

Beginnings of Hospitals in United States—Part II

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Smallpox Hospitals

The care of patients who were being inoculated against smallpox was another purpose for which early hospitals were established, particularly in New England.

Inoculation against smallpox was introduced into America through the efforts of the Rev. Cotton Mather and Dr. Zabdiel Boylston. A smallpox epidemic broke out in Boston in 1721. It is difficult for us who have the protection of vaccination to appreciate the horror and fear which such an epidemic created. Cotton Mather had in some way learned about the practice of inoculation in England. Doctor Boylston was a successful Boston practitioner. Mather urged Boylston to try inoculation. In June, 1721, he inoculated his 6-year-old son and two Negro servants. There were protests voiced by other physicians, the press, and the public. Doctor Boylston later published an account of his experience with inoculation. He stated that in the epidemic of 1721-1722 there were 5759 cases of smallpox in Boston with 844 deaths—a mortality rate of 14 per cent. There were 286 patients inoculated against the disease, with six incidental deaths—less than 2 per cent. After the success of this method of immunization had been demonstrated, small hospitals for the care of patients recovering from the effects of inoculation were established in many towns.

On Doctor Boylston's death, Dr. Thomas Aspinwall took up the work. He had a private hospital in Brookline. When vaccination was developed as a safer and more effective immunization procedure than inoculation, Doctor Aspinwall recognized its superiority, gave up the practice of inoculation and closed his hospital.

Early Isolation Hospitals

Inoculation hospitals were established in several other of the Colonies. Dr. Henry Stevenson operated one in Baltimore; several were opened in Charleston in 1763. There were sev-

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eral in Virginia in 1779. In the August 8, 1800, issue of the *Virginia Argus*, James Walker made the following announcement—

“The fall inoculation for Smallpox will begin at my hospital in the County of Buckingham. Prices a guinea for whites, fifteen shillings for blacks.”

Proprietary Hospitals

There were at least two private or proprietary hospitals in Virginia prior to the Revolution. Blanton, in his *Medicine in Virginia in the Eighteenth Century*, says—

“One of the early private hospitals in Virginia was conducted by Col. Jesse Brown, said to have been an ‘accomplished surgeon whose death was universally regretted.’ Our knowledge of this hospital is limited to mention of it in Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, for January 3, 1771, where an advertisement stated that Doctor Brown's son, Dr. Samuel Brown, had moved to Southampton County and proposed to continue the operation of his father's hospital and to practice surgery there.

“Dr. William Cabell, who died in 1774, conducted a hospital near his home in Amherst County and made a specialty of surgery, attaining considerable reputation as an amputator of arms and legs.”

Early South Carolina Hospitals

In 1734, the Vestry of St. Philip's Parish, South Carolina, in which parish, Charleston, then a town of five or six hundred houses, was located, petitioned the governor for permission to bring in a bill—

“for appropriating as much of the square

Piece of Ground belonging to the Publick in Charlestown, as may be necessary whereon to erect proper buildings for the use of a Public Work-house and Hospital, and for authorizing your Petitioners to Erect such Buildings on the same at their own proper Cost and Charge . . . Parish Officers are now often obliged to take up with very poor Accommodations of Lodgings, &c, for Sick Persons, and at extravagant Price, to the great trouble of such officers, Suffering of the Sick Persons, and enhancement of the Parish Charge."

Prior to this time it had been the custom in South Carolina to provide for sick persons in the private homes of citizens and to pay out of parish funds sums agreed upon for their board, room and nursing care. Evidently parsonages were occasionally used as hospitals. A French minister at St. James, Santee, is quoted as expressing his dissatisfaction with this custom in these words—

"I am obliged without charity to assist the sick poor people and to keep physic to cure her. Some time these be at my charge two months before she recovered her health."

It is to be hoped that the care he provided for his unwelcome patients was better than the English in which he phrased his complaint.

St. Philip's Hospital, Charleston

The petition of the St. Philip's Vestry resulted in the passage of an Act authorizing it to raise a maximum of 2000 pounds for the current year and 1000 pounds annually thereafter and to construct thereon a "good, substantial, and convenient Hospital, workhouse and House of Correction."

This is an early example of the custom of housing in the same building or in adjacent buildings on the same grounds, patients, paupers and prisoners, a system which may have some merit from the point of view of financial economy but which has many undesirable features. It is a system which has persisted in some localities down to the present day and interferes with the full use of the hospital facilities in such a setup. This is because of the fact that in the minds of many people the stigma that attaches to being a resident of the almshouse or the prison attaches itself to being a patient in the hospital.

