

IPHA History

Is your Municipal Water Supply approved by the State? 1930 version

By Dr. Ron Eckoff

At the April 1930 Iowa Public Health Association's Annual Meeting, A.H. Wieters, Director, Division of Sanitary Engineering, Iowa State Department of Public Health reported on a new program. Beginning in July, 1929, all water works were to be rigidly inspected and those meeting the requirements of the department were permitted to erect roadside signs indicating that the public water supply was approved by the department. The initial results were reported at the annual meeting in April and in the 1930 Biennial Report.

The local officials were given a verbal and written report. The large number of defects found indicated the value of this work. The water supplies were categorized as "Approved", "Provisionally Approved" and "Not Approved". "Approved" supplies met all of the requirements. On the "Provisionally Approved" list were those cities and towns where minor repairs, more frequent analysis or better operation was required before approval could be given. The "Not Approved" list included those places where a condition existed which required some major repairs or reconstruction or treatment. One common problem was cross connections. Many municipalities had cross connections with private supplies, particularly industrial supplies. 229 of the 532 supplies in the state were inspected between July 1929 and June 1930. 24 were Approved, 100 Provisionally Approved, and 105 Not Approved.

The State Board of Health had been concerned about water from its beginning in 1880. A civil engineer was a member of the board from the very beginning. Just as the physician members of the board did investigations, the engineer did investigations as appropriate.

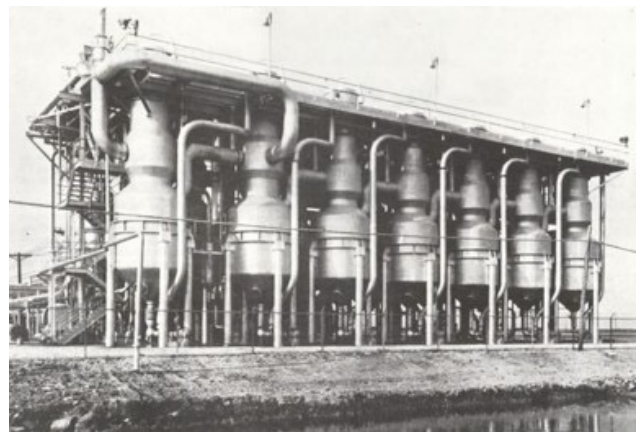
The 1887 Biennial Report the State Board of Health stated: "When public utility and safety to the public health are involved, the State Board will procure an analysis of water from water works where the supply is taken from wells, lakes or streams, and will pay one-half the expense. In cases where a water supply, private or public, is suspected of causing sickness, or where the same has been condemned for use by a local board, the State Board will, on official request by such local board, procure an analysis of such water at its own expense."

At least as early as 1889 the State Board designated a State Board of Health Chemist. This was not a board member and I do not believe was paid by the board except as indicated above. At the November 1893 meeting of the board, Professor Elbert W. Rockwood of the State University was elected Chemist of the Board and J. Christian Bay, assistant bacteriologist of the Missouri Botanical Garden was elected Bacteriologist of the Board.

In the 1908 Biennial Report there was a rule: "The local manager of any private corporation owning or operating a plant from which water is supplied to the public, and the superintendent of any water works or public wells owned or operated by any municipality in the State of Iowa, shall cause a sample of the water so supplied to be submitted to the Chemist of the State Board of Health for sanitary analysis." The fee was \$10 per sample. Note: The State Laboratory had been established by this time, but it was a Bacteriological Laboratory. It focused primarily on diphtheria, typhoid fever, and tuberculosis. The water examinations made in the state laboratory were all in conjunction with cases or epidemics of typhoid fever.

"The fiscal year ending June 30, 1914, represents the first year of service of the engineer under the reorganized state board of health. Prior to the reorganization the services of the engineering member of the board were not compensated by the state... The thirty-fifth general assembly in reorganizing the state board of health provided for the services of the civil and sanitary engineer, together with the necessary incidental and travel expenses were to be paid for by the state." The engineer had to examine and approve plans and specifications for water works, sewers and sewage treatment plants. He also made 53 field investigations during the year.

A water laboratory was opened in Iowa City in February 1914 as the State Epidemiological Laboratory. The thirty-sixth general assembly consolidated the Bacteriological Laboratory and the Epidemiological Laboratory into the "Laboratories of the State Board of Health."



