

1844-1994



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

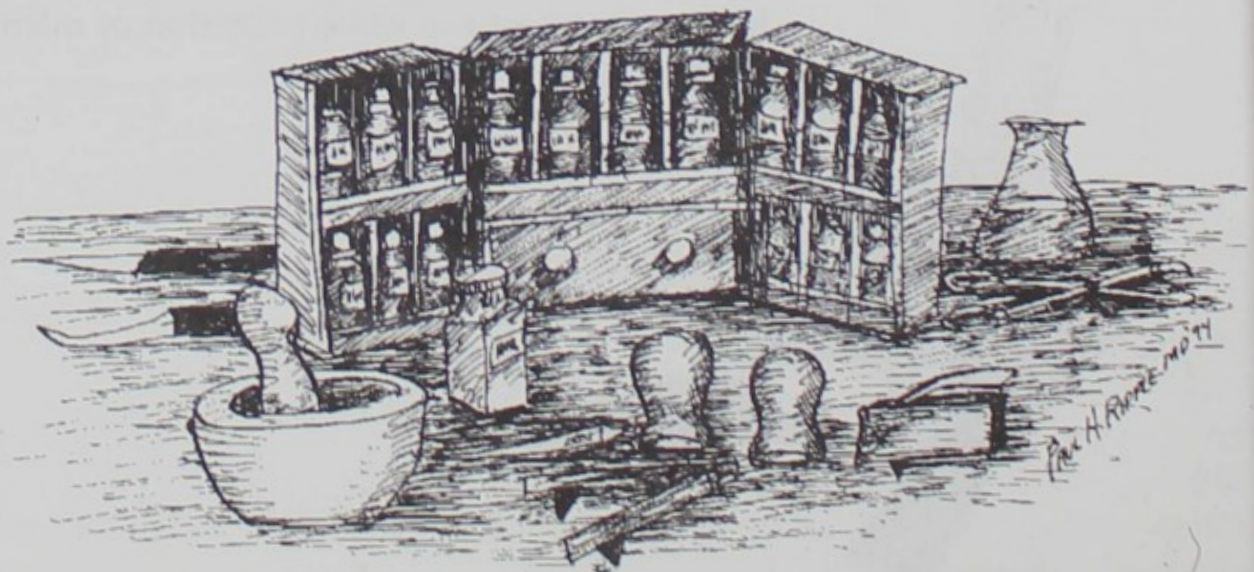
Chapter 16
The Edward Hand
Medical Heritage Foundation
Saving Lancaster's Medical Heritage

written by Paul Ripple, M.D.

The Lancaster County Historical Society was collecting and cataloging many stories and biographies of early health care and its physicians, but no one was making an effort to preserve the buildings and artifacts. This neglected enterprise came to several persons' attention when the old County Almshouse and Hospital were scheduled for demolition.

The initial credit must go to the Rev. Charles Wonderly, superintendent of the County Hospital, who contacted some members of the Historic Preservation Trust and the Lancaster City and County Medical Society. The two groups organized a committee which invited Dr. S. K. Stevens, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission, to come to Lancaster and participate in a meeting. Dr. Stevens said that this is one of the best built and preserved buildings of its age (1779-1801) and he recommended that it be preserved. It was nearly given to the Medical Society by the commissioners but a change in commissioners and the big expense of improving the plumbing and electrical system put the project on the back burner while the county refurbished it and continued to use it. The remaining buildings were all demolished. Some research by the Historic Trust revealed that this is very likely the second oldest hospital still standing in the United States, second to the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia (1752). It is the only surviving Almshouse in the United States.

On April 17, 1980 the old County Hospital was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



February, 1982 saw the founding of the Edward Hand Medical Heritage Foundation, a conception of the Lancaster City and County Medical Society whose goal was to preserve the rich medical heritage of Lancaster County. Dr. Paul H. Ripple, the second president of the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County was their first president. Many doctors helped in these early efforts - Drs. Roland Loeb, William Atlee, Mary Ellen Smith Meiser, Herbert Tindall, Henry Wentz, Charles Wolfe, George Kent, Joseph Eckenrode, Samuel Hauck, Dave Wiley and many other non-physicians - Mortimer Kadushin, Judy Eshleman, Bruce Ryder, Jean Wood, Jack Loose, James Huber, John Aungst, Charles Smithgall and many others.

Since its beginning the Foundation has accumulated a massive amount of old instruments, books and other artifacts of medical history in Lancaster County. Several displays were arranged in local store fronts and the county historical society in 1985. A small museum was established at the Medical Society Headquarters in 1985 and was dedicated on March 17, 1985 with a reception attended by our Congressman Robert Walker.

The Foundation made a big contribution of artifacts to a mini-museum at the Lancaster General Hospital in celebration of its 100th Anniversary. It also provided small exhibits at Columbia Hospital, Ephrata Community Hospital, Community Hospital of Lancaster and St. Joseph Hospital in celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Lancaster City and County Medical Society.

The Foundation hopes that every physician who reads this article will remember to donate his or her medical memorabilia. We have already lost many irreplaceable items of local interest.

Winter Tonic

An Amish boy was brought into the office because he said he could not read anymore. I quickly observed large dilated fixed pupils. I also noticed that his younger sister and his mother had large dilated pupils and none of them could focus on near objects. Had I discovered another inborn congenital defect of the Amish? On further questioning, the family reported that they had just purchased a new jug of tonic from an itinerant door-to-door salesman, who sold tonic to people, "so they could remain healthy over the winter months." I was able to locate this salesman and found out that the tonic not only contained atropine, but that he had made a mistake in the decimal point and he had used ten times as much atropine as he should have.