

# November 15, 1918: “Ding, dong, the witch is dead.” Not

The Bethlehem Gadfly coronavirus, Spanish Flu May 28, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts on the Spanish Flu 

*“The war is over. Like the dread influenza epidemic seemingly it has run its course, and is no more.”  
Morning Call, November 15, 1918*

There is nothing like an Armistice after a four-year war to presage a return to normalcy.

To the way it was.

Time to open up again.

And after a two-month siege with the Flu as well.

Two great converging battles simultaneously won.

**“Ding, dong, the witch is dead.”**

For a short period of time after the Armistice — the period from November 11 to December 1, 1918 — the *Morning Call* records the signs of Allentown and surrounding areas opening up again: schools open, temporary satellite hospitals close, postponed meetings are rescheduled, medicines now tout their efficacy for the lingering post-Flu weakness rather than as preventatives or therapeutics.

One touching example. Local art, community creativity sprouts again: “Jay Wellington resumed practice on his local talent play ‘Three Cheers’ on Friday evening at the Y.M.C. A. after an interruption of about six weeks made necessary by the influenza epidemic.” When the thespians are out, we’ve turned a corner!

Allentown dusts off the “All Clear” siren.

### Nearly Free From Epidemic.

The health authorities in this city who for the past two months have spent more time in combatting the influenza epidemic than they have in their own homes or elsewhere, have the situation well in hand and daily the reports of new cases are becoming fewer.

During the present week less than seventy-five cases have been reported. Those called off have not yet been checked up as N. J. McCafferty, secretary of the board of health, has been otherwise busily engaged filling out state reports and issuing permits for children going to school. However, the city is rapidly being cleaned up of the malady and will probably be entirely free in a short time.

But not so fast!

Mother Nature didn't get the memo.

Macungie: "Notwithstanding the raising of the ban against opening public places throughout most of our state, there are still numerous cases of influenza in this community.

Northampton: "It is reported that influenza is again gaining a foothold in the borough. The epidemic was practically stamped out when the quarantine was lifted."

East Texas: "Influenza is prevalent at East Texas. . . . There is scarcely a home that does not have members down with the disease."

Emaus: "From all indications the influenza cases are again on the increase in this borough, as many as 200 children have been absent from school in one day."

Hellertown: "It was hoped that the influenza would give our town the cold shoulder, but nothing so fortunate is happening. Since the

reopening of the schools the disease has broken out with a vengeance among the school children.”

In the same boat, Allentown, always restless under restriction, quickly needed to go back to the drawing board.

*“Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose”*