

IPHA History

1880-1881 Survey

**Office of the State Board of Health -
Des Moines, March 20, 1881**

Gentlemen-This Board desires to have, and to place upon the record for purposes of future study in connection with records of deaths and of meteorological conditions, statements, for as many different localities in the State as possible, of the diseases in Iowa during the year 1880. Will you have the kindness to send, as soon as is convenient, your replies to the following questions? Please use the stamped envelope enclosed herewith, and leave all additional postage to be paid at this office. In replying, it will not be necessary to repeat the questions, but simply to refer to the circular by number and to each question by number.

1. If you live in a city or incorporated town, what do you estimate the number of inhabitants of said city or town at the middle of the year 1880?
2. Among these inhabitants above mentioned, what do you estimate the number of deaths from all causes during the year 1880?
3. Please state the territory for which your replies to the following questions are made.
4. Among the people of your locality, considering the increase or decrease of population, was the amount of *sickness* from all causes during the year ending December 31, 1880 *greater, less, or about the same as the average* during the previous years? If not the same, how much was it increased or diminished?
5. Compared with previous years, and from all causes, was the ratio of *deaths* to inhabitants during the year 1880, *greater, less, or about the same as the average*? If not the same, how much was it increased or diminished?
6. What disease, or causes of death, were *more* than usually prevalent during the year 1880?
7. If you can assign any *cause* for the *unusual prevalence* of any disease, please do so.
8. What diseases, or causes of death were less than usually prevalent?
9. To what do you attribute the lessened prevalence?
10. From what diseases, or causes of death was there *more* than the usual mortality during the year 1880?
11. If you can assign any *cause* for the *unusual mortality* from any disease, please do so.
12. From what diseases or causes was there *less* than the usual mortality?
13. To what do you attribute the lessened mortality?
14. Please mention dates for the occurrence in 1880 of all diseases attended with *an unusually high or low rate of mortality*, and state whether the rate was high or low.
15. Please mention the dates of occurrence in 1880 of all *diseases not usually occurring in your locality*.
16. State the number of cases of each of these diseases; viz., small-pox, cholera, scarlet fever, typhoid fever, measles, whooping-cough, cerebro-spinal meningitis, diphtheria, and any other epidemic, endemic, contagious, or infectious disease that appeared during 1880. (Facts are especially

Try Your Hand at Completing this 1880-81 Survey for Your Jurisdiction. The Iowa State Board of Health was created in 1880 and one of the ways they gathered information was to recruit about 70-80 leading physicians from throughout the state to serve as "Special Correspondents". In March 1881 the board send the following survey to these special correspondents with questions about diseases, deaths, animal diseases, meteorological conditions, soil moisture, and ground water. The final question was an open ended question about causation or communicability of diseases and any suggestions regarding prevention.

In the next issue of the newsletter, we will provide a summary of the responses.

- desired, but opinions are better than no statements, though it would be well to state them as opinions.)
17. Of the eight diseases mentioned above, *name those of which no case appeared* during the year 1880.
 18. For each of months in 1880, please give a summary statement of the diseases which occurred, naming them in the order of their prevalence-greatest first.
 19. During the year 1880, *what diseases* occurred, *at what time, and to what extent, among* animals?
 20. Please give a summary statement of the meteorological conditions during the year 1880, specifying, if possible, the general characters for each month, and noting any peculiar or unusual condition.
 21. Please state the facts concerning the soil moisture in your locality, during each of the months in the year 1880, *without reference to previous years*, but comparing the months in 1880 with each other. Group them in order-driest first.
 22. *Compared with previous years*, in what months of the year 1880 was the *soil* in your locality *unusually dry*?
 23. *Compared with previous years*, in what months of the year 1880 was the *soil* in your locality *unusually moist*?
 24. In your locality, what is the *usual average depth of earth above the ground water*, as indicated by distance down to water in wells, streams, etc.? If different parts of your locality vary greatly, please answer for such different parts.
 25. Without reference to previous years, please state the facts concerning the *depth of earth above the ground water*, nearest the surface, in your locality, during each month of the year 1880, as indicated by distance down to water in wells, streams, etc., or by other facts. How many feet and inches do you estimate it, in each month?
 26. Compared with previous years, in what months of the year 1880 was the *ground water* in your locality *unusually high*?
 27. Compared with previous years, in what months of the year 1880 was the *ground water* in your locality *unusually low*?
 28. Please communicate facts bearing upon, or cases illustrating the causation or communicability of diseases.

Any suggestions which you may feel inclined to make concerning methods which seem practicable for the prevention of sickness or deaths in your locality, or in this State, need not be withheld, but are earnestly solicited.

In the absence of positive knowledge, opinions are desired. The fact that it will be difficult, and sometimes impossible, to give the information asked for, is well understood; the importance of the subject, however, warrants the effort, which it is believed will not always be barren of results, but will accumulate data which eventually will be of great value.