

## ACTIVITIES OF THE BUREAU OF GENERAL INSPECTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Since the change of government in 1898 from Spanish rule to American occupation there was no independent health organization in Porto Rico until the first of April 1911. The Sanitation Service in those days was under the Department of the Interior and still later it was under what was known as the Consolidated Department which comprised Health, Charities and Correction Bureaus.

On the first of April, 1911, the Service of Sanitation was organized as an independent unit to deal with sanitary conditions in general. By virtue of the adoption of the Jones Bill as the Organic Act of the Island the Department of Health was finally established in 1917.

During the year 1922-1923 the establishment of the Bureaus of Tuberculosis, Plague Prevention, Venereal Diseases, Rural Sanitation, Social Medicine and Puericulture was effected, and later on, in 1924-1925, the Bureau of Malaria Control was created, all of which are comprised in the actual organization. So the Department of Health presents the aspect of a great tree whose principal branches are: 1, Exclusive Sanitary Services: (Bureaus of General Inspection and Sanitary Engineering, the former comprising Food and Drugs, Dairies Veterinary, Constructions and Plumbing Divisions); 2, Public Charities: (Charity Schools, Insane and Blind Asylums, etc.); 3, Public Health work: (Bureaus of Plague Prevention, Tuberculosis, Social Medicine and Puericulture, Venereal Diseases, Rural Sanitation and Malaria, Pharmacy, Biological Laboratory, Chemical Laboratory and X-Ray Division, Quarantine Hospital, Leper Hospital, Insular Sanatorium, Transmissible Diseases and Vital Statistics).

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|----------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. SANITARY SERVICES | { | Bureau of General Inspection    | { | Food and Drugs, Veterinary, Dairies, Constructions and Plumbing Inspection Divisions. |
|                      |   | Bureau of Sanitary Engineering. |   |                                                                                       |
| 2. PUBLIC CHARITIES  | { | Boys' Charity School.           |   |                                                                                       |
|                      |   | Girls' Charity School.          |   |                                                                                       |
|                      |   | Blind Asylum.                   |   |                                                                                       |
|                      |   | School for the Blind.           |   |                                                                                       |
|                      |   | Insane Asylum.                  |   |                                                                                       |

	Bureau of Transmissible Dis-	} Leper Hospital Quarantine Hospital Prevention of Diphtheria X-Ray Division
	cases -----	
	Bureau of Tuberculosis-----	} Insular Anti-Tuberculosis Sanatorium
3. PUBLIC HEALTH AND PREVENTIVE MEDI- CINE -----	Bureau of Social Welfare. Bureau of Rural Sanitation. Bureau of Plague Prevention. Bureau of Venereal Diseases. Bureau of Malaria Control. Bureau of Vital Statistics. Biological Laboratory. Chemical Laboratory. Pharmacy.	

The Bureau of General Inspection enforces all the sanitary regulations. It also carries on a health campaign of a general character and with this definite purpose in view there exists a most satisfactory relationship with the Bureau of Sanitary Engineering and with the Laboratories, in which a harmonious spirit of cooperation is the dominating note. The general functions of the Bureau are those related to the inspection of constructions, food and drugs, veterinary and plumbing divisions, as well as the general sanitary inspection in charge of inspectors and physicians.

Very important work has been carried out during the past year. Quoting from the last annual report, we insert the following information:

“DIVISION OF FOOD AND DRUGS INSPECTION

“Until the 15th of November, 1924, the Island was divided into seven districts, having been organized in this way in August 1924. From the above-mentioned date on, a new distribution was made which divides the Island into six districts only. This was done with a view to concentrating the attention of three inspectors upon San Juan. The new division is as follows: District No. 1, San Juan, Puerta de Tierra and Santurce; district No. 2, Río Piedras and seventeen adjacent towns; district No. 3, Arecibo and fifteen towns; district No. 4, Mayagüez and thirteen towns; district No. 5, Ponce and eleven towns; district No. 6, Caguas and fourteen towns, including Vieques and Culebras.

“Three inspectors are on duty in San Juan and all the other districts are in charge of one inspector each. The plan carried out in regard to food inspection is giving highly satisfactory results. Merchants are more scrupulous as to the importation of products for public consumption and the people in general seem better informed as to food stuffs of inferior quality. The organization established in connection with the inspection of drugs has also given splendid results. Many pharmacies were operating in the Island in an irregular way and many of the drugs and preparations were not dispensed in accordance with the standard established by the Pharmacopea of the United States. To-day these establishments are operating regularly. It is believed, however, that with the enforcement of the new Law regulating pharmacies, which was approved by the last session of the Legislature, conditions along this line will improve to a remarkable degree.

