

Spanish flu hit Woodbine, military camps with vigor

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

News reports of how the 1918 Spanish flu affected Cape May County are few. No copies of the Star and Wave from 1918 have been found by the county and state libraries.

Lois Broomell, a gene-

alogist with the Museum of Cape May County, has been researching the effects of the 1918 Spanish flu in this county. The worst of the flu epidemic hit Cape May County in October and November 1918.

Broomell noted the public wore masks during the Spanish flu epidemic. A number of obituaries in this county in October and November mentioned influenza as cause of death.

The Oct. 11, 1918, edition of the Cape May County Times reported the Spanish influenza "as nothing more or less than the old fashioned grip in more virulent form." It reported 40 cases in Woodbine and 75 "sufferers" in Ocean City. In Cape May, several hundred cases were reported at the Marine Corps barracks where a strict quarantine was being maintained. Sea Isle had two cases and Ocean View had three cases and a "very few scattering cases in mainland farming sections have been brought to light."

"The few cases in the county in view of the ravages of the disease elsewhere is chiefly due, according to medical authorities, to the salubrious and beneficial effect of the seashore atmosphere," stated the Times.

A Cape May County Times Oct. 18, 1918, headline declared, "Epidemic influenza rages in Woodbine, over 200 cases reported up to Wednesday; believe epidemic now under control; 100 cases at Court House."

"Woodbine is hardest

hit of any town in Cape May County by the present epidemic of Spanish influenza. Up until Wednesday over 200 cases were being treated, an increase of 160 in one week. Only one death occurred, due to influenza, a strong testimonial to the healthful climatic conditions here," reported the Cape May County Times.

"Cape May Court House and vicinity is also hard hit, the total cases there being well over 100. Fourteen cases, one resulting in death, have been reported in Tuckahoe. The victim there is Miss Nellie Mason, age 23," it continued.

"In Ocean City there have been three deaths, and a total of nearly 100 cases. Ocean City schools and churches were the first in the county ordered closed as a precautionary measure. The epidemic there is now well under control," reported the Times.

"Wildwood appears to have escaped with fewer cases, in proportion to its population, than any other place in the county. According to unofficial reports only 18 cases have developed there with one death.

Sea Isle City is practically free from influenza, only two cases having been reported among the civilian population. A number of cases, however, have developed in the Coast Guard stations, where Marines and regular Coast Guards are stationed. Out of 15 men in the upper station, only five remain on duty," according to the Cape May County

Times on Oct. 18, 1918.

"Stone Harbor has the record for the county, not having a single case of any kind, even among the Coast Guards, where the disease has been most prevalent. There are five cases, none serious, in Avalon," it reported.

"The great difficulty in the county as throughout the country in general has been the scarcity of physicians. Covering the territory of Woodbine, Sea Isle and Avalon, with all the surrounding communities, there are only two physicians, Dr. Eugene Way of Dennisville and Dr. Joseph Joffe of Woodbine, where there were formerly five; at Court House, Dr. Julius Way has the practice that formerly kept three doctors busy. Similar conditions exist at other county points," stated the Times.

Also reported in that edition of the Times, 20,000 new cases of the influenza reported in Army camps with 733 cases of pneumonia and 277 deaths. It reported in cities elsewhere the death rate was in the thousands and coffins could not be built quickly enough to meet the demand.

According to the Influenza Encyclopedia produced by the University of Michigan, on Oct. 5, 1918, the state Board of Health issued a mandatory statewide order closing all churches, theaters, movie houses, dance halls, saloons, soda fountains and other places of public amusement and congregation, and prohibiting all public gatherings,

including public funerals for those who had died of influenza or pneumonia. The order also mandated that local boards of health advise their populations against travel in public transportation or from gathering socially with friends and family, and urged local officials to consider closing their schools.

No cure for the Spanish flu was available but Vick's VapoRub was used as a home treatment, Broomell said. From 1918 to 1919, Vick's VapoRub sales skyrocketed from \$900,000 to \$2.9 million. She noted the Spanish flu often led to pneumonia.

The online archive of California, collection of personal narratives, manuscripts and ephemera about the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic, features a letter from R.E. Hearn, Kiefer, Oklahoma, to Corp. Basil C. Thompson, USA General Hospital, Cape May, Nov. 5, 2018: "I suppose the picture shows and all places of amusement will open up next Sunday. Everything sure seems dead. The 'flu' caused about 5,000 deaths in this state. Myself, wife and baby all had it and I sure thought I was going to croak and the worst part was everybody was so scared over it, they would not go to see any one."

The Sept. 29, 1918 edition of the Philadelphia Inquirer reported the death of James Gordon, "famous basketball and baseball player" of Locust Gap, Pa., 24, in Cape May of Spanish influenza.



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City extends demo, pile-driving deadline

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council approved a resolution extending times for demolition and the driving of piling beyond the normal cutoff of Memorial Day.

During a virtual meeting May 19, Deputy Mayor Patricia Hendricks said the governor had earlier issued an executive order that stopped nonessential construction.

