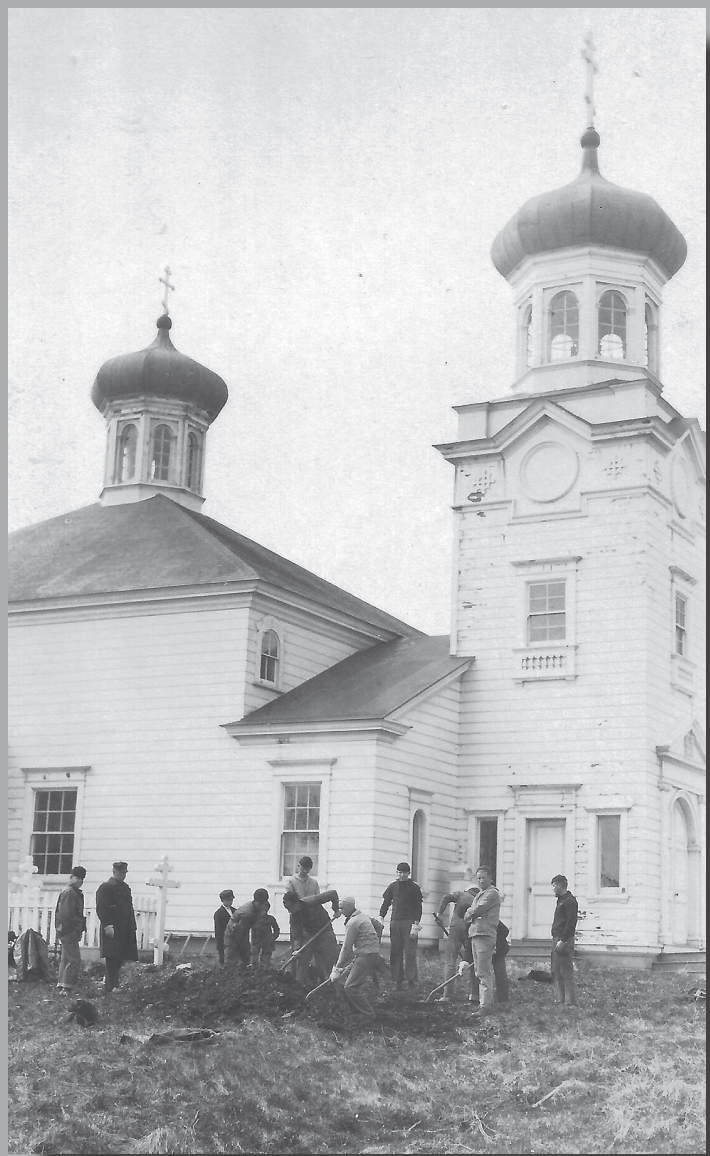


The USS *Unalga* and the 1918 -1919 Pandemic

Right: The USS *Unalga* sailing through an ice field.



Below left: A *Unalga* burial detail by the Orthodox Cathedral.



Below Right: Orphans and crew members.



Bottom: The orphanage acquired by the crew and named after the cutter.



