By Becky Filner, Head of Cataloging

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, medical schools offered academic prizes, frequently accompanied by a monetary award, for the best essays, examinations, and student notebooks. The New York Academy of Medicine’s Library holds several examples of prize-winning student medical notebooks, including John E. Stillwell’s *Report of Prof. Thomas’ Gynecological Clinics, Session of ’73 and ’74*. This notebook is an ornate presentation copy, not the rough notes Stillwell would have taken during the clinics. Written in a neat, legible hand, it also includes a calligraphic title page and twenty-nine watercolor illustrations. The notebook is bound in full leather with blind-stamped fleurs-de-lis and shamrocks on the cover and spine. The notes are from a series of clinics offered during the 1873-1874 school year by Theodore Gaillard Thomas, a professor of gynecology at New York’s College of Physicians and Surgeons and author of *A Practical Treatise on the Diseases of Women*. 

Stillwell’s notes, like Thomas’s lectures, are organized into a series of case studies. In the case study shown below, a woman named Annie Coyle reports that “her friends noticed her abdomen increasing in size” and her “menses … are ‘larger’ and … come twice as often as they ought.” When she had an examination at the dispensary, the examiner “pronounced her pregnant”; she
came to Dr. Thomas for an examination because she was “unwilling to rest under such unjust suspicions.”

Stillwell’s carefully transcribed lecture notes and a watercolor showing a woman with an ovarian tumor, from Stillwell’s autograph manuscript, Report of Prof. Thomas’ Gynecological Clinics, 1873-1874.

Dr. Thomas notes that he found an abdominal tumor and gives details on how he determined that it is a “fluid tumor” rather than one “that is filled with air or that is solid.” He rules out pregnancy because he cannot feel any movement when he places his hands on her abdomen and her mammary glands are not enlarged. His conclusion is that she has an ovarian cyst and requires an ovariotomy to remove it. Stillwell’s account of the clinic is accompanied by a watercolor of a female figure with an enlarged abdomen labeled, “Ovarian Tumor.” Other clinics in the notebook cover problems of the uterus and cervix, tumors, peritonitis, fibroids, complications during and after pregnancy, menopause, dementia, and sterility. There is even an account (with an illustration) of a woman who has two vaginas.

Watercolor by John E. Stillwell of a retroflexed uterus, from his Report of Prof. Thomas’ Gynecological Clinics, 1873-1874.

Student medical notebooks were usually submitted anonymously to ensure that the judging would not be biased. In this case, we know that Stillwell submitted this prize-winning notebook (even though the notebook does not contain his name) because the Library acquired the notebook along with the prize itself, a wooden case of gynecological instruments with a plaque that reads, “A Prize Awarded for the best Gynecological Report of 1874 in the College of Physicians and Surgeons N.Y. by Prof. T. Gaillard Thomas to J.E. Stillwell.”[2]
A plaque on the wooden case indicates that Stillwell received this prize from Prof. Thomas for the “best Gynecological Report of 1874 in the College of Physicians and Surgeons.”

Stillwell’s prize consisted of a full set of gynecological instruments stored in a sturdy wooden box lined with purple velvet. The instruments were made by G. Tiemann & Co., Manufacturers of Surgical Instruments, 67 Chatham St., N.Y.

The tools include all the necessary implements for a gynecology practice in the 1870s. Thomas describes many of the tools in his *A Practical Treatise on the Diseases of Women* (which was a required textbook for medical students at the College of Physicians and Surgeons around this time). Shown below are drawings of several of the tools, including “Buttle’s spear-pointed scarificator,” a “hard rubber cylinder for dry-cupping the cervix uteri,” cauterizing irons, and tools for sutures, and descriptions of how they were used.\[3\]

Taken from T. Gaillard Thomas’s *A Practical Treatise on the Diseases of Women, 2nd ed.*, these drawings show obstetrical tools and give brief descriptions of how they were used.

Taken together, John E. Stillwell’s prize notebook and the handsome case of obstetrical tools that he won for his efforts provide an interesting window into both 19th-century medical school competitions and 19th-century obstetrics and gynecology.

