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ON

QUARANTINE

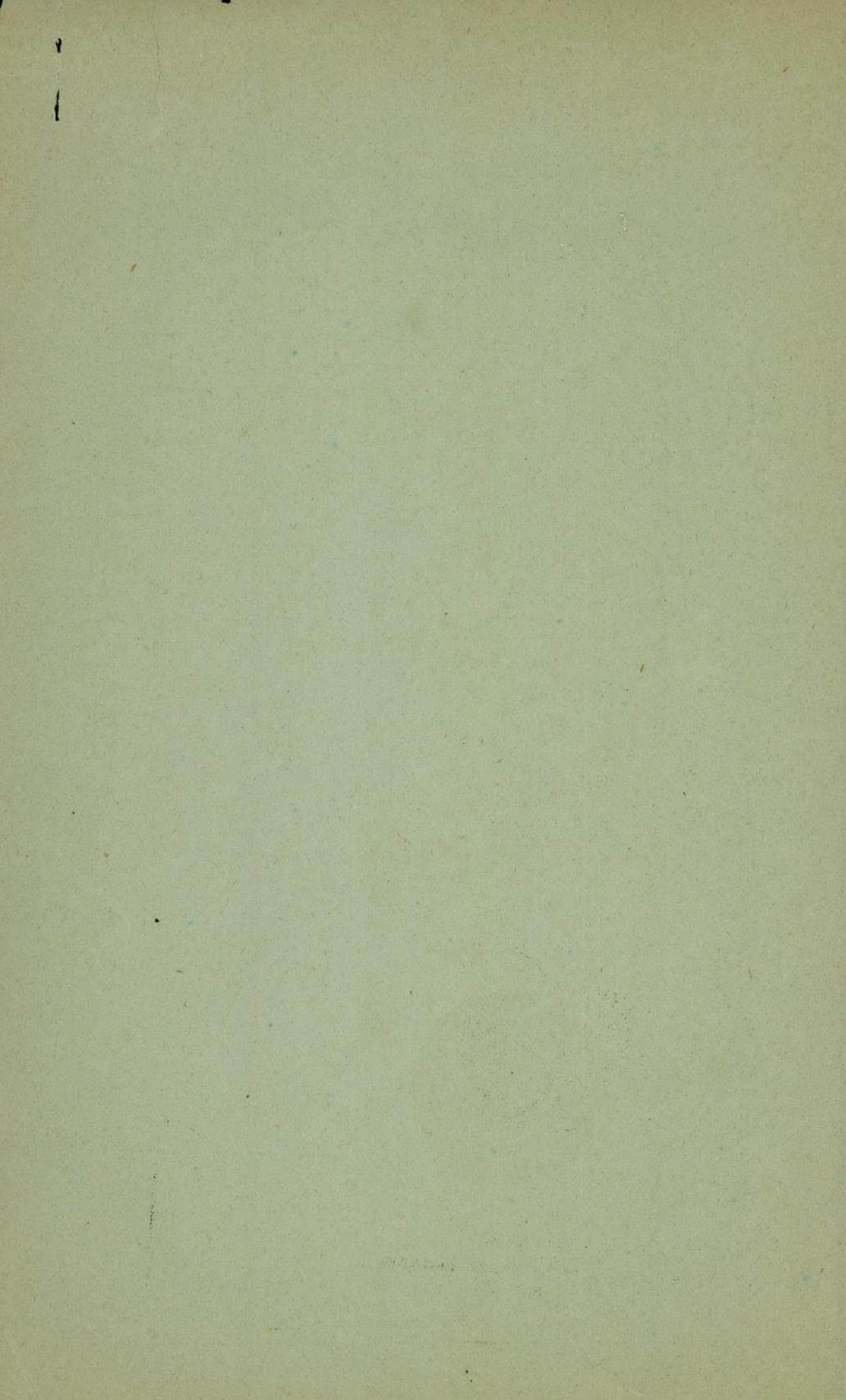
FOR THE YEAR 1882.

R. M. SWEARINGEN, M. D.,
STATE HEALTH OFFICER.



AUSTIN:
E. W. SWINDELLS, STATE PRINTER.
1882.

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REPORT ON QUARANTINE.

AUSTIN, *December 20, 1882.*

SIR:—Your communication of to-day, requesting a report on quarantine for the year 1882, “with such suggestions as I may see proper to make, regarding changes in the present laws,” I have the honor to acknowledge, and in compliance, respectfully submit the following:

The appropriation of sixteen thousand dollars, by the special session of the Seventeenth Legislature, for building a disinfecting warehouse at Galveston, was made on conditions “that the citizens of Galveston shall contribute an additional amount, sufficient to erect such warehouse as, in the judgment of the Health Officer, will subserve the purposes intended; otherwise the sixteen thousand dollars appropriated should not be expended.”

