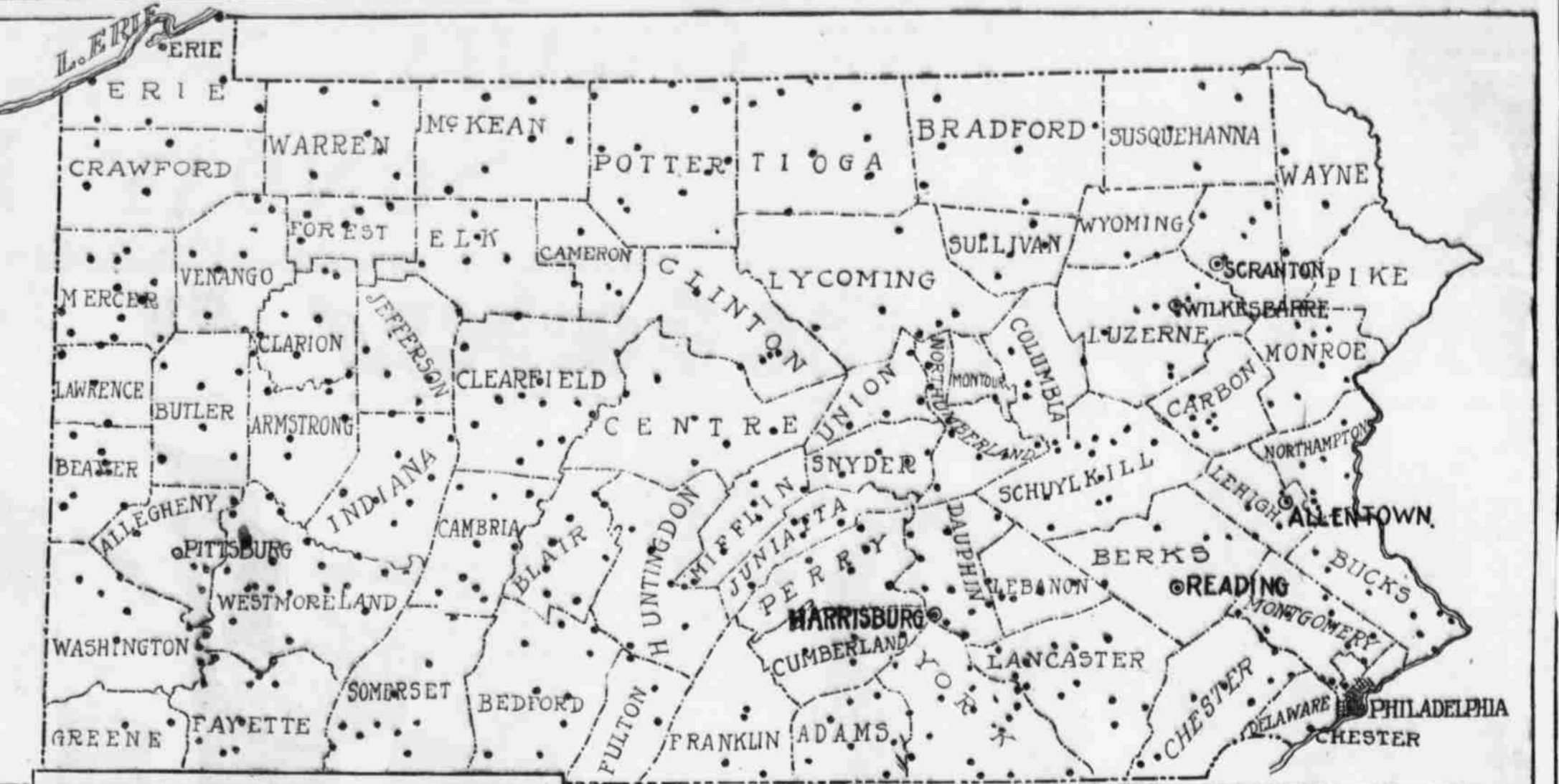


PROTECTING A STATE'S HEALTH

PENNSYLVANIA'S EXAMPLE A MODEL WELL WORTH COPYING.



