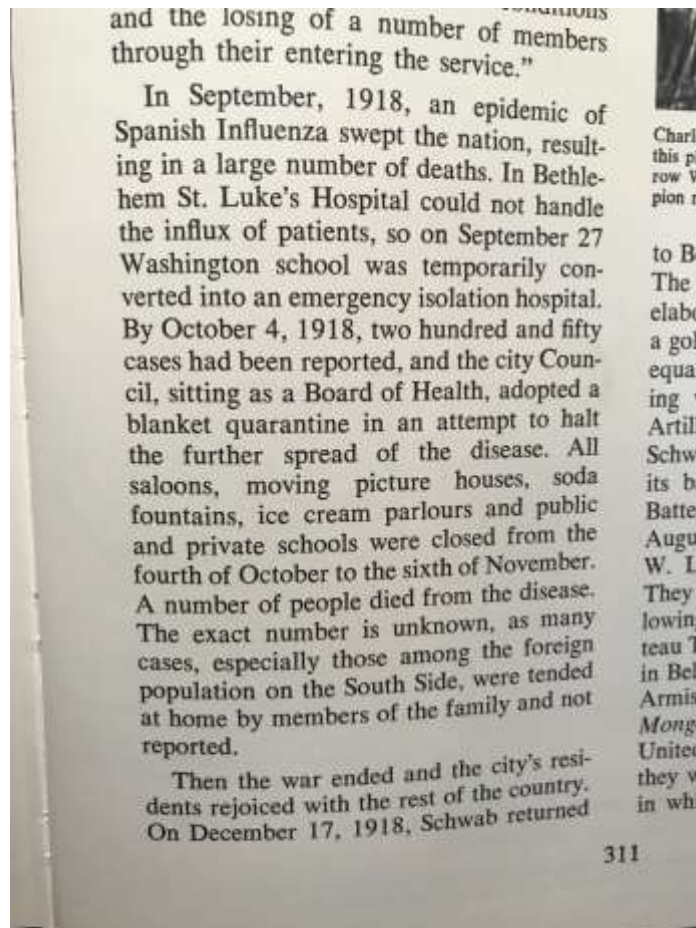


# Bethlehem “blanket quarantine”? Been there, done that

The Bethlehem Gadfly Bethlehem Moments, History, Bethlehem, Spanish Flu March 29, 2020

🦋 Latest in a series of posts on the coronavirus 🦋

Gadfly is a (literary) historian by trade. The past always beckons him. In this period of coronavirus, he could consult the files of the *Bethlehem Globe* on the local impact of the 1918 Spanish Influenza pandemic if the Lehigh University library were open. Sigh. Gadfly does have access to *Morning Call* files from home, however, and he will see what they yield. For now, here's all he finds in perhaps the main modern history of Bethlehem.



*Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: The Golden Years, 1841-1920 (1976)*

What do we see here?

- In Bethlehem, hospital capacity eventually was not sufficient.
- And satellite space was needed.
- Washington School? Where was Washington School?
- Case numbers escalated quickly to the danger point — within a month.
- Interestingly, we had no Board of Health — remember that Bethlehem was only born as a city in 1917, inauguration of the first mayor occurred only 9 months before the outbreak.
- By god, there was a blanket quarantine — a shelter in place.
- Like now, schools were closed.
- The list of other closings mentioned specifically includes watering holes and other fun entertainment and food gathering places.
- So what exactly does “blanket quarantine” mean? Were non-essential businesses closed? Were people advised to stay home?
- We need to remember that a war was going on!
- The duration of the shutdown was about a month.
- Exact number of deaths unknown.
- I wonder where victims of the disease were buried — Roy, at Fairview?
- Interestingly, the Southsiders handled the crisis differently.

Wow! Gadfly would love more granular detail about day-to-day life in our town during this time. He can't wait till he can get to *the Globe*. Anybody have suggestions for other resources?

But let's see what the files of the *Morning Call* yield.

In the meantime, is there any family lore in the memory banks of long-time city residents that you can share?