

# A Few Historical Facts about Michigan's Water Problems

Excerpts taken from: Fugate, Sandy. *For the Benefit of All: A History of Philanthropy in America*. Michigan: W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 1997.

Besides poverty, Michigan cities had many other problems. Near the top of the list were poor or nonexistent streets, inadequate sewage treatment facilities and crime. Contaminated water supplies were a growing concern and often contributed to regional epidemics. East Saginaw alone would spend more than \$500,000 on sewage facilities between 1866 and 1889. (pp. 44-45)

Other political manifestations of the Progressive era included public ownership of many utilities and improvements in government health standards...Corruption in politics and business had led to epidemics, such as typhoid, in some U.S. cities where privately-owned water companies had lobbied for and obtained political approval-formal or otherwise-for lax water-quality standards. Progressivism was, in part, the public's way of saying it had had enough of government's failure to act. (p. 57)

1. After reading these statements, what do think should have been done to protect people from contaminated water supplies?

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2. Do you think that Michigan has a water contamination/pollution problem in this day and time? Why or why not?

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