Diphtheria Antitoxin distributing stations in Pennsylvania

The organized work of caring for the health of the State's citizens is as much a State's duty as is the administration of its government by competent officials. It is an ever present debt owed the taxpayers and is of equal importance with the maintenance of an adequate police department as a protection against crime and criminals. The public health duty has become a more serious problem with the continued growth of the large cities and the increased sources of contamination for the water supply upon which these cities depend.

When a State, through the agency of an experienced and skilled health department, practically eliminates typhoid and scarlet fever, when diphtheria has been nearly eradicated and the waters of the State are being rapidly purified, there is a useful lesson to be learned by other States, and the methods employed embody every element of interest for those engaged elsewhere in protecting the people from the ravages of disease.

About two years ago Pennsylvania came to a full realization that its health laws were meagre and ineffective; that death and disease were making head in hand within the environs of the Commonwealth, and that its negligence had grown so great as to excite the wonder of the country. Almost on the spur of the moment its officials decided that a remedy had to be found. Result—The State Legislature of 1907, with the approval of Governor Pennypacker, passed on the statute books three of the most comprehensive health laws ever devised in the United States. It was necessary that some immediate and radical steps be taken, for the State was years behind her sister States in this work.

STATE HEALTH ORGANIZATION.
The State Board of Health, twenty years in existence and headed by a man who has but with only a nominal appointment and very limited powers. This Board was asked to advise the Commonwealth, but had no power to put in operation necessary health measures.

The Legislature of 1907 created the Department of Health and gave it the broadest power and a large appropriation to protect the health of the people of Pennsylvania. An executive committee of the Legislature charged the Commissioner with the preservation of the purity of the waters of the State, while an earlier act created a Bureau of Vital Statistics under the Commissioner of Health, which bureau will for the first time in the history of the State collect accurate statistics of births and deaths.

The act creating the Department of Health gave the Commissioner such broad powers as to create for that office a thoroughly upright and level-headed man were placed in charge of the department. The man who was chosen for this position was Dr. Samuel G. Dixon, president of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, a man not only of world-wide scientific repute but an active man of affairs, who brought to the office great executive ability as well as the necessary knowledge of sanitation.

Health Commissioner Dixon, but a short time in office, has been making long strides toward perfecting the necessary precautions to put in motion the machinery for handling the epidemic and checking its spread.

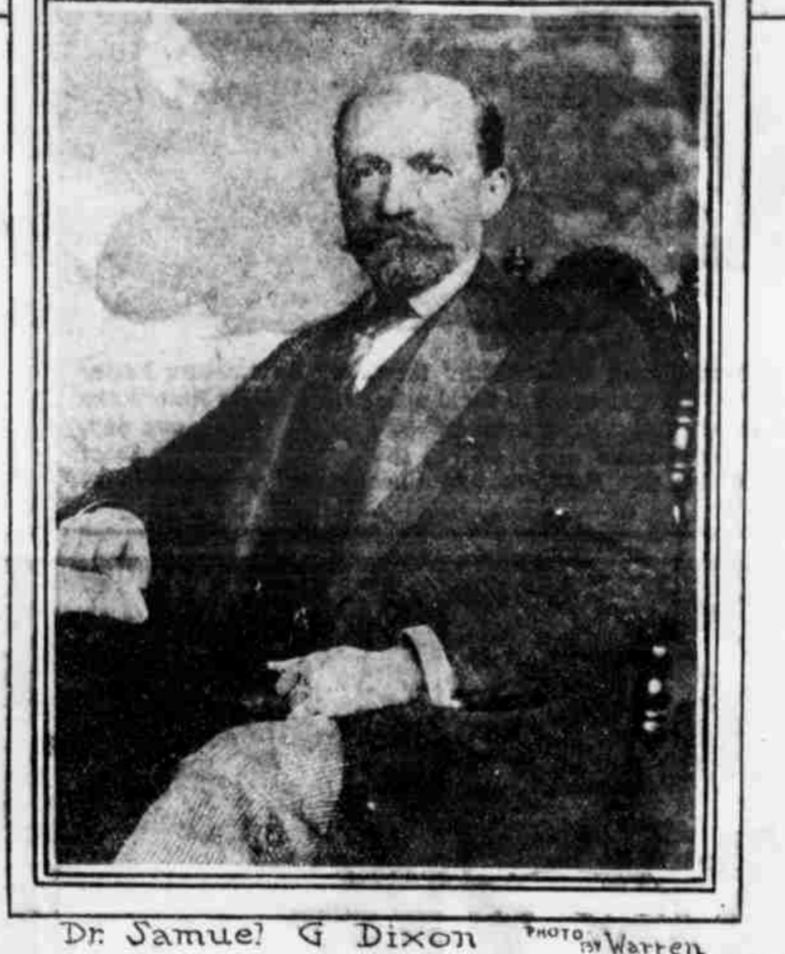
killings the germs in fecal matter and other discharges before they leave the sick room, setting forth simple but effective ways of household disinfection.

