

1844-1994



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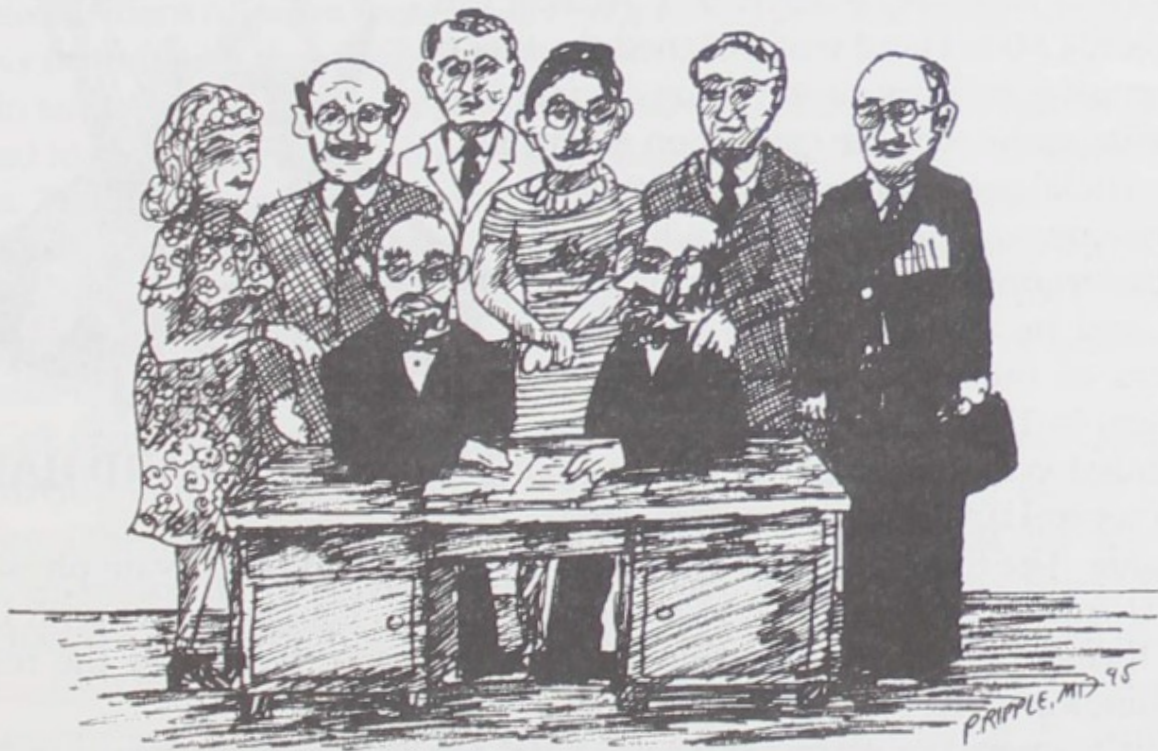


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Lancaster City & County Medical Society

## Section 3

# Prominent Physicians



*Chapter 22*  
**General Edward Hand, M.D.**  
*Physician, Patriot, Soldier*

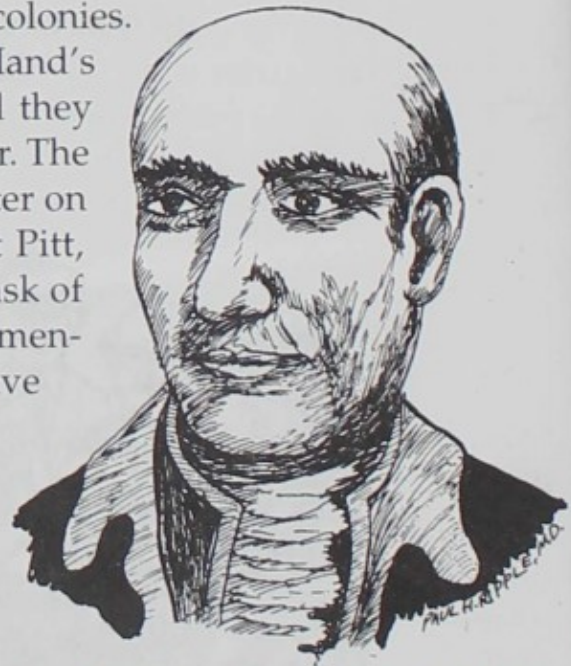
Born at Clydruff in King's County, Leinster, Northern Ireland, on December 31, 1744, Edward Hand's parents were established in the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, a factor that enabled him to attend Trinity College in Dublin. He studied medicine under a faculty of professors recognized throughout the Atlantic world. One was Sir Edward Barry, Physician General and author of numerous major works on medical practice. Others of some renown were George Cleghorn, under whose tutorship Hand learned physiology, and David MacBride, who taught Hand the theory and practice of physic including clinical instruction. Surgery especially was stressed in Hand's classes, and it was Surgeon-General John Nicholls who certified Hand's proficiency and approved his appointment as surgeon's mate in the British army.