A final note: Paul Houser joined the Division of Sanitary Engineering of the Iowa State Department of Health sometime during the July 1, 1928 – June 30, 1930 biennium. Paul was the Director of the Environmental Engineering Division of the Department when I joined the Department in July 1965. That covers almost 90 years!

Iowa Public Health Association

Public Health History in Iowa



Results of Iowa Municipal Water Supply Inspections – 1929/1930*

Appendix to article appearing in Winter 2017/18 issue of *Public Health Matters*

At the April 1930 Iowa Public Health Association’s Annual Meeting, A.H. Wieters, Director, Division of Sanitary Engineering, Iowa State Department of Public Health reported on a new program. Beginning in July, 1929, all water works were to be rigidly inspected and those meeting the requirements of the department were permitted to erect roadside signs indicating that the public water supply was approved by the department.

229 of the 532 supplies in the state were inspected between July 1929 and June 1930. Those are listed below.

APPROVED Met all of the requirements.			
Adel	Cedar Rapids	Dubuque	Sioux City
Ames	Clarinda	Fort Dodge	Spirit Lake
Belle Plaine	Clinton	Leon	Storm Lake
Boone	Colfax	Marshalltown	Stuart
Burlington	Council Bluffs	New Hampton	University Park
Cedar Falls	Des Moines	Oskaloosa	Waterloo

PROVISIONALLY APPROVED Minor repairs, more frequent analysis or better operation was required before approval could be given			
Ackley	Clear Lake	Iowa City	Newton
Ainsworth	Corning	Iowa Falls	Oakland
Albia	Correctionville	Jefferson	Osage
Alden	Corydon	Kellogg	Ottumwa
Algona	Creston	Keokuk	Red Oak

Anita	Dakota City	Knoxville	Rockwell City
Aplington	Davenport	Ladora	Scranton
Arnolds Park	Denison	Lewis	Sheffield
Auburn	DeWitt	Lisbon	Sheldon
Audubon	Dexter	Lytton	Shenandoah
Avoca	Doon	Manchester	Sioux Rapids
Bancroft	Dow City	Manly	Sloan
Belmond	Dunlap	Marengo	Spencer
Bettendorf	Durant	Marquette	Stanwood
Britt	Eagle Grove	Mason City	State Center
Brooklyn	Eldora	Mechanicsville	Tama
Burt	Emmetsburg	Mitchellville	Valley Junction
Carlisle	Everly	Mondamin	Walcott
Carroll	Fairfield	Mt. Ayr	Washington
Centerville	Glenwood	Mt. Pleasant	Waverly
Chariton	Grand Junction	Mt. Vernon	Webster City
Charles City	Grand Mound	Moville	Wesley
Chelsea	Hamburg	Muscatine	West Side
Clarence	Hampton	Nashua	Woodbine
Clarion	Hubbard	Nevada	Zearling

NOT APPROVED

Those places where a condition existed which required some major repairs or reconstruction or treatment

Adair	Guthrie Center	Missouri Valley	Sanborn
Afton	Guttenburg	Monona	Schaller
Arion	Hinton	Monroe	Schleswig
Atlantic	Holstein	New Hartford	Sidney
Boyden	Holy Cross	New London	Sigourney
Calamus	Homestead	New Sharon	Sioux Center
Casey	Humboldt	Nora Springs	Solon
Clermont	Independence	Northwood	Stacyville
Columbus Junction	Indianola	Ogden	St. Ansgar
Cushing	Janesville	Onawa	Sully
Davis City	Jessup	Osceola	Tabor
Duncombe	Kensett	Parkersburg	Templeton
Dyersville	Keota	Pella	Vail
Earlville	Lamoni	Pisgah	Victor
Early	Ledyard	Pleasantville	Villisca
Emerson	LeMars	Plymouth	Wall Lake
Epworth	Logan	Postville	Wapello
Exira	Lowden	Prairie City	West Burlington
Farley	Low Moor	Redfield	West Liberty

Forest City Fort Madison Fredericksburg Galva Garner Glidden Gowrie Grinnell	McGregor Macedonia Malvern Maurice Mediapolis Merrill Milford	Riceville Rock Rapids Rockwell Rudd Ruthven Sac City Salix	West Union Wheatland Whittemore Williams Wilton Junction Winterset Winthrop
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