

ISSN 1553-7641

THE WATERMARK

Newsletter of the Librarians, Archivists & Museum Professionals in the History of the Health Sciences

Volume XLIV

Number 2

Spring 2021



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Submissions for the Watermark:

The Watermark encourages submissions of news and stories about events, collections, catalogues, people, awards, grants, publications, and anything else of professional interest to the members of LAMPHHS. Please submit your contributions in a timely way to Stephen Novak, as e-mail attachments. Visuals should be submitted as jpegs with a resolution of at least 300 dpi if possible. Copyright clearance for content and visuals are the responsibility of the author.

Cover Image: Illustration from Hippolyte Bruyères, *“La Phrénologie, le Geste et la Physionomie”* (Paris: Aubert, 1847) from the Oskar Diethelm Library. See page 17.

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

After a winter of discontent by anyone's notion of that word, the advent of spring heralds what we all hope will be a better time. The progress of vaccination – in the U.S. at least – promises to finally tame COVID and bring back some semblance of “normal” before we completely forget what “normal” ever was.

The oddness of the times, however, has not prevented our members from doing what they do best: promoting the history of the health sciences whether that be through lectures, exhibits, or the acquisition of collections. You'll find notice of all these activities and more in the pages of the spring *Watermark*. In addition, LAMPHHS members being assiduous readers, there are the usual book reviews.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Sharon Butcher for her work as Associate Book Review Editor and to welcome her successor, Arlene Shaner.

I hope to “see” many of you at the annual meeting in May!

Till then,

Stephen E. Novak

Editor, *The Watermark*

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

The 2021 Annual Meeting is just around the corner! I hope all LAMPHHS members will be able to attend the planned events on May 4th and 5th. The committees that make up the Remote Arrangements Committee have done a fantastic job of creating the program, gathering nominations for new officers and for several awards. Our keynote speaker this year is Dr. Stephen Kenny (University of Liverpool, UK) who will focus on connections between racism and professional medicine in 19th and 20th century America. Dr. Sabine Hildebrandt (Harvard University) will be a guest speaker on May 5th and give us a close look at the Pernkopf Atlas and the legacies of Nazi anatomy. There are also several panels

planned that will discuss current events and how those have impacted the way our historical institutions operate. We will be hearing from Librarians, Archivists, and Museum Professionals!

Very soon the formal meeting announcement will be sent out via the LAMPHHS listserv. The program and registration information will be posted on the LAMPHHS website.

LAMPHHS Communications Committee

Some exciting changes have happened over the past three years or so. ALHHS welcomed the members of the Medical Museums Association into its fold, the merger brought about a name change to reflect the relationship, which then brought about a need for updated by-laws to govern the newly incorporated non-profit organization. A new logo is even in the works! Our social media presence continues to grow and improve as a result of Gabrielle Barr's tireless efforts to maintain both the LAMPHHS Twitter and Facebook accounts. With growth comes more work, so now is the time to establish a communications committee that can oversee all things social media, including the website and listserv and the sharing of information among LAMPHHS members.

Originally, nominations were gathered for positions on this committee. With a gentle reminder from Russell Johnson to re-read the by-laws, we realized that committees such as this are ad hoc and made up of volunteers, not elected positions. The former nominees, (Tara Wink, Andrew Yamazaki, and Anna Schuldt) became volunteers! That

then led to a discussion about the need for a committee chair, and it was decided that the LAMPHHS secretary position should include that responsibility. Our current secretary, Jamie Rees, gladly accepted the challenge.

Now that we have some volunteers and a committee chair, the next step is to define the committee's responsibilities. Committee members are meeting on a regular basis and will be building a framework on which to base a communications plan. As the plan evolves, more information will be sent to the membership.

If you have experience in outreach activities and are interested in volunteering to serve on the Communications Committee please contact Jamie Rees at jrees@kumc.edu.

Looking forward to “seeing” everyone in May!

Jennifer Nieves

President

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PROGRAM COMMITTEE – ANNUAL MEETING 2021

Introducing the 2021 Meeting Program

On behalf of the LAMPHSS 2021 Annual Meeting Program Committee, I am delighted to share information about our May 4-5 virtual meeting. On January 1, we put out a call to membership to share information about how we as library, archives, and museum professionals are challenging or changing practice to meet institutional and patron needs. The Program Committee was especially interested in proposals that addressed fundamental changes in the way we are engaging with: deprecated notions of neutrality in description; legacies of racism, sexism, and other forms of anti-inclusivity in our home organizations; and contested collections, problematic histories, and creating a cultural environment relevant to a diverse public. Our membership responded with some wonderful proposals, and we are pleased to announce the following sessions:

- **Addressing Institutional Racism.** Mary Hague-Yearl (Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University), Amanda L. Mahoney (Dittrick Medical History Center), Arlene Shaner (New York Academy of Medicine), Susan Sacharski (Northwestern Memorial Hospital), and Robert Vietrogoski (Rutgers)

University Libraries) will present on both their own experiences as well as those of peers and public historians.

- **Anti-racism, Diversity, and Inclusion in Libraries and Archives.** This special focus session will present three case studies (5-10 minutes each) about work in the area of anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion at speaker institutions followed by open conversation. Diana Delgado, Caroline Jedlicka, and Nicole Milano will discuss a library/archives working group and a resulting history of medicine book club for faculty, staff, and students to discuss historical inequities in medicine at the New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center. Dawne Howard Lucas and Chaitra Powell will describe ongoing anti-racism work at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, notably ethical description work to remediate approximately 700 finding aids describing antebellum-era collections and deliberate and ethical collecting efforts to diversify UNC's holdings.
- **Re-examining Special Collections, Archives, and Museum Workflows.** Sarah Alger (Paul S. Russell MD Museum of Medical History and Innovation Museum), Scott Grimwood, (SSM Health), Dominic Hall (Center for the History of Medicine, Countway Library, Harvard University), and Katherine Isham (Cushing/Whitney Medical Historical Library, Yale) will present on collection development in a time of crisis and newly implemented approaches to processing, description, discovery, and access.

