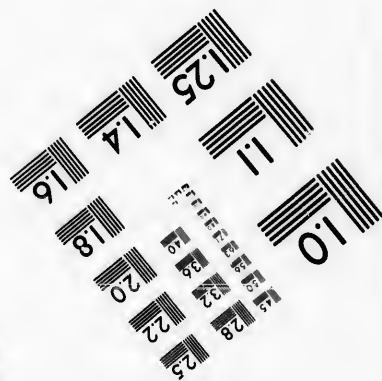
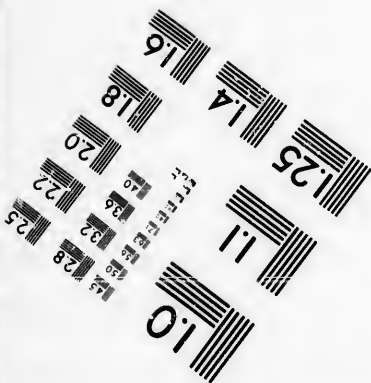
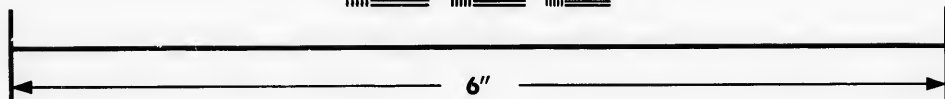
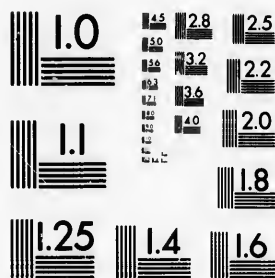


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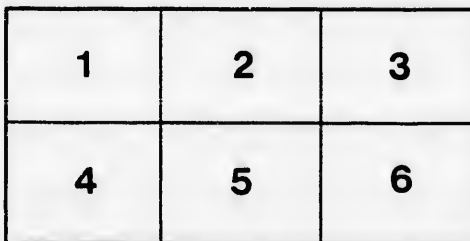
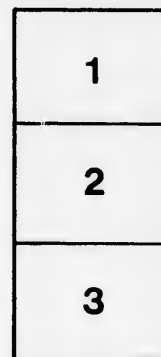
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**FINAL REPORT**  
**OF THE**  
**BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**OF QUEBEC.**  
*1849*

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*Class: Finances et Corporations.*

# FINAL REPORT

OF THE

## BOARD OF HEALTH

### OF QUEBEC.

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*By Mr. Sheriff Sewell, of the Committee appointed to collect facts connected with the existence of Asiatic Cholera, to form a foundation for the Final Report of the Local to the Central Board of Health, adopted by the Board on the 19th September, 1849 :—*

The Board of Health, for the City of Quebec, in bringing their labours to a termination; have naturally much that is painful to recal to the recollections of their fellow citizens, they have to mourn a large portion of individuals, whom the prosecution of their trade or profession had drawn hither temporarily, whether as sailors or traders, and who have fallen under the virulent influences of the epidemic, which has of late afflicted us.—Many too, who had left country kinsfolk, and friends, with the intention of settling among us, whose labours would have brought wealth to the country, who only reached their destination to receive the last offices of kindness from strangers, and to die among some of them, not even being permitted to see the country of their adoption and of their newly created hopes—while too many alas! are gone from among ourselves, who once ranked among our most enlighten-

ed, esteemed and useful citizens—and many of either sex swept, away whose absence will long be felt in their various circles, and whose unexpected and sudden removal is now being mourned by a cloud of bereaved relatives and friends—these are sad realities, to which the Board, in drawing public attention, would be criminally to blame, were they to omit the thankful acknowledgment of the mercy, which throughout this scourge, has tempered its severity, and given encouragement to many, even in the midst of its most sweeping desolations.

The Board of Health is an emanation from the City Corporation, having been called into existence through the powers of that body, and although formed very early in the season—long before the appearance of asiatic cholera—yet from the accidental circumstance of certain changes which were at the time under the consideration of Parliament, and which subsequently passed into law.—The Board, originally formed after having been kept in suspense for a considerable time, was prevented from going into action, and the present Board appointed to succeed it, did not come into operation until the very eve of the breaking out of the epidemic—this is not mentioned with any intention of charging blame on any body of men—none being chargeable, but, to shew that disease came upon us without adequate previous preparation for its reception, which the Board thinks it important to notice.