Since smallpox has appeared in mild form in the State it is necessary to be on the alert for the report of chicken pox among adults, as such a case may be pronounced chicken pox and then turn out to be smallpox and spread this dread disease through a whole community before it can be checked. A severe epidemic of smallpox was traced to this error in diagnosis.

The epidemic of measles throughout the State has required a great deal of attention. The popular idea that measles is a trifling affection is erroneous, for the disease, together with its sequelae, causes deaths in childhood and adolescence nearly as often as it does in adult life.

Every household where there is a contagious disease, he may be a milkman, for instance, who himself through lack of precautions is infecting the milk which he is supplying to hundreds of people.

Midwest cases of smallpox, diphtheria or scarlet fever occasionally break quarantine. In such cases the patients must be located with all possible haste, quarantined and placed under guard if necessary. The railroad company must be at once notified and the car in which the person off the line and thoroughly disinfected.



Dr. Samuel G. Dixon

upon the subject than any other man in the United States, only a few days before the adoption in Pennsylvania, wrote as follows: "I shall refer inquiries to the Pennsylvania Department of Health for the most complete and up to date equipment for carrying out registration laws."

The essential features of the registration law as enacted in Pennsylvania provide that no dead human body shall be removed from the registration district in which death occurred, or buried, or cremated, or otherwise disposed of, until a satisfactory certificate of death, signed either by the attending physician or Coroner, shall have been filed with the local registrar of vital statistics of such district and a burial or removal permit granted by that official.

These original certificates of death after being received, dated and registered by the local registrars are at the end of each month forwarded to the Central Bureau of Vital Statistics in the State Capitol, where they are scrutinized, indexed, tabulated and bound for future permanent reference. These certificates form a basis of an analytical study of the causes of deaths, of the principal ages at which death occurs, of the occupations, sex, locality and activity which contribute to excessive death rates. More than that, they furnish an opportunity for future generations to secure an accurate record of the personal and statistical particulars, as well as the facts surrounding the death of any individual in the State.

published by requiring from physicians or midwives a certificate setting forth in detail the personal and statistical particulars required to make a perfect record of the birth. These certificates, signed and registered by the local registrars, are monthly forwarded to the Central Bureau of Vital Statistics, at Harrisburg, where they are indexed, classified and bound in the same manner as death certificates.

Communicable diseases within the limits of incorporated municipalities are reported direct to the local health authorities, and by them in turn reported to the Department of Health at the end of each week. In rural districts immediate reports are made by attending physicians direct to the Department of Health.

A WIDE TERRITORY.
It may be interesting to note that Pennsylvania comprises a land area of 44,856 square miles; 30 cities, 549 incorporated boroughs, 67 counties, 1,547 townships, with an urban population of 4,477,888 and a rural population of 2,438,992. For the collection of vital statistics it has 976 local registrars, each with a deputy appointed to act in case of absence, illness or disability, in addition to 87 subregistrars acting in portions of the registration districts.

It has been held that Pennsylvania possesses features which provide for a more interesting study of vital statistics than any other State in the Union, for the reason that it presents the greatest diversity of occupations and that its population represents the various degrees of concentration from the third largest city in the United States down to the sparsely settled rural districts. The campaign waged by Health Commissioner Dixon for vaccination in order to check the spread of smallpox has been a most important work carried on by the new department.