This hospital was probably opened in 1738 and thus antedates by 13 years the Pennsylvania Hospital, the institution which has the most valid claim to being the oldest, though of course not the first, hospital in the United States.

St. Philip's Hospital had a very interesting history, much of which is recorded in the unpublished account book of the Vestry of the St. Philip's Church. It seems to have served mostly chronic patients. By 1789, the care of the poor had passed from the hands of the Church into those of the civil authorities and after that date there is no mention of the hospital in the archives of the parish. Consequently, the date of the discontinuance of its service to the sick is not known.

Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia

The Pennsylvania Hospital is quite generally recognized as the oldest institution for the care of the sick in the United States. It owes its existence largely to the efforts of two men, though others helped. These two gentlemen, neither of whom was a native Philadelphian, are Dr. Thomas Bond and Benjamin Franklin.

Thomas Bond was born in Calvert County, Maryland, in 1712. He began the study of medicine with Dr. Alexander Hamilton in Annapolis. There was no medical school in the Colonies and unless a young man who planned to become a physician had sufficient money with which to go abroad to study in one of the English or continental schools, he studied with some local practitioner until he thought he had acquired enough knowledge to enable him to begin practicing; he then hung out his shingle and began. There was no hospital in which he could take an internship. He did not need a license to practice, for none was required. The first act to regulate the practice of medicine and surgery was a local ordinance of New York City, enacted in 1760; New Jersey followed with a similar regulation in 1772. He could not use a medical library, for there was none until in 1762, when one was established in the Pennsylvania Hospital. He did not read medical journals, nor belong to a medical society—there were none. If he had forethought and industry he probably planted a garden of medicinal herbs and from them prepared many of the medicines he used. When he became sufficiently well known and successful to attract apprentice students he used their time in the early stages of their training to compound the drugs and medicines which he used and perhaps sent them to the woods and fields to gather Jimpson weed for his asthmatic patients, poke berries for the treatment of chronic sores, sour dock for the itch, blackberry roots, dogwood bark, elderberries and goldenrod for dysentery, juniper berries, not for bathtub gin, but for worms (we now call them intestinal parasites), boneset for ague and consumption and the roots, bark, leaves and fruit of many other plants. He used his medicines very liberally on the assumption that if a little

was good, a lot was better. It was only as homeopathy later became a rival school of medical theory and practice that the overdosing of patients began to abate.

The father of Thomas Bond, being evidently a man of means, sent both Thomas and his brother Phineas to study in medical schools in England, Scotland, and in Paris. These schools were affiliated with hospitals and young Bond learned the value of institutional provision for the care of the sick. He made the acquaintance of the wealthy and able Quaker physician, John Fothergill, who was later to help him and William Shippen establish America's first hospital and earliest medical school.

Returning to America, Bond set himself up as a general practitioner in Philadelphia in 1734. His brother Phineas joined him four years later.

Bond felt that there ought to be a hospital in Philadelphia and began to try to interest his friends and acquaintances in the idea. There were not the same incentives to hospital building then as now. There were really only two motives that could be appealed to, philanthropy and protection. No one thought of a hospital for private patients. Such an institution was only for the poor, the homeless, and the stranger. Then there were lunatics who if institutionalized would be less dangerous to the community. Bond, though a good doctor, was evidently not the man to arouse sufficient public interest in his project to enable him to secure the necessary money. But he did have the good sense to seek out the one man among his friends who could put the project across. That man was Benjamin Franklin, the most prominent citizen of Philadelphia, if not of America as a whole. Franklin tells how he did it, in his Autobiography. He says—

“But with a total of less than 5000 pounds, the managers, most of them substantial Quakers, must have had great faith in Providence to enable them to proceed with their undertaking.

“First, they needed a site and since the Penn family owned much land in the town, an appeal was made to them for a plot of ground which they thought suitable. But they failed to obtain it. On the other hand, the Penns offered them another parcel of land, but this they declined as it was swampy and adjacent to a brick yard. Then, too, the Penns attached a string to their proposed gift, that the land should revert to them upon any failure in succession of the contributors to the hospital.

“Not successful in obtaining the gift of a

suitable site, they spent 500 pounds of their capital for one. To this the Penns, several years later, gave the adjacent strip completing the square—8th to 9th, Spruce and Pine—which has ever since been occupied by the Pennsylvania Hospital.

