

## Guide to the **Public Health Collection**

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### **Collection Number V-15-1-7**

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*See also:*  
Cayuga Lake Levels and Typhoid Fever Report V-64-2-3  
1918 Influenza Epidemic Collection V-63-7-7  
1918 Influenza Research Collection V-64-4-2  
COVID-19 Pandemic Collection V-65-3-7

#### COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

New York State passed temporary legislation in 1832 requiring the establishment of local boards of health in municipalities throughout the state. By 1850 the law was made permanent, but Ithaca had already established its first board of health in 1831. Tompkins County established a Health District in 1947 and named Dr. William Spring as its first Health Commissioner. At that time Ithaca closed its health office and all public health services from then on have been run at the county level.

This collection contains materials on general public health matters, including county health department annual reports, and information on health legislation at the local and state level. It also contains materials on one of Ithaca's most devastating health emergencies, the typhoid epidemic of 1903. In a population of around 13,000, almost 1,400 cases of typhoid were reported in a period of only three months in that year. Eighty-two people died, a disproportionate number of them Cornell University students. It was one of the worst outbreaks that ever occurred in New York State and attracted national attention, provoking editorials in newspapers and magazines throughout the country, including McClure's Magazine and the New York Times. A New York State Health Department expert, Dr. George Soper, was sent to investigate the crisis, and a number of critical reforms were made.

## CONTAINER LIST

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Ithaca Board of Health and general public health information (1888-1938)	1
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“Sending Their Sons into Danger: Cornell University and the Ithaca Typhoid Epidemic of 1903” <i>New York History</i> – July 1997, and 1988 version	4
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### **Box 2**

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