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02 Miscellaneous Notes on the History of Health Conditions in Chester County

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Miscellaneous Notes on the History of Health Conditions in Chester County

This file contains assorted facts from Chester County history collected by students in the HIS480 "Computer methods of historical research" at West Chester University. Each fact consists of specific information, a reference note to its source, and a date. The "facts" are organized in chronological order.

This file has not been completely proofread, nor have the sources been verified, so use this material with caution. It is as accurate as human effort and a vigilant college professor can make it, but it is not perfect.

Data collected by Ken McFadden, Vince Civiletti, Chris Waychunas, Nancy Hershey Bob Troutman, Bob Gregory, John Morrison, Scott Harre, Dan Cleary, and Jim Jones (Spring 1996). Last edited by Scott Harre (April 29, 1996); Jim Jones (May 15, 2004).

1884

Source: Shirley Macauley, "W. Chester's squares failed as rectangles" in *Daily Local News* (November 13, 1972), 84. NOTE: Centennial issue nø1 of 5 by the *Daily Local News*

In 1884, the West Chester Women's Christian Temperance Union was founded, the first such group in Chesco. They met at the First Baptist Church. Sixty women attended the first annual meeting.

1887/06/30

Source: *Daily Local News*

"Five Hungarians are found lying dead in Puddlers' Row, three men, a woman, and a child, from some disease of an epidemic form. If it be true the wonder will not be great, for certainly that is a very filthy spot, and the Hungarians are very filthy people."

1887/07/01

Source: *Daily Local News*

"The report of the death of five Hungarians in Puddlers' Row, although widely circulated and believed, was incorrect. There is something wrong down there though, scruvy (sp), I am told, and people are giving that section a wide berth. An employee of the Phoenixville Iron Works, whose business frequently takes him to the "Row," told me yesterday that he saw in the army and elsewhere a good deal of filth, but the Huns here beat everything in that direction. 'Dirt and beer,' he said, "they live upon. Why after a wedding down there I saw two wagon loads of empty beer kegs hauled away."

1888/01/04

Source: *Daily Local News* (January 4, 1888)

Martha Malinda Gincley, daughter of Charles and Anna Gincley, died at age 2 years and 10 months.

1888/07

Source: *Daily Local News* (July 1888), cited in Keith Gitterman, "West Chester Through Time" (West Chester University: unpublished paper, December 30, 1982), in Chester County Historical Society.

"Goose Creek is one of the filthiest streams that flow near West Chester. Nearly all the sewage of the town flows into it, and, besides, a number of water closets sit over it." Westtown farmers complained about the pollution, since the stream flowed onto their property."

1889/07/26

Source: *Daily Local News* (July 26, 1889)

Sebella Brinton Gincley, daughter of Charles Gincley, died of cholera infantum.

1889/11/11

Source: *Daily Local News* (November 11, 1889)

James T. Doran died of typhoid fever at age 20 on November 11, 1889. His father John lived on East Niels Street (501 block). James worked as a fireman on the Media Branch of the RR under engineer William Buxton. His closest friends served as pallbearers, including John Ford, Patrick Riley, James Colwell, James Barry, James O'Brien and Michael Clifford.

1890/01/16

Source: "Brutal Fight Between Two Iron Workers" in "*Daily Local News*" (January 16, 1890).

James Quinn and Patrick McDonald fought with each other while working. Quinn's face, hands, and side were literally chewed up, and he now lies in Girard House. McDonald suffered badly damaged eyes. Both are employed in the blast furnace, Quinn as the first helper and McDonald as the weighmaster. Hot iron was being run into the beds and words between the two men led to blows.

1890/01/21

Source: Editorial in "*Daily Local News*" (January 21, 1890)

Evidently, there were people, mostly railroad pass holders, who ran for the train at the last minute. The author of this editorial thought this exposed them to senseless danger. The rail pass holders knew they didn't need to arrive early enough to buy a ticket, so they got in the habit of leaving at the last minute to catch the morning train to Philadelphia.

