THE ORIGIN OF THE PHILADELPHIA GENERAL HOSPITAL

An Address delivered before The Philadelphia County Medical Society
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of the Building of the Philadelphia Almshouse

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The Two Hundredth Anniversary of the building of the Philadelphia Almshouse will be celebrated on December 6, 1932, at the Philadelphia General Hospital, where new hospital units have been erected at a cost of over $14,000,000 on the site of Old Blockley Hospital. This hospital now has a capacity of 2,500 beds with a daily census of about 2,000. Last year 24,000 bed patients were treated. It is a general hospital with wards for all kinds of sickness, except chronic insanity and acute contagious diseases, such as diphtheria or smallpox.

It seems fitting that on this occasion some note should be made of the origin of this hospital, now one of the largest in America. It is the outgrowth of the Philadelphia Almshouse which was proposed in 1712, for which the money was appropriated in 1728, and which was erected in 1731 or 1732, just 200 years ago. Although the title "Philadelphia Hospital" was officially adopted in 1835 (almost 100 years ago), the Almshouse and the Hospital continued to be located together at the present site of the Philadelphia General Hospital in Blockley Township, West Philadelphia, until March 29, 1920,¹ when the Philadelphia

¹The buildings at Holmesburg, now known as the Philadelphia Home for the Indigent, were opened in the Fall of 1914 for indigent men and several hundred insane patients. These were carried on the Blockley rolls. The act of separation fixed January 1, 1920, as the legal date.
Shows two wings, whereas the view of the Almshouse on John Ried's map of 1774 gives a central unit uniting the wings.
Almshouse was moved to separate quarters away from the hospital grounds. The title "Philadelphia General Hospital" was adopted in 1902. Long before 1835, however, a hospital department existed at the Almshouse. It is our purpose to deal particularly with this hospital department of the Almshouse and to try to trace its origin. There are three early dates, 1712, 1713 and 1717, when it is possible that an almshouse or workhouse was built. Both terms are frequently used for the same thing, but sometime after 1766, when our records are more complete, there were three institutions, a workhouse, where vagrants were sent, a jail for criminals and also the Almshouse. I have not looked into the question of the founding of the workhouse but we frequently find notes by the Steward in the Old Admission Books of the Almshouse saying, "This villain should have been sent to the workhouse" or "He is a frequent inhabitant of the workhouse, the gaol and this institution". On July 29, 1712, an ordinance creating a workhouse for the poor was passed by the Philadelphia Council as follows: "The poor of this city daily increasing it is the opinion of this Council that a Workhouse be hired immediately to Imply poor P'sons and sufficient P'sons be appointed to keep them at work". In September, 1713, "Aldermen Preston and Carter were ordered to treat with Doctor Owen. The nature of this Bettering House is not known but it was probably the first house for the poor in Philadelphia. In 1717, an act was passed to authorize the erection of a workhouse in Philadelphia which was to be built within three years. We have no evidence that any of these institutions were built.

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3 Colloquial name for the Almshouse.
The first Philadelphia Almshouse of which we have a definite record was proposed in 1728, when money for the Philadelphia Almshouse was appropriated by the General Assembly of the Province of Pennsylvania that met in Philadelphia from October 14, 1728, until August 23, 1729. As the Act of Appropriation is among the first acts of the Assembly, no doubt it was passed in 1728. The Assembly first provided bills of credit. It then, in Section 10, provided for the penalty for forging these bills of credit, viz., that "he or she should be publicly whipped on the bare back and that he or she should have the right ear cut off." In those days this was a frequent practice. Attention is called to this in Outlaw Years, an account of early American Life, when a father warns his son, about to take a journey, to note whether the innkeeper's ears were notched. Section 13, appropriated £1,000 for grounds for an Almshouse. Section 15, appropriated £2,000 for building and carrying on "a House of the Representatives of the Free- men", now known as Independence Hall. Thus the Philadelphia Almshouse, from which the Philadelphia General Hospital has developed, was established before Independence Hall. Very little is known of the Almshouse which was built. The money was received in 1730 and the Mayor, Alderman Plumstead and James Steel were appointed a committee to select a place, prepare plans and make estimates. A square of ground, a green meadow, bounded by Third and Fourth, Spruce and Pine streets was bought from Aldred Allen for £200 and a brick building was erected in 1731 or 1732. The main front faced Third street, from which one might enter the grounds through a stile. The large gate was on Spruce street. There was a piazza all

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*Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania, V. Sections 10, 11, 15.
*Robert M. Coates, Outlaw Years, New York, 1930, p. 36.
*Spelled "Aldran" in Minutes of the Common Council of the City of Philadelphia, 1847; p. 309.
around the building and the house somewhat resembled the Friends' Almshouse, which was the first almshouse erected in Philadelphia.' The latter was, however, strictly sectarian.

The following additional facts represent everything that I have been able to find anywhere in history about the first Philadelphia Almshouse, except the question of Dr. William Shippen's service mentioned later. Maps of Philadelphia made in 1752 by George Heap, and in 1762 by "Matthew Clarkson and Mary Biddle as surveyed by the late Nicholas Scull" show the Almshouse on this plot of ground.* Notes from the Minutes of the Common Council of the City of Philadelphia are as follows:

At a Common Council held at Philadelphia the 12th day of Oct. 1730—The sume of £1000 lately granted by the Assembly of the Corporacon of this City, for the building of an Alms House, is now brought in and tendered by the Trustees of the General Loan Office, and the Mayor, in behalf of the Corporacon, signed the Bond and affixt the common seal as directed by the Act of Assembly. And it is now agreed by this Board that the monies shall remain in the hands of the Mayor, Alderman Plumstead and James Steel, each one-third part, who are desired to fix upon some proper place to erect the said Alms House, and draw a model and calculate the charge thereof, and lay the same before the next Council for their approbation.