**References**

\[1\] Contemporary handbooks from medical schools list the types of prizes awarded and the prize money attached to them. See, for example, the
section on “Prizes” under “School of Medicine” in Columbia College’s *Handbook of Information as to the Several Schools and Courses of Instruction 1886-1887*, p. 222-225.


12 Gifts for the Medical History Buff in Your Life

Posted on December 8, 2016 by nyamhistofmed

By Emily Miranker, Project Coordinator

Search no further for one-of-a-kind gifts for the medical history buff in your life: the Library’s [online shop](#) has you covered with over 3,000 products to choose among. Find a few of our favorites below. And take an extra 15% off as our holiday gift to you: use code ZAZZLETHANKS at check out.

1. This [sturdy tote bag](#) with a vintage advertisement for Tolu’s Rock and Rye cough tonic – good for what ails you. And groceries.

2. Our skeletal musicians give a whole new meaning to death metal. They might be from 1779; but our [headphones](#) are totally 21st century with a 20hz – 20,000hz range, built-in answer button and microphone to seamlessly take calls, and vegan leather padding.
3. This cheery orange fruits and leaves lunchbox includes a large sandwich container, two small containers and an ice pack. Dishwasher safe and BPA-free. Mangia!

4. Speaking of eating, food goes great with wine. These wine charms featuring skulls by 16th century Flemish anatomist Andreas Vesalius go great with glasses of wine.

5. Since red wine is good for your heart, admire this panel of an exquisite engraving of an anatomical heart by Scottish surgeon Charles Bell on your wall while you sip.
6. Keep your life in order with this desk organizer, the illustration of one of several poems gathered by Hugo Erichsen to "amuse the busy doctor in leisure hours."

7. This flask is from a New York-based surgical supply company’s turn of the century catalogue. Chemistry-lovers, you’re welcome.

9. Take ‘digital’ back to its roots of actual fingers with this artificial hand by French surgeon Ambroise Paré on your laptop case.
10. Just in case you feel naked without your actual stethoscope around your neck: this tie.

11. Once upon a time, your garden was your pharmacy. Peonies were used to treat spasms and cramps, gout, headaches, and fatigue. Caffeine is more popular for fatigue now...
12. Baby, it’s cold outside! Magnify your warmth by snuggling up with these microscopes.

Lastly, for the person who really and truly has everything already—or more likely just has no space—give the gift of membership to our Friends of the Rare Book Room, the people and programs that explore and support the books where all these remarkable images come from. All proceeds from the shop support the library’s collections’ preservation and public programming, and all Friends memberships are tax-deductible. Happy Holidays!
This post title is not strictly true. Or remotely true, actually. Bezoars are not found in rams’ eyes (to the relief of sheep everywhere, I’m sure). Maimonides, the 12th century Sephardic Jewish philosopher, reported an Eastern belief that bezoars could be found “in the eyes of rams,” though he then went on to note that “it is found in their [rams] gallbladder and this is true.” Bezoars are in fact found in goats’ stomachs and gastrointestinal tracts, as well as that of other animals such as sheep, cows and us humans.
A bezoar is a mass of undigested or inedible material found in the GI tract. Today, they are typically grouped into four categories: phytobezoars (made of vegetable or fruit fibers), lactobezoars (made of milk proteins), trichobezoars (made of hair and food particles) and pharmacobezoars (aggregates of various medications).[ii] Nowadays, if a bezoar doesn’t pass through the digestive system on its own they can be treated through medication to dissolve the mass, lavage therapy, and even surgery.

Once upon a time you may have wanted one in your system. I referenced this in Poisons, Pirates, and Professors in September for National Talk Like a Pirate Day. If you had been poisoned by an attacking pirate, you’d want to swallow a bezoar to cure yourself. Pierre Pomet, 17th century French druggist, wrote of bezoars curing all manner of things from smallpox to epilepsy, ending with its ability to work as an antidote to poison.[iii]

The word bezoar comes from the Arabic bazahr or badzehr, meaning counterpoison[v] and it is also mentioned in ancient Hebrew texts as bel zaard, “master” or “master of poison.”[v] Its power to counteract poison may come from a near eastern goat, the markhor. In Persian, mar is snake and khor means to eat. Snake-eater. So presumably immune to venom. Except that the markhor is an herbivore dining upon grasses and leaves. Mismarker alert! The name may have to do with their corkscrew-like horns (reminiscent of a winding snake) or that they are known to kill snakes on occasion.[vi]
Whatever the origins of the belief in curing poison, bezoars were popular in the Middle Ages and into the 17th century as antidotes. They were carried as charms, included as decor or attached to drinking and eating vessels to protect the diner, and tests were even designed to detect fakes—the selling of which was a punishable offense.[vii]

