

“Good, big-hearted men” take care of children displaced by the Spanish Flu

The Bethlehem Gadfly coronavirus, Spanish Flu May 12, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts on the Spanish Flu 

“Obey the laws, and wear the gauze;
Protect your jaws from septic paws.”
popular jingle, 1918

Gadfly’s used to washing his hands.

He’s spent a lot of time in research libraries digging through old dusty books and files.

So he’s enjoying his saunter through the 1918 *Morning Call* files on the Spanish Influenza pandemic.

He’s now read from mid-September when the *Call* announced that the Flu had “arrived” in America to the Armistice ending World War I, November 11.

It’s a shame Gadfly does not have access at this time to the Bethlehem papers. That might be of more interest to us. The *Morning Call* seemingly had “correspondents” many places — even such places now unfamiliar to him as Lynnville, Yoder’s, Zion Hill, Ashfield — but virtually no news from Bethlehem.

Gadfly’s been on the lookout for news that gives us some perspective on our current situation. In the last post, for instance, we see the restiveness and revolt against lock-downs that we are now experiencing. Late October crossing into November was a weird time in the Flu history. The same day that Harrisburg was observing a day of prayer for the passing of the disease, the Palmerton headline was “Three daughters from the same family die.” Allentown, always straining under the quarantine, opened up November 1, literally two days after a report headlined “High Mortality Rate Due To Influenza: Epidemic Has Not Yet Run Its Course in This City” and just across the page from “Influenza Takes Toll Of Five at Hockendauqua.”

Who can make sense of all that?

As November 1918 turned, then, the number of new cases was dizzyingly up or down depending on where you were and when you checked.

Familiar territory. Welcome to the Monkey House. Welcome to May 12, 2020.

But something different caught Gadfly's eye in that same November 1 paper announcing Allentown's freedom from quarantine.

Something about children.

Something he hasn't been thinking about now.

The Spanish Flu was a disease that devastatingly struck whole families, whole households, and all at once. There are many stories about husbands and wives sick together and even dying together. If the children were lucky enough to survive (there was no thought of child immunity then — stories of children one month old dying were common), what happened to them? On November 2 Schuylkill county announced 3000 orphans, 500 of whom maintained at public expense.

Wow!

So this joyful article about care for children in Allentown permanently or temporarily orphaned by the Flu caught Gadfly's attention.



**EIGHTEEN CHILDREN ARE
CARED FOR AT NEW HOME**

**City's Newest Charity a Most
Worthy One and Deserv-
ing of Support.**

“Good, big-hearted men” from the Kiwanis Club opened a temporary home for children stranded by the Flu in the Saeger Mansion, then at 4th and Walnut, across the street from Allen Park and Trout Hall in Allentown.

See: [Allentown home for children](#)

A fairly recent *Morning Call* article says, “Fourth Street was once the grandest address in the Lehigh Valley — think of a millionaires’ row.”

And thus the “magnificent” Saeger Mansion, one of the “most commodious” homes in the City, with foyer window and skylight by Tiffany’s, but **recently vacated** at that time, was turned into a storybook setting for the care of children permanently or temporarily cast away by the Flu.

Quite a project, one Gadfly is not sure we see the need of today.