Spanish Influenza: Sheridan County Victims, 1918-1919

By Trail End State Historic Site Superintendent Cynde Georgen

Dying as he did on October 10th, 1918, Benjamin L. Dotta, a 45-year-old railworker from Sheridan, is believed to be the first confirmed influenza fatality in Sheridan County. He would certainly not be the last. In the final three weeks of October alone, the deaths of seventy-eight men, women and children were reported in pages of The Sheridan Enterprise and The Sheridan Post. They ranged from ranchers, coal miners and railroad engineers to housewives, stenographers and schoolchildren. By the time the last death was reported on May 19, 1919 (33-year-old coal miner Mate Gudsty), the Spanish Influenza would claim 217 victims in the Sheridan area – about two percent of the population. (By comparison, if two percent of Sheridan County’s current population were to die in an epidemic, the number of victims would be just under six hundred.)

![Detail from The Sheridan Post, 1918 (Wyoming Newspaper Project)](image)

**NUMBER OF DEATHS BY AGE RANGE**

- Aged 0-5 -- 36
- Aged 6-10 -- 5
- Aged 11-20 -- 19
- Aged 21-30 -- 54
- Aged 31-40 -- 57
- Aged 41-50 -- 11
- Aged 51-60 -- 5
- Aged 61-70 -- 2
- Aged 71-80 -- 6
- No Age Given -- 22

**SIX DEADLY MONTHS**

October 1918 was the most virulent month for the flu, with seventy-eight people dying between the tenth and the thirty-first. In November, sixty people died. Between December and
the end of May, another seventy-nine perished. The deadliest single day was October 17, on which eleven people died.

The average age of the Sheridan area flu victim was 25.6 years. Fifty-seven percent were men. Of these, thirty-two worked in agriculture as either a farmer or rancher, twenty-eight worked in the Tongue River valley coal mines, and twelve worked for the railroad. Other occupations represented included sales, bookkeeping, electrical engineering, the ministry and undertaking. Bartenders, attorneys, stonemasons, druggists, wagon-makers, dry cleaners, and carpenters died as well.

Of the sixty-five women who died during the epidemic, fifty-four were identified as housewives. One was a nurse, another a saleslady, two were stenographers and another two were students. The remaining five had no occupation listed.

The disease impacted different parts of the county at different times with varying degrees of virility. Nearly all of the sixty fatalities in the coal camps of Acme, Carneyville, Dietz, Kooi Monarch and Monarch, for example, occurred early in the epidemic, between October and December. On the other hand, most of Clearmont’s thirteen deaths occurred in April 1919, in the waning days of the epidemic. Outside of Sheridan and the coal camps, the impact of the epidemic on the western half of the county was considerably less than in the eastern half. Even though the population in the eastern part of the county was rather low, there were still over two dozen deaths reported. In addition to Clearmont’s thirteen fatalities, ten more died in Arvada (almost all women), with two each in Ucross and Ulm. In contrast, Banner, Big Horn, Dayton, Parkman and Ranchester combined reported only twelve deaths.

Since most Sheridan County residents in 1918-1919 were Caucasian, it is no surprise that most of the dead were Caucasian as well. But the minority populations were not spared from the ravages of the disease. Eight Japanese railroad workers and their families were among the dead – including four members of the Okazaki family – as were four Mexican-born laborers and three African-Americans. Most of the dead in the mining camps were men and women of Eastern European descent – Poles, Czechs, Montenegrans, Austrians, Hungarians and Slavs – once again in keeping with the general population of the communities.

