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“SOME ACCOUNT OF THE PENNSYLVANIA HOSPITAL”

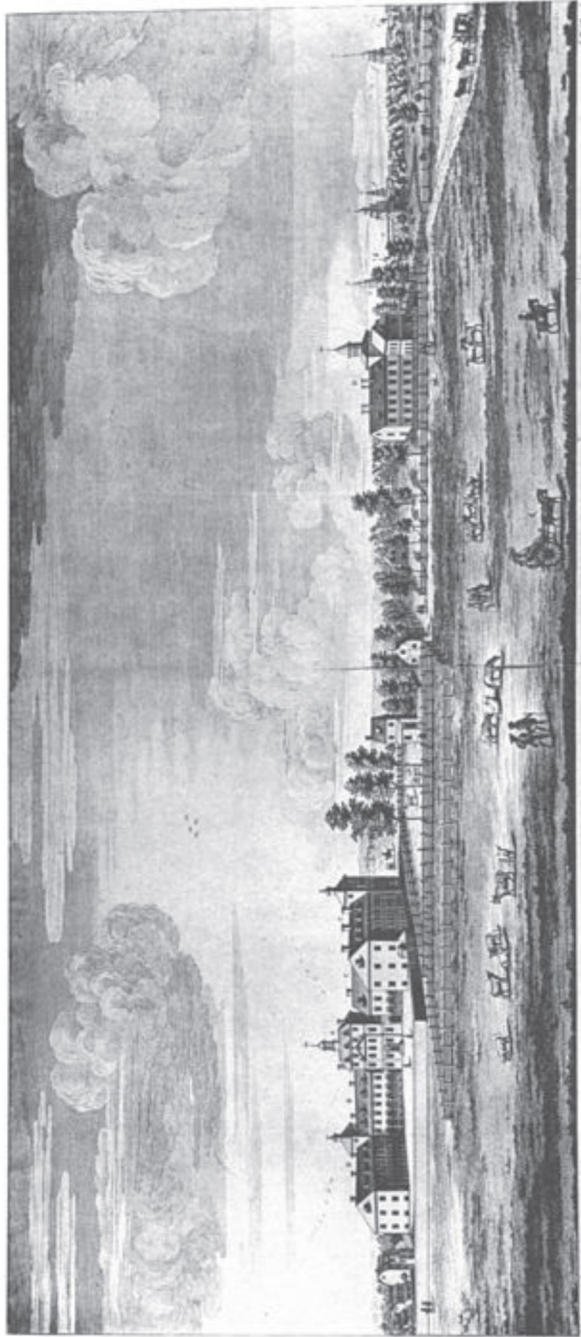
By J. HAROLD JOHNSTON

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A PAMPHLET in the Rutgers Library, printed by B. Franklin and D. Hall in Philadelphia in 1754, entitled “Some Account of the Pennsylvania Hospital; From its first Rise, to the Beginning of the Fifth Month, called May, 1754” is of real interest because the Pennsylvania Hospital is the first hospital in what is now the United States to have a consecutive and successful operation from its foundation.

The first hospital on the American continent is thought to have been established by Cortez in what is now the city of Mexico about 1524. The French established a hospital in Quebec in 1639 and in Montreal in 1644. Bellevue Hospital in New York City traces its beginnings to a room for the sick in the public workhouse in 1736, but the first hospital in the Colonies, organized as a hospital and having a continuous existence, is the Pennsylvania Hospital, which dates back to 1751.

Toward the end of 1750 some persons “who had frequent opportunities of observing the Distress of such distempered Poor as from time to time came to Philadelphia for the Advice and Assistance of the Physicians and Surgeons” met together on several occasions to



A View of the House of Employment, Almshouse, Pennsylvania Hospital, & part of the City of Philadelphia.

To the Right of the Almshouse is the Pennsylvania Hospital, the first in America.
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study the situation. On January 23, 1751, they presented a petition to the House of Representatives of the Province of Pennsylvania asking that "a small provincial hospital be provided."¹ A second reading of the petition took place one week later, at which time the House gave permission for a bill to be presented. The bill was introduced on February 1, 1751. There was some doubt about its passage because "the Expence of paying Physicians and Surgeons would eat up the whole of any Fund that could be reasonably expected to be raised." The opposition was stilled when three doctors agreed to treat indigent patients in the proposed hospital without charge for a three-year period. They also offered to furnish free the required medicines.² The bill chartering a hospital was passed on February 7, 1751, and signed by Lieutenant Governor James Hamilton on May 11, 1751.

