

QUARANTINE CAMP ALBURY 1919

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A simple postcard depicting scores of tents pitched on Albury Sportsground reveals the danger Albury, the country and the world faced from pneumonic influenza or Spanish Flu in 1919.



Photo taken from steps of the Albury Showgrounds Grandstand, looking east.

On the reverse of the postcard is a handwritten account of a five day stay by overseas travellers. Foto Supplies have been kind enough to share its contents with us.

The text of the postcard reads:

Quarantine Camp at Albury, on border between NSW and Victoria. We were here from March 29, 2 pm until 1.30 pm April 2, so as to be under surveillance before passing into NSW. More evasions of quarantine were accomplished probably than legitimate sojournings. People could hire at Wodonga rail station in Victoria an auto which carried thence a few miles up the Murray River (g.V.) where people ferried them over & took them to way stations up the r.r. line.

Inside camp, attendants and waiters came and went freely and temperatures were exquisitely took [sic] twice a day – ('had my temperament taken' was one simple Australian's asseveration). A joke to all concerned was this tarrying.

With up to 40 million deaths from Spanish Flu worldwide and 10 thousand of them in Australia the reality was no joke.

First detected in Melbourne late in 1918, the virus soon spread to Sydney. On January 27, 1919, NSW was officially declared an infected State, closing its borders, halting all interstate travel and movement of goods, causing chaos.

Next day, Victoria followed suite, allowing some interstate travel to resume. The *Albury Banner* told locals "Acting under special instructions ... the Albury police yesterday morning set a strict guard over the entrance from Victoria into NSW, and nobody was allowed to cross into this State. The embargo will apply to traffic of all descriptions, either by road or rail."

Wearing facemasks and free inoculations at the Town Hall became an everyday occurrence for Albury folk.

Open officially between January 17 and April 3, 1919, the Albury camp saw thousands pass through but quarantining perfectly healthy individuals for a week making temperature checks caused great inconvenience. Not one case was detected at Albury, prompting the *Border Morning Mail* to suggest a Mad House is required for those instigating this in the first place.

Many harrowing stories emerged of people working in Albury but living in Wodonga or vice versa, not being able to get home.