



# Places in Time

## WINTER 2021

### **The Influenza Pandemic of 1918: Its Story and Lasting Impact after 102 Years**

By Rita M. King, Ph.D.

Throughout history, humans have migrated to survive and thrive. We are not deterred by the gravest of obstacles. But as humans move, they often bring their diseases with them. This fact was demonstrated by the rampant spread of a deadly virus. In the Spring of 1918, the first wave of the “Spanish Flu” originated in a U.S. Army training camp in Kansas. The flu spread to other Army camps here in the U.S., where tens of thousands were infected, and then it attacked the civilian population. Next, the virus was carried via troop ship to France. This strain of the influenza (now officially called H1N1) was targeting the healthy young adults and death rates were low. Somewhere in France in August 1918, this virus mutated and became more virulent, but still targeted healthy 20-40-year olds.

It was called the Spanish Flu because, during World War I, Spain was the only country in Europe that did not censor their press. The countries involved in the War did not want the enemy to know that so many of their troops were dying. President Wilson never talked about the Pandemic (and he actually caught it). The New Jersey Health Department did not take note of it in their monthly meetings, nor is there an annual report for this Department for 1918.

When the U.S. soldiers returned via ship to U.S. port cities, America saw its first drastic increases in death by Spanish Flu. Once here, it would have spread along other transportation routes in the U.S., including railroads, electric street railways, horse-drawn vehicles and cars. City officials acted quickly – closed schools, stopped mass gatherings, e.g., in houses of worship and movie theaters. All were told to wear masks, which offered some protection. Still, many more died and bodies were stacked like cords of wood. They ran out of coffins and the deceased were buried in mass graves. More deaths occurred where there were crowded conditions, e.g., tenements, prisons, etc.

This strain killed very quickly. You could have symptoms in the morning and be dead by dinner. There was no vaccine. Often the individuals died of pneumonia. High fevers, up to 106 °F, were common. This was due to the patient’s immune system producing too many cytokines – proteins that raised their fever drastically and caused death. Bayer aspirin was the only medication available – yet, because it was a German product, many were afraid to use it (thinking it was chemical warfare).

On September 28, 1918 the Philadelphia Liberty Loan Parade was held – 200,000 attended. More people died from influenza due to that single crowd gathering than occurred in any other U.S. city (Fig. 1).

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## President's Message

Dear Friends,

Recalling the leader of the Continental Army on the eve of the Ten Crucial Days of the American Revolution, General Nathaniel Greene wrote, "His Excellency George Washington never appeared to so much advantage as in the hour of distress." David McCullough, 1776, p. 271 (Simon and Schuster 2005). Outnumbered six to one, Colonel Edward Hand delayed an attack by the British forces near the Assunpink Creek in January 1777, an action that allowed the Continental Army to regroup and defeat the British at the pivotal battle of Princeton. The courage and resilience displayed by the Americans through the terrible winter of 1776 into 1777- beset by typhoid, camp fever and dysentery- is a lesson to us all in the age of COVID-19. We can look to these patriots and exert our efforts to model their courage.

Our Facebook page will feature notable residents of Lawrence Township. Many of you know that Jon Stewart, the comedian, was a resident of Lawrence Township (he attended Lawrence High, and tended local bars). But did you know that Penn Jillette of Penn and Teller taught at Lawrence High? Or that Thornton Wilder and General Norman Schwarzkopf are among the many who called Lawrenceville home? Or that country music star Diercks Bentley attended the Lawrenceville School?

Look for other notable people on our Facebook page. We look forward to continuing our virtual connection until we meet again in person. We hope to see you soon.

Kathie Meeker-Cohen  
President

## About Places In Time

The mission of *Places in Time* is to serve members of the Lawrence Historical Society (LHS) by:

- educating them about the history of Lawrence Township; and
- informing them of the activities of the Society.

Comments, questions, or submissions should be directed to sent to [webmaster@thelhs.org](mailto:webmaster@thelhs.org).

