



Founded 1951

BULLETIN

Spring 2020

From our Newspaper Archive: 1918 Influenza in Contra Costa County

Lisa S. Gorrell

MANY LOCAL PEOPLE ARE STRICKEN WITH THE "FLU"

George Carrere, at one time news editor of the Standard, is ill with influenza in Richmond. Carrere has been editing the News in that city during the illness of Editor Hulaniski and was in turn stricken. He is doing well, however.

William Martin, popular Richmond printer and for years an employe of the Daily Independent, passed away a few days ago in Berkeley of pneumonia. He visited the county seat frequently and had a number of friends here and in Antioch who learn with sorrow of his passing.

County Assessor G. O. Meese was

on the street yesterday after an attack of "flu." His daughter, Winifred, has also been ill with the disease, but is making good progress.

Constable Palmer and Night Officer Reder are both making good progress toward recovery. Each was quite ill for a few days, but will soon be on duty again.

A. L. (Chuck) Wilcox, who was stricken several days ago, is reported much improved today. Chuck has had a hard struggle, from all accounts, but will soon be on his feet again.

(Continued on Page 3)

rooms, and soda fountains. Those allowed to stay open had to follow strict protocol about dishwashing of serving utensils and dishes.

Coughs and Sneezes Spread Diseases



As Dangerous as Poison Gas Shells

In October 1918 there had been 3,000 cases of influenza and

twelve deaths in Richmond. Martinez had fifteen cases at the hospital and about thirty cases reported in the city. The newspapers also printed advisement from the federal government, answering such questions as what is the course of the disease, how is it spread, what should be done if caught, etc.

Between 1918 and 1919, the influenza, also known as Spanish flu and La Grippe, killed more people than those who died in WWI. In the beginning, it was downplayed as just the influenza. Later, as more deaths were occurring, local governments began measures to stop the spread, such as closing roads into the county, ordering the wearing of face masks in public, and later closing all churches, schools, public restaurants, bars, billiard

SPANISH INFLUENZA

There are many simple remedies that can be used to guard against an attack of this form of grippe. One of the best is to spray the throat and nasal passages with Dobells Solution.

Dobell's Solution 25c
The Atomizer 75c

Other Preventives are:

Listerine 10c up	Cytos 25c, 75c
Et-Zo-Mol 25c	Glyco Thymolin 25c and up
Boroglycol 25c	Lavoris 30c, 60c
ZelPyrol 50c	Salugen 60c, \$1.20
Borolyptol 25c, \$1.00	

If any symptoms of an attack arise a physician should be consulted at once.

Martinez Drug Co.

THREE MODERN STORES

Palace Drug Co.
Antioch

Martinez Drug Co.
Martinez

Regal Pharmacy
Pittsburg

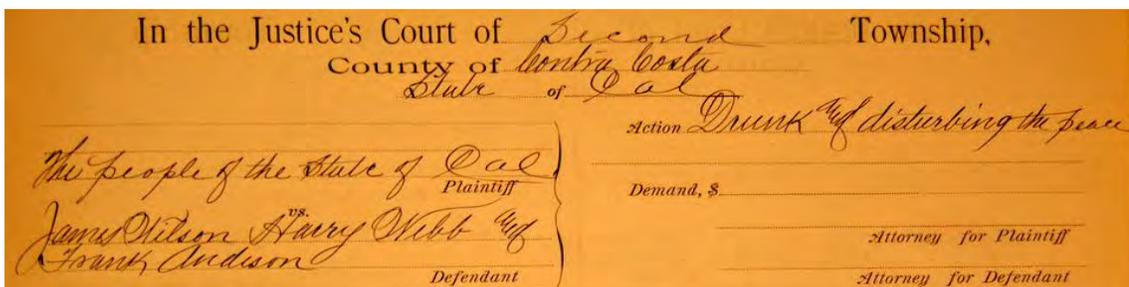
THE REXALL STORES

By the end of October, the *Martinez Standard* was publishing long lists of people who had the flu, not all of them dying. In December, the Shell Oil Company issued a statement of its position regarding the epidemic. They paid full wages to employees for lost time due to the influenza. They needed a doctor's statement but were willing to pay the physician's charges.

