

Santee Historical Society

Historical Happenings

Volume 12, Issue 2

April May June 2020



Santee Historical Museum

at the Barn

9200 Magnolia

**Open every Tuesday
from 10 to noon...**

and one Saturday of each month
from 10 to 2 pm.

**Check our website for dates
and come visit...
everyone is welcome!**



P.O.Box 710636, Santee 92072



www.SanteeHistoricalSociety.org



Santee Historical Society



TheSanteeHistoricalSociety@gmail.com



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President's Message



Alan Thompson

How the smallest thing can change the world and affect everyone in it. COVID-19, a very dangerous virus, imported from China, has made huge changes in the operation of the Santee Historical Society Museum at the Historic Santee Barn. We have ceased operations until further notice, which means no tours, no archiving, no visitors until we are given the all clear. Like you, we are all hunkering down with our families riding out this storm.

This column is used to inform you of upcoming events at the Historic Santee Barn, and on paper we have two upcoming events... River Park Days that has been postponed until October, and the Flag Retirement Ceremony in June. At this time, I cannot verify if the Flag Retirement event will take place. Please check our website, our Facebook postings, and our answering machine for updates.

There is a historical comparison between this pandemic and the great Flu Pandemic of 1918 as well as a personal one. My maternal great-grandmother, Matilda Parisse Palli, was a victim of the 1918 Flu which made some huge changes to my family back then. Great-grandmother was a single mom (my great-grandfather Rocco Palli passed away a few years before from a tragic trolley accident) and had 6 children with my grandmother, Julia Palli Posa, the eldest. With her passing, the local Family Court of Washington Pennsylvania was going to parcel out the children to be adopted. However, my grand parents Ralph and Julia Posa took in all the children and raised them as their own in addition to the 4 of their own. My mother, Clara Mae Posa was the youngest of the children.

I wrote this short family history to remind everybody that taking care of your family is the highest priority during this time of challenge. Speaking for the Board of Directors, you are part of our family, so take care of yourself. Just as the flu of 1918 passed, this COVID-19 will pass too.



Alan Thompson
President



Robin Neece
Vice President

*Wishing
you
good health,
sunshine
and flowers
during this
difficult
time in our
history.*



Arli Wolfson
Secretary



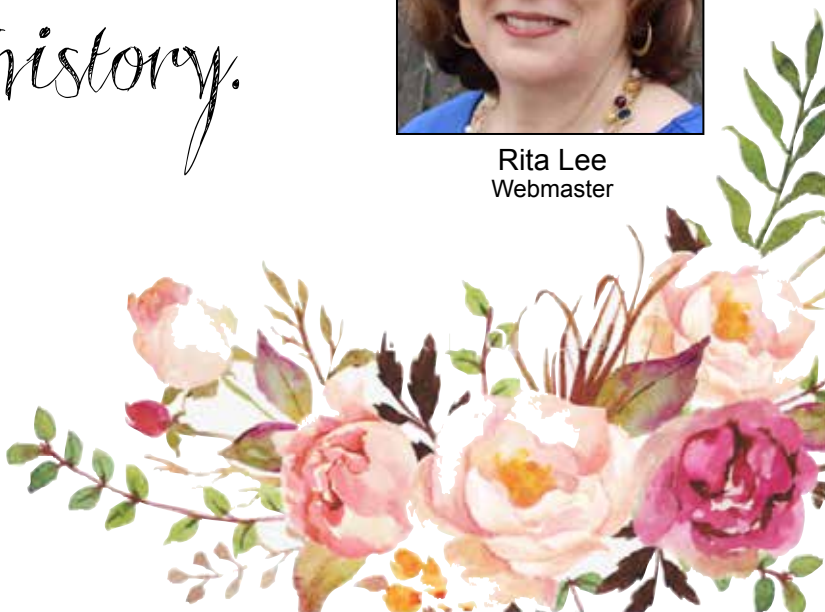
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We know that history repeats itself. We found a very interesting article in

The San Diego Union-Tribune

about how the 1918 Spanish Flu affected San Diego shortly after the Historic Barn was built

The 1918 flu pandemic in San Diego: 366 deaths, sheep dip and mandatory masks

By John Wilkens
March 15, 2020

For three months, San Diego fought influenza with quarantines and other measures similar to today

In some ways, it's déjà vu.

