

1844-1994



*Our*

*Medical*

*Heritage*



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# *Our Medical Heritage*



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Lancaster City & County Medical Society

## Section 1

# *The History of the Lancaster City & County Medical Society*



LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA, 1844



*Chapter 6*  
*The 100th Anniversary of the*  
*Lancaster City & County Medical Society*  
*Address of C. P. Stahr, M.D.*  
*May 1944*

On February 7, 1934, Dr. E. T. Prizer, at that time President of the Lancaster City and County Medical Society, at the annual banquet of the Society read a paper entitled "History of the Lancaster City and County Medical Society." This paper was a highlight of a banquet celebrating the 90th birthday of the Society. The paper was colorful, accurate, the result of a great deal of study and reading, and marked by the writer's devotion to his subject. It reflected great credit upon the author and honor upon the Society who had honored him by electing him its president.

We have been asked to write a short history of the ten years 1934-1944 to complete the cycle of 100 years since the founding of the Society in 1844. Our only regret is that Dr. Prizer is no longer with us so that he could complete the Society's history for the 100 years of its existence. We lack the ability to do this task with anything even touching his masterful writing of 1934.

We said that his paper was colorful. Did the last ten years of the Society lack color, or do we only fail to recognize the color because the period is too new in our memories to have developed the color which future years and future historians will find? We may say that the day of the pioneer in medicine is gone. Yet, we venture to predict that when some historian writes the history of our Society fifty years from now, he will write of members who have passed from our rolls and of members still on our list of active membership with just as much color as Dr. Prizer found and wrote about in the lives of the Pioneers of the Society in his article in 1934.

A history of any period is in a measure a history or chronicle of the lives of individuals who lived and worked in that period. The future historian will write about members of our Society whom we have known and with whom we have been associated and they in memory will be honored by the Medical Society of that time for what they were to the profession, in the communities in which they lived and worked, whether in Lancaster City or the towns of the county, a city doctor or a country doctor, but "their doctor" and "their friend" to the people among whom they lived and practiced the Healing Art.

During the years of which we write, thirty-one members have answered their last roll call. During the same period, 100 new members were added to the membership roll. The Society has lost by transfer 8 members; two members were lost by resignation and we are happy to record that only four members were lost by being delinquent, in violation of the By-Laws of the



Society. The present membership of the Society is 219.

The years 1939-1940 saw the passing of the old Lancaster Medical Club.



32 N. LIME ST.

The meeting place of the Society was changed from the home of the Medical Club, 32 North Lime Street, to the Little Theatre on the Franklin & Marshall College Campus. The final liquidation of the affairs of the Medical Club was accomplished in 1940 under Dr. C. Howard Witmer as President of the Medical Society. The contribution of its members relieved the signers of a mortgage bond of the financial obligation which they had graciously assumed when they signed the bond. It was a grateful and kindly act on the part of the County Society and certainly appreciated by the unfortunate signers. The Society is now repaying the Trustees Fund for money borrowed at the rate of two dollars annually for each active member met by an increase in the Society dues from \$13.50 to \$15.50 per year.

During the past ten years the scientific programs of the Society have continued to be of a high order. Leaders in the various fields of medicine have been our guest speakers. The credit for the type of program which our Society has enjoyed belongs to the program committees which have been carefully selected by our presidents, and have, year by year, done an outstanding job which was a factor of no mean importance in keeping our membership informed and abreast of the newest developments of scientific medicine. We can truthfully say that a good awake profession means a good Medical Society and that a good Society means a good awake profession in any particular community. We do feel therefore that the Lancaster County Medical Society can be justly proud of the last ten years in the life of the Society.

We hear much these days of "organized medicine". The only organization in the medical profession is found in the Medical Societies, local, state and national which are to be regarded as the index of the life of the medical profession in general.

We believe that what concerns the profession concerns the Medical Societies. Progress in one means progress in the other, for is not the Medical Society the clearing house for the spreading of the knowledge of advances in scientific medicine? It is the means by which the discoveries of the research laboratory become the property of the profession and are turned into results in the treatment of disease and the relief of human suffering.



Our Medical Society, therefore, takes great pride in the growth and development of our local hospitals in the past ten years. After all, the hospital staff is the life of any hospital. For years membership in the County Medical Society has been a requisite for election to the staff of our hospitals. A generous public has provided our hospitals with the best and most modern equipment to be had. One of our hospitals has just completed a most successful drive for the physical enlargement of the hospital plant. The equipment of our hospitals in all its departments, operating rooms, delivery rooms, laboratories, X-ray, cardiography has kept pace with the discoveries of modern medical science. But isn't it the staff which makes the hospital a living thing, that translates all this modern equipment into treatment, that applies knowledge to practical life saving and health restoring use?

