

CHAPTER 6

*“. . . Physicians or surgeons of known skill,
learning and integrity in each county . . .
shall form themselves into a society to be
called ‘The District Medical Society.’” — 1816*

The third item in the Act of 1816 provided for the establishment of district societies, and the fourth item required that before beginning the practice of physic or surgery, a man must have passed an examination and received a certificate from the examiners — censors — of the district medical society.

Somerset forms first county society

On May 7, 1816, the Society appointed Somerset County Drs. Peter I. Stryker, Ferdinand S. Schenck, William M. McKissack and his son, William D. McKissack, James Elmendorf, Augustus R. Taylor, E. Fitz-Randolph Smith, Moses Scott and Henry Schenck to meet in Somerville on Tuesday, May 21, at 10 a.m. to form a district society. As a result, Somerset became the first of the five county societies formed in that year.

Those who gathered at the Public House of Daniel Sargeant for the organization meeting elected Drs. Stryker, president; William M. McKissack, vice president; Ferdinand S. Schenck, treasurer; Elmendorf, corresponding secretary, and Smith, recording secretary.

The Somerset County founders and their successors, like the parent Society, recognized the priceless value of their original minute book and deposited it with the county clerk for safekeeping. They resolved that a special committee should annually inspect the quaint leather-bound book and report its condition. Consequently, one may still read entries inscribed a century and a half ago in the cramped and spluttering quill script of Dr. E. Fitz-Randolph Smith.

An initial item in the bylaws provided that a member absent for several consecutive sessions, or failing to perform a duty assigned to him, should be subject to investigation and a fine not to exceed \$20. Another provision deemed it dishonorable and worthy of censure for any member to hold professional intercourse with “irregular-bred pretenders to medicine,” illegal practitioners, or expelled members of the Society.

The censors chosen to examine candidates for a license were Drs. Stryker, Taylor, Elmendorf, William M. McKissack, and Smith, and they were to be compensated for their services. Applicants were to be examined in public, but for not more than three hours each, on eight branches of study: materia medica, pharmacy, anatomy, physiology, surgery, theory and practice of physic, midwifery, and chemistry.

Following the precedent set by the state group, the Somerset Society resolved to have its minutes published in the local newspapers, in order to attract prospective candidates and to inform the public of the organization’s procedures.

Somerset was the source of a number of leaders in the parent Society. Dr. Stryker served as president in 1808, 1817 and 1824; Dr. Taylor in 1822 and 1830; Dr. William D. McKissack in 1826; Dr. Smith in 1832; Dr. Abraham P. Hagerman in 1835; Dr. Henry VanDerveer in 1836 and Dr. Ferdinand S. Schenck in 1841. Dr. Moses Scott had served in 1789.

Somerset meetings were not all business. One itemized bill includes charges for twelve dinners at 5 shillings each, plus one glass of cider, four glasses of wine bitters, one glass of brandy, two of rum, twenty-eight Spanish cigars, and hay and oats for eleven horses.

Members were appointed for each half-year session to report their meteorological observations and the prevailing diseases in the county in the past six months. Complaints by officers at state and county levels through the next half century indicate that this reporting was regarded as an onerous chore and often neglected.

Drs. Henry VanDerveer and Cornelius C. Suydam were two notable members of the Somerset Society in its early years. Henry VanDerveer was in advance of his colleagues in prescribing small doses of medicine instead of the conventional heroic dosage. Before chloroform was in use, he advocated its little-known forerunner, terchloride of carbon. A bachelor, he occupied one half of the family homestead, while an unmarried sister, Phoebe, lived in the other. Weekly each made a formal call on the other.

The younger colleague, Dr. Suydam, attended many patients in the 1830's, including a considerable number of indigents. Exhausted, he withdrew from practice and for a time lived as a recluse. A close acquaintance once heard the doctor muttering, "I won't; I won't," and questioned him. Dr. Suydam confided that he was beset by an evil spirit constantly prompting him to get married, but he was determined not to yield. Later, he regained his health and sanity and married "an estimable lady," who made his home pleasant and provided wise and judicious counsel. He returned to practice and "the current of his life passed smoothly along."¹

Monmouth County Medical Society

On June 3, 1816, representatives of Monmouth County, then including the territory that became Ocean County, met at the Court House in Freehold to organize their society. The meeting was called by Drs. Samuel Forman, William G. Reynolds and Jacobus Hubbard, Jr. The last named was a son of the apprentice from Gravesend, N.Y.

Dr. Reynolds was chosen president; Dr. Edward Taylor, vice president; and Dr. Forman, secretary. Dr. Reynolds was a bachelor and former Navy man, temperate, intellectual, and a good teacher. Extremely versatile, he could design and build an intricate, mechanically operated box, or cut and make his own suit of clothes when the tailor disappointed him.

By 1820, the Monmouth group, like the state Society, regularly heard a president's address. Like the parent body, too, the Monmouth treasurer's account reflected the economic instability of the times, reporting a balance of \$35 "good money" and \$4 in "bad money."

Nevertheless, the group continued to prosper. For the next forty years it held meetings in the same room of the same hotel — the American House — and dined at the same table.

The members met to exchange experiences and share medical publications. The society subscribed to two periodicals. These, with the medical books the members shared, necessitated the purchase in 1832 of a bookcase.

Temperance-minded Monmouth doctors adopted a resolution in 1834 and had it printed in two local papers, declaring "ardent spirits [alcohol] is not needed in health; on the contrary, it is not merely useless, but pernicious, productive of disease and death." Twenty years later, in keeping with this philosophy, the members resolved that no more wine bills should be paid from society funds. After some debate, the use of cigars was allowed to continue at society expense.²

Essex County Medical Society

Essex County has contributed twenty-six presidents to the Medical Society plus countless other officers and leaders. Some of the nation's most illustrious medical men have called Essex home. A few, such as Drs. Wells P. Eagleton, Henry L. Coit, Edward J. Ill and Harrison S. Martland, have attained world renown.

