

REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
ON THE
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
RELATIVE TO
THE ISSUANCE OF CERTIFIED COPIES OF
BIRTH CERTIFICATES.

BY
THE JOINT STATE GOVERNMENT COMMISSION
OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Capitol Building

Harrisburg, Penna.

January, 1943.

JOINT STATE GOVERNMENT COMMISSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(Created in 1937, P. L. 2460, as amended 1939, P.L. 1084)

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to undertake studies and develop facts,
information and data on all phases of
government for the use of the General
Assembly and Departments and Agencies
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the resignation of Robert E.
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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

To the Members of the General Assembly
of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Pursuant to Resolution No. 51, Serial No.95,
Printer's No.77, adopted by the House of Represen-
tatives, April 10, 1942 and under the authority of
the Act of July 1, 1937, P. L. 2460, as amended by
the Act of June 26, 1939, P. L. 1084, creating the
Joint State Government Commission, we submit here-
with a report on the Bureau of Vital Statistics
relative to the issuance of certified copies of
birth certificates.

Elmer Kilroy, Chairman

Joint State Government Commission

January 1943.

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FOREWORD

This report on the Bureau of Vital Statistics, Department of Health is in conformity with the Resolution adopted April 10, 1942 by the House of Representatives. This Resolution directed the Joint State Government Commission to make a study of the functions and procedures of the Bureau of Vital Statistics and to make any recommendations it deemed advisable which will expedite the work of the bureau, especially pertaining to its main function, namely, the issuance of certified copies of birth certificates. Shortly after the adoption of the Resolution, Honorable Elmer Kilroy, Chairman of the Commission, directed the staff of the Commission to study the problem.

In making this report attention is called to the fact that the bureau, during the last six months, has made considerable improvement, especially pertaining to fiscal control of receipts, also some of the administrative procedures recommended in this report have at least partially been put in operation. The bureau during this same period has likewise been relieved by a substantial decrease in the volume of applications received. However, if these administrative procedural recommendations are all adopted and conscientiously followed, the issuance of certified copies of birth certificates, which is now the most important function of the bureau, especially at the Capitol, will become a routine production operation in all cases where records are on file. This will enable the bureau to issue certified copies for

about 80% of the daily volume of applications within at least one to two hours on applications personally presented at the office and within at least twenty four hours on applications received by mail. The present condition of the birth records reveals that there is no birth certificate on file for about 20% of the applications filed. However, by using this recommended procedure of processing applications the bureau can, on this same time schedule, furnish "delayed birth registration" forms to this 20% so these applicants can establish their record of birth in the bureau. This will also mean that after the adoption of the other recommendations has resulted in improved quality and completeness of records in the bureau, practically all applications received in future years can be completed on this schedule.

To accomplish this type of service will require rigid administration in eliminating entirely all "special service" for various officials of the State Government, Legislators, Political Leaders and others who have "contacts" with various individuals in the bureau. With these recommended administrative procedures in full operation these "special service" requests can all be fulfilled by the routine production method in a more expeditious manner than at present with "special service." This "special service" has in the past and still is a major contributing factor in greatly reducing the efficient operation and production of the bureau.

Both the legislative and administrative recommendations

contained in this report concerning the improvement of future birth records will not overcome the problems at present confronting the bureau due to the conditions of present records. It is, however, highly important that they be immediately adopted as an assurance against any repetition of their difficulties in future years when persons, who are born after adoption of these recommendations, later in life, apply for certified copies of their birth record. It is evident the need for birth certificates in future years will continue, not only as a means of proving citizenship when obtaining employment, etc., but probably most important of all will be the need of definite proof of date of birth when persons reach the retirement age under the provisions of the Social Security Act.

The staff of the Commission desires to thank Mr. Tom E. Williams, Director, Mr. J. Robert Painter, Assistant Director and others of the bureau, also Mr. John H. Dorning, Comptroller of the Department of Highways, who since February 1942, has been supervising procedural improvements in the bureau and Mr. William J. Wall of the Auditor General's Department for their cooperation and assistance in furnishing information used in making this study.

Paul C. Moomaw
Director.

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

THE REPORT OF THE JOINT STATE GOVERNMENT COMMISSION
ON THE BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS RELATIVE TO THE
ISSUANCE OF CERTIFIED COPIES OF BIRTH CERTIFICATES

HISTORY OF VITAL STATISTICS IN PENNSYLVANIA

The registration of births, marriages and deaths in Pennsylvania started after the passage of the Act of 1852, Pamphlet Laws 2, and registrations were made locally in the various counties and cities in accordance with this act and the following additional acts:

1855	Pamphlet Laws	4
1860	Pamphlet Laws	130
1876	Pamphlet Laws	113
1881	Pamphlet Laws	51
1885	Pamphlet Laws	56
1893	Pamphlet Laws	340
1895	Pamphlet Laws	246 and 350
1941	Pamphlet Laws	114

The act of 1885, Pamphlet Laws 56 which created the State Board of Health and Vital Statistics contained the following provisions:

"It shall be the duty of the State Board of Health and Vital Statistics to have the general supervision of the State system of registration of births, marriages and deaths, of prevalent diseases and practitioners of medicine and surgery; to prepare the necessary methods, forms and blanks for obtaining and preserving such records, and to insure the faithful registration of same in the several counties and in the Central Bureau of Vital Statistics in the Capitol of the State."

After the passage of this act registration of these vital statistics became prevalent in the various counties of the Commonwealth. However, no file of these vital statistics was established at the Capitol, and no one at present connected with the bureau has any knowledge of the reasons

for failure to set up a central record bureau. It was not until after the passage of the act of 1905, Pamphlet Laws 330 that the Bureau of Vital Statistics of the then State Board of Health, which is now the Department of Health, established a centralized system for the registration of births and deaths at the State Capitol. As a result of this act the State Bureau of Vital Statistics contains registrations of births and deaths occurring only since January 1, 1906.