At a Common Council held at Philadelphia the 3d day of March, 1730—The Board resolved ... that the square or lott of ground formerly in the possession of John Knight, near Society Hill, and now belonging to Aldran Allen, will be a proper place to erect [The Alms House] ... and agreed with the said Aldran Allen to pay for the said lott the sum of 200 pounds.—The board requests the Mayor, Recorder, Alderman Hudson and A. Fitzwater to draw up proper rules for the government of the said Alms House.—At a Common Council held at Philadelphia the 11th day of OCT'r. 1736.—The Mayor acquaints the Board that the Overseers of the poor of this city had been with him this morning, and informed him that the wife of Josiah Gates,
the present Overseer of the Alms House is dead, and it would be proper that some care should be taken of the said house. The present Overseer having for sometime past misbehaved himself.  

In the Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, we find a minute, in 1735, calling for the appointment of "a sober and discreet person to reside at the Almshouse to care for the Poor therin." It would appear that the city fathers failed to act on this suggestion when they appointed Josiah Gates. That all did not go smoothly in the establishment of the new Almshouse is shown by this reference to graft in 1735: "At a Council at Philadalia March 28, 1735—Complaints that overseers have been supplying the poor with necessities out of their own stores at excessive prices and paid unreasonable accounts to friends for services done the poor."  

Benjamin Franklin said that at the end of the year 1750 the House of Correction [the Almshouse] was the only place in which the lunatics of the city might be confined and that it was by no means fitted for such a purpose.  

A note in the Minutes of the Managers, November 15, 1775, says that upwards of twenty years before that time the number of Paupers in the Almshouse scarcely ever amounted to sixty and often not more than forty persons with perhaps as many outpensioners. The oldest written record in the possession of the Philadelphia General Hospital is a note book entitled "Bonds of Indemnity, Minutes of the Indentures of the Poor". The first date in this book is May 21, 1751, before a patient had been treated at the Pennsylvania Hospital, sometimes said to be the first hospital in the United States. The book contains a list of the names of apprentices, masters, magistrates and other matters of a confidential nature. It is true

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10 Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, III. 589.
11 Benjamin Franklin, Some Account of the Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia, 1754.
that there is no mention of the hospital or almshouse in the book, but the fact that many of the apprentices were children and that the book has been kept at the Philadelphia Hospital all these years suggests that many of these children were foundlings from the Almshouse. They were bound out to all sorts of trades and professions, some now obsolete, such as peruke maker. Another interesting fact recorded by the book is that Benjamin Franklin sat as a magistrate on January 31, and February 28, 1753. To repeat, the facts that I have just gone over plus the laws in regard to the poor, none of which refers directly to the Almshouse, represent our entire knowledge of the early efforts toward institutional care of the poor in Philadelphia.

The next instance we find in the history of the City about the institutional care of the sick is the purchase on February 3, 1743, of Fisher’s Island, afterwards called Province Island, on which the Pest House was built. Philadelphia was already an important port. Steps had been taken, in 1700, to examine the incoming immigrants. In 1738, Dr. Thomas Graeme presented a bill for 20 years’ service reporting “the state of sickly vessels arriving here”. The Assembly paid him 1 pistole a day. In 1751, Benjamin Franklin refers to the “kind care our Assemblies have heretofore taken for the relief of the sick and distempered strangers by providing a place [the Pest House] for their receipt and accommodation”.

Following this, the Pennsylvania Hospital was proposed by Dr. Thomas Bond in 1750. The petition to the Assembly of the Province of Pennsylvania for money to establish it, presented January 23, 1751, was written in the handwriting of Benjamin Franklin, but not signed by him for political reasons. Shortly afterward

12 Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, IV. 507 ff; George W. Norris, Early History of Medicine in Philadelphia, Philadelphia, 1866, pp. 102, 103.
a house was purchased on Market street which was opened February 10, 1752. By February 17, 1754, sixty patients had been cured and on May 28, 1755, the west wing of the hospital was dedicated at the present location, Eighth to Ninth, Spruce to Pine streets. On December 17, 1756, the patients were removed from the temporary hospital to the new building on Pine street.\(^{13}\) This marked a great advance in the treatment of the sick. The old idea of keeping both poor and sick together was abandoned and a place was provided where the well to do could go, as well as the poor. This Pennsylvania Hospital is the oldest hospital within the continental limits of the United States which was intended wholly for the care of the sick and wounded\(^{14}\) and which has continued on its ancient site\(^{15}\) and maintained its original name. To be understood, this description of the Pennsylvania Hospital must be examined with knowledge of the qualifying phrases. The first one "within the continental limits of the United States" means that hospitals in Canada, the Philippines and Mexico are said to be older. "Intended wholly for the care of the sick and wounded and which has continued on its ancient site and maintained its original name" eliminates the Philadelphia Hospital and the Charity Hospital of New Orleans because both began as a place for the poor and the sick. The first hospital in Philadelphia intended wholly for the care of the insane is the Friends Hospital, founded in 1813.\(^{16}\) The Friends also established the first almshouse in Philadelphia (in


\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 220.

