

[Pennsylvania Hospital Historic Collections](#)

Blog Post published by Joseph-James Ahern on Friday, March 27, 2015

By Stacey C. Peeples, Curator - Lead Archivist

The Pennsylvania Hospital, the nation's first chartered hospital, was founded by Dr. Thomas Bond and Benjamin Franklin, in 1751. It was the first institution in colonial America organized exclusively for the treatment and care of the sick poor and mentally ill. The Pennsylvania Hospital became a primary force in shaping the attitude of colonial Americans toward persons with emotional and psychological disorders, as well as advancing the practice of clinical medicine through Dr. Bond's lectures to medical students at the hospital.

The Pennsylvania Hospital Historic Collections documents the history of the Pennsylvania Hospital from 1751 to the present. Non-denominational, but heavily influenced by Quaker physicians and Board members, the hospital kept copious records of its dealings, including Board of Manager Meeting Minutes, patient ledger books, financial records and other administrative records.

The Archives of the Pennsylvania Hospital, now amassing more than 2600 linear feet of records, have been gathered for over 260 years. Half of the Archives collection consists of administration and financial records, patient files, photographs and other visual materials, as well as the affiliates absorbed by Pennsylvania Hospital such as the Philadelphia Dispensary, the Preston Retreat, the Southern Dispensary, the Philadelphia Lying-In Charity, the Maternity Hospital, the Nurse Charity, and the Humane Society; the remaining half consists of the artifacts and the records of the Institute of Pennsylvania Hospital (1841-1997).

Each year the Historic Collections handles requests from internal and external patrons; these queries cover basic inquiries about services (hours, making appointments, general history of the founding) to more detailed requests for historical research (genealogy, image selection, specific disease inquiries). The Archives also welcomes researchers who conducted research on-site. Researchers request manuscript material and rare books, as well as access to our fine art collection. In recent years we have welcomed many community members researching projects especially related to African-American history in Philadelphia.

In addition to our manuscript collection, the Pennsylvania Hospital is home to the oldest medical library in the nation. The library's origins trace to a gift from Dr. John Fothergill, a London physician and friend of Franklin and Bond. In 1762, Dr. William Shippen, Jr. presented the Hospital, on behalf of Dr. Fothergill, a book--William Lewis' *Materia Medica*, 17 anatomical drawings (16 attributed to Jan van Rymsdyk) and three anatomical plaster casts for the enrichment of the students of physic (apprentices) at the Hospital. Today the library houses approximately 13,000 volumes, many of which are found in only a handful of institutions in the world. Acquired books focused on anatomy, botany, natural history, obstetrics and mental illness, and the holdings include such classics as the works of Vesalius, Linnaeus, and Catesby's *Natural History of Carolina*. The Hospital's collection of fine art includes paintings, portraits, engravings, and sculpture; several works are by significant artists, such as Thomas Sully, Benjamin West and Thomas Eakins.

To contact the Pennsylvania Hospital Historic Collections, call 215-829-5434 or email stacey.peeples@uphs.upenn.edu Research by appointment only. Website: <http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/paharc/>

For a Guided Tour of the Historic Pine Building, please contact 215-829-3370 M-F from 9am to 4pm. Self-Guided Tours are available to parties of 1-5 persons, M-F from 9am to 4pm; self-guided walking tour brochures are available in the Pennsylvania Hospital Gift Shop for a suggested \$5 donation.

Posted in:

[Pennsylvania Repositories](#)