

PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS

A NEWSLETTER OF THE PUBLIC
HEALTH MUSEUM



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Public Health Loses a Champion

HELEN MELTZER

September 14, 1919 – August 19, 2016



We were saddened with the passing of Helen Ann (Fuchs) Meltzer in August, 2016. During her long tenure as the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA), ending in 1987, her accomplishments were many. Myron Allukian, Jr. described her as the “foundation and soul of MPHA.” But her legacy does not end with the MPHA.

In 1990, Helen Meltzer, as chair of the Massachusetts Public Health Association Centennial History Committee, worked with Chester R. Kennedy, Jr., Chair of the Committee for the Massachusetts Public Health Museum, Education and Resource Center to seek support of “Friends of Public Health” in establishing a Museum in the old Administration Building of Tewksbury Hospital. Helen served as Treasurer for the Committee and as Treasurer for the Public Health Museum in Massachusetts when it opened September 30, 1994. She continued as Treasurer through 2003, was vice president for the year 2004, and then continued on the Board of Directors of the Museum through 2011.

To learn more about Helen Meltzer’s contributions to public health, see the [MPHA web site](#).

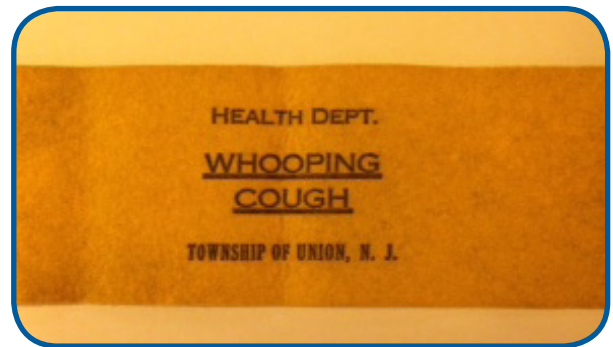
A Small Yellow Band Provides a Glimpse into the Past

The Public Health Museum is a stopping place for many orphaned items related to public health such as books, pictures, photos, official reports, ledgers and objects. Public health agencies, historical societies, medical libraries and individuals are our usual donors. Being curious and preservationists of history we seldom say no despite limited space and manpower. Such was the case when Bob Marcus brought us his Whooping Cough Arm Band. He had never worn it nor had he ever had whooping cough, but had kept it in his possession for decades hoping to find a home for it. He heard about the Public Health Museum and wondered if we would like to have it. He came to the right place.

The bacteria that causes whooping cough, *Bordetella pertussis*, was isolated in 1906 by the Belgian scientists Jules Bordet and Octave Gengou. The pertussis bacteria produces toxins that paralyze respiratory cells leading to laryngeal swelling and a severe cough with the characteristic “whoop” as the victim inhales.

In an article published in *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* of November 16, 1916, John Lovett Morse, M.D. advocated the requirement of infected children to wear an arm-band of some prescribed color and labeled “whooping cough,” in large letters. It would allow careful parents to keep their children away and to exclude the infected from public places. Dr. Morse thought that even children who had been exposed to whooping cough should wear a band and that children who failed to observe the quarantine regulations should “be at once sent to the hospital by the public authorities, no matter what their circumstances or social position.”

As you can see by the photo, the arm band was issued by the Health Department of Union, New Jersey. We were unable to determine when this occurred in Union. We do know, as reported in *Popular Mechanics*, January, 1916, in Newark, NJ, a health ordinance was issued making it mandatory that every child under 10 years of age and infected with whooping cough, wear an arm band indicating the fact. The official arm band in Newark had a yellow background with a design in the form of a Maltese cross printed in black on the yellow. Within the cross the words “Whooping Cough” appeared in large letters, as well as “Newark Health Department.” The band was to be worn for a period of six weeks and “the parent who [failed] to carry out the ruling [was] subject to court action.”



A vaccine for whooping cough became available in the U.S. in 1943. The scientists Pearl Kendrick and Grace Eldering of Western Michigan State Laboratory in Grand Rapids, are credited with developing the vaccine. They were assisted by local pediatricians and the children of Grand Rapids in clinical trials, which began during an outbreak in 1932, that helped prove the efficacy of the vaccine.

