

A Physicians View of Annville in the 1930's

Written by James R. Monteith, M.D..

In 2009 Wes Monteith, grandson of Dr. James Monteith, provided Friends of Old Annville with a copy of his grandfather's handwritten, untitled essay in which he describes and analyzes Annville in the 1930's. Dr. Monteith, who lived and practiced medicine at 301 East Main Street (currently the Patriot House), spent a good deal of time in his essay writing about aspects of life in Annville that were related to public health (water quality, pollution, hygiene, and prevalent diseases). He also wrote extensively about its schools. The doctor gives us a most interesting glimpse of real, everyday life in Annville 80 years ago and allows us to see how far we've come in the areas of public health and labor.

Editor's Note: Dr. Monteith twice refers to the N.R.A. in this essay. The National (Industrial) Recovery Act (NRA) was passed by Congress on June 16, 1933. That New Deal law was designed to encourage collective bargaining for unions, set up maximum work hours and minimum wages, and forbid child labor in industry.

Dr. Monteith writes:

History of Annville. Annville was laid out in 1762 by Abraham Miller, an early settler who named the town for his wife Ann. Early records spell the name of the town as Anvil or Anvill. For many years, however, it was popularly called for its founder, Millerstown. Annville Township was formed by a division of Lebanon Township in 1799 and was later divided into North and South Annville Townships in 1845. The town of Annville is located on the Wm. Penn Highway and on the Reading Railroad, 21 miles east of Harrisburg and 5 miles west of Lebanon. It is the cultural and educational center of the Lebanon Valley, being the seat of Lebanon Valley College, an institution which grew out of the old Annville Academy, which was founded in 1834. The industries of the town include the manufacture of shoes, hosiery, handkerchiefs and silk and also the quarrying of limestone. Its population, taken at the last census in 1933, amounts to 2997. Most of the inhabitants are of German or Pennsylvania German descent altho' the town does include a small number of Italians, most of which are quarry or factory workers.

Annville lies in the rich farm land of the Lebanon Valley and is surrounded by fairly small but prosperous farms. The rich limestone land has always been cultivated extensively by the thrifty Pennsylvania German inhabitants. Limestone is exceedingly rich in this region, at places being two miles wide. In recent years, many of the farms have been turned entirely or in part into quarries. The land is well watered by the Quittapahilla, a creek which flows through Annville, and by many other small streams. These streams furnish power for many mills. The climate of the region is mild and is very favorable to farming for there is little danger of drought and the Blue Mountains on either side of this valley protect it to a great extent during the winter from excessive cold and high winds.

The Board of Health. There is no real Board of Health in Annville, but in its place are 5 Commissioners of Public Health which really act as such a board in that they appoint a Health Officer who acts under the direction of the two physicians who report to him quarantine cases. He is in charge of putting up and taking down the signs and also of fumigations. He reports to

the State Dep't of Health the no. of contagious diseases and also reports to the Commissioners any conditions which need attention for local health, source of infection, etc.

Water. The water for the town is supplied by the Annville Water Company whose plant is located to the southeast of Annville about a quarter of a mile from town. There are no public wells in town, and no private ones within the limits of the town altho' many people have cisterns for use in washing, etc. These public and private wells were banned because of the danger of their being polluted by sewage and are now used as waste holes.

There is a high range of hills to the north of the town which is used as a watershed by the water company. This company has bought many farms along these hills and put in 10,000 spruce, pines, walnut, and oak trees in addition to the other trees which were fairly thick. They have built three reservoirs. One 140' x 60', one 80' by 40', and one L-shaped reservoir – 120' x 100'. The two former reservoirs hold from 250,000 to 300,000 gallons of water while the latter holds about 500,000 gallons. The water for these reservoirs comes from many springs in the hills and also some taken from the Quittapahilla Creek.