The General Assembly, in 1915, passed the act of June 7, Pamphlet Laws 900 which re-enacted the act of 1905, Pamphlet Laws 330 and made it the duty of the Department of Health to have charge of the State System of registration, not only of births and deaths, but also of marriages and diseases. This law repealed all other laws and parts of laws inconsistent therewith and provided that no other system for the registration of births and deaths shall be conducted or maintained at any of the municipalities of the State other than the State system of registration established in the Bureau of Vital Statistics, State Department of Health. This law has been variously amended by the following acts:

1921 Pamphlet Laws	181
1923 Pamphlet Laws	176
1927 Pamphlet Laws	498
1927 Pamphlet Laws	859
1929 Pamphlet Laws	81
1933 Pamphlet Laws	976
1933 Pamphlet Laws	979
1937 Pamphlet Laws	399

Since the passage of the Act of 1915, which caused complete discontinuance of acceptance of any birth registrations locally in the various counties and exclusively centralized

the registrations at the Capitol, the records of births recorded at the central bureau are in better shape and more complete than for the years of 1906 to 1915 inclusive.

After the start of the defense program in the Spring of 1940, when it became necessary to submit evidence of citizenship to obtain employment in the defense industries, the demand for certified copies of birth certificates began to sharply increase, both at the central bureau at the Capitol and its branch offices, and also in the various counties where birth certificates for persons born prior to January 1, 1906 were filed. It was then discovered that no birth certificate had been filed in the counties of thousands of persons born prior to January 1, 1906 and likewise it was discovered that no birth certificate had been filed with the central bureau at the Capitol of thousands born after January 1, 1906. The 1941 General Assembly, therefore, in an effort to assist these persons in establishing their date and place of birth, passed;

1. The act of July 16, 1941, Pamphlet Laws 383 empowering the Bureau of Vital Statistics to record the birth of persons born prior to January 1, 1906, or to record the birth of those persons born since January 1, 1906 but whose record had not been filed with the Bureau, upon presentation of a so-called "delayed" birth registration accompanied by certain documentary evidence and to issue certified copies thereof.

2. The act of July 16, 1941, Pamphlet Laws 405 empowering persons born prior to January 1, 1906 whose record of birth had not been previously recorded, was incomplete or incorrect, to have a record of his birth filed and recorded or corrected in the office of the Clerk of The Orphans Court in the County in which he was born, by presenting a petition to the Orphans Court containing certain documentary evidence, and after acceptance by the Court the further power of the Clerk of the Court to issue certified copies of such established birth records.

REGISTRATIONS IN THE BUREAU

The Bureau of Vital Statistics contains 6,993,398 registrations of live births which occurred in Pennsylvania between the years of 1906 to 1941 inclusive. The list includes for the same number of years 4,181,061 death registrations and for the years of 1906 to 1940 inclusive it contains 2,415,995 registrations of marriage. In addition to these registrations it contains registrations of stillbirths occurring in the State which in 1921 amounted to more than 10,000 but since that time stillbirths have gradually fallen to less than 5000 annually. In each case of stillbirth there is both a birth certificate and a death certificate filed with the bureau. A breakdown on live births, deaths and marriages shows the following:

	<u>Live Births</u>	<u>Deaths*</u>	<u>Marriages</u>
1906 to 1910.....	938,117	573,527	293,841
1911 to 1915.....	1,055,800	571,244	329,884
1916 to 1920.....	1,088,271	677,379	370,575
1921 to 1925.....	1,099,258	570,291	365,360
1926 to 1930.....	997,448	580,367	346,269
1931 to 1935.....	825,698	545,405	333,839
1936 to 1940.....	813,608	554,447	376,227
1941.....	175,198	108,401	- - -
Total.....	6,993,398	4,181,061	2,415,995

* Does not include stillbirths.

The central bureau of Vital Statistics at the Capitol contains the above records of births, deaths and marriages for the entire State. However, the State maintains branch offices in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Scranton and Erie, where duplicate copies of birth and death certificates are maintained for the convenience of persons born in those cities who may desire certified copies thereof.

METHODS OF INDEXING IN THE BUREAU

Since January 1, 1906 two different methods of indexing have been used in various years, likewise no index was made for certain years.

The types of index for birth records for the various years are as follows:

Alphabetized System by Years: 1906 to 1919 inclusive, 1922, 1925 to 1929 inclusive, (1926 incomplete, indexed "A" to "M" only)

Soundex System by Years: 1920 and 1921, 1923 and 1924, 1931 to 1936 inclusive

No Index for Years: 1930, 1937 to 1942 inclusive.

The types of indexing for death records for various years are as follows:

Alphabetized System by Years: 1906 to 1919 inclusive, 1925 to 1929 inclusive

Soundex System by Years: 1920 to 1923 inclusive, 1935 and 1936

No Index for Years: 1924, 1932 to 1934 inclusive, 1937 to 1942 inclusive.

It is estimated that approximately 70% of all applications received in the bureau are found in the indexes. According to information received from the bureau, there are a number of birth records on file which are not indexed even though the births occurred during those years for which there was an index made. As a result, by special search the bureau is able to locate approximately an additional 10% of the records which are not found in the index. There are no records on file for approximately 20% of the applications being received, especially during the years 1906 to 1925.

REQUESTS FOR CERTIFIED COPIES

Prior to the start of the defense program in the Spring of 1940 the number of requests for certified copies of birth certificates was almost negligible and the problem of their issuance was a comparatively simple matter. The only problem confronting the bureau was the issuance of certified copies of death certificates, which was a routine problem and the volume was fairly consistent from year to year. According to information obtained from the bureau, the number of certified copies of death certificates issued monthly is approximately 5000 over the entire state.