It is a matter of thankfulness that, although asiatic cholera cannot be stayed by any human endeavour, yet that its ravages may be mitigated by very simple precau-

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tionary measures within the reach of all communities—the cautious and moderate use of our ordinary food—cleanliness of body and habitation—warm clothing, pure air and healthy water—and the avoidance of any of the usually exciting causes of general malady and disorganization—these—it is not to be doubted, if generally attended to, would materially and favorably affect the bills of mortality—unfortunately, in cholera as in many other matters, the negligence and criminality of individuals does not involve only themselves in danger; a departure from temperance in food and drink, and a disregard of caution generally is fatal, it may be in the first instance where it is practised, but afterward the very accession of disease thus promoted—sometimes engendered by this negligence—spreads to other quarters, and the careful suffer with the negligent, the innocent with the guilty.

The Board purposely abstains from pronouncing any opinion on the contagion or non contagion of asiatic cholera, there is enough of uncertainty, in this question, which has occupied the attention and exercised the ingenuity of the leading and most enlightened members of the faculty, and everywhere a long and very scrutinizing examination has resulted in the practical persuasion of the propriety of the greatest precaution in all persons subjected to its influences, while it is most satisfactory to know that all the offices of christian kindness may be performed towards the afflicted with little danger from infection, and certainly with much less cause for fear than the performance of the same duties in other diseases,



whose extent of contagion or infection has been satisfactorily ascertained.

It became the duty of the Board of Health immediately on its appointment to cause the town to be thoroughly cleansed of surface dirt and filth--such as the removal of all accumulations of this nature from yards--wharves--closes of all sorts--to cause sewers to be cleansed which were found choked--to draw off all stagnant pools--by causing new drains to be opened where these were found to be absolutely required--and to cause to be filled up old wells which were in disuse, foundations of houses, holes and hollows of every description. The Board, moreover, was called upon to abate nuisances of a different kind, such as the closing up and removal of slaughter houses, whose garbage not being carried off by the ebb and flow of the tide were found to be in this particular infringement of the law. Styes kept in close and confined situations, where hogs were kept for fattening and slaughter, whose emanations were most pestiferous and dangerous to life--cess pools, sinks, and privies, which from want of drainage were occasioning noxious vapours and poisonous miasms and smells, the destruction of the old bedding and clothing of the sick and dead, all this came under surveillance of the Board, and required a firm and uncompromising spirit, and a determination not to allow the interested representations of individuals to prevail against the unbiassed judgment of the Board.

The Board early appointed visiting physicians in each of the wards of the City to visit poor patients at their houses and to keep open,

at all times, Rooms or Shops lighted up during the night where every person attacked by incipient disease might at once be furnished with those medicines, which have been found efficacious in multitudes of cases in arresting the disease when taken in that early stage of its existence.—This plan—not their own—the board has found most beneficial, and they may add most humane. It relieved many a poor man from the distractions of doubt and anxiety; he felt, that if attacked with a disease whose termination he knew to be fearfully rapid he might at once apply for relief and this while medical assistance was available. It kept hope alive within him. In some means it prevented the fatal insanity of looking to spirituous liquors as hope of refuge and above all it taught the, all-important lesson to be learned in times of epidemic—the *inestimable value of immediate application for relief*; the time which would otherwise have been consumed in useless, if not dangerous contention on the necessity of relief, was profitably taken up (in very many cases to the salvation of life) in hastening to the Board's Physicians—and this made all the difference—many a man if he had been required to pay for relief thus furnished, would have delayed to procure it, until it was unavailable.

The Board from the commencement of its labours would willingly have multiplied the number of the visiting Physicians until not a family was left without medical inspection and surveillance but actuated as it has been by the strictest economy consonant with safety and a desire to husband to the utmost the funds so liberally put at us disposal, it

found it imposible to carry out its views any further on this head.