This act incorporating "The Contributors to the Pennsylvania Hospital" gave the board of managers the right to own property and provided that, if the managers raised by contributions a capital stock of £2,000 as an endowment fund, the Province would contribute £2,000 for the erection and equipping of the proposed building.³

Following the receipt of the charter, contributions were solicited and the desired sum was quickly secured. The contributors met on July 1, 1751, at the State House in Philadelphia and chose by ballot, as provided in the charter, twelve managers and a treasurer.

The Board of Managers was composed of outstanding citizens of Philadelphia. In the group were Franklin, Joshua Crosby, a well-known merchant; Samuel Rhoads, a builder, member of the Assembly, delegate to the Continental Congress and later, in 1774, Mayor of Philadelphia; John Smith, born in Burlington, N.J., member

¹ The Association of Friends had made an unsuccessful effort to establish a hospital as early as 1709.

² At a meeting of the Board of Managers, held in December, 1752, it was "agreed that the Managers, each of them in their Turns, solicit Subscriptions from the rich widows and other Single Women in Town, in order to raise a Fund to pay for the Drugs" which had been ordered in London.

³ Franklin, who devised this strategy, writes in his *Autobiography*, "This condition carried the bill through; for the members who had opposed the grant, and now conceived they might have the credit of being charitable without expense, agreed to its passage; and then in soliciting subscriptions among the people, we urged the conditional promise of the law as an additional motive to give . . . thus the cause worked both ways. . . . I do not remember any of my political manoeuvres, the success of which at the time gave me more pleasure; or wherein after thinking of it, I more easily excused myself for having made some use of cunning."

of the Assembly, owner of the first line of packets to England; Samuel Hazard and Israel Pemberton, wealthy merchants, both deeply interested in the Indians of the Province; Dr. Thomas Bond,⁴ foremost surgeon of his day; Hugh Roberts, a grandson of Joseph Fox, one-time speaker of the Assembly, and Charles Norris, merchant.

Most of the Managers named above were Quakers.⁵ There were two, however, who were not of that persuasion: Richard Peters, an ordained minister of the Church of England, and Evan Morgan, a warden of Christ Church and a member of the Legislature. The first treasurer was John Reynell, a merchant who devoted much of his time to philanthropic causes and to the activities of the Society of Friends.

The Managers met⁶ on July 2, 1751, to inspect sites for the proposed building. The property chosen was owned by Thomas and Richard Penn, Proprietaries of the Province. A meeting was held four days after the inspection and, after electing Crosby president and Franklin clerk, the Managers prepared a petition to the Penns. The petition and an explanatory letter were forwarded to Thomas Hyam and Sylvanus Bevan with the request that they present the petition to the Proprietaries who were living in London. Messrs. Hyam and Bevan replied on January 18, 1752, enclosing a letter from Thomas Penn dated January 17, 1752. This letter stated that the Penns had instructed their Lieutenant Governor⁷ to grant a charter to the present and future subscribers and to give them a valuable tract of land.

Neither the terms of the grant of incorporation nor the proposed gift of land pleased the Managers. On July 2, 1752, they addressed another letter to Messrs. Hyam and Bevan telling them that the proposed lot was contiguous to a brickyard and not in a healthful location, that the Province act was a more liberal grant of incorpora-

⁴ Franklin, in his *Autobiography*, states that "Dr. Thomas Bond, a particular friend of mine, conceived the idea of establishing a hospital in Philadelphia . . . but the proposal being a novelty in America, and at first not well understood, he met with but little success."

⁵ Several Managers opposed the war for independence because of their principles and, without a hearing or trial, were sent as prisoners to Staunton, Va., for eight months.

⁶ At Widow Pratt's Royal Standard Tavern.