Another Frenchman represented in our collections’ holdings, barber surgeon Ambroise Paré, conducted an experiment to test the healing properties of a bezoar stone in the 1500s.[viii] A royal cook caught stealing silver had been sentenced to death. The cook was offered the alternative of being poisoned and then being given a bezoar under Paré’s supervision. If the cook survived...
the poisoning, he’d be spared. The cook lived only seven hours after the poison was administered, and Paré concluded the bezoar could not cure all poisons.

Still, the bezoar as antidote and mythical token lives on in the popular imagination. In J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* stories, Professor Snape quizzes Harry on where he’d find a bezoar in his first potions class and later when his friend Ron Weasley is poisoned with mead—intended for Professor Dumbledore—Harry quickly shoves a bezoar down Ron’s throat.

Join us for a free First Mondays lunchtime tour in our Drs. Barry and Bobbi Rare Book Reading Room for a chance to see our bezoar in person. It’s well worth a visit even if poison and goat guts aren’t high on your to-do list; the Rare Book Room is pretty much the real life Hogwarts.

References:


*Posted in* Collections, History of medicine | *Tagged* Ambroise Paré, Bezoars, First Mondays | *2 Replies*
November is National Diabetes Month. As one would assume, the New York Academy of Medicine Library has a large collection of books about the disease. As I perused the stacks, however, one title jumped out.

Shoot that Needle Straight by Robert Rantoul was published in 1947, and tells the story of Richard “Dick” Hubbard. The book opens with Dick ill, and home from boarding school. His symptoms are numerous and puzzling, including dry tongue, a constant craving for sweets, headaches, weakness, and a drastic increase in height. It’s not long before Dick is told he has Diabetes Mellitus, a diagnosis that elicits a “What the hell is that?” from Dick.

What follows is an engaging, often-times laugh-out-loud narrative of Dick’s new life with diabetes. Accompanying each chapter are charming illustrations by W. Joseph Carr.

After he is diagnosed, Dick and his mother travel to Boston, where he will have a two-week stay at a “diabetic home” known as the Carver Home, and see a diabetes specialist by the name of Dr. Anderson. At the Carver Home, Dick learns about diabetes and how he must control it through a home routine of proper diet and exercise. He also learns how to give himself insulin injections from his nurse, Miss Carver:

“Disinfect before you begin.
Press the needle firmly in.
Squeeze the plunger way down far.
Withdraw the needle and there you are.”

Dick’s new life as a diabetic is not without its hiccups. In one chapter, he goes to see a physician who claims he can cure diabetes, which he explains is the result of “a nervous condition brought on by destructive and fearful thinking processes, as a result of strain, over-worry or disasters.” Of course, the hope for a cure is too good to be true. The doctor in question turns out to be the head of an international narcotic ring, wanted in Argentina, Mexico and California for peddling an “iron tonic” full of morphine to unsuspecting diabetes patients.

In another chapter, Dick agrees to be a diabetes research participant at a lab. In a passage that would make any 21st century Institutional Review Board member cringe, the doctor explains to Dick what it means to be a “guinea-pig”:

“For this period you must be willing to do anything we ask, regardless of your feelings…. At certain times our requests will be difficult and will, no doubt, upset you emotionally, but you must realize the emotions cannot stand in the way of medical science, and content yourself with the thought that we look upon you as a medical specimen rather than a human being.”

Another highlight of the book is Dick’s (somewhat inexplicable) trip to Munich, Germany with his mother during Adolf Hitler’s reign. During the trip, Dick is hospitalized with painful sores. The situation is, understandably, quiet stressful for Dick, but he takes it in stride:

“Nazis. Heil Hitler! The Third Reich! You read ominous stories about them, you shuddered at what people said they intended to do to America and the world, but never in your wildest dreams did you imagine yourself sick and alone among more than one thousand of them in their homeland.
What a story to take home!”

