

Baltimore's Effort For Healthier Babies Through Bureau Of Child Hygiene

City Health Department, Through Dr. Mary Sherwood, Dr. Mary Cook Willis And Staff Of Enthusiastic Nurses, Is Doing Wonders In Training Of Mothers In Care Of Their Children—Daily Clinic At Bureau Where Mothers Are Told How To Care For Their Little Ones.

By EMILY EMERSON LANTZ
THE Baltimore genealogist of today seeking to trace a Maryland family's lineage to colonial days often finds the road to accurate birth and death records a thorny and faintly outlined path. Tradition lacks authority; family Bibles are not always available; scattered parish records, the land grant, the will, the tombstone inscription, must be depended upon for piecing together the uncertain family tree and occasionally an ancient gravestone bears the words "legitimate son of," etc., showing that even in pioneer days men felt the importance of handing down to posterity proof of the lawful right of descendants to bear their name and inherit their possessions.

The recent drafting of thousands of men, Americans, for military service, emphasized the necessity for more complete birth registration than has hitherto prevailed. It is always important, and sometimes absolutely necessary, that a man shall be able to prove his age and citizenship; his right to avail himself of public school facilities; his right to go to work at the age that the law allows; his right to an inheritance, his right to marry without consent of parents or guardians, his right to hold office, to secure passports for foreign travel and to prove his mother's right to a widow's pension if she is eligible for such emolument.

Another thing, medical examination necessitated in mustering the masculine youth of the United States into military service during the recent war, proved that this country had 8,000,000 men between the ages of 18 and 45 years who were physically sub-standard and unfit to fight for their country in a modern war. This discovery through army medical examiners, greatly emphasizes the vital necessity of a new, systematic and permanent plan of public health education under municipal direction to obtain accurate information regarding what is literally a life-and-death matter and to conserve and build up the physical fitness of the American people.

All Births Now Registered.
The Baltimore genealogist of the future will have a less arduous task than his predecessors. The law, in fact, now requires that a baby's birth be reported by physician, nurse or whoever is in attendance, to the health officer or town clerk who reports it to the State Board of Health. The parents then receive, from the Health Department of Baltimore, a birth receipt card stating that the birth of the child has been officially registered. If this receipt card is not promptly received, the parents may know that the law in regard to the registration of their child's birth has not been complied with, and should hasten to report the birth themselves.

Again the present law of Maryland has safeguarded the welfare of the new-born child by making it unlawful for a mother to be separated from her infant either voluntarily or by compulsion, until six months after the child's birth.

The Babies' Own Bureau.
But Baltimore is doing still more to establish the identity of the child, to educate parents to the proper care of it and to safeguard its condition up to its tenth year, when the public school system in a way becomes every child's municipal guardian.

This was done by the organization within the past year of the Bureau of Child Hygiene, under the Health Department of the city of Baltimore. Of this Dr. Mary Sherwood is the chief and Dr. Mary Cook Willis her assistant, and they are aided in their work by a staff of 12 experienced nurses.

The establishment of the bureau was due primarily to the very evident need in Baltimore of such a department of municipal work and to the interest and cooperation of Dr. William Travis Howard, of the School of Hygiene and Public Health. Dr. Raymond Pearl, also of the School of Hygiene and Public Health of Johns Hopkins University, has been uniting in efforts to devise simple yet comprehensive card codes that minimize the labor of registering official data, yet which include all essential details of information. As soon as a birth is registered at the Health Department and the certificate of birth made out such certificate before filing, is passed on to the desk of Dr. Sherwood, who assigns further research and duty pertaining to that child to the nurse in charge of the district in which the birth occurs.

As soon as possible, this nurse then pays a visit both official and friendly, to the mother of the child. Upon a little code card she jots down, not only all the essential facts concerning the birth and sex of the baby, its parentage, their ages, occupations, etc., of the parents, but also enough of the family history and nationality to make a most valuable record. Housing conditions are stated, light, space, air and whether the child is breast fed, or fed upon cow's milk or canned milk and what the results of the nourishment given. If death occurs, the nurse ascertains the cause. She also notes any congenital defects, malformations or accidents of birth. Her advice and interest may become a most potent factor in the life of both mother and child because having classified the home as belonging to one of several groups, she endeavors to improve the condition of such as need her supervising care. In touch with the Instructive Visiting Nurse Association, the Babies' Milk Fund Association, the Henry Watson Children's Aid Society, the Hebrew Children's Bureau, the Mount Wilson Sanatorium, the Johns Hopkins University of Maryland, Maryland General and Hebrew Hospitals and other agencies for public welfare, she can do much to make the baby's journey in life begin under the happiest possible auspices.

Standardize Boarding Homes.
One important feature of the work under the special supervision of Dr. Mary Cook Willis is the standardization of all boarding places licensed to take babies and young children to board. These must measure up to hygienic standard in the matter of sanitation, air, space, cleanliness, correct appliances for taking care of babies, suitable cribs, beds, porches, outdoor space. All these

essential things are considered and when it is realized that the license has this year been revoked of a baby caretaker who crowded 14 children into one room of 10 by 9 feet, it will be realized how essential such supervision, with power to act, is to the health of the city.