\(^{15}\) A. E. Fossier, *History of the Charity Hospital* (New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal, May and October, 1923).

\(^{16}\) The first in the United States exclusively for the insane was the State Hospital at Williamsburg, Virginia, founded in 1768 and opened for patients in 1773; *op. cit.*; A. C. Buckley, *Medical Work at Friends Hospital*, an address, printed at Friends Hospital, Philadelphia, June 3, 1926.
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1713) known as the Friends Almshouse and said to be strictly sectarian. But the first place in Philadelphia to which the poor and the sick, the unfortunate girl and the unemployed, the aged and the insane could go, was the Philadelphia Almshouse, now known as the Philadelphia General Hospital.

The first Philadelphia Almshouse at Fourth and Spruce streets soon became badly overcrowded. Due to this and also because the City had grown around it, a new site was selected in the suburbs from Ninth to Eleventh, Spruce to Pine streets, and the second Philadelphia Almshouse was erected in 1766. In 1767, 284 inmates were transferred to it, and by the end of the year the census showed 368. After the removal of the Almshouse to its new site our records are more complete. We have among the archives of the Philadelphia General Hospital four volumes of the Minutes of the Overseers of the Poor of Philadelphia from March 25, 1768 to March 3, 1795. We have the Treasurer’s Book of the Corporation of Contributors, etc., May 21, 1766 to April 22, 1786; the Minutes of the Managers of the Philadelphia Almshouse and House of Employment, May 14, 1766 to December 6, 1766, May 20, 1769 to August 11, 1778; Record Book of Admission, November 1, 1787 to September 27, 1790; March 26, 1792 to June 7, 1793; May 24, 1794 to September 25, 1795 and September 28, 1795 to October 9, 1797. These have lain more or less buried at the Philadelphia Hospital for 150 years, read by but few and not open to public inspection; thus preventing some historians from getting valuable data about the institution, the men who served it and the stirring times in which they lived. From a careful perusal of these records it is obvious that many sick patients were admitted to the Almshouse and were attended by an eminent staff. These cases did not develop in the Almshouse, but were admitted on account of illness; frequently they died in a few days. It is true
that we also find that the more serious cases were sent by the Overseers of the Poor directly from their homes to the Pennsylvania Hospital, when a hospital fee was to be paid. This custom of sending poor people for whom a hospital fee is to be paid, to the private hospitals is in vogue even to this day; but if they have no money, the fee is either paid from a special fund available at the hospital or they are sent to the Philadelphia General Hospital. Sometimes patients were sent from the Almshouse to the Hospital. In our old records whenever we find the words "Sent to the Hospital" it means the Pennsylvania Hospital. The Overseers of the Poor by assessing a tax raised money which was disbursed to the Pennsylvania Hospital for the sick poor, to the Philadelphia Almshouse for the poor and the sick and to the poor in their homes. During certain periods the Managers of the Pennsylvania Hospital and the Overseers of the Poor, could not agree about the charges and the sick poor were sent to the Almshouse. At various times when the Pennsylvania Hospital refused to take the poor unless the Overseers guaranteed to pay for them, we find that it was because they had great difficulty in collecting their bills.

37 "Sat., May 28, 1796—17/6 per week was paid by the Mgrs. of the Almshouse to have the Pennsylvania Hospital take care of a lunatic." Minutes of the Managers of the Philadelphia Almshouse and House of Employment. Manuscript Records of the Philadelphia General Hospital.

38 "A case of many foul ulcers, a lame and helpless woman, was recommended by Dr. Physick as a fit patient for the Hospital, but could not be admitted there under 22/6 per week, at the cost of this institution and our Doctors say she may be taken as good care of here and therefore need not be sent to the Hospital; therefore, she remains here. Sent in by Geo. Brown." Book of Daily Occurrences, Thursday, 24 November, 1796. Manuscript Records of Philadelphia General Hospital.

39 On June 1, 1789, the Managers of the Pennsylvania Hospital submitted a bill for £905/10 to the Guardians of the Poor, who referred it to the Managers of the Almshouse. Minute Book of the Guardians of the Poor of the City of Philadelphia and the Northern Liberties, the District of Southwark and the Townships of Moyamensing and Passyunk. Manuscript Records of the Philadelphia General Hospital.
from the city authorities. Cells were built at the Alms-
house, in 1790, for lunatics refused by the Pennsylvania
Hospital, as seen in the following note:

Special Meeting of the Managers when they ordered cells to be 
prepared for Lunaticks.—Wednesday, 27 January, 1790. A very 
severe day of snow, tho not so extremely cold, yet intolerably bad 
going; for the night before it had rained very heavy and there 
is some frost yet in the Ground, so that the surface of the Earth 
is quite wet and deep & the Roads almost impassible. Yet the 
Gentlemen and Managers came out, on the immediate necessity 
of making preparation for the Temporary Confinement & ac-
commodation of three unhappy Deranged Lunatic Women, Viz. 
Ann M—— & Effey C—— & Rosanna R——, now here 
and whom the Managers cannot get admitted into the Hospital, 
on any satisfactory Terms, & are therefore under the necessity 
of Keeping them here, the Hospital is the only proper place for 
such people and originally founded & endowed for their Relief 
& Accommodation—yet in the Present emergency the Managers 
of this Institution have been obliged to Order Three Temporary 
Cells, to be fitted up in the most secure and Proper manner, 
that, the situation of this Building and the present Circumstances 
of things will admit of.20