“The managers, however, decided not to wait until they could erect a building to begin caring for the sick and insane. In 1751 they rented a house for 40 pounds a year, spent 150 pounds for repairs, hired a nurse or maid at 10 pounds a year, appointed the two Bonds and Dr. Lloyd Zachary as attending staff without pay, and admitted their first two patients—one sick and the other crazy.

“Plans for the building were drawn by one of the managers and an appropriation of 3000 pounds made for its construction and furnishing. It was completed and on December 17, 1756, the patients were transferred to the new building.”

Franklin's part in this project is worthy of note. This ingenious Yankee who early in life moved from Boston, the Hub of the Universe, to Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, was the founder of, or assisted in founding, a number of organizations and institutions for the promotion of philanthropic, cultural, and scientific interests. At the time when Bond and his associates were unsuccessfully attempting to arouse interest in and obtain contributions for the hospital they wished to establish, Franklin, then 46 years of age, was Philadelphia's most distinguished and influential citizen and editor and publisher of a local newspaper. It was but natural that they should turn to Franklin for assistance. What he did to help is stated briefly and succinctly by Doctor Stuber in his Works of Dr. Benjamin Franklin, published in 1848. He says:

“About the year 1752, an eminent physician of this city, Dr. Bond, considering the deplorable state of the poor, when visited with disease, conceived the idea of establishing an hospital. Notwithstanding very great exertions on his part, he was able to interest few people so far in his benevolent plan to obtain subscriptions from them. Unwilling that his scheme should prove abortive, he sought the aid of Franklin, who readily engaged in the business, both by using his influence with his friends, and by stating the advantageous influence of the proposed institution, in his paper. These efforts were attended with success. Considerable sums were subscribed; but they were still short of what was necessary. Franklin now made another exertion. He applied to the Assembly, and,

after some opposition, obtained leave to bring in a bill, specifying, that as soon as 2000 pounds were subscribed, the same sum should be drawn from the treasury by the speaker's warrant, to be applied to the purposes of the institution. The opposition, as the sum was granted on a contingency, which they supposed would never take place, were silent, and the bill passed. The friends of the plan now redoubled their efforts to obtain subscriptions to the amount stated in the bill, and were soon successful. This was the foundation of the Pennsylvania Hospital, which, with the Bettering-House and Dispensary, bears ample testimony to the humanity of the citizens of Philadelphia."

Franklin's bequest to the hospital which he helped found is such an interesting example of gifts to hospitals, which gifts are found to be of doubtful value, that it may be of interest to quote from the will he made in 1788, two years before his death and from the minutes of a meeting of the contributors, related to the bequest. The quotation from the will is as follows:

"During the number of years I was in business as a Stationer, Printer and Post Master a great many small sums became due to me for books, advertisements, postage of letters and other matters which were not collected when in 1757 I was sent to England by their Assembly as their Agent and by subsequent appointments continued there until 1775, when on my return I was immediately engaged in the Affairs of Congress and sent to France in 1776, where I remained Nine Years, not returning till 1785; and the said debts not being demanded in such length of time are become in a manner obsolete, yet are nevertheless justly due. These, as they are stated in my great folio 'Ledger E,' I bequeath to the Contributors of the Pennsylvania Hospital, hoping that those debtors and the descendants of such as are deceased who now as I find make some difficulties of satisfying such antiquated demands as just debts may however be induced to pay or give them as Charity to that excellent Institution. I am sensible that much must inevitably be lost but I hope something considerable may be recovered. It is possible too that some of the Parties charged may have existing old unsettled Accounts against me, in which case the Managers of the said Hospital will allow and deduct the Amount or pay the balance if they find it against me."

The extract from the minutes of the Contributors reads:

"An extract from the last will and Testa-

ment of Dr. Benjamin Franklyn deceased was read, which has already been inserted under the Minutes of 5 mo. 31, 1790.

"The Minutes of the Managers respecting the Case were then read, likewise the Report of the Committee appointed by them to adjust the balances of the said Ledger and the answers they received from a number of Persons to whom they have applied and who appear to be in debt; An alphabetical List of the debts taken by the same Committee was also inspected and a general view of the Ledger taken by the Contributors, from which it appears that many of the debts are small, numbers of them due from Persons unknown, and all of them from thirty to sixty years old, which precludes every hope of recovering as much as will answer the demands exhibited against the decedent; it is therefore the UNANIMOUS OPINION OF ALL THE CONTRIBUTORS PRESENT THAT THIS LEGACY CANNOT WITH SAFETY BE ACCEPTED.