"The following demonstrative chart shows the number of samples sent to the Chemical Laboratory by the Food and Drugs Inspectors, with the quantity of foods destroyed or denatured for industrial use in each district:

Samples sent to the Chemical Laboratory	1st Dist.	2nd Dist.	3rd Dist.	4th Dist.	5th Dist.	6th Dist.
Ground Coffee .....	11	53	24			12
Refreshments .....		31				
Bread .....		26			18	
Drugs .....	12	16	29	50	44	15
Vinegar .....	19					
Flour .....	18					
Cows' Milk .....	17		120	43	68	32
Rice .....	9					
Butter .....	6					
Water .....				10	16	18
Other food stuffs .....	121	43	14	15	24	11
Foodstuffs destroyed or denatured						
Flour.....(pounds)	76710	10905		1788	4066	4764
Potatoes.....(pounds)	17380	5260	1270	6120	38770	1925
Herrings.....(pounds)	59065					
Spanish Peas.....(pounds)	12729					
Cake.....(pounds)	6553					
Corns Flour.....(pounds)	6370	1731	1034		3000	898
Onion.....(pounds)	6000		3890	3406		
Canned peppers.....(pounds)	5142				1619	
Codfish.....(pounds)	6750	3248	1675	4922	1040	
Preserved meats.....(pounds)	11780	950		123528	7318	834
Cheese.....(pounds)	4408				1160	
Lard.....(pounds)	3150					
Sardines.....(cans)	1928					
Vinegar.....(bottles)	1885	839	1173			
Rice.....(pounds)	13200		6250	80000	137800	4100
Beans.....(pounds)	5500				1500	
Butter.....(pounds)		3820			3765	2928
Salmon.....(pounds)		1750				
Mackerel.....(pounds)		1120				
Vermicelli.....(pounds)		745	1400			
Crackers.....(pounds)			903			
Apples.....(pounds)				2000		
Bread.....(pounds)				530		
Ice.....(pounds)					4300	
Condensed Milk.....(cans)					1329	
Confectioneries.....(pounds)						2500

## PLUMBING

Although the examination and approval of plans for plumbing is carried out at the Bureau of Sanitary Engineering all the work of inspection is done by this Bureau."

## CONSTRUCTIONS

Formerly in Porto Rico the average home of the poor people had no latrines, it was badly arranged, poorly ventilated and built in places that were not properly urbanized. As a residue of this condition there are still many unsanitary sections in different towns and cities of the Island. Such regions might be called dens of misery and death. "La Perla" in San Juan, "Santo Domingo" in Arecibo, "Peligro" and "Bajadero" in Lares, "La Guira" in Barros, are good and concrete examples of such places. The lack of ventilation,

of cleanliness and of commodities have made of these regions fertile fields for the propagation of contagious diseases. One case alone, of a transmissible disease rapidly spreads throughout the entire community.

Not long ago when on a visit of inspection in the small inland town of Lares some cases of typhoid fever were discovered. In a keen desire to localize the source of the outbreak it was found that the majority of the cases came from the barrios known as "Anon", "Peligro" and "Bajadero". An emergency hospital was established in order to isolate the patients, as from such places as these an epidemic may spread rapidly. Of course other steps were taken to check the outbreak by the Bureau of Transmissible Diseases, but the problem of doing away with such reminiscences of the past is the one which not only confronts the Department of Health but which should arouse every thinking citizen as to his responsibility and duty in the community.

The efforts put forth by the Department of Health to do away with the old unsanitary settlements throughout the Island has brought splendid results in San Juan and elsewhere under the strict vigilance of an efficient body of inspectors, as no houses located in unhealthful districts are allowed to be either constructed or repaired. In fact, the problem of clandestine constructions in the swampy and unurbanized sections of the different towns and cities has been solved through a close supervision of suspicious districts and by using drastic measures and resources of authority conferred by law upon the Commissioner of Health. These measures have made it possible to do away with entire districts in which hygienic houses have been constructed conforming to the rules of the Department.

The following chart appearing in the Annual Report shows the amount of work done by the Inspectors of Constructions during the past year:

District	Visits of Inspection	Buildings				
		Inspected	Deficient	Accepted	Closed	Stopped
1 .....	1768	1768	197	9	30	135
2 .....	146	146	30	8	3	17
3 .....	6565	5362	223	405	28	648
4 .....	4125	4125	91	317	9	42
5 .....	48	2048	10	429	.....	88
6 .....	11	377	86	124	2	86
7 .....	9	547	16	484	.....	15
8 .....	82	815	107	121	2	65
<b>Total....</b>	<b>12754</b>	<b>15188</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>1817</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>1095</b>

While great strides have been made along the line of housing conditions we cannot lose sight of the obstacles which present themselves such as the lack of cooperation on the part of those who are somewhat indifferent as to public-welfare matters. It is hoped that in due course of time every town in Porto Rico will have districts for the working classes in which new and sanitary houses may be constructed for those who have lived in squalor and abandonment up to this time. This construction of settlements for the working classes should be the foremost purpose of each municipality in order to make it possible, without excuses of any kind, to do away with these already mentioned dens of sickness and suffering in every part of the Island.

