Health Survey of-- City of Wheeler
State of --------- Oregon
County of --------- Tillamook
Date-------------- Feb. 1, 1931

by
Paul E. Shiningger
The city of Wheeler is a small town of 280 people (1930 census) nestled on the side of the foothills of the Coast Range and looking directly down upon the Nehalem River as it spreads out over a broad expanse of tide flats. Looking west about two miles the great Pacific roars and pounds upon the beaches that form the summer playground of thousands of people.

The Roosevelt Highway forms the Maine Street of the town, giving free and easy access to neighboring municipalities and for sheer beauty is surpassed by very few. A branch line of the S. P. Railroad extends from Portland furnishing another mode of travel for those who do not own a car.

All business houses are on the main street or highway as well as numerous residences while the greater portion of residences are built on the slopes of the hills back of the town.

Wheeler is essentially an industrial town of which fishing and shingle manufacturing are the most important. A large lumber mill furnishing work for several hundred men was the greatest revenue producer until about two years ago but due to industrial depression it now stands idle and the population of the town decreased. At present shingle manufacturing is the dominant industry with fishing a close second.

The population has always been essentially of the laboring class with only a small percentage of foreign born and very few indigents requiring outside aid. A goodly portion of the people now here own their homes but when the lumber mill operates there is a large number of transients.

The Municipal Government of Wheeler is of the Mayor-Council type, the officers consisting of Mayor, Recorder, Secretary, Treasurer, and six councilmen, all of whom are property owners and conduct the affairs of the town in a creditable manner.
Civic organizations active in the town are Nehalem Bay Chamber of Commerce and a local branch of the County Health Association. Of these the County Health Association is the only one carrying on any health activities.

The only license permits issued by the city are Dog, Peddlers, and Pool Halls.

The only provision regarding health is the election of a health officer, who is the town Physician and whose duty it is to take charge of all activities in case of an epidemic and to record all vital statistics. This is done with out salary and in cooperation of the populace.

Summarizing the health activities of the town it is found that there is a health officer who is a physician, well qualified to check the spread of epidemics in so far as it is humanly possible, in cooperation with a County Health Association.

This association is sponsored by the State. The association in the County is under the direction of the County Nurse. It is her duty to organize branches in each town. The local branch has a chairman and all who are interested are requested to attend.

Each member is ever alert for some instance where illness prevails and assistance is needed and this assistance is cheerfully given. 0.B. Kits are made up at the County seat and sold at cost to indigent mothers. In the school, milk is furnished to under-nourished children who's parents cannot pay for it. At present milk is being furnished for only one child.

There are no city laws or ordinances controlling milk supply, the officials believing that the State Laws have this fairly well covered and have let well enough alone.

There are at present two dairies supplying milk in Wheeler but one only on a very small scale. These are located 4 or 5
miles from town, one on the North Fork and the other on the South Fork of the Nehalem River.

None of the milk is pasteurized but is cooled to about 40°F immediately after milking. The dairy supplying the larger portion is very clean but the other is questionable, the methods used not being too impressive. Laboratory tests are conducted in accordance with state laws, by the state.

There are no laws nor ordinances governing the handling of foodstuffs nor requiring food handlers to be examined, proprietors being left to their own discretion.

Inspections were made in 2 small restaurants, two groceries, one soda fountain, one meat market and two barber shops.

The groceries were both exceptionally clean and there were no odors nor appearances of uncleanness. The soda fountain was clean, the glassware all being washed in cold water but no attempt made at sterilization. The restaurants are clean but dishes and silverware are not sterilized nor are the employees examined.

The meat market counters and cases and meat blocks were clean but the floor was in a deplorable state. There appeared to be an accumulation of several day's dirt there under the blocks.

There is one hotel in the town but went into receivership over one year ago and since then has not been operated.

Two rooming houses exist at present. One being the second story of a building, the first floor being a pool hall. No screens are used as in accordance with every other place in Wheeler. There are 2 flush toilets and one bath for the 11 people living there, and water is supplied from the city system. The bedding is of good quality and is always washed when a room is vacated. The other is so nearly like this one that description would be repetition.

Of the two barber shops, one is probably cleaner and much cleaner and much better lighted and instruments better cared for.
The other has a bath in connection, the tub in which has probably never seen a disinfectant. Neither is in connection with a poolhall nor any other form of business.

Two garages maintain rest rooms for men and women, one of which keeps its rooms well cleaned but the other has allowed the men's room to get into a deplorable state of unsanity.