⁷ Lieutenant Governor Hamilton opposed the proposal. He wrote Thomas Penn on July 5, 1751, saying he had advised the Managers not to present the petition.

tion than that proposed by the Proprietaries, especially because of the £2,000 appropriation, and that, in addition, the property offered by the Proprietaries, according to the maps on record, had already been given to the Province as a park. The Managers went on to say that a contributor⁸ had offered a larger piece of ground, but it was a mile out of town and therefore inconvenient for the physicians. The Managers also reported to Messrs. Hyam and Bevan that in the meantime they had hired a house⁹ early in 1752 and that 23 patients had been admitted, twelve of whom had been cured. Incidentally, the canny Managers had made demand upon the Assembly during the summer of 1751 for the payment of the £2,000 and, after receiving it, had put it out on interest.

Messrs. Hyam and Bevan replied under date of January 31, 1753, stating that the Penns alleged that the lot they offered was contiguous to the lot the Managers wanted and offered to make some change in the proposed articles of incorporation, agreeing that if the hospital did not succeed, the Managers could dispose of the building, but that the land would revert to the Proprietaries. The agents asked the Penns to put their reply in writing, but the Penns declined to do so. The agents ended their letter by suggesting to the Managers that they should either accept the offer of the Proprietaries or else "fix on some other piece of ground." The Managers expressed their appreciation to the agents on June 30, 1753, and accepted their advice.¹⁰

Some doubt about the powers and duties of the Managers apparently arose, for the pamphlet reports that a new set of bylaws had been adopted on January 17, 1752. The new bylaws are printed in full. Six days later the Managers adopted rules for the admission and discharge of patients. These rules bear a striking resemblance to the rules in effect today in general hospitals. Patients with incurable diseases were not acceptable. Patients with infectious diseases could not be admitted until appropriate "apartments" were prepared for

⁸ The donor was Matthias Koplín, "a pious but eccentric German." The lot, about four acres in size, was situated between Philadelphia and Germantown and was sold by the Managers on November 6, 1776.

⁹ This house, on the south side of High (now Market St.) below Seventh Street, was rented from the estate of Judge John Kinsey for £40 per annum.

¹⁰ The Managers purchased several acres of land just beyond the western limit of the city in 1754 from Wm. Hinton and Richard Parker. In 1767, Thomas and Richard Penn donated some adjoining property to the Managers and in 1769 they gave another piece to the hospital.

them. Children were not permitted to visit their parents "so as not to disturb Patients with their noise." Procedures comparable to those in effect at the present time were established for the admission of accident cases and the indigent.

Several other rules are of interest. All patients when cured were required to sign certificates stating the benefit they had received from the hospital, and these could be published or otherwise disposed of as the Managers thought proper. Patients were not permitted on pain of expulsion to swear, curse, get drunk, or behave rudely or indecently. No patient was permitted to play at cards, dice, or any other game within the hospital or to beg anywhere in the city.

Rules adopted for the choice of the physicians and surgeons permitted to practice in the hospital ¹¹ also follow very closely the rules in effect in hospitals today except that provision was made for apprentice or student practitioners who paid a fee of an English guinea per year for the opportunity of observing the physicians and surgeons at their work in the hospital.

At the annual meeting on May 7, 1752, three physicians and surgeons were chosen to attend indigent patients in the hospital for a three year period and the assignment list showing the months each doctor was to be on "service" is the same kind of list which hospitals prepare today. A staff of four consultants "to assist in extraordinary cases" was likewise appointed, perhaps to give dignity to the new institution, or to keep alive the interest of as many influential people as possible.

The physicians and surgeons chosen were the leading doctors of their period. Dr. Thomas Bond, a native of Maryland, studied abroad and began his practice in Philadelphia in 1732. He instituted the first course of clinical lectures in 1766 and was a founder of what is now the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. Dr. Phineas Bond, brother of Thomas, studied at Leyden, Paris, Edinburgh and London. He was likewise a founder of the medical school and, in 1747, a member of the Philadelphia Common Council. The third attending physician, Dr. Lloyd Zachary, was born in Boston and studied

¹¹ On October 23, 1751, the Managers adopted a rule which stated "that the physicians of the Hospital . . . shall first give demonstration of their Skill and Abilities . . . to assist (the Managers) in judging of the performance of such Practitioners."

abroad. He, too, helped found the medical school and was the health officer for the Port of Philadelphia.