The bureau has inaugurated a most important educational health work in the establishment of several small prenatal clinics where mothers may go before children are born to advise with the physician concerning care of themselves and preparation for the coming of the little stranger, whose future health and happiness is so dependent upon the mother's physical condition. Here they are taught the vital importance to the baby of being fed with milk from the mother's breast, since out of 195 babies that died in Baltimore during last July, only 11 were breast fed. Modified cow's milk is regarded by the bureau as the best substitute for mother's milk, as it most resembles mother's milk in composition and contains the vitamins which are essential to child growth and development. Condensed milk and substitute foods are not recommended. These, it is considered, do not promote the best growth and development of the child.

Mothers are encouraged to bring their babies regularly, whether sick or well, to clinics established by the Bureau of Child Hygiene or to the welfare stations of the Babies' Milk Fund that they may be weighed and their physical condition intelligently watched over.

The bureau intended to start a welfare center in Northwest Baltimore during the past summer, but found it absolutely impossible to find a house suitable for specific needs. There is now a small clinic established at McCulloh and Baker streets, another at Locust Point and a small pre-natal clinic in South Baltimore General Hospital with a resident woman physician in charge who several times weekly conducts the clinics and also attends women in confinement at their homes.

Since the bureau was established on February 1, 1919, and up to November 1, 1921 babies, born within the year in Baltimore city, have been visited by the physicians or nurses of the bureau. The largest number of deaths, occurring in children under 2 years of age, are from congenital debility, premature birth and from acute gastro-intestinal affections, while under 1 years of age the greatest number die of acute bronchitis and pneumonia and acute gastro-intestinal diseases. Fewer of the negro race are found to die of gastro enteritis and more colored babies are maternally nursed. However, more colored than white babies die of bronchial pneumonia. The death rate among the children of American parents is not so high as among the foreign born. Gastro enteritis is the cause of death among many children of foreign nationalities.

Personnel Of Bureau.

Dr. Mary Sherwood, chief of the Bureau of Child Hygiene, has long been identified with the municipal affairs of Baltimore, and, because of her interest in and experience with child welfare and her untiring efforts for better obstetrics in this city, is peculiarly qualified to develop the department of which she is the head. She is a graduate of Vassar College and of the medical school of the University of Zurich, Switzerland. Dr. Sherwood has for years been the physician to Bryn Mawr School and has served on many municipal boards. She was appointed by Mayor Hooper one of the trustees of the poor and by Mayor Hayes upon the Public Bath Commission, where she still serves. She is on the board of Mount Wilson Sanatorium and a member of the Babies' Milk Fund Association. She was also one of the original members of the Child Hygiene Association.

Dr. Mary Cook Willis is a Baltimore physician of wide experience and unusual executive ability. She is a graduate of the Woman's Medical College of Baltimore and was resident physician of the Good Samaritan Hospital. She was resident physician of the Barre Street Dispensary and for four years physician of the Florence Crittenden Home, also of the Northwest City Medical Agency, and she is now physician to the Maryland Industrial School for Girls.

Ten efficient nurses are the links between babies and the chief of the Bureau of Child Hygiene and her assistant. They are nurses carefully chosen because of their experience and suitability for the work and most of them have a saving sense of humor that enables them to pursue with cheerfulness an exceedingly arduous vocation. Some unofficial item of humorous nature usually enlivens official reports at the conclusion of the day's work, as, when securing data in a suburban district, a nurse ran frequently across such startling information as this:

"Occupation of father—invalid."
"Occupation of mother—spinster."
Time and again the word spinster occurred and the worker thought a wave of immorality was gripping the locality, until she discovered that the mothers were married women, employed in cotton mills

at spinning, which is occupationally designated as "spinster."

Another nurse, warning a mother against a food she was substituting for her baby in place of breast feeding or modified cow's milk, received from the mother the indignant response: "Why, I have fed 10 babies on that food and only lost eight of them."

A nurse striving to make a wan mother and her infant comfortable observed that the children were hilariously rolling a loaf of bread from end to end of the adjoining kitchen floor. She asked permission to stop them, which was granted, with the weary remark: "But what better can you expect on wash day?"

A visiting nurse praised a little Italian baby. "You lik-a dat bubee?" asked the mother, and without waiting for an answer, thrust it into the nurse's arms, saying: "You tak-a dat baby. Gotta nuke!"

"You know we just love Mutt and Jeff in the comic page of THE SUN," said one young mother joyously, "so we have named the baby Cicero."

The bureau has devised a code that most specially classifies female occupations both for women whose work is entirely at home and who receive, or do not receive, money compensation for their services and wage-earning women who work away from home. This code recognizes the housewife as a woman with a distinctive vocation. She is not classed, as formerly, as a woman, "without occupation," but as a woman with a most engrossing occupation, that of house-keeping.

Dr. Sherwood has recently called a meeting of physicians and heads of benevolent agencies in Baltimore to confer in regard to the standardizing of boarding homes for babies and children and will shortly call a meeting of representatives of institutions in which babies and children are received with reference to the co-operation of the Bureau of Child Hygiene in reference to foundlings and children under three years of age who are committed to them.