

IPHA History

Open and Read Your Mail

By Dr. Ronald Eckoff

Do you ever have the feeling others do not read your mail or instructions? Dr. Louis Thomas, Secretary of the State Board of Health wrote the following note in the March 1908 *Iowa Health Bulletin*. The Bulletin was published monthly with a circulation of 11,000-12,000.

Every day this office is in receipt of letters from mayors, township clerks and physicians requesting that a copy of the Revised Code of Regulations be sent to them, or that their names be placed on the Bulletin list. During the first two weeks of November 15,500 copies of the Regulations were mailed from this office to persons concerned in their enforcement. A copy together with the November Bulletin was addressed to the "Mayor" and to the "City Clerk" of every incorporated city and town in the State; to the "County Auditor," the "County Attorney" and "Superintendent of Schools" of each county; to the township clerk of each township in the State as the name and address appears upon the official list furnished us by the County Auditors, and to every Physician, Osteopath, Licensed Embalmer and Registered Nurse whose name is upon the Official Registers. As we have not been notified to the contrary by the Postal Officials it is evident that the pamphlets arrived at their proper destination and were delivered to the parties addressed. Our mailing list is printed and each pamphlet is labeled with the person's name, all addressed to one town of post office being put into one bundle. If the matter addressed to you was not delivered the fault must be with your local postal officials and you should make proper inquiries; but before going to this trouble we would suggest that you look through that pile of unopened papers and dust covered odds and ends in the corner of your office, and let us hope in the future you will make it a rule to promptly open and

read, then file for reference, all communications and pamphlets received from this office.

If, when confronted with questions pertaining to your duties, you consult the code of Regulations and your file of Bulletins, you will generally find the information at hand.

The daily volume of correspondence received at this office has assumed tremendous proportions. Much of this is due to the fact that the local officials neglect to consult the pamphlets that should be in their possession. The Secretary is at all times willing to assist Local Officials in solving the many perplexing problems confronting them, but the numerous departments under the State Board of Health and the various interests pertaining to each demands time and careful personal attention, consequently it is not always possible to answer correspondence as promptly as desired. The "Health Bulletin" is the official messenger of the State Board of Health and each issue carries information of importance to Local Boards and others interested. All notices and instructions to the Local Boards and Officials published in the "Bulletin" are authentic and should be acted upon without further correspondence. In every instance information pertaining to the enforcement of regulations published in the "Bulletin" has either been passed upon by the courts or is in accordance with an opinion of the Attorney General.

NOTE: The annual appropriation to the State Board of Health in 1908 was \$5,000.00, the same as it was in 1880 when the board was established. This had to cover the salary of the Secretary (Dr. Thomas), a clerk, board members expenses, printing, postage, etc. It is a little unclear, but it appears this was supplemented by a special appropriation of \$900.00 for an additional clerk, and \$2,000.00 for Vital Statistics. There was also an appropriation of \$6,000.00 for the Bacteriological Laboratory in Iowa City. The Board of Medical Examiners, Nurses' Department, and Embalmers' Department all generated some fees which added to the budget, although any fee income remaining at the end of the year reverted to the state general fund.

With the volume of work to be done and the lack of staff, it is easy to see how Dr. Thomas could be frustrated by people not reading their mail and bulletins.