These are just some of the situations Dick encounters as a diabetic. While highly comical, the book is also meant to educate and inform the diabetic patient. The American Journal of Digestive Diseases reviewed the book favorably in 1948, saying:

“This is a book that might safely be presented by a physician to a diabetic patient or by anyone to a friend suffering from the disease. ... The general dietary regimen and the insulin therapy are described in exemplary fashion.”[1]
Another review in *Science Education* also speaks highly of the book, which they mention "has been checked for accuracy by eminent doctors."[2]

While *Shoot that Needle Straight* may no longer be medically (or politically) correct, it is one of the gems of our collection.

References


Blood Transfusion: 350 Years

By Paul Theerman, Associate Director

Three hundred and fifty years ago, on December 17, 1666, the *Philosophical Transactions* published the first account of blood transfusion, in the form of a letter from physician Richard Lower to chemist Robert Boyle.[1] Lower’s experiments transfused blood from one dog to another. The article provided his methods, specifying where the arteries and veins were to be cut, how the quill was to be inserted that formed the blood’s conduit between animals, and many other details of the operation.

In addition to reporting on dog-to-dog transfusions, Lower also mentioned experiments between sheep, and interspecies transfusion between dogs and sheep, alternating donor ("emitter") and recipient. In this first communication on the subject, Lower also laid out a broad experimental program:

"Tis intended, that these tryals shall be prosecuted to the utmost variety the subject shall beare: As by exchanging the bloud of Old and Young, Sick and Healthy, Hot and Cold, Fierce and Fearful, Lame [i.e., Tame] and Wild Animals, &c."
The 1660s were the first heady days of the new Royal Society, whose motto, *Nullius in verba* (“nothing through words”), was the hallmark of the new “experimental philosophy.” And so these experiments have a bit of the quality of “ringing the changes”: try all kinds of animals, in all kinds of conditions, and see what happens!

Underlying the work, though, was the stronger sense of “blood as medicine.” Seventeenth-century physicians were well aware that too little blood led to death. But more, there was a general notion that blood and health were linked, a notion that came straight out of the humoral tradition. Sanguineous dispositions were healthy ones, in distinction to the melancholic ones that too much black bile created. A balance of humors, of course, was the best, but ruddy blood had an implicit edge.

In the same letter, then, Lower made these observations:

> It seems not irrational to guess afore-hand, that the exchange of bloud will not alter the nature or disposition of the Animals, upon which it shall be practiced . . . . The most probable use of this Experiment may be conjectured to be, that one Animal may live with the bloud of another; and consequently that those animals that want bloud, or have corrupt bloud, may be supplied from other with a sufficient quantity, and of such as is good . . . .

Blood transfusion could serve as a type of reverse blood-letting; for those patients with too little blood, more could be supplied, and especially “good” blood rather than “corrupt.” Animals would serve as the blood source without fear that people would take on animal natures.

Human experimentation followed quickly. Similar experiments had been going on in France, and in June 1667, physician Jean-Baptiste Denis undertook the first transfusions into a human. His account, translated and published in the *Philosophical Transactions*, was called “Touching a Late Cure of an Inveterate Phrensy, by the Transfusion of Blood.” 2 Calves’ blood served to restore to his right mind a man under the influence of a “phrensy.” In this case, the animal was chosen for “its mildness and freshness,” in order to temper the blood of the unfortunate—a different understanding from the English!
On November 23 of that same year, Lower and his colleague, physician Edmund King, transfused sheep's blood into a Mr. Arthur Coga, also of unsound mind. The transfusion seemed to have a good effect:

The Man after this operation, as well as in it, found himself very well, and hath given in his own Narrative under his own hand, enlarging more upon the benefit, he thinks, he hath received by it, than we think fit to own as yet.³

But transfusion as a therapy soon petered out. One case in France died. Though Coga survived, he did not fully recover, and he was soon drinking up the 20 shilling fee he received for undertaking the procedure. Blood transfusion was mocked and abandoned in England, and outlawed in France.⁴

Blood transfusion only revived in the middle of the 19th century, chiefly as a way of restoring blood volume. With the investigation of blood types before World War I, and Rhesus factors before World War II, transfusion became mobilized for war with the establishment of blood banks. In the last half of the 20th century, transfusion from banked blood became standard medical practice in surgeries of all kinds, and (using blood products) for hemophilia.

