

**SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
STATE BOARD OF HEALTH OF THE
STATE OF VERMONT FROM THE
YEAR ENDING AUGUST 31ST,
1892**

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Sixth Annual Report of the State Board of Health of the State of Vermont from the Year Ending August 31st, 1892 by Various

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VARIOUS

**SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
STATE BOARD OF HEALTH OF THE
STATE OF VERMONT FROM THE
YEAR ENDING
AUGUST 31ST, 1892**

STATE BOARD OF HEALTH.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
RICHFORD, September 1st, 1892. }

To His Excellency,

C. S. PAGE, *Governor.*

SIR:—I have the honor of submitting to you the Sixth Annual Report of the State Board of Health for the year ending August 31st, 1892.

Very Respectfully,

J. H. HAMILTON, *Secretary.*

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD.

	TERM EXPIRES.
DR. C. S. CAVERLY, Rutland, - - -	1896.
DR. J. H. HAMILTON, Richford, - - -	1894.
DR. O. W. SHERWIN, Woodstock, - - -	1892.

OFFICERS OF THE BOARD.

DR. C. S. CAVERLY, *President.*

DR. J. H. HAMILTON, *Secretary.*

GENERAL REPORT.

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The State Board of Health has now been in existence for nearly six years and, while there is much to encourage and stimulate in the work, there are many obstacles and hindrances to progress and usefulness, chief of which is the lack of authority.

At each session of the Legislature since the creation of the Board an attempt has been made to gain additional power. In 1888 a bill of this nature was passed by both branches, but did not receive executive sanction, as in the opinion of the Governor it gave the Board legislative authority, which was unconstitutional.

In many of the States, Boards of Health are invested with extremely arbitrary power; and this is delegated by the Legislature.

On the subject "Of the authority to make Ordinances, Rules and Regulations," the late G. W. Field, an acknowledged legal authority, says: "In the absence of constitutional restrictions it seems to be generally conceded that the Legislature may confer upon municipal corporations the power to make by-laws or ordinances within the scope of their general powers, and not in conflict with general laws, as may be deemed for the welfare of the inhabitants, and especially to make rules and regulations to secure or promote the public health and the lives of the people and prescribe penalties or punishments for violation of its ordinances, rules or regulations, which shall have, within the territorial limits of the municipality, the same force and effect as laws passed by the Legislature of the state. 'Any powers of legislation over matters of local concern can be delegated. But if the Legislature should attempt to invest the board of supervisors with power to enact the entire civil and criminal codes which should be in force within their respective counties, this would be manifestly in violation of the true intent and spirit of the constitution.' These powers may also be delegated, by the Legislature to Boards of Health, or other local boards or officers, and in such a case they may make ordinances, or rules and regulations, to secure the object for which they are organized, with all the effect within their respective jurisdictions, of a law of the Legislature."

According to section 6 of the act creating the State Board of Health, authority is delegated to the Board to promulgate and enforce such regulations for the better preservation of the public

health, in contagious and epidemic diseases, as they shall judge necessary, but no authority is given to anticipate in case of a nuisance, however dangerous it may be to public health. The importance of a change in this respect must be apparent to every one. Selectmen, as local boards of health, are already invested with this power, but, for unknown reasons, refuse or neglect to act except in extremely rare cases.

In many instances the State Board has been called upon to aid in the abatement of nuisances where Selectmen had full power to do so and were lacking simply in courage to do their duties. In some cases, however, the Selectmen have acted fearlessly for the public good. Selectmen have been called upon to appoint Health Officers in every town. In some cases this has been complied with, while in others the State Board has made appointments. This is for the purpose of aiding the Board in making sanitary investigations or inquiries respecting disease—especially epidemics—and the means of prevention.

Health Officers have assisted in the work as well as possible, for in many instances they have not received the hearty co-operation of the physicians of their respective towns. This is a very essential element in the work, and all physicians should regard the duty of reporting to the local Health Officer as of the greatest importance. There is, perhaps, not so much a lack of interest on the part of the physicians as an unwillingness to work without compensation, or rather to be to the small necessary expense in serving the public. Were a small allowance made them to cover postage, there would be a much greater certainty of immediate reports being sent to the Health Officer.

More frequent complaints have been made to the Board during the last year, of nuisances and outbreaks of contagious diseases, showing not that more of such evils are found in our State, but that the people of the State are coming rapidly to appreciate the benefits of the State Board of Health.

SPECIAL REPORT.

La grippe prevailed to quite an extent during the fall and winter months, increasing somewhat the death rate. Diphtheria has been less prevalent than last year, although it has not yet been entirely stamped out in some of the larger towns. This is due to the fact mentioned in the general report preceding, that the local Boards are in many cases very delinquent in doing their duty where there is danger of losing patronage or popularity by that means.

Scarlatina has been unusually prevalent, and in some localities quite fatal, especially in Bennington county. The State Board has been called upon to assist in checking the epidemic in many towns. Circular No. 9, on this subject, will be found embodied in this report, aiming to give the nature of the disease and hints as to its prevention.

