



# The Scribe

October 2020

Palmerton Area Historical Society  
www.palmertonhistorical.org

*knee-deep in history*

## **“No-Parking Virus” Hits Delaware Avenue!** *PennDOT Resurfaces the Thoroughfare*

If the Covid-19 shutdown of many local businesses wasn't enough, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) threw a curve ball at the town in the form of a complete resurfacing of Delaware Avenue.

In early summer, the Borough Water Service accelerated the replacement of leaking valves and curb stops along the length of Delaware Avenue. This disruption to travel was minor and had to be done before PennDOT began its task in August. For a little more than three

weeks, parking was hit and miss – mostly the latter – and businesses were disrupted. It was reminiscent of the old Con Edison motto “Dig We Must for a Better New York”.

It is hoped the improvement to the surface of Delaware Avenue will have been well worth the inconvenience and that sufficient attention has been made to avoid problems associated with asking rainwater to flow uphill to reach the sewer lines!



*Delaware Avenue is scraped ....*



*A spray of tar is applied .....*



*Black top is spread .....*



*A roller provides final touch.*

# Palmerton Area Historical Society

PO Box 267 ~ Palmerton, PA 18071  
www.palmertonhistorical.org  
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(610) 824-6954

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## 2020 Monthly Program Schedule

**Due to the coronavirus,  
the remaining programs for  
2020 have been cancelled.**

**The Palmerton Area  
Heritage Center also  
remains temporarily  
closed until further notice.**



*The paving of Delaware Avenue's broad expanse required application of black top in four equally spaced stages along the entire length of the thoroughfare. Traffic control was a challenge.*

# The Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020

## *How Does it Compare With 1918?*

As this issue of *The Scribe* was being prepared, the United States was into its seventh month of Covid-19. Due to the proximity to the larger urban areas of the Lehigh Valley, Carbon and Schuylkill Counties have been closely watched. Through August 31st, 422 cases of the virus were reported in Carbon with 28 deaths attributed to it. Schuylkill had 987 cases with 51 deaths.

As serious as these numbers are, they pale in comparison with statistics from 1918. In an April 2, 1983 *Times News* article on the epidemic (it hadn't yet been referred to as a "pandemic") the Schuylkill County Health Record reported 5,000 flu-related deaths with 400 in Minersville, 352 in Pottsville, and 121 in St. Clair. On October 23, 1918, the State Department of Health reported 13,721 flu-related deaths in only 22 days! In addition, 5,283 pneumonia related deaths were reported.

The December 1918 issue of *ZINC Magazine* reported a total of 82 deaths in Palmerton, although the number of NJZ employees was not indicated. However, Lehigh Coal & Navigation reported that 65 of their employees had succumbed to the flu.

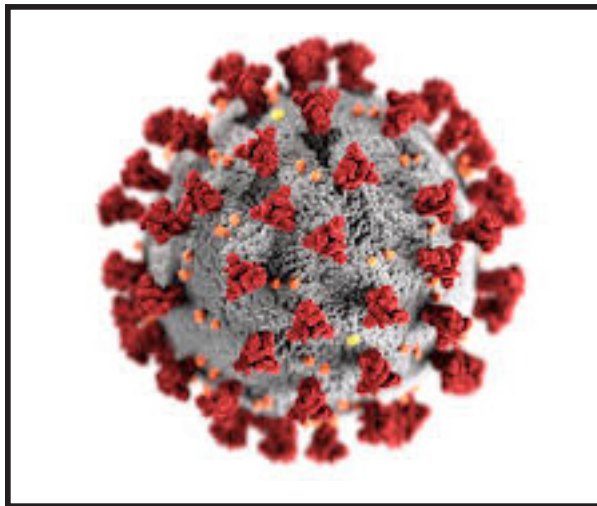
Like the 2020 pandemic, theaters, saloons, schools, and other places where crowds gathered were ordered closed. Similar to today, there were no wakes and no funerals. in 1918. Undertakers affixed placards to the doors of the homes of those who died and their remains were taken directly to burial.

The death rate in 1918 was remarkably different from that of Covid-19 in one particular aspect. The rate among those 25-34 years old was 50% higher than the rate among those 65-74 years

old. This is unlike the rates in 2020 where the younger population has had a lower mortality rate.

