

Library report for the Hartford Medical Society Historical Library

November 8, 2016

Librarian, Jenny Miglus

The library currently has 4 active volunteers. Mary Lou Wall comes twice a week for almost 3 hours each day to transcribe the handwritten minutes of the HMS. This is slow and painstaking work. Mary Lou refers to 3 dictionaries: a contemporary 19th century dictionary, a late 20th century medical dictionary and a current mainstream dictionary. The handwriting is often hard to decipher and spelling inconsistent. Mary Lou has gotten very engaged in the characters of the physicians as they come through in their notes as well as in the cases they present. She has already transcribed two full volumes and is working on the third.

Subjects Discussed
from the
Formation of the Society.

1846.	
Small Pox, Varioloid & Vaccination	Oct. 5
Rheumatism	" 19
Group	Nov. 2
Neuralgia	" 16
Ergot	Dec. 7
Ergot and the alkaloids	" 21
1847.	
Apoplexy	Jan. 4
Pneumonia	" 18
Haemorrhage	Feb. 1
Erysipelas	" 15
Mercurial Consultation	Mar. 1
Calomel	" 15
Haemorrhoids	April 19
Measles	May 3
Cholera Infantum	" 17
Phthisis Pulmonalis	June 21
Sun Stroke	July 19

Retired physician Richard Ratzan comes once a week to work on indexing [Early Medicine and Early Medical Men in Connecticut](#).

(Full citation) Russell, G. W. (1892). *Early Medicine and Early Medical Men In Connecticut. Rep. Proc. Conn. Med. SOC. Connecticut Medical Society, 148.*

This is a fascinating work, but without an index it is very hard to research any specific name. Dr. Ratzan has also gotten engaged in the stories of the physicians included in the book.

Miriam Neiman, a full-time librarian who is working on her archives certification is putting the final touches on the finding aid for the newly processed records of the Hartford Medical

Society. The records are all in archival boxes with appropriate labels. The finding aid will be online and will give context for the collection and an outline of its contents.

Surgeon Jim Menzoian comes for a full day on Tuesdays to work in the book lab. Thanks to his patience and skill, a great many volumes now have their spines attached and can be opened without difficulty. Also in book lab news, Jenny spent the week of October 24-28 in Morrow, Georgia at a workshop on repairing 19th century cloth bindings. She brought home improved book repair skills and techniques and some new tools as well. Jenny had the added pleasure of running into Dr. Mick Bedard at the airport as she was leaving. A small world indeed!

Three diaries in the HMS collection have gotten lots of attention recently. These were written by William Taylor of Barkhamsted, a farmer and teacher who kept the diaries between 1799 and 1830. Mr. Michael Day, who is a trustee of the Barkhamsted Historical Society, has visited the HMS library 5 times over the course of the summer and fall. The result of his researches is two feature articles in the latest edition of their newsletter: *Squire's Tavern Quarterly* (see below). As a result of these articles, a researcher who is a relative of William Taylor's came to the HMS library from New York City in September to do genealogical research.

Squire's Tavern Quarterly

BARKHAMSTED HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WWW.BARKHAMSTEDHISTORY.ORG

SEPTEMBER 2016

The William Taylor Diaries

by Michael Day

The story of the spotted fever epidemic of 1807-1808 is drawn primarily from entries in the diary of William Taylor, a Barkhamsted farmer. The diaries were recently discovered in the library of the Hartford Medical Society, now housed at UConn Health in Farmington. How they came to become part of that collection is unknown. While the books (there are three volumes covering the period from 1799 to 1830) are still being analyzed, much new knowledge regarding the early years of our community has already come

to light.

William Taylor was an educated man who in his early years spent his winters teaching in the local one room schoolhouses; from his notes we can now date several of our schools to a much earlier period than we once thought. We now know that there was a school near Goose Green as early as 1805, some thirty years earlier than was previously known. The center of town was not referred to as "The Hollow" as was previously thought, but as "Middle Hollow," which makes sense in that there was also a North Hollow and a South Hollow. We've learned that the "big schoolhouse in the Middle



Goose Green Schoolhouse.

Hollow," the predecessor of our restored Center School, was established prior to 1810 (not c. 1821 as

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The Spotted Fever Epidemic, 1807-1808

by Michael Day

In the late summer of 1807 a mysterious malady stalked the hills and valleys of Barkhamsted. People who had appeared quite healthy were suddenly cut down, sometimes dying within a matter of hours. The "disorder" struck without logic or warning, and seemed to spare neither young nor old. Death was all around.

One local resident who saw the terror firsthand and lived to tell about it was William Taylor, Jr. Taylor was a tough old soldier who had served throughout the Revolu-

tion. In September of 1807 he noted in his diary the losses he was seeing around him. *"1807 Sabbath day of Sept. 13th. This day before meeting the oldest child of Tod Tiffany who married Hannah Nelson was buried. It lived about 21 hours after it was taken. Monday, Sept. 14th: Today Hugh Gains aged 5 years was buried; he was the son of Enoch Gains, he lived 23 hours after he was taken. Tuesday Sept. 15th: Today Sophia Gains was buried. She lived about 6 hours after she was taken, aged 13 months. Friday Patty Gains was buried, aged 18 years. She did not live quite 3 days*

in Sub-Saharan Africa, but had somehow made its way to America. It appeared first in Medford, MA in 1806, and then, following established trade routes, migrated down into Connecticut, spreading quickly throughout the central area in the 1807/08 period.

The disease manifested itself in a number of different ways depending on the severity of the infection. Typically the victim would suddenly become tired, flushed and develop a severe headache. Chills, a sore throat and profuse sweating would follow. A red spotted rash would soon appear over the entire