The water system of Wheeler was installed in 1915, being constructed, owned and operated by the town. Before that time there were only a few people and these through a cooperative effort laid a pipeline back in the hills to a small stream.

In 1915 water rights were secured by the town on three small creeks in the hills and two reservoirs were built with pipelines to distribute the water and placed under the supervision of a water superintendent. In 1930 the supply was found inadequate for present uses and a new industry which was being built so a new and third reservoir was built bringing the total capacity to 11,000 gallons per day.

The water shed is an unlimited expanse of virgin forests back of the city in which only the wild animals penetrate. The water itself is unsurpassed in purity and there has never been any attempt at purification by any means whatever.

Laboratory examinations are made every six months in accordance with the State Board of Health and never has it received a grade less than A. In only a few instances has there been any gas fermentation in 10 CC and this has always been less than 10%. The report of July 30, 1930, which accompanies this survey, was made on a sample taken immediately after a heavy rain.

This system supplies all homes, business houses and industries within the incorporated town, there being no private supplies, wells, springs, etc.
### WATER REPORT

**Date:** 6/12/29  
**Lab. No.:** 37070  
**City:** Wheeler  
**Source:** Wheeler Creek, City, Store Tap, Iced  

**Date collected:** 6/14/29  
**Date received:** 6/17/29  

**Report to be sent to:** Joseph Lambrecht, Wheeler, Oregon  

The bacteriological analysis shows the water to be in condition:  
A—Safe for drinking purposes.  
B—Suspicious, probably contaminated. Another specimen should be sent.  
C—Polluted and unsafe for drinking purposes.  

**WILLIAM LEVIN, M.D.**  
Director of Laboratory.

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**Date:** 8/6/30  
**Lab. No.:** 43201  
**City:** Wheeler  
**Source:** Wheeler Creek, City, Untreated, Barber Shop  

**Date collected:** 7/30/30  
**Date received:** 7/31/30  

**Report to be sent to:** Water Superintendent, Wheeler, Oregon  

The bacteriological analysis shows the water to be in condition:  
A—Safe for drinking purposes.  
B—Suspicious, probably contaminated. Another specimen should be sent.  
C—Polluted and unsafe for drinking purposes.  

**WILLIAM LEVIN, M.D.**  
Director of Laboratory.

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**WILLIAM LEVIN, M.D.**  
State Health Officer.
The sewage system was installed by the city in 1920 and is under the direct supervision of the water superintendent.

The equipment is adequate and is accessible to about 60%-70% of the population. It is a combined system sewer and serves all houses and business concerns on the main street of the town. The remaining portion, the people who live further back all have septic tanks, there being a city ordinance against privies within the city limits. There is also an ordinance requiring that within the next 5 years all houses within the city limits must be attached to the city sewer system.

There is no treatment of sewage. The system bears it directly to the river where it is emptied and borne away by the current. The relation between sewage disposal and water supply is absolutely negative but the relation to bathing beaches is just as absolutely positive. During the long summer months men, women and children spend many hours in the water along the river's edge on the same side that the sewage empties. Sewage goes up and down the river due to the ebb and flow of the tide, thus infecting all beaches along the river.

With this exception, Wheeler can be considered a town, in comparison with other towns of similar size, of utmost sanitation.

Nuisances are covered by city ordinances and are in charge of the city marshall. The greatest nuisance reported is that of drunks and these are usually locked up overnight or sent home, there being extreme leniency.

Garbage is required to be put in sacks or cans and is collected periodically by a collector and carted to a dump ground two miles outside the city. Dead animals are buried by the garbage collector in a burial ground back in the woods.

There is a city ordinance to the effect that papers, rubbish, etc., must not be strewn upon the streets.
Industrial Conditions:

The dominant Industry at present is the Lewis Mother's Shingle mill which employs approximately 20-25 men.

The plant is a large building under one roof, well lighted by windows and electricity. It is well ventilated but at times gets quite dusty which is not good for the employee's health.

The plant is on piling over the river so that the problem of sewerage presents no difficulties. The water supply is the same as the city water supply so it is quite safe.

Shingle manufacturing is not anymore detrimental to health than other industries but there are considerable hazards, due to the multiplicity of saws, there having been several minor accidents in the past few days.

This plant has rejected state compensation but instead is covered by the Nat. Hospital Association which provides free medical and surgical service, including all transportation and hospitalization charges. Employees are protected 24 hours of the day from all injuries and illnesses including tuberculosis, paralysis and such chronic diseases except venereal diseases, obstetrical cases, insanity and diseases due to drugs and intoxicating liquors.