Immediately after this trust was committed to me, I visited Galveston and secured the professional services of Mr. N. J. Clayton, architect, in perfecting a plan and specifications for the contemplated warehouse. These plans, elaborately drawn, were presented to the Galveston Board of Health, with the strong endorsement of its president, who has long and earnestly advocated the necessity of an enterprise of the kind, and the following resolutions offered by the Hon. N. N. Johns, were unanimously passed:

“*Resolved*, That the plans and specifications for a disinfecting warehouse, to be erected by the State of Texas on Galveston Island, as drawn by Mr. N. J. Clayton, and submitted to this Board by the State Health Officer, be and are hereby approved.

“*Resolved further*, That the location for said warehouse, as selected by the State Health Officer, to-wit: a point about seventy-five yards to the east of, and on a line with, the present quarantine station, is endorsed as the most suitable and available place that can be made, by reason of the proximity to deep water, and the security to vessels in loading and discharging cargoes during rough weather.

In this connection I will briefly give the reasons that necessitated the selection of a site so near the city. A careful examination of the chart and measurements, revealed the fact that a wharf connecting Pelican Island with the channel would be at least six hundred yards in length. The channel, too, leading to that island (the only possible place, beside the one selected) is very narrow, and difficult to navigate by sail vessels, except when southerly winds are prevailing, and it is considered a dangerous place for such vessels to be caught in a gale.

The extra cost of reaching a warehouse so inaccessibly located, and of conveying goods to the city after being disinfected, would have entailed an expense, and crippled commerce more than the present plan of riding out a twenty days quarantine. These considerations, together with the conviction that the present site is far enough from the city to insure immunity against infection, were deemed sufficient to justify the location made.

The day after the approval given by the Galveston Board of Health, the plans were submitted to the "Texas Quarantine Warehouse Company."

It was the representatives of this company who pledged the Legislature that Galveston would furnish all that was necessary, beyond the sixteen thousand dollars given by the State, to complete a first-class disinfecting warehouse.

The plans were critically examined, and while the opinion was freely expressed by some that they were more extensive than necessary, they were, I believe, unanimously approved.

As I could not enter into an agreement with contractors on an indefinite promise made the Legislature, nor draw a warrant from the Comptroller for any part of the sixteen thousand dollars, until some evidence was presented that the citizens of Galveston had complied with the provisions of the law, it imposed upon me the duty of requiring the Warehouse Company to give a tangible form to said promise.

The architect estimated that the warehouse, including wharf, cisterns, tramways and guard house connected with it, would cost twenty-one thousand dollars, leaving five thousand to be advanced by Galveston.

The following letter from the president of the company, a very prominent and responsible gentleman, was filed with the Comptroller, and considered sufficient evidence that the law had been complied with:

GALVESTON, *May 27, 1882.*

DEAR SIR:—By a resolution passed this day by the "Texas Quarantine Warehouse Company," an assessment of five thousand dollars was made upon the members of said company, to be placed at the disposal of yourself, as State Health Officer, to enable you to erect a suitable quarantine warehouse building at Galveston, as per plans and specifications; and I have the honor to state that your drafts on me will meet with prompt payment on presentation, requesting that vouchers for payment of this five thousand dollars be attached to said drafts. I remain very respectfully, your obedient servant,

(Signed)

J. G. GOLDTHWAITE,
President T. Q. W. C.

To R. M. SWEARINGEN, S. H. O.

All the preliminaries having been disposed of, Mr. Clayton advertised for bids, in the *Galveston News* and *Houston Post*.

Contractors seem loth to undertake the work. The exposed position, the difficulty of securing hands, and the knowledge that the contractor who built the quarantine station at the same place had lost heavily, were among the causes that excluded bidders.

After much delay, two propositions were made, and the contract awarded to Mr. Harry Devlin, of Galveston, who executed a ten thousand dollar bond that the specifications would be adhered to, and the building completed on or before the first day of January, 1883.

The Galveston Board of Health, about the first of August, apprehending that infection might possibly be brought to the city by laborers engaged so near the quarantine station, ordered Mr. Devlin to discontinue work, and made it impossible for the conditions of his bond to be com-

plied with. Notwithstanding these unlooked for and unavoidable detentions, the work is rapidly progressing, and will be ready for use when the quarantine season again opens.

