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# The Healthiest City: Milwaukee And The Politics Of Health Reform



## Synopsis

Between 1850 and 1900, Milwaukee's rapid population growth also gave rise to high death rates, infectious diseases, crowded housing, filthy streets, inadequate water supplies, and incredible stench. The Healthiest City shows how a coalition of reform groups brought about community education and municipal action to achieve for Milwaukee the title of "the healthiest city" by the 1930s. This highly praised book reminds us that cutting funds and regulations for preserving public health results in inconvenience, illness, and even death. "A major work. . . . Leavitt focuses on three illustrative issues—smallpox, garbage, and milk, representing the larger areas of infectious disease, sanitation, and food control." Norman Gevitz, Journal of the American Medical Association "Leavitt's research provides additional evidence . . . that improvements in sanitation, living conditions, and diet contributed more to the overall decline in mortality rates than advances in medical practice. . . . A solid contribution to the history of urban reform politics and public health." Jo Ann Carrigan, Journal of American History

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A model study of its kind." "Choice

Between 1850 and the turn of the century, the population of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, exploded from 20,000 to nearly 300,000. The city's quick growth brought with it all of the problems of nineteenth-century urbanization: high death rates, infectious diseases, crowded housing, filthy streets, inadequate water supplies, and incredible stench. The Healthiest City, now available in

paperback, shows how a coalition of reform supporters - including business people, clergy, women's groups, professionals, trade-union Socialists, Populists, and reform Republicans - united to demand community education and public responsibility to achieve for Milwaukee the title of "the healthiest city" by the 1930s. In her new preface, Judith Walzer Leavitt notes that the 1993 cryptosporidiosis outbreak revealed that Milwaukeeans - and Americans in general in recent years - have paid decreasing attention to the machinery that keeps our cities operating and our citizens healthy. The bill for disinvesting in public health is paid by the public in inconvenience, in illness, and even in death.

Leavitt's *Healthiest City* provides one of the only comprehensive reviews of the history of public health in Milwaukee. While the topic may seem obscure, public health in U.S. cities has played a prominent role in both the formation of political policies and the quality of life in our urban areas. Leavitt's book takes a look at the importance of public health in a city once slated as "America's Healthiest".

I have to say that this is one of the best books that I've ever read. Once you start reading the healthiest city, you won't wanna put it down. I enjoy the fact that the author talked about the problems Milwaukee was facing and how the city officials were able to solve those problems. The problems ranged from garbage, smallpox, milk and many others. This book can truly enlighten one's knowledge. I truly recommend it.

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