

**HISTORY AND  
REMINISCENCES OF THE  
PHILADELPHIA ALMSHOUSE  
AND PHILADELPHIA HOSPITAL**

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History and Reminiscences of the Philadelphia Almshouse and Philadelphia Hospital by  
Various

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PHILADELPHIA ALMSHOUSE, 1840.

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HISTORY AND REMINISCENCES

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA ALMSHOUSE

AND

PHILADELPHIA HOSPITAL.

BY

*David*

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## THE MEDICAL HISTORY OF THE PHILADELPHIA ALMSHOUSE.

BY D. HAYES AGNEW, M.D.<sup>1</sup>

GENTLEMEN:—I am before you to-day by appointment of the medical board, to discharge a service preliminary to the opening of the annual course of clinical lectures in the hospital. For some time I have been engaged in gathering material from a great variety of sources, written and unwritten, to secure the history of the Philadelphia Almshouse from oblivion, if not utter loss. The field is extensive and interesting, though its paths have been much obscured by the decay of time. So interwoven is it with the secularities of Philadelphia, that no history of this city, civil, political or professional, would be complete without it.

The medical history of the Philadelphia Almshouse covers a period of one hundred and twenty years, during which time it has been located in three different positions. First, on the square between Spruce and Pine and Third and Fourth streets, at that time called the Green Meadows; next on the square between Spruce and Pine and Eleventh and Twelfth streets, long known

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Agnew was a member from 1858 to 1866 of the surgical staff of the Philadelphia Hospital. He was also curator of the museum from 1861 to 1867. This "History" was a lecture delivered at the opening of the clinical lectures at the hospital, October 15, 1862, and records the most important medical facts connected with the institution to that date. It was published by request of the board of guardians, and was printed by Holland & Edgar, 64 North Eighth street, Philadelphia; but it has long been practically out of print. Dr. Agnew has kindly given his consent to its re-publication in this volume of Reports to which it forms a fitting introduction. A few notes have been added and a few corrections made, but it is reproduced nearly as originally published. The notes added are placed in brackets. In the historical and miscellaneous memoranda, to be given later, will be found some allusions, relating to facts occurring within the period covered by Dr. Agnew, but not mentioned by him.]

The following prefatory acknowledgment is made by the author: "I am indebted to the board of guardians for free access to the records of the house; to Drs. Girvin and Benton, resident physicians of the Philadelphia Hospital, for valuable assistance in searching these records; to Mr. Samuel Hazard, secretary of the Philadelphia Historical Society, for information which the works of that library supplied; to Mr. Mickley, whose rare collection of old works is unsurpassed; to Professors Jackson and Hodge, and Drs. Gerhard and Stillé, whose acquaintance with matters pertaining to the subjects treated on, proved of much consequence in enabling me to ascertain facts connected with subjects on which written documents were silent, and to Mr. Cavender, whose industry in arranging the records is most praiseworthy."

as the Society Grounds; and last, on the west side of the Schuylkill river, where we are assembled to-day.

This, gentlemen, is the oldest hospital on this continent.<sup>1</sup> Proud, in his history of Pennsylvania, a work justly esteemed for its research, says the Philadelphia Almshouse was of later date than the Pennsylvania Hospital, the origin of which was in 1753. This is a mistake. In 1742 it was fulfilling a varied routine of beneficent functions in affording shelter, support and employment for the poor and indigent, a hospital for the sick, and an asylum for the idiotic, the insane and the orphan. It was thus dispensing its acts of mercy and blessing, when Pennsylvania was yet a province and her inhabitants the loyal subjects of Great Britain, more than twenty years before a school of medicine was founded in this city, and indeed before most of the great events which have given the American people a historical importance among nations of the earth.

Who were the first physicians appointed to attend the Philadelphia Almshouse, and at what period were they assigned to this duty? These are questions, so far as I know, which cannot be ascertained either from record or tradition. In 1768, and probably much earlier, Drs. Cadwalader Evans and Thomas Bond were the medical appointees; and on the 18th of May, 1769, we have a formal announcement of their re-election. The institution at this early period contained two hundred and forty-six inmates, and each of the medical attendants received fifty pounds per annum, and were required to supply such medicine as was needed for the sick.

Dr. Bond studied his profession at home and abroad; was the first surgeon and physician to the Pennsylvania Hospital, in which institution as early as 1769 he delivered lectures on clinical medicine and surgery. Dr. Cadwalader Evans was one of the first pupils of Dr. Bond. In order to finish his education he sailed for Edinburgh, but the vessel while on the voyage was taken by a Spanish privateer and carried to Hayti, where he remained between two and three years before he was able to renew the voyage for the Scotch metropolis, then the great centre of medical instruction. It was after his return from Scotland he became officially connected with the almshouse.

<sup>1</sup>Prof. Wm. Osler, formerly of the medical staff of the hospital, now of Johns-Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, in answer to queries, writes the editor that the Hotel Dieu, of Montreal, was founded in 1642, and possibly some of the Mexican hospitals are older yet.]