As mentioned in the President's article, the Program Committee is excited about offering not one, but two keynote speakers this year. Dr. Stephen Kenny, Senior Lecturer, 19th and 20th century North American History, University of Liverpool University, UK, will open the conference with his talk, *Racism, Power and the Culture of Medicine under American Slavery and Jim Crow Segregation*, which will "examine the routine use of Black subjects for demonstration, experimentation, profit, and prestige that characterized medicine in the slavery and Jim Crow eras." Dr. Sabine Hildebrandt, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Lecturer on Global Health and Social Medicine, Boston Children's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, will close the program with her talk *The Changing Faces of the Pernkopf Atlas: Reactions to the History of Anatomy in Nazi Germany*, which "places the Pernkopf atlas in its historical background and describes its evolution from anatomical knowledge source to "tainted masterwork," to interdisciplinary case study in medical history and ethics."

Interspersed throughout the two-day meeting will be a cocktails and coloring social hosted by our Chair of Remote Arrangements, Micaela D. Sullivan-Fowler (UW-Madison), a breakfast social, and a “show and tell” arts and crafts lunch.

Along with Program Committee members Brandon Pieczko (Ruth Lilly Medical Library, Indiana University School of Medicine), Ashlynn Rickord (Public Health Museum), and Paula A. Summerly (University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston), I look forward to seeing everyone in May!

Emily R. Novak Gustainis

Chair, Program Committee

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MEMBER PROFILES



Name: Glenda S. Barahona

Member of LAMPHHS since: 2013

Hometown: Brooklyn, NY

Current Employer and Position: Reference Archivist at the Lillian & Clarence de la Chapelle Medical Archives at the New York University Grossman School of Medicine.

Education: BA in Art History and Media Studies from SUNY University at Buffalo, MSLIS from Pratt Institute's School of Information.

Professional interests: Digital curation and asset management, exhibit design, making hidden collections accessible to the public.

Other facts, interests, or hobbies: Enjoys home improvement projects, indoor/outdoor gardening, backpacking travel.



Name: Dominic William Hall

Member of LAMPHHS since:
MEMA member since 2007

Hometown: Loudonville, NY
(Albany suburb)

**Current Employer and
Position:** Curator, Warren
Anatomical Museum, Center for
the History of Medicine, Francis
A. Countway Library of Medicine,
Harvard Medical School

Education: Master of Liberal Arts, History, Harvard University Extension School; Master of Arts, Museology, University of Washington; Bachelor of Arts, History, Colgate University

Professional interests: Cultural complexities of legacy museums; museum stewardship of sensitive collections; history of anatomical education in the United States; history of anatomy and pathology museums in the United States; renewed scientific use of legacy anatomy and pathology collections.

Other facts, interests, or hobbies: I'm married with two kids, one Boston terrier, and one geriatric cat. As an undergraduate, I sang in an all-male acapella group. Eco-justice has become a growing part of my non-work interests, and I volunteer with some local environmental groups.

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NEWS FROM THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE DIVISION OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

Division staff continue to work remotely to support YOU in your research and can be reached via the [NLM Support Center](#) via the "Write to the Help Desk" blue button. NLM Reading Rooms remain temporarily closed to the public in accordance with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and to promote social distancing. NLM online collection resources remain available, including [NLM Digital Collections](#) and [PubMed Central](#). For the latest NLM Interlibrary

Loan (ILL) service information check [here](#). For the latest NLM Reading Room information check [here](#).

NLM launches two new exhibitions:

Making a World of Difference: Stories About Global Health – [Read the NLM news announcement](#) and [visit the exhibition web site](#).

Outside/Inside: Immigration, Migration, and Health Care in the United States – [Read the NLM news announcement](#) and [visit the exhibition web site](#).

***The Washington Post* featured the first NLM History Talk of 2021**, by Dr. Naa Oyo Kwate, co-sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Office of Digital Humanities, as part of the [recently reaffirmed partnership between NLM and NEH to collaborate on research, education, and career initiatives](#). Over 500 viewers tuned in to hear Dr. Kwate speak on “‘Savages cry easily and are afraid of the dark’: What It Means to Talk about Race and African American health.” Watch the archived livestream of her talk freely [here](#), along with previously-archived NLM History Talks.

NLM History Talk held on Thursday, March 25. Dr. Annmarie Adams, Professor, Department of Social Studies of Medicine (Chair) and School of Architecture, McGill University, spoke on “Placing Women in Medicine: Maude Abbott and the Archaeology of Friendships.” Look for our interview with Dr. Adams on [Circulating Now](#), as part of our ongoing [series of interviews](#).

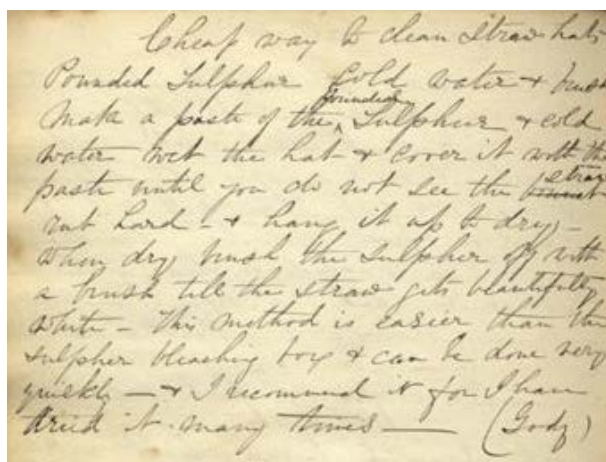
The NLM Web Collecting and Archiving Working Group continues to identify and select web and social media content documenting the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak as part of NLM’s Global Health Events web archive collection (1.8 TB). [A Circulating Now blog post, published January 28, reflects one year of collecting on this important topic](#), initiative which now includes 6200+ Seed URLs, encompassing federal, state, and local government COVID-19 pages, websites of disaster relief agencies and NGOs, and content documenting life in quarantine, prevention measures, vaccine development, the experiences of healthcare workers, patients, and more. The group continues to actively review recommended content for inclusion in the archive (8300+ URLs nominated to date), scoping and running crawls of content using Archive-It and Conifer (formerly Webrecorder), reviewing archived sites for quality, and adding metadata. The group continues to engage with other cultural heritage organizations archiving the history of COVID-19, including a group spearheaded by the leadership of the [Smithsonian National Museum of American History](#), as well as the group of federal