**EXCERPTS FROM OBITUARIES**

After the first dozen or so deaths, printed obituaries grew shorter and shorter. Sometimes, the dead were lucky to get a sentence to themselves. The following are excerpts from the
obituaries published in local newspapers during the height of the epidemic in late October 1918:

- Two-month-old Charles Everett died of a complication of diseases, primarily influenza.
- John Pienkovic, a miner at the Sheridan Coal company, died at Dietz due to influenza with complications. His wife died earlier.
- Julius Pavik, a Hungarian miner at the Acme Coal company, died as a result of influenza.
- Dan Crist of Carneyville was numbered among the victims of the dread epidemic.
- Mrs. Flake died at Carneyville.
- Elija Murdock died at the home of his brother on Soldier Creek.
- Robert Currie, a young businessman of Birney, Montana, died at that place as the result of an attack of influenza followed by pneumonia.
- Two-year-old Donald Harrison was reported dead from influenza.
- Another victim of the influenza was Mary Catherine Marecks, who died at Acme.
- Carroll Jefferies, Jr. died after an illness extended over a period of only a few days.
- Andrea Albynish, an Austrian miner, died at Acme of pneumonia following influenza.
- Christ Pederson, a well known young rancher from Decker, Montana, died in Sheridan where he was taken ill during a business trip.
- Robert T. Williams, one of the best known ranchers of the Tongue River country, passed away of the prevalent disease.
- Ernest Blain Robbins, ticket agent at the Burlington depot, died of pneumonia following an attack of the prevalent disease.
- Mrs. Thomas Byrom, another victim of the plague, died at her home.
- Miss Esther Langdon died as a result of an attack of influenza complicated with pneumonia.
- A young Japanese woman, Mrs. Akimoto, was another victim of influenza.
- Frank Brockett, a well known resident of Sheridan, died of the prevalent malady.
- Mrs. Wellen Carter died at Carneyville. She was the mother of three children, all ill with influenza at the time of the mother's death.
- Alfred F. Sharpnack died at his home after an illness extending over a period of nearly a week.
- Miss Enid Markle died at her home of pneumonia which appeared as a secondary complication with influenza.
- Samuel Tillman, chief engineer at the central power plant in Acme, died due to pneumonia following influenza.
- Rev. Arthur W. H. Wolters, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran church of Sheridan, died after an illness extending over a week.
Mrs. Olga Bacon died at home of pneumonia, a secondary complication of influenza. She was the sister of Miss Enid Markle, who died earlier.

Another victim of the plague was Robert Zeigler, a miner employed at Acme.

Harry Beasley, a young man employed in the construction department of the Burlington railroad, died at the emergency hospital.

Mildred Ethel Frazier died at the nurses’ home in Sheridan of pneumonia following influenza.

After an illness lasting less than thirty-six hours, Jesse R. Cooley died at his apartment.

Mrs. E. C. Fiske died at her home in Carneyville of the complications of influenza.

William Scott Stuby, round house foreman for the Burlington, died of pneumonia following influenza.

DETAILED LIST

The following is a detailed list of known Sheridan area influenza (I) and pneumonia (P) victims (others, whose deaths were described as being “from the current malady,” are labeled NS for “not specified”). While most resided in the county, others were from nearby communities in southern Montana, an area economically and socially connected to Sheridan County. The spelling of all names comes from newspaper articles and/or death certificates, neither of which may be accurate.

?, ? (female) No age given; housewife; died 1918-10/17; IP

ACHENBACH, Bessie Stueve Age 26; housewife from Lodge Grass MT; died 1918-11/20; I

ADAMS, Christine May Age 17; housewife from Arvada; died 1918-10/31; NS

ADDISON, Jessie Age 22; housewife from Kirby MT; died 1919-01/17; I

AKAGAKI, S. No age given; railroad worker; died 1918-11/02; IP

AKIMOTO, S. (Mrs.) No age given; from Dietz; died 1918-10/17; IP

ALBYNISH, Andrea Age 36; coal miner from Acme; died 1918-10/17; P

ALLEN, George Jack Age 1; from Ranchester; died 1919-03/25; P

ALLENDER, Samuel Roy Age 33; rancher from Arvada; died 1918-11/17; P

ANDERSON, Carl J. Age 52; railroad worker from Sheridan; died 1918-10/23; IP
ARNOLD, Ramson Willard  Age 37 rancher from Dayton; died 1918-11/25; IP

