

***The American Spirit: Lodi during the 1930's* Lodi History Highlights**
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by Artie Maglionico, Lodi Borough Historian

"The wave of depression which has spread over the country perhaps leaves us with little to be thankful for this Thanksgiving. Be that as it may we should be grateful and thankful for that which we have for it could always be worse. When we sit down at the dinner table this year let us endure this economic depression and pray that we shall have more to be thankful for come next Thanksgiving."

No folks, I didn't write that opening paragraph. It was actually taken from an article which was published in the Lodi Bulletin in November of 1930 during The Great Depression. It can certainly, to a degree, be the vocabulary of our own distressing economic times. Lines that may be doomed to appear in today's newspapers.

Back in 1930 Lodi, indeed the country at large, had little reason for celebration. In fact quite the opposite was true. Families were being forced out into the streets. Children were going without food and clothing while husbands and fathers faced day after agonizing day of unemployment. These were strong able bodied men whose American dream was fast becoming a living nightmare. No work, no food, no hope. The Lodi Borough Council saw fit to follow the lead of other municipalities by passing "Emergency Legislation" so as to create work for the alarming number of it's unemployed.

They accomplished this by the implementation of what Mayor Frank Gugliotti termed "Public Improvement Work". In September of 1930 no less than 250 men whose families were facing starvation were immediately put to work. Their jobs entailed the installation of water mains and sewer lines throughout the Borough.

The passing of the legislation, spearheaded by Councilman Michael "Packy" Cavallo, served Lodi a dual purpose.

Under the supervision of the DPW, it would not only be aiding the increasing number of the unemployed it would also be fulfilling the request of the DPW for additional water facilities. In 1930 not everyone in town had running water. The new water mains changed much of that.

The act of giving became contagious especially when Mayor Gugliotti began donating his \$41.00 monthly salary to the town's relief fund. This newly surfaced fund provided food, clothing, and shelter for those families who were the victims of "hard times".

Soon Borough and Board of Education employees followed suit by donating a dollar a week from their pay. This fund, thanks largely to the appeals of Michael Cavallo, did much to bring aid to those Lodi families who were walking on a dangerously thin line between heaven and hell - and there were many.

During that time, Winter 1930, the Bergen County Board of Freeholders hired 800 men to widen streets, build highways, remove garbage and paint signs along county roads. Their salary was \$15.00 per week, seven hours per day. Transportation and a meal were also provided. Among those workers were men from our Borough.

On a Tuesday night in early November of 1930, American Theatre owner Michael Basile gave away as many as ten eighteen-pound turkeys during a showing of "Sweet Hearts and Wives" starring Bill Dove and Olive Brooks. The birds were given to those families in need who were in attendance. . . Yes the globblers were ready for the oven. No oven? The Basile family roasted it for you! How's that for helping a neighbor? It wouldn't be surprising if stuffing and cranberry sauce were on the menu. What - no Brussel sprouts?

In early December of 1930, the Mayor's Relief Committee was established. It was a good idea since it proved to be the difference for those struggling families who would otherwise have been facing a dark, cold and desolate Christmas.

The group consisted of Mayor Frank Gugliotti, Councilman Michael Cavallo, David Arnoldi, Police Chief Henry Witte, Joseph Pacella, John Butler, George Berardinelli and a warm hearted, very generous community. Their efforts made it possible for those less fortunate neighbors, suffering the ill effects of economic doom, to enjoy an abundance of food and clothing that would last through Christmas and beyond.

On December 9th of that year construction on Borough projects began. With it began employment for 400 of Lodi's out-of-work residents. Lives were saved, so to the American Spirit.

For most of us the nightmare of the 1930's is a reality we won't soon face. This winter we'll be pampered, polished and well fed. Yet just beyond our walls the ravages of the wind pass bitterly through the night and threaten us with its icy blasts. For some of us winter is closer than we think and in its rage can be heard the cries for help. . . This holiday season let us share our warmth like they did back then.