

INFLUENZA!

Autumn, 1918

The Southern Pacific rolled into Gleeson only once a day during the year 1918. For so long, it appeared that the "Grim Reaper" had repeatedly failed to catch that train, and Gleeson was spared any fatalities from the flu pandemic which wiped out millions throughout the world. But even in a relatively isolated corner of Cochise county, such good fortune could not last. The first strike was an oblique one, killing not a Gleeson resident, but Frank Tracey of Bisbee, son-in-law of Gleeson resident Jack Clifford. Frank had been an occasional visitor to Gleeson, and was known to the local ranchers and residents. Frank passed away on October 9, 1918 at 9 in the morning. Born in Colorado on the fourth of July, 1887, he was only 31 at the time of his passing, and was employed in the Bisbee mines. He had fallen ill with the flu six days earlier, and the immediate cause of his death was listed as *lobar pneumonia*. Lobar pneumonia is an inflammation of the lungs, in this case caused by Frank's immune system in response to the deadly influenza commonly referred to as the "Spanish Flu".

He fell ill with the flu on Friday, and passed away the following Wednesday. This was not an uncommon occurrence with this particular flu strain. The more "normal" flu strains of modern times, virulent though they might be, tend to assault those with weakened or compromised immune systems. Children, the elderly, or those who are poorly nourished tend to have the roughest time with modern influenza. The most frightening thing about the "Spanish Flu" epidemic of 1918 was that it struck those with the healthiest immune systems, and it killed very quickly. Seemingly healthy 15-40 year olds were at the greatest risk. Seeing such specimens fall so quickly to this flu was the greatest cause of the panic which followed in the wake of this pandemic.

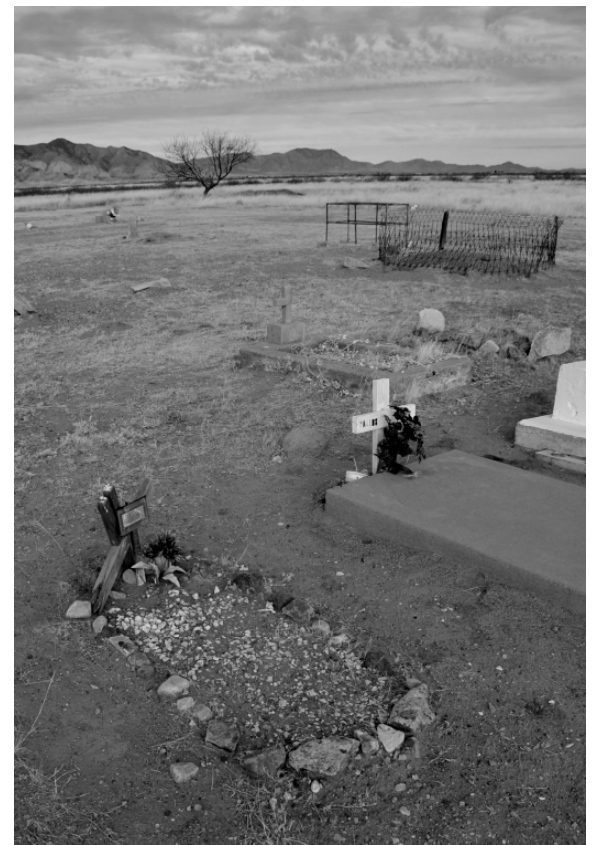
Modern research suggests that the "Spanish Flu" caused an over-reaction of the healthy immune system, switching off the signals which limit that reaction. That caused an inflammation of the lungs (the immune response out of control) which quickly and ultimately suffocated the victim. It was not unheard of for some to feel healthy on Monday morning and be dead by Tuesday evening.

For a time, Gleeson residents felt they had escaped the ravages of the influenza epidemic. The first cases appeared in Kansas in March of 1918, and traveled with soldiers overseas, where it began to sweep across the world. When the soldiers returned at the end of World War I, so did the flu, and it mowed down more than half a million people in the United States alone. Despite hopes to the contrary, the epidemic struck the Gleeson area in October. Within two weeks, other relatives of Gleeson residents passed away in quick succession.

The brother of Gleeson schoolteacher Miss Hosmer died in Virginia before he could come back to Arizona. On October 20, James Coulter, a 32 year old restaurant worker in Pearce passed away only *one day* after reporting to his doctor with flu symptoms. The dreaded epidemic was getting closer and closer to Gleeson. Jack Clifford caught the flu at the funeral of his son-in-law, Frank Tracey, and could not return from Bisbee for two weeks.

week old son also contracted the flu, but recovered.

