Ninety years and counting! While the Bureau of Laboratories was officially established in 1928, there were several public health milestones that led to its creation.

In the early to mid-1800s, Texas was hit by epidemics of cholera, smallpox, and yellow fever. During this time, campfire tales were told about odd animal behavior, which are now attributed to rabies. It was becoming evident that public health measures were necessary!

In 1896, the Texas State Health Officer requested $2,000 per year to hire a chemist to analyze drinking water and a bacteriologist to perform microscopy on bacteriological specimens. This was the beginning of public health testing in Texas. The early 1900s saw the Pasteur Institute of Texas created to aid in the diagnosis of rabies in pets and other animals. The Pure Food Commission was also established to analyze food. In 1912, an official Bacteriology Laboratory was established, and 1,082 tests were performed that year.

A consolidation of the Pasteur Institute of Texas, Texas Dairy and Food Commission, and the Bacteriology Laboratory led to the creation of the Texas Bureau of Laboratories. The newfound bureau was located in a new two-story, red brick building at 5th and Trinity Streets in downtown Austin. Over time, the laboratory grew in specimen volume, budget, and even building size. By 1946, the laboratory processed 160,324 specimens annually and had an operating budget of $200,000. By 1998, the laboratory processed nearly 1.5 million specimens each year! By 2003, the laboratory relocated to a new, seven-story facility in central Austin to begin its next chapter of history.

STAY TUNED FOR PART 2 OF 2
FOR YEARS 2003—2018