

23. Pennsylvania A Pioneer

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Pennsylvania--A Pioneer

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The year 1942 witnesses the accomplishment of fifty years of organized effort against tuberculosis in Pennsylvania. Much that our generation possesses in the way of resources designed to wage war against the ancient plague had its genesis in the Keystone State. One may go further and localize some of our beginnings in "the venerable city of Philadelphia. Here were not only the cradle of American liberty and the seat of the first medical school in the land, but also the birthplace of organized opposition to the ravages of consumption.

Prior to fifty years ago, Pennsylvania shared the common lot and took tuberculosis as a matter of course. Koch's discovery of the tubercle bacillus had been known for ten years, yet impressive health measures to crystalize the import of his discovery had yet to appear. Practically nothing had been done by any agency, public or private, to either prevent the disease or to effectively treat those who had become its victims. Hospital facilities were almost negligible and preventive measures were simply an absent quantity. Despite the fact that tuberculosis was by far the leading cause of death at that time, official health boards paid virtually no attention to the problem; anti-tuberculous legislation was a rarity and only an occasional physician manifested noticeable interest in its presence. What was true of Pennsylvania up to that time had been equally true throughout the nation, with the possible exception of two or three localized communities.

Out of this void there arose in Philadelphia in the year 1892 an organization whose basic principles and early activities had done much to point the way to a succeeding campaign against tuberculosis. In that year, a few physicians and forward-looking laymen, under the stimulation and guidance of the late Dr. Lawrence Flick of Philadelphia, organized the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis. This organization, which in 1920 changed its name to the Pennsylvania Tuberculosis Society and which also observed its fiftieth anniversary in Philadelphia in June of this year, immediately set about the task of educating the medical and lay public as to the known truths of tuberculosis. This involved the preparation of vast amounts of printed matter and addresses to medical societies and lay organizations. Every effort was made to stimulate proper control legislation and to encourage the development of hospital facilities for the care of the tuberculous sick.

The young organization struggled along for eighteen years before its financial support began to grow appreciably. Nevertheless, it accomplished much with the meager tools at its disposal during the interim. One of its greatest achievements was an indirect one. Taking precedent from the result of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania's initiative, similar organizations began to appear elsewhere in the United States and *Medical Director, Erie County Tuberculosis Hospital. throughout the civilized world. One of these was the National Tuberculosis Association, organized in 1904. Here, then, were the beginnings—and the accomplishments of these groups to date are too well known to need repetition here.

Pennsylvania was also a pioneer in the development of facilities required for the isolation and care of tuberculous patients. Again the name of Dr. Flick enters into the early picture, although his efforts were not

the very first. In 1869 a valuable piece of property including a substantial dwelling or two, was offered in Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, as a haven for those "afflicted with consumption." Legend has it that this novel idea was born of spite rather than charity and was intended to mar the tranquility of that staid, aristocratic and mid-Victorian suburb—mute evidence of the low regard held for tuberculosis at that time and the stigma placed on individuals suffering from the disease.

Whether this not too pretty tale is true, such an institution nevertheless actually developed on the premises, The Protestant Episcopal Mission of Philadelphia acquired the property and founded The Home for Consumptives some years later. This institution flourishes to this day and has in the years between offered sanctuary to thousands of hapless victims of tuberculosis.

Just prior to his successful contribution in the organization of the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, Dr. Flick succeeded in forming the Rush Hospital for Consumptives and Allied Diseases. This institution was opened in 1892. Two years later the Free Hospital for Poor consumptives was founded at White Haven, and again the hand of Dr. Flick, together with the collaboration of the Reverend Father Scully, was responsible. As an outgrowth of this valuable undertaking, Dr. Flick became associated with the industrialist, Henry Phipps. Together in 1903 they founded the Henry Phipps Institute from whence so much of scientific achievement has come these many years.

It is of interest to note here that this long flourishing institution has not only done remarkable work among the poor of Philadelphia, but has produced some of the most outstanding clinicians and teachers in the tuberculosis field in this state. Very high on the list among these was the late Dr. H. R. M. Landis whose biography and achievements appear elsewhere.

By this time it was apparent that the tuberculosis question burned most urgently in the homes of the poor. If a successful fight was ever to be waged against the disease, tax-supported institutions must be brought into the picture. The eminent champion and father of this cause was the late Secretary of State, Department of Health, Dr. Samuel G. Dixon. Largely through his efforts, the sanatorium known originally as South Mountain Camp Sanatorium, opened in 1902 at Mount Alto, became a state institution in 1907. This is now one of the largest sanatoria in the world. In 1912 the state opened Cresson State Sanatorium for Tuberculosis and two years later the Hamburg State Sanatorium. In 1938 a fourth sanatorium for the tuberculous was erected in the western end of the state at Butler. However, this institution has never been opened for that purpose despite waiting lists and a high residual tuberculous population throughout the state.

For many years a system of State Tuberculosis Clinics has thrived throughout the state and in 1939 state-controlled pneumothorax centers were established at strategic points. This work of inestimable value is under the able direction of Major General C. R. Reynolds, former Surgeon General of the United States Army.

Today, Pennsylvania has many county and local organizations actively engaged in the coordinated fight against tuberculosis. There are now some eighteen institutions devoting their more than 6000 adult beds to the treatment of tuberculosis. Some of the best known of these, besides the sanatoria mentioned above, are the Tuberculosis League Hospital of Pittsburgh, the Eagleville Sanatorium of Eagleville, Pa., and Devitts Camp at Allenwood, Pa., established by our former president, Dr. William Devitt. There are also included some excellent county institutions.

Regardless of her loner experience in developing organizations and institutions to combat tuberculosis, the set-up here as elsewhere is not perfect. There is yet much that can be done to refine and coordinate our several efforts. Into the picture has come as recently as 1941 the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American College of Chest Physicians. It is the writer's modest hope that this newly created group will help prove the faith of its predecessors in bringing about better and brighter days to the Commonwealth.