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UND Alumnus Publishes New Book on the Most Deadly Pandemic of the 20th Century

Before the 21st century COIVD-19, there was the 1918 Influenza pandemic. Christopher Price who received his DA in the Department of History at the University of North Dakota in 2013 and is now a faculty member at New River Community and Technical College, has published a new book, *Big Pandemic on the Prairie: The Spanish Flu in North Dakota*.

*Big Pandemic on the Prairie* tells the story of how North Dakota responded to the most devastating pandemic of the 20th century: the 1918 influenza outbreak that killed over a thousand people in North Dakota and millions globally. By digging deeply into local newspapers and archives, Price developed an engaging and thought-provoking story of resistance, resilience, reliance, and sacrifice across the state. In many ways, this story is uncannily similar to what our communities experienced in the 21st century.

These similarities explain the origins of this book. Price noted "I kept seeing people on TV and the Internet making claims that the COVID-19 pandemic and public health restrictions were unprecedented. I'd learned a little bit about the Spanish flu from reading various sources, and I also remember Prof. Kim Porter, my committee chair at UND, mentioning a relative had died while mustering out of the American Expeditionary Force in Florida. He went to Europe and survived the Great War, but he died of the Spanish flu before getting back to his family."

The book will appeal to a wide range of audiences from people trying to add historical context to the COVID pandemic to college students interested in the intersection of local and global histories as well as social history, and the history of public health and medicine.

Price says that the book offers some surprises for those interested in comparing the two crises. For example, "There was a fairly vocal minority who opposed vaccinations that were created and administered pretty much immediately. On the other hand, there was not the partisan divide in 1918 that was very evident with the COVID-19 pandemic."

He also tells us that this book is more than policy and politics: "The most interesting source was probably letters from the Ferdinand Shoemaker Collection at the University of Wyoming. when Dr. Shoemaker's worked at an Indian reservation hospital in North Dakota around the time of the Spanish flu. Without giving too much away, his records included a story of sex, drugs, and guns."

Like all books from The Digital Press at the University of North Dakota, *Big Pandemic on the Prairie* is available as a free download and as a low-cost paperback. This is Price’s second book with the press. His first book, *The Old Church on Walnut Street: A Story of Immigrants and Evangelicals* first appeared in 2014 and then as a revised edition in 2018 (<https://thedigitalpress.org/the-old-church-on-walnut-street/>).

William Caraher, publisher at The Digital Press notes: “This book is another fantastic example of the press’s commitment to authors with local connections and the history of the state and the region. Price’s book makes a unique and entertaining contribution to the history of North Dakota and we’re excited to make it available to as wide an audience as possible.”

Click here to download the book: <https://thedigitalpress.org/pandemic/>

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