agencies who meet regularly to discuss their respective initiatives. The NLM Web Collecting and Archiving Working Group also continues to engage with the Society of American Archivists Web Archiving Section, the Archive-It community, the National Digital Stewardship Alliance, and is contributing to and following the growing list of institutions collecting COVID-19 related content maintained by the [Documenting the Now](#) project. Nominations for content to include in NLM's Global Health Events collection remain welcome via nlmwebcollecting@nlm.nih.gov. NLM also continues to participate as an institutional contributor to a broader [International Internet Preservation Consortium \(IIPC\) Novel Coronavirus outbreak web archive collection](#). Learn more about NLM's efforts in the *Journal of the Medical Library Association* article "[The National Library of Medicine Global Health Events web archive, coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) pandemic collecting](#)," and the broader context of documenting the pandemic published in *Nature* on December 17 "[What are COVID archivists keeping for tomorrow's historians?](#)"

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NEWS FROM NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, CENTER FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE & PUBLIC HEALTH

Digital Projects: "Cheap way to clean straw hats"



For spring cleaning we look back 150 years to Jane Beck's receipt book for instructions for a "[cheap way to clean straw hats](#)." This book is one of 11 digitized for the Library's newest digital collection: [Recipes and Remedies: Manuscript Cookbooks](#).

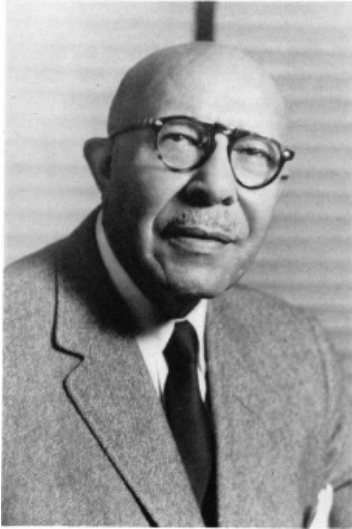
Library Events

The Library's winter events are now available to view online. Culinary historian Stephen Schmidt's January 30 Bibliography Week lecture, "Manuscript Cookbooks and Their Audience," was offered in connection with the the launch of [Recipes and Remedies](#):

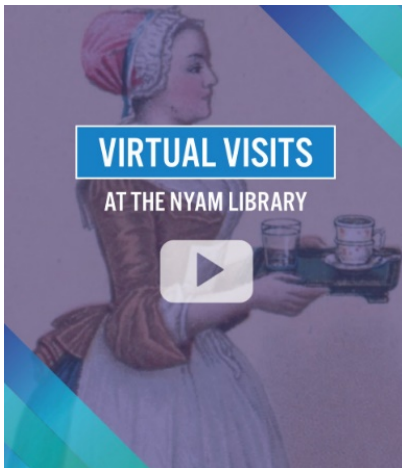
Manuscript Cookbooks. The lecture may be viewed [here](#). On February 3, Janice P. Nimura looked at two early women physicians in New York City, sisters Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell, in “The Doctors Blackwell”; view it [here](#). The Library cosponsored the lecture with the Heberden Society of Weill Cornell Medicine. The Library’s events are available through its [playlist](#).

From the Blog: Some Firsts—Peter M. Murray, Janet Doe, and Mary Ann Payne

On the Library’s blog, “Books, Health, and History,” we celebrate some NYAM “firsts”:



[Peter Marshall Murray](#), MD, the first Black Fellow of the Academy (featured), [Janet Doe](#), the first woman director of the NYAM Library, and [Mary Ann Payne](#), MD, the first woman president of the Academy.



Virtual Visits: February Chocolate

The Library’s virtual tours continued with “[Chocolate: Food of the Gods](#)” in February. All the Library’s online tours may be found on NYAM’s [Virtual Visit playlist](#).

Color Our Collections



The Library's 2021 [Color Our Collections](#) campaign gathered 102 coloring books from libraries, archives, and museums around the world: in all, 610 (!) coloring books have been mounted since 2016. This colorable "[Gyre Falcon](#)" is from the Library's copy of Ulisse Aldrovandi's *Ornithologiae* (Bologna, 1599). Enjoy coloring now and join us in 2022.

At Home with the NYAM Library

At Home with the NYAM Library

[NYAM Library](#)

Our monthly e-newsletter highlights our collections, digital and otherwise; Virtual Visits; and our blog, [Books, Health, and History](#). Sign up for the e-newsletter [here](#) and peruse earlier issues: [At Home with the](#)

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REPOSITORY NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Off the Shelf and into the Lab: Medical History, Preservation, & the University of Cincinnati Libraries' Adopt-A-Book Program

The Henry R. Winkler Center for the History of the Health Professions, University of Cincinnati, invites you to its next Cecil Striker Society Webinar Lecture on Thursday, May 6, 2021, at 7 PM. The talk, presented by Holly Prochaska (Head, Preservation Lab, UC Libraries), Ashleigh Schieszer (Conservator, Conservation Lab Manager, UC Libraries), and Christa Bernardo (Director of Development, University of Cincinnati Libraries) is titled *Off the Shelf and into the Lab: Medical History, Preservation, & the University of Cincinnati Libraries' Adopt-A-Book Program*. Please see the Winkler Center's website [here](#) for more information and Zoom login credentials.