Drs. Joseph Quimby, Samuel Manning, David S. Craig, Philemon Elmer and John D. Williams organized the Essex Society. The county at that time also included present-day Union and half of Passaic Counties, but none was heavily populated. The City of Newark had fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. The physicians convened on June 4, 1816, at Moses Roff's Inn on Broad Street, Newark — reputedly the finest public house on the stage coach line from New York to Philadelphia.

Dr. Williams was elected president. Like many early practitioners, he held dual offices. He was both doctor and judge, having been appointed a magistrate by Governor Pennington. Most of his medical practice was in the vicinity of Connecticut Farms (now Springfield).

Dr. Uzal Johnson was named vice president. Then sixty-six years old, he had served with the British during the Revolution. Dr. Johnson declined appointment to the Provincial Congress in 1775 and entered the British service. On his return to Newark, a stiff knee caused him to travel in a specially-made low carriage. Emblazoned on it was the motto *Nonnunquam paratus*. Some thought the Latin motto "always prepared," referred to his fund of jolly stories.

The Essex treasurer was Dr. Samuel Hayes, destined to become president of the state Society in 1834. After graduation from Princeton, Dr. Hayes studied under Dr. John B. Rodgers of Newark and from 1795 to 1799 was the apothecary of the New York Hospital. After a voyage to India, he and a partner opened an apothecary shop, but it lasted only a few months. In 1804, Dr. Hayes became associated with Dr. Cyrus Pierson, his father-in-law. Dr. Hayes was tall and somewhat bent, perhaps from his many scholarly pursuits. He was excessively modest and reluctant to press for an unpaid bill, although he never charged more than 25 cents for a visit.

The Essex Society, which was to be dominant within the state organization for many years, established its position at the outset by providing that it would be governed by the laws of the parent group except for control of its funds.

Summarizing the first fifty years of the Essex Society, Dr. J. Henry Clark, in 1867, cited items in the bylaws pertaining to medical ethics. One stated that medical practitioners should not pay uninvited attention to families usually employing another, adding that it "evinces a meanness of disposition to make meddling inquiries or hints concerning the nature or treatment of cases of sickness in such circumstances."³

Morris County Medical Society

Seven physicians in the area organized at the Morris County Court House in Morristown on June 11, 1816. Dr. Lewis Condict was elected president; Dr. Jephtha B. Munn, vice president; Dr. Charles Pierson, treasurer, and Dr. John B. Johnes, secretary; Drs. Joseph Hedges, Hampton Dunham and William Pierson were also admitted to membership.

Dr. Condict was one of the early members of a distinguished medical family in New Jersey. He was chosen state Society president in 1810 and was re-elected in 1819. Born in Morristown in 1772, he lived there all his ninety years, but his influence was felt throughout the young nation.

As a child he lived with his uncle, the Honorable Silas Condict of Morristown, a member of the Continental Congress. When Lewis was a boy of fourteen, he was placed with a leading townsman, Dr. Timothy Johnes, to be instructed in medicine. Later, he was a student of the estimable Dr. Benjamin Rush at the University of Pennsylvania, where he earned his medical degree in 1794.

One of Dr. Condict's close friends was Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse, founder of the Medical Department of Harvard University. Through him, Dr. Condict was introduced to Dr. Edward Jenner's technique for vaccination against smallpox. With a flair for the dramatic, Dr. Condict publicized the safety and effectiveness of vaccination by inoculating his two-year-old daughter with cowpox in one hand and later, smallpox in the other. The success of the demonstration and the child's resulting immunity helped to persuade others to submit to the procedure.

As a United States Congressman shortly before the War of 1812, Dr. Condict brought to light Great Britain's unjust impressment of over 5,000 American sailors. Later, he urged emancipation of slaves in the South and the establishment of colonies of freed Negroes on the west coast of Africa. In New Jersey in the 1840's, he served as one of the commissioners for the founding of the State Lunatic Asylum at Trenton.

Failure to attend a meeting of the Morris County Society was considered inexcusable. Even professional business was not an adequate reason for absence, and a fine of \$2 was levied on absentees. Absenteeism had its good point. The members dined together, and the bill was paid out of the treasury — which at that time consisted chiefly of funds from the absentee fines.

The promise of a free meal and the threat of a fine were not enough, however, to bring out a quorum in 1857, and meetings were suspended. The society was revived in 1873 through the strenuous efforts of Drs. John G. Ryerson of Boonton, I. W. Condict of Dover, and P. A. Harris and Fred W. Owen of Morristown.⁴

Middlesex County Medical Society

Early map makers created great confusion when they divided Somerset and Middlesex Counties along Albany Street in New Brunswick. Much later this contributed to the delay in summoning coroners and police to investigate the Hall-Mills murder case near New Brunswick in 1922.

The Middlesex County Medical Society president, Dr. Frank M. Donohue, reviewing the local society's one-hundred-year history in 1916, noted that Middlesex might have supplied more state officers, but two New Brunswick members lived on the Somerset side of Albany Street!

Roads, if not streets, were of prime concern to the county's first physician, Dr. Henry Greenland, who was the only practitioner there from 1675 to 1706. His chief means of support was a tavern in Highland Park serving the traveler as well as the home community. Medicine was his avocation.

In 1706, a second medical man arrived: He was "Dr." John Johnstone, mentioned earlier as having acquired his title enroute from Scotland. He came first to Perth Amboy, left it to serve as mayor of New York City from 1714-18, then returned to his first location and for thirteen years represented Middlesex County in the General Assembly of the Province of New Jersey. During ten of those years he was the Speaker. He also was one of the commissioners appointed to settle the New York-New Jersey boundary.

Versatility was a trait continued by Middlesex physicians in later centuries. One of these was Dr. Solomon Andrews of Perth Amboy (1806-72). He was the son of the Reverend Dr. Joseph Andrews, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Perth Amboy in 1816. Both father and son received the degree of doctor of medicine from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City. Solomon was an inventor at heart, and his devices ranged from a padlock to the world's first dirigible. It was buoyed by hydrogen gas and had a rudder for maneuverability. After the first successful model in 1848, Dr. Andrews continued improvements for the remainder of his life. One of his air ships soared to a height of two miles, speeding along at 120 miles an hour over Manhattan. Dr. Solomon Andrews also was Perth Amboy health officer, Collector of the Port, and three times mayor.

