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## ***A Dark Reflection: 1918's Pandemic in the Clayton ♦ Deer Park Community. (Part Two)***

*by*

**Wally Lee Parker**

*The dictionary definition of the word "pandemic" is "a disease prevalent throughout an entire country, continent, or the whole world." It then identifies the phrase "human nature" as embodying "the psychological and social qualities that characterize humankind." Historical studies reliant on verifiable evidence tend to suggest that whenever "pandemics" and "human nature" run afoul of each other, the outcome will be both chaotic and deadly.*

*... an ill wind ...*

On Tuesday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, 1918, Deer Park's schools opened for autumn's classes. Throughout the summer, the local newspaper — the *Deer Park Union* — hadn't voiced any great concerns regarding the influenza epidemic — most locals apparently assuming it was, if not an ocean away, at least a continent's width. That assumption began to change just thirty-six days later when, on Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, all schools in Spo-

kane County were abruptly closed by order of the county's health officer, Dr. Albert Stuht — that while acting in concert with the City of Spokane's health officer, Dr. John Anderson.

The same day the order took effect, Spokane recorded its first Spanish Influenza death, that of a 17-year-old girl.

Along with the notice of the local schools' closure, quite prominently displayed on the *Deer Park Union's* October 11<sup>th</sup> frontpage was a set of instructions detailing "simple precautions" everyone should practice

— the objective, to inhibit the spread of Spanish Influenza. The newspaper implied the article was penned by Henry H. Evans; the local druggist Deer Park's city council had appointed to act as the town's health officer. In actuality, these "simple precaution" had been copied almost word for word from a statement released a week earlier by Doctor Thomas D. Tuttle, Commissioner of Washington State's Board of Health.

Among those newspapers carrying Tuttle's statement was *The Labor Journal*, a weekly published in the small town of Everett on Puget Sound. But unlike many other newspapers, the *Journal's* October 11<sup>th</sup> issue included the cover letter Doctor Tuttle had posted along with those recommendations.

Dated October 3<sup>rd</sup>, and directed "To the Editor" of each newspaper, Tuttle's cover letter said, "I earnestly request that you publish the following statement as a matter of news in your paper, as I believe the prevention of a serious outbreak of influenza in the state is possible with the earnest cooperation of the people."

The first paragraph of the statement appearing in the *Union* read, "A good deal has been published with regard to the outbreak of Spanish Influenza in our army camps and cities, especially in the eastern part of the United States. This disease is spreading very rapidly. We are frequently asked 'What is the probab-

*ity of an outbreak of this disease in the State of Washington?' My answer is, the disease is already here. It has not assumed epidemic form as yet. It can be prevented from assuming epidemic form only by the earnest, conscientious and intelligent help of every citizen of the state."*

Hardly draconian in nature, the State Board of Health's suggestions were largely common sense. "Never cough or sneeze without holding a handkerchief before your face. ... Keep away from public gatherings ... If you have any symptoms whatsoever of grippe (at that time a commonly used alternate name for the flu) stay at home."

In response to the countywide shutdown order, a snippet from Deer Park's October 11<sup>th</sup> *Union* noted that the city's Knights of Pythias had cancelled all meetings until further notice — a potential consequence of which was echoed in the following drizzle-down headline from the same day's *Spokesman-Review*.

To quote, "Influenzas Edict Aids Home Life — Demand for Parlor Games and Books Resembles Annual Yuletide Rush — Streets Look Deserted — Club Women Now Have Chance to Learn Their Husbands by Sight" — the last heading likely a direct reference to fraternal organizations such as the Knights of Pythias temporarily closing their doors — most such clubs only open to men.

### Henry Hoover Evans — Deer Park's City Health Officer, circa 1918.

*According to the obituary appearing in the Deer Park Union, H. H. Evans — described as a "pioneer Deer Park druggist" — passed away in a Spokane hospital on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of August, 1943. The article also states, "Mr. Evans was born in Ohio about 60 years ago.*

*Little is known of his early history except that he was a graduate of the Ohio Normal University with a degree in pharmacy. He came to Deer Park 30 years ago ..."* According to online data linked to Deer Park's Woodland Cemetery, Henry's birthyear was 1881. So far, the only truly vintage lines possibly referencing Mr. Evans were located in the July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1901 edition of *The Pharmaceutical Era* — a weekly pharmacological newsletter published in New York. That edition states that the Ohio Board of Pharmacy held examinations and one Harry H. Evans was registered as an "Assistant Pharmacist." If that was our H. H. Evans, he would have been around 20 at the time, apparently with full licensure as a pharmacist yet to be obtained.

Bylined "Hannah Hinsdale," the article that followed explained, "With all its supplies of canned amusements shut down, Spokane has had to turn to the home-grown variety because of the Spanish influenzas epidemic. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good, so the toy and game counters of the book and department stores have flourished for the last two days. ... The book counters and magazine counters are crowded. ... They come in and say, 'Well, give us a magazine. We can't do anything else so we may as well read.'"

### ... a matter of numbers ...

Under the headline "Report 95 New Influenza Cases," the October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1918, edition of the *Spokesman-Review* outlined several instances in which health office regulations had been vigorously enforced, the following being one example.

"Martha Guder, a clairvoyant, W427 Third Avenue, was arrested last night by Health Inspectors Paul J. Strobach and A. C. White for conducting a meeting in violation of the closing order of the city health office. She was locked up. Ten people were found in the home of Mrs. Guder, who was about to give a demonstration of spirit rapping, according to the inspectors. Mrs. Guder denied that she was holding a public meeting, saying that she was entertaining a few friends at a private reading."

Later that day, the *Spokane Chronicle* quoted Dr. Anderson as saying, "It is a safe estimate that there are 300 cases of Spanish Influenza in Spokane at the present time, although nearly all of them are of mild form."

On October 13<sup>th</sup>, the *Spokesman-Review* reported "500 persons in the city are now afflicted." As for the county, the paper stated "While Spanish Influenza cases are beginning to appear in all parts of the county, the residents are complying strictly with the quarantine according to county physician A. E. Stuht, who says the disease will soon be checked."