Formed in 1976, the Cecil Striker Society for the History of Medicine has a straightforward purpose: to promote and perpetuate an interest in the history of medicine and related disciplines in the health sciences. The move of the Winkler Center to its new facility in 2008 generated a renewed interest in the Society, and in 2010 the Cecil Striker Society convened for the first time in many years. It has sponsored an annual lecture since then and because of COVID now presents bi-monthly webinars.

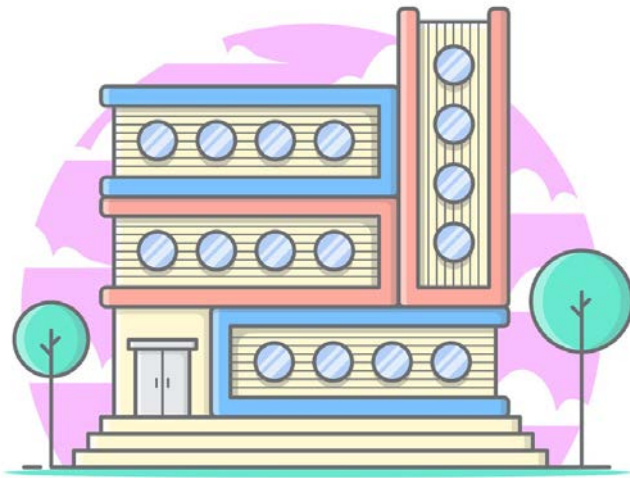
Please join us on May 6th at 7 PM to hear more about this very successful collection building and preservation and fundraiser endeavor.

Gino Pasi

Archivist/Curator

Henry R. Winkler Center for the History of the Health Professions
University of Cincinnati

New Online Community for Librarians/Archivists/Curators Involved in Undergraduate Research



The Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) has established an online community for library, archival, and museum professionals involved or interested in nurturing undergraduate research. It is envisioned as a networking space for those involved in activities such as the following:

- mentoring undergraduate research projects in libraries, archives, and museums
- teaching research skills workshops for undergraduates
- developing and providing resources for undergraduates in their research quest
- assisting undergraduates in the curation of virtual and in-person exhibitions
- working with undergraduates on digital humanities and science projects
- supplying resources and guidance in the communication of research (e.g., tips for designing an effective poster)
- partnering with undergraduates and mentors in the publication of undergraduate research journals
- attending to issues regarding diversity and inclusion in undergraduate research in library/archival/museum settings

How to Join the Librarians/Archivists Community

Go to the Librarians/Archivists Community (<https://bit.ly/LibrarianArchivComm>) and login using your CUR credentials (those new to CUR will need to establish a CUR user name and password). If you have forgotten your password, use the "forgot password" link (<https://bit.ly/CUR-ForgotPasswd>). If accessing the CUR Community for the first time, be sure to accept the Terms and Conditions. Then, use the green "Join Community" button on the right side of the screen to select notification preferences and officially join the discussion.

New Exhibit - "*It Shall Be the Effort of My Life*": *The Work and Words of Elizabeth Blackwell MD*



The Archives & Special Collections department at Upstate Medical University is pleased to share an online exhibit "[*It Shall Be the Effort of My Life*: *The Work and Words of Elizabeth Blackwell MD*](#)", in celebration of Dr. Blackwell's 200th birthday. This online exhibit draws quotations from Dr. Blackwell's memoir *Pioneer Work in Opening the Medical Profession to Women: Autobiographical Sketches* by Elizabeth Blackwell (1895), as well as correspondence and publications, to tell the story of the first woman doctor in her own words. Placing Doctor Blackwell's experiences in the context of her life and times, *It Shall Be the Effort*

of My Life highlights the challenges and triumphs of a woman who pursued medicine, not out of a call to healing, but to demonstrate the innate abilities of all women.

The exhibit contains images and documents found in the collections of other institutions. We appreciate their efforts, which made this exhibit possible.

News from Archives & Special Collections, Columbia University Medical Center

Fredi Kronenberg Papers Open

We are pleased to announce that the [papers of Fredi Kronenberg](#) are now available for research. This collection of a respected physiologist and leader in the study of menopausal health and holistic medicine will serve as an important resource in the history of women's health and alternative medicine during the late 20th and early 21st

centuries. In addition to materials documenting her own research, professional activities, and personal life, Kronenberg's papers contain the records of the Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine at Columbia University of which she was founder and director (1993-2007). The Center hosted workshops and continuing medical education courses, along with sponsoring numerous studies in the subject of hot flashes, nutrition, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and ethnobotany. The papers show how Kronenberg was engaged in a global network of scholarship that connected practitioners of Western medicine and that of "traditional medicine" throughout the world.

New Acquisitions:

Gilda's Club Records: We recently acquired the records of Gilda's Club Worldwide, the pioneering cancer support organization. The records, which come to about 58 cubic feet, include correspondence, committee and board minutes, newsletters, training manuals and other publications, publicity and fundraising materials, photographs, and artifacts dating from circa 1991 to 2009. Named for the legendary *Saturday Night Live* actress Gilda Radner, the first Gilda's Club opened in New York City in 1995 with Joanna Bull, Radner's psychotherapist, as Director. The name derives from Radner's oft-quoted remark that cancer gave her "membership to an elite club I'd rather not belong to." In 2000, Gilda's Club Worldwide (GCWW) was formed to develop a national network of clubhouses. GCWW merged in 2009 with a similar organization, The Wellness Community, to form the Cancer Support Community (CSC), though many of the affiliated clubhouses have retained the Gilda's Club name. Besides telling the story of one organization, the Gilda's Club records will be an important source for the history of patient activism, community building, and holistic medical care in late 20th-early 21st century America.