Just at the close of this year our State, in common with others, is called upon to consider preventive measures against the invasion of Asiatic cholera. Circular No. 10, treating on cholera and proper sanitary precautions, has recently been issued by the Board and may be found in this volume, together with correspondence, etc., from the Marine Hospital service and State Boards of Health of other States.

DIPHTHERIA.

In 1890 there were 198 cases of diphtheria reported in the State, and in 1891 less than 125. This falling off was due, in part, to greater care and precaution on the part of local Health Boards and in part to an increased interest taken by the people of the State in sanitary work, which is evinced by the many letters received from each locality where any epidemic disease appears.

TYPHOID FEVER.

The number of cases of typhoid fever in 1891 varies but little from 1890. If proper preventive measures were taken the mortality might be lessened very materially.

NUISANCES.

Never since the creation of the Board of Health has there been so many applications for assistance in abating nuisances as during the past year. These calls have all been promptly attended to, and, considering the small amount of authority vested in the Board, very much good has been accomplished by the means. Water of doubtful purity has been looked after and analyses made, and the public thus guarded against the great danger of drinking impure water. Results of some of these analyses may be found in this report; they were made by the Surgeon-General of the U. S. navy, Dr. Philip S. Wales, at the Museum of Hygiene, Washington.

LOCAL BOARDS OF HEALTH AND HEALTH OFFICERS.

A supplementary circular, in addition to circular No. 5, has been issued to local Boards of Health, as follows :

CIRCULAR NO. 5.

(30) Boards of Selectmen *may* appoint some medical man as Health Officer of their respective towns; should they neglect or refuse to do so, the State Board of Health will make such appointments.

(31) Health Officers shall assist the State Board of Health in carrying out their regulations in relation to the sanitary work of the State, especially regarding epidemic and contagious diseases, and shall make report of the facts thereof to the Secretary of the State Board of Health, as the said Board shall direct.

(32) It is also the duty of Health Officers, after being notified of the outbreak of any epidemic or contagious disease, to see that quarantine regulations are enforced and to have the oversight of cleansing and disinfecting all infected houses, etc.

A copy of these regulations was sent to the Selectmen in every town in the State, with the following letter :

STATE BOARD OF HEALTH,
SECRETARY'S OFFICE, RICHFORD, VT.,
-----, 1892. }

To the First Selectman of the Town of-----

SIR :—Will you kindly notify this office the name of the physician appointed as Health Officer for the ensuing year?

Respectfully,

J. H. HAMILTON, Secretary.

This resulted in the appointment of Health Officers in many towns which heretofore had been without such officer. In some instances the Selectmen requested the Secretary to make the appointment, and in some cases the Secretary made the appointment because of the negligence of the Selectmen in acting.

The following bill for increasing the proficiency of the State Board of Health was introduced into the Senate, during the term of 1890, by Senator Stevens of Franklin county, referred to the Committee on Public Health and passed by the Senate; reported favorably to its passage in concurrence and the third reading thereof refused by the House:

AN ACT FOR THE PRESERVATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND IN
AMENDMENT OF THE STATUTES RELATING THERETO.

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont :

SECTION 1. The Selectmen of each town, and the Board of Aldermen in each city of this State, shall annually appoint, in the month of March in each year, a Health Officer for said town or city, who shall be a physician in the regular practice of his profession in said town or city and a resident therein, if there shall be any person residing therein eligible to said appointment. If there is no resident practicing physician in said town or city, any physician whose regular practice extends into said town or city may be appointed. Said appointment shall be made within thirty days after this act takes effect, and in the month of March in each year thereafter, and such Health Officer so appointed shall hold office until his successor is appointed. In case of a vacancy in the office of Health Officer, by death, removal or resignation, the said vacancy shall be filled by a new appointment within thirty days from the time such vacancy shall occur. If the Selectmen of any town or the Aldermen of any city shall neglect or refuse to appoint a Health Officer, as required by this Act, or fill any vacancy therein, the State Board of Health shall make said appointment or fill said vacancy. A record of the appointment of a Health Officer shall be made in the office of the Town or City Clerk.

SEC. 2. Sections 3919, 3920, 3921, 3922, 3924 and 3925 of the Revised Laws are hereby amended by striking out the word "Selectmen," wherever the same occurs in each of said sections, and inserting the words "Health Officer" wherever the word "Selectmen" is so stricken out. The State Board of Health shall have all the authority and powers throughout the State as are granted by this statute to Health Officers in their respective towns.

SEC. 3. The Health Officer of each town or city shall make sanitary inspections whenever and wherever he has reason to believe and does believe anything exists in his town or city that may be detrimental to the public health. He shall, upon receiving notice of any case of infectious or contagious disease, dangerous to the public health, investigate the same, and determine, if possible, the source or cause of the disease, and shall institute such means of prevention and restriction as shall be necessary, and shall immediately report all the facts to the State Board of Health. Whenever a communicable disease is prevailing to any considerable extent, he shall make to the Secretary of the State Board of Health weekly reports concerning said disease during its continuance. In the month of March in each year each Health Officer shall also make to the Secretary of the State Board of Health a full report of the sanitary condition and public health of his town and of his doings during the preceding year.