

Bubonic Panic: Where Plague Invaded America

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In the book “Bubonic Panic: Where Plague Invaded America”, we learn about the bubonic plague, which is a disease that caused people to die within a few days. The plague had three forms: bubonic plague, septicemic plague (a disease where someone’s chances of survival would be much lower), and pneumonic plague (a disease that took away your breathing). Symptoms of bubonic plague include buboes (painful lumps under the skin of a person infected with bubonic plague), high fever, headache, achiness, weakness, and more. It caused millions of deaths, and no one knew why. The disease started back in the year of 542, when a historian by the name of Procopius discovered bubonic plague. He noticed that it started with a fever, and then later into nausea and a deep coma. The plague eventually spread to the Mediterranean Sea, and later to countries near it such as India and China. After killing tens of millions of people, the plague eventually disappeared for 600 years. Unfortunately, in 1346, bubonic plague broke out again in Italy after the Mongol army wanted control of the port run by merchants in Italy. 20 to 25 million people died of plague during the 14th century. Over the next 400 years, millions of people died, and the bubonic plague disappeared in 1722. The plague didn’t come back once again until after another 150 years. It reappeared in the 1890’s when Mary Niles (an American doctor) was working in China and found 8 patients with buboes and high fevers. This could only mean that the bubonic plague had returned. The plague continued to spread throughout China and into other countries. It wasn’t until Louis Pasteur discovered the germ theory and the invention of better microscopes when people actually began to figure out what caused the bubonic plague. Then, two researchers- Shibasaburo Kitasato and Alexandre Yersin- came to Hong Kong to discover the microbes that caused plague. Kitasato was the first one to find the bacteria that caused plague, but that bacteria was eventually known to cause pneumonia. Yersin, however, ended up finding the bacteria that causes bubonic plague and had the bacteria that caused it named after him. Later, Waldemar Haffkine discovered a vaccine for bubonic plague, but it was only strong enough to prevent plague and not cure it. At the same time, Paul-Louis Simond (a pathologist) discovered that fleas also caused plague. Unfortunately, at the same time, 30 countries on five continents had plague, and the plague was now approaching America.

As the 20th century began, plague continued to spread. At the same time, a bacteriologist named Joseph Kinyoun had proof that there was plague in America, as his pets had all died from the bacteria of the bubonic plague. However, he wasn’t able to control the spread of bubonic plague throughout California and the rest of America. Even worse, Kinyoun was being criticized by the governor that bubonic plague wasn’t even in California. However, when the governor (Governor Gage) noticed that other pathologists were agreeing with Kinyoun saying that plague existed, he became furious. Eventually, he agreed that there was plague in the country, but he made Kinyoun leave California and go to Michigan, which Kinyoun found frustrating. However, the amount of bubonic plague victims had gone down, which was a relief to doctors and others in California, but this only made Governor Gage think that there wasn’t plague in America once

again. Eventually, the Republicans chose to nominate someone else, as they were upset Gage was interfering with the goal of stopping plague. Rupert Blue was later chosen to help stop plague, and he told a group of people to kill every single rat and flea that they saw. Eventually, his methods worked, and the last person was attacked by bubonic plague in 1908. Blue's next goal was to clear plague of the place that he thought plague would travel next (Oakland). However, it turned out that another bubonic plague-carrying animal was discovered- ground squirrels. Luckily, as time went on, the plague decreased in numbers as more plague bacteria-carrying animals were killed, and the chances of surviving plague began to increase. Along with that, antibiotics and other medicine were found to help kill plague bacteria. Although bubonic plague cases occur today, they are much easier to solve thanks to the help of the invention of new antibiotics and medicine. Although bubonic plague has definitely been detrimental towards people, it has been easier to cure.

There were many things that I liked about this book. One reason why was because it was very informative. This book gave a lot of information about the bubonic plague and how it has changed over the past few centuries. It has also given information on how to avoid bubonic plague. Along with that, I liked how there were many statistics in the book. Some of these statistics include 20 to 25 million people dying of plague in the 14th century and less and less deaths of bubonic plague occurring as time went by. However, some of the information in the book was very scary to know. To hear that millions of people died of a plague that was very harmful to people makes me a little afraid of the plague. Because some of this information was a little bit scary to me, I would recommend this book to readers that are 12 and up. However, this book is very interesting and informative, which is why I would recommend this book to someone else.

Recommended Titles:

Fatal Fever: Tracking Down Typhoid Mary by Gail Jarrow

The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History by John M. Barry

The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic by Steven Johnson