This minute stresses the fact that the Managers of 
the Almshouse felt that the proper place for these pa-
tients was the Pennsylvania Hospital. However, this 
practice of keeping the insane at the Almshouse grew 
until some 3000 were removed to Byberry in recent 
years, when the Philadelphia Hospital for Mental Dis-
eases was separated from the Philadelphia Hospital. 
The following cases taken from the Daily Book of Ad-
misions, from 1788 to 1790, show very definitely that 
sick people were admitted to the Almshouse:

—— ill with the pox.
Mary K—— with the small pox.
—— appears to have a putrid fever which is dangerously 
contagious.

In the Book of Daily Admissions, 1795, we have a 
complete census at the end of the year. With conserva-

20 Book of Daily Admissions, Philadelphia Almshouse and House of 
Employment, Wednesday, 27 January, 1790. Manuscript Records of 
Philadelphia General Hospital.
tive interpretation of these figures we find that 114 out of 301 inmates were sick. They were suffering from the following diseases: Venereal disease, Flux, Intermittent Fever, Ship Fever, Ague, Lunacy, Fitts, Consumption, Broken Arm and Leg, Putrid Fever, Rheumatism, Violent Inflammation of the Eyes, Malignant Fever, Dropsy, Small Pox, White Swelling, Palsy, Piles, Ruptures, Dysentery, Pregnancy, Pleurisy, Hole in the Arm, Gravel, Frost Bite, Scurvy, Drunkeness, Yellow "Jaunders." The census by wards was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women's Side</th>
<th>Incurables</th>
<th>Polish [Venereal]</th>
<th>Lying-in</th>
<th>Sick</th>
<th>—</th>
<th>117</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Church Ward</td>
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<td></td>
<td>22 Nursery</td>
<td>27 Spinning</td>
<td>35 Women's Garret</td>
<td>18 West Garret</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men's Side</td>
<td>Cells</td>
<td>Sick Ward</td>
<td>Skeats [Venereal]</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 Men's orderly</td>
<td>28 Married Ward</td>
<td>26 Garret</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-six employees, making the grand total census 327.

References to a visiting medical staff soon appear in our original records, in the Minutes of the Managers, May 21, 1770, noting that Doctors Bond and Evans were paid £50 each, being in part their accounts for medicine and attendance. Lawrence says these men were elected on May 16, 1769; Agnew that they were reëlected on that date at £50 per annum; Curtin that they were reëlected January 15, 1769. The dates from

21 Charles Lawrence, History of Philadelphia Almshouses and Hospitals, Philadelphia, 1905.
JOHN DICKINSON
A munificent contributor to the Philadelphia Almshouse and House of Employment.
From the original by Charles Willson Peale in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Lawrence, Agnew and Curtin antedate any books on the subject which we now have in the Philadelphia General Hospital. It is quite possible that the earlier records of the Almshouse, which have been lost, might show names of other physicians. In this connection attention should be invited to a very important find made by the writer, which shows medical attendance at an even earlier date. It is not mentioned in any of the histories of the Philadelphia Hospital. In the manuscript known as “The City Almshouse Cash Account”, under date of March 25, 1768, appears this entry: “To cash Dr. William Shippen for his attendance at the Almshouse as per account £50”. In other instances we find that the salary paid the Almshouse doctors was £50 per annum. The Dr. Shippen mentioned was probably the father of Dr. William Shippen, Jr., who was connected with the hospital during the Revolution. At the date noted Dr. William Shippen, Jr., was practicing in Philadelphia, having returned from his studies abroad in 1762, so it is possible the reference may be to him. “A list of the poor in the Philadelphia Almshouse”, which is undated but included with other papers of the year 1751, gives an account of various cases that had come up for consideration by the Committee, with notations such as “Inquire of Dr. Shippen” and “Under Dr. Shippen’s care, with an ulcerous condition.” Although one of these papers is not dated and cannot be definitely attributed to the year 1751, this discovery gives us the name of Dr. William Shippen, probably the elder, as the first doctor known to have been connected with the Almshouse. Dr. Thomas Bond was evidently giving lectures on obstetrics in the wards of the Almshouse to his students, before January 3, 1771, as evidenced by this note:

24 In the Manuscript Department of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
As Order and Decency tend to the reputation of every institution, more especially those of a Public nature, the Managers were of opinion, that some further regulations should take place respecting the Women's Laying in Ward of the Almshouse and therefore notice being given to Dr. Bond he attended this evening when he was desired not to permit any Pupil under his particular direction, or any of those attending the Medical School in this City, to be present at the delivery of a Woman in the said Ward, but those who were of decent manners and of suitable age to attend operations of that kind. Which Regulations the Doctor highly approved of, and that he would strictly observe the same.