Last year Dr. Dixon sent a letter to each secretary of the 2,300 school districts in Pennsylvania asking them to place in the hands of the teachers or principals in charge of schools in their districts a circular letter calling the attention of these principals and teachers to the vaccination clauses of the act providing that no child was to be admitted to school until it had presented a certificate signed by a physician stating that the child had been successfully vaccinated or had previously had smallpox. A supply of blank vaccination certificates was sent to each secretary of a school district. Since that time the department has sent about four hundred thousand vaccination certificates on request. This shows that thousands of children have since been vaccinated and thus made immune against smallpox.

The Department's medical inspectors in each county have visited schools where there was opposition to vaccination, impressed on the teachers their duty of upholding the law, talked with school directors and visited in their own homes parents who through prejudice were keeping their children from vaccination.

one of these has been answered. Time has been taken to write long letters, explaining the need and wisdom of vaccination, giving facts and figures to strengthen the arguments. No questions have been considered too trivial to answer. In this correspondence the Commissioner has treated the writers as sincere in their requests for information.

Dr. Dixon has also received many anonymous letters and slanderous communications. No matter how bitter a letter in opposition to vaccination has been, the Commissioner felt that there was any chance at all to have the writer listen to reason he has taken the time to correspond at length. Circulars have been sent out setting forth the necessity of vaccination, putting in convincing form the arguments for its efficacy. The public press, in the opinion of Dr. Dixon, has been a big factor in advancing the cause of vaccination.

Finally the Commissioner has made addresses in different parts of the State before school teachers' institutes and conventions of school directors and county superintendents. In this way he has come in direct touch with the people and exerted a wonderful influence in breaking down the prejudice against vaccination and counteracting the work of the anti-vaccinationists.

These public addresses have convinced the people of the State that Dr. Dixon is a man with a big warm heart, who loves children who is not swayed by an impulse or at all blind to reason. His opponents have pictured him in a bitter light, as being harsh hearted and a good deal of a tyrant. He has refuted by actual experience that the children in the schools should be made immune against smallpox by vaccination. It is determined in his efforts to have the law obeyed.

VACCINATION PROBLEM.
The right to debate from school a child who has not been vaccinated has been upheld by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania during the present year in a decision, the pertinent part of which says: "Vaccination, it is said, is the infliction of a disease, compox, on the subject, and if that can be done irrespective of his consent then the next step may be to require submission to inoculation with anthrax or serum for diphtheria, tuberculosis, cancer and other diseases, and we have rather a dismal picture of the possible consequences if it will be time enough to consider such matters when they arise. At present the vast preponderance of opinion among intelligent and educated people, under the guidance of the medical profession, is that vaccination is a highly useful ameliorative, if not always a preventive of one of the greatest of the scourges that have in past times afflicted humanity and that the regulation of it by a statute is not only a justifiable but a wise and beneficent exertion of the police power over the public health. When the Legislature goes beyond that into new or more debatable fields it will be time enough to consider the limits of its power."

The Department of Health consists of the Commissioner of Health, appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, who must be a physician of at least ten years' experience and a graduate of a legally constituted medical college. Attached to the Department is an Advisory Board consisting of six members, the majority of whom shall be physicians of ten years' experience and one a civil engineer. They are appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, for four years and serve without pay. The law says: "It shall be the duty of the Commissioner of Health to protect the health of the people of the State and to determine and employ the most efficient and practical means for the prevention and suppression of disease. To carry out effectually the responsibilities which this duty imposes the Commissioner and his agents are given full power to order nuisances detrimental to the public health or the causes of disease and mortality to be abated and removed and to enforce quarantine regulations. The Commissioner may issue warrants to arrest persons who disobey the quarantine orders or regulations of the Department of Health, and in the inspection of nuisances the Commissioner's duly authorized agents have the power and authority conferred by law upon constables, and where an owner of the property refuses to abate a nuisance detrimental to the public health the Commissioner's agents may have such nuisances abated; and to cover the cost of such action the Commissioner may file a lien in the name of the Commonwealth, as provided by law for other municipal liens. The Commissioner may revoke and modify any order, regulation, bylaw or ordinance issued by him in his official capacity concerning a matter which in his judgment affects the public health beyond the territory over which such local board has jurisdiction. General supervision is given the State Commissioner of the registration of births, marriages and deaths, of practitioners of medicine and surgery, of midwives, nurses and undertakers and of all persons who are engaged in the practice of any of these professions, and to be of importance in obtaining complete registration of births, deaths, marriages and deaths. The law laid upon the Commissioner the duty and responsibility of preserving the purity of the waters of the State for the protection of the public health. The waters of the State are in fact streams and springs and all bodies of surface and ground water, whether natural or artificial. Whenever in the opinion of the Commissioner the sewage discharged into the waters of the State by individuals, private corporations or companies becomes injurious to the public health he may order a discharge of such sewage discontinued. The Commissioner is authorized to grant to municipalities to construct or extend a sewer system whenever in his opinion it is in the interests of the public health demand it.