Dr. Stuht also said "two cases have

been reported from Mead, and two cases from Milan ... and some cases at Elk."

The very next day the *Review* commented on Spokane's "Nurse Famine," saying, "During the last year graduate nurses have been leaving the city for army service in large numbers," the results being, "Spokane yesterday had no nurses to draw upon for the several new cases of influenza wanting attention."

Referencing Spanish Influenza, a separate article posted in the same issue noted, "Six cases at Deer Park were reported yesterday by Dr A. E. Stuht, county physician."

The October 15<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Seattle's Post-Intelligencer* carried this stark warning from that city's health commissioner, Dr. J. S. McBride. "Seattle people are not making the efforts they should to check the disease, and unless they do Seattle will see a duplication of the conditions that have prevailed in the East. Undertakers will be unable to care for the dead. Rough boxes will be used for coffins and express wagons for hearses in order to care for the deaths."

### ... the problem outlined ...

The *Deer Park Union's* Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup> issue contained a smattering of local influenza news. It mentioned that lodge No. 186 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows would "hold no meetings during the time the lid is on because of the grippe." The Wayside community correspondent wrote "At the present time we know of no influenza case." Denison's correspondent said the same for that community. And the front page carried a notice that "A telegram received here, Sunday, from Camp Johnstone, Florida, contained news of the serious illness of Chester Groshong, who is confined in the hospital with Spanish Influenzas."

Chester did survive, as noted in a November 1919 issue of the *Union* when the paper reported he'd attended the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen's Halloween masquerade ball dressed as a "Turk."

During the latter half of October,

1918, and on into early November, a smattering of newspapers around the county — including the *Union's* October 18<sup>th</sup> issue — carried a wordy article under the equally wordy multipart headline “*Uncle Sam's Advice on Flu — U. S. Public Health Service Issues Official Health Bulletin on Influenzas — Latest Word on Subject — Epidemic Probably Not Spanish in Origin — Germ Still Unknown — People Should Guard Against 'Droplet Infection' — Surgeon General Blue Makes Authoritative Statement.*”

The majority of the piece was copied from a report on “*Spanish Influenza*” published by the U. S. Public Health Service, Washington, D. C. as “*Supplement No. 34, September 28, 1918.*” As reprinted, there seems to have been some rearrangement of paragraphs, possibly to enhance the report's dramatic impact.

After a brief historical introduction, the bulletin explained, “*In contrast to the outbreaks of ordinary coughs and colds which normally occur in the cold months, epidemics of influenza may occur at any season of the year, thus the present epidemic raged most intensely in Europe in May, June, and July.*”

Regarding symptoms allowing recognition of the disease, the report said, “*In most cases a person taken sick with influenza feels sick rather suddenly. He feels weak, has pains in the eyes, ears, head or back, and may be sore all over. Many patients feel dizzy, some vomit. Most of the patients complain of feeling chilly, and with this comes a fever in which the temperature rises to 100 to 104. In most cases the pulse remains relatively slow.*”

As for laboratory tests, “*... it has been found that in this disease (Spanish Influenza) the number of white corpuscles shows little or no increase above the normal.*”

The September 1918 Health Service publication emphasized that, “*No matter what particular kind of germ causes the epidemic (that being unknown at the time), it is now believed that influenza is always spread from person to person, the germs being carried with the air along with the very small droplets of*

*mucus expelled by coughing or sneezing, forceful talking, and the like by one who already has the germs of the disease. ... As in most other catching diseases, a person who has only a mild attack of the disease himself may give a very severe attack to others.*”

... waiting ...

Two weeks later, mention of the influenza once again visits the *Union's* pages. Besides the observation that “*patches of snow visible on Mount Spokane and Kit Carson early last week emphasized the fact that another summer has passed,*” the November 1<sup>st</sup> issue also assured Wayside readers that there're “*no known cases of influenza in this neighborhood,*” and that Chattaroy's Red Cross was cancelling its planned Halloween gathering “*on account of the influenza ban.*”

Featured on the front page of that week's *Union* was a reprint from the *Christian Science Monitor* assuring readers that the “*right attitude of mind wards off influenza.*”

... “*an S. A. T. C. man from Clayton*” ...

The first cases of Spanish Influenza among military students at that town's college reportedly having surfaced at the beginning of October, these two sentences appeared on page eight of the *Pullman Herald's* October 11<sup>th</sup> issue. “*Mrs. G. L. Zundel went to Spokane Monday to learn how the Red Cross pneumonia jacket is made. She is now prepared to instruct the Pullman workers in the manufacture of these jackets in case any are needed for the soldiers at the college.*”

History still emits a whiff of controversy when recounting the collision of 1918's pandemic with the cluster of volunteer S. A. T. C. inductees — Student Army Training Corps inductees — attending Pullman's Washington State College. What makes the episode even worse, the war these young people were at the college learning to fight ended before the first class had finished its sixty-day rotation.

The nature of the S. A. T. C. was

outlined in the August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1918 issue of *The Official U. S. Bulletin* — said bulletin being a six-day-a-week publication produced by the federal government's wartime Committee on Public Information. In part the outline read, “*Under the regulations provided for the Student Army Training Corps, selected young men who are physically fit for military service, who are 18 years of age or over, and who have had a grammar school education, may voluntarily be inducted into the Army and enter upon a course of special training. Those who have had a grammar school education, but no more, will ordinarily enter special training detachments to be trained along mechanical lines of military value.*”

Regarding the above “*18 years of age or over*” — prior to September 12<sup>th</sup> 1918 only young men 21 years of age and above were required to register for the draft. On that date the age of registration was dropped to eighteen.

