



NOTICE OF THE REQUIREMENT OF VACCINATION Registrar's District of Plymouth, 1897

This notice was given to the parents of a child called Vera Marian Atwill when they registered her birth in Plymouth in 1897. It instructs them that they must have her vaccinated against smallpox within three months, or face a penalty under the 1871 Vaccination Act.

Smallpox was a highly infectious disease that killed about 5% of adults who caught it and up to 70% of children. It began with a fever and a rash that spread all over the body. The rash turned into pustules, then scabs. When these fell off they often left deep scars.

The letter gives the names of registered public vaccinators in the area and when and where vaccinations can be obtained. Registered vaccinators were doctors paid by the government to administer vaccinations.

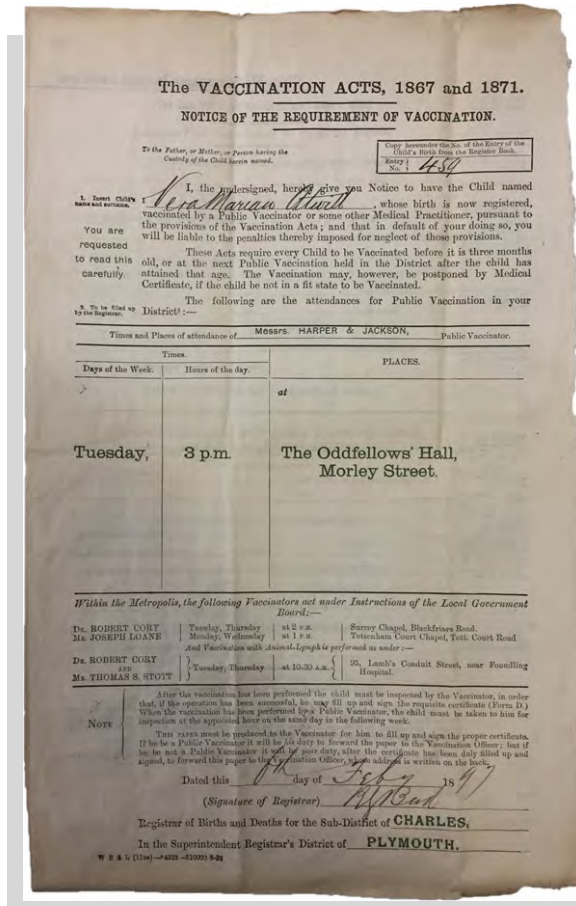
The 1853 Vaccination Act made vaccination of children compulsory. Vaccination was free to parents and paid for by the taxpayer. Today we are used to this idea but at the time people had to pay for their own medical care and there was no national healthcare system.

Some people objected to compulsory vaccination, including inoculators who earned money by administering a riskier form of smallpox prevention called variolation. The 1867 Vaccination Act outlawed variolation, introducing prison sentences for anyone who attempted to inoculate another person. The 1871 Act confirmed that vaccination of children was compulsory, as was enforcement of the £1 fine for not vaccinating your child. This was a large fine; at the time a factory worker, shop assistant or office clerk might earn only £25 a year.

The enforcement of fines was very unpopular. Some parents worried about safety, others objected because they thought the choice to vaccinate should be theirs, not the government's. They faced increasing fines and possible imprisonment if they did not comply.

A Royal Commission was set up to investigate the issue in 1889 resulting in the 1898 Act (the year after the date of this notice) introducing an exemption for conscientious objectors to vaccination.

Smallpox vaccination was ultimately successful in Britain and around the world. The disease was finally eradicated in 1979.



John Johnson Collection, Public Services, Box 5, 1-b

Questions

1. Make a list of points in favour of compulsory smallpox vaccination, and another of reasons why some people objected to it.
2. The notice states that vaccinations took place at Oddfellows' Hall. This was a meeting place for a society of traders. Why did they not take place at a local clinic or health centre?
3. It took 125 years for vaccination to eradicate smallpox in the UK, but only 28 years to eradicate polio. What changes made this improvement possible?

FURTHER READING

History of smallpox vaccination article from the Science Museum:
<https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/medicine/smallpox-and-story-vaccination>

NOTICE OF THE REQUIREMENT OF VACCINATION

Registrar's District of Plymouth, 1897

The VACCINATION ACTS, 1867 and 1871.

NOTICE OF THE REQUIREMENT OF VACCINATION.

To the Father, or Mother, or Person having the
Custody of the Child herein named.

Copy hereunder the No. of the Entry of the
Child's Birth from the Register Book.

Entry
No. 454

1. Insert Child's
name and surname.

You are
requested
to read this
carefully.

I, the undersigned, hereby give you Notice to have the Child named
Neva Maria O'Connell, whose birth is now registered,
vaccinated by a Public Vaccinator or some other Medical Practitioner, pursuant to
the provisions of the Vaccination Acts; and that in default of your doing so, you
will be liable to the penalties thereby imposed for neglect of those provisions.

These Acts require every Child to be Vaccinated before it is three months
old, or at the next Public Vaccination held in the District after the child has
attained that age. The Vaccination may, however, be postponed by Medical
Certificate, if the child be not in a fit state to be Vaccinated.

The following are the attendances for Public Vaccination in your
District:—

Times and Places of attendance of		Messrs. HARPER & JACKSON,	Public Vaccinator.
Times.		PLACES.	
Days of the Week.	Hours of the day.	at	
Tuesday,	3 p.m.	The Oddfellows' Hall, Morley Street.	

Within the Metropolis, the following Vaccinators act under Instructions of the Local Government
Board:—

Dr. ROBERT CORY	Tuesday, Thursday	at 2 P.M.	Surrey Chapel, Blackfriars Road.
Mr. JOSEPH LOANE	Monday, Wednesday	at 1 P.M.	Tottenham Court Chapel, Tott. Court Road.
<i>And Vaccination with Animal-Lymph is performed as under:—</i>			
Dr. ROBERT CORY AND Mr. THOMAS S. STOTT	Tuesday, Thursday	at 10.30 A.M.	95, Lamb's Conduit Street, near Foundling Hospital.

NOTE

After the vaccination has been performed the child must be inspected by the Vaccinator, in order
that, if the operation has been successful, he may fill up and sign the requisite certificate (Form D.)
When the vaccination has been performed by a Public Vaccinator, the child must be taken to him for
inspection at the appointed hour on the same day in the following week.

THIS PAPER must be produced to the Vaccinator for him to fill up and sign the proper certificate.
If he be a Public Vaccinator it will be his duty to forward the paper to the Vaccination Officer; but if
he be not a Public Vaccinator it will be your duty, after the certificate has been duly filled up and
signed, to forward this paper to the Vaccination Officer, whose address is written on the back.

Dated this 17th day of July 1897

(Signature of Registrar) *Charles*

Registrar of Births and Deaths for the Sub-District of **CHARLES,**

In the Superintendent Registrar's District of **PLYMOUTH.**