Other notes about the staff follow. On February 28, 1771, "Dr. Cadwalader Evans inoculates for small pox." On July 3, 1772, "The following staff was appointed: Drs. Thomas Bond, Cadwalader Evans, Adam Kuhn, Benjamin Rush, Samuel Duffield, Gerardus Clarkson"; September 2, 1773: "Dr. Thomas Park elected to succeed the late Dr. Evans"; April 20, 1779: "Drs. Glentworth, Jackson and Duffield appointed, each to serve two months in rotation". Then, another proof of the existence of a paid medical staff at the Philadelphia Almshouse may be noted. On May 24, 1783, Dr. John Morgan wrote a letter saying that although there was a paid physician on duty at the Philadelphia Almshouse, inmates were treated at the Pennsylvania Hospital by doctors who charged no fee, "and whilst one set of Gentlemen perform the Services, without thanks, emolument or honor, another reaps the fruit of their labors". He was referring to the fact that certain venereal cases were sent to the Pennsylvania Hospital for special treatment with mercurial vapor. One historian speaking of the period previous to 1802, says that "it is evident that the sick and insane paupers at the Almshouse were not under the care

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26 Thomas G. Morton and Frank Woodbury, History of the Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia, 1895 and 1897, pp. 468-469.
of any other medical officers and received only the ordinary Almshouse care". No doubt the statement was made because the records from which we have been quoting lay buried and forgotten at the Philadelphia Hospital. Such an eminent staff would not have been in attendance at a mere infirmary.

The Managers of the Almshouse and House of Employment and the Overseers of the Poor of Philadelphia certainly considered that the Almshouse was not only a hospital but the finest hospital on the continent, as shown by the following petition to the Assembly, taken from the minutes of the Managers, November 15, 1775, and addressed to the Assembly of the Province of Pennsylvania, asking for an appropriation:

Surely such great numbers of helpless destitute poor people, comfortably supported or casually and properly relieved in so easy a manner, ought, one should think, give rise to the most pleasing reflections, to the Supporters of the House of Employment, etc., in this city; which is not only an Asylum for the poor, old and emaciated, as an Alms-House; but is likewise really and fully an Hospital, in every sense of the word, and perhaps more extensively so than any other Institution on this Continent. For instance, a Laying in Hospital, where upwards of 30 poor destitute women in a year, are carefully delivered and comfortably provided for in that extremity; compleatly a Foundling Hospital and Charity School, where more than 50 poor helpless infants on an average, the year through, are taken due care of and such as are capable and fit, kept at School 'till suitable good places can be had to bind them to. In fine, it is a Hospital for Curables and Incurables of all ages and sexes, and in every Disease and Malady, even to Lunacy and Idiotism, to a considerable degree; and very generally an Institution for clothing the Naked, feeding the hungry, healing the sick and administering Comfort and Relief to the Distressed of every kind in different ways. For its Funds are very frequently benevolently extended to numbers without its Walls.28

The men who made this assertion that the Almshouse was "perhaps the finest Hospital on the Continent" were well-known citizens of established reputation as follows: Jacob Shoemaker, William Wishart, Samuel Fisher, Charles West, Joseph Marriott, Isaac Parrish, Stephen Collins, William Craig, Anthony Morris, Jr., and Joseph Pemberton. The statement that the citizens considered the Almshouse a Hospital is again made in similar terms in The Annual Account and State of the Institution on March 13, 1776; in which, after accounting for the work done during the year, the contributors are told that they can be justly proud because it is the finest hospital on the continent and also that it is "An Innoculating [for Small Pox] Hospital, where that Charitable Service hath often been performed, and always with success, and at this time 20 Poor Children are all happily coming through the Disease under Innoculation and several in the Natural Way." This Annual Account also says

Upon a minute inspection of the present State of the House of Employment and Alms House in this city, or rather of the Institution for the Relief and Employment of the Poor . . . it seems but just to observe [that it has] Advantages . . . which Time, Equitable Laws, and Prudent Management will no Doubt render more universally conspicuous and totally eradicate any ill founded Prejudices that may have Arisen against this generous benevolent Design. For although it is supported by Tax, yet all who have, with Candid Disposition, taken the Trouble of acquainting themselves fully with its Nature and Tendency do freely and cheerfully confess It is of general Advantage and highly worthy of Encouragement, and most Gentlemen, Strangers, and Travellers, who have visited the Houses, generally acknowledge it to be an Institution founded in Humanity, worthy of the Legislature of the Province of Pennsylvania.  

William Coats, Anthony Morris, Jr., Samuel Rhoads, Jr., and Isaac Parrish were the committee that drew

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up the above Annual Account and submitted it for approval at a meeting of the Managers at Benjamin David’s. The other Managers of the Philadelphia Almshouse and House of Employment on May 13, 1776, were Jacob Shoemaker, Charles West, William Wishart, Samuel Fisher, William Craig, William Wharton, Benjamin Morgan, John Baldwin and Joseph Potts. Practically all of these men and also those who signed the other similar documents, mentioned in this paper, were already contributors to the Pennsylvania Hospital and no doubt well acquainted with both institutions. The Lying-in Hospital mentioned by the petitioners of 1775 and 1776 was the first in Philadelphia. One was later established at the Pennsylvania Hospital (April 11, 1793), with the opening announced for February 2, 1803.30

The Managers of the Philadelphia Almshouse and House of Employment were not the only persons who stated that it was really a Hospital. The following contemporary travellers, authors and other authorities state definitely that a Hospital was an important part of the Almshouse.