Another Middlesex innovator was notable in the medical profession. He was Dr. Clifford Morrogh of New Brunswick (1821-82), the first physician in the state to use chloroform. He used it during a leg amputation necessitated by osteomyelitis. Dr. Morrogh invented many instruments and designed a sailing yacht that won two prizes. He was a bank director in the community for almost thirty years and also a treasurer of St. Peter's Church in New Brunswick. He served with distinction in the Medical Department of the Union Army during the Civil War.

The competent handling of figures and finances was noteworthy in another New Brunswick physician, Dr. Henry Rutgers Baldwin. His ability, exercised for the state Society as it approached its centennial anniversary, and until he became president in 1877, put the financial accounts on a firm basis for the first time and set a pattern which enabled the Society henceforth to anticipate and provide for future expenses and to direct expenditures for the greatest good.

The physicians named to organize the Middlesex society, in addition to state Society President Dr. Lewis Dunham, were Drs. Jacob Dunham, Enoch Wilson, Matthias Freeman, Charles Smith, Nathaniel Manning, Ralph P. Lott and John Van Cleve. They met on June 13, 1816. Censors named to examine applicants for the Middlesex group were Drs. Smith, Van Cleve, Freeman, Manning, and Wilson.

In a sense, the Middlesex Society was initially organized in 1766. Although it did not literally become a district or component society until 1816 — and the early minutes are lost — there is no doubt that Middlesex physicians helped provide the nucleus for The Medical Society of New Jersey.

Dr. David C. English of New Brunswick, former president and later editor of the *Journal*, made the claim for his home county during the parent Society's 150th anniversary observance in 1916. In the first fifty years of the state Society, eleven presidents, including the first one, Dr. Robert McKean, came from Middlesex. In the years following, seven more have come from this county.⁵

Sussex County Medical Society

At the annual meeting of the parent organization on May 12, 1818, Drs. Reuel Hampton and George Hopkins won approval for a district society in their home county of Sussex. July 14 was set for the organization meeting in Newton. Other physicians named to join them included Drs. John S. Hughes, George Van Nest, Samuel W. Fell, Gideon Leeds, Jabez Gwinnup, Samuel Fowler and Elias L'Hommedieu.

Sussex County's first medical man, Dr. Fowler, was born across the state line, in New York, in 1779. He finished his medical studies by 1802 and within ten years had gone through the then all-too-common experience of losing his wife and new-born baby. At thirty-six, he remarried, this time a member of the iron-rich Ogden family. Then he extended his interests: into mining, politics — first the state senate and later congress — and into a wider medical practice. In the same years he became a sturdy family man with six children.

Minerals became his passion; he discovered ores not previously identified and these were catalogued later by geologists. His most important mineral discovery, franklinite, like the settlement he founded, honored the name of Benjamin Franklin — the American Dr. Fowler most admired. Other minerals were named hardystonite, sussexite, and fowlerite. The mining enterprise, important though it was at the time, scarcely smudged the scenic, rural charm of this mountainous section of New Jersey. By 1845, the area was advertised "for the languid frame and the sick heart" to enjoy "pure elastic air, the reviving atmosphere of mountain solitudes where every breeze visits the senses as if laden with the renovating spirit of life."

It may have been that invigorating air that made meetings of doctors unnecessary, but it is more likely that the few who practiced in the remote region had all the travel they could sustain in caring for patients. Whatever the reason, the first effort to organize a Sussex County Medical Society failed. The formation of Warren County in 1824 and a medical society there two years later, prompted some of the original Sussex Society men to join the newer group.

But the Sussex physicians were ready to revive their organization in 1829. The state Society commissioned Drs. Fowler, L'Hommedieu, David P. Hunt, and Stephen Hedges to carry out the reorganization. Dr. Hedges was seated as a delegate and also named a censor for the Eastern District. Since 1829, the Sussex Society has been regularly represented at state meetings.⁶

Salem County Medical Society

Before the Revolution, medicine in Salem County was chiefly carried on by lay Quakers. After the war, it was practiced more generally by trained physicians, and as early as 1799, the Harveian Medical Society met at Salem and Woodstown. Dr. John Dickinson (1758-1834), who in 1777 had been a surgeon's mate in charge of the military hospital at Red Bank, was a member of this Society. For his service in the Revolutionary War, Dr. Dickinson received a sword and metal canister from General George Washington.

In 1818, local physicians asked permission to organize the Salem County Medical Society. The applicants were: Drs. James Vanmeter, Hedge Thompson, Charles Swing, Daniel Bowen, Charles Hannah, William F. Hunt and Thomas Yarrow. Their first meeting was held on November 30, 1818, and from then until 1850, they held regular sessions and sent delegates to the parent Society. In 1831, one of the Salem founders, Dr. Yarrow, was elected president of the state group.

Dr. Yarrow had come from England in 1797 at the age of twenty-one. He was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and established his medical practice at Sharpstown in 1809. While his profession came first, Dr. Yarrow also found time to serve in the state legislature and as an associate judge of Salem County. He was a member of the Board of Censors, testing applicants in the Western District of the state Medical Society for many years before becoming state Society president in 1831. After his death in 1841, his son, Dr. Thomas J. Yarrow, continued in practice in the county.

Salem-born Dr. Hedge Thompson studied medicine under Dr. Caspar Wistar in Philadelphia and completed his training at the University of Pennsylvania, graduating in the medical class of 1802. Although he served as a county judge and as a congressman, his frail health forced him to give up medical practice after a few years. When he died in 1828 at the age of forty-eight, his son, Dr. J. H. Thompson, succeeded him.

Dr. James Vanmeter, another medical alumnus of the University of Pennsylvania, began practice in 1790 at Hancock's Bridge and sustained his practice for half a century. In his early years he helped train his brother, Robert Hunter Vanmeter. Robert served during the War of 1812 by caring for the sick of the regiment at Salem. An old jail was converted into a military hospital for his use.