Deadlines for submissions are as follows:

December 15th (Winter issue)

March 15th (Spring issue)

June 15th (Summer issue)

August 15th (Fall issue)

Preferred length of submissions is 800-1000 words for feature articles and 400-500 words for reviews. LHS does not provide a commission for submitted works.

*Places in Time* accepts advertisements from businesses which provide services that would be of interest to LHS membership. Rates and other related information can be obtained by contacting the Society at [webmaster@thelhs.org](mailto:webmaster@thelhs.org)

*Places in Time* is published quarterly by the Lawrence Historical Society. Back issues are available at the LHS website -[www.TheLHS.org](http://www.TheLHS.org). We can be contacted at the following address: [webmaster@thelhs.org](mailto:webmaster@thelhs.org) This program is made possible, in part, by a grant from the Mercer County Division of Culture and Heritage, in partnership with the New Jersey Historical Commission, Division of Cultural Affairs/ Department of State. An advertisement (or sponsor recognition) appearing in *Places in Time* does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation of the advertiser's product or service by LHS or *Places in Time*. *Places in Time* and LHS assume no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

**February Event: Lecture On Slavery and African-American History in Lawrence Township**

Lawrence Historical Society, in conjunction with Mercer County Library System, will host a virtual lecture, Slavery and African-American History in Lawrence Township on February 24 at 7:00 pm. Dr. Brooke Hunter, Associate Dean of The College Liberal Arts and Sciences at Rider University and Lawrence Township Historian, will deliver the lecture. The historic record to be presented will focus on Lawrence, and will place the township in the general context of slavery, African-American history, and race relations in New Jersey and the United States. This informative lecture examines the social and political context of slavery and how the institution has influenced race relations since Colonial times.

The lecture is free, but registration is required to obtain the link. The MCLS GoToMeeting software will be used for this event. This free software works like Zoom and can be downloaded to a computer or as an app on any Android or iOS device. For more information, visit the society website at [www.thelhs.org](http://www.thelhs.org).

To go directly to the registration page at the library, please go to: <https://www.eventkeeper.com/code/ekform.cfm?curOrg=MCL&curID=488387>

Registrants will be emailed a link the day prior to the event. If you do not receive a link, please email [hopeprogs@mcl.org](mailto:hopeprogs@mcl.org) for assistance.

**History in the Pages**

The Secret History of the New Jersey Devil

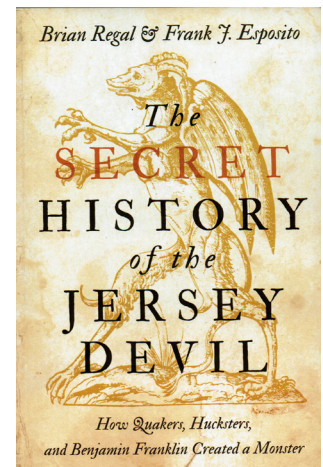
Brian Regal & Frank J Esposito, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018. 160 pp.

Review by Judy Salcewicz

Most New Jersey residents know about the Jersey Devil: the myth, the legend, the hockey team. The first page of *The Secret History of the Jersey Devil* challenged my knowledge. "Everything you think you know about the Jersey Devil is wrong," authors Brian Regal and Frank Esposito proclaimed. I was one of the many who, after growing up in New Jersey, pictured it as a winged horse-like creature with glowing red eyes ready to prey on those who dared roam the Pine Barrens at night. A historical banquet awaited in the pages of this well-researched and documented book.

The story of our most famous myth begins, not in New Jersey, but in the English colony of West Jersey. Details of colonial history set the scene for the legend's forgotten origins. The Leed's Devil, the monster's first moniker, was political.

Daniel Leeds (1652-1720), a well-read member of the Society of Friends, wrote an almanac to enlighten members of his Quaker community. The Friends he sought to uplift, attacked him for the inclusion of astrology. Not to be dissuaded, Leeds labored for months over an ambitious book of metaphysical philosophy. Offended community members burned his books as a heretical attack on their Christian beliefs. To salve his wounded pride, Daniel lashed out with a series of exposes that include "some of the earliest political attack literature produced in America, which helped lay the groundwork for today's innuendo-and scandal-laden journalism, with its focus on hearsay and rumor rather than facts."