By Christmas, it seemed the epidemic was winding down and rules were lessened; however, in the new year, cases began to rise again. The best protective measures enforced were the wearing of face masks and closing of facilities with large crowds, as was suggested by Dr. C. R. Blake, Richmond city and county health officer. Still, people became ill, and some were dying. It is sad to see the newspaper listings of those who succumbed to the disease.

Further Resources to Learn More

- John M. Barry, "How the Horrific 1918 Flu Spread Across America," *Smithsonian Magazine*, Nov 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/journal-plague-year-180965222/>.
- "America During The 1918 Influenza Pandemic," *Digital Public Library of America*, <https://dp.la/exhibitions/1918-influenza>.
- "The Influenza Pandemic of 1918," <https://virus.stanford.edu/uda/>
- A blog with 1918 flu epidemic stories: <https://1918flustories.com/>



Human Nature and the Justice's Court

Judge Barry Goode

Editor's Note: The Justice's Court (Justice of the Peace) handled around 90% of the legal cases in a community. Naturally, these were mostly petty crimes. The judge was a respected member of the community, knew everyone and was known by everyone. It was a rustic system that had its faults but managed to keep the peace fairly well; sadly, it is no more. The clipping above is from the second township (at one time, there were 17 townships in the County, each with its own Justice's court.). The date is 1892. The records cited are all from the CCCHS archives.

In my political philosophy classes at Kenyon College, many years ago, we had lively debates over the perfectibility of human nature, sharpening our arguments on the whetstones of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx and others.

Those debates came to mind recently, when I had a chance to browse through some century-old records of the Contra Costa Superior Court – specifically, the handwritten minutes of Justice Jas. H. Chichester, Justice of the Peace of the “Justice Court of the 10th

Township, County of Contra Costa, State of California,” from 1914 and 1915. The 10th Township was in the western part of our county.

On November 18, 1914, Justice Chichester received the case of *People of the State of California v. George Edwards*. The alleged miscreant was charged with “the crime of felony, ‘to wit’ Horse Stealing”. He issued a warrant and gave it to Constable J. E. Moitoza to serve.

On December 8, 1914, the Constable brought into court a man who “gave his true name as W.D. Smith.” Justice Chichester lined through the name “George Edwards” and inserted “W.D. Smith.” It is one of the few inelegant entries in a minute book written in a fine hand -- penmanship of the kind that has long since disappeared. Unfortunately, Justice Chichester does not say how the Constable knew to

bring in Mr. Smith when he was charged with arresting Mr. Edwards. But the community was smaller in those days.

It seems the Constable was right. Justice Chichester records that bail was set at \$1,000 – which seems awfully steep for those days – and calendared a preliminary hearing for Tuesday, December 22 at San Pablo. The owner of the horse and some witnesses testified that they “recognize said horse as the one claimed by plaintiff.” That was good enough for Justice Chichester who held him to answer and “remitted” Mr. Smith “to the Superior Court at Martinez with bail set at \$1,000.” What later befell Mr. Smith is lost to history.

Subsequent pages tell of batteries, threats to kill, disturbing the peace, petit larceny, burglary, and other matters familiar to those of us working in the Superior Court today.

One hopeful case brought to Justice Chichester’s attention in December 1915 was *People of the State of California v. W. W. Thompson*. The complaining witness was his wife, Clara Thompson. The charge was “misdemeanor, ‘to wit’ failure to provide for minor children.” Justice Chichester issued a warrant and Constable Moitoza was sent to find the alleged deadbeat. But that is the only entry. A couple of lines below is written, in pencil, “Case postponed indefinitely.” One hopes that is a sign of reconciliation.