By the time the influenza epidemic had waned, approximately 550,000 Americans had died – equivalent to almost one

million today. In 1918, people were warned not to lull themselves into a false sense of comfort that flu had run its course. The same is true today. The number of daily deaths in Pennsylvania this year peaked between April 20-30 at about 400 per day. That number had fallen to about 15 per day in August. The most important lesson that comes out of 1918 is that it is best to tell the truth and not sugarcoat the news.



*How can something so tiny and beautiful be so deadly.*

## The Early Years of Women's Suffrage

### *Two Women Who Played Important Roles*

The 1920's were remarkable in that the era provided women with their first legal opportunity to vote – a right denied to them prior to the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. This legitimized the role of women in the governance of the country.



*Edith Galt Wilson*

The decade of the 20's was "bookended" by two unusual and talented women. To the average person a century later, the names of Edith Galt

and Lou Henry evoke no images of greatness, yet each played an important role.

President Woodrow Wilson was a recent widower when he met the widow Edith Galt in 1915. Following a courtship and marriage, Edith Wilson did much to support her husband's efforts during the years prior to America's entry into World War I. The significance of her role was such that she became the first person other than the President to be accorded Secret Service protection. But it is what she did following the end of the war for which she is noted.

On October 2, 1919, upon his return from the League of Nations conference at Versailles, President Wilson suffered a massive stroke,

the knowledge and severity of which were downplayed to the public. At that time, there was no provision for transfer of power from an incapacitated leader.

Until President Warren Harding took office on March 4, 1921, Edith Wilson functioned as Chief of Staff (it was not until 20 years later that Congress officially created this position) and she exercised virtually all control over access to her husband. During that time, she was considered by some historians as "de facto" President and because of the power she exercised her role in history is controversial.

Lou Henry was an Iowa farmgirl who became a true "Renaissance Woman" and brought an exceptional talent to Washington from 1929-1933 as First Lady.

Following her graduation from Stanford University in 1898 with a degree in geology, Lou Henry married Herbert Hoover,



*Lou Henry Hoover*

a mining engineer and together they traveled extensively. She was an excellent horsewoman, an outstanding athlete in several sports, and was

proficient in Latin and several other languages. She traveled to China with her husband and served as a hospital volunteer during the Boxer Rebellion. By the time they returned to America, Lou Hoover and her husband were both fluent in Mandarin Chinese.

In 1919 Lou Henry Hoover was decorated by King Albert I of Belgium for her work with Belgian refugees following World War I and in the 1920's, she was twice featured on the cover of Time Magazine. Her skill as a geologist and linguist enabled her to translate from Latin, the classic 16th Century metallurgical text "De Re Metallica" which remains in print today as the

definitive English version.

At the onset of the Great Depression, Lou Henry Hoover set the standard for FDR's later "Fireside Chats" when she broadcast nationally to lend encouragement to the country. She also realized the need for the President to have a nearby retreat to escape the rigors of Washington. Her idea eventually resulted in the creation of "Shangri-La" during the Roosevelt Administration - better known today as Camp David.

Two women of great talent. Two different roles of equal importance in America's history.

## **The Nineteenth Amendment**

*"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of sex."*

Like most politically charged issues, the road to passage of this amendment was not easy. Beginning in 1848, the women's suffrage movement sought equality in the voting booth and they achieved early success in 1869 when Wyoming granted women the right. Colorado, Utah, Idaho, and other western states followed. The ability of women to deal with the harshness of life on the frontier was a factor in convincing male-dominated legislatures to provide them equal stature.

