No Ordinary Man

by Robert M. Grom

IT is a cruel irony of Pittsburgh medical history that Dr. Chevalier Jackson, who invented the esophagoscope and refined the bronchoscope - medical instruments still used today for viewing and treating diseases of the esophagus and bronchus - is proudly claimed as a native son while the man who sent him patients and lent him medical books on laryngology is all but forgotten. In fact, the life and career of pioneer throat specialist Dr. William Hudson Daly is one of the most colorful chapters in Pittsburgh medicine from the late nineteenth century. The life of Daly, who served on both sides in the Civil War, hunted with Buffalo Bill, and devised a will establishing the Athalia Daly Home in the Bloomfield section of Pittsburgh, deserves much closer scrutiny.

When the famous Dr. Jackson, fresh from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia and a year of study in London, set up practice in Pittsburgh at age 22, he chose an office on Sixth Avenue, near Penn. This was "specialist row" in those years, and, as he recalls in his autobiography, he found it advantageous to be near Dr. Daly, who was quoted in the literature of the new field on throat disorders and treatment, called laryngology. Daly, who traveled frequently, referred his patients to Jackson during his absence, and Jackson faithfully sent them back on his return. Daly was, no doubt, grateful for this, since his former assistant had left to open an office across the street and had taken a number of Daly's patients with him. The friendship between Daly and Jackson lasted more than a decade. Jackson recalls that Daly, who subscribed to all the leading journals and "had a copy of almost every laryngeal book published... generously loaned [them] to me. His aid in those lean years was invaluable."

At the time, Daly was at the peak of his career and was a recognized expert in laryngology. He had written more than 50 papers, and was cited in many textbooks. He wrote on topics ranging from gunshot wounds, tonsils, burns, leprosy, and malaria, to his most famous treatise, on respiratory disorders related to asthma. This paper drew the attention of the dean of British laryngologists, Sir Morrell Mackenzie, who wrote in the London Journal of Laryngology and Rhinology, "There can be no doubt that Dr. Daly may justly be regarded as the founder of the surgical school of rhinology in the United States." (Rhinology is the branch of medicine that deals with the nose and its diseases.) In 1897, he was named president of the American Laryngological, Rhinological and Otological Society and chairman of the Health Section of the American Social Science Association. He organized the American Medical Association Congress in Cincinnati and became its president. Three times a delegate of the American Medical Association to the British Medical Association, he was elected to the British Laryngological, Rhinological, and Otological Association and to the Société Francaise de Laryngologie, de Laryngologie, et de Rhinologie, and he was elected president of the Laryngology Section of the Ninth International Medical Congress in Washington, D.C., in 1887.

But William Daly's interests extended well beyond medical academia.

Born September 11, 1842, in Blairsville, Pa., to an Irish father, Thomas Daly, and his Scottish wife Helen, William was orphaned...
at 17. The outbreak of the Civil War found him in Richmond, Va., where he volunteered for service in the Confederate Army — the first of four terms of military service. He saw considerable duty with Company B of the 15th Virginia Volunteers, who fought in most of the battles from Big Bethel to Lee’s Mill. There is a record of his admission as a patient to the Seminary Hospital in Richmond, from September 4 through 9, 1861, for the treatment of kidney inflammation. The battle of Lee’s Mill in which he was taken prisoner in April, 1862, was his last as a Confederate soldier.

Presumably released through prisoner exchange or under parole, Daly was free to seek other prospects, and he chose — in 1863, at age 21 — to begin the study of medicine at Jefferson Medical College. He took an oath of allegiance to the United States, and, his previous service as a Rebel notwithstanding, he seems to have had no qualms about serving as a medical cadet at the Germantown Hospital and shortly thereafter, as acting assistant surgeon at the White Hall U. S. Army Hospital in Bristol, Pa. He was subsequently transferred to the General Army Hospital in Savannah, and in 1865, to Hilton Head, S.C., where he was made post surgeon.

At the war’s end, Daly was sent to Florida to receive and take charge of the last of approximately 5,000 prisoners recently liberated from Andersonville prison in Georgia. Having seen the horrors of war from both sides, and having gained a vast amount of practical medical experience, he recognized the need to complete his professional training. This time, he enrolled in the University of Michigan Medical School at Ann Arbor, where he received the M. D. degree in the spring of 1866. Immediately after graduation, he came to Pittsburgh to take up private practice. He began treating patients at the 13-year-old Western Pennsylvania Hospital, which had only recently been returned to private operation after its use as a government military hospital during the war. No doubt Daly felt comfortable at West Penn, where the patient population consisted principally of other veterans. He also attended patients at the Pittsburgh Free Dispensary during this period.