Suggested Reading:

When Mexican Physicians Take to the Streets and to Villages

Posted on November 10, 2016 by nyamhistofmed


In late November of 1964 more than two hundred residents and interns from one of Mexico City’s leading public hospitals threatened to strike because they were denied a Christmas bonus. Their unexpected response revealed the financially precarious situation of junior doctors and the worrisome state of many of the nation’s public hospitals. The subsequent walk-out launched ten months of unprecedented actions in hospitals, clinics, and, surprisingly, Mexico City streets.

As the movement gained momentum, physicians’ demands for living wages and better working conditions shifted to incorporate a call for social justice for peasants and blue-collar workers. The shift away from hospital-based labor demands alarmed an increasingly repressive regime that set out to discredit physicians through media manipulation, intimidation, and incarceration. By March 1965 many young physicians, once heralded as the future of the nation, were portrayed in the government-controlled media as traitors of the state.

Declassified material offers an extraordinary opportunity to learn —via decoded messages, transcribed wire-tapped conversations, and memos to the president— how the government sought to deal with unruly doctors. It is especially interesting to learn how the government used media —television and newspapers — to distort claims and dismiss doctors’ demands as the actions of a “greedy” profession. Especially revealing is, for example, how secret service agents infiltrated hospitals to gain first-hand knowledge of a movement that quickly became national in scope.

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References


Posted in Collections, History of medicine | Tagged blood transfusion, Richard Lower | 3 Replies
Throughout the multiple walk-outs, hospital emergency rooms remained opened but newspapers created a sense of growing dread among the population. In news stories doctors were often labeled “lazy,” “traitorous,” “murderous,” and, most often, as elites disconnected from the rest of society.

Days before the 1965 State of the Union address, President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz sent military personnel to oust doctors from key hospitals. In his address the president spent more than thirty minutes speaking about the irresponsible “homicidal actions” of striking physicians. In the aftermath of the movement, more than five hundred physicians lost their license to practice medicine (most were able to practice again in the next presidential administration) and for the following fifty years, until summer 2015, there were no national, doctor-led movements in Mexico.
Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo (People’s Revolutionary Movement) intent on destroying the government through violence. These doctors were, in turn, captured and together with other members of the guerrilla spent nearly a decade in Lecumberri prison for acts of treason.

The “medical” movement, as it came to be known, was really about two (often at odds) issues: the role of physicians in a rapidly changing society and the country’s need to provide proper healthcare to all working Mexicans, a right established in the 1917 Constitution. In fact young doctors’ reactions may be rooted not in 1960s urban discontent but, curiously, in experiences of city doctors in rural Mexico.

Starting in 1936, all Mexican medical students were required to spend time in remote, poor, and/or indigenous areas provided much-needed primary care. This mandatory social service was later written into the Mexican Constitution. For many city physicians their social service time was a transformative experience. For example, treating patients in extreme poverty while living with them as neighbors and facing similar hardships (such as lack of electricity or running water) sensitized many physicians to the complexity of providing care in Mexico. In addition, these doctors experienced, often for the first time, the deep socio-economic divisions in the country. It was young doctors most moved by their social service year who, oral histories reveal, were more likely to join a social movement.

Currently Mexico’s public healthcare system is going through dramatic shifts, and the 1965 movement is a reminder of the powerful and evolving role that physicians have played in transforming care in the country.

A Visit to the Drs. Barry and Bobbi Coller Rare Book Reading Room

Dr. Patrick Brunner, the author of today’s guest post, is Instructor in Clinical Investigation at The Rockefeller University.

On July 26 2016, a group of young physician-scientists from The Rockefeller University visited the Drs. Barry and Bobbi Coller Rare Book Reading Room at the New York Academy of Medicine. As part of the Clinical Scholars curriculum, led by Dr. Barry Coller and Dr. Sarah Schlesinger, these researchers regularly meet for educational tutorials, and the excursion to the Rare Book Room has clearly been one of the highlights of this past semester.

