

The Flivver Flash

The Official Newsletter of the Space City T's - Houston, TX

The Spanish Flu and Its Effects on Detroit

by Debbie Marino

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The Spanish Flu

Much like the initial slow start of COVID-19 to the United States this year, early evidence of the "Spanish flu" pandemic showed itself in March of 1918 with about 500 recruits at Camp Funston, Kansas coming down with influenza. Although 48 men died, such illness was not considered unusual in a crowded Army camp. In that same month, over a thousand men at the Ford Motor Company plant in Detroit also developed influenza, and in the following two months about a quarter of San Quentin's prison inmates in California became ill, as well, but these civilian outbreaks were exceptions. At the time, the United States would not notice higher than normal influenza and pneumonia cases until the numbers were later tallied. American troops overseas, however, weren't so lucky. They were among the British, French and

German troops quickly being infected. By May of 1918, influenza had reached Southern Europe, with Spain being particularly affected. The press was quite censored in wartime Europe, but Spain was neutral in WWI, and openly discussed how the strain made millions sick, including their King Alfonso XIII. As a result, this influenza acquired the nickname "Spanish flu" and continued to spread to shipping routes in Africa, India, China, South America, and beyond. ([A previous pandemic: When Carroll County was in the grippe of the Spanish flu](#))

With daily updates of the COVID-19 virus since early 2020, and comparisons to previous epidemics, most people have now heard of the 1918 Spanish flu, but you may not have heard how that pandemic over a century ago influenced Detroit's automotive industry. The

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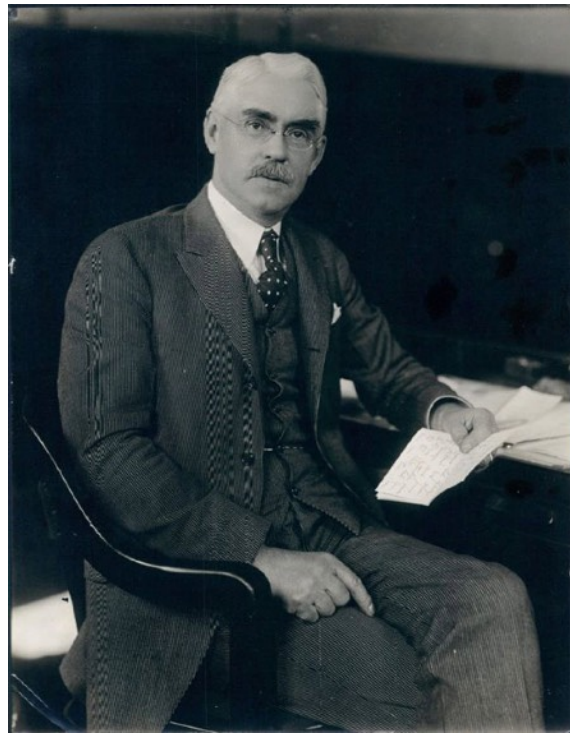
Spanish flu pandemic lasted from January 1918 to December 1920, and was detected in Michigan in September of 1918, shortly before the end of WWI, at the US Naval Training Station at Ford Motor Co.'s River Rouge Plant and Shipyard in Dearborn. Five sailors showed symptoms of the flu, often referred to as the gripe; only two days later the number reached 107. ([101 years ago: When the Spanish flu ravaged Detroit](#))



Motor Corps and Canteen volunteers from the Detroit chapter of the American Red Cross, taking a break from delivering supplies to influenza victims. National Archives

The Detroit News reported that roughly two weeks later the virus had made its way to Detroit, with their first influenza-related death occurring on October 1st. Their health commissioner, James W. Inches, believed that the military had been responsible for bringing influenza to Detroit, and he telegraphed Army Surgeon General William Gorgas on October 12th requesting that their men be prevented from coming to Detroit. "Detroit has one hundred fifty thousand men working on over a billion dollars' worth of war contracts. Aircraft, Liberty motor, and motor truck production of the United States depends upon this city. These men should be as carefully protected as any other part of the country's fighting force." He then had inspectors meeting all trains,

streetcars, and interurbans arriving in Detroit, to turn any soldier or sailor away not on official business. However, he felt this move was the only action needed at that time and thought that the ban on public dances should be lifted, as this was a means to educate participants with vital information. ([The American Influenza Epidemic 1918 - 1919](#))



Detroit health commissioner James W. Inches. Before becoming Detroit's chief health officer, Inches served five terms as the mayor of St. Clair, Michigan. In January 1919 he accepted the post of Police Commissioner. In 1923, he ran unsuccessfully for mayor of Detroit.