At West Penn, Daly was in good company. His colleagues, all of them eminent in their respective fields, included doctors William J. Asdale, James McCann, James B. Murdoch, J. Chris Lange, John Milton Duff, Francis LeMoyn, Charles H. Emmerling, Whitmore Snively, and Cyrus B. King. Daly also associated himself with Dr. R. Stansbury Sutton, one of Pittsburgh’s first specialists in gynecology. Sutton, who considered Daly to be a pioneer in his own field, said of him: “Dr. Daly’s rank in the medical profession was good... [He] had a flourishing practice here from the time he returned from London...until 1893. After that [time], the country filled up with throat specialists.... If not the discoverer of the fact that asthma was a reflex from a disease of the nose, he was the first to call attention to it.”

Two years later, he was appointed physician to the Reform School of Western Pennsylvania in Allegheny City, a post he held for eight years until the school was moved because of a typhoid epidemic that infected 270 of the school’s 300 residents. It was Daly who suggested that the cause of the problem stemmed from the school’s location in a low-lying area near the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, into which drained the sewage of Pittsburgh and Allegheny.

On June 23, 1869, Daly married A. Athalia Cooper, whose name today is more familiar to West Penn Hospital patients and staff than that of her physician husband. She was the daughter of one of Pittsburgh’s pioneer steelmakers, James M. Cooper. He was a partner in the firm of Hussey, Wells and Company, the first firm to prove that iron could be converted to steel in the crucible, thus saving significant production costs. The plant was located between 16th and 18th streets, Penn Avenue and the Allegheny Valley Railroad.

Marriage drew Daly into fatherhood and the city’s social arena. The couple’s first child, James Cooper Daly, was born in October 1870. The appeal of the military remained, however, and in 1871, Dr. Daly was commissioned as a lieutenant colonel and surgeon in the 18th Division of the Pennsylvania National Guard, a post he held until the outbreak of the Spanish-American War at the close of the century.

Over the next several years, scarlet fever claimed the life of young James and, in 1878, that of the couple’s second-born son, William Theodore, who died four days before his first birthday. Grief-stricken by the loss of his sons, Daly left shortly after William’s death for Europe to pursue intense study of diseases of the throat. In one year, he studied at the leading medical centers of London, Paris, Berlin and Vienna. Most rewarding, perhaps, was the time he spent with Sir Morrell Mackenzie, who would later praise his former
student's work in the pages of a leading British medical journal. Mackenzie, considered the creator of the laryngology specialty, was sent to Berlin to treat Crown Prince Frederich III of Germany and was subsequently knighted by Queen Victoria.11

Back in Pittsburgh in 1879, Daly launched his own practice of laryngology, and is considered the city's first specialist in this area. He also practiced “galvano-cautery,” known today as electrotacottery, in which electricity is used to destroy tissues in the body, such as, in Daly's practice, nasal polyps. Daly’s “Candidate’s Thesis” submitted to the American Laryngological Association in 1880 was subsequently published in the Archives of Laryngology (Vol. II, No. 2) in April 1881.

Daly became general surgeon for the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad in 1879, a demanding position in light of the prevalence of industrial accidents during this period.12 In a statistical analysis of amputations between January 1877 and January 1884 in the October 4, 1884, issue of Medical News, West Penn resident physicians William H. Mercur and Ellwood B. Haworth reported that more amputations were performed at West Penn in 1883 alone than in any other institution in the United States, and the majority were the result of railroad injuries.

At an office on Sixth Avenue, Daly — according to several years of Pittsburgh City Directories — ran his practice from 10:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. on weekdays. An active member of the Allegheny County Medical Society, he had served as secretary during the early 1870s and became president in 1881.13 He also held membership in the Pennsylvania Medical Society and the Pittsburgh Academy of Medicine. In 1880, he became president of the medical staff at West Penn.