Arlene Shaner, the curator of this exceptional collection, presented seminal works to the group, and her deep insight and passion for the history of medicine made the excursion a unique experience. Ms. Shaner started the tour with the presentation of one of the most outstanding works of Western medicine – Andreas Vesalius’ opus magnum “De humani corporis fabrica libri septem” (On the fabric of the human body in seven books) from 1543. Ms. Shaner comprehensively and clearly outlined the historical context in which this book had been published, and fascinated her audience with a display of the book’s iconic woodprints. This artwork, which everyone in the room had seen in numerous reproductions, now laid open in its original form – showing the famous muscle man posing in front of an Italian landscape, and the skeleton, leaning on a spade, gazing towards the sky.
A letter, sent from Oxford, dated July 7th, 1909, had been incorporated into the book as an inscription. From this letter one can learn that Sir William Osler himself donated the book to the New York Academy of Medicine. Ms. Shaner clearly knows each and every inch of this version of Vesalius work, one of three copies that the New York Academy of Medicine holds.

Vesalius' *Fabrica* has undoubtedly been one of the most influential books on human anatomy, overthrowing the observations and influences of the Greek physician Galen, which had been uncontested by Western medical science for more than 1300 years. And it was not until 1628 that another seminal work, which had also been put on display for the evening, William Harvey's treatise “Exercitatio anatomica de motu cordis et sanguinis in animalibus” (On the motion of the heart and blood in animals), established that blood circulates in a closed system, and that the heart acts as a pump – a manuscript considered by many scholars to be the single most important publication in the history of physiology.

The visitors from The Rockefeller University were greatly impressed by the richness of this library – especially as they learned that all the books are available for review through the library’s archives, be it the “Anatomia hepatitis” (The anatomy of the liver) by Francis Glisson, or the first atlas of skin diseases by the dermatological founding father Ferdinand von Hebra.

Arlene Shaner also presented Bernhard Siegfried Albinus’ “Tabulae sceleti et musculorum corporis humani” (Tables of the skeleton and muscles of the human body), first published in Leiden in 1747, which not only depicts anatomical studies in a monumental fashion, but presents the models within elaborate and artful surroundings – overall, an impressive testimonial of its time.

The climax of the visit was the display of a very special gift donated to the New York Academy by Sir Alexander Fleming – a capsule containing a colony of Penicillium, taken from the original culture that produced one of the world’s first antibiotics for medical use. And it has only been about 70 years since this medication became available!

Seeing all these treasures that irreversibly changed the world, and learning about the stories behind them in the context of both medical and art history, was a unique, and almost sensual, learning experience for the visitors, and Ms. Shaner’s never-ending expertise helped everyone in the room to deeply dive into history.

Aldous Huxley once said: "The charm of history and its enigmatic lesson consist in the fact that, from age to age, nothing
changes and yet everything is completely different.” Understanding the challenges that these authors face during their life times, which may not have been quite so different from the ones that we face today, while, at the same time witnessing the dramatic changes that have been instigated by their works, was a true inspiration. The afternoon passed quickly, and everyone agreed that they wanted to come back and further explore this treasury in the middle of New York City.

Ninety Years and Counting

Posted on October 12, 2016 by nyamhistorymed

By Arlene Shaner, Historical Collections Librarian

On Saturday, October 15th tours of The New York Academy of Medicine’s building will again be part of Open House New York, the city’s annual celebration of architecture and design. This year’s event is a notable one for us because our building is ninety years old. On October 30, 1925, after sixteen years of fund-raising, searching for just the right location, and reviewing and approving plans drawn up by the architectural firm York & Sawyer, the trustees of the Academy laid the cornerstone for our present home. Slightly over a year later, on November 18, 1926, after an afternoon dedication ceremony, the building opened to the public. The election of Honorary Fellows and the delivery of the Wesley M. Carpenter Lecture, by Professor Michael I. Pupin of Columbia University, took place that evening.