Before the vaccine and the advent of antibiotics there were 250,000 cases of whooping cough per year in the US with 10,000 deaths, usually in children less than 10 years of age. Today whooping cough persists as a global problem with 50 million cases annually in undeveloped countries, usually in the very young or very old. There are still outbreaks of whooping cough every few years in the U.S., with about 30 deaths reported annually. Despite a very high rate of vaccination for pertussis, there are some pitfalls. Immunity wears off, doses for vaccination can be missed, or infection can occur before the first vaccination. Newborns are particularly at risk as vaccination for pertussis cannot begin until age 2 months. If an unvaccinated baby is suspected of having the disease, all persons coming in contact with the child will be treated prophylactically with antibiotics. The pediatrician is mandated to alert local public health officials of the incident to prevent an outbreak.

Mr. Marcus, thank you for sharing your Arm Band and inspiring an interesting review of public health history!

By Mary Ferguson and Linda Perry

PH Museum Success in 2016 and More to Come in 2017

On November 16th the Public Health Museum held its annual meeting summarizing 2016 activities and announcing plans for 2017. Activities in 2016 saw successful partnerships between the PH Museum and community partners, continued high school training opportunities, progress towards improving the physical space at the Museum and a starring role for the Museum in an upcoming film. 2017 will bring an expanded exhibit to the Museum and the 5th year of Outbreak, a week-long interactive learning experience to introduce high school students to the opportunities available for careers in public health, as well as a redesign of the Museum web site. We look forward to an exciting new year at the Museum.

See the following link to an article about the Museum from the *Tewksbury Town Crier*.
[Public Health Museum Year in Review](#)



The Public Health Museum was honored to have Dr. Monica Bharel, Massachusetts State Commissioner of Public Health, give a presentation at our Annual Meeting. During the Commissioner's presentation, entitled "Data, Disparities, and Public Health – Addressing Equity from Bedside to Public Health," she touched on topics including health equity issues relating to residents with lower incomes and education, methods to reach out to these individuals, and getting them to follow through with medical care appointments and preventative health issues.

Noreen Johnson-Smith presenting to the Museum membership a nominee for the Board of Directors, Louis Fazen, III.



Annmarie Hoch, Arianna Young and Chloe DiMarzio, students from Outbreak 2016 spoke to the audience members regarding their experiences at this summer's program. The students spoke of how they enjoyed the field trips to the Hinton State Lab and the Family Health Center of Worcester.

Looking for Historical Hospital Records? These Resources Can Help

The Public Health Museum often receives inquiries from individuals looking for information regarding patient records. Records dating from 1900 on may be protected by privacy laws and may need a court order to view. The Tewksbury Hospital Records Department keeps all patient records and should be contacted for information on any records. However, records prior to 1900 may be available without court order. Below is contact information for organizations that may be able to assist you in locating records.

Tewksbury Historical Society <http://www.tewksburyhistoricalsociety.org>

Massachusetts State Archives <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcgen/genidx.htm>

Tewksbury State Hospital Cemetery Records <http://www.tewksburyhospitalcemetery.ma-vitalrecords.org>

Tewksbury Town Hall Phone 978-640-4355

Tewksbury Hospital Records Department Phone 978-851-7321 ext. 2213

Family Search <https://familysearch.org> A free genealogy website, hosted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

Tewksbury Almshouse Patient Index; Center for Lowell History <http://library.uml.edu/clh/TewAlms/AAAlms.htm>

A comprehensive index of inmate case histories of the Tewksbury State Almshouse for the period covering October 1860 thru January 1896 compiled from microfilm available at the Center for Lowell History

Center for Lowell History, University of Massachusetts Lowell Libraries <http://library.uml.edu/clh/>

Tewksbury Almshouse Intake Records 1854-1884 <http://libhost.uml.edu/collections/show/5>

Museum Collection - In Search of TB-Related Items

PHM collecting goals are to acquire, document, study, interpret, make accessible, exhibit and care for object and document collections that further the Museum's mission and meet the needs of the Museum's audiences. Materials from Massachusetts materials are a priority materials and materials are especially desirable. (Provenance refers to an artifact's historical origin and pathway to its current owner.) Materials showing the progress of public health in the U.S. and the world in general are also considered.