A month after the first reported cases among S. A. T. C. students, the November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918 edition of *The Pullman Herald* carried this headline, “*Spanish Influenza Situation Shows Improvement — 37 Dead.*” As the newspaper explained it, “*Up to this morning the hand of death had descended upon 37 sufferers from the disease, for the greater part young men who had come to Pullman from all parts of the Northwest as members of the two branches of the S. A. T. C., men who were called upon to make the supreme sacrifice only a few weeks after they had pledged their all in the cause of liberty and right.*”

“*Of the 37 deaths recorded since the start of the epidemic, 31 have been members of the two branches of the S. A. T. C. at the State College, only six have been civilians.*”

As to the *Pullman Herald's* suggestion that there were “*two branches of the S. A. T. C.,*” the government's above quoted Bulle-

tin explained that those entering with a least a high school education “*will be allowed to enter the colleges for more advanced training as officers and as technical experts of various kinds*” — this apparently being akin to the Reserve Officers Training Corps.

In a segment covering state and national news, the *Deer Park Union's* August 23<sup>rd</sup> issue noted, “*Acceptance this week of 75 additional colleges as training centers ... brought to 257 the number of such institutions ready for organization and equipment.*” The article added,

“*The colleges accepted include ... Washington State at Pullman.*”

The *Spokesman-Review's* September 12<sup>th</sup> issue reported “*2500 young men and young women will receive training at the state college at one time during the school year opening September 30,*” among them, “*1300 students who will become members of the Student Army Training Corps.*”

Among the 37 young people the *Pullman Herald's* November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918 edition listed as dying, “*At midnight Charles William Billings, an S. A. T. C. man from Clayton, died at the Episcopal Church.*”

... Clayton brushes off the epidemic ...

On Friday, the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, the *Spokane Chronicle* reported the city's deaths due to Spanish Influenza totaled seventy-seven. To quote the city's health officer, “*It is my candid opinion that we are right on the crest of this epidemic and ready to drop over on the other side.*”

On the same day, the *Deer Park Union* announced, “*Charles Billings, a student in the auto school at Pullman, passed away at that place Wednesday of grippe or pneumonia, we did not learn which.*”

The next week's *Union* printed the following obituary.



*“The funeral of Charles William Billings was observed on Friday, November 2, at the cemetery near the Swedish Lutheran Church, five miles north of the city. The funeral was conducted by Rev. William Worthington. Mr. Billings was a victim of the Spanish Influenza which was contracted while he was at the training school at Pullman. Charles Billings was born at Mills, Nebraska, June 27, 1897. He was 21 years old and was inducted into the service but a few weeks ago.*

*“He leaves a father, mother and two sisters, all of them residents of the community north of town.”*

Also in the October 8<sup>th</sup> *Union*, Williams Valley’s correspondent reported *“The D. B. Throop family, which has been down with the influenza, is all on the road to recovery at this time.”* The newspaper printed an obituary for ten-year-old Fullerton David Jenkins who had passed away at Spokane’s Saint Luke’s hospital several days earlier — the cause not given. And then there was the following request. *“The Health Department of the town of Deer Park asks that there be as little travel to Spokane as possible. Get along with what can be purchased at home until the epidemic of gripe has been controlled.”*

On that same day, this bit of news appeared in the *Spokesman-Review*. *“New regulations requiring the wearing of influenza masks in public places, adapted last Monday by the state board of health, have been received ... The regulations are statewide, and their enforcement is said to rest with all peace officers of the state and the police department of cities.”* One caveat the article noted, *“customers need not wear masks in restaurants, cafes and other eating places while actually engaged in eating their meals.”*

A banner headline crossing the *Spokesman-Review*’s November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918 front page proclaimed, *“World War Ended.”* While most remaining pages of the newspaper were heavy with armistice related items, the following bit of Deer Park news was buried on page five, column five, under the lead *“O. L.*

*Olsen and Wife Ill: County Exemption Board Chairman Has Influenza.”* It read, *“Both O. L. Olson, chairman of the county exemption board, and Mrs. Olson of Deer Park are confined to their beds with influenza, according to word received in the city last night.”*

On November 12<sup>th</sup> the *Spokesman-Review* announced that the state was retracting its recent flu mask order, and also lifting the ban on public meetings and assemblies — to which county physician Dr. F. E. Stuht added, *“The state orders mean that we will not oppose public meetings in the county and that masks need not be worn. ... I suppose the schools may open in a few days. The state authorities will probably tell us when.”*

Writing in the *Union*’s November 15<sup>th</sup> issue, the Bear Creek correspondent said *“The Morse, Taylor and Pronty families have recovered from the flu. Viola Black of Elk has been home sick with the flu. F. A. Prichett is recovering from a flu attack.”*

In the same issue, Clayton’s correspondent opinionated, *“It now looks as though the flu scare (is) nearly over. So far as Clayton is concerned, most people here believe the quarantine has been a needless measure in places like this. Nearly four weeks had passed before a single case appeared within several miles of town. While people had not congregated in crowds, life went on otherwise as usual. Had the people realized that the Spanish Influenza is, as the Youth’s Companion (a magazine distributed nationally) of this week says, the La Grippe of 1899, not so many would have been scared to death.”*

The November 18<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Spokane Chronicle*, under the headline *“Spokane is Happy Once More,”* announced *“An order issued yesterday by Doctors J. B. Anderson and A. B. Stuht, city and county health officers, removed the quarantine on public gatherings. An exception is made of dances and the public schools. The schools will be allowed to open Monday, November 25, but the ban on dances and balls is still indefinite.”*

If the pattern followed by Spokane’s newspapers holds true, this, from the last para-

## GAUZE MASKS NOW THE STYLE

### MUST WEAR THE FLU MASKS IN COUNTY—CONGESTION RULES MORE RIGID

The number of new cases of flu appearing in Stevens county during the past week is only half of those reported the week before. Colville’s flu situation is improving, according to the county health officer. The local physicians have been working night and day to fight the epidemic and deserve credit for the manner

in which they have handled the situation. Orders in regard to the wearing of masks and congregating in groups are to be rigidly enforced in Stevens county.