There has been very little trouble with the water being polluted, the chief cause for complaint being the extreme hardness of the water. This comes from the natural lime which is in it from the limestone soil and also from the large amount of chlorine which is placed in it for purification. The source of pollution is closely watched for there is some danger that the water will dam back and gather filth from the farming and grazing land nearby. In very rainy weather an extra amount of chlorine is placed in the water for protection.

The chlorinating plant is located southwest of town and all the water is chlorinated at this plant. The liquid chlorine is brought to the plant in huge tanks which are set up above the pipes which the water is carried to the plant. This plant allows the chlorine to continually run out into the water. Usually there is a flow of 10-15 drops a minute. Much of the water is pumped directly from the plant to the water main and is never sent to the reservoir. This water often tastes very strong of chlorine and is at times extremely impalatable. A valve on the main is able to change the pressure in different parts of town. The south side of town gets its water from the largest L shaped reservoir. There is usually 20 lbs pressure. If pressure becomes too low the valve is used to let in the water from the two smaller reservoirs which ordinarily supply the north side of town, and thus this water is added to increase the pressure for the south side if necessary.

The water is tested every month or six weeks by the state inspectors who come at any time. Sometimes they tap all the springs and test them – at other times they test only the water in the main or in the reservoirs.

Sewage. The sewage disposal in Annville is very simple. Each home has its own cesspool in the back yard and some double houses have double pools. Because of the limestone region this, altho' crude, serves the purpose very well especially since wells of drinking water have been banned in town. There are three or four septic tanks in town with the final outlet in the crevices of the limestone but the simple cesspool which is drilled thru the rock until a crevice is struck works very well. Considering everything I would say the system is efficient as far as Annville itself is concerned. It is supposed, tho' it never has been proven that three fourths of Annville is built over a subterranean lake. There are sinkholes in the midst of town which seem to bear out this theory.

About fifteen years ago workmen who were repairing a crumbled wall in the college cesspool in the center of town, found a fissure in the limestone at the side of the pool, leading deep into the ground. Investigating, they found a swiftly moving current of water which, when sounded for depth proved so deep that, with the equipment they had, no bottom was touched. Later this stream was investigated on several different occasions and each time it was proven to be larger than it was previously supposed. It is now generally accepted that the town is built, at least in great part over this lake, and the sewage system is arranged accordingly. It is an unheard of thing in town for a family to dig a new cesspool or to have one become full. All the sewage drains thru crevices in the limestone into the ground to the lake below.

If wells were allowed I should criticize this system severely, however there are none. There is never any talk about sewage disposal and, as it is certain this waste does not drain into the creek near town and so is not used for drinking, I would not condemn it.

Garbage, Refuse, Ashes. The collection of refuse, garbage, and ashes is one of the most inefficient and poorly managed points of the whole town. There is the town "garbage man," who is usually too dead drunk to collect refuse and delegates his duty to his two half grown sons. These children sometimes make the rounds and sometimes take the day off for their own pleasure in the garbage wagon which is drawn by a scrawny white mule. As a result the garbage and ash cans become full and overflowing. The garbage is supposed to be collected twice a week at the rate of ten cents a trip to each house, but with such a haphazard system the garbage is often allowed to become putrid from long standing. Many people in town have chicken yards or keep hogs and feed their garbage to them, thus eliminating the garbage collector entirely. Their neighbors often donate their garbage to the yard or pen and the rest of the town is more or less at the mercy of the garbage boys.

When these boys have their wagon full of refuse they drive to a quarry about a half mile west of town right along the highway and dump it there. The quarry has been unused for several years and is partly filled with water. All sorts of rubbish and refuse are dumped here and sometimes the stench is disgusting when driving past on the highway. Quite a number of young boys from town go to this quarry to shoot the rats which run along the sides and eat the garbage which has clung there. It is in every way a most unhealthy and unsanitary place. Fortunately there are no houses or used farmland within about a half mile from the quarry.