The building received quite a bit of attention in the press when it opened. The December 1, 1926, issue of the Medical Journal and Record devoted more than twenty pages to descriptions of the opening ceremonies, including the texts of several of the speeches from the November 17th dinner at the Waldorf Astoria that preceded the formal dedication, Arthur Duel’s account of the history of the Academy’s several homes, and Mabel Webster Brown’s detailed exploration of many of its architectural features.¹

¹ Postcard showing entrance to The New York Academy of Medicine, n.d.
The building is a showcase of the Byzantine and Romanesque revival style popularized by York & Sawyer in collaboration with the interior design firm Barnet Phillips, whose other New York projects with the architects include the Central Savings Bank, the Bowery Savings Bank and the New York Athletic Club, all of which display similar design features. The Academy's new home contained nine floors of library stacks; the main library reading room, Woerishoffer Hall, with its large arched windows looking out to the north and west; the auditorium, Hosack Hall; reception rooms; office spaces; and meeting rooms for the Academy and several other organizations. A carved lunette featuring Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine, and his daughter, Hygeia, the goddess of health, fills the archway above the front entrance, flanked by portraits of Hippocrates and Galen. Carved Latin inscriptions, selected by a committee of Academy fellows, fill niches above the front door and some of the windows. Elaborately painted beamed ceilings, depicting animals and plants important to the history of medicine, grace the main lobby area and the third floor reading rooms. The bronze animals and plants inlaid in the marble floor of the entrance lobby, along with the carved figures in the auditorium, add whimsical touches that still attract the attention of visitors today.

Above, a squirrel and a mandrake adorn the floors of our lobby.

In 1928, Architectural Forum, one of the most prominent national architecture magazines, featured the building in its April Architectural Design issue, providing floor plans as well as multiple photographs of the interior and exterior spaces. Matlack Price, in his preliminary comments, complimented the architects on their ability to make the design seem "so new, so fresh, so
The Academy of Medicine’s new building is among the most interesting of recent buildings. Although the Academy expected its new building to provide sufficient space for at least twenty years of library growth, by 1930 the trustees were already exploring plans for an expansion. At the end of 1932 the addition that contains the rare book room suite and other office and study spaces rose above the auditorium on the northeast side.

While looking through the archives in preparation for this year’s tours, sets of postcards illustrating a number of the architectural features of the building came to light. We know that these cards could not have been made until after the spring of 1933, when the addition was completed because one of the cards shows the interior of the rare book room (below). The postcards, which are part of this post, show many of the elements of the building that are still visible today.

References


2https://archive.org/stream/SelectionsFromTheWorkOfBarnetPhillipsCompanyArchitecturalDecorators/BarnetPhillipsCompanyCca107588#page/n0/mode/2up


Cool Products for Curious Minds

Posted on October 5, 2016 by nyamhistorymed

Emily Miranker, Project Coordinator

Here at the Library our highest priority and our favorite thing to do are one and the same: share the collection. We’re constantly thinking up new ways to do this and we’re thrilled to announce the latest: we’ve launched an online shop with over 3,000 products featuring images from our collections. If you’ve ever been entranced by a gorgeous picture featured on the blog, something we’ve posted on our Instagram feed, or an item seen during an in-person visit to the library, our store is for you! Or if you need a truly unique treat for someone in your life who’s just impossible to find the perfect gift for; we’ve got you covered.

The items you’ll find in our shop range from accessories to home goods to fine art. The products mirror the diversity of our collections from medicine, food, and cookery, to New York City history, botany, and much more. And, best of all, the proceeds
from shop sales support preservation of the collections, outreach and programming.

This group of musicians come from an 18th century work by Jacques Gamelin – possibly my favorite memento mori in the collection.

As you browse the items, you'll find bibliographic and historical information about the featured image in the product description. And if you're not interested in a notebook per se, there'll be a link to see the image on other products.

The subjects of our images were frequently the inspiration for the products on which they feature. Even the most familiar picture gets some new life breathed into it as they take on new forms.

Below, we draw from a confectioner’s 1907 cookery manual, a tempting selection of pretzels and breads from Prague, and a detail of condiment bottles from Lyman Phillips’ helpful book for the solo gentleman A Bachelor’s Cupboard, and the best Benjamin Franklin look-a-like I’ve ever seen on a 1911 pamphlet from our Margaret Barclay Wilson cookery collection.
Apron from the Academy shop, using an image from Emil Braun’s 1903 Baker’s Book.

We’re also loving kitchen accessories from our Botanicals collection:
In case you’re starting to think about holiday cards or stocking stuffers for later this season, consider any of these:

Enjoy seeing our collection from these new angles. Don’t forget that we are open to readers by appointment four days a week, and for those just wanting to visit, we have lunchtime tours on the first Monday of the month.