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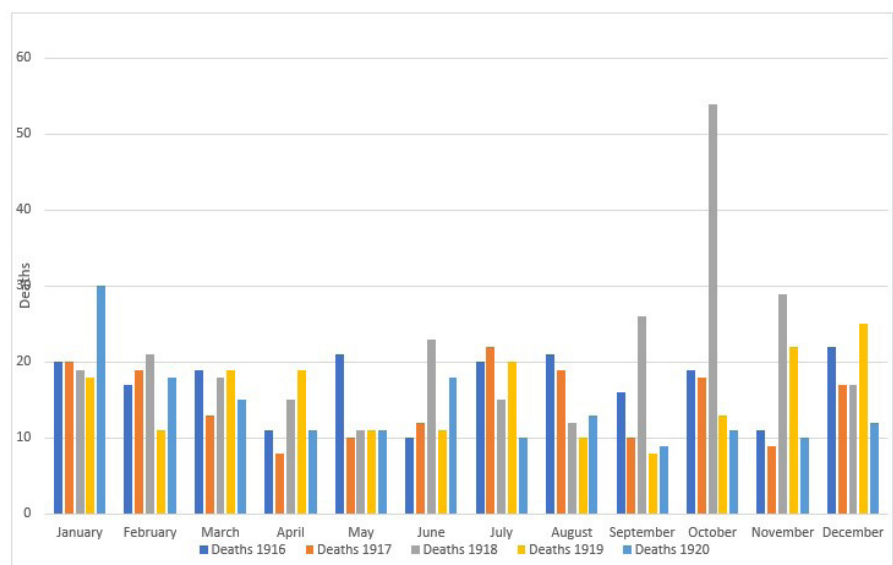
Figure 1. The Liberty Loan Parade in Philadelphia, PA

October 1918 saw 195,000 deaths in the US due to the Spanish Flu. The last picture of my grandfather was taken a week before he died in New York City of the Spanish Flu. (Fig.2) Note the absence of a mask, even though he was out in public! He was 33 and married with a 5-month daughter, my mother.

Elmwood Cemetery, in North Brunswick, NJ, saw its largest spike in burials during Oct.1918. (Fig. 3). I thank Akash Patel, a former student and graduate of The College of New Jersey for his outstanding research.

At some point in late 1919 – on a day as lost to history as the one of its emergence – the Spanish Flu made its last human being ill, then mutated again and disappeared.

The virus infected roughly 500 million people, one-third of the world's population, and caused 50 million deaths worldwide (double the total number of deaths in World War I). The total of Americans killed in its 25-week rampage would be **675,000 people**.





**Fast forward to 2020.**

What was initially referred to as the Wuhan virus is now officially called SARS-CoV-2 and it causes the disease, COVID-19. Its origin is from bats, while H1N1 is of avian origin. SARSCoV-2 is a less complex RNA virus than H1N1.

First reported cases of SARSCoV-2 surfaced in Wuhan, China in late 2019. The disease quickly spread by planes globally. Genetic testing of the strains in the U.S. appear to be a closer match to those virus strains circulating in Europe. China has control over the dissemination of information, so when it really surfaced and how many were affected is currently unknown to us. It is very likely that first cases in the U.S. were thought to be annual flu cases and dismissed.

**Both viruses are airborne. Both spread when humans are in close contact.** COVID-19 appears to have other symptoms, including blood clots. Those most at risk to COVID-19 are those over 65 and individuals with underlying health problems, including obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

COVID-19 also spreads in crowded areas such as, nursing and health care facilities, day care centers, church gatherings, and on cruise ships!