"It threw a wrench into many people's plans who had contracted with contractors, had formed their plans, whether it was a renovation or new construction," she said.

Hendricks said the prohibition of demolition and

pile-driving until after Labor Day could throw plans so off schedule that homeowners could lose contractors or delay work extensively.

Gov. Phil Murphy lifted the nonessential construction executive order that was in place for 37 days. The city's resolution adds 37 days to what would have typically ended Memorial Day. The extension runs from May 22 to July 1.

In other business, council introduced a \$1.8 million bond ordinance for various capital improvements. The projects include \$30,000 for computer technology upgrades; \$50,000 for a police utility vehicle; \$9,000 for police tasers; \$225,000 for a new ambulance for the fire

department; \$85,000 for fire department safety, personal protective and communications equipment; \$750,000 for road repairs; \$250,000 for construction of a public works vehicle storage building; and \$100,000 for Convention Hall roof and building repairs.

Council also introduced a bond ordinance for improvements to the water and sewer utility in the amount of \$1.2 million. Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan asked to remove \$250,000 from the bond earmarked for design expenses for an upgrade of the city's desalination plant. She said she did not see it as necessary at this time.

"Take this out and revisit it maybe in September, once

we know where we stand financially after the summer and it's something we can move forward at that time," Sheehan said.

Inderwies said the \$250,000 could be used to hire an engineer to develop a request for proposals for the project. He said the project could be undertaken at a later date.

"We need to address the desal expansion," Inderwies said. "This is just the beginning step."

Sheehan rescinded her motion to alter the bond ordinance.

Council appointed Emily Dillon as the city's new deputy clerk. She has worked for the city as a tax clerk.

Bond falls one vote short

Continued from Page A1

Street.

The public safety building would have been the most expensive structure the city ever built, Sheehan said, adding that this was not the time for such a project.

Meier questioned risking the health of first responders. Both the fire and police stations have water intrusion and mold issues.

Hendricks said the city had countless hours of advisory committee research and debate, a town hall meeting and hours of discussion at coun-

cil meetings. She said the current facilities are unsafe and functionally obsolete.

"Our police chief and fire chief support the proposed building; they've explained the basis of their support so many times," Hendricks said.

She said realistic alternatives to the building do not exist.

"Opposition to the proposed building is based on nonexpert opinion, wishful thinking and budget figures drawn from 8-year-old construction projects in fire magazines," Hendricks said.

All around the country people are making the time to thank the heroes on the front line in this horrible pandemic, she said. Hendricks said in this time, more than ever, the needs of first responders must be met responsibly.

Lear said council was not voting just for a building but voting to ensure the safety of the community.

"We're voting to protect the health, safety and well-being of our homeowners and visitors," he said. "We are voting to show the men and women of our police and fire departments and their families that we value their service and their lives."

"The arguments against the public safety building have been poorly con-

ceived, far-fetched and unrealistic," Lear continued.

He said voting against the public safety building was "senseless" and it was time for council to act responsibly. Lear said if a voter referendum were needed, let it be done, but he warned it would cost the city more money and time.

Mullock said passing the \$15 million bond ordinance at this time would be a major deterrent to the city. He predicted the layoff of city employees due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to council's vote, resident Bob Gorgone spoke by phone in favor of one building to house the fire and police departments. He said he was a former naval engineer and a chief financial officer for the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

Gorgone said the concept presented for the public safety building was based on significant research, public input and most importantly input from professionals including Cape May's first responders. He noted interest rates had reached historic lows.

"If we don't act now, I suspect we'll be continuing to have the same conversation this time next year or the year after, or even the year after that, not to mention the cost to

the first responders to live in the current facilities," Gorgone said.

City Clerk Erin Burke read an email into the record from Public Safety Building Advisory Committee Chairwoman Kathleen Wyatt and co-chairwoman Rose Trafficante, who stated a "no" vote on the bond ordinance demonstrates choosing to place Cape May's police, fire and emergency medical technicians in "unsafe, noncompliant and inefficient facilities."

"It speaks to resistance and the influence of politics," they stated.

In an email, resident Nancy Barrows stated she attended a town meeting on the public safety building and was impressed by the information presented for a combined building. She stated a presentation by Sheehan and Mullock lacked "so much up-to-date information it was an embarrassment."

Barrows stated she did not understand why two council members were holding up this issue when it was imperative to the safety of residents and tourists.

"Could this issue be somewhat personal?" Barrows asked.

"So these two members need to put their personal issues aside, grow up and pull up your professional panties and vote for the safety and well-being of Cape May," she continued.

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27		12:09	6:00	5:44
28	12:17	1:05	6:52	6:43
29	1:14	2:09	7:48	7:50
30	2:16	3:14	8:45	9:00
31	3:23	4:17	9:43	10:08
1	4:28	5:15	10:38	11:13
2	5:30	6:10	11:32	
3	6:28	7:02	12:13	12:24

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