The larceny cases are somewhat familiar, although some have a twist of historic flavor. For example, on Wednesday, February 24, 1915 Modesto Cabrera appeared before Justice Chichester and complained “of misdemeanor ‘to wit’ petit larceny.” Mr. Cabrera accused Mary Mietlo of stealing his “purse containing [a] twenty dollar gold piece and 15 dollars in currency.” Constable Moitoza was given a warrant for Ms. Mietlo’s arrest. The Constable found her that same day and brought her before the Justice of the Peace, who set trial for Friday, February 26. The court appointed an interpreter, and testimony was

taken. Three witnesses “testified that the defendant, Mary Mietlo wanted to read the plaintiff’s fortune and at the same time placed her hands on and about the person of the plaintiff in a very suspicious manner and shortly afterwards he missed his purse...” The defendant testified “that she did not touch or lay her hands anywhers (sic) on the plaintiff’s person, or had not done so upon any person during her life.” Justice Chichester did not buy her story, found her “guilty as charged” and fined her \$50 “in U.S. Gold Coin.” (Presumably, she already had the \$20 gold coin. But the record is silent as to whether she was able to come up with another \$30 in gold.)

Battery was not much different. One rough story is told of a case of misdemeanor battery that came before the good judge on March 8, 1915. A warrant having been duly issued, Constable Moitoza brought defendant John Gomez into court the following day. At 10:00 a.m. “it appearing that everybody interested in this case being present, the court concluded to proceed with the Case.” Manuel S. Moitoza (the Constable’s brother?) was sworn as the interpreter. Justice Chichester records “the testimony as taken was considerable in favor of the plaintiff. Apparently the defendant forced the trouble upon the plaintiff and gave him considerable of a beating, before the row could be stopped.” Mr. Gomez was found guilty and fined \$13, which he paid on the spot.

The quotidian fodder of Justice Chichester was written out, in full, in elegant script. Today, we refer to those same offenses as Penal Code 242, 270, 415, 422, 459, 484/488. So where does that leave my classmates who argued for the perfectibility of human nature? I am sure at least one will point out that we no longer have people charged with horse theft.

This article was reprinted with permission from the Contra Costa County Bar Association (CCCBA). It was originally published (in slightly modified form) in the November 2014 Contra Costa Lawyer magazine, a publication of the CCCBA. You can view the original online here on page 7,

https://issuu.com/cccbba/docs/ccl_nov2014_web

SCANPRO 2200: A 21ST CENTURY SOLUTION TO A 19TH CENTURY

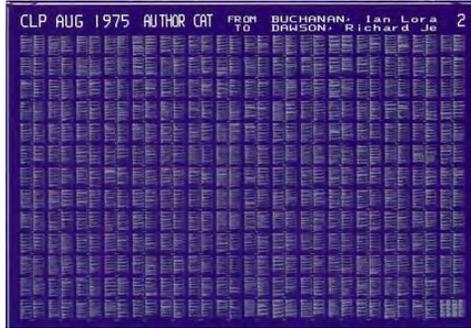


Microfilm Roll

PROBLEM *Scott Saffler*

Recently, the History Center bought and installed a “ScanPro 2200” digital microfilm and microfiche reader.

The reader allows researchers to scan through our archive of old newspapers and other legal documents that are stored on microfilm rolls or microfiche film.



Microfiche Page

You’re probably wondering:

- how is this 19th Century technology?
- why have we installed this equipment?
- what does a “ScanPro 2200” do?

Microfilm as we know it today dates to England in 1839. An Englishman whose family ran an optical goods firm combined his profession with the new daguerreotype photography process, coming up with a method to shrink the pictures by a ratio of 160 to 1 and place them on small bits of photographic film. However, it fell to a Frenchman to improve, standardize and ultimately patent the process in 1859. As cool as it was, the process of shrinking and expanding photographs fell into the category of “a solution in search of a problem” at first.

During the Franco-Prussian War in late 1870 and early 1871, there was a great need for the French to move information between Paris and the war front. Since electronic transmission lines were still new and untested, it fell to the trusty carrier pigeon to deliver the messages. Due to the small size of the messenger, the weight of the messages had to be equally small and light. Many pages of documents were converted

to microfilm, which was then placed in a canister tied to the pigeon’s leg. More than 100,000 sheets of microfilm were transported in and out of Paris that way. However, the Prussians soon caught on to the carrier pigeon “trick” and came up with an “anti-aircraft” tactic of their own. With hawks and falcons flying around the French capital, many of the pigeons became prey for the larger birds and never reached their destination.