ASHTON, Steve  No age given; from Arvada; died 1918-12/18; NS

BABIONE, Cora Mae  Age 38; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-11/01; IP

BACHLETT, Barbara  Age 33; housewife from Monarch; died 1918-11/05; I

BACON, Olga Markle  Age 35; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-10/24; IP

BALDWIN, Adelia Anna  Age 50; housewife from Sheridan; died 1919-04/16; P

BALDWIN, Sam  No age given; from Lodge Grass MT; died 1918-11; NS

BALL, Myrtle Gertrude  Age 31; housewife from Big Horn; died 1918-11/03; I

BAONK, Paul  Age 46; coal miner from Monarch; died 1918-11/06; I

BARBER/BARKER, Maggie May  Age 22; housewife from Birney MT; died 1919-01/12; I

BARKEY, Elizabeth Church  Infant; from Buffalo; died 1919-03/03; IP

BARNHARDT, George D.  Age 33; rancher from Moorhead MT; died 1919-01/29; I

BARYLAK, George  Age 4; from Clearmont; died 1919-01/05; I

BAXTER, Gene  Age 1; from Kooi; died 1919-02/13; NS

BAXTER, Mary  Age 20; housewife from Kooi; died 1918-11/20; P

BEASLEY, Harry  Age 30; railroad worker from Sheridan; died 1918-10/24; I

BELT, Minnie  Age 31; housewife from Sheridan; died 1919-04/15; IP

BENEGALIA, John  Age 37; coal miner from Acme; died 1918-10/21; IP

BERKMAN, D. D.  Age 31; railroad worker from Sheridan; died 1918-10/30; P

BEZOLD, ?  Infant; from Sheridan; died 1919-01/20; I

BIRCHBY, Anna  Age 32; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-11/19; I

BIXBY, William  Age 74; from Kirby MT; died 1918-10/17; IP

BOUDIN, Robert  Age 18; laborer from Dietz; died 1918-11/30; IP

BOYLES, Irma Mabel  Age 31; housewife from Dietz; died 1918-11/26; I

Spanish Influenza - 5 - www.trailend.org
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Death Date</th>
<th>Cause of Death</th>
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<td>BROCKETT, Frank</td>
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<td>cowboy</td>
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<td>BROWNIE, Clay M.</td>
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<td>BURY, John</td>
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DIDELOT, Verna C.  Age 21; from Parkman; died 1918-10/23; IP

DOTTO, Benjamin L.  Age 45; railroad worker from Sheridan; died 1918-10/10; IP

DUARTE, Kelos  No age given; from Sheridan; died 1919-04/21; IP

EACRET, Clara  Age 50; housewife from Sheridan; died 1919-05/01; NS

EQUEKI/EQUCHI, ? (Mrs.)  No age given; housewife; died 1918-10/25

FARRIS/FERRIS, Stanley  Age 31; rancher from Lower Prairie Dog; died 1918-11/08; I

