

April 10, 2020

In a report from the CDC about Swan's Island it stated, "Thursday, October 24. The influenza situation at Swan's Island is very serious. There are 260 cases out of a population of 800, and there have been 10 deaths. The only doctor on the island, Dr. Gage, is assigned to government duty, and has asked to be relieved of this duty so he can return to the island and care for the sufferers."

This is a list of those who died from the Spanish Flu on Swan's Island or were from here. It seemed to have taken its toll on here in a little over 3 weeks, taking the lives of 15-18 people. There were two listed in Dellie Bridges burial records that are not in the Town Clerk's death records.

Velma Barbour, 18, died October 3 and her brother Vernon George Barbour, 20, died October 4. They were the first victims to succumb. They were first cousins twice removed from Sonny Sprague. (meaning two generations apart)

Ethel Haney Grant, 36, died October 6, listing flu and heart issues as the cause of death. She was the wife of George Grant and a great grand aunt of Candi Joyce's by marriage. Ethel had had a baby a few weeks earlier – possibly a miscarriage as there was no name listed. She left 1 daughter.

Henry Moulden, 37, died October 6, from what was called typhoid pneumonia at that time. He was the husband of Lilla Bridges. He left behind 3 daughters. Henry was Dale Joyce's great grandfather.

Lottie Herrick, 38, died October 7, the second wife of Charles Herrick and left behind a 6 year old child. She would have been David Joyce's great grandfather's wife.

Ira Robinson, 18, and his brother Ellsworth Robinson, 24, both died on October 8. They would have been Sonny Sprague's second cousins once removed.

Sidney Joyce, 35, died October 9, his wife Vira had a baby boy that day or the next that didn't survive then she caught the flu and died October 20 at 29 years old. They left a 4 year old daughter. Vira was Gwen May's great grandaunt on her father's side.

Eldie Smith Tainter, 31, died October 13 followed by her husband, Blanchard Tainter, 32, who died October 19. They left 4 orphaned children who had to be split up. She was Gwen May's great grandaunt on her mother's side.

Bessie Lake Staples, 22, died October 22 in Bath. She was the first wife of Herman Staples, Gwen May's grandfather. They were married 10 months.

Florence Stanley Withee, 18, died October 13. She was the wife of Clyde Withee and left 2 infants. Florence was Jean Ranquist's great aunt.

Alvah Stanley, 20, died October 21. He would have been a first cousin twice removed to Sonny Stanley.

Lizzie Torrey Joyce, 49, died October 28 from pneumonia due to flu that she had for 2 weeks. She was the wife of Linwood Joyce. Lizzie was the second cousin twice removed from Johnny Morrison. She was also Gwen May's great grand uncle's wife.

Vera Morse, 23, died Jan 5, 1919 in Bangor. She was a nurse and had been living and working in Bangor for 2 months when she caught the flu that turned into pneumonia. The death certificate said she had the flu for 10 days and pneumonia for 4 days. She was the daughter of Nelson and Clara Morse. Nelson was the grandfather, from his second marriage, to Mike, Greg and Christie Holmes.

TOTAL OF 17 known deaths

Dellie Bridges was sexton at that time and in his burial records he lists William Martin but he isn't listed in the 1918 death records of the town. The 2 William's that are recorded died in 1931 and 1934.

He also named Annie Kelley for that year but the only record listed for an Annie Kelley is in 1934.

Old-timers on the Island remember the stories from their ancestors telling of the caskets piled up on the Methodist Church steps. And of the many caskets that went by the homes of the people living on Steamboat Hill and Steamboat Road as the steamboats brought bodies back home to be buried.