The sharp increase in the volume of requests for certified copies since the start of the defense program in the Spring of 1940 is clearly reflected by the following figures for the central bureau at the Capitol:

1939 - Total for 12 months	56,745
Highest month, October.....	6,709
1940 - Total for 12 months	131,548
Highest month, October.....	17,945
5 Months, January to	
May inclusive.....	28,595
7 Months, June to	
December inclusive.....	102,953
1941 - Total for 12 months.....	299,252
Highest month, December.....	33,001
1942 - Total for 11 months	
January to November inclusive.....	530,031
Highest month, March.....	69,261

Of the above requests for certified copies received at the central bureau it is estimated approximately 1500 per month are for certified copies of death certificates and the

remainder are for certified copies of birth certificates, except a negligible amount of which are requests for certified copies of marriage certificates, issued only from the central bureau at the Capitol.

The number of certified copies of birth and death certificates issued for the first eleven months of 1942 at the branch offices are as follows:

	<u>Births</u>	<u>Deaths</u>
Philadelphia.....	43,907	26,405
Pittsburgh.....	28,537	3,967
Scranton.....	6,174	585
Erie.....	2,850	---

During the first eleven months of 1942 approximately 93% of all applications received by the bureau including its branch offices were for certified copies of birth certificates and 86% of these were received at the central bureau.

At the present time approximately 65% of all applications for certified copies at the central bureau are received by mail and the remaining 35% are made by personal application, whereas in the branch offices only approximately 10% of the applications are received by mail and the remaining 90% are made by personal application.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since such a large percentage of the volume of work in issuing certified copies of birth certificates centers in the central bureau of the Capitol, all references hereinafter in this report when referring to the bureau will refer directly to the Central bureau at the Capitol. All recommendations made will be primarily for the central bureau and in all cases where these recommendations are applicable to the branch offices they can readily be adopted thereat.

General findings and conclusions:

The bureau had, prior to the Spring of 1940, geared itself for the issuance of a limited and fairly consistent number of certified copies of especially death certificates and very little public attention was focused on its activities due to the fact these requests were fulfilled on a reasonably current basis.

When the volume of requests for certified copies of birth certificates needed by persons to establish citizenship for employment in defense industries started to increase sharply, the bureau was not geared by personnel or by any systematic method of processing applications on a quantity basis to fulfill the demand. Neither did it at that time nor for nearly two years thereafter take full cognizance of the problem and establish and effectively put into operation any systematic method of processing this continually increasing volume. Accordingly, the bureau started to fall behind in its work and the number of unfilled requests for certified copies of birth certificates continued to increase almost progressively

from time to time even though additional personnel was employed and given added space in which to work.

When this heavy demand for certified copies of birth certificates started the bureau also discovered for the first time the very poor condition of the records in Pennsylvania of births, especially between the years of 1906 to 1925 inclusive. This period covers persons now seventeen years of age or over and practically all of the demand to date has been from this group. The poor condition of the birth records is due to an accumulation, since 1906, of gross carelessness and violations, especially by physicians, midwives, local registrars and State officials, whose duty, during those years, was to carry out or administer the provisions of this law. In future years the effects of these violations of the law and inefficient administration since 1925 will gradually come to light as younger people make application. Since these errors in the records are not generally discovered until seventeen or more years after date of birth, in a large percentage of cases the attending physician has died, parents have died and satisfactory documentary information to establish a record of birth or to correct errors is not readily available. This condition has also greatly added to the problems of the bureau.

This condition does not exist in the issuance of certified copies of death certificates because requests for such certified copies are generally made shortly after the time of death. Also, physicians and especially undertakers, under the law must see that a certificate of death is

filed with the local registrar so a burial or removal permit can be issued for transporting or disposal of the body. These permits can only be issued after the filing of a death certificate. Only in very few instances have local registrars violated the law in this respect.

Particularly during the latter half of 1940, and the early months of 1941 many applicants did not send in the proper information and this necessitated the bureau attempting to carry on considerable correspondence which they were not properly set up and equipped to take care of, with the result that in many cases they were not able to give any attention to such applications.

In October 1940, added supervisory personnel was brought into the bureau in an effort to solve this ever increasing problem which even by that time was causing many persons to be seriously delayed in obtaining employment in defense industries.

As the volume increased the bureau was continually finding itself confronted with the problem of insufficient trained personnel and the need for additional space. Many attempts were made by the officials of the bureau to obtain necessary additional personnel and also to obtain sufficient additional space. In attempting to obtain needed additional personnel they were confronted with other obstacles, namely, the rate of pay was low and the positions were mainly classified on a per diem basis and considered as temporary, therefore it was difficult to obtain the proper personnel. Also, the employes brought in and trained along with some of the

older personnel, who were working under these conditions, were soon attracted to other positions at higher pay and with a greater degree of permanency. This involved an excess amount of personnel turnover and the necessity for additional training of personnel to replace them.

The officials of the bureau were delayed in getting additional space as needed according to testimony by the Assistant Director before a House Committee in June of 1941. Referring to the problem of space he stated, "we made attempts, as the occasion demanded, for more space and fought for several months until we threw the Department of Military Affairs out of some of the space they had, comprising two large rooms down there on the side where our office is located." He also advised this committee that the bureau was handicapped in its work by having only one set of records with which to work. He advised at that time that, under the present setup of the department, when the personnel became trained they would be able to take care of the demand, provided they had duplicate sets of records on microfilm. He further advised at that time they had some machines and that he had been given authority by the Secretary of the department to go ahead with the microfilming of records.

The obtaining of the necessary number of machines and the microfilming of records was never carried out. This report will later discuss the subject of microfilming of records, its effect upon the preservation of the original record and the reduction in the cost of searching and producing certified copies.

Throughout 1941 the volume of requests continued to increase and then after December 7, 1941 when production in war industries was greatly expanded the requests for certified copies to prove citizenship increased far more rapidly than ever, reaching a peak load to date in March 1942. By this time the backlog of unfilled requests had accumulated to the staggering total of approximately 75,000 applications many of which had remained unfilled in the bureau for approximately a year, including those containing irregularities. At times the bureau became so swamped in its work that when any applications or records contained any irregularities they were laid aside without proper handling and many were never again found.

