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A HISTORY OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN NEW MEXICO

by Myrtle Greenfield

DURING its early years of statehood, New Mexico—with a population of a half a million people—had no public health department. Deaths from tuberculosis, influenza, smallpox and other infectious diseases were numerous, and epidemics were frequent. Beginning in 1919, when the first state department of public health was established, a few dedicated people, despite financial handicaps, lack of proper facilities, and difficulties encountered in bringing treatment to isolated communities, labored diligently and successfully to improve health conditions in the state.

The problems encountered in instituting a New Mexico Department of Public Health are thoroughly documented and described in this book. Numerous charts, graphs and tables augment the text. Not only does the author present the basic facts of the state's public health history, but intersperses her account with rich detail concerning the establishment of a public health laboratory (which she directed from its inception until her retirement in 1956), and a bureau of vital statistics, maternal and child care services, programs in dental and mental health and public health nursing, and sanitation services.

Budgetary problems and legislative acts bearing on public health are discussed fully, and comprehensive appendixes present pertinent letters, legislative acts, lists of personnel, and biographical material.

The author, "a keen observer, capable of self-criticism, and an inexhaustible pioneer worker," gives insight to the personal sacrifices made by numerous medical officials, doctors, legislators, nurses and laboratory technicians in order to bring New Mexico's public health services up to modern standards.

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