Around 1906, two Belgian “Information Scientists” published a paper on the possible use of microfilm to save space in libraries and other archives. Even though the authors gave a demonstration of their techniques at the American Library Institute’s annual meeting in 1913, it wasn’t until the mid-1930s that libraries, newspapers and even Harvard University began to use microfilm to preserve their documents.

In the early 1960s a competitor, called microfiche, emerged. Microfiche allowed for more shrinkage than microfilm. With microfiche, it was possible to reproduce a grid of 100 pages or more on a single 4”x6” film. Since most books and newspapers had been copied to microfilm at this point, this process has been used mainly for the storage of data tables.

A serious problem was discovered regarding the life span of microfilm, however. In 1964, it was reported that some microfilm appeared to prematurely degrade, with small spots tinged with red, orange or yellow appearing on the surface. Eventually, it was discovered that the acetate used in the film stock was the culprit. As the acetate began to degrade, acetic acid, a concentrated form of vinegar, was released. In the early 1990s, Kodak solved the problem by replacing acetate with polyester, which has resolved both the decaying and smell problems. Kodak has promised that the new film would resist decay for at least 500 years. Check back with us in 2490 for the results of this promise.

Okay, enough microfilm and microfiche history. Why has the History Center purchased this equipment?

As a result of the consolidation of newspapers, the *Contra Costa Times* closed their larger offices around the county. As a consequence, CCHS was the recipient of many of the newspaper's historical documents. In addition to their photo negatives and drawers of clippings, we received a large collection of newspapers from around 1980 to late 2019 in the form of roughly 1,000 rolls of microfilm. In addition to our existing collection of microfilm from other local newspapers, we also have a lot of microfiche pages collected from the County offices and other locations. Our sole resource for reading these documents was the microfilm/microfiche reader



Current Microfilm/Microfiche

shown below. Not only was it not very readable, there was no way to capture or print a page unless you used a camera to take a picture of the grainy picture projected on the "screen".

Knowing that the County has a lot of microfilm of old court proceedings, I knew they had a similar situation, but on a much larger scale. During a recent visit to the County Recorder's office, I mentioned our problem to my contact there; he told me that they had an old reader/printer if we were interested. The unit was a larger and heavier version of what we had and the attached printer looked about 15-20 years old, which made me leery of getting toner cartridges for it, let alone replacement parts if we should need them!

However, they had just received a new digital reader which I was told did a good job reading, saving and printing microfilm pages. After getting a demo of the unit with Janet Stapleton, our Photo Department Head, we were convinced that this would answer our concern while requiring a minimum of space. I arranged to have the local salesman for this reader, called the "ScanPro", give us a demonstration. Many of our board members, as well as Executive Director Priscilla Couden, attended the meeting, and all came away impressed. With funds donated by the Martinez

Community Foundation and the balance approved by our Board, I purchased the ScanPro, as well as a new PC to run it. Our salesman came in on a Saturday



ScanPro 2200

morning, delivered and installed the hardware and software and off we went.

The physical scanner measures about 12" x 16" and 9" high and is fully controlled by a Windows 10 program. When the program opens, a menu allows you to choose either microfilm or microfiche. If you are reading microfilm, the program first shows you an on-screen guide for properly threading the roll in the machine. It then allows you to scroll through your microfilm using on-screen buttons from a slow crawl to fast forward. It even has a one-button option to auto rewind your microfilm reel when you are done.

Once positioned on the page you want, the program allows you to select the entire page or just sections. Once selected, you can save your chosen image to a JPG or PDF format file, or just print the selection to our local printer. PDF files can contain 1 or more selected pages, and you have the option to run an OCR scan before saving, which will allow you to do a text search using most PDF reader software.

As far as the quality of the scans, we have found that it is on par with other scanning equipment we use. Text and photos are clear. The only problem we have encountered is the color photos from the newspapers, but this is not the fault of the machine. Due to cost issues, most newspapers were scanned in grayscale mode. Grayscale is not an issue. However, in translating color photos to shades of gray, the colors don't translate well, and the image ends up being either too light or too dark.