James Hardie, writing in 1790, described the Almshouse as follows:

Here the helpless stranger finds a comfortable residence in the hour of sickness and distress . . . It may be considered a laying in and foundling Hospital. The cleanliness attracts the attention of all travellers who unanimously declare that in this respect this institution exceeds anything in the Old World and it may at least be safely asserted that it is not surpassed by anything in the New . . . [It has] over 350 inmates . . . [In childbirth it] relieves the Sick and so eminently redounds to the honor of the metropolis of America.33

31 Underlined by author.
32 Ibid.
It is interesting to note that the first reference to Revolutionary Soldiers in our Minutes is on February 2, 1776, when we find a note that soldiers were sent to the Almshouse until Congress could make provisions for such persons. On November 19, 1776, sick and wounded soldiers were cared for at the Bettering House, as the Almshouse was colloquially called. On September 5, 1776, the Council of Safety, Thomas Wharton, Jr., President, requested quarters in the Bettering House for Continental Soldiers who were suffering from dysentery. The Managers replied that they could not grant the request as they had just been through an epidemic of dangerous putrid malignant fever with the Small Pox and many other contagious disorders, which disorders have but very lately abated and if obliged to huddle the whole poor, sick and well into one part to make room for the soldiers, the health of the poor, helpless creatures that they had charge of might be endangered.

The Council of Safety overruled the Managers and on October 23, 1776 (as noted on January 1, 1777), Colonel Francis Gurney acting under orders from Dr. William Shippen, Jr., Director General of the Hospitals of the Continental Army, peremptorily ordered the Almshouse cleared of the poor and sick and the Continental Soldiers brought in. Mr. Benjamin Paschall with Doctor Young was appointed “a committee to view the sick soldiers at the Hospital and about the city and take an account of the names of each.” This “List of the Soldiers in the Hospitals in and about Philadelphia taken by order of the Council of Safety by Benjamin Paschall and Thomas Young, begun on December 16, 1776” shows that 440 sick soldiers were billeted in the city, at Shields, between Front and Second streets; at McElroy’s; at Semple’s Store, Front street; at Dr. Young’s (one patient); Bettering House, Ward 7, 115

[Underlined by the author.]

Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, II. 52.
Origin of the Philadelphia General Hospital

soldiers; at Sprout's Store, Water and Front streets; at Wm. Peden's at Brigade Rendezvous; at Mr. Hart's; at Barret's House; at Francis Roger's at Judge Shield's, and in Arbuckle's Row (about 100 men with camp itch). Morton has noted that the first recorded treatment of a Revolutionary Soldier at the Pennsylvania Hospital was on December 5, 1776. The above committee in making its census of sick soldiers makes no mention of the Pennsylvania Hospital. Although its instructions read to view the soldiers at the hospital, its report lists Ward 7 of the Bettering House. Therefore, we may say that this was a Hospital in the opinion of these men. We would add, however, that we realize the fact that the Almshouse was used by the Continental Army as a hospital does not in itself prove that there was a hospital there before that time. We have proven that point elsewhere. We have evidence of the urgent necessity for beds for the sick Continentals in the note on March 11, 1776, when "Proposals were entertained"; by the Council of Safety, "for Building 4 teniments on the North side of Green Street as a Barrack Hospital." That the Philadelphia Almshouse was looked upon as a hospital by the British is seen by the following quotation from the unpublished diary of Dr. Henry Yates Carter of London, Surgeon to his Majesty's Navy, now in the possession of one of our staff, Dr. J. W. McConnell:

After the Battle of Germantown they brought the wounded back in the number of about sixty, in wagons and put them in the still unfinished Presbyterian Meeting Building in Spruce Street, below 3d and 4th Streets, the City Hospital proper and the Pennsylvania Institution, which I had attended two years. This afforded at this early stage of the population only very few cases of surgery of importance but as a military hospital it was not to be neglected and I employed it with unabated assiduity.

The surgeon of the Hessian troops from Anspach and Bayreuth, who became the president of the United Medical College of Anspach and Bayreuth after the Revolutionary War, said that when he visited the Bettering House in 1783, several rooms were "fitted as a hospital for pregnant women, parturient women, and chronically sick women".35

Brissot de Warville used the term House of Correction to describe the Philadelphia Almshouse, just as Benjamin Franklin did. His description is so complete and intimate that it is interesting to quote it rather extensively. It is the best description found:

VISIT TO A BETTERING-HOUSE, OR HOUSE OF CORRECTION

This hospital is situated in the open country, in one of those parts of the original plan of Philadelphia not yet covered with houses. It is already divided into regular streets; and, God grant that these projected streets may never be anything more than imaginary! If they should one day be adorned with houses, it would be a misfortune to the hospitals, to Pennsylvania, and to all America.

This hospital is constructed of bricks, and composed of two large buildings; one for men, and the other for women. There is a separation in the court, which is common to them. This institution has several objects; they receive into it, the poor, the sick, orphans, women in travail, and persons attacked with venereal diseases. They likewise confine here, vagabonds, disorderly persons, and girls of scandalous lives. . . .

But to finish my account of this hospital, there are particular halls appropriated to each class of poor, and to each species of sickness; and each hall has its superintendent. This institution was rich, and well administered before the war. The greater part of the administrators were Quakers. The war and paper-money introduced a different order of things. The legislature resolved not to admit to its administration, any persons but such as had taken the oath of fidelity to the State. The Quakers were by this excluded, and the management of it fell into hands not so pure. The spirit of depredation was manifest in it, and paper-money was still more injurious. Creditors of the hospital were paid, or rather ruined by this operation. About a year ago, on

the report of the inspectors of the hospitals, the legislature, considering that of the Bettering-house again to the Quakers. Without any resentment of the affronts they had received during the war, and only anxious to do good and perform their duty, the Friends accepted the administration, and exercise it as before, with zeal and fidelity. This change has produced the effect which was expected. Order is visibly re-established; many administrators are appointed, one of whom, by turns, is to visit the hospital every day; six physicians are attached to it, who perform the service gratis.

