Yellow Fever

The Yellow Fever epidemic of 1793 was an important event in the history of Philadelphia, particularly black Philadelphia, and in the history of medicine. Philadelphia, along with Charleston, suffered the first Yellow Fever outbreaks in the American Colonies in 1699. The city avoided an outbreak in 1747 by quarantining a ship from Barbados. Then, in 1793, after a 31-year absence, Yellow Fever hit Philadelphia and decimated 10% of the population. Home to the national capital, both local and federal officials, along with thousands of citizens, fled Philadelphia as the epidemic continued from summer into fall. Mayor Matthew Clarkson was left to manage the epidemic and was aided by citizens such as Stephen Girard, Benjamin Rush and leagues of African Americans.

Search Terms: Philadelphia Board of Health; Philadelphia Lazaretto Quarantine Station; Benjamin Rush; Mayor Matthew Clarkson; Stephen Girard; Absalom Jones; Richard Allen; Mathew Carey; Philadelphia’s College of Physicians

Recommended Collections:

Library Company of Philadelphia Benjamin Rush Manuscripts volume 35: Letters to Benjamin Rush on Yellow Fever

UPA/Ph RC 211. P5 P53 1848 ‘Alphabetical List of Persons Admitted to Bush Hill Hospital in Philadelphia, Sept. 11th to Nov. 25th, 1793 {Yellow Fever Victims}, taken from the ‘Minutes of the Proceedings of the Committee Appointed on the 14th of September, 1793, By the Citizens of Philad..with the Malignant Fever.’ (Philadelphia, 1848).

UPA/Ph 26A:1 Yellow Fever Deaths in Philadelphia


*The diary of Elizabeth Drinker, 1758-1807*
Collection #1760

*Extensive materials on Benjamin Rush, Stephen Girard and Mathew Carey are available by looking in the PC1 card catalog.*

**Other Sources of Information:**

Girard College - 2101 South College Ave., Philadelphia www.girardcollege.edu

*The Great Fever* at PBS – www.pbs.org

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