As these unfilled applications for certified copies of birth certificates continued to pile up the news of the increasing delay in obtaining a certified copy of one's birth certificate spread over the State and this resulted in many persons filing their application with the bureau even though they were in no immediate need of a certified copy of their birth certificate. They, learning of the difficulty in obtaining it, simply took the position, "I may need it some day so I had better apply." This helped increase the demands on the bureau.

After the bureau fell so far behind in this work considerable correspondence in the form of inquiries also poured into the bureau from applicants asking why they had not received a certified copy of their birth certificate. This added additional work to the already overburdened bureau

in even attempting to handle this correspondence. During this time the bureau also started sending applicants a form post card with their individual application file number contained thereon as an acknowledgment of receipt of the application. This only added additional work on the part of the bureau which would not have been necessary had the bureau been able to handle the requests on even a reasonably current basis.

The Legislature in the Spring of 1941 was fully aware of the confusion in the bureau and the increasing difficulty of citizens obtaining a certified copy of their birth certificate, which at that time, and more so later, was seriously delaying the employment of thousands of persons in defense work, thereby causing a very serious man hour loss to the war effort. Therefore, it passed some remedial legislation and also increased the appropriation to the Department of Health \$547,000, a large portion of which was for the purpose of providing the necessary facilities to overcome these difficulties and for properly operating the bureau.

After the Spring of 1940 and throughout 1941 the Director and also the Assistant Director made numerous requests for the authority to increase pay rates and employ and train additional personnel. While they were able to have part of their requests fulfilled such partial fulfillment fell far short of the increasing needs of the bureau. This is likewise true of requests for purchase of additional needed equipment, even after the passage of the 1941 appropriation act.

During this period of time, even with additional personnel which had been added in the bureau, no real systematic

method of processing the applications was put into effect. This caused a continued increase in the number of "special service" requests by various officials of the State Government, Legislators, Political Leaders and others employed in and about the Capitol at Harrisburg having individual members of the staff of the bureau handle this "special service". Also outside service organizations were having many applicants pay them, in most cases, highly exorbitant fees to obtain certified copies after which such organizations would seek and obtain this "special service" from employes of the bureau. Such requests were continuing to increase because persons unable to get service by mail would ask or write these various officials, and others at Harrisburg or pay service organizations to assist them in getting their certified copy. Many persons also started to make personal trips to Harrisburg from all parts of the State, many of them several trips at considerable expense and loss of time in an effort to obtain results. This condition continued to increase to a point where it was the general accepted thought throughout the State that it was practically useless to attempt to get a certified copy of a birth certificate by mail. The rendering of this "special service" by various bureau employes, which took them off their routine work, slowed up and practically destroyed any attempt to systematically process applications on a quantity basis comparable with the demand.

Shortly after the beginning of the year 1942 with the number of applications again sharply increasing there became almost a complete breakdown in attempting to promptly obtain

certified copies of birth certificates by any other method than through this "special service."

In February 1942, the Comptroller of the Highway Department was loaned to the bureau and given full authority to make whatever changes he deemed advisable in an effort to solve the increasing problems of the bureau. At that time there was an accumulation of approximately 30,000 pieces of unopened mail, most of which contained money and applications, and a backlog of approximately 75,000 unfilled applications. Since that time the bureau has been gradually working out from under its load and during this same period throughout 1942 the volume of applications received has gradually decreased with the result that at the present time (December 1942) applications for which the record is on file can be completed within a period of from one to fifteen days. Recommendations will be made in this report which will enable the bureau to further and more uniformly expedite the processing of these applications.

To bring about this improvement since March 1942 the bureau

1. Considerably reduced the practice of various persons coming to different individuals in the bureau for the handling of their "special requests." This practice still exists to such an extent that if the bureau completely establishes a production scheduling system its efficient operation will be considerably retarded unless such "special service" is entirely eliminated.

2. Set aside the backlog of approximately 75,000 unfilled applications and gave preference to the current applications. At the same time they gradually worked out the backlog in so far as it covered persons who had not in the meantime obtained their certified copy of birth certificate by either re-applying or having it obtained by "special service."

3. Installed a systematic fiscal control system for handling all incoming receipts.

There is still a large number of so called unfilled applications in the bureau (approximately 70,000). These, however, are practically all cases where, (1) no record was found on file and the bureau is awaiting the filing of a "delayed" birth registration by the applicant, or (2) cases awaiting additional corrective information or documentary evidence from the applicant.

The major causes of the difficulties which have been experienced by persons attempting to obtain a certified copy of their birth certificate are basically due to the following:

1. Carelessness and violations of the law by persons responsible for filing of birth certificates with local registrars, especially physicians and midwives by failure either to file a certificate, completely and accurately supply all names, dates and other required data or to supply it sufficiently legible as required by law for issuance of certified copies thereof.
2. Failure of local registrars to carry out the provisions of the law pertaining to completeness and legibility of birth certificates furnished them.
3. Careless administration at the bureau since January 1, 1906 in:
 - A. Failing to more rigidly supervise the work of local registrars in securing proper certificates of birth,
 - B. Failure to refuse payment of registrars' fees on birth certificates filed with the bureau which were incomplete or illegible,
 - C. Failure to maintain the best possible uniform system of filing and indexing of these records at the bureau.

4. Failure of the bureau, especially during 1940 and 1941 to make proper provision for prompt and efficient handling, in a systematic manner, the progressively increasing volume of requests. Also, their failure to make proper provisions for promptly and systematically handling the correspondence and corrections to records necessary in overcoming, in so far as possible, the effects of the causes 1, 2 and 3 above.

Recommendation No. 1, (Administrative)

It is recommended that a systematic production scheduling system, as hereinafter described, be fully established in the bureau to complete all applications received daily, which contain sufficient information to be accepted, by processing them in groups or quantities in hourly production cycles so that certified copies can be issued at least within one to two hours to all persons applying personally at the bureau and at least within twenty-four hours on all applications received by mail, except in cases where no registration record is found in the files. Also, that after installation of this production scheduling system no original applications be processed through the bureau in any other manner. (See pages 37 to 40 inclusive for description of production scheduling plan.)

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 1.