The intimate knowledge which the prosecution of these labours forced upon the Board, induced it under the conviction that the epidemic exhibited more of virulence here than elsewhere within the Province, to appoint a Sub-Committe specially to consider the causes to which this might be assigned, the results of the laborers of that Committee have been published in two reports and the Board takes this opportunity of re-iterating its acquiescence in their recommendation—*Drainage and pure water* ; these, the Board considers the indispensable elements of future health, these must be obtained, before any well grounded hope of immunity can be entertained—without these and until they are procured, come what may in the shape of epidemic—impure water will ever be found most destructive to life from its well known property of absorbing Gases of all kinds and thereby becoming a vehicle of poison, which the impurity of the atmosphere will ever be found attractive of its influences, and the health of the inhabitants will all the more rapidly succumb to its power, it may in the first instance fasten on individuals of dissipated and filthy habits, living in houses built over stagnant pools or subject to noisome and noxious vapours the victims of spirituous liquors, and those poisoned by impure and unhealthy water, but from them it will spread its desolations to every section of the town and to every portion of its inhabitants—it being a well known Law of Epidemics and of Asiatic Cholera in particular that in proportion to its ravages and until its virulence

be expended, its poison becomes more and more obnoxious to life, its ravages more general and precaution less available.

It is not pretended that the want of drainage and pure water, all important as these are, constitute the sole attributable causes for the aggravation of this disease in Quebec—there are others and as legitimate which may be assigned, some arising naturally out of her position, others which the Board regret to say, they consider disgraceful to her and at variance with the character she has hitherto sustained for peace and good order.

It must not be forgotten that Quebec is a large Port filled to overflowing during the summer months with sailors, emigrants, raftsmen and farmers, the latter drawn hitherto by trade and in the view of supplying the large floating surplus population.—These congregate in ill ventilated houses which are filled with excess, riot, drunkenness and debauchery of every kind are to be found here, and in times of Epidemic, diseases and death as surely follow—added to these causes, during this season there have been additional and unwonted reasons for the spread of disease. The Epidemic has been materially increased by the mutinous conduct of sailors and others, first in the destruction of the shipping-office and all the consequent drunkenness excitement and want of precaution, and next in the demolition of the interior of the Custom House, which building had been given up by the Corporation to the Board of Health and was about to be made a Hospital and refuge for patients recovering from cholera. Had the plan of the Board been allowed to have been

carried into effect, how much of disease might have been arrested in its incipient stages? How many lives saved whose only hope was speedy medical assistance? How many have died from exhaustion while being carried from the Coves to the Marine Hospital, from sheer exposure to a hot sun or rain, who if a place of refuge had been at hand might have found relief and been here now living instances of the precaution and humanity of the scheme? It is pitiable to think of the suffering which has been caused by these rash and ill judged proceedings, many who were known to have been active participators in both these acts of folly and of crime, are themselves to be counted among the victims of cholera.—Nor can it be deemed any thing else than deplorable that in the nineteenth century and in a city having any pretensions to civilization, such profound ignorance should have prevailed.

It has been urged in mitigation of the conduct of these misguided men, that they acted from *fear*!! Fear is but too apt to lead astray, but almost any passer by if consulted might have pointed to the pages of some respectable author where the well authenticated fact was stated, that a Hospital in times of Epidemic is a cause of safety rather than of danger, and had they consulted the Board they would have been furnished with undoubted evidence of the fact, that in 1832 and 1834 notwithstanding the unavoidable hurry and confusion which the Hospitals of those days exhibited, the immediate neighbourhood was favored with an almost perfect immunity from disease, and that it was only on the decline of the Epidemic that a few

cases appeared in their vicinities.—As the matter now stands the perpetrators of those deeds must bear as best they may the imputations of being the immediate cause of the death of many of their relations and friends, and far from benefitting themselves, they are rendered the objects of derision and contempt.

As a matter of importance to the health of the city, and one immediately connected with the subject matter under investigation, it may not be improper to mention two objects well worthy the attention of the City Corporation, the Board alludes to the state of the beaches of the city, but more particularly (as already reported) to the *Cul de Sac* and the *Palais* harbours; they are the receptacles of filth, into these flow all the impurities of the town, the offal of its slaughter houses and all the contents of its sewerage, and yet strange as it may appear it is here and almost here alone whence the thick and turbid water is taken for the use of our inhabitants, were it required of us to remove these sources of sickness and of death at some costly expenditure of time and money it would be no safe or satisfactory plea to urge the expence and the tedious nature of the work; but even this plea weak as it would be, is taken from us for it so happens that both of these spots may be converted at a comparatively small expence into sources of profit and emolument to the city; the one by its conversion into a market or some other useful improvements, the other into a tidal harbour; much opposition has been offered to one of these improvements and much may be expected, but the