Manuel Alejandro Lopez was the one-year-old son of Francisco and Adela Lopez. He was one of the Mexican and Mexican-American population around Gleeson which was hit hardest by the pandemic. Manuel fought for 7 days, but his lungs were unequal to the task. His father Francisco served as his undertaker, preparing his body for burial in the cemetery at Pearce.



The middle of January 1919 saw yet another flu outbreak in Gleeson, when 11 people filled up the town hospital. Among them was Miss Salmans, one of the local teachers.

It was reported that over 2000 Navajo on the reservation in the four-corners area of Arizona died from influenza during the epidemic. As with any flu, close proximity created a powerful vector for the disease. Throughout Arizona, meetings of any kind, conventions, gatherings, even church services were cancelled or postponed until the epidemic passed.

In larger cities, such as Tucson, officials were debating whether or not to mandate the wearing of masks, as people became more and more frantic to avoid the disease. Judge Bolton, from Courtland, was on a crowded train leaving the Rillito station (modern-day town of Marana) towards Tucson, when the man next to him just snapped, started yelling at people to "stop crowding him," and shot the conductor, once in the thigh and again in the back. The judge tried to wrestle the gun away from him, and during the struggle, the deranged man was shot dead by a third passenger. Such was the fear instilled by the onslaught of this epidemic.

In all, hundreds of people in the Gleeson, Courtland, and Sulphur Springs Valley area contracted influenza, and the death rate was about 20%, according to national statistics. In the end, when the several waves of influenza had passed, more than 30 residents of the Gleeson area had died from the "Spanish Flu".

IMPROVED
Mrs. M. H. Brown, who has been ill is again up and around.

AT WORK AGAIN
George Rivers of Gleeson, who has had influenza, is sufficiently improved to attend to his duties as day foreman of the Shannon Copper company.

DEATH
A Mexican woman whose name could not be learned, died in Gleeson on Saturday. Influenza, followed by complications, proved fatal.

DEATH
Sunday morning, Callesano Lopez, aged 14 years, died in North Courtland of pneumonia. The funeral was held Sunday afternoon at 5 o'clock. Interment in the Courtland cemetery.

Many residents of Gleeson and the surrounding area contracted the disease, and concern became anxiety, which led some to panic. Area schools closed and didn't re-open for months. A local Sunday-School convention was cancelled, as was the regional fair in the town of Light (just east of Pearce). Many people took to the hills, to go "vacationing" away from population centers. By mid-November, dozens of cases were cropping up on a weekly basis.

The first Gleeson citizen to fatally succumb to the epidemic was a 27 year old Mexican-American miner Juan Herrera. He died on the afternoon of November 20, during the height of the November slaughter. He had lasted only 8 days after falling ill with the "Spanish Flu". Juan passed away at the Gleeson hospital under the care of Doctor R.J. Stroud. The dreaded "Spanish Flu" epidemic had claimed its first Gleeson casualty. Juan's wife and two-

PLACE OF DEATH		ARIZONA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH	
County: Cochise		BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS	
State: Turquoise		State 1888 No. 163	
Town: Gleeson		ORIGINAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH	
City: Gleeson		County Registered No. _____	
		Local Registrar's No. _____	
No. _____ (If death occurred in a Hospital or Institution, give its NAME instead of street and number.)			
FULL NAME: Manuel Alejandro Lopez			
PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS		MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH	
SEX: Male	DATE OF BIRTH: June 17th, 1916	DATE OF DEATH: Nov 20th, 1918	FILE NO. _____
AGE: 1 yrs 5 mos 4 days	OCCUPATION: (a) Trade, profession or particular kind of work	I hereby certify that I attended deceased from Nov 15 1918 to Nov 21 1918; that I last saw him alive on Nov 21, 1918, and that death occurred on the date stated above at 5:25 P. M. The DISEASE or INJURY causing death was as follows:	
BIRTHPLACE: Gleeson, Arizona		Epidemic Influenza	
NAME OF FATHER: Francisco Lopez		Was disease contracted in Arizona? Yes	
BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER: Sonora, Mexico		If not, where? _____	
NAME OF MOTHER: Adela Suarez		CONTRIBUTORY (Duration) yrs mos 3 days	
BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER: _____		(Signed) _____	
BIRTHPLACE OF DECEASED: _____		Nov 22nd 1918 (Address) Gleeson	
PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL: Pearce		*In death from VIOLENT CAUSES (WAR, ACCIDENT, SUICIDE, or HOMICIDE)	
UNDEBTABLE: Father		LOCAL REGISTRAR: _____	
		COUNTY REGISTRAR: _____	