**Prevention methods are the same as in 1918: Wash your hands carefully & frequently. Wear a face mask properly. Maintain a certain physical distance between you & the next person (6-12 ft. or more). Keep your brain engaged. Be prudent.**

COVID-19 doesn't appear to be seasonal as influenza is. Countries with their hot summers still have this virus wreaking havoc.

The U.S. responded very slowly to this pandemic. The response was not organized. We did not have medical and safety supplies. Providence Regional Medical Center (in the state of Washington) saw the first U.S. case. Why were they more prepared for this global outbreak than most hospitals?

The hospital had held a pandemic drill two weeks before their first case. And, they did have enough protective masks, resuscitators, etc., in their inventory.

If we are going to contain this Pandemic, we need to continue banning mass gatherings, implementing extensive testing, contact tracing, isolating the infected, and quarantining those suspected of being infected. As of mid-December 2020, there are just over 16 million COVID-19 cases in the U.S. and almost 300,000 deaths.

The good news is that several vaccines are ready for distribution.

*Rita M. King is an Assistant Professor of Biology at The College of New Jersey. She also delivered the society's 2019 Mary Tanner Lecturer.*

**Figure 2. (far left) William Mohnkern – 10/17/1918**

**Figure 3. (left) Burials at Elmwood Cemetery from 1916-1920. Note the drastic increase in October 1918.**

## Lawrence Township Historical Collection: Slides

By Laura Nawrocik

*The following is part two of a series of articles highlighting the items in the Township of Lawrence's archival collection, which is curated by the Office of The Township Historian.*

Last issue I introduced you to the Lawrence Township Historical Collection in part one of this series. For part two we will begin to look at the different parts of the collection and some of the unique items and resources that can be found in it. This article also comes with a request – we need your help in curating this part of the collection, slides. The best part of this request, you can help us from home or work, on your own time.

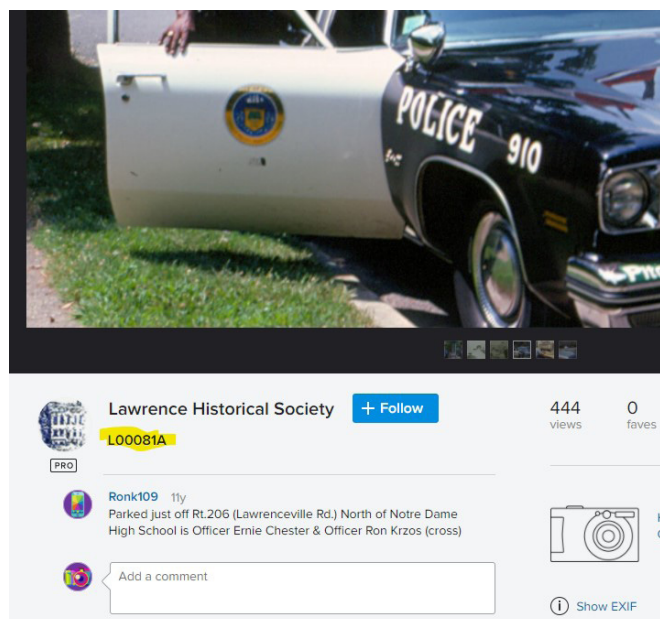
The collection houses a variety of material types and one of the most interesting is the 35mm slides. There are over 3,000 individual slides, both in color and black and white, in the collection. The vast majority have already been placed in archival safe trays and are stored in archival safe boxes. As part of the ongoing effort to digitize the township collection, most have also been scanned into both jpeg and tif format. The Lawrence Historical Society has been generous in providing funding to make the digitized files available to the public through their Flickr photo sharing page. More on that below.

Like most slide collections, the bulk come from the 1970s, which was the heyday of 35mm slides in the United States. A large portion are of photographs taken by the late Michael Angelotti in 1974, when he documented almost every aspect of the township at the time. There is, however, one glaring problem with the slide collection – it lacks documentation. All of the slides were arranged by Township Historian Winona Nash by general subject. Some are further identified through brief notes on the paper border and many have the developer's date stamp. Most do not have any type of identification at all and this is where we would like to have some help, we need people to take a look and let us know if you recognize anyone or anything in the slides.