John Gorman Papers: Archives & Special Collections has acquired the papers of John Gorman, one of the developers of RhoGAM™, the vaccine that has effectively eliminated Rh disease in the industrialized world. In the 1960s Gorman, a clinical pathologist who was then Director of the Blood Bank at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, worked with fellow Columbia faculty member, Vincent Freda, an obstetrician-gynecologist, and William Pollack, a researcher at Ortho Pharmaceutical, to find an antidote to a condition that was killing thousands of

children a year in the U.S. alone. Rh disease used to occur when an Rh-negative mother had an Rh-positive baby, the Rh inherited from the father. Though initial Rh pregnancies are safe from Rh disease, any subsequent one may end with the mother's antibodies attacking the fetus, often resulting in stillbirth, or neonatal jaundice with severe brain damage. RhoGAM™, the vaccine Gorman, Freda, and Pollack developed, was first used in 1968 and has since eliminated the condition in the U.S. and the rest of the developed world. Gorman's papers, which are about 10 cubic feet in extent, include extensive correspondence with biomedical researchers from across the U.S. and Europe, laboratory notebooks and research notes, reprints of scientific articles, copies of newspaper and magazine articles, photographs, and more. The materials not only cover Gorman's work in the 1960s but his efforts in subsequent decades to promote the use of RhoGAM™ around the world. In 1980, Gorman, his collaborators Freda and Pollock, along with British researchers Cyril Clarke and Ronald Finn, shared an Albert Lasker Award for Clinical Medical Research for their work on Rh disease.

Photo: Vincent Freda, top, and John Gorman, bottom, 1968. Photo by Elizabeth Wilcox.

Richard W. Lippman Journal: A member of Columbia's medical school class of 1940, Lippman (1916-1959) was dismissed from his post at Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles in December 1951 when his name came up during hearings before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). The journal he kept in 1952-1953 details his efforts to regain his job and, later, find a new position. It contains extensive discussions of the reaction to his dismissal in southern California's Jewish and medical communities, especially among members and leaders of the Jewish Community Center, the Committee for Medical Freedom, and the Los Angeles County Medical Association.

New Online Exhibit, Updated Book Catalog, and Online History Seminars at Oskar Diethelm Library, Weill Cornell Medical College

The Oskar Diethelm Library, part of the DeWitt Wallace Institute of Psychiatry: History, Policy, & the Arts at Weill Cornell Medical College, is pleased to announce the release of a new online Omeka exhibit on stigma:

<https://oskardiethelm.omeka.net/exhibits/show/stigma/goffman-stigma>. This exhibit was made possible through the wonderful curation and assistance of Jaina Shaw, who completed her Advanced Certification in Archives and Records Management at the Palmer School at Long Island University in December of 2020. The exhibit focuses on the works of Erving Goffman and feature items from the collection, such as the library's 1492 copy of *Malleus Maleficarum*, which describes how to identify witches and people

with witches' marks similar to stigmata, and advertisements on asylum tourism in 19th century New York.

In addition, the library recently updated its book catalog:

<https://oskardiethelm.library.site/> and has continued to add many new finding aids to the Empire Archival Discovery Cooperative:

<https://www.empireadc.org/empiresearch/agency/Oskar%20Diethelm%20Library>.

Lastly, the Richardson History of Psychiatry Research Seminars recorded through Zoom over the past year can be viewed online at: [http://psych-](http://psych-history.weill.cornell.edu/psy_res_sem/sem_archive.html?name1=Video+Archive&type1=2Active)

[history.weill.cornell.edu/psy_res_sem/sem_archive.html?name1=Video+Archive&type1=2Active](http://psych-history.weill.cornell.edu/psy_res_sem/sem_archive.html?name1=Video+Archive&type1=2Active) and the schedule for the upcoming seminars can be found on our website:

[http://psych-](http://psych-history.weill.cornell.edu/psy_res_sem/cur_pro_sch.html?name1=Current+Program+Schedule&type1=2Active)

[history.weill.cornell.edu/psy_res_sem/cur_pro_sch.html?name1=Current+Program+Schedule&type1=2Active](http://psych-history.weill.cornell.edu/psy_res_sem/cur_pro_sch.html?name1=Current+Program+Schedule&type1=2Active). To attend the seminars, please contact Dr. Megan Wolff at mew2008@med.cornell.edu.

Nicole Topich

Special Collections Librarian, Oskar Diethelm Library

DeWitt Wallace Institute of Psychiatry: History, Policy, & the Arts

Weill Cornell Medical College

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BOOK REVIEWS

Deirdre Cooper Owens. *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018. xiv, 182 pages. \$26.95. ISBN: 978-0-8203-5475-0

To say this is a challenging read is to put it lightly. The writing and the depth of research are indeed impressive; it is the sheer content that makes it a difficult read. Difficult but necessary. As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this book is to recognize “the unheralded work of those enslaved women recruited against their will for surgeries and made to work while hospitalized, and the labor of those poor immigrant women who willingly entered crowded hospitals in an effort to be healthy reproductively” (p.3).

The story begins with several enslaved women and girls who lived and worked in 1840s Alabama in the slave hospital established by Dr. James Marion Sims, later regarded as

the “Father of American Gynecology”. Instantly, the reader is exposed to the work expected of them, the experimental procedures conducted on them in the name of science, and the social and cultural theories of race that deemed their skills valuable but their bodies disposable.

The first-hand accounts, the journal logs of the slaveholders, and the cold terminology of the doctors paint a detailed and painful picture of the beginnings of the field of gynecology and the immeasurable sacrifices of black and immigrant women. The pictures throughout give faces to the doctors who propelled the medical advances and, more importantly, give faces and names to the women who endured unimaginable pains and atrocities. The lists and papers of slaves and their jobs and pricing illustrate the cold and calculating nature of the time.