Dr. Thomas Graeme, a graduate of the University of Leyden, was not only a physician but a judge, serving for 20 years as a member of the Supreme Court. He was a member of the Provincial Council and served as Collector of the Port. Dr. Thomas Cadwallader, likewise a member of the Provincial Council, was the Medical Director of the Army during the Revolution and the first doctor to give a systematic course of medical lectures (1750). Dr. Samuel Preston Moore, a native Philadelphian, was the son of a physician and the treasurer of the Province of Pennsylvania for fourteen years. Dr. John Redman, a Leyden graduate, studied at Guy's Hospital in London. He was a member of the Philadelphia Common Council, a trustee of the College of New Jersey (Princeton), an Elder in the Presbyterian Church and the first president of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.

Several financial statements are included in the pamphlet. A statistical report for the half year ending May 4, 1753, indicates that of 64 patients received, 32 were completely cured, four were considerably relieved, five were discharged as incurable, two were discharged for infractions of the rules, two left without permission, six were taken away by their friends, five died, and eight were in the hospital on the last day of the month.

The report concludes with the statement that several out-patients had received the advice of physicians.

To the hospital administrator of today, the rules and regulations adopted almost two hundred years ago by America's first hospital are amazingly modern. Many basic principles of present day hospital management are exactly the same as those established by the Managers of the Pennsylvania Hospital in the 1750's. This is all the more remarkable because of the tremendous changes which have occurred in the field of medicine itself.

Hospitals pride themselves on their charts and their medical records and yet, this first hospital adopted a rule on January 23, 1752, which says "The Practitioners shall keep a fair Account (in a Book provided for that purpose) of the several Patients under their Care, of the Disorders they labour under, and shall enter in the said Book the Recipes or Prescriptions they make for each of them."

Consultation between physicians is a rule in hospitals today. This first hospital established a committee of consultants and adopted a rule which read "Upon extraordinary cases, the Practitioners in Attendance shall call in two or more of the Practitioners chosen for the Service of the Year, to consult with."

The use of the word "service" in the above rule and in other sections of the pamphlet is of interest. Doctors today "take service," meaning that they will be at the hospital according to an agreed upon schedule to treat the indigent without charge.

Patients are not admitted to hospitals without a preliminary diagnosis, thereby guarding against the admission of contagious or other cases which the hospital is not equipped to handle. The physicians and admitting officers were warned "to be particular in enumerating the Symptoms" and a physician had to sign the admission request, even as today.

Florence Nightingale was not born until 1820, but in the argument for the need of the hospital, one reason was "providing good and careful Nurses, and other attendants." The therapeutic value of diet may be considered a modern development, but one of the arguments Franklin used was "His Lodgings will be commodious, clean and neat, in an healthy and open Situation, his Diet will be well chosen, and properly administered." In another paragraph Franklin outlined the advantages as "benefit of regular Advice, Attendance, Lodging, Diet and Medicines."

Doctors, for years, served on hospital boards of trustees but during the past fifteen or twenty years this has not been considered good practice and such organizations as the American College of Surgeons advise against it. Almost two hundred years ago, one of the original rules of the Pennsylvania Hospital said, "No Practitioner, during the term for which he is chosen to serve the Hospital, shall act as a Manager." When Dr. Thomas Bond was "put on Service" he resigned from the Board of Managers.

All hospitals today pride themselves upon their educational functions. The first set of rules of this pioneer hospital made provision for "Apprentices or other Students" and lectures were offered them as early as 1766. Franklin wrote that the hospital would "not only render the Physicians and Surgeons who attend them [the patients], still more expert and skilful, for the Benefit of others, but afford such

speedy and effectual Instruction to the young Students of both Professions, who come from different and remote Parts of the Country for Improvement, that they return with a more ample Stock of Knowledge in their Art, and become Blessings to the Neighborhoods in which they fix their Residence.”

Clinics for the treatment of ambulatory patients are conducted by almost all hospitals. “Out-Patients” are referred to in the pamphlet, a designation still in use today.

Few diseases are mentioned in the pamphlet, but Franklin refers to patients “tortur’d perhaps with the Stone, devour’d by the Cancer, depriv’d of Sight by Cataracts.”

The foresight of Franklin and his colleagues as revealed in this pamphlet is utterly amazing. Without previous experience, but with some knowledge of hospitals in England and on the Continent, these men outlined a plan of organization and adopted rules of procedure which, in spite of the tremendous development in medicine itself, are just as pertinent in the hospital field today as they were two hundred years ago. Their achievement should humble those who have assumed that hospitals are strictly the product of the twentieth century.