I have seen the hospitals of France, both at Paris and in the provinces. I know none of them, but the one at Besançon, that can be compared to this at Philadelphia. Every sick, and every poor person, has his bed well furnished, but without curtains, as it should be. Every room is lighted by windows placed opposite which introduce plenty of light, that great consolation to a man confined, of which tyrants for this reason are cruelly sparing. These windows admit a free circulation of air; most of them open over the fields; and as they are not very high, and without grates, it would be very easy for the prisoners to make their escape; but the idea never enters their heads. This fact proves that the prisoners are happy, and, consequently, that the administration is good.

The kitchens are well kept, and do not exhale that fetid odour which you perceive from the best kitchens in France. The eating-rooms, which are on the ground floor, are equally clean, and well aired; neatness and good air reign in every part. A large garden at the end of the court, furnishes vegetables for the kitchen. I was surprised to find there, a great number of foreign shrubs and plants. The garden is well cultivated. In the yard they rear a great number of hogs; for, in America, the hog, as well as the ox, does the honors of the table through the whole year.

I could scarcely describe to you the different sensations which, by turns, rejoiced and afflicted my heart, in going through their different apartments. An hospital, how well soever administered, is always a painful spectacle to me. It appears to me so consoling for a sick man to be at his own home, attended by his wife and children, and visited by his neighbours, that I regard hospitals as vast sepulchres, where are brought together a crowd of individuals, strangers to each other, and separated from all they hold dear. And what is man in this situation? . . . A leaf detached from the tree, and driven down by the torrent . . . a skeleton no longer of any consistence, and bordering on dissolution.

But this idea soon gives place to another. Since societies are condemned to be infested with great cities, since misery and vice are the necessary offspring of these cities, a house like this becomes the asylum of beneficence; for, without the aid of such in-
stitions, what would become of the greater part of these wretches who here find a refuge? So many women, blind, deaf, rendered disgusting by their numerous infirmities. They must very soon perish, abandoned by all the world, to whom they are strangers. No door but that of their common mother earth would receive these hideous figures, were it not for this provision made by their common friend, Society.

I saw in this hospital, all that misery and disease can assemble. I saw women suffering on the bed of pain, others, whose meagre visages, roughened with pimples; attest the effect of fatal incontinence; others, who waited with groans the moment when Heaven would deliver them from a burden which dishonours them; others, holding in their arms the fruit, not of a legal marriage, but of love betrayed. Poor innocents! born under the star of wretchedness! Why should men be born, predestinated to misfortune? . . . Mr. Shoemaker, who conducted me thither, and another of the directors, distributed some cakes among them, which they had brought in their pockets. Thus the directors think of their charge even at a distance, and occupy themselves with their happiness. Good God! there is, then a country where the soul of the governor of an hospital is not a soul of brass!

Blacks are here mingled with the whites, and lodged in the same apartments. This, to me, was an edifying sight; it seemed a balm to my soul. . . .

I remarked in this hospital, the women were much more numerous than the men; and among the latter, I saw none of those hideous figures so common in the hospitals of Paris . . . figures on which you trace the marks of crime, misery, and indolence. They have a decent appearance. . . .

On our return from the hospital we drank a bottle of cyder. Compare this frugal repast to the sumptuous feasts given by the superintendents of the poor of London . . . by those humane inspectors who assemble to consult on making repairs to the amount of six shillings, and order a dinner for six guineas. You never find among the Quakers these robberies upon indigence, these infamous treasons against beneficence. Bless them, then, ye rich and poor; ye rich, because their fidelity and prudence economise your money, ye poor, because their humanity watches over you without ceasing.

The expences of this hospital amount to above five pence a day, money of Pennsylvania, for each pensioner. You know that the best administered hospital in Paris amounts to about fourteen pence like money a day; and, what a difference in the treatment!89

THOMAS PARKE, M.D.

From the original by Thomas Sully in The Library Company of Philadelphia. Dr. Parke was elected, in 1773, to the Medical Staff of the Philadelphia Almshouse.
Origin of the Philadelphia General Hospital

It would be misleading to quote this splendid description of the Almshouse Hospital without also referring to what de Warville saw at the Pennsylvania Hospital. He praises it very highly for the enlightened manner in which the insane were treated. There were six men patients, about the same number of sick women and fifteen lunatics of both sexes in the Pennsylvania Hospital.