The first three chapters give voice to the black slaves, while chapter four is focused on the experience of the Irish immigrant women and girls. Chapter five concludes the book by exposing how society and science justified and often glossed over what we recognize today as the inhumane treatment of patients, regardless if they came under the knife willingly or, as in most cases, not. The many quotes and examples in this chapter help realize the extent to which how instantly and definitively these women were dismissed and forgotten.

Rather than simply rehashing a hidden history, Dr. Cooper Owens picks it apart and skillfully brings to bear the lens of the racial and patriarchal society that allowed and even justified such events. She firmly rips off the band-aid of any misconceptions we may have of the glory and splendor of these pioneering doctors, revealing the sad and torturous underbelly of gynecology's medical advancement. Physical and mental traumas caused by the vicious and repeated rapes, and the unforgiving experiences of slavery have been glossed over or simply ignored by much of history. In this book, these come to life in a most brutal and brutally honest way. The reader, or at least this reader, is left sitting with legs tightly crossed and heart utterly shattered, but mind grateful, in learning about these women and their lives. Again, difficult but necessary.

Dr. Cooper Owens successfully and rightfully places these forgotten women on a pedestal of appreciation and reverence, next to—or even above—the men who are known and celebrated by history already. Long overdue, these women's stories are finally told with a level of compassion and truth that reels in the reader, no matter how challenging the content. This book can provide added depth and perspective to the medical curriculum, personal knowledge, and historical understanding. Whether you are a medical practitioner, a student of medicine, a woman receiving gynecological services, or a lifelong student of history, this story is worth knowing.

Though the book appears small—five chapters in 126 pages—it is powerful in every page. Dr. Cooper Owens gracefully and honestly guides the reader through gynecology's origins in the slave ships centuries ago, to the slave houses of southern plantations, to the immigrants escaping Ireland's potato famine. The field of medicine that is now deemed such a necessary and regular aspect of women's health had a horrific and terrifying birth amongst the lowest and poorest women. At last, their stories are revealed and the truth is known. And we—as historians, students, medical providers, women, humans—can be better for it.

Hannah Rutledge

Director, Biomedical Library
University of Pennsylvania
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Richard J. Kahn. *Diseases in the District of Maine, 1772-1820: The Unpublished Work of Jeremiah Barker, A Rural Physician in New England*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. xxiv, [ii], 535 pages. \$35.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-005325-3

Historians of medicine who focus on the era of early modern medical practice--which I define as between Thomas Sydenham's patient-centered empiricism in the seventeenth century and the dawn of general anesthesia in 1846--will love this book.

Physicians who see themselves also as historians of medicine sometimes do not distinguish adequately between the type of intellectual activity involved in medical practice and the type involved in medical historiography, and thus fail at the latter. We are fortunate that the author of this book, Dr. Kahn, an internist, has no such fault. He understands this distinction very well and succeeds as a perceptive and meticulous medical historiographer whose scholarly expertise is evident throughout his work.

Accordingly, Kahn divides the book into two main parts: his general introduction to the state of early American medical practice, theory, literature, innovations, epidemiology, education, and therapeutics, all of which comprise the context of Barker's practice (pp. 1-132); and his richly annotated verbatim transcription of Barker's medical manuscripts (pp. 133-438). The rest of the book consists of exceedingly useful scholarly addenda, including a glossary (pp. 441-460), a bibliography (pp. 461-497), an index of cited authors (pp. 499-509), and an index of subjects, including the names of patients and other persons (pp. 511-535).

Jeremiah Barker (1752-1835) did not attend medical school but--as was fairly typical for the time--was apprenticed to a practicing physician and was fully qualified in medicine by age twenty (pp. 4, 25). He had a successful medical practice, partially in Massachusetts but mostly in Maine, from 1772 until he retired in 1818. Insofar as Maine at that time belonged to Massachusetts and did not become a separate state until 1820, it was generally regarded as a rather insignificant outpost of civilization. Barker apparently disagreed with this dismissive assessment and sought to elevate Maine's status in the annals of medicine. For the last two decades of his life he planned, wrote, and took subscriptions for a comprehensive medical history of Maine based on both his own experiences and those of fellow practitioners. For reasons unknown, despite the subscriptions, this book was never published--until now. The manuscript languished among Barker's descendants until they donated it to the Maine Historical Society in 1942 (pp. 12-13). Kahn learned about it in 1990 and immediately began to prepare it for eventual publication.

Barker conceived his book as straightforward reporting of medical and social conditions in Maine. His manuscript "documents the thought and practice of a physician in everyday practice" (p. 24) in the trenches. Like most competent physicians who had to rely only on their five senses before sophisticated diagnostic instruments, tests, and procedures were devised, he was a keen observer (p. xxii), not only of medical presentations and phenomena, but also "of human nature" (p. 2). For example, he wrote that although he encountered many cases of mental illness, he never saw one among Native Americans: "At times, I practiced among aboriginals, who lived in small villages. None of them pretended to possess any medical skill, or magic arts, but quickly called for a physician, when diseased. ... Fish and vegetables composed the chief of their food, and they were a sober & orderly people. I never saw a case of insanity among them, neither did I ever hear of an insane Indian in other places, excepting when under the influence of spiritous liquors. Then they would sometimes commit murder, but not suicide" (pp. 136-137).