Much of the initial 1994 collection came from Tewksbury Hospital, including furniture from the Annie G. McDonald house, and other state institutions. The Danvers State and Taunton State Hospitals closed and merged their artifacts into the Public Health Museum's collection. Several major donations from individuals include over 100 patent medicine bottles donated in 1997 by Jack Bloom, D.D.S., and items from the estate of the late Dr. J. Worth Estes. We are excited about any item that adds to our present exhibits (or a possible future exhibit) such as a recent gift of a Whooping Cough Armband (see article on page 2).

Of special interest at the moment are items related to tuberculosis. We are planning an addition to our current exhibit, to be displayed in the spring. Do you have any items that may have been used by a tubercular patient while in a sanatorium, or perhaps made by such a patient during treatment or recuperation? Do you have a family history you could share with us? If so, please contact us at phmuseum@gmail.com.

Emy Thomas, Collections Committee Member

2016/2017 Calendar of Events

PUBLIC HEALTH ACTIVITIES

DECEMBER 2016

1st, World AIDS Day

4th-10th, National Influenza Vaccination Week

JANUARY 2017

Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month

National Birth Defects Prevention Month

National Blood Donor Month

15th-21st, National Non-Smoking Week

29th-Feb 4, World Leprosy Week

30th, World Leprosy Day

FEBRUARY 2017

American Heart Month

4th, World Cancer Day

PH MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are always needed for a variety of projects at the Museum!

If you enjoy meeting new people, want to participate in educating the public and are available Wednesday or Thursdays or the first Saturday of the month, we encourage you to come help us with tours at the museum. Training is provided.

The Museum also plans to increase its social media and internet presence in 2017. If you have experience in web site design and maintenance or social media and marketing, we'd love to talk to you!

If you are interested in public health, history or just want to spend some time with a great group of dedicated staff and volunteers, contact the Museum at 978-851-7321 EXT 2606 or complete the [application](#) and mail it to PH Museum, 365 East Street, Tewksbury, MA 01876.



Happy Holidays from the PH Museum



The Public Health Museum is pleased to participate in the Tewksbury Public Library (TPL) 2016 Festival of Trees. The Festival is "a community celebration of the holidays sponsored by the Staff, Trustees, and Friends of the TPL."

Forty-six trees representing community organizations are participating in this year's event. The opening night of festivities was on December 2 and included a Winter Songfest with Jeannie Mack Family Concert and a Christmas Concert with the Merrimack Valley Chorus. The trees are on display through the month of December.



THE PUBLIC HEALTH MUSEUM IN MASSACHUSETTS

Our Mission

The Public Health Museum is a non-profit educational and cultural museum. The Museum strives to preserve records and artifacts from our nation's public health history; educate the public about the achievements and contributions of public health; and inspire people to build upon the past and continue to advance the future of public health. Our Museum provides a space to explore public health artifacts, inspire future public health professionals, and foster community involvement.

Our History

Incorporated in 1990 and open to the public since 1994, the Museum has the distinction of being the first of its kind in the nation. Massachusetts has a rich history of leadership and notable firsts in the birth of our nation. In the field of public health, Massachusetts was the first to record vital statistics; the first to implement a sustained board of health; and the first to implement a communicable disease surveillance system, among many others.

MUSEUM HOURS

Wednesdays, Thursdays and the first Saturday of each month 10:00am-2:00pm
OR
By Appointment

WALKING TOURS

Seasonal (May through October, weather permitting)
The third Thursday and first Saturday of each month 10:00am-2:00pm
OR
By Appointment

ADMISSION

\$5.00 per person for museum
\$10.00 per person for walking tour

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested in the Public Health Museum.

To subscribe to this newsletter, please reply with **SUBSCRIBE** to Newsletter in the subject line. To unsubscribe, please reply with **UNSUBSCRIBE** in the subject line.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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DIRECTIONS

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phmuseum@gmail.com

WEBSITE

publichealthmuseum.org

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