#### To Make Flu Masks

From four to six layers of gauze are used, depending on the thickness of the gauze. The finished mask measures 8x6 inches. Turn the edges in all around the hem. Three horizontal pleats are made to provide the necessary fullness. Four pieces of tape, one at each corner of the mask, are used to tie it on and are made about 11 inches in length. The outside of the mask is marked with black threads so that one will not put it on wrong. These masks should be changed every two hours, and the one taken off should be sterilized before wearing again.

#### *Influenza Masks and Social Distancing — circa 1918.*

*The above is an abridged clipping from the front page of the November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1918 edition of the Colville Examiner.*

graph of the above article, only refers to that city. *“Deaths officially reported now number 189, three being reported this morning.”*

#### *... Deer Park and Clayton end shutdown ...*

*“The flu ban was raised at noon Tuesday, and Deer Parkers are again breathing normally. ... Mrs. Renshaw, president of the local Red Cross informs us that all the cases here are improving, and she wishes to take this method of thanking those who have so generously given of their time in taking care of those affected.”* So said the *Deer Park*

*Union*’s November 22<sup>nd</sup> issue.

Among the items scattered elsewhere, *“Frank P. Swan is on duty at the First State Bank again after a week’s tussle with the gripe. ... Mayor O. L. Olsen is attending to business again after having been confined to his home a week or more with a genuine attack of the flu. The Mayor says that it is not a disease to trifle with, but one that, with proper care, can be handled all right. Mrs. Olsen is rapidly improving.”*

The correspondent for Williams Valley stated, *“The Williams Valley school opened again Monday. The flu ban having*

been lifted in Stevens County was the prime cause.”

As for the town of Clayton — also in Stevens County — that community’s correspondent reported, “School commenced again on Monday, and by Wednesday nearly the entire attendance was again on hand. One or two families seem to still be timid about the flu, but it is not certain that Clayton has had a single case of the disease. In fact, this place has been so free from the disease that Dr. Searight left for Trail, B. C., a couple of weeks ago to aid in the trouble there. He was called home several days ago on the reported case of Curtiss Small. He has returned in disgust to Trail, declaring Mr. Small’s ailment bronchitis — not the influenza at all. The patient he left behind is now sitting up and on the high road to recovery.”

Several column-inches later, Clayton’s correspondent added, “The Coffin family, who live several miles out but are in the school district, have about recovered from what is perhaps our only real case of the flu. In fact, no serious results have come to anyone in this vicinity except the one soldier who died at Pullman and was brought home for burial.”

The *Union*’s November 29<sup>th</sup> edition carried this in its “School Notes” segment. “School opened Monday morning after a vacation of six weeks with a good attendance.” Following were several “regulations,” namely, “Pupils cannot attend school if there is sickness in the home that in any way resembles the influenza,” and, “Any pupil that shows signs of taking cold or that has a cold must be sent home at once.”

An article on page six of the very next day’s *Spokesman-Review* headlined, “Epidemic Shows Sharp Increase.” The text following stated, “Total deaths reported to date 236” — that apparently only counting those within the city at the time of passing.

On that same page, under the lead-in “Not Alarmed by County Flu,” this appeared. “While the Deer Park schools have closed again as the result of the report of 15 cases of influenza, Dr. A. E. Stuht, county health of-

## Pioneer Deer Park Physician Passes

Dr. Edgar Arthur Way who has practiced in Deer Park for the past thirty-one years died at his home on December 19 after being ill for several months.

Funeral services were held Sunday, December 22, at the Open Door Congregational Church with Reverend G. H. Rice officiating. The body was shipped to Franklin, Indiana for interment Monday evening. The Lauer Funeral Home of Deer Park was in charge of arrangements.

Besides his wife, Margaret, at the home, he leaves one brother, Harry Way, Columbus, Indiana; and one sister, Mrs. Mary McIlvane, Franklin, Indiana.

Dr. Way was the physician for the Royal Neighbors Lodge for many years and did outstanding work during the flu epidemic of 1918 when he was the only doctor here.

**Dr. Edgar Arthur Way.**

**(July 19, 1870 — December 19, 1940)**

**Clipped from the December 26<sup>th</sup> 1940 issue of the Deer Park Union.**

**Other than the fact that Dr. Way arrived in Deer Park in 1909, little more has been discovered so far about the physician’s past.**

ficer is not alarmed, as conditions in other parts of the county remain unchanged.

“The slight increase noticed at places should not cause alarm,” said Dr. Stuht. “I would not be surprised if more or less cases appear this winter. We can not expect a sudden termination of the disease.”

### ... critical copy of newspaper missing ...

Sad to say, an entire issue of the *Deer Park Union* critical to our understanding of the community’s reaction to the pandemic is missing from our electronic files — and therefore more than likely from the hardcopy archive as well. That Friday’s issue is of special importance since it appears that sometime during the first week of December, 1918, a decision was made to convert Deer Park’s just closed-again high school into a hospital for the care of Spanish Influenza patients. It’s quite possible an explanation for that decision and initial steps of instituting such would have been printed in the December 6<sup>th</sup> issue.

We do have a mostly legible copy of the next week’s *Union* in which the community’s influenza situation is extensively covered.

### ... a busy week ...

The upper left-hand column in the *Deer Park Union*’s Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup> issue noted the passing of one of Deer Park’s leading citizens. The obituary began, “The morning of December 7<sup>th</sup> brought an unusual shock and sadness to the entire community when it was announced that J. R. Neaville had died. Hundreds of people had been watching with intense anxiety the struggle which was known to be going on for his life.”

On the opposite side of the front page, under the heading “The Flu Situation,” this.

“Casting up the situation with regard to the progress of the epidemic up to Wednesday morning, December 11, it appears about as follows.

“Reports have been gathered from the

president of the Red Cross who has been in active touch with the situation from the beginning; from the health officer and Dr. Way (see sidebar, facing page), through the office at the hospital and from the Deer Park Lumber Company.”

A strip along the newspaper’s edge had been damaged at some point. For the following paragraph, where bits of text were damaged or missing altogether, either a best guess was made or note added in parenthesis when the words were missing or illegible.