"Nevertheless being gratefully sensible of the active part which Doctor Franklyn took in promoting the Institution and having experienced the benefits of his benevolent Exertions for the Interests thereof on various occasions, they lament the Necessity they are under of declining to accept a legacy from which the Doctor expresses a hope that something considerable might be recovered but which the Contributors have great reason to believe will never be the Case; Under these Impressions it is agreed that the Managers should return the Ledger to Doctor Franklyn's executors with a Copy of this Minute.

Signed in behalf and by desire of the Contributors.

James Pemberton, President."

The New York Hospital, now a part of the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center, is our second oldest hospital. It has had much interesting history.

Early Virginia Hospitals

Virginia early recognized the need for a marine hospital. Before 1705, Lt. Gov. Alexander Spotswood had

"urgently recommended that a hospital with every convenience obtainable in those times should be built as a part of the fort at Point Comfort for the use of sailors needing medical or surgical attention."

I quote the following from Blanton's Medicine in Virginia in the Eighteenth Century:

"On April 15, 1708, the council ordered 'that a house be hyred for accommodation of the sick men belonging to her Majesty's Ship, the *Garland*, and that the Rent of the said house be paid out of her Majesty's Revenue of two shillings per hogshead and it is recommended to Collo. William Wilson to provide a house accordingly.'

"However it was not until 1780 that steps were taken to establish a permanent marine hospital. In that year the Commonwealth of Virginia by act of its Assembly provided for the establishment of a hospital for sick and disabled seamen by a direct tax on sailors and mariners. Nothing more was done until 1787, when another act provided that 'whereas that the tax imposed on seamen hath produced a fund sufficient for the purpose of erecting a hospital' the Governor be authorized to appoint 7 commissioners to erect a hospital at Washington, Norfolk Co. Work on the hospital was accordingly started but from the beginning its funds were inadequate. In 1790 the Assembly authorized the sale of the building. Apparently no purchaser was found for in 1794 a tax of 30 cents for the support of the hospital was levied on every sailor who entered ports of the State.

"In spite of the tax the finances of the institution remained in a deplorable condition, and in the same year, James Taylor, Sr., wrote the Governor on behalf of the Commissioners, urging prompt action by the Assembly, to meet the deficiency in funds which had prevented the completion of the work and had made it impossible for the Commissioners to keep their contract with the builder. Even then, apparently, the funds were not forthcoming, for an act of 1798 offered to cede the building to the United States for a marine hospital if the Federal Government would pay the balance due on the contract. In 1800 the Government accepted the hospital on the conditions proposed by Virginia, and it became the first Federal institution of its kind in the country.

"The hospital was operated by the United States Government until the War between the States, when the Confederates took it over and used it as barracks. At the evacuation of Norfolk it fell into Federal hands and was converted by them into an army hospital. It continued to serve this purpose until the Fall of 1862. After that the building seems to have remained in disuse until 1875. In that year, under an act of Congress of 1866, which provided for the sale of

all marine hospitals whose admission rate had fallen below 20 cases per annum, it was sold by the Secretary of the Treasury.

"From its very beginning at Ferry Point, Virginia, the marine hospital movemet has expanded until today (1931) there are 26 first class marine hospitals in the United States, caring annually for nearly 400,000 patients. Although the celebrated Greenwich Hospital in England was established at an earlier date, it was essentially a military institution designed to serve the Royal Navy exclusively. The Ferry Point institution not only was the oldest marine hospital in the country, but marks the beginning by the United States Government of a service whose efficiency and organization have been admired and copied on two continents."

The First Mental Hospital

The credit for founding the first state supported hospital for the care of persons with mental diseases, is due in large measure to one man, Sir Francis Fauquier, Governor General of His Majesty's Colony of Virginia, who seems to have been familiar with the hospitals of England, such as Bedlam, which are publicly supported. In his annual speech on Thursday, November 6, 1766, he addressed the House of Burgesses in these words:

"It is expected I should also recommend to your consideration and humanity, a poor unhappy set of people, who are deprived of their senses and wander about the country terrifying the rest of their fellow creatures. A legal confinement and proper provision ought to be appointed for these miserable objects."

