

Palmer Lake Historical Society

1918-19 pandemic impact on Colorado schools

By Sharon Williams

Early in the fall of 1918, Colorado one-room school-houses were quickly abandoned, public schools closed, and colleges quarantined their campuses, some placing themselves under the control of the American Red Cross. Due to a shortage of nurses, teachers were moved to assist in Denver hospitals and infirmaries set up on campus at Colorado A&M in Fort Collins and the School of Mines in Golden.

The flu first appeared in Colorado in September 1918 at the University of Colorado, where cadet students contracted the disease from soldiers brought to Boulder for student training. Aided by the movement of troops at the end of World War I, the virus spread at a historic rate and particularly affected children younger than age 5 and people 20-40 years old.

By late September 1918, Colorado saw its first known influenza fatality when University of Denver student Blanche Kennedy died in her brother's home.

On Oct. 4, 1918, Colorado Agricultural College reported three possible flu cases and its first death—

all among the troops of young student soldiers taking part in the wartime Student Army Training Corps, according to The Mile High College, an account of Colorado State University's early years by its first university historian, Ruth Wattles. Soon, many more cases and fatalities overwhelmed the makeshift nursing facilities on campus.

In late November 1918, Colorado Agricultural College President Charles Lory's sister Emma Smith lost her 3-year-old daughter, Iris, to the virus. A few days later, Iris' twin sister, Inez, died, followed by 6-year-old Cecil and 19-year-old Eda. In just three weeks, the Smiths went from having nine children to five.

In the Pikes Peak Region, Cheyenne School started in the fall of 1918, where flu fatalities began to happen in the Army camps to the south and east in Colorado Springs. Dr. Lloyd Shaw, former principal of Cheyenne School, described firsthand experiences in an article for The Colorado Springs Free Press, March 9, 1957. He indicated the flu was rapidly spreading. By

the first week in October, all area schools were closed. School staff and faculty salaries were reduced due to diminished responsibilities. When reported cases subsided, Shaw reopened Cheyenne School on Jan. 18, 1919.

In early September 1918, Cañon City closed schools. Homework assignments were mailed to the students. The only students who returned to school were the seniors, who wanted to graduate on time in the spring of 1919. The public gathering ban was kept in place even when it seemed the flu was on the decline, which accounted for the low death rate in Fremont County.

While the Historical Society has suspended regular meetings due to COVID-19, Sharon Williams is writing a series of columns with relevance to OCN readers. July's column will feature an account of the women's suffrage movement.

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Left: Cañon City High School seniors. *Cañon City High School 1919 Yearbook*, courtesy of Royal Gorge Regional Museum and History Center. **Above:** Colorado nurses and children don masks to ward off disease. The influenza epidemic of 1918 produced a run on surgical masks that mirrors today's shortages during the coronavirus concerns. Photo courtesy of the HistoryColorado.org website.

High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

Foraging, forests, and food hiking in Tri-Lakes

By Janet Sellers

Our June rains bring us seasonal gastronomic treasures, from spruce shoots to mountain greens to fungi, and a plethora of foraging discoveries, if we know how to find them. Many recognize some wild foods, but beware! There are also dangerous look-alikes. Ticks are also on the rise outdoors, as reported by the Pikes Peak Mycological Association. The association is offering, during the current cautious social climate, online video classes on fungi.

Speaking of a fun guy and wild foods expert, I met Donny Dust recently to discuss fungi and foraging in the Front Range area, especially the Tri-Lakes region. Dust is a world-class consultant for remote primitive survival, preparedness, and ancient technologies. We sat down at Fox Run Park with Friends of Fox Run Park Co-director Marlene Brown to talk about primitive technologies, local foraging, wild mushrooms, and more.

Dust, a Monument resident, offers paleo survival skills education with his self-reliance school, Paleo Tracks Survival. Dust has a friendly way of explaining the wild world, where most of us fear to tread. He can craft shelter, clothing, and tools barehanded in the wilderness using ancient technologies with age-old respect for Mother Nature and the Earth, and he teaches these skills. He is a technical consultant for feature films and has taken part in network television programs. He remarked he is a "professional caveman" as he utilizes paleo technologies for survival and emergency preparedness education and programming.

Friends of Fox Run Park (FOFRP) has invited Dust for a local public hike foraging day on June 30. Since attendance will be limited to 10 people due to COVID-19 restrictions, reservations are required; contact FOFRP by email at friendsoffoxrunpark@gmail.com. If the first hike fills, a same day second chance offering is possible.

Janet Sellers is an ethnecology researcher, writer, photographer, designer, artist, and chronicler of life

and landscapes. She is director of Janet Sellers Fine Arts and lives near Monument.



Above: Donny Dust, survivalist and paleo wilderness educator, inspects a culturally modified tree (CMT) and explains ancient technologies for CMT formation using leather, connected silver skin tissue, or yucca ropes. He explained animal skin ropes are inherently stable, but yucca ropes require bear fat or other oil so as not to fray from outdoor conditions regarding the ancient technologies of bending the CMT. Photo by Janet Sellers.



Above: Tara Lloyd, horticulturist and a current volunteer at Monument Community Garden, helps prepare the soil with alpaca manure and compost for seeding and transplants. For 2020, the garden is again optimizing organic methods including ancient and heirloom seeds that will produce large amounts of food. This year's "walking stick" kale could overwinter for two to three years, each plant reaching a height of 8 to 12 feet, and just one huge leaf can feed a family of four. Post-season, the kale can be frozen for eating in winter. The garden is showcasing the three sisters' of corn, beans, and squash, dozens of lettuces, brassicas, herbs, rhubarb, and peppers. The garden is surrounded with its annual wildlife "deer screen" protection of giant sunflowers. It is located in Lavelett Park in Monument. Photo by Janet Sellers.