FISKE, Gus L.  Age 55; undertaker from Sheridan; died 1918-12/21; NS

FISKE, Odessa  Age 25; housewife from Carneyville; died 1918-10/22; IP

FLOCKHART, Agnes  Age 1; from Dietz; died 1918-10/16; P

FORRES, M.  Age 28; died 1918-11/23; P

FRAZIER, Mildred Ethel  Age 20; student nurse from Sheridan; died 1918-10/23; IP

FRENCH, William Edward  Age 22; farmer from Kirby MT; died 1919-01/20; I

FULLER, Samuel Morton  Age 32; rancher from Sheridan; died 1918-11/15; IP

GARCEZ, Joseph  Age 25; laborer from Sheridan; died 1918-12/23; IP

GARDNER, Willa May  Infant; from Sheridan; died 1919-03/09; P

GARRETSON, ?  Infant; from Clearmont; died 1918-12/18; I

GARRETSON, Lloyd Jennings  Age 3; from Clearmont; died 1918-12/25; IP

GARRETSON, Mary  Age 35; housewife from Clearmont; died 1918-12/18; I

GASSION, Emma  Age 24; housewife from Arvada; died 1919-01/19; I

GERMAINE, Valentine  Age 30; coal miner from Acme; died 1918-10/15; IP

GOURD, Dorothy  Age 54; housewife from Sherian; died 1919-01/17; IP

GRACE, Hettie Schroeder  Age 21; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-11/07; I

GRAVERSON, John Lewis  Age 36; county attorney from Sheridan; died 1919-05/04; P

GRAVES, Elphia A.  Age 40; housewife from Clearmont; died 1918-12; IP

Spanish Influenza - 7 - www.trailend.org
GRONG, Susia Millie  Age 5; from Monarch; died 1918-10/31; I

GROSS, Harry R.  Age 30; rancher from Slater Creek; died 1918-12/30; I

GUDSTY, Mate  Age 33; coal miner from Sheridan; died 1919-05/19; IP

GURYUAC, Stevan  Infant; from Monarch; died 1918-10/31; I

HAMMOND, Norman  Age 48; farmer from Decker MT; died 1918-11/04; I

HARATYK, John  Infant; from Kooi; died 1919-02/19; P

HARRINGTON, Jennie L. M.  Age 26; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-12/21; IP

HARRIS, Richard Dale  Infant; from Ranchester; died 1919-01/21; I

HARRISON, Donald  Age 2; from Sheridan; died 1918-10/21; IP

HARTMAN, Olaf Andrew  Age 45; stone mason from Birney MT; died 1919-04/19; IP

HEBERT, Nellie Roberta  No age given; housewife from Arvada; died 1919-05/06; P

HEINIE, George  Age 32; farmer from Sheridan; died 1918-11/02; P

JACK, Margaret  Age 29; from Acme; died 1918-10/30; P

JEFFERIS, Isaac Carroll  Age 27; druggist from Sheridan; died 1918-10/17; I

JIROSZK/YURROSEK, Paul  Age 26; coal miner from Carneyville; died 1918-10/27; P

JUGO, Rudi  Age 30; coal miner from Carneyville; died 1918-11/09; IP

KABELUSZ, John  Infant; from Dutch Creek; died 1918-11/05; I

KAHLER, ?  Infant; from Sheridan; died 1919-01/21; NS

KAWOLOK, John  Age 26; coal miner from Monarch; died 1918-11/17; IP

KELLEY, Allie L.  Age 32; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-11/29; I

KELSAV, Iris  Age 20; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-10/30; P

KETCHUM, Neal  No age given; from Ranchester; died 1918-11/02; IP

KING, Clyde  Age 29; rancher from Carroll; died 1918-12/24; IP

KROUT, Clarence  Age 33; farmer from Sheridan; died 1918-11/28; IP
KUHOT, Mike  Age 34; coal miner from Kooi; died 1918-10/30; IP