This eloquent appeal was received by the Burgesses with humble thanks, and on November 20, 1766, a resolution was passed

"That a Hospital be erected for the reception of persons who are so unhappy as to be deprived of their reason."

It was also ordered

"That the Committee of Proposition and Grievances do prepare and bring in a bill or bills pursuant to the above resolution."

However, no action was taken. In his speech in adjourning the House, on April 11, 1767, the Governor quoted the resolution of the previous session in regard to this, and stated that since that time nothing had been done about it. This move of Sir Francis brought the desired result,

as on June 4, 1770, Mr. Bland presented to the House, according to order, a bill to

“make provision for the support and maintenance of idiots, lunatics, and other persons of unsound minds.”

The bill was received and read the first time and about three days later, June 7, 1770, was passed.

Prior to the Revolution of 1776, which dissolved the relations between the parish vestries and the state, the custody of the pauper insane and the relief of the poor in Virginia, belonged to the vestries of the Established Church, which was the Church of England. That the colony early felt the dependence of these unfortunates upon her bounty is clearly shown by an act passed by the House of Burgesses in the tenth year of the reign of George III, 1769, entitled

“An Act to Make Provision for the Support, Maintenance of Idiots, Lunatics, and Other Persons of Unsound Mind.”

“The Public Hospital for Persons of Insane and Disordered Mind,” which had been incorporated the previous year, 1768, was, as a result of this act, opened for the reception of “idiots, lunatics and persons of unsound minds,” on October 12, 1773. This hospital, now known as the Eastern State Hospital, is the oldest hospital in the United States to be used exclusively for the care of the insane.

The General Assembly placed the creation of the institution in the hands of distinguished citizens: Thomas Nelson, Jr., was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, served with distinction in the Revolutionary War, and was Governor of Virginia in 1781; George Wythe was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and Professor of Law at William and Mary College; Peyton Randolph was President of the first Continental Congress in 1774; Benjamin Waller, John Blair, William Nelson, John Randolph, Dudley Diggs, and John Tazewell. A purchase of land was made from Thomas Walker, and upon it was erected a building two stories high. The plan was furnished by Robert Smith of Philadelphia, and its date reads April 9, 1770. The 1200 pounds originally appropriated not being sufficient to purchase the land and complete the buildings, the general assembly in February, 1772, passed an act authorizing the treasurer of the colony to pay to the court of directors

“a further sum, not exceeding 800 pounds, to be by them applied towards finishing the said hospital, making enclosures for the patients to walk and take air in, after their

reception, and defraying the other incidental charges.”

On September 14, 1773, at a meeting of the court of directors, the president informed the court that the hospital was completed, whereupon the court proceeded to examine the said hospital, and finding it finished according to agreement, it was received by Benjamin Powell, the “undertaker.” At the same meeting James Galt was appointed keeper of the hospital, and he was referred to the general assembly for such salary as his services should be thought to merit.

On October 12, 1773, the first meeting of the court of directors for the reception of patients was held. Two cases were taken into consideration, one from the County of Hanover and the other from the County of New Kent. The court being of the opinion that they were persons of insane and disordered minds, they were received in the hospital. At this meeting the keeper of the hospital was ordered to call on Dr. John DeSequeyra

“to visit such persons as shall be brought to the hospital on their first reception, and at such other times as may be necessary.”

The first patient was received on April 28, 1774, the charge of his maintenance being 15 pounds a year.

From the time of its incorporation up to 1841, the institution was known as the “Public Hospital,” sometimes as the “Lunatick Hospital,” and at times spoken of as the “Mad House.” There is now in the library of William and Mary College a map of the City of Williamsburgh dated 1780, on which the hospital is designated as the “Madhouse or Bedlam.” By an act of legislature, passed on March 6, 1841, the name was changed to the Eastern Lunatic Asylum, and not until February 22, 1894, was the name changed to the Eastern State Hospital. The hospital was the first in this country to care for the colored insane as well as white patients.

Thus we have traced some of the beginnings of the hospital movement in the United States. There is much more to be said on the subject, but fearing that some one of you may make a remark like that of a divinity school student in a class in Old Testament History, I shall stop at this point. The professor was lecturing on the Prophets of Israel. Having spent about an hour and a half on the major prophets, he is reported to have said—“And now what place shall be given to the minor prophets?” One weary and perhaps hungry student replied, “Professor, one of them may have my place, I’m going.”