During the latter months of 1942 the bureau has been, to a certain extent, processing applications by groups, but not to the extent that they evenly divide the daily load into equal groups being processed through the bureau on any scheduled time basis. Likewise, prior to March 1942 various employes of the bureau were almost continuously leaving their routine work to give "special service" to applications received from various State officials and others employed in and around the Capitol who have established "contacts" with these various individual employes of the bureau. This also greatly delayed the routine work and destroyed any possibility

of efficient operation. This has, however, been considerably reduced but still exists to such an extent that it impedes the routine operation in issuing certified copies of birth certificates. After complete establishment of a systematic method of processing applications, better service can be had in the regular manner than is obtained at present by "special service."

Considerable delay to the routine processing of applications is also caused by record books being out of the record room in the possession of various persons throughout the bureau. This always necessitates the holding up of any applications whose record is in the books which are not in the record room when needed. For a period of time the various units of the bureau were not systematically arranged so as to require the minimum amount of travel by employes in their work. This has, to a certain extent, been improved upon during recent months but further improvement can be made in the physical setup of the bureau.

Recommendation No. 2, (Administrative)

It is recommended that at the earliest possible date a uniform modern system of indexing be established in the bureau for all birth registrations since January 1, 1906.

Findings and conclusions to Recommendation No. 2:

As will be noted by referring to page 5 of this report, there are two different methods of indexing in the bureau

and in certain years no index whatsoever has been made. Likewise it has been found that the record books in most of those years which were indexed contain records of many births which are not found in the index.

At the present time the indexes for the years 1906 to 1925 are used mostly when searching for birth certificates. However, the index for the later years will in the future gradually become the ones most frequently used. This is especially true during the war when birth information must be obtained on minor children for use in verifying parentage in connection with military dependency allowances granted by the Federal Government. There is no index for the years 1930 and also 1937 to 1942 inclusive. Most of the need for certified copies of birth certificates in connection with military dependency allowance comes from dependents born in these latter years. Where there is no index it is necessary at present for searchers to go to the books for the proper year and registration district and locate the proper birth registration. This involves considerably more time in locating birth certificates than is required for those applications which have been previously indexed.

From information obtained in the bureau it is quite apparent that of the two systems now in use the Soundex system of indexing is most satisfactory. However, before carrying out the above recommendation for a uniform system of indexing for all registered births from 1906 to the present time it would be advisable to thoroughly investigate and select

the most modern system which can be best adapted to the needs of the bureau.

Recommendation No. 3 (Administrative)

It is recommended that, if possible, a uniform and more simplified method of filing birth registrations in the bureau be established. At least on those birth records being filed at the present time.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 3.

As will be noted on page four of the report, there are now over 7,000,000 birth registrations alone filed in the bureau. The birth registrations for 1906 to 1928 are filed chronologically by months and alphabetically by registration districts in each year. The birth records for years 1929 up to the present are filed chronologically by month and year for each county. The simplest possible form of filing birth registrations will aid materially in speeding up the work in searching the records of this unit.

Recommendation No. 4 (Administrative)

It is recommended that the correspondence filing system be thoroughly studied with a view of improving the conditions in this unit of the bureau.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 4.

Considerable difficulty has been experienced in a large

number of cases where there is any correspondence necessary in connection with an application. There have been numerous complaints where documentary evidence filed with the bureau which has been considered unsatisfactory or insufficient cannot be readily located after the applicant has submitted additional or corrective data as requested by the bureau and in some instances the applicants have been required to even re-submit the original data. This and other conditions in the correspondence unit have not only caused extra work, etc., contributing to the difficulties of the bureau, but have withheld and considerably delayed the issuance of birth certificates to many persons.

Recommendation No. 5 (Administrative)

It is recommended that the Prosecution Unit of the bureau be provided with the necessary facilities to frequently make spot checks in various counties to obtain prosecutions for violations of the law, especially by physicians and midwives, for their failure to properly file a complete and accurate birth certificate.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 5.

The bureau at present has an Investigation Unit, same having been established originally in 1927. For a number of years they conducted spot checks in the form of county surveys and found numerous births which had not been recorded. They likewise found where physicians would withhold the

filing of birth certificates and then periodically turn in large quantities of same. In many cases physicians admitted they were careless in filing these birth certificates. For a number of years this unit obtained frequent prosecutions, but according to information received from that unit they have not had the facilities to make these spot checks as they did formerly and there have been no prosecutions for failure to file birth certificates since June of 1940. (See page 31 for legislative recommendation No.14.)

It is quite evident that these violations of the law still continue in considerable volume. The Federal Bureau of the Census, when taking the 1940 Census, had their enumerators inquire in each household if there had been a birth during a certain number of months during that year. In each case where there was a birth the enumerator made the proper record of the birth and forwarded it to the Bureau of the Census. These reports from the State of Pennsylvania were compared with the transcription of the birth records furnished by the Bureau of Vital Statistics to the Bureau of the Census. During the period for which the Bureau of the Census made the special check they found births of several thousand persons in Pennsylvania which had not been reported to the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

Recommendation No. 6 (Administrative)

It is recommended that the number of registration districts in Pennsylvania be considerably reduced,

that the local registrars be more carefully selected as to their qualifications, that they be employed on a salary basis and that the turnover of appointments of local registrars be considerably reduced by instituting some form of tenure.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No.6.

At the present time there are over seven-hundred registration districts in the State. In practically all cases local registrars are paid on a fee basis and in most cases the annual remuneration is very low. The work is generally given to someone in each locality to make a small amount of extra money, along with their regular occupation. Local registrars are, in practically all cases, selected by local political leaders for appointment by the Department of Health, and in a large number of cases little or no consideration is given to their qualifications to effectively perform the work. Even, if qualified, the remuneration is so low that properly qualified persons quite frequently resign. This also adds to the turnover of local registrars. It is the opinion of the Commission that if the number of registration districts are considerably reduced, thereby making possible the increase in the remuneration, it will attract to these positions persons in all cases with sufficient qualifications to properly perform their duties.