Our Sanitary Regulations provide that no house can be built, repaired or extended in any part of Porto Rico without first obtaining the authorization of the Commissioner of Health. Thus, corresponding plans must be submitted for approval. The Sanitary Regulations also make imperative the urbanization of land when a construction is projected and all this guarantees the success of public-health activities as related to housing conditions in Porto Rico. With the work organized as it is at present, there is every reason to believe that former conditions will not return.

Rural zones must of necessity improve their housing conditions, by presenting plans of construction in accordance with the Sanitary Regulations. A well-trained corps of inspectors work in the country endeavoring to teach the people how to live free from the jeopardy of disease. By referring again to the last Annual Report a good idea of the work carried on by the other divisions of this Bureau may be obtained.

#### “VETERINARY INSPECTION

“This division has been very active throughout the year, special attention having been given to the inspection of dairies, particularly to those which supply milk to the cities of San Juan and Río Piedras, in order to insure a better quality of milk for public consumption. The inspection of dairies has been carried out both night and day and the milking has been carefully watched. The work is in charge of a body of well-trained inspectors under the direction of the Veterinarian.

“A system of score cards has been established like the one adopted by the United States Department of Agriculture. Some details have been eliminated and others added in order to make them adaptable to the conditions of the country. This card system has given fine results on the mainland and will doubtless be a success in Porto Rico, as it will not only educate and protect the consumer but will serve as a stimulus to the milk producer in order to supply the very best grade of milk. If this system gives the results expected, the importation of con-

densed, evaporated and powdered skimmed milk will diminish to a great extent in the near future.

“In the last few months the inspection of dairies has been extended to the city of Ponce and to the southern section of the Island.

“ANIMALS VACCINATED

“Several outbreaks of hog cholera have been registered during the year and these have been checked by vaccination and quarantine. This work was done in coöperation with the Department of Agriculture and Labor.

“The number of hogs vaccinated is as follows:

Humacao.....	217
Río Grande.....	240
Bayamón.....	99
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Total.....	556

“In Las Piedras another outbreak of this disease was checked by quarantine:

CATTLE VACCINATED BY ANTRAX

Bayamón.....	130 head
Guaynabo.....	175
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Total.....	305

“The chief of the Veterinary Division has visited the dairy at the Insular Sanatorium frequently. An epizootic of Seroptic Mange broke out recently at this dairy and the sick animals were treated, most of them are already cured and the rest are being treated.

“The veterinarian has also visited different towns examining cattle to be slaughtered for human consumption.

“A limited number of blood specimens from horses has been taken for the investigation of glanders. They were found negative in the Laboratory. Some years ago this disease was very prevalent among horses here and even some human cases were registered, but at the present time it has almost disappeared from the Island.

“IMPORTATION OF ANIMALS

“The importation of animals from the mainland has increased this year, a total of 1,245 having been brought in. Most of these animals were cattle for slaughtering, to be used for public consumption.

“MUNICIPAL CHARITIES

“This service is carried exclusively by the municipalities, the Department only having the inspection of hospitals and emergency rooms. The municipal medical service is deficient and the work of the municipal physician for the poor is unsatisfactory because of the lack of good hospitals where patients may be treated and because of the very bad condition of the emergency rooms, as well as of the insufficiency of the appropriations in the municipal budgets to pay employees, buy material and furnish equipment and medicines. The municipal hospitals are almost always neglected and the equipment and material are generally inadequate and deficient. This department is giving special attention to the inspec

tion of hospitals and it is believed that the campaign will bring about very good results, as several municipalities have already constructed and equipped modern hospitals.

“The Emergency Rooms are operated under the same conditions, being poorly equipped, situated in undesirable places, lacking of light and ventilation and having old deteriorated floors and walls which cannot be thoroughly cleaned.

“DISPOSAL OF GARBAGE

“This service like that of Charities is in the hands of the municipalities. Generally speaking it is very deficient due to the lack of funds with which to buy proper equipment and to pay the necessary personnel.

“The following chart shows the appropriations made in the municipal budgets of the Island for the above-mentioned services for the years 1923-24 to 1925-26:

Fiscal Year	Municipal Charities	Garage disposal
1923-24 .....	\$866,660.17	\$322,151.79
1924-25 .....	922,924.22	457,962.09
1925-26 .....	978,126.55	244,796.21

During the present year 43,165 head of cattle were slaughtered with a total weight of 9,552,725 pounds; 32,219 hogs with a total weight of 2,438,150 pounds and 6,170 goats with a total weight of 234,750 pounds.

In the milk stations throughout the Island 12,221,750 litres of milk were expended, the dairies that supply San Juan with milk having a production of 5,954,975 litres or 16,315 litres a day.

One hundred and forty-nine public establishments were closed during the year. In this number we include several municipal dependencies such as slaughterhouses, meat markets, jails, etc.

