

## Influenza of 1918 from a Personal Perspective

The following are partial letters written to Lt. Herbert Phillips, Camp McClellan, Alabama, by his mother Mrs. Dyer Smith (Harriet) Phillips, Ogdensburg, NY in October of 1918. (The family was originally from Hammond.) Harriet's great grandson, Mark Schnittger, shared the letter portions with Hammond historian, Donna Demick, who transcribed them onto the computer in April of 2020.

**October 19, 1918** Pg 3: Have you heard Harley Hazen was killed in action. That was sad indeed, but a noble death to him, poor fellow. Hammond has given one brave fellow to the cause. Bert, your pictures are not done yet. They are awful busy at Dow's. I am going in today and expect (*expect?*) to get them. There are 600 cases of influenza in Ogdensburg, so they say. I know there are a lot of people here dying with it. Pa passed a house yesterday morning where the father and mother and a pair of twins all lay dead. Schools, churches and everything are closed up except the stores, and they will have to close, I guess, so much of their help are sick. I see by the Hammond paper that Margaret's school is closed-has she got it too? I wrote her a few lines yesterday. I have not been off the hill in 2 weeks.

Dear Son Bert,

**Ogdensburg, October 26, 1918**

Received your welcome letter yesterday that you wrote last Wednesday evening, October 18<sup>th</sup>.. Was glad to hear you were well and hope you keep so. We are all well, as yet; we are living a hermit's life just now. It will be 3 weeks Monday since I was off the place and the girls have not been away since school closed. That will be 3 weeks next Wednesday and we have not seen a soul to speak to only Mr. Dawby in all that time. It is pretty tiresome, but we have got to stand it. Nobody goes away from the place but Pa, he draws the milk. The flu is raging terrible in Ogd., whole families being wiped out by it. There will be a good many destitute homes here, when it is over all the way. From 10 to 20 deaths a day now and it has been worse than that, hospitals overcrowded. Also, lots of emergency hospitals full; several nurses have died within it. I got a telephone message from Sid last night saying that he had just gotten over it and that Olive was quite bad with it...

Pg 4 ...any away yet. I thought I would wait til I heard from you. Sherman Grant has the influenza and several others around the old town (*Hammond*) so we cannot go there, so we have got to just stay on the hill. I would be afraid for Pa & Bess to get it. Well, we have our potatoes dug and dug about 90 bushels, quite a few bad over...