Recommendation No. 7 (Administrative)

It is recommended that the bureau authorize the payment of no fees to any registrar for any certificates received in the bureau which are not complete in every essential detail, and satisfactorily legible. Also, that the bureau more closely supervise the field activities of the local registrars in properly carrying out their duties.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 7.

It has been pointed out in this report that the large number of incomplete and illegible records is a major contributing factor to the difficulties which have been experienced in the bureau. There is sufficient authority under the law to refuse payment of fees for incomplete or illegible records when filed with the bureau, and likewise for the local registrar to refuse acceptance of such incomplete or illegible birth certificates from physicians and midwives.

Recommendation No. 8 (Administrative)

It is recommended that the personnel of the bureau be reclassified, and in so far as possible, be put on a permanent salary basis and that rates of pay be properly established commensurate with the importance of the work being performed.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 8.

As has been previously pointed out in this report, one

of the major problems confronting the bureau has been the large turnover in personnel. This has been mainly due to low rates of pay which are not commensurate with the type of work being performed and having a large number of employes on a per diem basis rather than on a permanent salary basis. Not only has there been considerable turnover among the new employes, but many of the older employes have left the bureau to take positions at better rates of pay and with a greater degree of permanency.

Recommendation No. 9 (Administrative)

It is recommended that the Bureau of Vital Statistics impress upon physicians and midwives, by seeking cooperation through their State Associations, the importance of accurately spelling all names when filling out birth certificates.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 9.

Many birth records filed with the bureau by physicians have surnames spelled differently from the correct spelling as shown on the application. This has added considerably to the correction work necessary in the bureau.

Recommendation No. 10 (Administrative)

It is recommended that steps be taken immediately to have all records in the bureau microfilmed and that all future records as they are received in the bureau be microfilmed. Also, that facsimile certified copies be issued instead of hand written certified copies.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 10.

The importance of permanent preservation, especially of birth certificates filed in the bureau, cannot be over stressed. It is known that under the present provisions of the Social Security Act the certified copies of birth certificates will be widely used as a definite proof of date of birth when persons reach retirement age, which at present is 65 years. Some of the records which have come into the bureau since 1906 have now deteriorated to such an extent that the writing is hardly legible. This has been due to poor quality of paper frequently furnished by the bureau in past years instead of a high percentage rag content paper, and the fading of ink even though the law required the records be "written legibly in unfading ink." There has also been considerable wear and tear on some of the records due to continuous searching of the books since the start of the heavy demand for certified copies of birth certificates. It is, therefore, especially important that the existing records be microfilmed before they deteriorate further.

The 1941 amendment to the Administrative Code which legalized the microfilming of State records would give facsimile prints from microfilm sufficient legal status to meet all the requirements even though the original record filed with the bureau may become illegible or destroyed.

In making the recommendation to microfilm all present and also all future records as they come to the bureau it

would be advisable to make a duplicate set, one set to be kept in reserve in a fireproof vault and the other set to be used for making facsimilie type certified copies. When the existing records are microfilmed it would also be advisable, in so far as possible, to re-group the birth records into a uniform filing system.

Experience in the use of microfilming for both locating the proper record and making certified copies therefrom, clearly indicates that the work can be done much faster and far more economically than the present method wherein all certified copies are hand written. This saving in labor cost alone will justify the expense of microfilming all present records.

It is not believed that two sets of microfilmed records will be needed for searching and producing facsimilie copies. If the work is properly scheduled through the bureau one set of records will suffice for each scheduled search.

Even with war conditions requiring priority to obtain microfilming equipment and supplies, the importance of issuing certified copies of birth certificates in connection with employment in war industries is sufficiently important that the necessary priorities can no doubt be obtained to secure this equipment.

Recommendation No. 11 (Legislative)

It is recommended that the Vital Statistics law be amended to require physicians, midwives or any other person responsible for the filing of birth certificates to print in

unfading ink or typewrite all information on forms furnished by the bureau made of not less than 50% rag content paper.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 11.

While the law has always required all birth certificates to be "written legibly in unfading ink", examination of the records clearly indicates that the ink is badly faded on thousands of the records and while the writing may have been legible to the person making out the birth certificates, in a large number of cases it has not been legible to the personnel of the bureau whose duty it is to attempt to make certified copies thereof. By having the information printed or typewritten it will insure the record being legible to those making certified copies or to those receiving a facsimile.

Recommendation No. 12 (Legislative)

It is recommended that the law be amended to require physicians and midwives in attendance at any birth to be legally responsible, not only for the filing of a complete registration with the local registrar, but also be responsible for the filing of any supplementary information which was not originally available but which is necessary to complete the birth certificate.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 12.

The law, at present contains a provision requiring the local registrar, upon receipt of a birth certificate, to send the parent a copy of the information contained thereon

and requesting the parent to immediately notify the bureau of any errors or omissions on the certificate so the bureau can correct its records. This amendment to the act has resulted in some improvement in the accuracy and completeness of especially the more recent birth records. Parents, however, as a general rule, have been rather careless in reporting the necessary corrections. It is, therefore, believed advisable to center the responsibility for supplementary information with the physician, midwife or other person responsible for filing the birth certificate.

Recommendation No. 13 (Legislative)

It is recommended that the law be amended to require physicians and midwives, who have failed under the provisions of the law in the past to file a birth certificate, to furnish the necessary affidavit or other data when requested to do so, to assist any person to establish a record of their birth without any cost whatsoever to the applicant. Also, that furnishing of such information shall in no way relieve the physician or midwife for failure to file a birth certificate under the provisions of the law.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 13.

Information obtained in the bureau indicates that there have been many complaints on the part of applicants that physicians have charged their regular office visit fee when the physician furnished them with an affidavit as to their birth. There have been other complaints that in some

instances physicians did not file a birth certificate due to nonpayment of their fee for delivery.

Recommendation No. 14 (Legislative)

It is recommended that violations of the Vital Statistics Law be made a misdemeanor instead of a summary conviction and that the penalties be increased.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 14.