Daly's incisiveness and independence as well as his biting wit are illustrated by an account, in the minutes of the county society, of his case report of a patient who represented himself as a Dutch pen-maker suffering from an aortic aneurism of 17 months standing. Despite the diagnosis of an aneurism by several famous doctors, according to Daly no one could detect any trace of the “aneurismal thrill, or bruit, which is scarcely ever absent in such cases.” (“Aneurismal thrill” is the fine vibration resulting from disease of the vessel wall which the doctor can detect with his fingers. A “bruit” is caused by the same defect but is the resulting sound.) Daly’s consternation at his colleague’s deference to the diagnosis of the “famous doctors” is evident in this report of his case history, recorded in the society’s minutes:

Doctors McCann and Daly expressed themselves in decided opposition to the view of certainty in the existence of a tumor of such a character. The man was engaged in selling steel pens of a very miserably poor quality at a high price by the box, with one of which I have attempted to inscribe the fore-going words to his memory. A post-mortem examination on his remains would give immense satisfaction, and clear up the doubt concerning his pathological condition, besides arresting him in his unholy career of flooding the profession with bad steel pens.14

Second only to his devotion to his profession was Daly's love of hunting and of collecting old and curious weapons. On one expedition to the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming, he engaged in a confrontation with an enraged elk. Daly survived, but with a back injury that would plague him for the rest of his life.15 A trophy elk rack hung conspicuously thereafter, however, in the Daly home.

On another such hunting trip to Big Horn during the 1880s, Daly encountered two men who would have a major impact on his future. Daly was in his camp one evening when a man on horseback “came tearing over the range,” asking for a doctor to accompany him to examine a sick patient in a nearby camp. Daly agreed to go with him and successfully treated a young girl. The courier, as it turned out, was William F. (Buffalo Bill) Cody, and the grateful father of the young girl was General Nelson A. Miles, famous for his exploits during the Indian wars. The three men became close friends and hunting companions over the next few years, and General Miles figured prominently in Daly’s last term of military service.16

When the Spanish-American War broke out, Daly, at 56, once again volunteered, but for a very different role. Presumably because of his professional stature and perhaps because of his friendship with General Miles, Daly was named by President McKinley as the surgeon general of the Volunteer Army of Pennsylvania. At the annual meeting of the American Laryngological, Rhinological, and Otological Society at Pittsburgh's Duquesne Club on May 12, 1898, Daly laid down his gavel as president and bade his fellow mem-

Buffalo Bill, friend and hunting companion of Daly's
bers farewell, setting off for the War in Cuba.\textsuperscript{17} They responded with an impromptu song that is a wonderful artifact of the times. It was composed by one of those in attendance, Frank Harcourt Koyle, whose interminable remarks prefaced the song:\textsuperscript{18}

This song written impromptu by a member of the American Laryngological, Rhinological, and Otological Association, Dr. Frank Harcourt Koyle, of Hornellsville, N.Y. and sung by members at their banquet to the tune of “Off to Philadelphia in the Morning,” at their annual meeting at the Duquesne Club, Pittsburg, Pa., the evening of May 12, 1898, humorously celebrating the then sudden departure, and the goodbyes to Dr. W. H. Daly their President, just leaving the Banquet Hall, under orders of General Miles Commander in chief of the U. S. Armies, for the War in Cuba. And although the song is written impromptu in a humorous vein for, and at the wish of the American Laryngological, Rhinological and Otological Association, in the mellow haze of Pittsburg smoke, and under a somewhat similar condition of mind, suggesting the unique and unerring hospitality of Dr. Daly which they were then enjoying, it is affectionately dedicated to him, “The Grand Old Man” of the Association, who only a few short hours before to our infinite surprise notified us that he leaves tonight to serve our flag and our country in the War against Spain, for the freedom of Cuba. No one more noble, brave, nor skilful could have been chosen from the profession, of which he is a beloved and distinguished representative, and as a national medical body we feel honored to have had one of ours selected to fill the high position to which he has been called, upon the staff of the General Commanding the Armies of the U. S. as Chief Surgeon with rank of Major U. S. Vols. and no more affectionate goodwill goes with him, our dear president and friend, Major William H. Daly, Chief Surgeon U. S. Vols, than that of Frank Harcourt Koyle, the author.