LONDON CLOOM EXPLAINED

Certain faint, shuddering recollections of astronomical instruction lead me to inform the world that atmospheric haze is derived from the sun. This, of course, will be news to persons as far away as are Americans from this, the manufactory of universal wisdom. Well with the advice and consent of the Board of Education of Philadelphia and as chairman of the Committee on Hygiene and did much to improve the sanitary conditions of the schools of that city.

Dr. Benjamin Lee, who for twenty years was the secretary of the former State Board of Health, occupies the position of assistant to the Commissioner. His long experience especially fitted him for the work of advising the Commissioner as to the establishment and successful build up of the Department of Health. Dr. Lee was a specialist of widely recognized ability in orthopedic surgery before he began to devote his life to sanitary work.

Dr. Frederic C. Johnson, chief medical inspector, at the time of his appointment was assistant chief resident physician in the Philadelphia Hospital.

Dr. Herbert Snow, chief sanitary engineer, is one of the best known engineers in the country. Mr. Snow is a pioneer in the work of devising sanitary systems of sewages disposal, and his knowledge and experience are of inestimable value to the Department of Health in its dealings with municipalities and corporations in regard to sewage and water supply systems.

Dr. Wilmer B. Bait, State Registrar of Vital Statistics, is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania in 1888, having been a member of the medical corps of the class of 1887. For a number of years he has been identified with sanitary work in Philadelphia and with the State quarantine service.

"Walk along the Thames at night if you want to see a fine starry night," said my London friends, and I obeyed them. I have traversed Westminster, Waterloo and Blackfriars bridges on clear evenings and, following instructions, have gazed skyward. Yes, the stars have shone brightly, as advertised. On some nights they have seemed to vie with one another in snapping bright gleams eastward. A singular phenomenon—the sun forever and the stars prodigal in their generosity. The only possible explanation is that the sun, being modest and retiring, hates to look at the sooty buildings, while the stars—the Jutes—have less scruple about appearances.

ON what the Londoners call "fine days" I have walked along the streets gazing earnestly at the heating gleams of a coquetish sun, trying to puzzle out the reason why genuinely bright sunshine was withheld. Really, a foreigner in London feels like picking a personal quarrel with the sun on these "fine days." He is tempted to ask some such useless question as this—"If you're going to shine why don't you go ahead and do it, instead of smirking up there like a big, bashful, red-headed girl. Get busy! Come on, now, and show London what you do in the States!"

By the time you have finished such a reddish appeal to the solar intelligence the reddish orb will have very likely disappeared altogether behind rain laden clouds. To be so unheeded is somewhat uninteresting, and you are without power of speech a few moments later when, through the partially translucent atmosphere, there struggle a few more glimmers of brightness, only to vanish again as tantalizingly as before.

You feel sure, on the days which Londoners call "fine," Wonder what would happen if the sun did some real shining over London? "Most extraordinary!" they'd probably promptly chronicle it as a purely Londonese virtue.

As compared with the foggy autumn and the overcast skies of winter the London spring is a very pleasant season, he says, as I have said, oasis coquetish gleams upon the city—some five hours or more before she visits her favorite zone, the "blue sky" which is not without comparative charms, but totally unlike the deep rich blue which robes Manhattan Island.