Prior to the amendment to the Vital Statistics Law in 1929, P. L. 81, any violation of the law was a misdemeanor punishable by fine ranging from five to one-hundred dollars, and in some cases imprisonment of as many as sixty days, or both. The 1929 amendment eliminated these penal provisions and substituted a summary conviction before a magistrate, carrying a fine of from five to fifty dollars, or in default, a jail sentence of not more than thirty days. It is believed penalties similar to those prior to the 1929 amendment should be restored to the act and with strict enforcement by the enforcement unit it will act as a stronger deterrent in reducing the violations and carelessness which have caused so much trouble to persons now attempting to obtain certified copies of their birth certificate. This is especially necessary due to the two year statute of limitations on summary convictions. In most instances these violations for failure to file a birth certificate are not known to the person involved until they apply for a certified copy, generally seventeen or more years after date of birth.

Recommendation No. 15 (Legislative)

It is recommended that the law be amended to permit the bureau to use a "short form" certified copy of birth certificate containing only name of child, date and place of birth, age of parents at time of birth, and date of filing of birth certificate.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 15.

By far the greatest need for a certified copy of a birth certificate is to establish age and place of birth. If a "short form" of certified copy is used certifying this essential information it will save considerable cost to the bureau as long as certified copies are hand written, and also save considerable embarrassment to applicants in many cases, especially cases of illegitimacy. The bureau estimates that at the present time they receive applications for certified copies of birth certificates of approximately five hundred cases per month where the records indicate illegitimacy of birth.

Recommendation No. 16 (Legislative)

It is recommended that whenever any court grants a decree changing the spelling or in any other manner changing any part of the full name of any person born since January 1, 1906, that the clerk of such court shall, within ten days, file a certified copy of the decree with the State Bureau of Vital Statistics. Also that the Bureau of Vital Statistics shall immediately make the necessary changes on the birth certificate of such person on file in the bureau.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 16.

It has been the experience in the bureau that in many cases names or the spelling thereof have been changed by court action and before correcting the birth records it has been necessary for the applicant to obtain certified copies of the court decree. Also, in many cases the name was changed when applicant was a child and upon making application no record of birth was found under the name in which he applied.

Recommendation No. 17 (Legislative)

It is recommended that the law be amended to specifically require immediate registration with the Bureau of Vital Statistics of all babies taken into foundling homes.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 17.

It has been found in the past that many persons applying for birth certificates were raised in foundling homes and no registration of their birth has been recorded with the Bureau of Vital Statistics, thereby causing such persons undue difficulty in obtaining a certified copy of birth certificate. The law at present does not specifically cover foundling homes.

Recommendation No. 18 (Legislative)

It is recommended that the law be amended to require the State to pay the fees of all local registrars throughout the State in the same manner as they are now paying registrars fees in the cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation 18.

At present under the law the State pays the fees for

registration of all births and deaths in the cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh upon certification by the State registrar to the State Treasurer. Whereas the fees for registration of births and deaths in all other parts of the State are paid by the Treasurer of the county in which the birth or death occurred upon certification by the State registrar.

The original Vital Statistics Law provided a fee of twenty-five cents for each birth and death certificate, sent to the bureau by local registrars, to be paid for by the treasurer of the counties in which the birth or death occurred. However, the law provided that in the cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh if the local registrar occupied the office of City Clerk, Health Officer or any other local office, and received a fixed salary as local officer, he would be paid seven cents for each birth and death certificate, or if he was not a local officer and not receiving a salary but was furnished by the city with suitable office room for carrying out his duties as local registrar, he would receive a fee of ten cents for each birth or death certificate, such fee being paid by the State. The act of 1921, P. L. 181 amended the Vital Statistics Law and increased the fee in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh to twenty-five cents, striking out the provisions concerning the local registrar being an employe of the city or being furnished office space, etc. The act of 1927, P. L. 859 again amended the Vital Statistics Law and increased the registrars fee from twenty-five to fifty cents throughout the State, including registrars in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. No one, especially since the fees have been made uniform, has been able to give any logical reason why the State pays the

registration fees in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh but the counties pay the registrars fees throughout the remainder of the State.

It is the opinion of the Commission that since the State receives all revenue for furnishing certified copies of birth and death registrations and appoints all local registrars, they should pay the fees of local registrars in all parts of the State as well as in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

The registration fees for the State outside of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh for the years of 1939-40 and 41 amounted to approximately \$309,000, or an average of \$103,000 per year. There has been a slight increase for the year 1942 and these same fees are estimated to be about \$107,000. This would mean on the basis of 1942 an expenditure by the State for the next biennium of approximately \$215,000 for the payment of these fees for the various counties in addition to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Recommendation No. 19 (Legislative)

It is recommended that the law be amended to eliminate the fee of \$2.50 charged by the bureau for filing a "delayed birth registration" of persons born since January 1, 1906.

Findings and Conclusions to Recommendation No. 19.

In all cases where it is necessary for a person, born since January 1, 1906, to file a "delayed registration" of his birth it is due almost entirely to the attending physician, midwife or other person responsible therefor, having failed, at the time of birth to file a birth certificate.

In a few cases it is possibly due to the failure of the bureau to locate the record. Had a birth certificate been filed at the time of his birth, as required by law, no charge would have been made for filing and the State or county would even have paid the registrar's fees. It is certainly no fault of the applicant. It is also important to the bureau to have these additional birth records and it receives all fees for certified copies thereof.

It is the opinion of the Commission, that for these reasons and due to the fact the applicant is subjected to other expenses such as affidavits, etc., also delay and inconvenience, in preparing a "delayed birth registration" for filing, that no filing fee therefor should be charged.

FINAL

The Bureau of Vital Statistics is performing a very important function, not only now as a part of the war effort, but will, in the future, be one of the most important bureaus of the State Government.

It is the opinion of the Commission that these legislative and administrative recommendations should be immediately adopted. Also, that after the adoption of these recommendations the bureau will be able to operate more efficiently and at a much lower per unit cost in rendering its major service, namely the issuance of certified copies of birth and death certificates.

