Benjamin Rush & a Turning Point in Modern Medicine

Although Benjamin Franklin gets a lot of credit for his contributions to the sciences, he wasn’t the only Ben making a name for himself in the 1700s. Benjamin Rush made many contributions to the sciences, specifically medicine. Known as the “Father of American Psychiatry,” he helped found the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane and promoted the humane treatment of the mentally ill. He also created the Philadelphia Dispensary for the Medical Relief of the Poor in 1786, which was like an early “free clinic.” And he was brave – when many wealthy Philadelphians fled the Yellow Fever epidemic in the city, Rush stayed behind to help treat the poor. Benjamin Rush’s legacy is one of humane treatment of the ill, preventive medicine, and disease containment through inoculation. Research how his life’s work was a turning point in modern medicine in the collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Search Terms: Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane; Philadelphia Dispensary for the Medical Relief of the Poor; Dr. John Redman; College of New Jersey; College of Philadelphia; Moral Therapy

Recommended Collections:

Dreer collection
Collection#175

Rush family papers, 1748-1876
Collection#LCP134

James Hamilton papers
Collection#1612

*Extensive information on Benjamin Rush is available in the PC1 card catalog.*
Other Sources of Information:

College of Physicians of Philadelphia - The Historical Medical Library – 19 South 22nd Street, Philadelphia — www.collegeofphysicians.org/library/

Library Company of Philadelphia – 1314 Locust St., Philadelphia—
www.librarycompany.org

Pennsylvania Hospital’s Historic Library – 800 Spruce Street, Philadelphia—
www.upha.upenn.edu/paharc/collections/library.html

Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL) –
http://clir.pacscl.org/

University of Pennsylvania University Archives & Records Center – 3401 Market St., Philadelphia — www.archives.upenn.edu