Drs. Charles Hannah and Charles Swing were also University of Pennsylvania graduates. The former commenced his practice at Hancock's Bridge and later settled in Salem. Dr. Swing studied first under state Society President Dr. William B. Ewing of Greenwich, then continued at the University of Pennsylvania. He joined Dr. Ewing in practice in 1815, and later settled at Sharpstown.

When Isaac Sharp emigrated from Ireland about 1730 to take possession of 600 acres and exercise his birthright in the Religious Society of Friends, he also founded a line that was to supply medical men to Salem County and all of southern New Jersey for nearly two centuries. Dr. Jacob Sterne Thomson Sharp and his son, Dr. Edward S. Sharp, were among them.

No explanation is given for the suspension of Salem County Medical Society meetings in 1850, but there are strong indications that it was due to the tensions preceding the Civil War. In 1880, a reorganization of the Salem Society took place, prompted by physicians bearing such still familiar names as Summeril, Waddington, Cook, Heritage, and Fithian.⁷

Cumberland County Medical Society

There was a medical practitioner in Cumberland County as early as 1730. He was Dr. Elijah Bowen, who lived near Shiloh and prescribed only vegetable medicines. His son, Elijah, Jr., succeeded him in practice.

Another early physician was Dr. James Johnson of Readstown. He married the daughter of an Indian chief and a white woman. The girl was exceptionally beautiful and, in addition, seemed to possess many secrets of the healing art, a circumstance which some said accounted for the marriage. After his death in 1759, Dr. Johnson's "black salve" — reputedly a remedy for erysipelas and other afflictions — continued to be sold by his daughter for as long as she lived. One Bridgeton resident made his expert qualifications clear. Outside the house he had built in 1751 he hung his "shingle":

Dr. John Fithian
Medical Doctor

A contemporary, Dr. Samuel Ward, commenced practice in Greenwich about 1760 and was accepted there only after he had succeeded in reducing a dislocation which his competitor, a self-proclaimed expert, could not manage. Dr. Ward proved himself a competent surgeon and also an able political writer. He died in 1774, and his widow later married Dr. Samuel Bloomfield of Woodbridge, father of Joseph Bloomfield, governor of New Jersey from 1801 until 1812.

One of Dr. Ward's students, Dr. Thomas Ewing of Greenwich, succeeded to his practice. Slim and dark with black eyes and hair, Dr. Ewing was among the handsomest "Indians" at the famous Greenwich tea-burning ceremony of 1774. A little later he was a surgeon with southern New Jersey troops in the Revolution. He was brought home from the disastrous Battle of Long Island suffering from camp fever but recovered sufficiently to see naval action on two privateers, both of which were attacked by British forces. In 1781, Dr. Ewing was elected to the legislature, but a year later, at thirty-five, consumption ended his action-packed life. His son, Dr. William Belford Ewing, helped form the Cumberland Society in 1818 and was president of the state group in 1824.

Another Cumberland physician who proved himself a more than able seaman was Dr. Eli Ayres of Woodbury, who invited Dr. Joseph Fithian to share his practice in 1816. Two years later, Dr. Ayres became involved in efforts to found an African colony for freed slaves. He accompanied Captain Robert F. Stockton of Princeton to acquire the proposed land, (now

Liberia). The purchase was satisfactorily completed, but on the return voyage everyone aboard was stricken with fever. Dr. Ayres, convalescing from his attack and with only one sailor well enough to assist him, undertook to navigate the ship, apparently with satisfactory results, since ship and passengers reached America safely. Dr. Ayres then settled in Baltimore.

“He has a fever.”

“Fever” was used as an all-encompassing answer for busybodies by one Cumberland physician. Dr. Ebenezer Elmer, one of at least five Bridgeton-area practitioners bearing that family name, served in Captain Bloomfield’s militia company under Dr. Lewis Howell. In later life, whenever “news-mongers” asked what ailed a patient of his, Dr. Elmer would simply answer, “He has a fever.” Although he assiduously protected his patients from gossip, Dr. Elmer so approved of legitimate news that he was the secretary of an association in Bridgeton in 1775 that prepared weekly papers on various topics. These were placed in the tavern of Matthew Potter so that all who wished could keep informed of the affairs of the country and neighborhood.

In 1789, still bent on sharing his knowledge and extending help to a young colleague, Dr. Elmer wrote to Dr. Azel Pierson with detailed instructions for inoculating against smallpox. He concluded with a warning: “Be sure to make use of genuine good matter, and introduce it effectually and neatly. In this, as well as every other branch of practice, do not deem the most minute circumstances too trifling to be attended to in your first set out. A young man who wants the advantage of experience must gain the confidence of his patients principally by minute attentions. In doubtful cases, attend to every symptom, revolve them well in your mind, and be cautious in prognosticating while any ambiguity remains . . .”

Dr. Pierson carried on his medical practice at the same time that he held the office of clerk of the county. In 1813, while attending a patient with typhus fever, he contracted the disease and died at age forty-six. His book on arithmetic was published after his death as “Rose’s Arithmetic,” without crediting Dr. Pierson as the author. It was widely used in schools.

Education was a foremost concern for all the physicians bearing the distinguished Elmer name. Dr. Jonathan Elmer, who was born in Bridgeton in 1745, and died there in 1817, was an apprentice to Dr. John Morgan of Philadelphia before receiving the Bachelor of Medicine degree at what is now the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. Three years later, in 1768, he received a degree of Doctor of Medicine, dedicating his thesis to Benjamin Franklin, who expressed his gratitude in a letter from London.

Dr. Elmer became an eminent practitioner in his home state and was elected fourteenth president of The Medical Society of New Jersey in 1787. His friend Dr. Benjamin Rush expressed the highest regard for Dr. Elmer’s professional ability. Turning to politics at the outbreak of the Revolution, Dr. Elmer had an equally distinguished public career as a member of the Continental Congress and judge of the Cumberland County courts.