KUKUZHKA, Paul  No age given; coal miner from Carneyville; died 1918-11/04; P

KUKUZKA, Annie  Infant; from Kooi; died 1918-11/15; IP

KUZMA, Tony  Age 26; miner from Acme; died 1918-10/22; I

LALENSKI, Lewis  No age given; miner from Kooi; died 1918-10/18; NS

LAMOUREUX, Edward  Age 35; farmer from Clearmont; died 1919-04/20; I

LANGDON, Esther  Age 26; from Sheridan; died 1918-10/17; IP

LANIER, Charles  Age 31; rancher from Dayton; died 1918-12/23; IP

LEHTO, Lyyti  Age 3; from Carneyville; died 1918-10/31; I

LEWIS, Garrett  Infant; from Sheridan; died 1918-10/27; IP

LEWIS, Geraldine/Genevieve  Age 8; from Little Goose; died 1919-01/23; IP

LEWIS, Josephine  Age 2; from Little Goose; died 1919-01/31; I

LIJCKI, John  Age 2; from Kooi; died 1918-11/22; P

LINDSAY, ? (Mrs. Earl)  No age given; housewife; died 1918-11; NS

LITTILER, Joseph  Age 37; salesman from Monarch; died 1918-10/30; I

LONG, Alvin H.  Age 32; rancher from Clearmont; died 1919-04/05; IP

LONG, Bessie  Age 22; housewife from Clearmont; died 1919-04/14; I

LONG, J. Frank  Age 17; student from Clearmont; died 1919-04/26; I

MAHALIK, ?  Infant; from Acme; died 1918-10/27; IP

MANDIC/MANDICOF, Peter  Age 33; coal miner from Dietz; died 1918-10/11; P

MARCKS, Mary Catherine  Age 36; housewife from Acme; died 1918-10/21; I

MARKLE, Enid  Age 27; stenographer from Sheridan; died 1918-10/21; IP

MARTYNEK, Paul  Age 38; coal miner from Carneyville; died 1918-11/07; P

MARVIN, Earl Roger  Age 28; rancher from Kirby MT; died 1918-12/18; I
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Cause of Death</th>
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<tr>
<td>MAXWELL, Clara</td>
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<td>McGregor, Eva</td>
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<td>Menendez, Ramon</td>
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<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Kirby MT</td>
<td>1919-01/18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okazaki, R. (Mr.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>No Age Given</td>
<td>Sheridan</td>
<td>1918-10/19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okazaki, U.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Railroad Worker</td>
<td>Sheridan</td>
<td>1918-10/12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okazaki, W.</td>
<td></td>
<td>No Age Given</td>
<td>Sheridan</td>
<td>1918-10/16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Spanish Influenza - 10 - www.trailend.org*
OKUBO, S. Age 26; housewife from Alger; died 1919-02/06; IP

OKUBO, Tatsuko Age 2; from Monarch; died 1919-03/17; I

OTONI, S. No age given; died 1918-10/22; IP

OTT, Herman F. Age 39; wagonmaker from Sheridan; died 1918-11/06; I

OWEN, Ira Age 20; rancher from Parkman; died 1919-04/30; IP

OWENS, Charles Everett Infant; from Acme WY; died 1918-10/19; I

PARAT, George Leonard Infant; from Dietz; died 1919-01/18; P

PATE, Elizabeth Age 35; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-11/05; P

PAULUS, John Age 7; from Ranchester; died 1919-03/08; P

PAVIK, Julius Age 42; coal miner from Acme; died 1918-10/20; I

PEDERSON, Christ Age 20; rancher from Sheridan; died 1918-10/17; IP

PIENCEWKI, John No age given; coal miner from Dietz; died 1918-10/20; I

PLUMB, Henry Lee Age 37; cowboy from Ulm; died 1918-12/24; IP

POLLARD, Edna Louise Age 31; housewife from Monarch; died 1918-11/16; IP

POPE, John Age 55; rancher from Sheridan; died 1919-02/20; I

POTTS, Raymond R. Age 27; from Sheridan; died 1918-10/26; IP

PRETATOO, Edward Age 33; coal miner from Acme; died 1918-11/21; IP

QUINN, Thomas H. Age 29; farmer from Sheridan; died 1918-10/26; IP

RALSTON, Adam Age 28; coal miner from Dietz; died 1918-12/20; IP

ROBBINS, Ernest Blaine Age 34; railroad ticket agent from Sheridan; died 1918-10/17; IP