While Barker's Volume 1 deals with a variety of conditions--mental illness, upper respiratory diseases, wounds, puerperal fever, other fevers, palsy, rabies, hydrocephalus, etc.--their selection apparently inspired by medical geography, i.e., the study of the localized incidence of various diseases, Volume 2 concerns entirely the most prolific killer of Barker's time: tuberculosis (p. 18). His interest in tuberculosis was personal. At least three of his five wives died young from it (p. 10). Barker was always open to new developments in bioscience and therapeutics. He was an avid student of chemistry and an eager experimenter with various chemicals in

medicine. Among his experiments was trying digitalis for tuberculosis (pp. 353-355). He employed and promoted alkali compounds as a catchall remedy for puerperal and other fevers (pp. 288-291), tuberculosis (pp. 347-353), rabies (pp. 251-252), scarlatina anginosa (pp. 209-210), and several other baffling presentations. He was not as unsystematic as the empirics, but probably not quite as systematic as he should have been, perhaps because, as a resident of a backwater region of New England, he was at pains to keep current with medical literature (pp. xxii, 22). Most contemporary medical writing emanated from academic physicians and elite practitioners in medical hubs such as Edinburgh, London, Paris, Philadelphia, or New York. Little of it found its way in a timely manner to Maine. Yet, despite his difficulty in obtaining up-to-date information, "Barker described his patient's complaints, physical findings, therapies, outcomes, and sometimes autopsies, with frequent reference to the medical literature that justified his choice of treatment Following the latest scientific literature regarding chemistry and medicine, Barker risked patient and peer disapproval as a clinical 'innovator' by using alkaline therapy for various fevers and diseases" (pp. 25-26). Rush's notorious "single cure" theory may have contributed toward Barker's preference for alkali as a remedy for a wide variety of diseases.

Barker's medical understanding and therapeutic approach may have changed too hastily as he grasped for news of medical advances. He flirted briefly with Brunonianism (pp. 72-73) when John Brown's *Elements of Medicine* appeared in Maine in 1788, but soon abandoned it after reading Benjamin Rush's attacks on it (pp. 402-403) and after his own few experiments with its methods did not work. Against freewheeling phlebotomists like Rush, Brown advocated, in addition to bloodletting, strong doses of opium or alcohol for some conditions and violent emetics, purgatives, or cathartics for others. Hence several passages in Barker's book concern "the unhappy consequences of the fascinating Brunonian doctrine, which ought scrupulously to be avoided" (p. 234).

The first autopsy in North America was performed in 1639, but they remained infrequent until the nineteenth century. Barker, on the other hand, performed them as often as he could, whenever he received permission from the legal authorities and the family, in order to teach himself more about disease and injury (p. xviii). Significantly, especially for a rural practitioner, this was after Matthew Baillie's work on morbid anatomy but before Jean Cruveilhier's monumental treatise on pathological anatomy and well before what was then called medical jurisprudence evolved into forensic pathology. Among Barker's postmortems were several cases of puerperal fever, which seem to have markedly improved his understanding of this sepsis (pp. 187-189).

As a non-elite experimenter, Barker likely--on average--helped his patients in the long run, at least as regards relief of symptoms (p. 116), since, in his time, even elite physicians could cure very little. In some ways he may have been a "danger" to patients (pp. 112-115), but no more than most practitioners of his day and surely less so than Brown, François-Joseph-Victor Broussais, Andreas Röschlaub, or even—occasionally--Rush. Eventually more circumspect minds such as Gilbert Blane, David Hosack, Elisha Bartlett, Austin Flint, Pierre-Charles-Alexandre Louis, and François Magendie would prevail as biomedical theory became more scientific, but, in the meantime, Barker was well within the mainstream of medical practice.

Writers of all kinds often quote philosophers out of context, with insufficient understanding of the whole philosophical system, and thus get the thought wrong. Kahn, however, is to be commended for quoting George Santayana on skepticism and getting it right (p. 130). In the fuller context of Kahn's quotation, Santayana writes in *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (New York: Dover, 1955), p. 69: "... scepticism is an exercise, not a life." Never mind that Santayana sometimes contradicts himself, as he does in this case (p. 49): "... the scepticism I am defending is not meant to be merely provisional." In promoting healthy, provisional skepticism as an exercise, Kahn quotes the part of Santayana's argument which makes sense.

In addition to being a work of first-class scholarship, Kahn's book is a real page-turner. I could not put it down.

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James E. Higgins. *The Health of the Commonwealth: A Brief History of Medicine, Public Health, and Disease in Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020. 124 pages. Paperback: \$19.95 ISBN 978-1-932304-69-5

This slim illustrated volume, part of the Pennsylvania Historical Association's *Pennsylvania History Series*, is deceptive in the depth it covers. As the title indicates,

this is a brief history, though in name only. Covering a complex state the size of Pennsylvania was a monumental task, and clearly Higgins was up for the challenge. Following an introductory literature review in which Higgins observes that no comprehensive history of medicine in Pennsylvania exists, he explains his rationale for embarking on this current exploration of the topic. Higgins opens his study with a historical analysis of Pennsylvania during the colonial period, examining early medicine in the context of immigration and industrialization while making a strong case for what is to follow – an integrated historical, medical, industrial, and environmental study spanning nearly five centuries.

Higgins provides a thorough look at caregivers over time, ranging from women to country doctors to larger institutions such as health departments, hospitals, and medical centers in both urban and rural settings. Colorful descriptions of conditions impacting public health enable the reader to visualize the ever-changing challenges Pennsylvanians have faced. This brief history manages to capture examples and case studies illustrating both the world's impact on Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania's impact on the world while focusing on the influences of wars, mining, iron and steel manufacturing and scientific advances on the health of the populace. He also examines the impact of diseases such as smallpox, yellow fever, and cholera on public health as well as on public policy and planning. Higgins gives appropriate recognition to the professionalization of medicine, the establishment of eight medical schools in the 19th century, and scientific advances, including penicillin and other antibiotics. Throughout the text, Higgins ensures that readers are familiar with the accomplishments of notable figures in Pennsylvania medicine, including Benjamin Rush, William Gerhard, Samuel Hahnemann, and Elizabeth Blackwell.