There is grave danger of the water seeping downhill to the Quittapahilla which flows quite near and thus being taken to the farmlands which lie on the banks of this stream and polluting them. There is also the danger of polluting the drinking water which is taken partly from this creek. The water company is aware of this & especially in the wet weather the chlorine in the water is increased to combat possible infection of the town. The townspeople do not seem to be aware of the danger and even the Board of Health allows the matter to run on & on.

Sanitary Nuisances. There are no odors in the town itself except once in a while a strong suggestion of skunk which has made its home under someone's porch. The town is pretty far in the country & these animals sometimes become a real nuisance. Sometimes at night they can be

seen crossing the street in the middle of town & several families were reared under porches all thru town. No one wants to shoot them under his own house so they are allowed to go where they please.

Dust does not seem to cause an annoyance as all except one or two of the streets are macadam and they are all oiled once a year. The general cleanliness of the town is good for it is a veritable passion of the Pennsylvania Dutch to be scrupulously clean. Almost all the porches & sidewalks are scrubbed at least once a week. The few empty lots in town are usually rented to people who plant corn or vegetables on them, so they are well taken care of. There are no dumps allowed – the garbage being dumped just outside of town in a quarry. There is usually a foul odor on the highway passing this quarry but nothing seems to be done about it.

There are no places for flies or mosquitoes to breed & they do not seem to constitute a nuisance although Annville has her share of them in the summer time. Smoke is not a nuisance for the train runs on the extreme end of town & not near many houses. There is not a great deal of smoke from the factories, for they use hard coal and they are more or less set away from the houses. Piggeries are not allowed at all in town.

Industrial Hygiene (and Labor Issues). Upon visiting a shoe factory located near the center of town & upon interviewing privately several of the workers I found conditions which, to say the least, were far from sanitary. This local factory has been one of the largest industries of the town for years & conditions have always been deplorable. To begin with, it was owned by one of the political leaders of the county who finally became congressman. Naturally his political influence and his money had great weight with the state inspectors. Since his death the factory has passed into the hands of his heirs, who are not so well off as they once were & consequently run the factory & the workers for all they are worth. However since the N.R.A. conditions are much better and wages are higher. Inspection, tho' is still very poor. Inspectors from the state come about once in three months but always give warning before they come. The place, as a result, is cleaned thoroughly & makes a fair appearance. Many different inspectors come but of all these there is only one who cannot be bribed. He pokes around behind the closed doors and often raises a disturbance with the management. The rest of the inspectors take a casual look and leave.

There are four floors to the building. The second is the women's floor – here are 150 workers. Each has a machine for her various positions and is provided with a stool. Quite a number of women find it impossible to use these (stools) & continue operating their machines so they are compelled to be on their feet during the entire day. However the stools make a good impression on inspectors. The safety precautions are fairly good – each belt and wheel is protected by a screen. The machinery is efficient and fairly new. There are not many accidents & those that do occur are caused by the carelessness of the workers. This is true of all floors. Most of the accidents result in the loss of a finger or partial disablement of fingers or hand when the hand becomes caught under the needle or knife of the machine. There is only one first aid room – this

is a small cubby hole on the 4th floor which can be reached by the slow work elevator & which contains a cot and a Johnson & Johnson first aid kit. This kit however contained only cotton and a bottle of mercurochrome which, the workers reported, is empty half the time. The door of this room is always closed when the inspectors come.

The toilet facilities are nothing short of deplorable. The toilet room for women is a small room with two small windows. In it are six toilets with discolored bowls and broken seats. They are separated by board partitions. The plumbing is very poor & several are usually dammed up & unfitted for use. There are six lavatories and paper towels are supplied, but women bring their own soap. The room is cleaned once a day in a hit or miss fashion & deodorant crystals are sprinkled but the place is usually dirty. On the women's floor is one drinking fountain which has to serve the 150 women. The men's toilet rooms are much worse than this. Both the men's and women's rooms are cleaned and deodorized the night before the inspectors arrive.