Quarantines. Event cancellations. People stockpiling food. Those are all happening in San Diego now because of the coronavirus, and they happened here in 1918, too, when the Spanish flu arrived.

That pandemic, believed to be the deadliest in history, infected an estimated 500 million people worldwide, almost one-third of the population. It killed at least 50 million, including 675,000 in the United States, dwarfing the numbers of those who died in soon-to-conclude World War I.

The death toll in San Diego from the flu was 366, out of a population of about 75,000. That's about 0.5 percent of the city. Today, that would amount to some 6,800 victims.

Almost 5,000 others got sick with "the grip," as it was sometimes known then.

With the coronavirus in its early stages, no one knows what the final numbers will look like this time, and there are obvious differences between what happened then, especially in terms of medical knowledge. Doctors in 1918 understood that viruses existed, but knew little about how to test for them or create targeted vaccines to combat outbreaks.

There were no antibiotics to treat the secondary bacterial pneumonia that killed many of the victims. Doctors couldn't explain why the flu ravaged fit and healthy people in their 20s, 30s and 40s more than it did children and the elderly.

Some even doubted that it would reach San Diego. One health official predicted influenza couldn't take hold here. He thought the weather was too mild.

But the flu came anyway, and looking back offers reminders, if not lessons, about how human beings react under pressure from an unseen foe.

The first cases were reported on Sept. 26, 1918, in Balboa Park, where sailors were stationed. A day later, a dozen more cropped up at Camp Kearny, an Army base. The sick were put in quarantine.

Then came orders from the city shutting down for five weeks all schools, theaters, movie houses, gymnasiums, pool halls, libraries, churches - anywhere the public gathered. Neighboring cities issued similar edicts. People were told to wear gauze surgical masks when outside their homes.

Still the cases mounted. A dozen members of the crew building the San Diego Arizona Railway in the Carrizo Gorge were fatally stricken. "We do not wish to unduly alarm people, but we have a situation which must be recognized," Dr. Ernest Chartres-Martin, San Diego's health officer, told reporters. "The influenza has not been stopped, or even been curbed."

Children absorbed what was going on around them. According to an account by local historian Richard Crawford, many of them began skipping rope to this rhyme:

I had a little bird
Its name was Enza
I opened the window
And in-flew-Enza

Containment strategies

Then, as now, "social distancing" was part of the containment strategy, although they didn't call it that in 1918. Some cities took it less seriously than others, with disastrous results. Philadelphia refused to cancel a parade and soon found its hospitals overwhelmed. Within six weeks, more than 12,000 people were dead.

San Diego restricted public gatherings but officials thought it was mostly an indoor problem. Get outside, residents were told, and the fresh air will keep you healthy. People went to the beaches. They held folk dances in parks, splashed in outdoor swimming pools. One doctor suggested car rides at least 3,500 feet up into the mountains.

Some physicians also recommended a post-meal spray of quinine bifulsate, more commonly an anti-malarial drug, which was thought to "preclude much danger from the malady," according to Crawford's account.

City officials eventually decided to spray the streets, too — with sheep dip, a liquid used by farmers to keep the animals free of insects. The Imperial County town of Brawley had reported success with it.

Inside homes, the Burton Electric Co. advertised a portable heater as "the only real flu chaser." It cost \$10. "Take no chances on catching the 'flu' — easy to catch, but hard to get rid of," one ad read.



Student Army Training Corps shown wearing masks at San Diego High School during the 1918 flu pandemic.
(San Diego Historical Society)

By late October of 1918, the flu's spread in San Diego seemed to be slowing. "The total number of cases reported from the city and nearby camps and posts is now 535 with a total of 20 deaths," the San Diego Union reported, while adding a dig at its neighbor to the north: "It is pointed out that one day in Los Angeles records more new cases and more deaths than the totals in San Diego since the disease first appeared."

The newspaper, on its editorial page, scoffed at wearing masks in public. It suggested they were better suited for "highwaymen, burglars and holdup men" and expressed regret "that some of the young women in public employment are compelled to wear these masks. We miss their pretty faces."

The Chamber of Commerce also downplayed the threat, arguing in a statement that "fear is the greatest contributing cause in prolongation of the influenza epidemic." A letter writer to the Evening Tribune dismissed the whole thing as "influenza propaganda" and suggested doctors were just trying to drum up business.