THE RAILROAD DISINFECTING WAREHOUSE.

For several years the managers of the railroad lines between New Orleans and Houston have been discussing the propriety of constructing a disinfecting warehouse on the Sabine river, to be used when yellow fever prevailed in Louisiana. The Galveston warehouse gave a fresh impulse to the enterprise, and Major E. W. Cave, representing the roads, at the suggestion of your Excellency, about the first of May called upon the State Health Officer for plans. They were promptly furnished, and in a short time a large body of skilled workmen were engaged upon the building.

On the twentieth of July, accompanied by Dr. Rutherford, health officer of Houston, Judge Crosby, Major Cave, and fifteen or twenty of the leading citizens of Orange, the warehouse was inspected, formally tendered by the railroad officials to the State, to be used for disinfecting purposes, and so received by the Health Officer. The building is three hundred feet in length, is divided into three separate apartments, supplied with ricks for the segregation of articles to be treated, air tight chamber, ventilators, and a railway track on each side. In finish and arrangements, it is the most complete warehouse of its kind in America, a credit to the State and a monument to the enterprise of the companies constructing it. In order that all interested may see the careful precautions that have been adopted to prevent infection from passing through, I append the rules and regulations for its government. These regulations have been critically examined by Dr. S. M. Bennis, of New Orleans, and been honored by his approval.

REGULATIONS FOR THE TRANSFER AND DISINFECTION OF FREIGHTS PASSING THROUGH THE DISINFECTING WAREHOUSE NEAR THE SABINE RIVER, DURING THE EXISTENCE OF QUARANTINE AGAINST NEW ORLEANS OR ANY INFECTED POINT IN LOUISIANA ON THE LINE OF RAILWAY. ALSO, REGULATIONS FOR THE PASSING OF FREIGHT TRAINS BY SAID WAREHOUSE.

Section 1. Cars and freights from any infected point must be treated under the direction of an inspector of the National Board of Health, and in accordance with such rules as may be prescribed by said board. The cars may then be closed and sealed, and may proceed under certificate of inspector.

Sec. 2. The cars thus treated shall then be taken to some point not less than twenty-five miles nor more than one hundred miles from the infected place. The freight shall then be transferred into cars that have not been exposed to infection, and after being again treated by an inspector of the National Board of Health, shall be sealed, and may proceed under certificate of inspector to the point designated, near the disinfecting warehouse.

Sec. 3. All trains with cars for transfer of freights at the disinfecting warehouse shall be stopped not less than one mile on either side of warehouse, and no person connected with said trains shall be permitted to communicate with persons at the disinfecting warehouse.

Sec. 4. All movements of cars at the disinfecting warehouse shall be done with a switch engine, used expressly for that purpose, with acclimated crew and train-hands, who shall remain at quarantine station, and not communicate with employees of other trains.

Sec. 5. All cars from infected points shall be placed on track on north side of warehouse, and cars from non-infected points on track on south side of warehouse.

Sec. 6. All freight intended for fumigation shall be placed in such portion of warehouse as may be deemed by the quarantine officer in charge best suited for its fumigation, and all officers, agents and employees of the railroads, engaged at the warehouse, shall be under his direction in this respect.

Sec. 7. Cars from non-infected points shall not be permitted to be on track along side warehouse while cars from infected points are being unloaded.

Sec. 8. After freight from an infected point has been disinfected, the same may be removed to cars from non-infected point, and after again being fumigated may be sealed and permitted to proceed to destination, under certificate of officer in charge.

Sec. 9. All employees of the railroad engaged at the warehouse shall be acclimated persons, satisfactory evidence of which must be furnished the officer, who shall keep a roll, and regard them a part of the station, subject to his orders and under his constant supervision.

Sec. 10. In the classification of freights to be moved to and from infected places, the one adopted by the Medical and Sanitary Association of New Orleans shall be used until a more elaborate classification is furnished.

First class articles shall be treated for a period not less than forty-eight hours, before being allowed to proceed, and longer if in the judgment of the officer in charge the same be deemed necessary.

Second class articles shall be treated for twenty-four hours, or longer if in the judgment of the officer in charge the same be deemed necessary.

Third class articles in box cars shall be placed on platform surrounding the warehouse, and be ventilated for twenty-four hours before being allowed to proceed to destination.

Sec. 11. Freight from non-infected places, going east, may be transferred without detention through warehouse, or across platform, subject to regulations respecting location of cars from infected places.

