them in 1963. She died in 1967.

The Davises operated the place for 20 years, and in 1983 sold it to Frank Flachs, who renamed it Frankie's Place. He sold it to John McDaniels and it became McDaniels. When John sold it to Gerard Debari in 2002 it became Oakleys and gained fame for its wood fired pizza.



George and Chris Zografakis acquired the business in 2018. Thanks to Lynda Stratton for sharing information and photographs.



Catskill Mountain News
Delaware County Chamber of Commerce's 2004 Business of the Year

Obituary

Our community mourns the passing of the *Catskill Mountain News*, which ceased publication with its January 15, 2020 issue. It had been in print since July 3, 1902. Over nearly 118 years, through all the storms, wars and economic downturns, all the epidemics, elections and social turmoil, the *News* had never missed an issue. It was the chronicler of the 20th century in this part of the Catskills.

Posterity is the big loser in the newspaper's demise. Remaining weekly newspapers in the region have a much wider focus. The jumble of electronic news about the current virus pandemic, for example, offers

virtually no coverage of its impact locally, as the *News* did during the Spanish flu outbreak of 1918-19 (see page 2). In any case, contemporary online articles and images may not even be available or accessible in 50 or 100 years, given changing technology. How will future local historians make sense of it?

Our condolences go to the Sanford family who ably shepherded the paper through thick and thin for 114 years; and to Joan Lawrence Bauer whose tenure as editor and publisher came at a time of intense competition from social media and the changing habits of consumers.

In 2006, HSM orchestrated the digitization of the *News* 1902-1973. It remains a go-to source for history and genealogy research. We are proud to have made that resource available and hope in the not-too-distant future to add several more years of the *News* to that website (nyshistoric-newspapers.com.)

In 2017, a few months after the newspaper changed hands, HSM organized a program called "History as it Happened," readings from the *News* culled from a century of change. In tribute, we have posted it on the Features page of our website, mtownhistory.org. We hope you enjoy it.

THE 55¢ POST

THE 55¢ POST is an exclusive feature for members who receive *The Bridge* via e-mail. Because your newsletter requires no stamp, you get an "extra"!

We are living through a period that will be studied, written about, analyzed and remembered for decades to come. How is the novel coronavirus and the outbreak of COVID-19 affecting your daily life? Has sickness visited your home or family? Did you have to close a business, lay people off, shut down an organization? Are you a medical professional working to curb the disease? An employee who has continued to work in an 'essential' commercial or government capacity? Are your kids home from school? How are they, and you, coping with isolation? Are there stories of joy amidst the fear, uncertainty and sadness? Please send us your thoughts, stories, photographs, short videos or audio clips and observations to history@catskill.net. HSM will archive them to document this historic moment. Thank you.



A sidewalk message of hope spotted on Swart Street, Margaretville



Here's Looking at You, Margaretville!

Aerial photographer Art Bussy took this view of Margaretville in the summer of 1933, when the new steel bridge across the East Branch was under construction. Note the old covered bridge which had been moved downstream for the duration of the project. It was later dismantled and repurposed.

Read all about Arena resident Art Bussy inside on page 4.

Photos from the Arthur Bussy Collection, San Diego Air and Space Museum