Several of Dr. Elmer’s students established themselves in Cumberland, including Drs. Samuel Moore Shute and Ephraim Bateman. The latter, like Dr. Elmer, was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, and established several generations of Bateman medical men in the county.

Dr. Ephraim Bateman kept carefully detailed case records in his diary. One, concerning the death of a woman in childbirth, possibly from eclampsia, lacked only the brevity and conciseness of a later New Jersey physician, Dr. Arthur W. Bingham, who led a determined and successful program in the twentieth century to improve maternal and child health and mortality records. The latter even repeated Dr. Bateman's technique of concluding a case history with a query as to whether another treatment would have been better. Dr. Ephraim Bateman's son, Dr. B. Rush Bateman, was president of the state Society in 1866.

Dr. Moses Bateman was another noteworthy member of the family. He attended medical lectures at the University of Pennsylvania and began practice in Fairfield Township. He was twenty-eight when the War of 1812 opened, and served as assistant surgeon in the Army until his death on November 7, 1814.

Cumberland founders

December 8, 1818, at Bridgeton, was the time and place set for the organization of the Cumberland County Medical Society. The physicians named to found it were: Drs. William Elmer and Ebenezer Elmer, William B. Ewing, Ephraim Bateman, James B. Parvin, Enoch Fithian, Thomas Peck, George O. Trenchard and Ephraim Beach. Others present included Charles Clark, Lawrence VanHook, Edmund Sheppard, Daniel C. Pierson and Isaac H. Hampton.

A committee was appointed to frame bylaws, and the group met to approve them at Brewster's Hotel in Bridgeton in January, 1819. Officers for the first year were: Dr. Ebenezer Elmer, president; Dr. Ewing, vice president; Dr. Fithian, secretary, and Dr. William Elmer, Sr., treasurer.

When the state Society met on May 11, 1819, Drs. Bateman, Hampton and William Elmer were accepted as delegates from the Cumberland Society. There were not enough members present at the Cumberland meeting in 1830 to form a quorum, and one man wryly suggested that Dr. James B. Parvin, who was also a Methodist minister, should be invited to write a funeral sermon for the society! The society was inactive until 1849.

In 1867, the Cumberland Society prepared a petition to the legislature demanding the passage of sanitary laws for the state. The petition was backed by The Medical Society of New Jersey but disregarded by the legislature. One Cumberland writer remarked bitterly, "Sapient legislators quibble for days over the passage of bills that deserve hardly a moment's consideration, and refuse to enact sanitary laws which promise the health and prosperity of the entire people of this commonwealth."

Present-day Cumberland County historian, Dr. Frank J. T. Aitken holds the collection of historic items pertaining to the society, including the original books of minutes beginning in 1818, a Code of Ethics with fee bills published in 1851, and charters of reorganization. He regards with particular interest the experiments with mud poultices carried on by physicians in Cumberland County in the 1870's, possibly seeing in these a semblance of the twentieth century achievements in microbiology by Dr. Selman A. Waksman and his associates.⁸

Gloucester County Medical Society

Not far from Cumberland, on the same December 8, 1818, a number of physicians called a meeting at the Public House of Jesse Smith in Woodbury to organize the Gloucester County Medical Society. Those appointed by the state Society were: Drs. Dayton Lummis, Thomas Hendry, Bowman Hendry, Joseph Fithian, Lorenzo Fisler, Isaac Davis, Benjamin Erwin, Francis Hoover, William Hunt, Samuel Harris, Jeremiah J. Foster, Ezra Baker, and John C. Warner. Officers elected were: Dr. Lummis, president; Dr. Bowman Hendry, vice president and corresponding secretary; Dr. Foster, recording secretary and treasurer.

Gloucester County originally encompassed Camden and Atlantic also, and until the separation some years later, the physicians attending meetings of the "Old Gloucester" Society had great distances to travel. This was one of the reasons why the society made a number of false starts before it was permanently under way.

From 1818 until 1821, the group met twice a year. It resumed in March, 1830, when Dr. Charles Garrison was elected to membership, but meetings were soon suspended again. In 1846, a new charter was granted. Officers were: Drs. Joseph Fithian, president; Charles Garrison, vice president; Thomas J. Saunders, secretary; and Joseph C. Weatherby, treasurer.

The members immediately resolved that an essay on a medical subject should be read at each annual and semi-annual meeting. A \$1 fine was imposed if the member designated failed to fill the assignment.

A member also was to be appointed by the president to report on epidemics occurring in the county during the year, giving their nature, mortality, and treatment.

Martial hiatus

So many members were involved in the Civil War that no meetings were held between 1861 and 1866. In 1867, the society resumed. By this time Atlantic and Camden counties had been separated from Gloucester, and distances were not as great. With traveling time shortened, the Gloucester Society members were able to plan quarterly meetings.

Once more, from 1890 to 1893, meetings were suspended, but for the last time. Drs. Luther M. Halsey of Williamstown and George Evans Reading introduced new vigor and interest to the society. So revitalized was the group that by 1899 Dr. Halsey had been elected president of The Medical Society of New Jersey. He was one of six men from the county to hold this office. Dr. Louis K. Collins of Glassboro, held the post of first vice president in 1965. His forbear, Dr. Richard Collins, arrived from Ireland in 1766, and practiced in Port Republic. He was the first resident physician in Gloucester. Another local physician, Dr. James Stratton of Swedesboro, had been a member of The Medical Society of New Jersey as early as 1786 and was elected president in 1788. His son, Charles, became governor of New Jersey in 1796 and his grandson, Dr. Benjamin Harris Stratton of Mt. Holly, was president of the state Society in 1838.

Dr. Charles Garrison and his son, Dr. Joseph Fithian Garrison, and Dr. Luther F. Halsey and his son, Dr. Luther M. Halsey, were among the noteworthy two-generation practitioners and Gloucester Society members. Dr. Joseph Fithian was state president in 1849, Dr. John R. Sickler in 1859, and Dr. L. M. Halsey in 1899.