Board ventures to predict the speedy accomplishment of these great and useful works at no distant day, and, notwithstanding the strenuous endeavours from partizan and interested motives to prevent this consummation, and when this is accomplished, Quebec will be in a position to boast of as convenient and central a market as any town can show in or out of the province, and a tidal harbour unrivalled, the board believes for security and accommodation either as regards depth of water or the nature of the bottom, on which the small trade and river craft have to rest at low water, these would be no uncertain speculations but works which from the moment of their completion would not only be of priceless value as sources of health to the city, but highly remunerative and putting a large and increasing revenue at the command of our city rulers for civic wants and improvements. Of the revenue which would accrue to the city can there be a single doubt, when the number of boats, are looked at, all crowded and huddled together, exposed to be broken up, and continually broken up by wind, their owners selling large produce without paying any market tax, while the wharves are covered with hucksters and traders of all kinds who coming from a distance sell to the prejudice of those who pay for market room. The rapidly increasing extent of the coasting trade and of the sale of vegetables and other market produce coming from a distance is worthy the serious consideration of our city rulers; now it is to be remembered it brings no revenue whatever to us; how it may be made a source of emolument and to

a very considerable degree has been pointed out.

The value which may be attached to the labours of a Board of Health will ever be proportioned to the means put at their disposal and to the period of time permitted them to labour *previous to the appearance of disease of an epidemic nature*. The safety of a town cannot be supposed to depend even remotely on any hastily appointed Board collected on the very verge of sickness, it is only by continuous well directed persevering efforts in times of health and prosperity that any preparation can be made for epidemic sickness and the introduction of foreign malady and danger, particularly of so formidable, so relentless, so destroying a disease as Asiatic Cholera—if these premises are founded in truth, this is the time for preparation, we know not how soon it may be among us again. It was only two years after Asiatic Cholera first visited us in 1832 that it returned and so far as our citizens were sufferers with increased violence; who will say that in 1850 or 51 we shall not be visited again? who will assert that it may not become endemic? and who can doubt the wisdom of being prepared so far as human suggestion and foresight may avail to meet it? and it may be to mitigate by wise precautionary measures its virulence and its ravages.

By reference to the accompanying accounts of the Board, it will be found with how much economy they have acted, their total expenditure amounts to £862 19s. 8d., while the amount expended for drainage, cleaning the town is £262 18s. 10d., which having



been expended for permanent improvements of the city or for cleaning, &c., may now properly be considered as belonging to the ordinary city expenditure and what was done being essentially necessary to the well being of the particular localities relieved, would have been required, the cholera had not made its appearance this last June, therefore being deducted from the total amount of the Board's expenditure leaves a Balance of £600 0s. 10d., which may be considered as the total pecuniary cost to the city, arising out of the appearance of Asiatic Cholera in the present year, 1848.

The Board of Health might perhaps here close their report, suggestive measures of improvement for the future, not falling so immediately within their Province.—Still, however, as forming, during their existence a component part of the City Council (being in fact a Sub-Committee of that body) they may well be supposed to have an interest in the welfare of the city, it may be permitted them to say that no surer way of mitigating disease of an epidemic nature can be suggested than the adoption of the various improvements which from time to time have been successfully introduced among all thickly populated districts; improvements which have done so much to elevate the poorer classes. The board need scarcely enumerate the building of houses for the poor into which many modern comforts of modern growth are to be found, improved sewerage of which the value may be judged by the stress laid upon it, in any one of the many works or reports on this branch of domestic comfort, the abundant supplies of

water given to the poor at a rate within their means the great luxury of public Baths—of which till very lately the people of England were ignorant, but are now reaping the benefit and the pleasure, public wash houses with a great variety of other important improvements.—These may not all be within our reach at the moment but many might be advantageously introduced at once and others would follow in rapid succession, and it may here be added, although it is not the intention of the Board to particularize any of those or other improvements nor to offer any special suggestions of prominent prevention which it considers more especially to belong to the Corporation, yet it cannot permit this opportunity to pass off without impressing on that body and the public generally, the necessity for the thorough inspection of the wharves, closes, yards of the city after the opening of the Spring, when their places are almost always found to need cleaning from the accumulated dirt of the winter.

