tions, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia newspapers, church and census records, and other public documents, Holt demonstrates in this study the complexity of motivation and behavior of Pittsburgh voters. Also he suggests that by concentrating on events leading to the Civil War, historians may have ignored the essential continuity in politics of the prewar and postwar years.

The strengths of this book are obvious. Its principal shortcoming, which affects its readability, is its author’s preoccupation, perhaps inherent in his method, with groups and classes at the expense of individuals. From time to time Holt mentions the names of leading Republican politicians like Congressman James J. Moorhead and Thomas M. Howe and Democratic chieftains such as David Lynch and Charles Shaler. But their personalities remain indistinct in contrast to the party machinery they manipulated.

One other reservation may be voiced that relates to the author’s use of statistics. The table on “Comparative Population Growth of Cities” among the appendices (p. 318) tends to give an exaggerated impression of the slow rate of Pittsburgh’s population growth in relation to other cities. Although Pittsburgh’s population grew only about six per cent between 1850 and 1860, the increase in population of Allegheny County from 138,000 to about 178,000 in the same decade is indicative of demographic trends that the table does not disclose. Indeed the much greater apparent population growth of Philadelphia and St. Louis is explained by major annexations of outlying territory of a kind that Pittsburgh did not experience until after the Civil War.

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James T. Flexner has written a series of biographical sketches on pioneering medical men of America. His narrative style has made each one of these men very much alive — their personalities clearly outlined. He has looked behind the front of the M.D. and depicted the true image of the man: small, arrogant and impulsive on some occasions, and then again magnanimous, humble and cautious on others.
From the present-day aspect of medicine with complex heart surgery a daily routine, the intensive care departments of the modern hospital with their complex monitoring systems, and the wide scope of antibiotics and other specific drugs available, the medical men of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries seemed so helpless with little more to do than the "laying on of hands." Their training was meager, being little more than an apprenticeship, but with their medical armamentarium of herbs, physics, stimulants, poultices, and bleeding, probably little more than that was really necessary.

The men presented in James Flexner's book were medical pioneers, taking the first few faltering steps toward organization and founding of competent medical schools, performing the unprecedented abdominal surgery, introducing the practice of anesthesia, and doing basic work in physiology of the stomach.

John Morgan, the greatest physician of colonial days, is presented as a pathetic figure vainly trying to organize the army medical department during the Revolutionary War. It was an impossible task with dissenting, intensely jealous regimental surgeons, each trying to manage his allotted area in his own manner. Supplies and even the most meager medicines were almost unavailable either through poor distribution or a lack of appropriation from Congress itself. Many times more men died as a result of contagious disease and inadequate treatment than were battle casualties. Condemned by everyone and hounded throughout his life by an arch rival, Dr. William Shippen, Morgan was forced to resign as surgeon-general, and then spent the rest of his life trying to vindicate himself. His earlier accomplishments consisted of a major contribution to the organization of a medical school at the College of Philadelphia, and a remarkable foresight in the system of study and preparation for the degree of doctor of medicine.

Benjamin Rush was the great teacher at the University of Pennsylvania and a leading medical practitioner of Philadelphia who set the modus operandi of medicine throughout most of the United States. Unfortunately his medical theories were not founded on solid fact or research, and were loudly proclaimed and blindly followed by the doctors of the early republic. His theory of practice consisted of strong purges and bleeding, a harmful practice that was pursued for decades, and did great harm to American medicine. Violently ill patients were weakened and death hastened by purging and bleeding. Rush's work during the Philadelphia outbreak of yellow fever is brilliantly done and most interesting. His constructive accomplishments included the founding and furthering of sound medical educational practices and
also to be commended is his exposure of William Shippen, the tormentor of John Morgan.

Kentucky’s great contribution to medicine was Ephriam McDowell, who most of all fits the title of this book, *Doctors on Horseback*. Being the leading surgeon of the Kentucky frontier, McDowell was used to riding horseback hundreds of miles to do surgery or consult on a medical case. Like many of the great medical discoveries, it fell to the hands of an unknown, backwoods physician with great skill and fearlessness, to do the impossible — cutting open an abdomen and removing an ovarian tumor. Previously patients with ovarian tumors were left to die a slow painful death, and the great surgeons of the east and even of Europe dared not venture into abdominal surgery. It took a backwoods doctor on Christmas day of 1809, in a makeshift operating room in his home, risking the scorn and condemnation of everyone, to do one of the most important operations in the history of surgery. He demonstrated that the abdominal cavity could be cut into successfully, and this proved to be the forerunner of modern surgery. It took many years to convince the medical world what this simple country surgeon demonstrated. Little else was needed in this man’s life to make him a medical immortal. The brilliance and daring of the surgery cannot overshadow the courage of the patient who must forever be mentioned when the subject of the first ovariotomy is brought up — Mrs. Jane Todd Crawford. Ephriam McDowell’s home, furnished in period furniture of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, is now proudly cared for by the people of Kentucky.

Next Flexner deals with the life of Daniel Drake, the medical genius on the Ohio. No doubt the greatest medical man of the midwest, Drake’s life was spent in organizing and teaching in various medical schools in Cincinnati, Lexington and Louisville. The most astounding part of this sketch is the pugnacious, quarrelsome traits of the early medical men with constant bickering, maneuvering and intrigue to gain the upper hand on various faculties. One of Drake’s pupils was a John Lambert Richmond, a preacher and physician. He was the first to perform Cesarian section in America. On April 22, 1827, his sermon was interrupted at Newton, Ohio, and he was called to a log cabin where a woman in labor was unable to give birth because of a pelvic malformation. Again out of sheer necessity the country physician rose to the occasion and performed the first Cesarian section to save the woman’s life and thus entered the medical hall of fame.

The next section of Flexner’s book deals with the life of William
Beaumont, physician and physiologist of Mackinac. By a stroke of luck, Beaumont was able to do the original work on gastric function and the mechanics of the digestive process. By the accident of a bullet wound in the stomach of his patient, Alexis St. Martin, Beaumont was actually able to observe digestive processes and introduce various foods and note the time required for and the manner of digestion. This was the forerunner of modern physiology and paved the way for a more factual and scientific approach to human physiology and medicine as a whole. The trials, emotions and frustrations of Beaumont and his temperamental patient are presented almost in novel form and make the reading much easier than the usual biographical work.

Finally, it fell to the lot of a village medical practitioner, Crawford Long, and an obscure dentist in Hartford, Connecticut, William T. G. Morton, to discover and promote the use of ether for anesthesia. This again paved the way for modern surgery. The story around the discovery and use of ether to alleviate pain and permit the relaxation needed for surgery is brilliantly presented again. The dispute as to who was first matters little. The overwhelming gratitude of mankind for the blessings of painless surgery can be shared by both men.

Herein then is a book of medical lore, well written, revealing, interesting as a novel, yet historical and biographical in nature. It is well worth reading.

_Homestead, Pennsylvania_  
Robert W. McDermott, M.D.


Before the reader discovers the fact for himself, I hasten to note that this report on Robert Alberts' new biography is just that — not a professional historian's review but the enthusiastic reaction of an antiquarian to a most pleasant adventure in colonial history.

The "golden" theme of the book's title was chosen well. Here is the fascinating story of a young man gifted with the Midas touch, who married the current golden girl of Philadelphia, built two great mansions, traveled widely in Europe, knew everyone who mattered, both in America and abroad, served his country well and made a fortune at the same time! His whole career was golden in most respects except for longevity — but that is all in the back of the book!