

Public health was primarily public sanitation, particularly with regard to clean water and the disposal of sewage. It was the crowded housing conditions and the lack of adequate sewage treatment which caused epidemics and other public health conditions.¹²⁷ The great cholera outbreak of 1866 had prompted the appointment of a permanent Board of Health in 1867, but as a public agency it too was tainted by corruption.¹²⁸ Similarly, reform efforts to establish a mental hospital for the insane ran up against the well entrenched forces of political corruption.¹²⁹

The debates over the treatment of venereal disease, especially syphilis, which was fatal, communicable and incurable until after World War I when penicillin became available, was not just a question of public health, but a debate along moral and religious lines. Af-

down town or on the South Side, the colored families were in the district, moving in just ahead of the prostitutes. . . . A former Chief of Police gave out a semi-official statement to the effect that so long as this degenerate group of persons ["prostitutes, cadets and thugs"] confined their residence district west of Wabash avenue and east of Wentworth avenue they would not be apprehended. This part of the city is the largest residence section of colored families

THE VICE COMM'N OF CHI., *supra* note 6, at 38. The Report includes details on the amounts of money received and charged, based upon court cases and from the "Police Lists." *Id.* at 106-107.

¹²⁷For example,

Cottages which had formerly housed single families were now packed with a family in each room. A house-to-house check of Chicago's fourteenth ward in 1881 showed that 18,976 persons were sheltered in 1,107 dwellings; significantly this ward suffered that same year the highest mortality from infectious diseases. Health Commissioner De Wolf attributed the popularity of saloons to the comfort found there by workers and their older sons, since their dwellings—usually kitchen, living, and sleeping room all in one—did not afford even standing room for a whole family. The census of 1880 revealed the number of tenement dwellers to be about equal to the number of foreign-born. . . . No public regulation of housing in Chicago was undertaken until 1880; in fact, despite terrible conditions, there was very little that could be done.

BONNER, *supra* note 28, at 23.

¹²⁸"In view of decades of close-range experience with corrupt political mismanagement of local public health agencies, the reluctance of Chicago physicians to warmly endorse the expansion of government into medicine is not surprising." *Id.* at 176.

¹²⁹Bonner continues,

Almost from the outset [of the establishment of a separate facility for the insane in the poor-house] the good intentions of the promoters of the new asylum were frustrated and corrupted by political knavery. As at the County Hospital, the staff of the asylum enjoyed a bounteous liquor supply. Maintenance funds were grossly mismanaged; needed drugs and foods were denied the medical attendants, the responsible position of ward attendant was filled by political appointees whose coarse brutalities went unnoticed in an insane asylum.

Id. at 168. The appointment of the head of the hospital was approved by the political boss, Michael McDonald, and the abuses were not stopped because a nearby saloon business thrived on the traffic from the hospital. A reform doctor who sought a hearing regarding some of the more extreme abuses was shot at through his window at the hospital. *Id.* at 170.