

1844-1994



*Our*

*Medical*

*Heritage*



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# *Our Medical Heritage*



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Lancaster City & County Medical Society

## Section 2

# *Lancaster City & County Medical Society Celebrates 150 Years*





*Chapter 18*  
*Medical Heritage Tour of*  
*Southern Lancaster County*

*The Lancaster City & County Medical Society*

*Sunday, June 26, 1994*

Seventy physicians and their spouses gathered at Rock Ford on a sunny Sunday afternoon, June 26, 1994 to enjoy a medical heritage tour of southern Lancaster County. Their excursion began with a visit of Rock Ford, the 18th century home of General Edward Hand.

General Hand was a physician who came to Lancaster from his native country, Ireland, to practice medicine. He joined the Continental Army in 1795 and in 1781 became the Adjutant General to General George Washington. He moved to Rock Ford in 1793 where he died in 1802. Dr. Edwin Atlee studied under Dr. Hand and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Medical Department in 1804.

Three physicians who became well known were born in southern Lancaster County. We visited the ancestral home of Dr. John H. Musser, Professor of Medicine at University of Pennsylvania and later President of the American Medical Association in 1903-4; the birthplace of Dr. John B. Deaver, a famous surgeon at Lankenau Hospital who became the Professor of Surgery at University of Pennsylvania; and the birthplace of Dr. D. Hayes Agnew, Professor of Surgery at University of Pennsylvania.

Imagine living in the era before anesthesia, antisepsis, the discovery of bacteria and the germ theory of infectious diseases. In southern Lancaster County, the telephone came into being about 1900; the automobile arrived about 1910, but the roads were not improved until after 1930; and electricity first became available after 1910. Every small village was almost self-sufficient with its own general store, doctor, post office and blacksmith or garage.

The tour continued as we visited the:

**Home and office of Dr. Benjamin Musser** - Dr. Musser had no formal medical education or training, but appeared on the 1800 census as a physician. The original house was built about 1750. Dr. Musser constructed an addition about 1800 which included an office and a three cubicle hospital. Dr. Musser had two sons, five grandsons and five great grandsons (all of whom had medical degrees), who practiced medicine.

**Birthplace of Dr. John B. Deaver** - Dr. Joshua Deaver practiced medicine at the Buck for over 50 years and was known as the "Father of Physicians" since he had three sons, who were physicians. All three of them became surgeons and practiced in Philadelphia. Dr. John B. Deaver became a famous and flamboyant surgeon at Lankenau Hospital and was appointed professor of surgery at University of Pennsylvania. He was known as "The Professor."





**First home and office of Dr. Benjamin Sides** - Dr. Sides was a Civil War surgeon, who performed many surgical procedures on patients in the homes of southern Lancaster County with Dr. James Peoples. It is said that he performed the first appendectomy on a patient, Sarah Shade, in 1890. She survived and lived many years.



**Second home and office of Dr. Benjamin Sides** - It is

said Dr. Sides kept patients in the third floor of this home. There was a fire in this house and the third story was never rebuilt. He treated Welsh people, who were brought here to quarry Peach Bottom slate, on both sides of the Susquehanna River.



**Home and office of Dr. Charles Stubbs** - Dr. Jeremiah Stubbs was his father and began his medical practice in the vicinity of Wakefield in 1827. Dr. Charles Stubbs was a Civil War surgeon and was a collector of rocks and Indian relics. His house and office had one front entrance. Patients entered the front door and turned to the left; friends and social visitors entered the same door and turned to the right. He took a train excursion from Westbrook Station near his home to the Shenandoah Valley, Luray Caverns, Washington, D.C. and return for \$6.40. His son, Dr. Ambrose Stubbs concluded the three consecutive generations of Drs. Stubbs to practice medicine in Wakefield.



**Home and office of Dr. James Peoples** - You can see where the second door had been in the front of this house - the door through which patients entered his office. He raised and trained horses at "The Ranch" near the Mason-Dixon line and sold many to other physicians.

**Home and office of Dr. Ambrose Stubbs** -

The third generation of Drs. Stubbs started his practice in Wakefield in 1896. He placed curtains at the sides of his sleigh to break the wind, had a charcoal foot warmer and carried wire cutters to cut down fences so he could cross the fields when the roads were impassable. He charged 25 cents for an office visit and \$1 for a house call - \$1.25 over 10 miles. Dr. Stubbs made house calls all day and ate lunch wherever he happened to be. He carried medical supplies in his saddle bags, made finger splints from cigar boxes, and administered chloroform when it was needed. He had office hours Saturday nights and Sundays.





**Historical monument honoring Dr. David Ramsay** - (His birthplace was destroyed in 1920). Dr. Ramsay was truly a medical giant in the 18th century in America. He was very influential during the Revolutionary War, chaired the Congress under the Articles of Confederation and guided the formation of our Republic as both an author and a statesman. He studied under Dr. Rush at the University of Pennsylvania and in his letter of introduction to the people of South Carolina, Dr. Rush said of David Ramsay, "He is far superior to any person we ever graduated at our college." His oratory was much in demand throughout the colonies and early nation. Dr. Ramsay was called "The Father of American History" because he wrote and published many celebrated and historical books.