Sec. 12. Flat or open cars loaded with freight from non-infected places may pass the quarantine station, going east, without transfer of freight, or further detention than is necessary for inspection by the officer in charge.

The said cars, or other open or flat cars, coming from an infected place, shall, after being cleansed and fumigated under the direction of an inspector of the National Board of Health, at the infected place, be permitted to pass the quarantine station, without transfer of freight, when loaded with lumber, ties, or railway iron, only; but all such cars shall have certificate of inspector, that above rules have been complied with.

Freight in box-cars, from non-infected places, going east, may in like manner pass the quarantine station, without transfer, but such cars will not be permitted to return beyond the point designated for the stoppage of all cars from infected districts until after being thoroughly disinfected.

Sec. 13. The railroad company shall furnish such fumigating material and chemical agents as may be prescribed, and assume all expenses con-

nected with the transfer and disinfection of freights, including the salary of the special inspecting officer appointed by the Governor.

Approved September 11, 1882.

O. M. ROBERTS,
Governor.

R. M. SWEARINGEN,
State Health Officer.

THE REGULAR QUARANTINE.

Pursuant to your proclamation of April 27, 1882, quarantine was established at Sabine Pass, Galveston, the mouth of the Brazos, Pass Cavallo, Aransas Pass, and Brazos Santiago.

No funds ever being on hand to employ guards to look after these stations houses between the quarantine periods, fisherman and tramps usually occupy them during that time, and make it necessary to repair doors, windows and cisterns before they are again tenable, and in condition to be used. The station house at Aransas was burned about the first of August, but on account of the insecure title or right to Shell Banks, its former location, no effort has yet been made to rebuild it.

The station house on Padre Island, commanding the port of Brazos Santiago, was blown off by the storm of 1880.

I considered it useless, and decided not to expend the few hundred dollars at my disposal, in erecting a cheap building, that would probably have met the fate of its predecessor, when the first gale struck that storm favored spot. The officer on duty there was provided with tents, and the old wharf was rented for twenty-five dollars per month, on which to anchor them.

No infectious or contagious diseases have passed any of these stations, and it affords me pleasure to testify, that to the best of my knowledge, the officers and employees have diligently discharged the duties assigned them.

THE BROWNSVILLE EPIDEMIC.

On the twenty-fourth day of June Doctor McManus, of Matamoros, saw, in that city, the first case of the disorder afterwards recognized as true, typical yellow fever.

The cases rapidly increasing, aroused the apprehensions of the Hon. Thomas Carson, mayor of Brownsville, who requested the medical men of the city to visit Matamoros, and determine what character of disease was prevailing.

The malarial complications so masked at that time the deadlier malady, that the report of the physicians allayed the fears that had been felt, and no barriers were erected until a telegram from Matamoros announced that a death had occurred from black vomit, and your Excellency directed that quarantine be established.

Corpus Christi, under the impression that Brownsville could not escape, if an infectious disease had existed so long in Matamoros, very wisely declared quarantine against both cities.

That aroused the indignation of the citizens of Brownsville, and the following telegram, addressed to the State Health Officer, was received on the thirtieth day of July:

"We are quarantined against, wrongfully; no sickness here. The disease prevailing in Matamoros pronounced by a majority of best physicians, non-contagious. We therefore ask that you come here, examine, and place us in the position to which we are entitled.

(Signed)

"THOMAS CARSON, *Mayor.*"

Immediately after receiving the above dispatch, in accordance with the law governing questions involving the justice of quarantines declared by one place against another, and in obedience to your order, I left for Brownsville. On the sixth of August, the day after my arrival, I telegraphed your Excellency that yellow fever was in Brownsville, and an epidemic impending.

Your special proclamation was then issued, and the border counties of Hidalgo, Starr, and Zapata, that had temporarily established quarantines, were embraced in it.

Doctor W. C. Fisher, of Galveston, was commissioned Health Officer, and placed in charge of Starr county guards, and Doctor J. A. Black, of Round Rock, given control of guards in Hidalgo county.

In the mean time, in response to an application from your Excellency, Dr. John B. Hamilton, Surgeon General of United States Marine Hospital Service, into whose hands had been committed the contingent fund of one hundred thousand dollars, appropriated by Congress "to be used in case of a threatened or actual epidemic, in aid of State and local boards, to prevent and suppress the spread of the same," ordered Robert D. Murray, Surgeon Marine Hospital Service, to Brownville, with instructions to confer with the State authorities in all measures to be taken for the suppression of the epidemic.