The song was called “I Shstart to free ould Cuba in the Mornin”:

1

Oh, me name is William H. Daly,  
And a scalpel of a shillaleh  
I can handle any minute widout warnin’,  
Wid a good black thorn forinst me,  
He’ll get hurt who runs against me  
When I shstart to free ould Cuba in the Mornin’.  
CHORUS:

But tho’ me black thorn’s on me shoulder  
Faith there’s no man could be boulder;  
Though I’m lavin’ now the shpot that I was born in,  
For I lately tak the notion for to cross the briny ocean,  
And I shstart to free ould Cuba in the mornin’.  

2

Whin Miles told me I must lave this place  
I tried to kape a cheerful face,  
For a bottle and a hot bird I’m not scorin’;  
But I trust yez will not mind me,  
If I lave yez dhrunk behind me,  
And I hope yez’ll have no headache in the mornin’.  
CHORUS:  
For ‘tis dhrunk yez will be gettin’  
If yez keep your t(h) roats a wettin’  
Iv’ry toime yez drink a liquor widout corn in,  
Shtick to high-balls of good whiskey,  
Tho’ they make yez somewhat frisky,  
And the hat of aich will fit yez in the mornin’.

3

And I hope that iv’ry sinner  
Who is prisint at this dinner,  
Will forget he has a shpot that has a thorn in;  
And we’ll drink to our President Daly,  
who wid scalpel and shillaleh,  
Makes his start for carvin’ Spanairds in the mornin’.

CHORUS:  
For me black thorn’s on me shoulder,  
And there’s no man could be boulder  
Tho’ I’m lavin’ now the shpot that I was born in;  
Miles and me has tuk the notion for to cross the briny ocean,  
And we shstart out to free ould Cuba in the mornin’.

4

There’s a place that I’ll not mition,  
Paved wid many a good intiont;  
‘Tis the place the Spanish Dons will be adornin’,  
For I’ve just got my Commission,  
And me bhoys wid your permission,  
Wid the Dons I’ll raise hell’s blazes in the mornin’.  
CHORUS:  
Wid me shtraps upon me shoulder,  
And me courage raver boulder,  
We will carve the bloody Dons as sure as thunder;  
And the pleasure will be mine
5

And when the War is over,
Won't the Cubans be in clover,
As they see their bloody inimies lave for
Caddiz.
We will tell them our idea
Was to come and make them freer,
And to give them haughty Dons a taste
of Hades.
CHORUS:
For 'tis surely up ag'inst us
To defeat the foe fornicist us,
And yez know me byes a bullet cannot
harm me
So wid Miles and me a-leadin'
Shure the Dons will soon be pleadin'
Before us two who lead the mighty
Army.

During the war, Daly served in various capacities including that of field surgeon in charge of a camp, and he was in charge of bringing home from Cuba a shipload of sick and wounded. The combat did not, however, keep him from continuing his clinical investigation. He studied leprosy in Cuba and the Yucatan and, pursuing a new interest in sanitation, he visited military camps in Europe with letters of introduction personally signed by General Miles. One letter, dated July 9, 1900, suggests that Daly was prepared to go to war again. "I will hold your application," Miles wrote, "and in case there is any prospect of my going to China for war purposes, I will put it in."

Daly showed himself to be in the vanguard of public sentiment when he took on the beef industry at the turn of the century. Six years before the nation passed the Pure Food and Drug Act, Daly became enmeshed in a controversy that was popularly referred to as the "embalmed beef scandal." Having found that the purveyors of beef to the military were experimenting on the meat by using boric and salicylic acid, hazardous preservatives, Daly convinced his old friend, General Miles, to take on the Goliaths of the War Department — Secretary of War Russell A. Alger and Commissary General Charles P. Eagan.

The ensuing trial attracted national attention and resulted eventually in the forced resignation of Alger and the court martial of Eagan. Daly, whose support and testimony was credited with turning the tide for the general's case, also stepped down from his military post, believing that he would be better able to support Miles as a civilian.
West Penn converted the Athalia Daly Home into a temporary residence for patient families.