A First Aid kit supplied with bandages and various medicinal agents is supplied to all industries coming under their protection and these supplies are replenished by them as necessary.

As a passing remark, this plant has been built and is operated with every consideration possible in such an industry, for the health of its employees and no serious accidents have marred its one year of operation.
The milk supply of Wheeler is from two dairies—the principal of which is the Orchard dairy owned and operated by Amsel Lommen.

There are on this dairy, about 30 cows all of which are clean healthy looking animals. They are tuberculin tested every year by state officials and in the past eight years one cow reacted four years ago and was immediately killed. Tillamook County is singularly clear of tuberculous cows.

The barns conform to state laws, having concrete floors thruout which are washed daily and the walls are whitewashed every year. Floors, walls and ceiling are very clean. The barn is also very well lighted, having a row of windows on each side and electric lights in the middle.

The barnyards are very clean, there being grass and gravel walks to the barn and milk house. Even in the rainy season there is no mud. The manure is carried on a track 100 ft. from the barn and at intervals is hauled away.

The milk rooms are very clean and are constructed of concrete floors and walls, exuding only an odor of Cleanliness.

Bottles are washed with a washer which washes, rinses and steams each bottle, going thru water 149° F then 180° F. and steam. All implements used in handling milk are sterilized under cover by steam and kept covered until used again. No scrums are used at anytime and peculiarly, more than one or two flies are never seen even in the summer.

Toilets are indoor flush toilets, sewage being carried to the river nearby so their is no possibleity of contamination.

The water supply is a private system thru one and a quarter miles of pipeline from the hills and is comparable to the water of the town of Wheeler.

Milking is done by hand by men who rigidly clean themselves before milking and each cow's udder is carefully washed at each milking. The cows flanks are kept clean by daily cleaning.
The milk is immediately removed upon milking to the milk house where it is cooled to approximately 40°F, bottled and capped. No milk is kept longer than 14 hrs. before delivery and some only 2 to 3 hours. Employees are not required to have a health certificate.

The milk is periodically examined by the Ore. State board of health. The last report was given as slightly excessive in bacterial count but was probably not a fair test, the sample being taken from a store where no refrigeration is had. No excessive counts have been reported before. The results of counts could not be obtained because they have never been returned numerically to the dairy.

Measures for the control of Communicable diseases are not organized but left to the discretion of the attending physician who conforms to state rulings by quarantining and reporting all such diseases to the County Health officer.

Wheeler is apparently a very healthy place to live. The records in the office of the County Health officer show the following diseases reported.

- Smallpox: 2 cases in 1927, 3 cases in 1928
- Tuberculosis: 1 case and one death 1926, 1 case and one death 1930
- Measles: 2 cases in 1927

There have been in the past 5 years, numerous influenza, several pneumonia, several mumps and 3 poliomyelitis cases but no epidemics.

Venerable diseases are reported, in conformation with state laws to the County Health officer there having been reported in the past 5 years 2 cases of syphilis and 6 cases of gonorrhea from Wheeler.

Treatment of these cases is left to the discretion of the attending physician.

There are no laes regarding prostitution in Wheeler.

No non-Medical practitioners are in Wheeler but there are several Chiropractors living in the Country out of Wheeler who profess to diagnose and treat all forms of diseases.
The foregoing survey of the town of Wheeler is not intended in any way to be a reflection upon its health activities but merely a statement of cold facts, of situations as they have been found. Wheeler is not any different than any other small town in the supervision of its business activities especially those dealing with food handlers, in that public sentiment is the greatest law and those upon whom suspicion of unsanitarity is cast, lose their business.

The health activities are not numerous, but adequate and the city physician has been found to be diligently fulfilling his trust of caring for the health of the community. The health activities functioning are mainly for the care of indigent of which Wheeler fortunately has very few.

Upon inspection of the various business houses, rooming houses etc, of Wheeler one is struck with the almost total absence of screens anywhere except as required by state law. This, it is found, is not due to any lack of cleanliness of the people but to the fact that Wheeler is peculiarly free of flies at any time of the year. This fact, undoubtedly contributes much to the town's reputation of being a healthy place to live.

Wheeler is to be commended upon its program to keep the city clean and its plans for further cleanliness.
Recommendations:
Cleaning up and prevention of dumping rubbish in the small ravines within the city.

Treatment of sewage or change of sewage disposal so that it does not run directly upon the bathing beaches.

Requirement that all food handlers present certificate of health.

Requirement that all dairies dispensing milk within the city conform to all state rules and regulations.