The last ten years, therefore, has seen much knowledge translated from research into treatment. The doctor has been given tools with which to work and the knowledge and ability to use the tools. The conquest of cancer has long been the aim of the medical profession. Progress has been made toward the realization of that dream. The medical profession has played an active part in an educational program looking toward an early diagnosis of malignancy. Skillful surgery plus modern use of X-ray and radium plus early diagnosis has given the patient with cancer a new outlook on life.

The discovery of the so-called sulfa group of drugs, "the miracle drugs," and the new penicillin has proved to be of untold value to the surgeon, the genitourinary surgeon, and the internist. Post traumatic and post operative infections are no longer the nightmare of operative procedures. Pneumonia (and) blood stream infections have been brought under control and the mortality rate of these diseases has been markedly decreased. Widespread use of blood transfusions (and) the use of blood plasma have added a great deal to the success of the treatment of medical and surgical conditions.

This has been true in civilian practice, but has really been miraculous in military surgery. Blood plasma in the first aid treatment of surgical shock (and) the immediate use of the sulfa drugs have reduced the mortality in our front line medical installations and in our military hospitals to an almost unbelievable low.

And what of the advancement in preventive medicine? Here again we approach the field of the unbelievable or miraculous. Active, mass immunizations have made our troops safe from epidemics of disease. Typhoid, yellow fever, plague, tetanus are no longer feared by the Medical Departments of the Army and Navy.

In January 1943, our county was threatened by an outbreak of smallpox. Members of our Society, the heads of our County and City Health Departments did a magnificent job in the handling of this situation. With the cooperation of the medical profession, mass vaccinations checked the spread of the disease and a great deal of suffering and inconvenience for the public



at large was prevented and the disease never reached epidemic proportions.

And now the war. The profession of Lancaster County can well be proud of the part it played in the increase of the Medical Department of the Army and Navy as required by the declaration of war. Before the declaration of war a number of our members were called into active service because they held commissions in the National Guard and the Medical Reserve Officer group of the Army and Navy.

In all, 60 members of our Society are serving with the Armed Forces of our country, in the Army and Navy in all sectors of this global war and on the seven seas. In addition, Lancaster County furnished at least 15 more officers for Uncle Sam, hospital interns here at home or serving internships in hospitals outside Lancaster County.



We honor these men on this our 100th Birthday. We feel that they deserve that honor. They responded to the call of duty, at great personal sacrifice, financial and professional. We know that their service will be a credit to themselves and to the Medical Society of which they were active and honored members. To date two of this number have made the supreme sacrifice, Captain Quinn and Lt. McClain, the latter a new man in Christiana who had not yet been elected to membership.

It is our duty as individuals and as a Society to keep the home fires burning for these men absent on duty, to do all in our power to keep their places open and ready for them when they return from the wars.



The last ten years has seen a new interest growing in a department of medicine which is already being recognized as a specialty – "Industrial Medicine and Surgery." Perhaps the war effort, the change from peace time production of industry to war production has been the cause of this increased interest in the health of the industrial worker. Certainly keeping the war worker healthy and on the job, the decrease in time lost from industrial accidents, industrial safety, is a war effort worthy of the support of all Medical Societies.

And what has our Society done, looking to the future of the practice of medicine? Certainly we have become awake to the fact that there is "danger ahead." Most of us shy away from the subject of Medical Economics. But socialized medicine, state medicine, politically controlled medicine, bureaucratic medicine, call it what you will, is just around the corner.

It is all right to have a Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in the United States Navy. The U. S. Public Health Service is a wonderful government agency. But, we do not see a Bureau of the Practice of Medicine and Surgery as a necessary factor in the improvement of the practice of medicine in the United States. Nor do we believe that it is wise to make a political football out of the practice of medicine.

We have every confidence in the Surgeon General of the U. S. Public Health Service, but he will have to be a "Superman" to discharge his duties as provided in the Wagner-Murray-Dingle bill. We believe that individual initiative is responsible for the high plane modern medicine occupies today. The history of the Lancaster County Medical Society or the history of any other Medical Society proves that beyond a shadow of a doubt. It must fight for what has made medicine in these United States what it is today.

### *An Amish Compliment*

Dr. George Gerlach, a general surgeon who also did some family medicine, had a large number of Amish patients, many of whom were also friends. After successfully treating one of the very ill patient/friends, a member of the patient's family paid Dr. Gerlach a sincere Amish compliment when she said, "Dr. Gerlach, you are as common as dirt."