Mrs. Daly frequently accompanied her husband on his hunting trips to the West in order to pursue her own deep concern for elevating the station of Indian women on reservations. She helped to establish schools on the reservations and, from her home, regularly sold Indian-made lace to Pittsburgh matrons. This concern extended as well to unmarried, working women in Pittsburgh. 27

In his last will, executed on February 19, 1901, less than six months before his death, Daly ensured that his wife’s good works would be perpetuated. “The object, intent, aim, and effect of the Athalia Daly Home or Homes,” according to the will, was:

to furnish home, shelter, protection, instruction and improvement to industrious girls and women, while either in or out of employment, at the lowest possible cost to them commensurate with their maintaining the proper sense of self-respect and ambition on the part of the beneficiaries, who shall desire or require shelter of plain, comfortable and cheerful home, surrounded by good influences, attended by proper and wholesome amusements, presided over by kind and friendly guardian officers, known to be interested in the happiness, prosperity, self-respect and welfare of the beneficiaries.

In accord with Dr. Daly’s wishes, the Athalia Daly Home was incorporated in March of 1904. The charter indicates that the corporation held $220,000 in real and personal property from Dr. Daly’s estate; 28 other sources place the figure at $250,000. The will, however, was contested by relatives, and the case eventually reached the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, in October 1904.

Construction began in 1905, and the home was opened on November 20, 1907, almost exactly eight years after Athalia Daly died. The provisions of the will were not fulfilled completely. Daly had envisioned “a home or homes,” intending that Badenbrook, his “farm mansion house” in Baden, Beaver County, be utilized as a country home for those who “need or prefer the invigorating influence of a sojourn amid rural surroundings.” In the end, the “homes” became a single residence, much larger than he had proposed, and the Baden property was sold to cover a portion of its cost.

For 70 years, however, the Athalia Daly Home served the purposes set forth in the will. By 1975, changing lifestyles had made such a residence an anachronism. A report made by a special committee involved in the home’s operation summarized the situation:

For many years the Home was fully occupied and operating expenses were normally met by receipts from the guests so that it was not necessary to invade the endowment fund. For the last few years the occupancy rate has declined. At March 31, 1975, there were only 24 resident guests. Operating expenses for that month, $7,365.08, exceed receipts from occupants by $2,677.23. This marks a low point in occupancy that follows a trend with which the Board has been concerned for several years.

At its next meeting the Board should consider whether the operation of the Home should be continued or whether its property and assets should be transferred and applied to suitable charitable purposes and the corporation dissolved. 29

The Daly Home directors saw fit to negotiate turning the facility over to West Penn Hospital for purposes that even such a far-sighted pioneer as Dr. Daly could not have envisioned in 1900. 30 In March 1976, the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County responded to the home’s board by transferring its assets and properties to West Penn. 31 Advances in medicine during the last two decades, particularly in the treatment of burns and coronary surgery, had turned West Penn into a regional referral center, drawing patients from a wide geographic radius. To allow relatives of out-of-town patients to remain close at hand during their hospitalization, West Penn converted the Athalia Daly Home to a temporary residence for patient families.

Until recently, the Daly Home served primarily as a hostel for relatives of seriously ill patients. Although the nature of the charity it offered had changed, it continued to perpetuate the memory of Athalia Daly, for whom her husband secured an immortality greater than his own. He deserves, nevertheless, a place of honor in his own right as a pioneer laryngologist and public health advocate, patriot and soldier in the annals of Pittsburgh’s medical history. He was, as General Miles said of him, “no ordinary man, no ordinary physician.” 32


2William H. Daly, “The Relation of Hay-asthma and Chronic Naso-pharyngeal Catarh,” Archives of Laryngology, vol. 3, no. 2 (April 1882), 157-161. The treatise compared the effects of asthma,
normally marked by continuous labored breathing and wheezing, and often attacks of coughing or gasping, with recurring inflammation of the mucous membranes of the nose and/or pharynx.

2Records of the Adjutant and Inspector General's Office, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
3Thomas Jefferson University, Special Collections/Archives, Scott Memorial Library, Philadelphia.
4Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's - 1917, Record Group 94, National Archives.
5William H. Daly, "A Medical Thesis on Sympathetic Pruritis with More Special reference to the form affecting the Scrotum of the Male," Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
6"Revolver Shot Ends the Life of Dr. W.H. Daly," *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, 10 June 1901.
7"Dr. W.H. Daly Kills Himself," *Pittsburgh Times*, 10 June 1901.
10"Revolver Shot Ends the Life of Dr. W.H. Daly," *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, 10 June 1901.
12Ibid., 18-19.
14Ibid.
15"...furnish home, shelter, protection, instruction, and improvement to girls and women."