DESCRIPTION OF PRODUCTION SCHEDULING PLANDisposal of Average Application. (Delayed Type Not Included)

Information received from the bureau indicates that of each one-hundred original applications, approximately seventy are found to be properly indexed, which insures a record being in the file, making possible the issuance of a certified copy. The remaining thirty require special search of the registration records by consulting the record books for the proper registration districts of the proper year. Of these thirty applications the special search operation locates the records of approximately ten for which a certified copy can then be issued, and no record is found for the remainder and accordingly these twenty applicants are furnished with the necessary forms for filing "delayed birth registrations."

Operation of Production Scheduling System:

This system can be operated regardless of the number of applications received, providing sufficient personnel for each operation is available to handle the volume of work allowing for a certain percentage of day to day fluctuation in volume so that sharp sudden increases can be handled either on schedule or be absorbed by overtime.

During November 1942 the bureau received approximately 34,000 applications, 65% or 22,100 of which were received by mail and the remainder or 11,900 were personal applications made to the bureau. The bureau works seven and one-half hours per day, or about 155 hours per month. On this basis the volume of applications per hourly cycle to be processed would be about 220.

At the end of each hour all personal applications received at the office during the hour for which the formal application had been entered and written up in the bureau, plus additional mail applications similarly entered and written up sufficient to make up the full hourly quantity (220), should be sorted alphabetically by those years which are indexed and sent to the Index Unit. Any applications for those years having no index should be sorted in the same order as the registration records for those years are filed and be immediately sent to the record room and assigned to the special searchers.

The personnel of the Index Unit should, in so far as possible, have the same years assigned them on each hourly cycle as this, to some degree, will enable them to become

more familiar with their respective indexes. These applications, after being checked by the Index Unit should then be re-sorted in the same order as the registration records for those years are filed and then be sent to the record room, keeping those for which an index is found (70% or 154) separate from the remainder.

These 154 should be turned over to routine record searchers and given preferred access to the registration records. The remainder should be turned over to the special searchers. The searchers, both routine and special should, in so far as possible, have the same group of records assigned them on each hourly cycle. This will enable them to become more familiar with the names, spelling and handwriting on the records. Each searcher assigned to a certain group of records should go through those records in the same sequence on each hourly cycle. This will permit the first record books searched to be sent to and returned from the certified copy writers in sufficient time to be back in place for the beginning of the next hourly search. The special searchers, when searching records in those years for which there was an index that did not contain names as shown on applications thereby requiring a special search, should follow up the routine searchers as closely as possible so they can make the special search in the books before these books go to certified copy writers. This special search generally locates about one-third or (22) records which were not indexed. By following this procedure no one registration book will be needed by searchers or certified copy writers more than once in each hourly cycle.

The 20% or (44) applications for which no record is found should be marked "no record" and then disposed of as follows: Fifteen (15) representing the 35% made by personal application should be returned to the office after which such applicant should be given a "delayed birth registration" form with instructions for filing same. The twenty-nine (29) received by mail should be turned over to some person whose duty it is to send the applicant a form letter along with a "delayed birth registration" form and instructions for filing same. These forty-four (44) applications should then be sent to the Delayed Birth Registration Unit and filed alphabetically awaiting return of the "delayed birth registration" by the applicant.

The certified copy writers, in so far as possible, should have the same group of books assigned to them on each hourly cycle. This to some degree will enable them to become more familiar with spelling of names, handwriting of physicians, etc., in certain localities. The certified copy writers should also complete the certified copies in the various books in the same sequence as the books were searched so the group of books needed first in the next hourly search will be returned to the file room in sufficient

time. Each certified copy writer should also be provided with a rubber stamp to stamp the word "error" on each application which contains any information different from that shown on the record and certified copy. As the certified copies are completed all those for applications marked "office" should be returned to the office for personal delivery to the applicant. All completed certified copies for applications received by mail should be sent to a mailing unit with sufficient personnel to see that all such certified copies completed in each hourly cycle are prepared for mailing.

In all cases, both in the office and in the mailing unit where the word "error" is stamped on the application, a correction form with instructions should be attached to the certified copy. By having the certified copy writer stamp the word "error" on the application it will obviate the necessity of someone again comparing the application with the certified copy.

After returning all certified copies to applicants, whether at the office or by mailing, the applications therefor should be re-sorted hourly in accordance with the needs of the Accounting Division and returned thereto for final close-out.

Correction Unit:

The work in the Correction Unit should be properly sorted and the personnel of the Correction Unit should schedule their work in such a manner that they will remove books from their proper places in the record room when they will be least needed by the searchers. When such books are removed from the record room a charge-out card should be used so that the searchers will know the exact person in the Correction Unit who has the book. If at any time the volume of work of the Correction Unit is such that it interferes with the scheduled work of the searchers then such correction work should be done during hours when the records are not in use by the searchers. This unit should also be provided with sufficient correspondent typists to currently handle all correspondence necessary in connection with obtaining necessary additional documentary evidence for corrections.

A policy should be established and strictly adhered to which will require anyone in any phase of work in the bureau, when examining the birth records to come to the record room for such examination instead of removing the record book therefrom.

Delayed Birth Certificates:

The processing of completed applications for delayed birth registrations received in the bureau is principally a procedure of comparing the information contained on the registration form with the documentary evidence accompanying the application and the examination of the documentary evidence itself to determine its authenticity and acceptability. The daily volume of this work should be divided among a sufficient number of examiners so that it can be kept on a current hourly basis for those received at the window and on a daily basis for those received by mail. This is likewise true of the number of delayed birth registration copy writers. This unit should also be provided with sufficient correspondent typists to currently handle all correspondence necessary in connection with obtaining necessary additional documentary evidence for processing delayed birth registrations.

Physical Setup of the Bureau:

The bureau should be physically arranged so that all work can be performed in the proper sequence with a minimum amount of travel by personnel and movement of records between the various units in the bureau.