On October 18th a group of representatives met, James W. Inches among them, and decided that a closure order would only create hysteria in the city. The group included members of the Red Cross, businesses, manufacturing, and the Board of Health, and featured the likes of Cadillac founder Henry Leland, *Detroit News* publisher George G. Booth, and Alfred L. McMeans of Dodge Brothers. State authorities did not agree with the group's conclusions, and the state Board of

Health along with Michigan governor Albert Sleeper issued an order to close all places of public amusement and congregations to be in effect on midnight, October 19th, with schools being the exception. By October 24th, all schools were then closed, with their teachers expected to become volunteers conducting home visits to instruct on proper influenza care. While the epidemic still raged in other parts of Michigan, Detroit's cases had trended downward. Schools reopened on November 4th, and after much discussion with Governor Sleeper, Inches convened the Board of Health and bans were lifted for the city of Detroit on November 6th.



Motor Corps ambulance driver from the Detroit chapter of the American Red Cross.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION.

The Spanish flu pandemic consisted of four waves, but it was mostly the middle two that affected the city of Detroit. That fall of 1918, almost 1,700 people had died from the virus. There was a slight resurgence in the city during December, leading to more than 700 additional deaths. Two events possibly attributed to that third wave: a mass gathering in downtown Detroit at Campus Martius when WWI ended on November 11, 1918, and the Thanksgiving parade later that month. Although influenza

continued to circulate in the state, newspaper coverage lessened, as did the virus, in Detroit, even with almost 30,000 cases having been recorded. ([Lapointe: When A Pandemic Hit Detroit In 1918, It Was A Very Different Place](#))

The Dodge Brothers and Henry Ford

Michigan-born John and Horace Dodge started their own machine shop in Detroit in 1900, after having gained machinists and managerial skills working for other manufacturers the previous 14 years. It wasn't long before they were supplying engines to Olds Motors Works and then shortly after that, building transmissions for Ransom Olds, founder of Oldsmobile. By 1903, Henry Ford asked the brothers to make the running gear for the (original) Model A, which essentially would be the entire automobile, except for the wheels, tires and body. The decision was a risk, as Ford had now failed with both the Quadricycle and the Detroit Automobile Company (the Ford Motor Company did not yet exist). At the time, Ford could only assemble cars at the Mack Avenue plant (Ford Motor Company would move to the larger Piquette plant some 18 months later), so all the cars' components would have to be made elsewhere.

The Dodge brothers gave up all their other contracts to work exclusively for the Ford business for the next 11 years, but it didn't come without a heavy cost to Ford. While the Dodes agreed to cancel \$7,000 of Ford's overdue payments and extend him an additional \$3,000 in credit, they were granted 10% of the Ford Motor Company stock. John Dodge was even made vice president of the company. By 1913, the Dodge brothers were considered the largest supplier in the automotive industry, having built over half a million vehicles, but none attributed to themselves and still dependent on Henry Ford.

By July of 1914, the Dodge Brothers Motor Car Company was established. Competition was fierce, with it being one of the 120 new makes of cars that year alone.

Around this same timeframe, Ford decided to stop paying his investors dividends with the idea of reinvesting money in building the River Rouge plant and other expansion, while still lowering the price of the Model T (\$950 in 1908 to \$360 in the fall of 1916). The Dodge brothers initiated a lawsuit for \$39 million dollars against Ford to be distributed to stockholders and won. (The Michigan State Supreme Court's ruling of Dodge v. Ford continues to explain how corporations operate still today: "a business corporation is organized and carried on primarily for the profit of the stockholders.")



A studio portrait of automotive pioneers John F. Dodge and Horace E. Dodge together around 1914.

When Henry Ford resigned as president of the Ford Motor Company in December 1918, with son Edsel Ford to now take the helm, he declared he was starting a new business to make an even better auto than the Model T. This announcement frightened off shareholders, who ended up selling all their holdings back to Ford. In 1919, Ford even bought the Dodge brothers' shares for \$25 million, and in July, the Ford Motor Company was completely controlled by the Ford family. By now, the Dodges were already multimillionaires, and had more to worry about

than what Henry was up to. Having expanded their Hamtramck factory some years ago, the Dodge Brothers Motor Company board had purchased almost 300 acres along the Detroit river in May of 1919 to open a steel mill capable of producing 2,000 tons of product daily to streamline their auto production.

