

We have survived pandemics before

VINTAGE VIEWS

Small pox, diphtheria, Spanish flu among Concord's history, but city prevails

The forlorn feeling of despair and helplessness descended upon the small town of Concord in the year 1790. The people were unsuspecting and the unseen guest arrived without welcome. Smallpox arrived in Concord and visited the home of the West family, and Dr. Philip Carrigain was immediately consulted. The good doctor visited the family battling smallpox and was found to have contracted smallpox himself.

The people of Concord were stunned, how had this disease descended upon their small community without warning showing no mercy for the afflicted. Upon the order of Dr. Carrigain the West family was immediately isolated in their residence as the doctor quarantined himself and his family in their home on North Main Street to battle the spread to the remainder of the community. The town fathers gathered and set to work building a structure near the Bradley Estate in the North End of Concord to house those in need. This primitive structure was built on the day of Sabbath by the members of the community and located just to the south of the Old North Cemetery.

During this early period in Concord history there were no hospitals in

the town and those with illness were nursed back to health at home and visited frequently by Dr. Carrigain.

This new structure was referred to as the Pest House and utilized for a period of years to provide a location to isolate the ill and combat the threat of a pandemic.

The small pox epidemic was efficiently managed in Concord during this period with only one death resulting. Both the West and Carrigain families recovered otherwise and returned to health. However, the fear remained and the need for health management in the Concord community was both needed and desired by the residents as the decades progressed.

Well into the 1800s we find the city of Concord with a health inspector and a Pest House constructed on the Dark Plain. This area was on the east side of the river and provided isolation for those that fell victim to other forms of disease in the coming years. The Pest House in the area now known as the Heights was utilized in the latter 1800s as well as into the early 1900s to isolate residents that contracted small pox, typhoid fever, measles and diphtheria.

During the year 1902 there were 23 cases of typhoid fever as well as an additional 29 cases in the two years following. The Pest House was utilized and effective with treatments available during this period, the death toll being seven individuals between 1902 and 1904. Small pox did visit Concord once again in 1903 resulting in two people being infected without a loss of life. As the Pest House was

as the Detention Center, for the people were detained per order of the Concord Health Department.

The measles epidemic arrived in Concord during the years 1903 and 1904 and was again managed with medication and quarantine.

In the year 1903 there were 583 cases with four deaths with 1903 seeing only 31 cases and no loss of life.

SEE PANDEMIC PAST D2



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Historian

utilized for a period of years it became known

Looking at past pandemics in city

PANDEMIC PAST FROM D1

Scarlet fever also visited during the years 1902 and 1903 with 57 people infected in Concord but life was again spared for these poor individuals. Diphtheria followed closely in the Concord community during the years 1903 and 1904 with 97 people contracting the disease. The city health inspectors noted the first case of diphtheria arrived in a Penacook school and quickly spread to other students in the Fosterville section of Concord. The 97 young people that contracted diphtheria resulted in four deaths during this two-year period.

As the years progressed here in Concord the Margaret Pillsbury Hospital and Memorial Hospital were established and very well staffed with nurses and doctors that had access to the latest antitoxins with the ability to isolate those infected. The sterile atmosphere and oversight by the trained medical staff resulted in the closing of the Detention Center, which

had been used less frequently into the 1900s and had fallen into disrepair. The land surrounding the Detention Center was eventually seized by the state and utilized for training the military.

After a period of years, the epidemic of influenza visited Concord in 1918, often referred to as the Spanish Flu, this pandemic tragically resulted in 693 deaths in the year 1918 followed by 454 deaths in the year 1919 here in Concord. The small amount of relief was found to be centered around isolation and quarantine, the medical staff at our local hospital wore masks and adhered to sanitation practices of the day. As the months passed so did the pandemic, sadly Concord witnessed much loss of

life. The old Pest House was eventually dismantled and the forest reclaimed the area where it was once located. A small building isolating those forlorn people that harbored a feeling of despair and

helplessness. Many of the lonely people that once resided in the Pest House recovered from their afflictions, but I am sure the memory remained with them until their very last day. Please remember to be kind and compassionate. Remember those that are alone and be resilient. This too shall pass.

Red Cross nurses in 1918.

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