If public attention could only once be turned to these matters, many mountain obstacles would dwindle to nothing before an energetic determination to overcome them—not a modern improvement could be introduced among us which would not eventuate here as elsewhere in an accession of wealth to the City. Of all formidable undertakings in the eyes of our citizens, that of introducing Gas appeared the most gigantic and the furthest beyond the means of our quiet-loving citizens, and yet Gas came at last almost unsolicited and without an effort, and men now look on their indolent fears and wonder at their want of energy. Gas, it is admitted on

all hands, will give a handsome return to the spirited promoters of it. Water, so essential to health and life, would give a far greater return. An increased interest in civic affairs would be materially beneficial as increasing the economy of the governing body and giving life and energy to its movements. Were the city improvements carried on with energy and in accordance with modern modes of doing business, and the principles of taxation somewhat altered, there is no doubt but our City Rulers would soon find an increase of power and money at their command, and citizens of every grade would feel the benefit which would accrue to them from these changes, not as regards their financial welfare alone (of that we are not enquiring now,) but in what is of vastly greater importance their health and that of their relatives and friends; and we should soon be put in the way of obtaining all those modern improvements, of which mention has been made, and which almost every town in Europe and America now possesses, while we with folded arms are groaning under the magnitude of our supposed liabilities and in want, the meanwhile, of the very elements of social comfort.

The board rejoices in being permitted to add in conclusion, that the almost total disappearance of asiatic cholera has enabled it in the exercise of a sound discretion so far to break up its establishment as to cease its daily meetings, for the future, and to incur no further expense with the exception of the payment of a Health Inspector at a reduced rate. Keeping itself, however, so far organised that at any moment, should it be unhappily

required, at the call of the President it, can re-enter on its duties without a moments delay and with whatever efficiency it has manifested during its operations.

JOS. MORRIN,  
President.

F. X. GARNEAU,  
Secretary.

GENERAL STATEMENT of Disbursements of the Board of Health of the City of Quebec, from the 5th of July, the day in which Asiatic Cholera broke out, to this date :—

The Committee of Audit have examined the expences of the Board from the commencement, and find that the Expenditure of the Board has amounted to £862 19s. 8d. Currency.

The expenditure may be classed as follows :—

|  |      |    |    |
|--|------|----|----|
| Paid to Secretary, Visiting Physicians,<br>Health Officer and Two Assistants.  | £393 | 1  | 0  |
| Caleche Hire.....  | 9    | 0  | 0  |
| Coffins for the Dead.....  | 30   | 12 | 0  |
| For disinfecting medicines.....  | 6    | 1  | 6  |
| White Washing.....   | 1    | 2  | 0  |
| For Printing.....  | 11   | 14 | 1  |
| Paid to persons whose clothing & bedding were burnt by order of Board,   | 8    | 1  | 9  |
| Stationery.....  | 1    | 18 | 6  |
| For treatment and care of citizens sent to the Marine Hospital, including £45 9s. 2d. for the burial of the dead amongst them..... | 92   | 10 | 10 |
| Miscellaneous disbursements.....   | 20   | 19 | 2  |
| House Rent and Refuge House.....   | 25   | 0  | 0  |
|  | £600 | 0  | 10 |

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Repairs of Streets, Drains, &c., done<br>by the Road Department of the Cor-<br>poration on the order of the Board<br>of Health..... | 262 18 10        |
| Total.....  | <u>£862 19 8</u> |

Audited and Certified to be correct,  
 (Signed) WILLIAM SEWELL, } Auditors.  
           JOSEPH LEGARE, }  
 Quebec, 19th September, 1849.

STATEMENT shewing the number of persons  
 who have died of Cholera in the City and  
 Banlieu of Quebec, from the breaking out  
 of the disease to this day :—

|                                |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Men, including 99 sailors..... | 569          |
| Women.....                     | 294          |
| Children, male.....            | 95           |
| Do. female.....                | 76           |
|                                | <u>1,034</u> |

Out of that number 32 were emigrants.  
 Quebec, 19th September, 1849.

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95

96

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