

1844-1994



Our

Medical

Heritage

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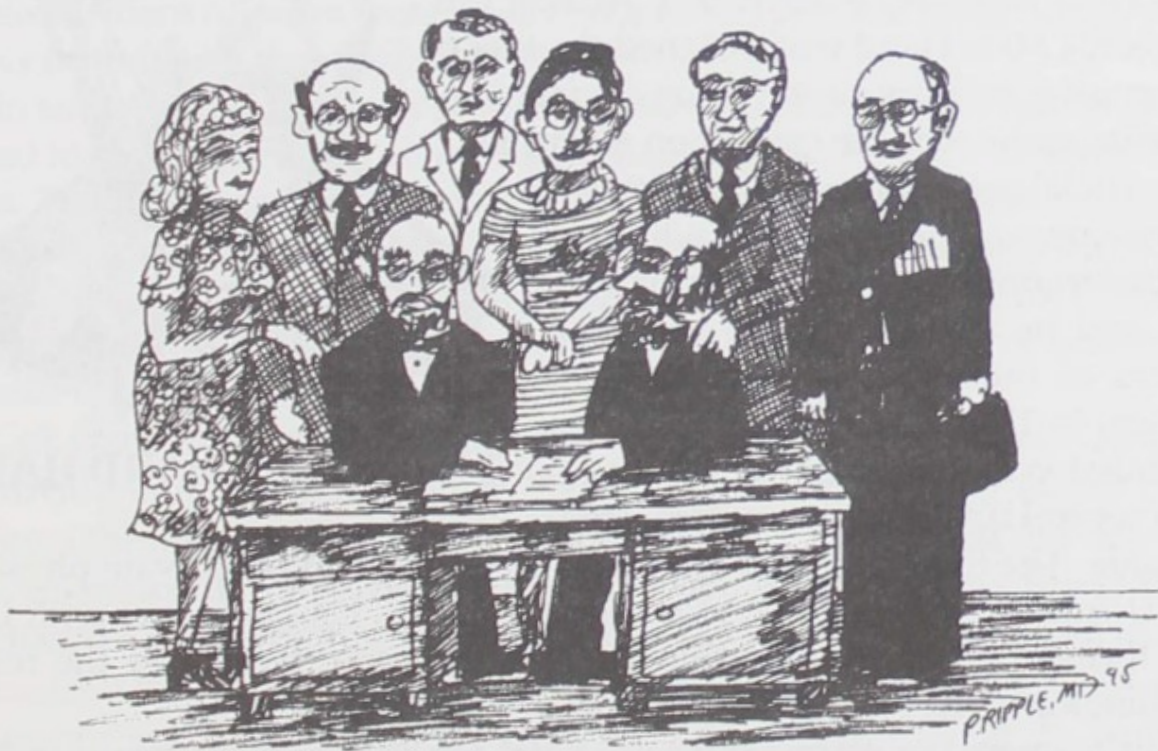


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Lancaster City & County Medical Society

Section 3

Prominent Physicians

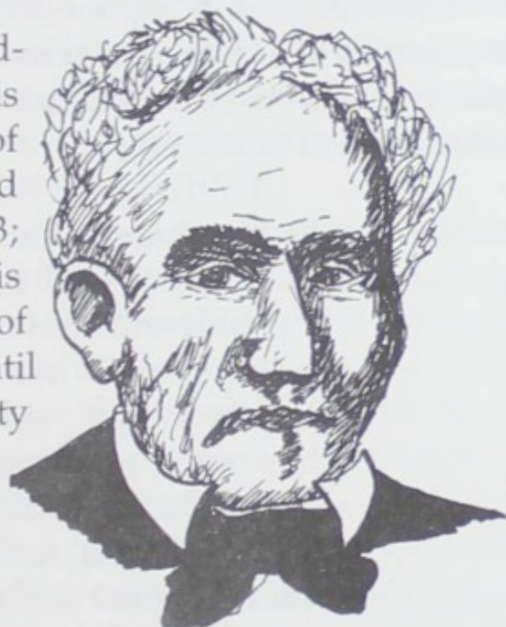


Chapter 24
Samuel Humes, M.D.
Lancaster's Gift to Organized Medicine

The son of a Lancaster lawyer, Dr. Samuel Humes occupied the position of Lancaster City Treasurer when he embarked on the study of medicine.

Dr. Humes received his M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1808, and returned to Lancaster to practice. He soon became known as an excellent physician and surgeon, developed an extensive practice, and was revered by his patients and peers. At least two medical students who later became prominent Lancaster physicians studied medicine under Dr. Humes: John Light Atlee and Henry Carpenter.

A lifelong bachelor, his interest in providing the best possible medical care led to his interest in organized medicine. He was one of the small group of physicians who attempted to form a county medical society in 1823; though the effort failed, Dr. Humes bided his time and attempted to maintain some type of loose organization for twenty-one years, until the successful formation of the Lancaster City and County Medical Society in 1844. He served as the first president of that organization, serving four consecutive terms. He probably would have served longer except for a newly-passed regulation barring succeeding terms.



DR. SAMUEL HUMES

Dr. Humes was a leader in arranging the meeting held in Lancaster in 1848, at which the Pennsylvania Medical Society (PMS) was formed. He was elected first president of that organization.

Dr. Humes served as president of the PMS at a time when physicians were dismayed by their failure to persuade the legislature and the governor to exercise some control over the practice of medicine, in order to assure the quality of medical care by certifying the provider's credentials. Dr. Humes' analytic mind and forward-looking philosophy are perhaps no better demonstrated than in his report to the PMS upon leaving office as their first president.

"When those only shall be selected for our profession whose preparatory education accords with the sensible views of the National Association on that subject, when our schools persevere in the courses promised for theoretical and clinical instruction, when our graduates in medicine select locations for practice without reference to their comfort and ease, but where

their recently acquired knowledge can be brought into immediate requisition, when liberal and conscientious views are entertained in relation to medical consultation in extreme cases, where the lives of valuable citizens are in jeopardy and they are not deferred until the moribund condition, when those only are members of the profession whose thirst for wealth is merged with the more noble desire of becoming successful practitioners in medicine, when the infinitesimal humbugs of the day are superseded by the sober second thought of an enlightened community, and finally, when our profession is distinguished for the liberal, benevolent and gentlemanly bearing of its members toward one another, then will the period have arrived, as predicted by the immortal Rush, 'when casualties and old age shall be the only outlets of human life.'"

When he died in September, 1852, he named his old friend and student Dr. Henry Carpenter as executor. Oddly enough, none of the local newspapers commented on Dr. Humes' death in September, 1852. They did run as a news item the following:

TRIBUTE OF RESPECT – At a special meeting of the Members of the Lancaster city and county Medical Society, held on Saturday last, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, it has pleased Divine Providence to remove from his sphere of his labors and usefulness the senior member and first President of our Society, as he was of the State Medical Society, Dr. SAMUEL HUMES, whose zeal for the welfare of his profession, ardent love for the honorable and diligent practice of it and faithful and unremitting devotion to his patients while his health permitted it, afforded a bright example to those who survive him, and

Whereas, in all the relations of life as a Christian gentlemen, a patriotic and liberal-minded citizen, and faithful friend, he had secured the esteem and respect not only of his medical brethren, but of the whole community. Be it therefore,

Resolved, That this society is deeply sensible of the bereavement, and will hold in lively remembrance the recollection of his virtues.

Resolved, That we will attend the funeral of our deceased fellow member, and request the privilege of carrying his remains to their final resting place.

Resolved, That these proceedings be entered upon our minutes, and a copy of them be presented to the nearest relative of the deceased.