**Home and office of Dr. Harry C. Zimmerly** - Dr. Zimmerly brought notoriety to medicine in southern Lancaster County. This house was known as the "House of Horrors" where unprofessional operations (the name given to illegal abortions) were performed. A woman who died under his care was incinerated. Dr. Zimmerly was indicted for performing an unprofessional operation which resulted in her death.



**Home and office of Dr. Robert Vaux Raub** - Dr. Raub was the son of Dr. Henry Raub, the first burgess of Quarryville. When Dr. Robert V. Raub died, the Quarryville Sun said of him:

"His funeral and the manifestations of heartfelt grief and personal loss by the hundreds in attendance, strikingly illustrated the simple life of the country doctor and the affectionate relations that exist in the rural district between the man who ministers to their physical wants and the people to whom he ministers. The life of a country doctor is sacrifice. His fees are small and his hours are long. No night is too dark, nor no storm too tempestuous for him to brave. He catches sleep as he climbs the steepest hills, and his faithful horse neighs at the stable door to tell him he's at home. He knows no luxury of office hours, nor specializes on any one disease. He reduces the fractured limb and oftentimes soothes the broken heart. He responds to the call of the poor, and never takes advantage of the well to do. In his laborious work, he is seldom seen in a house of worship but in the love of his profession and the nobility of his practice he seems to walk with God... If St. Peter honors a pass, it is when the weary country doctor knocks for admission and begs for rest."

**Home and office of Drs. Charles Helm & Robert Helm** - Dr. Charles Helm practiced medicine in Georgetown from 1887 until 1921 when he moved into this home and office in Quarryville. Dr. Robert Helm, a nephew, started his practice in Quarryville in this building in 1948.







**Home and office of Drs. Thaddeus Rohrer, Charles Bair and Marshall Steele** - All three physicians used this building for their office at different times. Dr. Thaddeus Rohrer began his medical practice in 1881. He started the first drugstore in Quarryville at the suggestion of Dr. Joshua Deaver. Dr. Rohrer's daughter, Mrs. Gilbert tells the story of her father and his trouble with his prostate gland.

He went to see his old friend, Dr. John B. Deaver, in Philadelphia. It was agreed that he should have surgery and his wife went to Philadelphia with him. A few days after the surgery, Dr. Deaver asked Mrs. Rohrer to observe him do surgery in the amphitheater (pit) in front of the students. With considerable reluctance she accepted. The students were sitting in the front and she, Sue, was in the back of the large auditorium when Dr. Deaver held up the mesentery from the abdomen of the patient being operated upon and said, "This looks just like the molasses at the Buck, doesn't it, Sue?" Mrs. Rohrer was most embarrassed.

*Dr. Charles Bair* was "Family Physician of the Year" in 1961. He had a chauffeur for 25 years from 1935-60, traveled 35,000 miles a year and wore out 25 cars.

*Dr. Donald Witmer* who practiced with Dr. Bair for a year said Dr. Bair told him he should take certain precautions for his car: Weld a 1/4 inch steel plate on the bottom of the oil pan to keep the plug from being knocked out and the oil drained; carry a set of chains, shovel, rug, sand or ashes and carry bailing wire to reconnect the hose if it got torn by stones.

**Office of Drs. Amos and John Helm, Sr.** - Drs. Helm practiced over 115 years in southern Lancaster County. Dr. Amos Helm began his medical practice in 1868. The creek was high and water was running over the bridge. His horse slipped off of the bridge. Amos was rescued from branches of a tree by the local mail carrier. His son, Dr. John Helm, Sr., first used an automobile in his practice in 1913 but, because of the poor roads, continued to use the horse and carriage in the winter until 1923. Many physicians of this era removed fence rails and placed them in the muddy ruts in the road for their carriage or automobile.



**Home of Dr. William Wentz** - Dr. Wentz had a separate building, no longer in existence, for his office to protect his family from infectious diseases. He had two sons who became physicians. Dr. Charles Wentz returned to New Providence to



practice medicine after his father died in 1902. He contracted typhoid fever and died a few years later. Dr. Frank Wentz had a large medical practice in Philadelphia. A digging in the quarry in the rear of the house has unearthed hundreds of archaeological medical artifacts used during Dr. William Wentz's practice.



**Home and office of Dr. Robert Agnew and birthplace of Dr. D. Hayes Agnew - Dr. D. Hayes Agnew**

was born in 1817 and was a charter member of the Lancaster City & County Medical Society. After a brief period of medical practice in this area, Dr. Agnew moved to

Philadelphia because of his interest in anatomy and surgery. He taught anatomy and operative surgery to students from Jefferson Medical College and the University of Pennsylvania and became the Professor of Surgery at the University of Pennsylvania in 1870. Dr. Agnew was known as the "Dear Old Man."

All of us enjoyed a picnic at the birthplace of Dr. D. Hayes Agnew, now the home of Dr. and Mrs. Herbert L. Tindall.

Other pictures of the houses and their locations are available at the office of the Lancaster City & County Medical Society. Pictures of many of the physicians and information about them can be found in *The Journal of The Lancaster County Historical Society* - Volume 91, No. 4, 1987-88.



## *Amish Telephone*

When the Amish are asked, "Do you have a phone number to make any change in appointments?," they usually give their non-Amish neighbor's phone number.

One Amishman said, "I have a phone in a little box on a telephone pole at the end of my lane. My dog hears the phone ring and comes to get me. Let the phone ring about twenty times."