The workers are on the 8 hr. day – 45 hr. week plan since the N.R.A. All employees are working piecework and must average \$.30 an hour or they are given notice to leave. Summing it all up, I would say that if the place were free from graft and were inspected regularly by unbiased inspectors the conditions would be changed to an almost ideal factory, for the location, building, and machinery are good. However, the methods of sanitation are almost nil and the conditions bid fair to continue so.

Milk. Report on the sanitary conditions of our farms and one city dairy. A visit made to Mr. Herr's farm, about 3 miles north of Annville. Mr. Herr is an average farmer – his barn was white washed, floor of concrete & good drainage, stalls were of ample size and well lighted both natural and artificial. All cows were regularly tested and kept in the best possible dirt free manner. Attendants wear white clothing and all utensils shine from frequent cleaning. Mr. Herr is an uneducated man thus unaccustomed to the danger of bacteria – he has always insisted on a careful washing of cows and workers hands as a premilking precaution. Mr. Herr submits his milk to the cool confines of a marvelous spring house until the earliest moment of delivery to the Hershey Dairy in Hershey, Pa. Hershey Dairy. All incoming milk each day is pasturized [sic] and represents a bulk of 5000 gallons per day & they serve all the rural communities including Annville which is 7 miles from the dairy. Every drop of milk is pasteurized by the flash method (160° - 165° for 60 seconds or more). I sincerely believe that the flash method of treatment is ideal because of the conditions of the farms from which the Dairy gets their milk.

Housing. There are no tenements in Annville, nor are there any apartment houses. In fact, it is next to impossible to procure an apartment. The few that are in town are made from the second floor of a private dwelling – but these are very few indeed. There is little if any problem with housing – the inhabitants live in single or double houses which are usually ample for their needs. Almost all the houses of Annville are occupied & it is seldom that one is empty for more than a few weeks. The only large building in town which has any ventilation system at all is the school

& this system will be explained later in the unit on schools. The factories and college buildings are ventilated by the old system of raising & lowering windows.

Communicable Diseases. The following is a list of communicable diseases as adopted as notifiable by the State Dept. of Health, Sept. 28, 1933 "to safeguard human lives & for the prevention of infections therefrom: (1) acute anterior poliomyelitis (infantile paralysis); (2) anthrax; (3) bubonic plague; (4) epidemic cerebrospinal meningitis (cerebrospinal fever, spotted fever); (5) chicken pox; (6) Asiatic cholera; (7) diphtheria (membranous croup, putrid sore throat); (8) epidemic dysentery; (9) encephalitis lethargic; (10) German measles; (11) rabies; (12) leprosy; (13) malaria; (14) Malta (undulant) fever; (15) measles; (16) mumps; (17) pellagra; (18) psittacosis; (19) relapsing fever; (20) Rocky Mt. spotted fever; (21) scarlet fever; (22) smallpox; (23) trachoma; (24) trichinosis; (25) tuberculosis in any form; (26) tularemia; (27) typhoid; (28) paratyphoid fever; (29) typhus fever; (30) whooping cough; and (31) yellow fever.

Tuberculosis. Tuberculosis is a notifiable disease & the physician has the liberty to make it quarantinable if he considers the case to so serious that quarantine is necessary. This is seldom necessary in Annville for T.B., according to the statistics of the cases which were reported from this town, is not very prevalent. However, if more cases develop they are treated immediately. There is in Lebanon one of the 100 Chest Clinics established by the State & here the Annville physician brings his patient for diagnosis if necessary & treatment. If conditions at the home of the patient are extremely poor & if he is becoming a health menace he may be removed to one of the State Sanitoria situated fairly nearby.

Typhoid. All of the cases of typhoid are notifiable and quarantinable. The local doctor, should a case appear, immediately quarantines the house, keeps those exposed under observation & conducts an intensive search for the source. He examines milk and water conditions & examines all those in contact with the patient in order to find carriers if any. These are immediately restricted to their homes if found. Vaccine is used as much & where the physician deems it necessary.

