

Awareness of the Spanish Flu arrives in the Lehigh Valley, September 13, 1918

The Bethlehem Gadfly Spanish Flu March 30, 2020

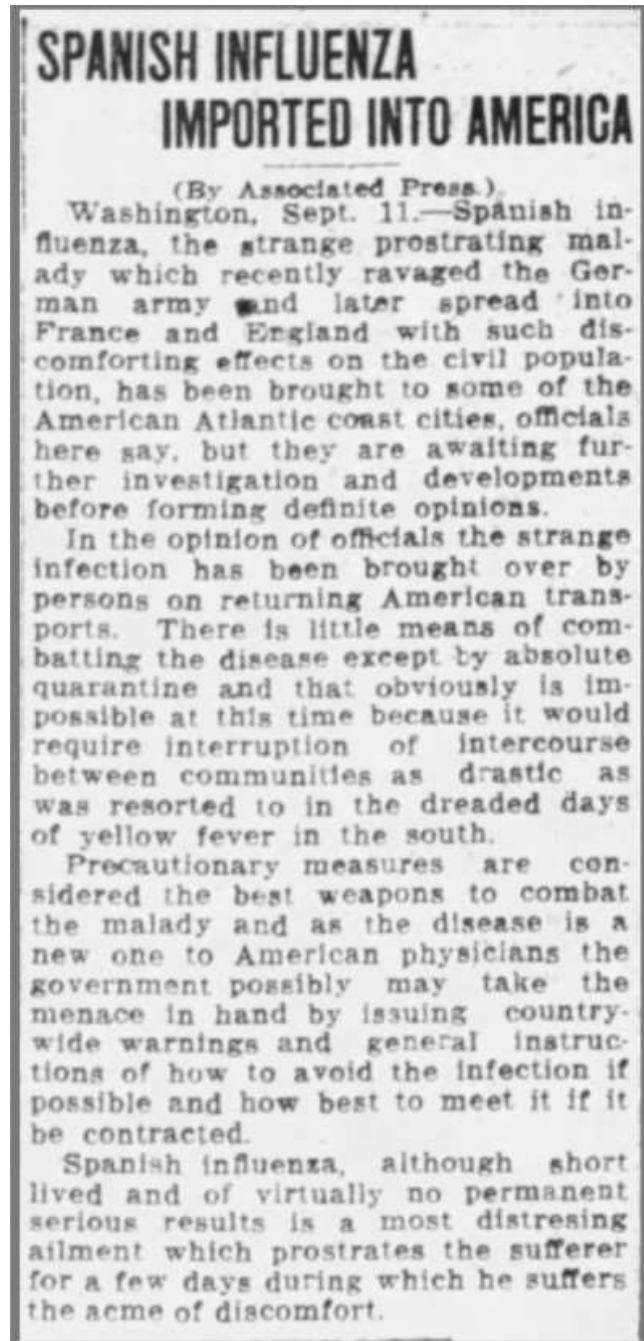
🌀 Latest in a series of posts on the coronavirus 🌀

For perspective on our current situation, we are following the entrance of the 1918 Spanish Influenza, that paragon of pandemics, into the minds and bodies of Lehigh Valley residents who got their news through the Morning Call (the files of the Bethlehem Globe are closed to us at the moment).

We can mark the exact day.

On Friday the 13th, 1918, readers, if they read carefully, found this on p. 17 of the *Morning Call* rubbing shoulders on both sides with stories about the war.

- Note that our “officials” are aware of the flu’s “ravage” in Europe (as we were in China) but are slow to be sure it’s here.
- Social distancing is recognized as the prime defense, but our “officials” hesitate to initiate such “drastic” action.
- The government “possibly may” have a **15 Days to Slow the Spread** plan to combat the disease.



- Though the European experience is as plain as day, the disease is characterized as, though acutely uncomfortable, short-lived and not serious — how often have we heard that 80% who have the virus will self-treat without consequence — but no mention is made of death, though 675,000 Americans will eventually suffer it.

Readers of their Friday the 13th newspaper would, if they noted the story at all, feel no imminent fear.

Readers of this Monday the 30th blog, however, might well feel distressed at lessons not well learned.