ROBINSON, Ida Grace Age 20; housewife from Arvada; died 1919-02/09; IP

RUCKER, Clyde Orville Age 32; dry cleaner from Sheridan; died 1918-10/13; P

RUCKI, Joe Frank Age 30; coal miner from Monarch; died 1918-10/20; I

RYBYZA, Joe Age 28; coal miner from Acme; died 1918-10/24; IP

Spanish Influenza - 11 - www.trailend.org
SABO, Rosa  Age 37; housewife from Monarch; died 1918-11/05; IP

SANDBURGH, Helen Mary  Infant; from Sheridan; died 1919-02/16; NS

SANDESON, John Otto  Age 38; railroad engineer from Sheridan; died 1918-10/15; P

SANDESON, W.  Infant; from Clearmont; died 1919-02/12; I

SAUNNERS, Lee John  Age 37; coal miner from Acme; died 1918-12/18; IP

SCHULTZ, Louis  Age 71; farmer from Clearmont; died 1918-11/04; IP

SHARPNAK, Alfred F.  Age 71; carpenter from Sheridan; died 1918-10/15; I

SHASSETZ, Regina  Age 17; housewife from Monarch; died 1918-11/13

SHAW, Mabel  Age 21; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-10/24; P

SMITH, Betty Jane  No age given; died 1919-01/23; NS

SMITH, Catherine E.  Age 76; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-11; IP

SMITH, Leon  Age 6; from Clearmont; died 1919-02/22; IP

STOUT, ? (female)  Infant; from Upper Prairie Dog; died 1918-11/11; P

STUBY, William Scott  Age 32; railroad foreman from Sheridan; died 1918-10/15; P

STUEVE, Gladys  Infant; from Parkman; died 1919-02/28; NS

STULTZ, Louis  Age 80; from Clearmont; died 1918-11/03; I

SUTHERLAND, Lawrence  Age 30; from Sheridan; died 1918-10/19; I

SWINYER, Hazel  Age 10; from Sheridan; died 1919-01/25; I

TAYLOR, James  Age 35; cowboy from Arvada; died 1918-10/25; P

THOMAS, Charles  Age 40; from Sheridan; died 1919-04/21; IP

TILLMAN, Samuel  Age 30; electrical engineer from Acme; died 1918-10/19; P

VESTAL, Mabel  Age 18; housewife from Sheridan; died 1919-01/16; IP

WANTULOCK, Mike  Age 25; coal miner from Monarch; died 1918-10/29; NS

WARDLOW, Louis  Infant; from Model; died 1918-11/06; I

Spanish Influenza - 12 - www.trailend.org
WATSON, Nela  Age 35; housewife from Sheridan; died 1919-04/14; I

WELCH, Patrick  Age 43; railroad worker from Ranchester; died 1918-11/28; IP

WELLER, William T.  Age 40; rancher from Sheridan; died 1918-12/02; I

WILEY, Ida Mae  Age 38; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-12/11; P

WILLIAMS, Robert T.  Age 66; rancher from Sheridan; died 1918-10/17; I

WILSON, Abner  Age 17; from Sheridan; died 1918-10/30; IP

WINTERS, Marvin  No age given; rancher from Decker MT; died 1918-10/23; P

WINTULOK, Helen  Age 2; from Monarch; died 1918-10/30; IP

WOLTERS, Arthur W. H.  Age 25; minister from Sheridan; died 1918-10/24; IP

WOODARD, Harold Damon  Age 34; electrical engineer from Acme; died 1918-10/30; IP

YOUNG, Gertrude Irene  Age 30; saleslady from Sheridan; died 1918-11/03; IP

ZECOUICH, Milika  Age 33; coal miner from Acme; died 1918-11/05; IP

ZEIGLER, Robert  Age 32; coal miner from Acme; died 1918-10/23; IP

ZEIGLER, Stella Gildroy  Age 27; housewife from Acme; died 1918-11/17; IP

ZORNER, Pearl Nettie  Age 25; housewife from Sheridan; died 1918-11/10; I