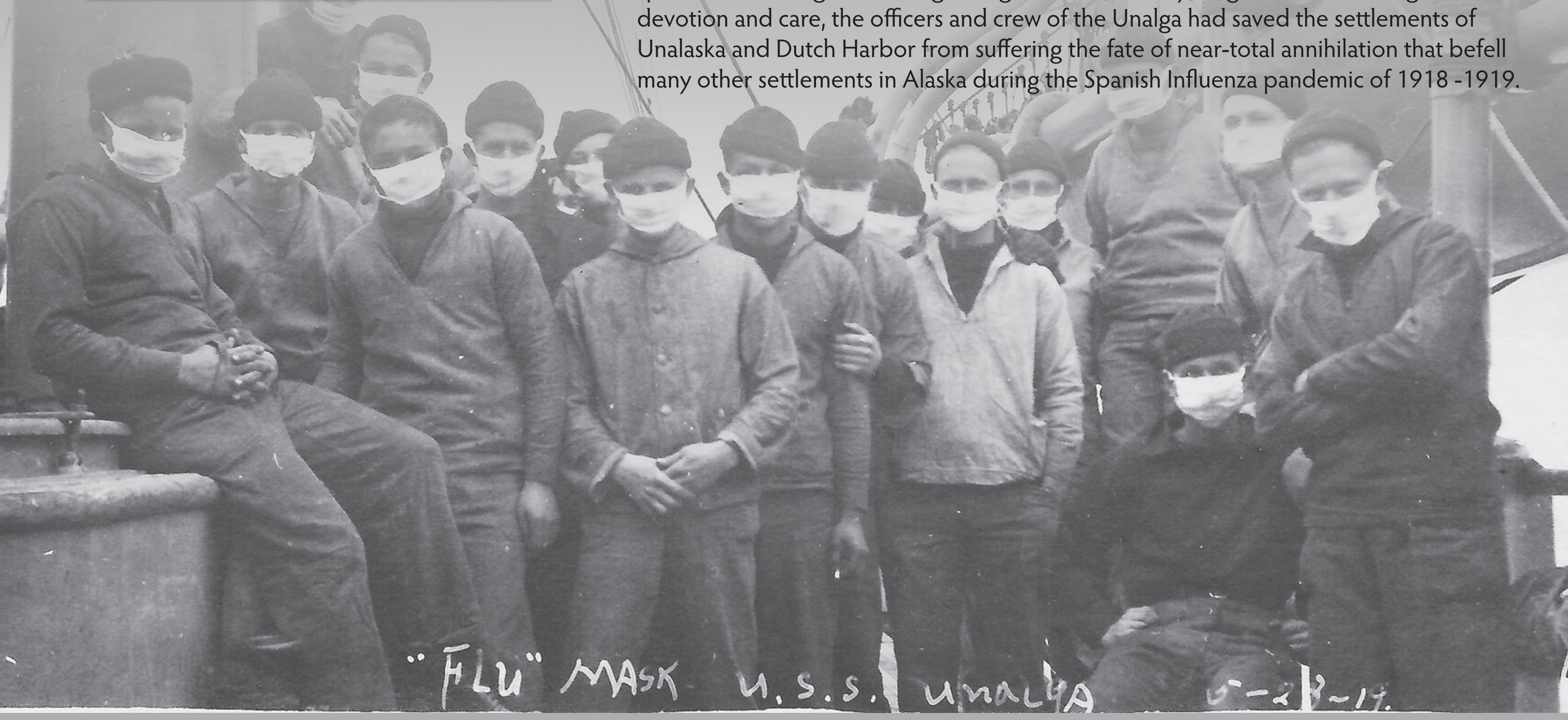
While on patrol, the Coast Guard cutter USS *Unalga* learned of a severe Influenza outbreak on Unalaska Island. Upon arrival, Senior Captain Fredrick Dodge found that nearly the entire population was infected and many would die without immediate medical care. He requested support and immediately engaged the *Unalga*'s three medical personnel and seventy crewmen in intensive relief efforts.

From May 26th to June 4th the *Unalga* was the only resource keeping the inhabitants of Unalaska and the adjacent settlement of Dutch Harbor alive. Caring for the sick and burying the dead was exhausting and emotionally challenging; even with the best medical care between 2-3% of victims would die, but without care the mortality rate would be far higher. The crew members nursing the ill had no protective equipment besides cloth face masks, leaving them exposed to infection. Several became ill, including Captain Dodge.

Other *Unalga* personnel took charge of providing logistical support. Captain Dodge decided it would be justified to feed the entire town using the ship's food stores and crewmen would eventually deliver over 1,000 *Unalga*-prepared meals a day. They outfitted a temporary hospital, powered by the ship's electricity and furnished with plumbing. Finally, they made rough wooden coffins and hacked graves into the permafrost, ultimately burying between 44 and 46 victims in Unalaska's cemetery beneath wooden white-painted Russian Orthodox crosses.

In addition to nursing the sick and burying the dead, the crew of the *Unalga* also had to care for the children of the deceased or incapacitated. Spanish Influenza most ruthlessly killed younger adults and this had the tragic effect of creating a number of orphans who, even if not infected, were in danger of starving, freezing, or eaten by now-feral dogs (repeatedly described as more like ravenous wolves) in Alaskan's unforgiving environment. Unalaska had an orphanage, the Jesse Lee Home, but when it became full, Captain Dodge requisitioned a vacant house and it became the "USS UNALGA ORPHAN HOME."

Relief ships began to arrive on June 3rd and the last death occurred on the 13th. Overall, the care administered by the Coast Guard sailors had been somewhat rough-hewn but effective. The mortality rate at Unalaska ended up being between 1 and 1.5%, lower than in most American cities. For years later, the inhabitants of Unalaska would speak of the *Unalga*'s crew in glowing or even (coarsely) angelic terms. Through their devotion and care, the officers and crew of the *Unalga* had saved the settlements of Unalaska and Dutch Harbor from suffering the fate of near-total annihilation that befell many other settlements in Alaska during the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918 -1919.



"FLU" MASK U.S.S. UNALGA 5-23-19