Diphtheria. Any new case is immediately isolated, the household quarantined & the authorities notified. If infection seems to be centered in the school or other well defined group of individuals, a nose & throat culture of each is taken for identification of carrier. Last year 85% of the Annville children were given inoculation against diphtheria & no epidemic has swept the town for years.

Venereal Diseases. Venereal diseases are not reportable in Penna. except by local ordinance & there is no such ordinance in Annville & it is almost impossible to find accurate figures of the number who have venereal diseases. The State is very much interested in the control & has established venereal disease clinics to diagnose & treat actual cases & to get sources of infection. Sometimes the contacts of a patient are rounded up for examination by the clinic & they are made clinic patients. Venereal diseases are not quarantinable but there are several stations for

women (but none for men), where the worst patients may be sent by the local physician & where they are kept until they die or are rendered non-infectious & no longer a menace. However, these cases are all kept very quiet.

Schools. Annville has a very modern and up-to-date school building which was completed in 1928 at a cost of \$233,529.00. It is designed in the colonial style of architecture and the exterior walls are of broken range blue limestone from the local quarries, while the interior walls are of stone and brick. The building is reinforced with stone and structural steel. Corridors are cement and floors of hardwood maple. The building is entirely fireproof throughout its 155 foot length and 110 foot depth. It contains 775,620 cubic feet. There are 23 large classrooms and 15 smaller rooms. The gymnasium-auditorium is 80 by 56 feet with ceiling of 22 feet. There is a large study hall, teachers' restroom, pupils' lavatories and shower rooms, health room, physical director's room, etc. The building is of the two story type with basement and sub-basement with locker and shower rooms.

The building is well lighted throughout by indirect lighting and has an emergency lighting system and complete electrical time system. The grounds are well graded and landscaped in the front of the building – the large athletic field is on the left and the playground in the back. There is adequate space for playgrounds, etc., as this building stands on about 10 acres of ground. All this ground belonging to the school is very well cared for as to grass cutting, etc. The school population is 766 with 110 in junior high school, 233 in senior high school, and 423 in grades 1-6.

The ventilation of the school is excellent. It is equipped with a low pressure steam heating system of ventilation and the Johnson Temperature Control. Each room has one or more units which are large metal boxes fastened to the wall – each containing a motor and fan. Air is sucked into these units by the motor thru a grill opening in the outside of the building. The amount of air brought in is constant, but its temperature is affected by the thermostatic conditions. There is a thermostat in each room, and the thermostat is set for 72 degrees. When the rooms gets colder the damper automatically goes on in the unit and fresh air is brought into the room. Thus the room is guaranteed a constant supply of fresh air – but never raw air. The air is shot up from the unit with such force that it goes directly to the ceiling and from there thru the room, thus eliminating any drafts.

The necessity of removing the used air is taken care of in the following manner. Each classroom has a cloakroom which has a door with a grill opening in the bottom. As the fresh warm air is shot into the room, the used air, which has become cooler, sinks and is forced out by the continuous rush of fresh air into the cloakroom. At the opposite end of the cloakroom a conduit takes the foul air to the attic. These conduits leading to the attic take the bad air directly out of the building. Each unit has a hand damper for the teacher or janitor to regulate early in the morning or at night. This will keep out most of the cold air until the janitor has gotten the steam up and the fire going.

There are also supplementary automatic radiators in the north and west rooms to use in case of extreme cold. These do not come on unless the temperature drops to 60 degrees. If the Johnson control system is not turned on, the units act as simple radiators. There is one or more unit in each classroom, 4 in study hall, and 6 in the gym – each costing \$300. The whole system cost about \$30,000 and the Johnson Temperature Control cost an additional \$2,500.