Drs. Benjamin P. Howell and Joseph F. Garrison represented Gloucester in another meeting of significance, when they helped to found the American Medical Association at Philadelphia in 1847.⁹

Bergen County Medical Society

Bergen was the fifth county to organize a society in 1818, although one Bergen man, Dr. Joseph Sackett, Jr., had been among the founders of The Medical Society of New Jersey. The first meeting in Hackensack, on December 14, 1818, named eleven doctors to form the society. They were: Drs. David Mervin, Josiah Hornblower, Sr., and Jr., Elijah Rosencrantz, Henry Kipp, Cornelius I. Blauvelt, James L. Baldwin, Garret Harnenbeck, William W. Colfax, Isaac V. Foreleigh and Garret Banta.

While medicine had long been a family profession, with son following father, and wives and daughters giving valuable assistance and making notable sacrifices, Dr. Banta's wife probably was the first in Bergen County to serve as nurse and medical assistant, accompanying her husband on his calls.

Hornblower was a famous name in the early history of the county and state. Joseph C. Hornblower was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. His brother, Josiah, Sr., served as a naval surgeon in the War of 1812. He began his practice in Bergen, where he earned the title of "ol' travelin' Doc." He used boat, horse, wagon and feet to cover all of that county, most of Hudson, portions of Rockland County in New York and Staten Island.

Dr. Hornblower died in 1848 at the age of eighty-one, leaving four descendants who practiced in Bergen and Hudson Counties.

Dr. Abram Hopper, who established himself in Hackensack in 1818 and was the first of several generations of medical men, stretched his rounds to two- and three-day trips in that sparsely settled, near-wilderness country. Like Dr. Banta, who also traveled widely, Dr. Hopper accepted only grain for the horses and a hot meal for himself as compensation for the extra distance.

A generation later, in 1839, Dr. Thomas Dunn English was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and began his practice atop the Palisades in Fort Lee. Restless and of an inquiring mind, he took up the study of law and for a few years was said to have performed operations and argued cases in the same day. Best remembered for the sentimental ballad beginning, "Don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?," he was also an author and poet, an orator of wit and charm, justice of the peace, Bergen Assemblyman, New Jersey representative in congress, and — thanks to his Indian grandmother, an Indian chief.

In the early 1800's, the presence of unfriendly Indians — persisting longer in Bergen than elsewhere in New Jersey — the sparse settlements and the difficulties of travel, delayed any continuing district medical society for many years.

In 1836, a new attempt at organization was made by Drs. John M. Cornelison, C. B. and Peter H. Zabriskie, John F. Ellis, Jr., R. M. Stevenson, I. Banks Aycrigg and Robert Smythoff. However, these men met only once. Finally, in 1854, a new group convened and successfully organized under Dr. William H. Day, president, and Dr. Charles Hasbrouck, secretary. The latter served as president of the parent body in 1871.¹⁰

Cape May County Medical Society

Although slow to provide a living for medical men, Cape May County had enough practitioners in 1819 to petition for a charter. State President Dr. Lewis Condict set February 1, 1820 for the meeting date at the Court House in Middle Township and appointed as founders Drs. John Dickinson, Robert C. Schenck, John Ludlam Smith, and Philip Ford. A founders' meeting was again set for February, 1821, but delegates rarely attended the meetings afterwards, and a permanently functioning county group was not established until 1883.

Long before a society was thought of, Richard Smith migrated from Egg Harbor to Cape May, with his license to practice "Chirurgery and Physig" issued in 1705 by New Jersey's Lieutenant Governor Ingoldesby. Smith may have been present in the winter of 1713-14 when forty or fifty of the fewer than 300 Cape May inhabitants died of a disease that "came on with pain in the side, breast, and sometimes in the back, navel, tooth, eye, hand, feet, legs or ear." In 1927, Dr. Eugene Way of Dennisville, studying the 1857 history of Cape May written by physician and legislator Dr. Maurice Beesley, diagnosed the epidemic as influenza.

Dr. William Hamilton was another early physician in Cape May. At his death in 1743, he left an estate valued at over £32. It included a broadcloth coat, double-breasted vest, two pairs of leather breeches, a blue coat, an old red coat, thirteen pairs of gloves, an old wig, small papers containing pills, raisins, powders, a box of small vials — some empty and others containing waters, spirits, salts, etc. The medicines were estimated to be worth about £2/10, though the appraisers admitted they knew nothing of such values. Also listed in the doctor's estate were an amputating knife and saw, two saw plates, other surgical instruments and a case of lancets.

Drs. James Flood and Benjamin Stites, Jr., grandson of an English doctor, were early medical men who may have been born in the county. Dr. Flood was one of two persons appointed to purchase clothing for the Revolutionary soldiers. He also was called upon as early as 1731 to witness wills drawn in the area.

Dr. Frederick Otto was the son of Bodo Otto, one of the family of four doctors from Germany, who served with the Continentals in the Revolution. About 1774, Frederick Otto located in lower Cape May where he died before the war was over.

Dr. Dickinson, one of the founders, located near Cape May Court House in 1786 after serving as a surgeon's mate on Navy vessels. He had previously lived on the banks of the Delaware River near Red Bank, Gloucester County, where he had converted part of his home into a hospital.

Another founder, Dr. Schenck, born in Freehold, was practicing medicine in Cape May in 1802 and died there in 1833. Dr. Smith was born in Cape

May and studied medicine both in Philadelphia and New York. He served in the War of 1812, then began practice in Cape May County. He died in 1824 at the age of thirty-four.

The fourth founder of the Cape May Society, Dr. Ford, had been born in England in 1768. He married a Cape May girl of *Mayflower* heritage, and practiced in the vicinity of Cape May Court House. His death in 1820 doubtless contributed to the delay in founding the county society.¹¹

Hunterdon County Medical Society

New Jersey had only thirteen counties in the early 1800's when the district medical societies were being formed. One of these was Hunterdon, which New Jersey historian John T. Cunningham has described as the county where East Jersey and West Jersey joined hands. When the county was carved from Burlington in 1713, it included most of what is now Mercer, Morris, Sussex, and Warren Counties. The last three established separate identities in 1738, but another century passed before Hunterdon and Mercer were divided. Consequently, the Hunterdon County Medical Society had Trenton residents among its charter members.

