

Michigan Every Day **By Patrick Sullivan and Carole Eberly**

Oct. 19, 1918
No church on Sunday

In newspapers across Michigan, tucked away amid headlines about World War I deaths and news of the German Kaiser, residents learned that starting this Sunday, by order of the state government, all meeting places would be closed. The order went into effect on Oct. 19, 1918, just after midnight, and was to remain in force until further notice. The front page of the Traverse City Record-Eagle made no mention of the reason for the ban because people already knew why. In an editorial in the same edition, the newspaper bemoaned a lack of willingness among citizens to contain contagious diseases like Spanish influenza, which was ravaging Michigan that fall. “When scarlet fever is prevalent, there are plenty of people who will send their children to school when they have enough of the disease to give it to other pupils,” an editor wrote. “They dislike so much to be quarantined that they will conceal the suspicious symptoms until someone is really very sick and they get scared.” The editorial concluded that if only people were willing to stay out of work or away from school when they got sick, thousands of lives could be saved. The day following that churchless Sunday, the newspaper described the city as a ghost town: “Yesterday was, perhaps, the quietest Sunday in the history of the city. Churches and theaters remained closed. Few people were on the street. But for the fact that the gasoline ban had been raised, permitting the use of motor cars, the streets would have been deserted.”