“Checking over and eliminating old cases and false reports, there have been reported 104 case during (this?) second outbreak. The outbreak has been in progress (missing text) days. Cases were reported (during?) the first eight days at (missing text) average rate of 10 per day. (Missing) the past four day’s reports (have?) come at the rate of six per day. It appears thus that (there?) has been a lull in the progress of the disease, though not enough to relieve the pressure upon (available help?) when all the (illegible) of the previous eight days is considered.

“Twenty-five cases have entered the hospital and two have been discharged. The inevitable weariness incident upon caring for the sick and trying to discharge the ordinary duties of life is beginning to be felt and the need of volunteers still very urgent. This is especially true of women’s help. There are so many homes where women and little children are sick that it is difficult to supply the needed assistance without the help of women. This will be more apparent when it is understood that about 50 homes are directly affected by this second outbreak.

“If the citizens of Deer Park ever had reason to be proud of themselves they have that reason now. The number of persons who have volunteered for any help which they can give, night or day, is phenomenal when we consider the number of homes involved and the call which is being made upon all surplus energy to take care of friends and relatives. The response to appeals for beds, bedding, clothes, towels, and other materials when the

hospital was opened was most generous and the unanimity with which the work has thus far progressed with mainly volunteer help to depend upon is exceedingly gratifying. Generous contributions of fruit, vegetables, cream (and) butter have come in. Continued generosity along this line will still be needed.

“Additional training services has been secured for night work at the hospital and there is no room for doubt that things will progress most satisfactorily there under Miss Crawford’s very efficient management.

“Although the death of Mr. Ray Neaville came as a tremendous shock to the community on account of his position and usefulness over so long a period, we are to be congratulated on the smallness of our death rate when other places are considered. Without doubt this has been due to the promptness of the city council in recognizing the situation and in providing the hospital and the cooperation of all our citizens in quickly meeting every call for help as it came. The town may well be proud of the sacrificial spirit of its people.”

The December 13<sup>th</sup> issue of Deer Park’s *Union* also carried a scattering of flu-related notices peppered about the pages. Among them ...

“Frank Spinning is out of the hospital after several days tussle with the flu. Frank said that when he went to the hospital there was a brick house standing on the back of his neck, but that the nurse kindly removed it the first day, and thereafter he was ready to get out, but officials would not stand for it.”

“Miss Lena Olson, who has been confined to her room for the past week or so with the flu, is again able to be out.”

“Captain George Baker is again patrolling Main Avenue, after having been off duty for ten days with the prevailing malady — flu. He claims he lost 20 pounds, but he does not show it.”

“Miss Viola Eggert of the Arcadia office force is on the job again after spending a week at home with the flu as a companion.”

“Miss Osborne of Spokane is subbing at the Deer Park Lumber Company’s office

during the illness of the regular stenographer.”

“T. A. Allen, who has been ill for the past several days with the flu, is able to be around again.”

“Frank Chapman is among the live ones again, having successfully withstood a siege of the influenza.”

“W. S. Gilger says he does not even complain of the neuralgia anymore, for if he does Mrs. Gilger will have him in the hospital.”

“Louis Olson, proprietor of the Olson Hotel, is on duty again after a week’s siege with the flu.”

“Charles Wilson has fully recovered from an attack of the flu, and is again around his old haunts.”

“Miss Rose Eastland, who has been in the hospital with the flu, is so far recovered that she is able to sit up.”

“The W. T. Lutton family, which has been in quarantine on account of the flu, are all reported as on the road to recovery.”

“Miss Mable Harshbarger is reported to be steadily improving. She has returned to her home from the hospital.”

“A. Bishop of the Deer Park Creamery Company is improving rapidly and expects to be free from the clutches of the flu this week.”

The correspondent for Chattaroy wrote, “The body of Archie Keek, who died at Milan of influenza, was brought to Chattaroy Wednesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, for interment in the local cemetery. Besides his wife and child, he is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. Keek of Dry Creek, and several brothers and sisters.”

The Wayside correspondent submitted the following. “Emerson Graffmiller and family are ‘in’ with the flu. Also Mrs. Duane Wheeler and daughter have passed through a siege of it. Mrs. Gus Hamann is also ill with the same.”

The tone of Clayton’s submission for the December 13<sup>th</sup> issue seemed difficult to categorize. Though noting that “Our physi-

cian, for the first time in many months, is the busiest man in town. Health in Clayton is ordinarily such, till we catch the other fellow’s disease, that a doctor has poor picking,” the correspondent then complained, “If ever a quarantine was a useless one so far as the local conditions were concerned, it was the five weeks when the flu quarantine in general was on. Not a sign of a case was apparent until about the time it was lifted. After two weeks of school the disease broke out in ear-

nest in numerous families, though there had been none of it in the schools during the time the schools were in session, and the directors rightly shut down. No deaths have occurred, and in a majority of instances the attacks have not been severe. Indications are that the district will have complete control of the epidemic and everyone recovered by the first of the year.”

———— to be continued ————

## Notes from the Office

### Happenings In & Around the Society’s New Home

#### Backstory for the Society’s Newest Acquisition, The Olsen Opera House’s Stage Curtain.

... a secret kept ...

In the summer of 1911, Deer Park entrepreneur Louis Olsen raised a two-story redbrick structure on Main and First Street’s southwest corner lot. Vintage editions of the *Deer Park Union* interchangeably called this new edifice the Olsen Block or the Olsen Building. Over the next century the building’s first floor saw a secession of businesses, while the upper level remained largely unchanged. As older citizens passed away and fewer and fewer of the newer had reason to climb to the upper level via a set of annoyingly steep steps, that floor’s colorful history faded from popular recollection. Only those who occasionally

had reason to challenge those stairs were aware of the long-vacated auditorium consuming the majority of the top floor’s square footage — proving that forgetfulness can, on occasion, be a good thing.