Though brief, the text provides a thorough treatment of remedies that controlled outbreaks of infectious disease as well as localized injuries. This analysis also addresses the challenges posed by chronic disease, such as heart disease and cancer, as well as antibiotic-resistant infections. Finally, one cannot help but appreciate Higgins's concluding remarks about the expected impact of COVID-19 as he acknowledges the pandemic that was just beginning at the time of publication.

Higgins's highly accessible title will prove to be invaluable to students and educators alike throughout Pennsylvania and beyond wishing to incorporate examples drawn from the history of medicine into their classroom. It is approachable, appealing to the general reader as well as to a diversity of specialists seeking to orient themselves in

Pennsylvania's centuries-long journey, while serving as a model for scholars seeking to explore and share the histories of other regions and nations.

Lois Fischer Black

Curator of Special Collections

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Stephen Fried. *Rush: Revolution, Madness, and the Visionary Doctor Who Became a Founding Father*. New York: Broadway Books, 2018. 601 pages. Paperback: \$20. 978-0-8041-4008-9

Watermark readers of Stephen Fried's new biography of Benjamin Rush may be puzzled by his opening contention that his subject is unknown and unappreciated by Americans—"a footnoted founder, a second tier signer" (p. 10). Certainly American history of medicine mavens are well-acquainted with Rush—the "American Hippocrates," the father of American psychiatry, the man who personified the "heroic medicine" that a subsequent generation of irregular medical practitioners would strongly react against.

But though Fried gives much attention to Rush the physician, he wants to convince us that Rush is also worthy of being included in the Founders' Pantheon. I'm not sure he succeeds—Rush only briefly held elective office and his time in the Continental Congress, though it made him a Signer of the Declaration of Independence, was only about six months. Nor was he a political thinker on the level of Madison, Adams, or Hamilton.

However, Fried's biography makes a compelling case that Rush the patriot, the man of science, and the moralist is worthy of being considered one of the great figures of the Revolutionary Era and Early Republic if not on the level of his fellow Philadelphian, Benjamin Franklin. Coming from a modest background—his father, a gunsmith, died when Rush was five—his precocious intelligence enabled him to obtain an excellent education (Princeton, 1760), followed by medical training at the University of Pennsylvania and Edinburgh and a prominent place among Philadelphia's medical elite.

I will not here recount Rush's busy, eventful life—you'll have to read the book for that. However, Fried's narrative does bring out certain strands of his life as emblematic of the man. One is the battle between Rush the man of reason and Rush the man of passion. In his youth he formed intense, though chaste, relationships with several women which appear to have tormented him; his mother, who paid for his education, had decreed that he couldn't marry until he could support a family. His marriage at age 30 to Julia

Stockton, fourteen years his junior and member of a wealthy New Jersey family, was preceded by a series of courtship letters that were over-the-top passionate even by the standards of the 18th century. He could be equally intense when engaged in the chronic medical disputes of the era (though to his credit he rarely engaged in the name-calling and personal vilification so common at the time). This was particularly problematic in his insistence that his means of treating patients during Philadelphia's disastrous 1793 yellow fever epidemic was the *only* successful way even in the face of withering criticism of his treatments.

Another strand is Rush's lifelong engagement with the role of religion in civic life. While a devout Christian, Rush was never dogmatic (at various times he was a Presbyterian or an Episcopalian), and he thought deeply about how to inculcate moral values in a society which was, even then, one of the most religiously pluralistic in the world. Rush scandalized members of Pennsylvania's Constitutional Convention when he vigorously opposed including an oath for candidates for political office that would require them to recognize Trinitarian Christianity. His statement that "no man whose morals are good should be exempted because he will not take that declaration" is described by Fried as "one of the first, if not *the* first, public statements in the American debate on separation of church and state" (p. 153).

Appropriately, Rush's devotion to the care and treatment of the mentally ill is another theme of the book. As Fried points out, this was a long-standing concern for Rush, but he was only able to delve more deeply into the matter after being put in charge of the psychiatric patients at Pennsylvania Hospital in 1787. Rush immediately improved their physical surroundings—installing stoves, for instance, which were previously thought unnecessary because of the belief that "lunatics" were insensible to heat or cold. He agitated for the construction of a special psychiatric wing at the hospital which, when finally opened in 1794, gave Rush greater opportunities to try out various treatments. His thinking on the issue came to fruition with his magnum opus, *Medical Inquiries and Observations, upon the Diseases of the Mind* (1812). Fried rightly places the work in a context of a rich international conversation on mental illness that includes Pinel in France and Tuke in Britain. Rush's theories on the causes of psychiatric disorders seem bizarre to us but they were no more so than those offered by those two other psychiatric pioneers. His achievement, I would say, was more to summarize his thirty years of experience treating the mentally ill than to offer an overarching theory of psychiatric disorders.

Fried offers a full, affectionate, yet still warts-and-all portrait of an American who, for all his quirks—and they were many—is one of our most admirable figures: curious, open-

hearted, tolerant, and devoted to the welfare of his fellow citizens. Even those of us who think we know Rush's story will be surprised how varied and interesting his life was. My only quarrel with this volume is poor quality of the paperback edition: the paper isn't of the best quality, and the numerous illustrations are often muddy and indistinct. Such a work deserves better.

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The Watermark (ISSN 1553-7641) is the quarterly publication of the Librarians, Archivists & Museum Professionals in the History of the Health Sciences (LAMPHSS). It was founded in 1976 to serve as the newsletter of the Association of Librarians in the History of the Health Sciences, changed its subtitle in 1992 when the name of the organization was changed to ALHHS. The subtitle was changed again in 2020 when the present name was adopted. OCLC records are #11902760 (1976-1992) and # 40676801 (1992-2020).

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