About 1870, Drs. John Blane, Samuel Lilly and H. B. Nightingale prepared a notable medical history of Hunterdon County which was printed in the *Transactions of The Medical Society of New Jersey*, 1872.

From this work it is learned that two of the earliest practitioners were bound together by an anecdote. One was Dr. George Andrew Viesselius, who lived at Three Bridges and died about 1774. He was commonly known as "the red cheek doctor" because of a birthmark. He was born and educated in Holland or Germany and in New Jersey confined himself to treating ulcers and other ailments which might respond to external applications. He was known for his waxed cerecloth — used for wrapping a dead body — his black salves, washes and poultices.

At this time, Dr. Oliver Barnet, who practiced near New Germantown, was visited by a patient with a sore gum. The man said his neighbors told him he had cancer. Dr. Barnet told him it was only a gum-boil and would be well in a short time. When the patient reported this, his neighbors were convinced the young medical man did not know his business, they recommended consulting "the red cheek doctor." The latter examined the patient, acknowledged he had a bad mouth but promised to cure it. He made a prescription, charged a guinea, and sent the patient away relieved. He also remarked that Dr. Barnet was a fool.

Dr. Barnet, hearing of this, adopted the contemporary method of settling disputes and vowed to horsewhip his detractor. When they met, Dr. Viesselius acknowledged that he had said Barnet was a fool but explained, "You told the man he had a gum-boil and you got nothing for your services. *He* told me he had a cancer. I told him I could cure his mouth, and I got a guinea for it. You were a fool for not taking the guinea."

After Dr. Viesselius' death in 1767, patients still applied for his ointments and plasters. His widow, with the assistance of a bound boy, Jacob Tidd, continued to prepare and sell these. Tidd later established himself in practice and assumed the title of doctor, without benefit of further education. Probably no other pretender was more distressing to regular practitioners, who

frequently reported receiving his patients after their diseases had become incurable.

Half a century later, in May, 1821, The Medical Society of New Jersey appointed thirteen physicians to organize a district society in Hunterdon. They were: Drs. Nicholas Belleville, John McKelway, James T. Clarke, John H. Phillips, William Johnson, Henry B. Poole, William P. Clark, John Bowne, William Geary, Henry S. Harris, John A. Hendry, Henry H. Schenck and Edmund Porter.

The meeting was held in Flemington on June 12, 1821. It admitted as new members Drs. John Sloan, John Lilly, Oliver W. Ogden, William Barnet (a nephew of Dr. Oliver Barnet), Isaac Ogden and Henry Holcombe.

Officers were: Drs. Belleville, president; Dr. Johnson, vice president; Dr. Poole, secretary; Dr. Bowne, treasurer.

Dr. Belleville (1753-1831) was an aristocrat. Born and educated in France, he came to America with the famous Count Casimir Pulaski to participate in the Revolutionary War. Dr. Belleville remained as a resident of Trenton and an associate of the most distinguished persons in the newly-founded republic. He had a colorful personality; surviving anecdotes document his practical wisdom and droll humor. He enjoyed the friendship of General Washington, Alexander Hamilton and the Marquis de Lafayette, and was personal physician to Joseph Bonaparte, the older brother of Napoleon, who fled to America in 1815 and for twenty years made his home at Bordentown, N.J.

Economic conditions were poor at the time that the Hunterdon Society was founded, and many physicians found it impossible to make a living solely from the practice of medicine. This, plus the great distances they had to travel on horseback to attend meetings, probably accounted for the society's failure to continue. A reorganization attempt in 1836 floundered, but in 1846, with a third charter from the parent Society, the Hunterdon Society became a permanently functioning body. It took into membership doctors with such familiar names as Larison, Ogden, Holcomb, Schenck, Coryell, Case, Honeyman, Duryea, Southard, Davidson, Lilly, Hunt, Race, Creveling, Creamer, Studdiford, Riley, Todd, Sproul, Young, and Abel.

The longhand minutes from this time forward are carefully preserved by Dr. John Barclay Fuhrmann, who succeeds his father, Dr. Barclay S. Fuhrmann, as secretary and historian for the Hunterdon County Society.¹²

Warren County Medical Society

Before the designation of a separate Warren County in 1824, medical men in the area had acknowledged the particular competence of midwife "Aunt Peggy" Warne. In the Revolutionary War years, she rode horseback on her missions, through snow and rain, day or night, and many women owed their lives to this faithful, skillful woman. While all practitioners look forward to watching the babies they deliver grow to healthy adults, legend relates that there was one baby the entire population of Warren County watched. She was Catharine Learch, motherless since birth and spoon-fed by her father. In an era when prizes went to the farmer with the fattest sow, biggest pumpkin and tallest corn, Cathy was her father's pride — finally topping the scales at 764 pounds. Her husband — a member of the Schooley family — was

proud of her too and permitted her to tour the country as the fat lady in traveling shows.

As Warren gained the dignity of a separate entity, local practitioners were ready for a separate local medical society. On November 8, 1825, the state Society named as Warren organizers Drs. Jabez Gwinnup, W. P. Clark, George Green, S. C. Cook, Stewart Kennedy, J. P. B. Sloan, Thomas P. Stewart, David P. Hunt, Gideon Leeds and David Green.

They met on February 26, 1826, at the home of John P. Ribble in Washington (then Mansfield) and elected Dr. Gwinnup, president; Dr. John Ball, vice president; Dr. Kennedy, secretary, and Dr. Leeds, treasurer. Dr. George Green and Dr. Sloan formed a committee on constitution and bylaws. Two months later, on April 25, they met in Belvidere, where they held every annual meeting until 1889.

Dr. Gwinnup was nearly sixty when he took office as president. His black broadcloth suit with long coat and ruffled shirt sheathed a portly and imposing figure. His blue eyes, smiling countenance and firm composure brought immediate comfort to patients. His well-worn book of *Thomas' Practice* and personal scrapbook full of practical recipes and items pertaining to the medical profession indicated an alert mind, open to new knowledge. In addition to his medical practice, he served as a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, built his own residence, and fathered ten children.