Most of the restrictions on public gatherings were lifted by the middle of November. But then came another outbreak, 100 new cases. Officials turned the Mission Brewery building at the foot of Washington Street into an emergency isolation hospital.

City health officials pushed to re-instate closures, and got push-back from business owners. After the state moved forward with a quarantine order, the City Council passed its own in early December. Only those selling "the necessities" were allowed to stay open — grocery stores, banks, drug stores and meat markets.

Police gave warnings to a small number of businesses that flouted the rules. If they were still open the next day, their owners got arrested.

Mandatory masks

The shut-down lasted less than one week. After it was lifted, the City Council ordered everyone to wear gauze masks while out in public.

Failing to don one carried the threat of 30 days in jail and a \$100

fine. Hundreds were arrested and fined small amounts. "Unlucky members of the 'I Won't Wear 'Em Club' were brought before the court in seemingly never-ending fashion," the Evening Tribune reported.

The masks had to be the thickness of four gauze bandages or six pieces of cheesecloth. Newspapers published sew-your-own instructions. The Union also ran a cartoon in early December of several men in masks — including one with it covering his eyes, not his mouth and nose — under the heading, "They Improve the Looks of Some People." Another part of the drawing read, "Funny Looking Us" (FLU). Not so funny: The continuing health toll.

Some of the deaths were heartbreaking in their capriciousness. A Fallbrook man named Harry Smelser came to San Diego for jury duty and caught the flu. His wife, Dot, traveled south to take care of him. She got sick, too. He recovered. She died.

Then, almost as suddenly as it started, the epidemic waned. On Christmas Eve, the mask order was lifted. There would be another wave of cases in 1919, but the worst was over, at least in San Diego.

Health officials thought they knew how to keep it that way, with an approach that feels familiar to anyone watching the current coronavirus spread. They recommended no traveling, especially to Los Angeles, and Camp Kearny ordered its soldiers not to head there on leave.

But what about people coming from L.A. to San Diego?

"Many of these persons come to San Diego where we have almost stayed the progress of the ailment," the Union editorialized on Jan. 20, 1919. "Some of our health authorities are of the opinion that if it were not for this Los Angeles immigration this city would be practically free of the influenza germ."

If only it were that easy.
Then and now.



*Circa 1918
Military personnel on
truck at Camp Kearny
during flu epidemic.*
(San Diego
Historical Society)

AND DAILY REC.—THE UNION, NEWSPAPER OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, SATURDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 7, 1918

FIRST DAY OF QUARANTINE IS TAKEN GOOD-NATUREDLY; ANXIOUS TO STAMP OUT 'FLU'

Most Streets Closed and Business District Practically Deserted; Many Minor Violations of Ordinance, but No Arrests; Police to Enforce Regulations More Strictly Today

San Diego's first day of enforcing the influenza quarantine ordinance was taken good-naturedly. With some of the streets closed, the business district was almost deserted. The police reported that the public seemed to take the quarantine laws in good spirit and that the streets were kept clean and free of litter.

Chief of Police William J. Hall, who has been in charge of the quarantine effort, said that the public seemed to take the quarantine laws in good spirit and that the streets were kept clean and free of litter.

At a short meeting of the quarantine committee, which was held at the city hall, the members of the committee discussed the progress of the quarantine effort and the need for more strict enforcement of the regulations.

The influenza epidemic, which has been spreading rapidly in San Diego, has caused a great deal of concern among the citizens. The quarantine committee has been working hard to keep the disease from spreading further.

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They Improve the Looks of Some People



DECISION TO BRING PERRY BEFORE MILITARY COURT ADVANCES DATE OF TRIAL

Officials Believe Case Will Be Disposed of Before Civil Criminal Calendar Comes Up Late in January; Lieutenant Continues to Deny Can Section With Sister Murder

San Diego, Dec. 6.—The decision to bring the case of the late Lieutenant Perry before military court has advanced the date of trial. Officials believe the case will be disposed of before the civil criminal calendar comes up late in January.

The case of the late Lieutenant Perry, who was accused of murdering his sister, has been a subject of much speculation. The military court has decided to take jurisdiction of the case.

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THE MARSTON COMPANY

1110, Sixth and C Streets

Store Closed Temporarily

In Accordance With
Quarantine Regulations

Orders for Essentials

Customers requiring essential articles for the sick room, or for health protection, may obtain them by telephone order, or by application at the door.