The community’s memory of what was originally tagged “Olsen’s Opera House” began to reawake in May of 2008. That was the month the first copy of the society’s newsletter, the *Mortarboard*, went to press. The following quote was clipped from an article appearing in that issue — said article describing a field trip the membership took on January 12<sup>th</sup> of that year.

“After the close of the society’s monthly meeting, members and associates of

**Further Reading — Biography of Louis Olson (also spelled Olsen).**

“Louis Olson: Businessman/Builder,” by Peter Coffin.  
*Mortarboard* #89, September, 2015 — page 1133 — *Collected Newsletters, Volume 24.*  
[http://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/mortarboard\\_issue\\_89\\_doublepage\\_web.pdf](http://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/mortarboard_issue_89_doublepage_web.pdf)





Photo by Wally Lee Parker.

***The Olsen Opera House Stage — as of January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008.***

*Taken during the society's 2008 tour of the Olsen Building, this was the first view most of us had of the curtain.*

the C/DPHS gathered on the southwest corner of Deer Park's Main and 1<sup>st</sup> Street for a tour of the Olsen Building — a tour guided by Gordon Grove, a member of the family that currently owns the structure.”

After explaining that the building's second floor was accessible via a set of street level doors on the building's southeast corner and then up the aforementioned noticeably steep steps, the article stated, “the building's upper level has space for four offices.” And then that those offices overlooked Main Street.

Recalling the various doctors that once hung shingles outside the above noted rooms, tour attendee Robert Clouse quipped “I pity the poor souls that had to negotiate those stairs when hurting.” As one of those with a few little shards of memory related to either climbing or being carried up those stairs —

that back in the late 1940s or very early '50s — I saw no reason to quibble with Bob's observation.

Revisiting the upper level some six decades later, on a day when the only light was spilling from an overcast sky, then filtered through grimy windows, my first impression of the theater was an expanse of bare floor — empty except for some boxes stacked in the more or less middle, and a smattering of boards and bric-a-brac dropped here and there in jackstraw piles. It felt as if decades of dust and neglect had steeped deep into all the opera house's surfaces, leaving every nook and cranny holding some bit of debris eroded from the past. Even the air itself oozed a suggestion of age.

Since we knew little of the second floor's history at the time, the pieces of Mor-



Photo by Peter Coffin.

***Moving the Stage Curtain — July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020.***

*A group of volunteers load the curtain onto Mike Reiter's trailer, this while the rig was parked on First Street, just north of the Olsen Building.*

tarboard article quoted below used the term “pavilion” when describing the opera house.

“The pavilion area, approximately seventy by seventy feet, occupies at least two-thirds of the upper floor. (It's) separated from the office area by a long hall. At the beginning of the hall is a small ticket office — said pavilion (having) once offered dances, movies, and live plays.

“The (raised) stage area is located on the south side of the pavilion. The stage floor bows outward into the pavilion, with a trough deep enough to hide the stage-lights inset into (the stage's) lip. The stage is fairly shallow, but accessible from either wing. And propped against the back (wall) of the stage are background props — canvas over wood frames — once painted to resemble storefronts or some such, but now faded beyond (clear) recogni-

tion.”

While fairly accurate, something very important was missing from the above article's description — said absence being a considered decision based on our tour guide's request. This, of course, needs some clarification.

The most intriguing thing about the entire theater was the very vintage curtain still hanging just behind the stage's polished wood arch — still hanging as if waiting to rise one more time. Painted on the curtain were advertisements for local businesses — twenty of such. Our best guess — then as well as now — was that all the businesses appearing on the curtain were in existence prior to the end of World War I, and maybe even as early as the

— text continued on page 2136 —





Photo by Wally Lee Parker — January 12, 2008.

The Olsen Opera House Curtain — circa 2008.

The width of the Olsen Opera House curtain is 20 feet. At this time its height is a matter of guess, since a detailed evaluation has yet to be made. There is an unpainted apron integral to the curtain's rolling mechanism attached below that portion of the curtain normally seen by the audience. Once the curtain has been unrolled and measurements taken, we expect the height of the painted surface to be around 9 feet, with at least several more feet for the unpainted apron.

Referred to in the literature as an Olivo Drop (said term apparently referencing both the style of curtain and the means by which it was raised and lowered), a complete survey of this relic has yet to be conducted. Hopefully such a survey will describe the materials used, research the history of the company's mentioned in the artwork, detail the current condition of the artifact and the best methods of preservation coupled with the least damaging means of displaying the artifact. Through it all, the following nationally recognized rule for the care of antiquities should be observed. "Do no harm."



— text continued from page 2133 —

opera house's 1911 opening. We've yet to find anything to kibosh our feeling that the earlier of those possible dates is the likely, leaving us with a strong suspicion that this curtain is just now on the cusp of turning one hundred and nine years old.

On that chill winter midday in 2008, we immediately recognized the curtain as a significant though fragile historic treasure — one that had survived this far by the luck of being in a relatively stable environment that was also out of most everyone's sight and mind.

To extend the relic's luck a bit more, Gordon Grove requested the society's silence. So, for the next twelve and a half years those members aware of this remarkable relic only spoke of it in hushed terms — if we spoke of at all.

#### ... a gift to the community ...

In May of 2016 Gordon called the historical society's president, Bill Sebright, to inform him that he and his sister, Leslie Ann Grove, were selling the Olsen Block, and as part of the deal were gifting the society the opera house curtain. The gifting was a bit convoluted since the buyer very definitely wanted to keep the vintage curtain. As Gordon later explained, the negotiated solution *"seemed to work well because the society had no place to store the roll drop, and the purchaser wanted it to remain hanging on the stage where it had survived the better part of a century. For the moment it was a win-win situation."*

Early this year word reached the society that the curtain had been taken down, rolled, wrapped in plastic and left on the floor of the theater's stage. Society members began to make inquiries, and as of June it appeared an agreement had been reached in which the building's owner would relinquish the curtain as per the prior agreement.

