

This is the written presentation by Chelsey D'Albini. Chelsey created this especially to share with those that love the Garnett community on this Memorial Day, May 25, 2020.

It goes without saying that this year is by far the most discombobulating experiences many of us have ever seen. For some of us, our lives have changed so dramatically that we're not sure we will see what we considered to be normal in 2019 ever again. I can, without hesitation, say that the first five months of 2020 have left us nowhere to go but up. We have seen some of the very worst in people. We've lost sight of our neighbors as people and instead see them as potential carriers of the virus. Distrust, anger, spite and fear abound and that's ok. It leaves room for the light. It makes the stories of light that much more meaningful. It warms our hearts to hear that a retired farmer sent an N95 Mask to ground zero in New York. It means, pardon the cliché, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

This Memorial Day, we are limited by a lot of things. We're limited in the amount of people we can be around. We're limited by where we can go. We have a lot to be wary of. Who has traveled to what county and when? Have you been exposed? Have you been out of the country? Do you have a fever? Do you feel ok? Where have you been in the last 14 days? Who have you been around? Are you whole? We are surrounded by those questions, and with those questions come the limitations of fear. Fear of what happens next. Fear of the unknown. Fear that it will come back. Fear that it will get a foothold here. Fear of our environments. Fear of the people we used to trust.

As much as I would like to tell you what happens next, I can't. I wish that I could sit here and say that it will all be better on XX date. But I can't. What I can tell you with certainty is that this isn't the first time we've seen a pandemic or the effects of a pandemic in Anderson County. It seems poignant that we are a hundred years removed from the last pandemic. A century from the last time it was "unsafe" for us to travel, to be in public without a mask, to be limited by our fear in more ways that we are willing to say. 102 years to be exact.

If you were to envision any Memorial Day ceremony of the last umpteen years, you could picture the group of individuals standing at the base of the flagpole. They stand there in the spring air, to honor the men and women who've gone before. Along a barely visible grass road stand the Color Guard, armed with their rifles for the gun salute and bearing the colors. I bring your attention to this layout because that grass road that runs between the 3rd and 4th Block of the 1st addition in Garnett Cemetery, it is directly adjacent to the flagpole and Soldier's Memorial. On the very northern edge of that grass road facing west is a large marker that reads "Brown." This is perhaps one of the most overlooked areas in the cemetery. It's upstaged by the Soldier's Memorial, Flagpole and Chapel across the road. It is quiet, close to the field behind the neighboring Catholic cemetery. It is sunny on most days, the sky is unobscured by trees and foliage, and you can feel the wind blow across your face in the audible stillness. But here lies one of the war casualties of the Influenza Pandemic of 1918, it's a small head stone to the west of that large "Brown" marker that says, "Son" and "Prairie F Brown."

In a newspaper article in the Garnett Review published 17 October 1918, the death and burial of Prairie Fredrick Brown, Jr is announced.

*"The body of Fred Brown, who died at Jefferson Barracks, MO last Thursday, arrived here Saturday, and was taken to the Farris undertaking establishment. Sunday afternoon, the remains were taken to the cemetery, where services were held under a tent, conducted by Rev. V.E. Davis."*

Brown was born near Cuba, a small town in Republic County, Kansas on 9 August 1897. He was the youngest son, and second youngest of 7 children. His family moved to a farm two miles north of Garnett when he was six years old, where he grew up and graduated from Garnett High School with the Class of 1915. He was called Fred by his friends, probably to help separate himself from his father, Prairie F Brown, Sr. Fred was spending the summer of 1918 in Colorado Springs driving tourist cars. It's important to know that Fred answered the call for enlistment that summer. 1918. History tells us that the war would end that November, but in the summer before, Fred was a 20-year-old man enjoying the long life he thought he had ahead of him. After enlisting he was sent to Jefferson Barracks, Mo. A place that would eventually produce the Aviation Parachuting School, a precursor to the paratroopers of the Army Air Corps. The date was 23 September 1918. 8 days later everything would change. The newspaper article reads:

*"Just one week from the following morning (1 October 1918) he was sent to the hospital, being stricken with the dread epidemic that has been claiming many of our soldier boys as victims. All was done for him that medical skill could do, but he finally yielded to the disease and passed to the Greater World last Thursday (10 October 1918)."*

He had only been 21 years old for 62 days. He had been at training for only 8 days. He never saw combat. He never stepped foot outside of the country.

To maintain morale at the time, wartime censors minimized early reports of illness and mortality rates in Germany, Britain, France and the United States, but newspapers were free to report the epidemic's effect in neutral Spain creating the false impression of Spain as the epicenter of the outbreak and dubbing it the Spanish Flu. This misnomer still exists today. The close quarters and massive troop movements of World War I hastened the pandemic, increased transmission rates and augmented virus mutation; the war undoubtedly increased the lethality. The Influenza Outbreak spread very quickly. It infected more than 500 million people across the world and resulted in the deaths of 3-5% of the world's population over the 24-month course of 1918-1919. It is recognized as the second global pandemic in recorded history, the previous being the Black Plague during the Dark Ages.

The most interesting part of this story is that when Brown enlisted in the military, the Influenza Outbreak was already underway. The virus had been traced back to Fort Riley, Kansas where it infected more than 300 soldiers in early March 1918. People were told not to drink from public water fountains, to wash their hands regularly, wear masks in public, not to spit in the streets and not to gather in large groups. Government officials were taking blow torches to metal things that the public touched often as a means to disinfect and sanitize. There were limitations on who could travel to where and large cities were under quarantine. Over the summer of 1918, the infection rates dropped and things started to resume to life as usual. A sense of normal returned, but perhaps it was all for naught. Brown was infected during the second wave of Influenza in September 1918. That second wave of the Influenza was more lethal than the first. Most of the recorded influenza deaths and data that we see today are from the second wave.

Isn't it funny how history repeats itself? Skeptics of our current situation would say that we are being overly careful, that all of this is for naught and the Coronavirus will just have to take its course. Others would say that we can't be careful enough, that we've been too lax in our public hygiene practices and to maintain social distancing. Whichever way you look at the current situation and limitations that we are all facing, we need to take pause and remember that this isn't the first time our country has seen this. Though the cost is high, it will get better. We need to remember to find the good in people again when this is all ended. We have to look past the

fear, anger, and distrust in order to find our neighbors again. We have to look for the light at the end of the tunnel. That's what Fred Brown's family did.

Fred Brown's family didn't expect to be burying their son less than a month after sending him off to Jefferson Barracks. They didn't expect to have to host his burial with a limited group of people under a tent to prevent further infection. They didn't expect to have to mourn their son in quarantine. They didn't expect their 21-year-old brother would succumb to a pandemic that they thought would never touch their community. They were very limited on how they could respond. They couldn't participate in the societal mourning that we still experience when someone passes away today. They couldn't gather in a church basement for lunch. They couldn't mourn Brown's passing as a community. They buried him with honor. As a family they mourned him together and as a community they mourned him after the Pandemic had ended. His father, brothers and sisters were a part of the community that mourned him in 1923 when his name was placed on a bronze plaque on the flagpole in front of the old Garnett High School building. They chose to see the light in the situation and remember Fred as best as they could. When they were surrounded by the darkness of death and mourning and the fear of a Global Pandemic, they chose to see the light. They chose light, and we should too.