

Story 1: Texas Public Health Laboratory Celebrating 90 years of Excellence

Ninety years and counting! While the Bureau of Laboratories was officially established in 1928, there were several public health milestones that led to its creation.

In the early to mid-1800s, Texas was hit by epidemics of cholera, small pox, and yellow fever. During this time, camp fire tales were told about odd animal behavior, which are now attributed to rabies. It was becoming evident that public health measures were necessary!

In 1896, the Texas State Health Officer requested \$2,000 per year to hire a chemist to analyze drinking water and a bacteriologist to perform microscopy on bacteriological specimens. This was the beginning of public health testing in Texas. The early 1900's the Pasteur Institute of Texas was created to aid in the diagnosis of rabies in pets and other animals. The Pure Food Commission was also established to analyze food. In 1912, an official Bacteriology Laboratory was established and 1,082 tests were performed that year.

A consolidation of the Pasteur Institute of Texas, Texas Dairy and Food Commission, and the Bacteriology Laboratory led to the created Texas of the Bureau of Laboratories. The newfound bureau was located in a new two story, red brick building at 5th and Trinity Streets in downtown Austin. Over time, the laboratory grew in specimen volume, budget, and even building size. By 1946, the laboratory processed 160,324 specimens annually and had an operating budget of \$200,000. By 1998, the laboratory processed nearly 1.5 million specimens each year! By 2003, the laboratory relocated to a new, seven story in central Austin facility to begin its next chapter of history.

1928

The Bureau of Laboratories Created a two story building located in downtown Austin

1936

Licensed by NIH to make vaccines (typhoid, rabies, tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis)

1945

Additional story added to downtown lab building

1958

Dedication ceremony for new public health buildings on 49th and Lamar

1965

Bill passed to start phenylketonuria (PKU) testing inception of today's Newborn Screening Program

1971

DSHS Lab stopped vaccine production

1983

Newborn Screening Program required 2nd screen for Texas babies

1985

Texas Newborn Screening Program acquire first automated "robot" first of its kind in public health

1995

Microbiology lab implemented pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) for E. coli one of four labs in the US selected

2002

DSHS Lab created the Emergency Preparedness Branch to respond to anthrax attacks

Stay Tuned for Part 2 of 2

For years 2003—2018

Interested in a topic? Let us know! Please write to us at Laboratorian@dshs.texas.gov to submit your questions.