Edward Hand was assigned to the Royal Irish 18th Regiment which was sent to the American colonies.

Arriving at Philadelphia on July 11, 1767, Hand's regiment was quartered in that city until they were ordered to the forks of the Ohio River. The Royal Irish unit marched through Lancaster on its way to western Pennsylvania. At Fort Pitt, Surgeon's Mate Hand was assigned the task of supervising military supplies for the regimental units at the fort. He carried on extensive commercial negotiations with traders and provisioners at the fort, many who had Lancaster connections. Hand's rank was low, and he was obliged to obey the orders of incompetent and slothful officers. In 1796, Dr. Hand purchased a commission as an ensign from the profits of several land deals in western Pennsylvania.

The following year George Washington and his private physician and friend, Dr. James Craik, stopped at Fort Pitt. Dr. Hand met with them and formed a close relationship with Washington that lasted the rest of Washington's life.

By the time the regiment was ordered to the eastern seaboard in 1773, Hand had added paymaster to his medical and supply officer assignments. While stationed in Philadelphia, Dr. Hand became aware that the discontent of the colonists he experienced at Fort Pitt was to be found in eastern Pennsylvania as well. In 1774, he sold his ensign's commission and resigned from



**DR. (GEN.) EDWARD HAND**

the British army. He then moved to Lancaster to commence the practice of medicine. Here he found a prosperous town of some 3,000 persons but a shortage of physicians.

Dr. Hand arrived in Lancaster with a letter of introduction from Provost Smith to the Reverend Thomas Barton of the Lancaster Anglican Church (St. James's). At once he was accepted into the social life of Lancaster, and formed personal relationships with Jasper Yeates, William A. Atlee, George Ross and Edward Shippen, the social and professional leaders of the community. These gentleman already had definite ideas about American independence from the British Crown. Hand entered into the spirit of the times, and became an American patriot. He became a vestryman of the Anglican Church. In 1775, he married Catharine Ewing, a niece of Sarah Yeates.

In July, 1775 Dr. Hand received orders to join the Continental Army as a Lt. Colonel of Colonel William Thompson's Rifle Battalion. The unit marched to Boston to provide protection for those engaged in throwing up earthworks and other fortifications. Hand established a reputation for working directly with the men, a quality not found among the British officers. Lt. Col. Hand's riflemen were ordered to conserve their limited supply of powder, and not to fire indiscriminately at distant British officers. Their enforced "leisure" resulted in the men becoming unruly and mutinous. With the situation out of hand, Colonels Thompson and Hand had to call Generals Washington, Lee, and Greene to quell the disorder. Instead of imposing severe punishment, the disobedient riflemen were fined and made to perform the ordinary camp duties from which they had been exempt.

In January, 1776 the army was reorganized, and in March Hand was promoted to full colonel, and given the command of the First Continental Regiment. The British now had been forced out of Boston, and Hand's regiment was ordered to New York by General Washington who believed the British would attack there. After strengthening fortifications at New York, Hand's regiment was sent out on Long Island. While there his right eye became inflamed.

Col. Hand was sent to Philadelphia to convince the Continental Congress to provide uniforms for his men. When he returned to Long Island Hand reported the movements of ships to Washington. It was during this time that the Declaration of Independence was adopted. While on Long Island Hand purchased a black youth and a black girl as slaves which he had sent back to Lancaster. During the battle on Long Island Col. Hand showed courageous leadership in face of deadly fire from the British. Throughout the battle in New Jersey Hand again showed excellent generalship in leading his troops to delay the British, and gain time for General Washington. Washington appreciated the leadership capability of Hand, and sought his advice increasingly.

On April 1, 1777, Hand was promoted to brigadier general, and ordered to Fort Pitt. Later he was sent to New York state to stabilize relations with the Indians. When General Hand rejoined the Continental Army in 1779, the British were moving their military operations to the South. The Continental Army suffered almost as much from shortages of food and clothing in New Jersey as they did under the withering fire of the British. American officers began to quarrel among themselves, and challenged Washington's promotions. Lt. Col. Alexander Hamilton, aide-de-camp to Washington, felt slighted when Washington by-passed him in favor of Hand to become Washington's adjutant general. Hand visited Lancaster while Congress debated his nomination to be adjutant general in early 1781. As adjutant general Hand served not only as the chief administrative officer, but was responsible for security, and the duties of assistant inspector general.

Hand accompanied Washington to Virginia in 1781 and was with him when Lord Cornwallis surrendered to the American forces.

The Revolutionary War won, General Hand returned to Lancaster to resume the practice of medicine. In politics he was a staunch Federalist, the party of Washington and most Lancastrians. He served in the Continental Congress 1784-1785, and was a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly 1785-1786. In the first electoral college that chose Washington to be our first president, Hand was a member. He was a member of the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1789-1790. In 1789-1790, Hand was chief burgess of Lancaster.

Hand never hesitated to come to his country's aid, and gave medical attention to the poor without charge. He died September 3, 1802, at Rock Ford, his country home near Lancaster.



*Rockford*

*Lancaster, Penn.*