Schuylkill County residents will long remember the epidemic which wiped out hundreds of its citizens in October 1918. Many children were orphaned, and many parents lost their loved ones. County Medical Inspector J. B. Rogers reported close to 2000 cases of heavy colds or La Gripe as it was called when the situation began to cause alarm.

On October 4, the Commissioner of Health issued an order that all theaters, saloons, dance halls, schools and churches should be closed down, that funerals should be strictly private and that all gatherings in crowds or visiting of the sick should be forbidden. By this time there was 7500 cases and that many deaths had been reported in the county.

Frackville reported 480 cases and an emergency hospital was opened in the Hose House. The hospital and colliery ambulances were kept constantly making trips and the physicians were taxed to the limit to keep up with the patients. By noon of October 7, Frackville already had 11 deaths and many were critically ill and death was almost momentarily expected. The streets of the town were deserted. The health authorities had expressed upon everyone the wisdom of not congregating in crowds and the only places that were crowded were the drug stores where people by the score were clamoring to get their prescriptions filled.

The State Reserve Millville and a hospital unit of twelve men set up at the Amory in Pottsville and patients from Frackville were transported there to be taken care of. Red Cross workers assisted the militia and trained nurses and boy scouts supplied messenger service between drug stores and doctors.

Then the doctors began to feel the strain. One death was reported among them and ten doctors and two nurses were reported seriously ill in the hospitals. Captain Hainly and members of the American Rescue Workers who had been helping were stricken and the ministers of town gave aid to the nurses and doctors.

By October 9, it seemed as if the situation was well in hand throughout the county except in our town where the situation was grave. There was a shortage of supplies and the state sent in blankets, sheets and pillow cases and 500 cots. On October 10, twenty advanced medical students from the University of Pittsburgh were sent into the region, over a score of county doctors being seriously ill from overwork.

With twenty medical students and surgeons from the Allentown Army Camp and twenty-five professional nurses from Elmira and Rochester, the situation improved by October 11. All stores were closed on Saturday October 12 so that there could be no gathering of shoppers. Eighteen emergency hospitals had been established in the county—three of which were situated in Frackville. By Monday October 14, the number of cases had reached 17,000 in the county. Many of the mines of the county were forced to suspend operations and the trolley cars were operating only part-time because of the shortage of crews. The telephone companies also were overworked with the heavy load of calls.

The county undertakers were unable to handle the many cases and undertakers from Reading were called to help out. The county was practically under military rule with the arrival of more army doctors.

By October 30, the Board of Health removed all restrictions and the following Sunday all churches resumed services and school children returned to their studies on Monday.

In the County, 3,000 children were left orphans, 500 of that number without anyone to take care of them. The grand total of $91,000 was the cost of the epidemic bills for the county of which $15,181 was paid by the state and $26,000 by corporations. The list of liabilities included Frackville at $2,527.43. On October 19, 1918, Frackville had 450 cases of flu; October 22, 375 cases; October 23, 360 cases; and October 24, 320 cases. By October 30, 1918, 112 deaths were reported in Frackville.