In January of 1920, the Dodge brothers attended the New York Automobile Show in New York City. Both John and Horace became ill and were thought to have been infected by the third wave of the Spanish flu outbreak, complicated by pneumonia. The eastern seaboard cities were hit especially hard by the pandemic as the war was winding down. John Dodge died days later in his grand suite at the Ritz-Carlton on January 14, 1920 at the age of 54. Horace Dodge never fully recovered either from his health status or from the loss of his brother. He spent many months of that year in Palm Beach, Florida, hoping a warmer climate would aid in his recovery, but had the foresight to make decisions to assure management continuity of the company after his own death on December 10, 1920 at the age of 52. While his death certificate lists cirrhosis of the liver from years of heavy drinking, most stories attribute influenza complications and the devastation of losing a brother whom he was "practically inseparable since childhood", according to Horace himself, as the real causes. Both brothers reside in Detroit's Woodlawn Cemetery in the family's granite mausoleum built in an Egyptian Revival style fashionable at the time, complete with a bronze door guarded by two stone sphinxes. ([Bar Fights, Lawsuits and the Flu Pandemic: The War Between Henry Ford and the Dodge Brothers](#))

([When industrial America's manufacturing legend Dodge Brothers was stopped cold by the flu](#))

How the Dodge brothers and the Dodge Brothers Motor Company would have continued if not for their early demises is anyone's guess. No doubt they would have continued to give Ford Motor Company a run for their money, and any other player in the industry. Instead, the iron and steel works plans were scrapped, and with no family members interested in running the business, Dodge was sold to investment group Dillon, Read & Co. in 1925, then into the hands of Chrysler in 1928.

An Example of Model T Fords in Early Law Enforcement

by Dom Demio



The above photo is of two (2) New York State Troopers in a Model T Ford from back in 1920. The sign behind them reads, "Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, Malone The Macadam Road to Montreal. Provided by the Adirondack Good Road Association." Use of Troop Cars began in 1919. Prior to that, patrols were done traveling from village to village on horseback by a pair of Troopers from the establishment of the force in March 1917. If you were the victim of a crime – someone stole your cow, broke into your home etc., you reported the incident to your local Postmaster. When the Troopers rode into town they went to the Post Office to get the

complaints. The troopers would then go out to conduct the investigation. If there was a major crime such as a murder the Postmaster knew to contact the two (2) closest Post Offices and the six (6) Troopers would conduct the investigation. By the way, upon completion of their initial training the entire force of 232 Troopers went to the New York State Fair in Syracuse, and introduced [herringbone parking](#) for the first time in history. This parking style is now used in most shopping center parking lots.



1919 Model T Ford at the Opening of the National Law Enforcement Memorial Museum in Washington, DC

The replica Troop Car above is one of the first patrol vehicles of the New York State Police. Although equipped with a hand crank siren and spotlight; police radios were not widely used until the 1930s. Troopers would be assigned specific roads to patrol. When the Station Sergeant received a call for an accident or crime he would call the gas stations, restaurants and post offices on those roads. The business owners would place a towel on the roadside mailbox. When spotted the Trooper would use the business phone to call the Sergeant to receive the assignment and respond to the incident. Today this car is used in [DARE Day](#) events and car shows to promote a positive image of law enforcement by raising awareness of the history in the field.

Space City T's Dues Are Due

Remember, the deadline for dues payment is March 15, 2021. At that time the roster will be compiled according to those paid. Dues are still **\$25.00** per year. Please **print** out this page, **fill out** the form below with your most recent information, and make your check payable to: **Space City T's**.

Please **mail** your dues to the Treasurer at:

Jerry Smith
13723 Llano Lake Court
Houston, Texas 77059

NOTE: Dues are not tax deductible. To do so will jeopardize our club's 501c non-profit status with the IRS

SPACE CITY T's MEMBER ENROLLMENT

Model T Ford Club of America membership # if Applicable _____

Model T Ford Club International membership # if Applicable _____

DATE _____ **CHECK #** _____ **AMOUNT \$** _____

Name: _____ **Spouse** _____

Minor Children (under age 18) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Home Phone: _____ **Work:** _____

Cell: _____ **Cell:** _____

E-Mail address: _____

Occupation: _____

Model T's Owned:

Space City T's of Houston Bylaws, Article VI, Section 4: Dues for members admitted to membership between July 1 and December 31 shall pay (1/2) of the annual dues: \$12.50 for the given 1/2 year, \$25.00 per year thereafter.

The Flivver Flash is published by the Space City T's chapter of the Model T Ford Club of America in Houston, Texas twelve times per year. This newsletter is produced for the education and enjoyment of members and those expressing interest in joining the Space City T's. Said education and enjoyment is as it pertains to the Model T Ford automobile. The Flash is also shared with other antique auto clubs. Other clubs may use articles from this publication with credit to this newsletter or the original source. News, articles, ads or anything of interest to the club must be submitted to the editor by the 20th of the month preceding the month of publication. Emailing takes place the last week of the month. Annual dues are \$25 per year.