For the protection of both customers and employees, goods will not be sent on approval during the epidemic. It is therefore important that your telephone orders should be plainly and carefully stated, as it will be necessary to entrust the selection of these orders to the store employees.

A HEATER

Is an Absolute Necessity in the Home. Don't Do Without One—Just Phone

Main 4 7 2 Home 2 4 5 0

and We'll Deliver

Our stock of heaters is a big one and includes heaters for oil, electricity, gas, coal, wood and briquets. Prices to suit any purse.

INGLE MFG. CO.

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WE ARE OPEN

During Quarantine

If You Need Sick Room

Supplies Call or Phone Us

FREE DELIVERY

Hospital White Chamber Wares, Bed Pans,

Rubber Sheeting, Gauze, Cotton, Fever

Thermometers, Nose and Throat Sprays,

Trusses, Elastic Hosiery and Abdominal

Supporters.

Physicians' Supply Co.

911 Fifth Street, Between My. and E

Telephone Main 2371

MEXICAN GUILTY OF FIRST DEGREE MURDER, VERDICT

Penalty for Killing Teacher Merchant Fixed at Life Imprisonment by Jury

First degree murder was the verdict found against Victorio Ceballos, a Mexican, by a jury in Federal court here today.

The jury found Ceballos guilty of the murder of a teacher, which was the first case of its kind in the history of the court.

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BIG INCREASE IN VALLEY CROPS

Imperial County's Production Exceeds All Previous Records by 35 Percent, Report

Imperial County, Calif., has reported a big increase in its valley crops, which has exceeded all previous records by 35 percent.

The increase in crops is due to the fact that the weather has been very favorable for the growing season.

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CONFERENCE ON ROAD PAVING IS POSTPONED

Meeting of the State Highway Commission Will Be Held at a Later Date

The meeting of the State Highway Commission, which was scheduled for today, has been postponed to a later date.

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CORONADO TAG DAY POSTPONED

Due to Quarantine Campaign For Home to Be Continued By Other Methods

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FOUND IMPOSSIBLE TO SUPPLY NURSES

Red Cross Secretary of This Division Makes Appeal for Immediate Assistance

The Red Cross Secretary of this division has made an appeal for immediate assistance to supply nurses.

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TROOPS OF ALLIES TO POLICE BERLIN

Correspondence, Dec. 6, (London)—The Allies are expected to police Berlin.

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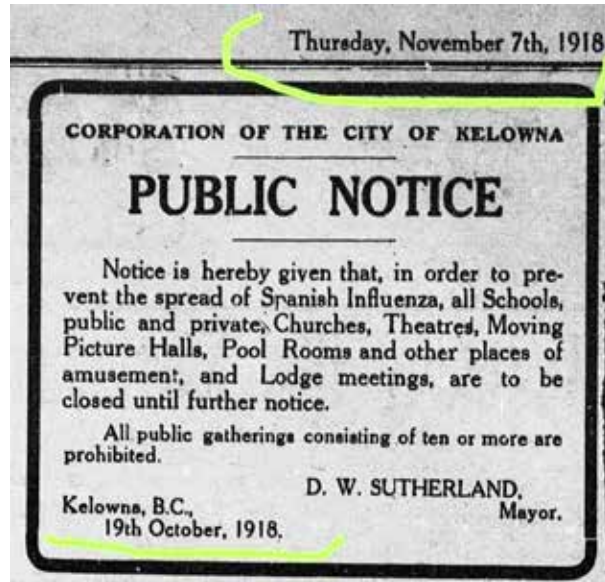
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Poking around the internet,
we found additional photos
of California during
the 1918 Pandemic.

*This poem was written in 1869 and
reprinted during the 1918 Pandemic*

And people stayed at home
And read books
And listened
And they rested
And did exercises
And made art and played
And learned new ways of being
And stopped and listened
More deeply
Someone meditated, someone prayed
Someone met their shadow
And people began to think differently
And people healed.
And in the absence of people who
Lived in ignorant ways
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,
The earth also began to heal
And when the danger ended and
People found themselves
They grieved for the dead
And made new choices
And dreamed of new visions
And created new ways of living
And completely healed the earth
Just as they were healed.



People were arrested for going out in public without face masks.