There is a special motor in the attic to suck air out of shower rooms and toilet rooms. The toilets are in blocks, one block for boys and one block for girls on each of the two floors. There are also toilets in the various small rooms and show rooms and offices such as the health room, etc.. Each of these blocks is ample in size and facilities. In back of each commode there is a small grill leading to an opening between the walls. As 6 air is brought in by the unit, bad air is pushed out through these grills to the opening and through a conduit to the outside. The attic motor facilitates this process. The toilets are thoroughly cleaned three times a week and the floor scrubbed once a week. As a result of the ventilation and cleaning, no deodorant is ever used – nor is there need for any.

There is a hospital room for any cases which need immediate attention, equipped with a hospital bed, a dental chair, a Johnson First Aid Kit, etc. There are also first aid kits on each floor, in the athletic director's room, in the home economics room, and in the principal's office. The county nurse comes in at call. There is medical inspection once every three years by a local doctor appointed by the State who examines the pupils of grades one to eight. The results are sent to Harrisburg and cards are made out and sent to the teachers who give them out to the pupils. There is no follow-up work at all done by the State. All this inspection would do little good if it were not closely followed up.

This work is done by the Annville Health Council which is maintained by the sale of Christmas seals and bonds, and also by gifts from townspeople. Last year the Council had 50 children fitted up with glasses. It also conducts a health inspection and follow up work in the years between State inspections. One of the noteworthy things this Council has done is the inoculation against diphtheria of 85% of the school children – thus giving Annville the highest record of the State. This is done every year.

A Baby Clinic is also maintained which meets in the school every week. The local doctors alternate at each clinic. The County nurse is paid to do follow-up work of the results of the clinic. The Council gives \$100 a year for membership in the Lebanon County Crippled Children's Association which gives attention to crippled children all over the County. Last year 15 Annville children were taken to this clinic, and there received treatment. Dr. Gill of Philadelphia conducts an operating and diagnostic clinic for these children and follow-up work is done by a prominent Lebanon physician. The school is probably the most hygienic place in town. It has been proven that epidemics like measles, etc. do not spread as rapidly in this new building, with the constant supply of fresh air, as they did in the old buildings. There are relatively few epidemics among children.

Miscellaneous There are no markets in Annville. Many farmers bring their produce to town in their wagons and there sell it from door to door. Stores are kept very clean and the two soda fountains in town are also quite sanitary for they are both comparatively new and the proprietors are keen rivals. There are no slaughter houses and meat is not inspected in town at all. Neither are there any cold storage plants.

Restaurants are run as regular country “dining rooms” and serve good but plain food from very well cleaned kitchens, again reflecting the Pennsylvania Dutch people. There are three barber shops, two of which are excellent. The third is a dark little room with a stove in the middle run by a little old man of about 68. There is a continual checker game in back of the stove and old Sunday papers thrown around. The barber’s tools, however, are clean and hair is quickly brushed up. This man has very little trade.

The district nurse is continually on call and does a good deal of work in town. She visits all needy patients, attends the Baby Clinics, etc.. I have already explained the Health Council which is the principle welfare and health organization of the Town. This Council and the various churches do most of the welfare work. The Associated Charities of Lebanon County also assists in Annville cases. There are two fairly good hospitals in Lebanon to which all Annville patients are taken. These are the Good Samaritan and the Lebanon Sanatorium – both of which do a good deal of charity work. General

Summary I think Annville as a whole had fairly good conditions of living, for being as small as it is. Really a country town, it escapes a good many complications of a larger city; however, many things could and should be bettered or changed entirely.

First of all the Health Commissioners should be better organized and take a more active part in town affairs, rather than letting the Health Council have all the work to do. The sewage system should be inspected more often. I would recommend a new system, but as the old one has worked so far, there seems to be no chance of change. The garbage and ash disposal is certainly very poor. I would suggest collection by an agent of the Board and a different method of disposal. The milk and water conditions are fairly good and there are no nuisances to worry about.

The factory conditions are very poor and I would certainly recommend more and unbiased inspection with plenty of compulsory changes in the factory, especially as to cleanliness, ventilation, first aid, etc.. The school system I found to be excellent.

Therefore, as a whole, I would consider Annville a healthy place in which to live.