To help out, we ask that you please visit the LHS Flickr page and take a look at the photos. If you visit the society website at [www.thelhs.org](http://www.thelhs.org), you can find a link under history, then photos. Or you can visit the site directly at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/thelhs>. If you click on albums at the top, you will see a list of collections based on subject. You can either leave a comment on the individual photos if you have a Flickr account (they are free) or you may email us at [webmaster@thelhs.org](mailto:webmaster@thelhs.org) with information or questions on how to help. If

you identify a photograph via email, please indicate the name of the photo, which you can find just under the Lawrence Historical Society name under each photo (see yellow highlight in example at right). We will also feature a new slide each week on our Facebook and Instagram accounts, so be sure to follow us on social media.

*Laura Nawrocik is the part-time archivist for Lawrence Township and a librarian with the Mercer County Library System. She is also a former president of the Lawrence Historical Society.*



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His journalistic attack earned him the title of “Satan’s Harbinger,” an egregious insult for the times. Daniel Leeds’ reputation was further damaged by his alliance with Lord Cornbury, the first royal governor of New Jersey suspected of colony tax fraud and scandalous behavior.

Daniel’s son Titan clashed with Benjamin Franklin when he took over running his father’s almanac. Franklin, under the alias of Poor Richard, predicted the death of his rival in 1733. When Titan disputed this claim and said he was very much alive, Poor Richard asserted that Titan’s ghost was attacking him. Franklin won. Poor Richard’s Almanac prospered while the Leeds Almanac expired. Franklin continued to discredit Titan. He accused him of being an astrologer and a sorcerer who haunted his enemies. Franklin’s false stories and hoaxes continued for ten years after Titan’s death in 1738.

The legend of the Jersey Devil began around the time of Titan’s death. It is one of the oldest in the United States. Details differ but agree that a witch named Mother Leeds gave birth to a hideous devil child-beast. European colonists and Native Lenape beliefs intertwined to give an image to the myth. M’sing was a Lenape forest god portrayed as a deer-like creature with wings. Colonists contributed characteristics of Lucifer to the beast.

In the early days of the Republic, the possibility of monsters in the American wilderness surfaced after its absence during the Revolutionary War. Reports of extraordinary creatures abounded. Fascination with giants, devils, sea serpents, and ghosts prevailed in Europe and the new world. Reports of these oddities relied on eyewitness reports which were often unreliable.

Stories of the devil died out. When two men reported a sighting in 1899, it was thought that the devil returned from a hundred year banishment. It elicited only mild curiosity until 1905 when a “fleshed-out rendering of the modern variation of the story appeared in the Trenton Times.” More articles followed when unrecognizable footprints appeared in the snow in the Pine Barrens. The paper published a cartoon series depicting the devil as a dragon-like reptile with leathery wings, clawed hands, and hooved feet. With profit as a motive and an attempt to recruit and titillate readers, American newspapers promoted sensationalism. Their reports on gruesome crime, catastrophes, and monsters paved the way for modern tabloid and reality journalism. When there were not enough news items, reporters fabricated and exaggerated the ‘news’.

Twentieth-century entrepreneurs molded the legend into the form it has today. Dime museums which displayed oddities became popular. People flocked to see the Jersey Devil after its well-publicized capture. In dim, flickering light they were able to glimpse the kangaroo outfitted with wings and hidden behind a curtain. They trembled when the poor creature yelped after it was prodded. The exhibit ended but the interest in the devil didn’t. A new generation would claim to see the devil in the foreboding atmosphere of the Pine Barrens. Ghost hunters and modern myth chasers have joined the quest.

The legend has much to teach us. I highly recommend this entertaining and informative read. The forgotten history of the Jersey Devil has much to teach us.

*Judy Salcewicz, a Lawrence Historical Society board member, lives, writes and gardens in Lawrence. Her work has been published by Chicken Soup for the Soul, The Kelsey Review, and other publications.*

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