Dr. Gwinnup was only four when his father died — shot as he returned from delivering hats for Washington's Army at Valley Forge. His mother apprenticed him to Dr. Jabez Campfield of Morristown, and, two months short of twenty-one, Gwinnup was examined and awarded a medical license signed by Dr. Francis Bowes Sayre and two justices of the Supreme Court. Equipped with a horse, an old pair of saddlebags filled with medicines, and a *Bell's Surgery*, he began practice. Within a few years, Dr. Gwinnup was so respected and influential that he was able to enforce his dictum that all physicians in the area be properly licensed or desist from practice.

Charges were always discussed by members of a new society, and the Warren County Medical Society was no exception. The men also enjoyed the opportunity for professional exchanges and mutual instruction. They were interested, too, in the examination of candidates for license. Part of the \$15 fee charged the applicant went to the parent Society, but the remainder belonged to the county group and helped its delegates meet their expenses to the annual meeting of the state Society.

In 1890, a local committee of Drs. John S. Cook of Hackettstown, Philip F. Hulshizer of Stewartsville, John H. Griffith of Phillipsburg, William H. McGee of Belvidere, and John C. Johnson of Blairstown completed a medical history of Warren County. They regarded the annual journey to the state meeting as a highlight of the early years. "The relaxation from practice," one wrote, "an opportunity to display a fine team of horses, and the obligation to bring home a report of the proceedings of the state Society — and the fact that expenses were partly paid from funds brought back with them — made an inducement for the trip which was rarely omitted."

A less pleasant obligation was the prosecution of irregular practitioners. Every member also was called upon to report any dishonorable conduct on the part of another member. However, as a safeguard against pettiness,

there was a counter provision that a member preferring charges against another and failing to sustain them would be liable for censure and possible expulsion from the society.

Since surgical instruments were costly and were needed only occasionally, the Warren Society in 1837 appropriated \$100 from the treasury and assessed each member \$3 so that three cases of instruments could be bought and shared by all. Later the society paid \$50 for a "Jarvis Adjuster." This probably was another name for the snare invented by Dr. William Chapman Jarvis, the American laryngologist. The instrument was designed to carry a wire loop and tighten it to remove tonsils, polyps, and small growths having a narrow base.

Discussion and exchange of practical ideas regularly followed the reading of papers on such varied topics as "The Non-Contagious Nature of Typhus Icterodes, with Remarks on the Cause of Yellow Fever," "Medical Ethics," and "Stricture of the Rectum."¹³

Burlington County Medical Society

A horse race between Prince Lucien Murat, nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, and Dr. Ashbel Page of Columbus (then Black Horse), is credited with giving impetus to the formation of the Burlington County Medical Society.

In 1818, the prince was living at Point Breeze on the outskirts of Bordentown with his uncle, Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon and exiled king of Spain. Prince Murat kept several racing horses and loved to challenge others to race. Dr. Page accepted a challenge and agreed to a race through the streets of Columbus on a date well advertised in advance.

Crowds turned out and saw the prince win. When he demanded the agreed-upon prize of one of the doctor's racers, he was refused. The doctor claimed foul play and refused to give up his steed. The prince then shouted he would not pay the doctor's bill for professional services.

Some of the spectators must have smiled at that, knowing the prince was often in arrears on his gambling and drinking debts. Nevertheless, the doctor brought suit, but the evidence at the trial was disregarded when it was found that the doctor, although he had passed the examination and received the license, had failed to comply with the law requiring him to file his certificate in the office of the Chief Justice of the State of New Jersey.

The outcome of the trial startled other practitioners. They found that only two — Drs. Nathan W. Coles of Burlington and John L. Stratton of Mount Holly — were authorized medical licentiates in the county.

Particularly shaken were three young men, Drs. Charles Ellis of Burlington, Benjamin H. Stratton of Mount Holly and John C. Davis of Pemberton. Fresh from the halls of the University of Pennsylvania, with diplomas in hand, they hurried to Freehold to present themselves to the censors for examination. All three passed and were certified and legally registered.

These three and the two older practitioners constituted the legal number for a district medical society. Dr. Jonathan J. Spencer of Moorestown appeared as their accredited representative before the state Society, and the five were authorized to hold an organization meeting on May 19, 1829, at the Burlington County Court House in Mount Holly.

Dr. Coles was elected president; Dr. Stratton, secretary, and Dr. Ellis, treasurer. A fee of \$2 was paid by each member upon joining and \$1 a year was set as dues.

At the semi-annual meeting of the parent Society in November, 1829, Drs. J. L. Stratton and Charles Ellis were seated as Burlington delegates.

Quarterly meetings were held in Burlington County from that time on, and in June, 1879, when the semi-centennial celebration was held at the Burlington City Hall, one charter member, Dr. Ellis, was alive and present.

Over the years, many Burlington County physicians would contribute to the prestige of their local and state Societies and to spheres beyond the medical profession. One such individual was Dr. Joseph Wright Taylor (1810-80), a physician-philanthropist of Burlington, who gave the land, first building and endowment to found Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania in 1880. Like other members of the Religious Society of Friends, he was convinced that intelligent women deserved an education as rigorous and stimulating as that offered to men.

Dr. Taylor himself was a medical graduate of the University of Pennsylvania in 1830—almost twenty years before the first woman in America was granted a degree of medicine. A lifelong bachelor, the Burlington man was a supporter of Abolition, Temperance and peace movements. His name is recalled by Taylor Hall on the Bryn Mawr College campus. He also served as a Manager of nearby Haverford College from 1854 until his death.

The Medical Society of New Jersey had made a strong comeback after its decade of inactivity. With the aid of the component county societies, and additional ones formed in the ensuing years, it was ready to cope with new challenges. Among these would be medicines of spurious quality and medical organizations beyond the boundaries of New Jersey.¹⁴