Let us now see what various historians have to say about the establishment of the first hospital. Morton and Packard maintain that the Almshouse simply had an infirmary. Agnew maintains that there was a hospital at the Philadelphia Almshouse. Scharf and Westcott say the Almshouse was probably finished in 1731 or 1732, and that "beside the asylum for paupers was established an infirmary or hospital with accommodations for the sick and insane." H. M. Lippincott, speaking of the Almshouse, says "Here was lodged the poor, the sick and the insane, and this Hospital Department of the Almshouse was the first in the United States." F. P. Henry states that "The city almshouse, now the Philadelphia Hospital had a hospital department, the oldest in the colonies." Norris does not mention the Almshouse at all. Thompson Westcott says "Here commenced the Philadelphia Hospital in connection with the Almshouse about 1732, then the first hospital established in the American Colonies." Watson says, "The Philadelphia Hospital started here with the Almshouse in 1732, being the first one established in this country. It contained the sick and insane, as well

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4 Thomas G. Morton and Frank Woodbury, History of the Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia, 1895 and 1897, pp. 218-220.
as the poor.” The earliest hospital separate from the poor house, to which in early times it was united, “was opened and continued for several years in the house known as Judge Kinsey’s dwelling and orchard.”

There is nothing extraordinary about this connection of the almshouse and the hospital. A study of the care of the poor and the sick in ancient times shows that they were cared for in institutions variously called basilicas, hospitals, monasteries, poor houses, almshouses or work houses. The use of the almshouse as a place for the sick persisted in America for many years. We find the United States Marine Hospital Service arranging for admission of sick sailors to the almshouse at Charleston in 1825. Many of these places although called almshouses had a medical staff and were to that extent really hospitals although called almshouses. I see no reason why the date of origin of the Philadelphia General Hospital should be given when the title “hospital” was first used. It should be given as the time when service to the sick was rendered by a medical staff. We have an analogy in selection of a date of origin in the determination of the date of origin of the American Philosophical Society. After using a later date for some years, the American Philosophical Society decided, after careful research, that the date or origin was 1727, when the Junta or Leather Apron Club was founded. Thus the date of origin is given as the date of founding of an organization with a different name. The authority for this is found in the dictum of the Carnegie Foundation, defining a date of founding. “By date of founding”, it declared, “is meant the year in which the institution was established

out of which the present college or university has developed". The same point can be made about the University of Pennsylvania which has undergone several changes of name from the days of the Charity School in 1740.

The whole question then revolves about the point as to the difference between an infirmary and a hospital. I take it that an infirmary is a part of an institution to which the sick inmates may be sent for special care. The difference between a hospital and an infirmary is that in the case of the hospital, sick people are sent there from their homes, whereas in the infirmary, inmates already at the institution are sent there when they become sick. We have shown that the sick were sent to the Almshouse in 1768 and 1795; that the Pennsylvania Almshouse was established before the Pennsylvania Hospital is a matter of record. We have shown from the words of Benjamin Franklin, when he petitioned for the establishment of the Pennsylvania Hospital, that the lunatics of Philadelphia before that time were sent to the Almshouse. We have shown that a staff of eminent doctors, who served on the first faculty of the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania and the first staff of the Pennsylvania Hospital, who were founders of the American Philosophical Society and of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, were serving at the Almshouse in 1768 and possibly in 1751. We have shown that the Managers in 1775 and 1776 thought it a splendid hospital, "perhaps the finest on this continent." We have shown that the Continental Army and the British Army used it as a hospital. We have quoted the opinion of various au-

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thors and answered the objections raised by two of them. Unfortunately the records of the Almshouse before the founding of the Pennsylvania Hospital are lost. Therefore, we can only say that we think that the same conditions shown by our earliest records existed from the first. It seems to me altogether reasonable to believe that when no hospital, exclusively for the sick, existed, they were sent to the Almshouse along with the poor. It is likely that the Almshouse of 1728 was organized along the lines laid down in the Act of 1723 in England, which abolished outdoor relief and which ordered that public relief funds should be paid only to those who went to workhouses which were built by the parish. By 1732, over fifty of these workhouses had sprung up in London. One point that has occurred to me is that when the law was changed and the management of the Philadelphia Almshouse passed, in 1766, into the hands of the Contributors to the Philadelphia Almshouse and House of Employment, who were to elect Managers, it is possible that they introduced a new system of medical care, but we cannot prove the same, any more than we can prove that it was the experience that Dr. Thomas Bond had at the Almshouse that led him to recommend the building of the Pennsylvania Hospital.48 I would say that the Pennsylvania Hospital was the first modern hospital, but not that it is the oldest hospital in the United States. Twenty years before the Pennsylvania Hospital was built the Philadelphia Almshouse was erected and was caring for the lunatics and we think also the sick of Philadelphia. I maintain that the earliest hospital, to which the sick were sent in Philadelphia, was the Philadelphia Almshouse, of which the Philadelphia General Hospital is a direct descendant and that this Almshouse was, in the words of the Petitioners of November 15, 1775,

"really and fully an Hospital in every sense of the word and perhaps more extensively so than any other Institution on this Continent." In conclusion, quoting from the minutes of May 13, 1771, when William Fisher, John Drinker and Stephen Collins drew up the report, which was certified to in the Pennsylvania Gazette by George Roberts and which was submitted and approved at the Court House by the remaining members of the Managers of the Philadelphia Almshouse and House of Employment, Thomas Say, Luke Morris, Benjamin Morgan and James Logan; and also quoting the same formula, mentioned May 13, 1776, by a committee whose names I have already mentioned, I would agree with these old worthies of long, long ago, that "its prospect for rising advantages are by no means inconsiderable and upon the whole after a minute inspection of the present state and support of the institution there seems to be no impropriety in observing that under Divine Providence and if happily aided by the Generous Countenance and Support of a wise and Virtuous Legislature, the prospect of its growing utility is by no means inconsiderable."  