2021 Space City Club Officers and Board Members

President	Dave Lucas	281-388-0761
Vice President	David Carter	713-875-1049
Secretary	Bruce Carter	713-703-2958
Treasurer	Jerry Smith	281-461-9906
Board Member	Nancy Carter	713-580-3368
Board Member	Bobby Wright	409-771-5548
Board Member	Anthony J. Marino	281-482-4156

THE FLIVVER FLASH

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281-482-4156

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2022 Officer Nominations

Please communicate your 2022 club officer nominations to Dave Lucas at (713) 299-3059 or daverlucas@yahoo.com.

New Members Wanted

Please visit our [Space City T's of Houston Texas web site](#) and view our club future and past Model T Ford events and activities.

If interested, please provide your name, address, mobile phone, & email, and make a \$25 check payable to:

Space City T's

Please mail your information and check to the Treasurer at:

Jerry Smith
13723 Llano Lake Court
Houston, TX 77059

The Space City T's Club is the Houston, Texas chapter of the Model T Ford Club of America. All questions concerning membership, The Vintage Ford magazine, the MTFCA library, chapter insurance, purchase of manuals, back magazine issues, or store items can be directed to the following:

Model T Ford Club of America

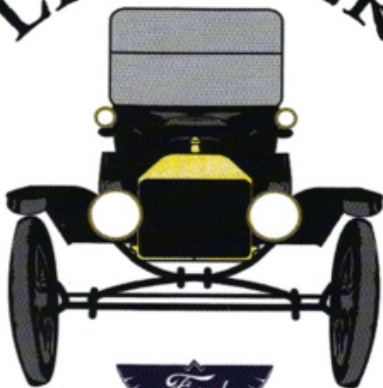
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Richmond, IN 47375-0996
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Email: susan@mtfca.com

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832-607-8528 mobile or
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leave a message or
topkick7@gmail.com

FLIVVER FLASH INPUTS NEEDED

Do you have something to share? A barn find, funny or not so funny Model T stories? Tour photos, or articles about Model T's? Your Model T acquisition stories, restoration photos or swap meet finds? A special interest article?

Please email ads, articles, photos, stories, etc. etc. to: topkick7@outlook.com

Next Meeting Cancelled

December 9, 2020



**Dine with Friends at
Demeris BBQ at 6:00 P.M.**

located at

**1702 West Loop North,
Suite A, Houston, TX 77008**

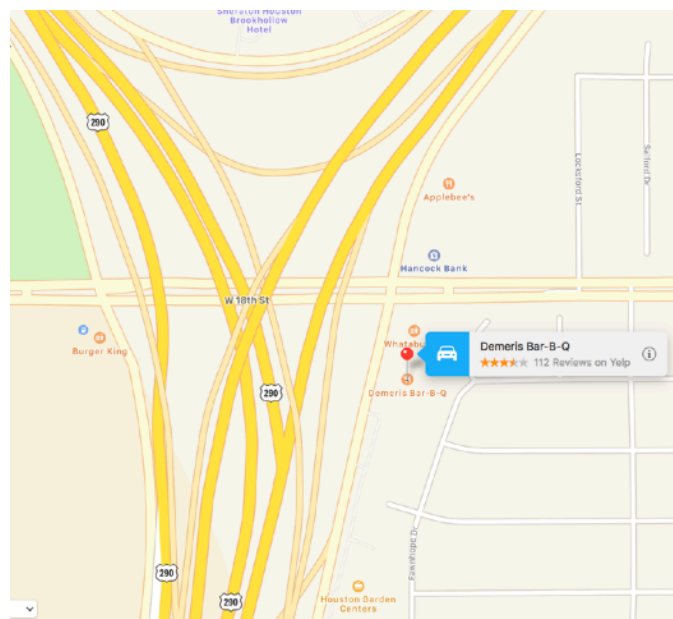
**Then attend the
Space City T's Meeting at 7:30 P.M.**

Place:

**Lazy Brook Baptist Church
—1822 West 18th Street in the
Heights**

Website: www.spacecityts.org

Email: modelt@spacecityts.org



Directions to Demeris BBQ

From the east or west on I-10 or the south side of downtown, take the I-610 West Loop North and get off at the 18th Street Exit. Demeris BBQ will be immediately on the right after Houston Garden Nursery.

From the west on Highway 290, exit at Mangum and turn right to 18th Street. At 18th, turn left, cross under West Loop and turn into the Whataburger parking lot on the right. Proceed to Demeris BBQ after the Whataburger.

From the north on I-45, take the 610 North Loop West around to the I-610 West Loop South to the Hempstead Highway exit. Make a U-turn under I-610 and proceed north on the frontage road to just before 18th Street, Demeris BBQ will be on your right after Houston Garden Center.



First Class Mail



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League City, Texas 77573

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