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THE AWKWARD STATE OF UTAH



COMING OF AGE IN THE NATION

1896-1945

CHARLES S. PETERSON AND BRIAN Q. CANNO

Soldiers returned home to households and communities under quarantine due to the deadliest influenza pandemic of the century, the product of an H1N1 virus that provoked a severe immune system response. When combined with bacterial coinfections such as pneumonia, the virus often proved fatal. In the United States and in Utah, one-fifth of the population battled the virus, and more than 600,000 died. Many cases were never reported to the state public health authorities, but the Utah Health Department cataloged 91,799 cases between 1918 and 1920 with 2,915 deaths, or a death rate of nearly 3.2 percent. Among the state's Native Americans, death rates from the disease were much higher: 16 percent. Many Native Americans lived in remote areas and lacked access to medical care. Navajos commonly

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abandoned their hogans after a death occurred there for cultural reasons, and their consequent exposure to the elements in the winter likely weakened their ability to resist the disease.⁹⁶

Although the first outbreak of the deadly viral infection in the United States had occurred in Fort Riley, Kansas, in March 1918, the first reported cases in Utah occurred during a deadly nationwide comeback of the disease that commenced in September and October 1918, only weeks before the war's end. On October 10 Dr. T. B. Beatty, Utah's state health officer, banned all public meetings, including church services, and urged school officials to cancel classes until the epidemic subsided. The quarantine was temporarily lifted for celebrations of the Armistice ending the war on November 11, but then reimposed. Although the Utah Board of Health opposed any parades or public celebrations of the return of the Utah National Guard early in January, city officials and Governor Bamberger vetoed their recommendation and permitted the troops to parade through Ogden, when the troops arrived by train on January 15, and in Logan, where they were housed for a week before demobilization was completed. No welcoming banquets were held, but Governor Bamberger, LDS Church president Heber J. Grant, and Brigadier General Richard W. Young took off their protective respiratory masks to address the troops in a public meeting.⁹⁷