Dr. Jos. Smith, City Health Director, Dead

Dr. Joseph Smith of Providence, an energetic, loquacious man who had devoted most of his life to public health, died of cancer last night in Rhode Island Hospital. He was 68.

Dr. Smith retired last June 5 city registrar and director of health, posts he had held since 949.

Dr. Smith specialized in the battle against communicable diseases and his conquests here included typhoid fever, diphtheria and polio.

He was a respected authority in his field, but despite official demands on his time he was active in numerous civic and charitable organizations.

In recent years, he had been hospitalized several times for treatment of heart ailments and cancer. He was last admitted to Rhode Island Hospital on Monday.

Dr. Smith had been associated with the city health department for about 40 years. As a young man he was associated with the late Dr. Charles V. Chapin and he once said that Dr. Chapin inspired him to carry on the never-ending fight against disease and epidemic.

Dr. Smith's $12,973-a-year post as health director carried immense responsibility. His department, before the state assumed control of local health services last July, was the largest and best organized in Rhode Island.

It supervised inspection of milk and public dining places. Dr. Smith kept a close watch on restaurants, lodging, board and rooming houses, some of which, he said, were "pest holes."

His department handled half of all the birth certificates issued in Rhode Island and a high percentage of the state's marriage licenses.

But, in his philosophy, his responsibility extended far beyond the field of pure medicine.

Dr. Smith was an early advocate of the state assuming control of all municipal health services. But he at first opposed a state take-over of the Chapin Hospital. He later modified his position and said he would not object to a state take-over of the hospital if the hospital were to retain its emphasis on the treatment of contagious dis-



Dr. Joseph Smith

He said there would be difficulty in getting contagious disease patients admitted to general hospitals, and he felt that they should be admitted to Chapin.

Resigns Post

When the state finally did take over health services, Dr. Smith resigned his city post with this explanation:

"It's simple. I'll be saving the state money and I'll be saving the city money. This is just what I've been trying to do for all these years."

Dr. Smith was born in San Francisco on Oct. 8, 1898, a son of the late Charles and Esther (Koppelman) Smith. When he was a small child his parents moved to Boston and then to Providence.

He was graduated from the Candace Street Grammar School, Classical High School and received his bachelor of arts degree from Brown University in 1920. While studying at Brown, he got a job through Dr. Chapin working in his spare time at city hall.

His work gave him an opportunity to watch the superintendent of health at first hand and it was during this period that he decided to specialize in the field.

While at Brown, he was drafted into the Student Army Training Corps and was slated to report to the Field Artillery School at Camp Zachary Taylor in Louisville, Ky. A last-minute change assigned him to the Sanitary Corps and enabled him to complete his pre-medical studies.

Dr. Smith went on to Harvard Medical School. He was graduated in 1924 and interned at Western Pennsylvania Hospital in Pittsburgh and then for nine months at Providence City Hospital.

Takes City Job

On April 1, 1926, he took a job in the Providence Health Department as assistant to Dr. Chapin and on Jan. 7, 1929 was appointed first deputy superintendent of health and deputy city registrar. In 1940 he was called into federal service and assigned to Manchester Air Base at Manchester, N.H. He was promoted from captain to major and was graduated in December from the Medical Field Service School at Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania.

He served at various Air Richardson.

In March, 1935, after the city council had asked the General Assembly to separate the position of superintendent of the Chapin Hospital from that of superintendent of health, Dr. Smith became a candidate for the health job. By that time he had become a fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine of London, one of the few life members of the American Public Health Association and an early diplomate of the National Board of Medical Examiners. However, the superintendency went to Dr. Michael J. Nestor, who had been nominated by city council Democrats.

As an officer in the Army Medical Corps, Dr. Smith in Force bases until December, 1943, when he became attached to the 100th General Hospital Unit and went overseas to England, to Paris, into the Rhineland and finally into Austria.

In February, 1946, Dr. Smith, his Army service over, returned to his desk in city hall. Less than three years later, on Jan. 3, 1949, the then Mayor Dennis J. Roberts appointed him superintendent of health and city registrar. He had been acting superintendent since the retirement a few weeks previously of Dr. Nestor.

Dr. Smith was instrumental in establishing Boy Scout Troop No. 20 at Temple Emanu-El, where he was active in the religious school.

In February, Dr. Smith received the LaFarge Interracial Award given annually by the Catholic Interracial Council to a person who has promoted the cause of human brotherhood.

His Memberships

He had served as secretary of the Jewish Family Welfare Society, treasurer of Roger Williams Lodge B'nai B'rith as a board member of the Jewish Federation of Social Service, and as secretary of the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Providence. He was a past president of Providence Zionist District and a member of Jewish War Veterans Post No. 23.

He was a past commander of Providence Municipal Post, American Legion, a past president of the Rhode Island Public Health Association and he served on a commission named by former Gov. Christopher Del Sesto to work out details of a proposed shift of local health services to the state.

Dr. Smith was secretary of the Providence Board of Hospital Commissioners and held membership in the Providence Medical Society, the Rhode Island Medical Society, the Jacobi Medical Club of Providence, the Massachusetts Association of Boards of Health, St. Andrew's Lodge, F. & A.M.; Providence Royal Arch Chapter, Providence Council of Social Agencies.

He had been a member of the Providence Floating Hospital Association and was a member of the corporation of Rhode Island Hospital, a member of the board of managers of the Providence District Nursing Association and a fellow of the American Medical Association.

Dr. Smith lived at 281 Olney St. with his wife, Dr. Clara (Loitman) Smith. The two were married in August, 1932. Mrs. Smith then was pediatrician in charge of the department of clinics in the Boston Public Schools.

Survivors are Mrs. Smith; two sons, Charles W. of New York City, and David L. of Cincinnati, Ohio; two daughters, Mrs. Eugene E. Baker of Louisville, Ky. and Mrs. Gerald D. Weintraub of Newton, Mass.; two sisters, Mrs. William Raffel of Norwalk, Conn. and Mrs. Lazare Bawley of Herzlia by the Sea, Israel; and eight grandchildren.

The funeral will be held Sunday at 2:30 p.m. at Temple

SMITH, DR. JOS.