We will be constantly adding new products to the store, if you’d like to see your favorite image on a product, feel free to get in touch and we will see what we can do!

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**Clove serving tray from the Academy shop, featuring an image from Robert Bentley’s *Medicinal Plants*, 1880.**

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**Explore the Academy Library Timeline**

Posted on September 27, 2016 by nyamhistorymed

By Robin Naughton, Head of Digital

The New York Academy of Medicine Library began in 1847 with the intention of serving the Academy fellows, but in 1878, after the collection had expanded to include over 6,000 volumes, Academy President Samuel Purple and the Council voted to open the Library to the public. It continues to serve both the Academy fellows and the general public, providing an unprecedented level of access to a private medical collection. Today, the Academy Library is one of the most significant historical libraries in the history of medicine and public health in the world.

The Academy Library’s history spans almost 170 years and a glimpse into this history is documented in this interactive timeline. While the timeline does not represent everything that has occurred in the Library, notable milestones can be seen here. The story starts with the founding of the Library on January 13, 1847, with a gift from Isaac Wood of Martyn Payne’s *Medical and Physiological Commentaries* and continues forward to the recent renovation and naming of the Drs. Barry and Bobbi Collier Rare Book Reading Room.
Timeline Highlights

Academy's First Permanent Home: In 1875, the Academy purchased and moved into its first permanent home at 12 west 31st Street. This image of the Academy's first building will take you back to a different time.

Academy's Current Home: In 1926, the Academy moved to its current location on 103rd Street and 5th Avenue. The architectural firm York & Sawyer designed the building. A 1932 expansion added three new floors on the northeast side of the original structure above the existing floors. Today, you can visit the Academy at this location and explore the historic building.
Cookery Collection: In 1929, Margaret Barclay Wilson gave the Academy her collection of books on food and cookery, which includes a 9th-century manuscript (*De re culinaria*) attributed to Apicius, and sometimes referred to as the oldest cookbook in the West.

George Washington’s Teeth: Yes, that’s right! In the spring of 1937, the descendants of John Greenwood gave the Academy the lower denture created by New York dentist John Greenwood for Washington in 1789. The denture is just one of the artifacts that the Library owns.

Honored Librarians: In 1974, the Academy honored Gertrude L. Annan and Janet Doe, long-time librarians for their contributions to the Library.

There are many more highlights in the timeline so [click through and enjoy](#).
The Academy Library timeline was created using Northwestern University’s Knight Lab open-source timeline tool called TimelineJS. The tool was released under the Mozilla Public License (MPL), making it possible for anyone to create timelines to embed and share publicly.

TimelineJS is an easy tool to create a timeline with just a few steps. Here are some things to keep in mind when creating a timeline:

**Content: Have content ready prior to creating**

It’s important to have content ready prior to creating the timeline. For the Academy Library timeline, there was already a text version of the timeline that could be used to create the interactive timeline. Together Arlene Shaner, Historical Collections Librarian and I edited, updated and added images to the timeline. Starting with some content allowed us to devote time to enhancing the timeline by finding and adding associated images.

**Media: Make media publicly available**

It is important that the media resources used in the timeline are publicly available. TimelineJS uses URLs to access and display the media files (images, videos, maps, Wikipedia entries, Twitter, etc.). Thus, items behind firewalls or logins will not be accessible to the public. Make sure to upload images to a publicly available server and use that URL for the timeline.

**Google Sheets: Add all content and links into spreadsheet and publish**

Google Sheets is the data source for the timeline and this means that all data for the timeline is managed in Google Sheets. Once the Google Sheets file is published, the URL is used by TimelineJS to create the timeline, link to the timeline and embed code for websites.

If you’re familiar with Google Sheets or have used any spreadsheet program, then you know the process of adding content to the spreadsheet. If you haven’t used any spreadsheet program before, think of Google Sheets as a table with multiple columns and rows where you’ll input data for the timeline.

To get started, the TimelineJS template and directions provide a good guide to the parameters of the timeline with each row representing a screen and each column a component of that screen. For example, the date structures are very flexible and the timeline can include a full date and time or just a year. Also, in the background column, adding a hex number for color can change the background color or including a link to image will show a background image.
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