On Thursday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, a group of

volunteers removed the rolled curtain from the former Olsen Opera House to a safe storage area. Once that was done, the society felt free to post a photo of the curtain taken during the society's 2008 tour on our website, and openly announce the relic's existence.

#### ... "be mindful of the possible hazards" ...

In an email to the *Mortarboard's* editor, Gordon Grove reported on his examination of the curtain — that made while it was still hanging. Below are some of his findings, along with his concerns and suggestions.

*"The drop is pretty resilient in that it has withstood around 100 years of hanging in that one spot. I did a fair amount of testing the flexibility of the paint on the muslin, and I was surprised that it didn't seem to want to crack at all if any spot was sharply folded. For the number of places on the edges where it had been torn a little or ripped away from nails, it seemed to resist tearing any further. They should be fairly easy to stabilize."*

Understanding the next passages requires some idea of how the Olsen Building's curtain — known on the vaudeville circuits as an *"olio drop"* — was raised and lowered. The olio drops were usually hung downstage — downstage meaning closer to the front of the stage. As for the origin of the word olio (pronounced ow-lee-ow), some sources have suggested it's theatrical slang for oilcloth. I'm sure there are other thoughts on that as well.

To raise, the Olsen theater's olio drop was spooled upward on a wooden roller some 22½ feet long. As society member Mike Reiter detailed after examining the roller — that also being in the society's possession — *"The pole consists of 3½ inch wooden circles spaced every 16 inches apart with lath-type strips of wood nailed around their perimeter."* This gives the roller a diameter close to 4 inches. With the curtain fully extended and the roller resting on the stage's floor, we believe the curtain's unpainted tailpiece remained wrapped around the roller one or more times. Using ropes attached to each end the

Photo by Mike Reiter.



***The Olsen Opera House's Olio Drop Curtain Roller.***  
***End view of the roller showing both the size and method of construction.***

wooden roller, and a pulley system fixed within the fly-space above the stage, this roller was rotated upward, and in the process it spooled the curtain into the fly-space. In the act of gathering the curtain, the roller spiraled up the back of the curtain. In this manner the curtain was lifted until it disappeared from the audience's view. As the curtain was raised, its surface and the images painted on it would have remained relatively still — the theatrical illusion being that the curtain was disappearing from the bottom up along a horizontal line.

The curtain, edges hidden from view, was hung immediately behind the stage's polished wooden arch. For future reference, we should get detailed measurements of the stage.

Gordon continued, *"When the curtain was down and totally visible, the roller was sitting on the stage's floor. There are some*

*small burn-holes appearing at regular intervals that are obviously the result of a hot light touching the curtain's surface while it was rolled up."* Gordon noted that these holes, beginning near the top of the curtain, grow progressively smaller as they descend — grow progressively smaller till they disappear. That would be the exact progression expected if a heat source were singeing its way through multiple layers of curtain material.

Gordon then stated, *"The main problem with the curtain right now is that it's quite dusty."* As readers will note, a few paragraphs further on Gordon is pleading for this relic to be treated with *"thoughtful care."* If the first impulse when dealing with a century's accumulation of grime is to send the curtain to a commercial cleaner or set-to with household cleansers and a vacuum cleaner, don't. When

dealing with what amounts to a priceless vintage textile, it would be wise to see what nationally recognized museums and preservationist groups recommend. In other words, it might be wise to approach this relic as an historically significant painting on cloth and follow the most knowledgeable and research driven recommendations for its care.

When retrieved by the society, the curtain had already been detached from the stage and lowered to the floor, then rolled in a loose and haphazard manner. Regarding such Gordon wrote, *"I'm also a little concerned that it will get scrunched since it's not now rolled in a stretched condition."*

Noting that the relic had hung undisturbed during his family's tenure of the Opera House, Gordon said, *"I have no idea when it was last rolled up on the roller, but my folks*

*bought the building in the '70s and never rolled the curtain up when they had it.*

*"I guess it's a mixed bag of concerns from a preservation standpoint. The curtain is a tough old bird and has had what it takes to survive unfurled in the environment it has known. It's not immediately at risk of drying up and blowing away, but while new environments and conditions of storage may seem more gentle, some could easily turn out to be more harmful, even in the short term, if thoughtful care is not taken."* In other words, as Gordon added, *"Be mindful of the possible hazards."*

There's a lot more to be discovered about this intriguing artifact and its history. Keep watching these pages.

——— Wally Lee Parker ———

## Minutes of the Clayton ♦ Deer Park Historical Society ——— July 11, 2020 ———

I certainly hope this will be the last month that the COVID-19 pandemic will force us to have no meeting. The words of my Dad came to mind, *"It's better to be safe than sorry."* I still hope to meet outside in August, maybe in Mix Park. Face covering and social distancing will be important. The following were reports sent by email.

Society President Bill Sebright reported: 1) Kris Barnes with the Deer Park Library sent the following email: *"I have a question for you. When the Deer Park Tribune moved, the newspaper donated a framed poster and book regarding the Artistry of Space Art Collection that toured the US in the 90s? I add a question mark because the poster is not*

*dated but the book is dated 1998. The poster is an advertisement of the traveling Artistry of Space exhibition. I am not real familiar with the exhibition, but I will include a link I found regarding a bit of history (see below). I am struggling to find a spot to display it at the library. The book needs to be displayed with the poster which creates a challenge here as I don't want the book to check out and have the set become separated. Another solution would be to have both items check out together but the poster is framed with glass and frankly that becomes a safety issue with people potentially carrying it in and out of the library and we currently do not check artwork out in our library of things so ... . Well, you can see*

Space Art Home Page.

<https://er.jsc.nasa.gov/seh/spaceart.html>

*my dilemma. So, I am wondering if the Historical Society would consider it as a donation. I tried my best to find a spot to display it here, but I just don't have an awesome spot for it."* I still haven't seen the display, so don't know how large it is. Mike Reiter said he has a T-shirt from the exhibition to go with the display. Someone wondered if this is local history. So, we will have to get more information and discuss what to do next.