It took another half century for the Congress

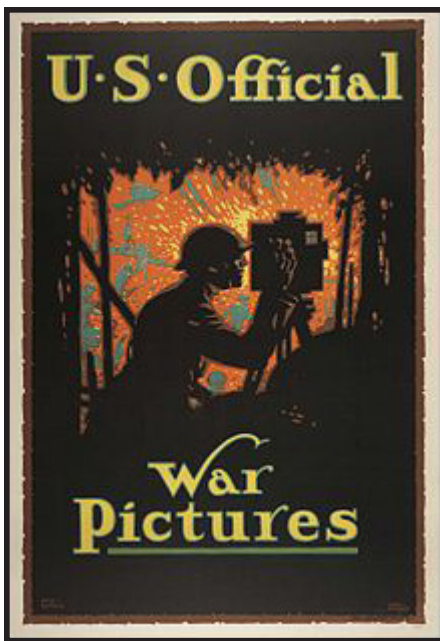
of the United States to take up the cause and on June 4, 1919 the amendment was approved by the US Senate by a two-vote margin. Adoption required approval by three-quarters of the states (36 of 48 at that time) and this was not guaranteed. States as diverse as Delaware and Alabama voted against it. Other states such as Connecticut, declined to act.

Tennessee approved it on August 18, 1920 after a tie was broken when one legislator changed his "no" vote allegedly after receiving a letter from his mother! Eight days later, the United States Secretary of State officially certified the adoption of the amendment. Eventually, all states ratified the amendment – the last of which was Mississippi on March 22, 1984.

## The Danger of Propaganda - *Learn From History or Repeat It*

The parallels between America of 100 years ago and the country of 2020 are striking. Although there is no war today that compares with “The Great War” that ravaged Europe from 1914-1918, there is a continuing ideological “war” among the varied nations of the world. These ideological differences even foster strife between America’s two major political parties.

In 2005, John M. Barry published his book, “The Great Influenza” in which he detailed the 1918 pandemic flu and how the media (in those days the press) dealt with it. This health crisis came at the time America was entering the war in Europe. There was much discord and division



among groups that supported America’s entry into the war and those who were opposed.

P r e s i d e n t  
W i l s o n  
demanded that every American be made aware of the brutality

of the struggle and that they support American participation. Acts were passed that made it a crime to “utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the government of the United States.” This was considered treasonous and

punishable by 20 years in prison.

Such legislation would be considered unthinkable today, yet worse was to come. President Wilson created the Committee on Public Information with the purpose of using propaganda to influence public opinion on the war. At its heart, this Committee



subscribed to the belief of one of its founders that *“truth and falsehood are arbitrary terms ... The force of an idea lies in its inspirational value. It matters little if it is true or false.”* Such a cynical comment would be ridiculed today were it not for the ongoing 2020 debate over “fake news.”

Although the Committee was dissolved in 1919 following the end of the war, some of the ideas that permeated its efforts found their way into the reporting on the pandemic. In his book on the great influenza, Barry wrote that at the time, “newspapers reported on the disease with the same mixture of truth and half-truth....” As the virus spread from place to place, every time the newspapers said “Don’t get scared!” they frightened people!

## On the Lighter Side

Several readers have asked for something a little “lighter” in *The Scribe*. This issue will introduce a variety of mental challenges. Those who wish to respond may do so by mail to PAHS 410 Delaware Ave Palmerton PA 18071 or electronically to palmertonhistorical@ptd.net. Appropriate recognition will be awarded to those submitting correct answers.

Each letter of this encrypted quotation has been replaced by a different letter. The expression is by a famous essayist and Nobel laureate

ALX LKPLXNA BRSC RB WHTKAZ

KN GRWX RB BHCX

PXRSPX NHTAHZHHTH

### From Memorial Park Pool fans ....

1. What is the maximum depth of the pool?
2. How high was the High Dive (in meters or feet)
3. In what year was the High Dive removed and why?

### From the Desk of Jane Borbe ....

1. The state’s Liberty Bell is housed in Philadelphia. On the Bell, the name of our state is printed incorrectly by today’s spelling. How was it spelled at the time the Bell was cast? Hint: It’s not Pencilvania.

Let the editors of *The Scribe* know if you enjoyed this look at the lighter side of history and feel free to offer suggestions.

## Look for Your 2021 Membership Renewal Letter

Early next month, you should receive a letter seeking the renewal of your membership in the Historical Society. This year has been particularly difficult for many of us and the Society is no exception. We request your reply at your earliest convenience.



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**Palmerton Area  
Historical Society  
Heritage Center**

410 Delaware Avenue  
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**HOURS**

**Wednesday** - 12:30-3pm

**Thursday** - 10am-2pm

**Friday** - Noon-4pm

**Saturday** - 10am-2pm

