

# The Spanish Flu comes to Bethlehem

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [Spanish Flu](#) April 3, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts on the Spanish Flu 

*For perspective on our current coronavirus 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).*

In the period a few days before and after October 1, 1918, Bethlehem readers of the *Morning Call* could see the disease coming closer and closer to their homes.

On September 27 Allentonian James Kingston returned from Tennessee and the funeral of his nephew, “a specimen of good health, 27 years of age,” whose “sudden and unexpected death” while serving in the army at Camp Devens was a “severe shock” to the family.

But that was nobody’s immediate family and Camp Devens and Tennessee were far away.

On October 1 in Easton, “suspicion was aroused” that two people with no connection with the military died of the “dreaded Spanish Influenza,” 20-year-old Ulmont White and 55-year-old Seth Johnson.

But that was Easton and the cause of death unsure.

October 2 was the day uncertainty itself died in Allentown. On October 2 the Spanish Flu claimed John Levi Keiser, age 68, 118 Walnut St.; Harvey Diehl, age 29, 19 S. 12th St.; and Lewis Uhl, 320 N. 6th.

On September 13, the Spanish Flu arrived in the U.S.; on October 2 it arrived in Allentown.

The Flu was no longer a number; it had a name, an address, and a story.

It was real.

Keiser was the Lehigh Valley Railroad gatetender at the 3rd St. crossing, someone many people might have passed over the years. Diehl had the hard luck of catching the Flu literally waiting in line for his discharge from the very army on which the Flu was feasting like a bear at a honey pot.

<p><b>HARVEY S. DIEHL VICTIM OF SPANISH INFLUENZA</b></p> <p>The second death in Allentown attributable to Spanish influenza was that of Harvey S. Diehl, of No. 19, South Twelfth street, which occurred just before midnight Monday night at the Allentown Hospital. He had been in a contingent of draftees at Camp Dix, N. J., was rejected there and came home on Wednesday, September 18. He developed symptoms of Spanish influenza, with pains in the limbs and back. He didn't go to bed at once but later typhoid pneumonia developed. He suffered greatly and on Monday morning was taken to the hospital where he sank gradually to the end. At the time he was at Camp Dix he stood in line in a cold rain for a long time waiting for his discharge and it is thought that he contracted his sickness then.</p> <p>Deceased was 29 years of age and was born near Vera Cruz, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Diehl. He resid-</p>	<p>ed for a time at Coopersburg and a year ago moved to Allentown. He was employed as lineman for the Lehigh Valley Transit Co. There survives his wife, Idella, nee Erney, his father and step-mother, residing at Gerysville, and the following brothers and sisters: Alfred Diehl, Philadelphia; Eugene, Coopersburg; Thomas and William, Gerysville; Rebecca, Allentown, and Mrs. Anna Beck, Coopersburg. He was a member of Livingston Castle, No. 258, K. G. E.; Lafayette Chamber, No. 49, O. K. of F., of Spinnerstown. The funeral will be held on Friday afternoon, with services at Blue church.</p> <p>The first case of Spanish influenza to result fatally was that of John L. Keiser, at No. 118 Walnut street, on Sunday.</p> <p><b>EXTENSION COURSES AT MUHLENBERG COLLEGE</b></p> <p>The regular extension courses of Muhlenberg College for the school year will open on Saturday, Oct. 5th.</p>
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By October 4 the disease was certainly in Bethlehem, killing “a popular young resident,” 32-year-old Frank Lowery of 620 W. Broad St. (the address of the hairdresser next to the former Mayflower lunch across from Sim’s Market), a husband leaving a wife and two sons, a son himself tragically dying before his parents — perhaps the first Bethlehem resident known to succumb to the Flu.

FRANK A. LOWERY.

Frank A. Lowery, a popular young resident of Bethlehem, for the past three years, died a victim of Spanish Influenza. He contracted the disease while in Washington, D. C., a few days ago and returning to his home at 620 West Broad street, where he died at 9 o'clock Tuesday night of pneumonia, resulting from influenza, at the age of 32 years.

Deceased was a native of Philadelphia and came to Bethlehem three years ago and was employed as chief clerk in the office of R. W. Gillespie, assistant general sales agent of the Bethlehem Steel Company. Five months ago he left to become chief clerk in the office of J. L. Replogle, director of steel supplies, for the War Industries Board.

Deceased was a member of San Domingo Council, No. 236, Knights of Columbus, of Philadelphia; Court Standard, Foresters of America, of Philadelphia, and the Union Wheelmen Club, of Bethlehem. He leaves his wife, Mary A. (nee Schell) Lowery, and two sons: Frank, Jr., and James. He also leaves his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George M. Lowery, of Philadelphia.

The funeral, which will be strictly private, will be held on Saturday morning at 9.45 o'clock from his late home. The remains will leave on the 10.33 o'clock train for Philadelphia, where they will be interred in the Holy Cross Cemetery.

The Spanish Flu had come to Bethlehem.