Next time you come to visit us in Martinez, be sure to check out the new scanner in our public access area.

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Please consider CCCHS in your estate planning. It is simple, and any gift is tax deductible. We have a Schwab account that makes it easier for members and others to donate shares of stock to the Society, a good way to make a year-end or other contribution.

From the President:



As this newsletter finds its way to you, we are all dealing with the worst public health crisis in most of our lifetimes. We at the Historical Society hope that you are well, and that you will stay healthy as we move through the coronavirus pandemic.

Many of you may know that our History Center is shut down at least until May 3, under the shelter-in-place order that was issued by the Contra Costa County Health Services Department.

This shutdown is in effect for all non-essential businesses in the county, along with five other counties in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Our board members and executive director are working via email, but our real “meat-and-potatoes” work, archiving historical material, has taken a pause. The rest of the year we will focus on getting our archival work back up, looking for more off-site storage space, upgrading our computers and software, and implementing our public outreach program.

We’re also coordinating the planning for the Martinez Archives Crawl on October 3rd. This event was a big success the first time we did it, in 2018. We hope for even more success this time, as we partner with the Library, the County Clerk/Recorder’s Office, the Martinez Historical Society and other participating sponsors this second time around.

Thanks to our volunteers, our critical work will get done once we reopen. We recently received a very large batch of *Contra Costa Times* newspapers on microfilm, as well as a new microfilm/fiche reader, funded in part by the Martinez Community Foundation. We have also received material from the Pleasant Hill Historical Society, and, very soon, the Local History Collection from the County’s Central Library in Pleasant Hill, which is closing. Our volunteers will be processing, scanning, cataloging, responding to research requests, making presentations to organizations all over the county, having our quarterly Authors in the Archives series, and publishing this newsletter, among many other things. Above all, we thank all of you for your interest and your contributions to preserving our County’s history.

John Greitzer



From the Executive Director

Dear Members and Friends,

I hope you are all well and that you will continue to be so during this coronavirus crisis. I’m writing from home, where I am sheltering in place, thankfully with my husband and daughter, who was visiting from another state when the County’s order was made. As you probably know by now, the History Center has been closed down. The work of the Society goes on, however. I have been hard at work on an update to our Volunteer Handbook and other projects like a Walking Tour of Martinez that is being prepared for our 2nd Martinez Archives Crawl that is to be held on October 3. I am monitoring the phones and the emails received by the Society. Our wonderful volunteers are at home, as well. I hope to have everyone back at work as soon as possible.

Another event will take place in October, as well. I have announced my retirement as of October 31. I will have been at the History Center since January 1, 2010, seeing our organization through several major changes, including the move from Main Street to Escobar in 2013. I will be helping the Board with their search for a replacement.

Meanwhile, it is my dearest wish that each and every one of you remain healthy, do what is needed to help others keep healthy, and continue to know you are a valued part of the Contra Costa County Historical Society family.

Priscilla

Editor’s Note: *It is with sadness that our board and volunteers greet the news of our executive director’s upcoming retirement. We wish her the very best.*

Naturally, we will be looking for a replacement. So if you or someone you know might be interested in learning more about the E.D. position, please send a letter of interest to our address. No need to go into detail about your qualifications. Once we have made up a job description, we will send out a copy to all interested parties, as an invitation to formally apply for this position.

Thank you for your interest!



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Mark Your Calendar

1st Tuesday, May 5 – History Center (HC) Re-Opens! Maybe. The current shutdown order expires on Sunday, May 3. If it is not extended, we should be open on the above date. **Stay Tuned!**

3rd Saturday, May 16—HC open 10-2

1st Saturday, June 6—HC open 10-2

3rd Saturday, June 20—HC open 10-2

Mission Statement

Our Mission is to Preserve, Protect and Provide public access to the records and heritage of Contra Costa County, California.

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Newsletter Editor: Donald Bastin

The History Center

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