Dr. C. B. Combs, and later on, Dr. Wolff, was authorized to represent the State in the conferences referred to, and directed to co-operate with the Marine Hospital Service in all their efforts to invest the fever district, and confine the infection to its narrow boundaries. A double line of guards were stationed, one along the Arroyo Colorado, a stream encircling Brownsville on the east and north, and about thirty miles distant, and the other, organized and controlled by Dr. Arthur E. Spolm, acting assistant Surgeon, Marine Hospital Service, reached along the railway between Corpus Christi and Laredo.

The expenses of these extensive lines were necessarily great. September 30, the Marine Hospital Service had paid out twenty-six thousand eight hundred and fifty-five dollars, and the expenses, all told, up to the date that quarantine was raised, must have aggregated sixty-five or seventy thousand dollars.

Our own expenses were greatly in excess of any previous year, the deficiency being about twenty thousand dollars. A river front of five hundred miles to guard, with crossings anywhere and everywhere, required a little army to make it efficient. The good accomplished, however, can not be estimated by dollars and cents. The fact that the epidemic was confined to one place in Texas, while it desolated ranches and towns for hundreds of miles up the Rio Grande on the Mexican side, is strong evidence that the money was not squandered uselessly.

For the fortunate results attained, the State is greatly indebted to the valuable assistance given by the Marine Hospital Service.

The epidemics at Brownsville and Point Isabel were remarkably mild, the death rate at the first named place being only one hundred and fourteen in two thousand reported cases, and at the last, only three in thirty.

The first cases were unquestionably brought to both towns from Matamoros. The manner of its introduction into Matamoros will probably never be positively ascertained.

While in the city during the epidemic I endeavored to discover its origin, but I failed to do so. I could not entertain the opinion that the germs of the disease were indigenous, nor accept the generally received theory that it was brought overland by tramps from Tampico. The distance from Tampico to Matamoros is too great to be traveled by pedestrians during the incubative period, and it is highly improbable that the scanty and well ventilated wardrobes of these wandering footpads could be readily converted into fomites. No evidence was obtained, either, that yellow fever existed in Tampico prior to its first appearance in Matamoros. All things considered, and pre-eminently the fact that communications were uninterrupted via Bagdad and Vera Cruz with Havana, the chances are that the unknown factor in the make-up of epidemics was again imported from that city—*its great nidus*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGES IN THE LAW.

As to the workings of the present quarantine system, and the amendments that I think ought to be made, I respectfully submit—

1. That the several articles on quarantine be consolidated into one, and made clear and explicit, so that any ordinary intelligence can understand its meaning, as once recommended by your Excellency.

2. That all local quarantines declared by county or city authorities be required to obey the rules prescribed by the Governor. Without such a provision it is impossible to have concert of action. As it now is, one county can adopt rules to suit their peculiar ideas or prejudices, that conflict with those of the next county or city, and there is no power that can undo them. For instance, from five to ten days is the ordinary period considered necessary to hold one in quarantine, but if one of these local authorities, from fear, malice or ignorance, sees proper to extend the time to twenty, thirty or sixty days, he can do so, and the unfortunate prisoner has no higher tribunals to look to for relief.

3. That all quarantine officers, commissioned and paid by the State, should be appointed by the Governor and be under the direct and exclusive control of the Governor and his health officer. The State Health Officer would then be clothed with power commensurate with his great responsibilities, and local interests would not be paramount in opening and closing the gateways of commerce and infection.

4. An appropriation sufficiently large to have a contingent fund of a few thousand dollars, to be used, in case of an epidemic, to prevent its spread. I can see no special good in dividing the appropriation into two separate funds—one under the head of "Quarantine Buildings," and the other "For pay of officers and employees." Last year nearly five thousand dollars of the building fund was not expended, but it could not be touched to pay the two thousand dollar deficiency on the other appropriation. Thirty-five thousand dollars per annum—the amount usually given—*under one caption*, will, I think, meet all the probable requirements of next year.

With these changes, the present system will be materially improved. Local boards of health, and the State Board, if one is ever organized, will find ample and attractive fields for the exercise of their best minds in gathering vital statistics and directing sanitary improvements.

Small States, where the members of boards of health can be brought together in a few hours, can well assume quarantine duties, and spare time for the endless controversies that enliven their meetings, but a vast territory like ours, with an exposed border reaching from Denison to Sabine Pass, along the entire coast to Bazos Santiago, then up the Rio Grande to Laredo, can, I think, be more promptly and effectively defended by the State's chief executive.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

R. M. SWEARINGEN, M. D.

State Health Officer.

His Excellency, O. M. ROBERTS, Governor of Texas.