Society Treasurer Mark Wagner reported: The main checking account ended the month at \$7,886.09. The web hosting account ended the month at \$940.46 with a withdrawal of \$31.29 for web hosting. There were deposits of \$200. A \$20 check was written for postage. The Brickyard Day account is at \$1,945.33.

Society Vice President: No one has stepped forward to become Vice President.

Print editor Wally Parker reported: 1) One hundred and twenty copies of the July *Mortarboard* (#147) have been printed for distribution. Printable files of the same have been forwarded to the Loon Lake Library and The Heritage Network. An online version has been submitted for uploading to the Society's website. 2) July's issue features an article penned by Pete Coffin under the title *"The Arcadia Orchards."* A second featured piece, this titled *"A Dark Reflection: 1918's Pan-*

*demic in the Clayton/Deer Park Community (Part One),"* was authored by the *Mortarboard's* editor. July's Letters/Brickbats column includes a clipping from the February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1892 edition of Olympia's *Washington Standard* newspaper detailing a plot, of sorts, to annex a slice of Eastern Washington into Idaho. Other clippings suggest the difficulty of hitting railroad stations with mail sacks thrown from moving trains, and the date of founding for both Yoke's Grocery Store and Lauer's Funeral Home. 3) Once again I need to remind everyone that the *Mortarboard's* current editor is getting old. It would be wise for one or more people to step forward and learn the ins and outs of Print Publications before all choice in the matter is removed.

Webmaster Damon Smathers reported: The July issue of the *Mortarboard* has been uploaded to the website. We once again placed a note on the frontpage letting viewers/members know our July meeting has been cancelled. A picture of the Olsen Opera House/Dance Hall curtain has been placed on our front page with a brief description on what the society plans to do next. Viewers can click on the *"What's Happening"* button for a larger photo of the curtain.

Pete Coffin reported that: 1) He is helping Melissa Silvio, President of the Valley Historical Society, research the Phoenix Log-

### Help Wanted!



**The society has a number of positions that need to be filled by creative ladies and gentlemen — those duties being that of Vice-President, Secretary, Publicist, Director of Fundraising, Curator, Archivist, Subscriptions Coordinator, and one or more people willing to learn the ins and outs of Print Publications and take over as editor when the need inevitably arises. If you'd be interested in any of these positions, contact the society.**



ging Railroad. 2) He spent most of the month getting his life back together.

Mike Reiter reported that: 1) Tom Costigan called me around early June to let me know Susan Peterson was hoping the Historical Society could haul the (Olsen Opera House) curtain out of the upstairs of her building. The curtain is on a pole that is over 20 feet long, and the problem was trying to find somewhere it would fit. Tom informed me that the Chamber of Commerce would be moving into the old *Tribune* office and that there might be sufficient wall space in there to display it. I spoke with Danielle Holstine of the Chamber about it. She seemed to be positive, although she would need to talk to her board members. In the meantime, Pete Coffin has offered to store it in his basement where it

sprawls across three quarters of the floor. This is definitely a temporary location.

Our field trip to tour Chuck's tractor collection at Challenge Hill is still postponed. We are trying to figure out when we can re-schedule it.

Brickyard Day has been cancelled for 2020.

Settlers Parade is still on; however, there will be no official activities in Mix Park.

Our next meeting will be Saturday, August 8, 2020, at 10:00 AM at either our new building or Mix Park. More information to follow.

Minutes submitted by President Bill Sebright, acting as secretary.

— end —

### Society Contacts

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### Comments Policy

We encourage anyone with observations, concerns, corrections, divergent opinions or additional materials relating to the contents of these newsletters to write the society or contact one or more of the individuals listed in the "Society Contacts" box found in each issue. Resultant conversations can remain confidential if so desired.

### Editorial, Copyright, and Reprint Concerns

Those contributing "original" materials to the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society normally retain copyright to said materials while granting the Mortarboard and the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society durable permission to use said materials in our electronic and print media — including permission to reprint said materials in future Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society publications. Under certain conditions proof of ownership of submitted materials and/or a signed release may be requested. No compensation for materials submitted is offered or implied. All materials submitted are subject to editorial revision. Any material published as an exception to these general understandings will be clearly marked. When requests to reprint materials are received, such will be granted in almost all instances in which the society has the right to extend such permission. In instances where we don't have that right, we will attempt to place the requester in contact with the owner of the work in question. But in all instances where a request to reprint is made, it should be made to both the society and the author of the piece, and it should be made in writing (letter or email). The society considers the application of common business conventions when dealing with intellectual properties a simple means of avoiding misunderstandings.

Volunteer proofreaders for this issue: Bill Sebright, Lina Swain, and Ken Westby.

From "The Coast" magazine,  
April, 1907



### See Yourself in Print.

The Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society's department of Print Publications is always looking for original writings, classic photos, properly aged documents and the like that may be of interest to our readers. These materials should be rooted within, though not limited to, northern Spokane County, southeastern Stevens County, and southern Pend Oreille County. As for types of materials, family or personal remembrances are always considered. Articles of general historical interest — including pieces on natural history, archeology, geology and such — are likely to prove useful. In other words, we are always searching for things that will increase our readers' understanding and appreciation of this region's past. As for historical perspective; to us history begins whenever the past is dusty enough to have become noteworthy — which is always open to interpretation. From there it extends back as deep as we can see, can research, or even speculate upon.

Copyright considerations for any materials submitted are stated in the "Editorial, Copyright, and Reprint Concerns" dialog box found in this issue. For any clarifications regarding said policy, or any discussions of possible story ideas or the appropriateness of certain types of material and so on, please contact the editor via the email address supplied on the same page.

— the editor —

### About our Group:

The Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society was incorporated as a nonprofit association in the winter of 2002 under the title Clayton Historical Society. Our mission statement is found on the first page (upper left corner) of each issue of our newsletter, the Mortarboard.

Our yearly dues are \$20 dollars per family/household.

We are open to any and all that share an interest in the history of our region — said region, in both a geographic and historic sense, not limited to the communities in our group's name.