1890/03/20

Source: *Daily Local News*

A fire occurred on Wednesday morning at #31 Puddlers' Row, owned by Phoenixville Iron Works. The house was occupied by Hungarians, who carelessly dumped hot ashes in the cellar. Loss is not known, but houses in the "Row" are not costly buildings.

1890/08/20

Source: *Daily Local News*

Michael Szaky, age 21, died at Pennsylvania Hospital at 4:30 p.m. yesterday afternoon of burns sustained in an accident at Phoenixville Iron Works. Szaky was a night-workman at the iron smelting works. At 6:30 am he was wheeling a truck with a large bar of red-hot iron on it when he stumbled and fell on the iron. The whole front part of his body was literally scorched before his comrades could rescue him. He was wrapped in cotton batting and sent on the first train to Pennsylvania Hospital, arriving at 8:00 am.

1890-1950

Source: Hugh H. Wolfenden, Population Statistics and Their Compilation (University of Chicago 1954), para. 2.

Vital statistics are valuable to the "adjustment of the representation in legislative bodies, ... to commerce and industry and in many administrative problems of government,...life insurance, pension plans, military service, settlement of estates and inheritances,...in the guidance of public health authorities."

1891/09/03

Source: Plaintiff's Statement: Elizabeth M. McGlone vs. The Phoenixville Iron Works in The Chester County Archives.

In her statement, Elizabeth M. McGlone claims that her husband John McGlone was killed through negligence on the part of the defendant on 1891/06/25. Elizabeth M. McGlone has two children, Joseph and Lizzie, the

latter being between 15 and 16 years old and has been an invalid for 6 years by reason of a spinal affliction. This suit is brought on her behalf.

1891/09/03

Source: Plaintiff's Statement: Elizabeth M. McGlone vs. The Phoenixville Iron Works.

John McGlone died as a result of a lift accident, which the plaintiff claims was of "extraordinary negligent and dangerous construction." The lift was allowed to be run unoccupied as well as be operated by a boy aged under 14 years. Because of negligence and the fact that her family is now deprived of their support, Elizabeth M. McGlone is bringing suit against Phoenixville Iron Works for damages in the amount of \$10,000.

1891/09/03-1891/12/08

Source: Chester County Appearance Docket #55, 73. Elizabeth M. McGlone vs. The Phoenixville Iron Works.

On 1891/09/03, Elizabeth M. McGlone filed a complaint in court against the Phoenixville Iron Works for the wrongful death of her husband, John McGlone. The defendant, Phoenixville Iron Works, pleads "Not Guilty" on 1891/09/23. On 1891/11/09 it is agreed that Thomas M. Baldwin, Barclay Lear, and John D. Mullin shall act as arbiters, hearing the case 1891/12/07-08.

1891/12/07

Source: *Daily Local News*

Lawsuit filed by Elizabeth M. McGlone against Phoenixville Iron Works is being heard today by Thomas W. Baldwin, Esq., Barclay Lear, and John S. Mullin, arbiters sitting in the Grand Jury Room. Mrs. McGlone is suing for damages for the loss of her husband John McGlone, killed in the company mills one day last summer. Husband John was working on the second floor of the building, when a descending elevator caught him between its heavy framework and the wall of the building. It was alleged that there was gross carelessness on the part of the company in constructing the elevator.

1891/12/14-28

Source: Chester County Appearance Docket #55, 73. Elizabeth M. McGlone vs. The Phoenixville Iron Works.

In the case of Elizabeth M. McGlone vs. Phoenixville Iron Works, judgment was found in favor of the plaintiff for the sum of \$750. (Reference is then given to Judgment Docket Y2, p. 152. Chester County Archives does not have this item.) On 1891/12/14, the Elizabeth M. McGlone files for costs of court to the sum of \$17.60. The defendant, Phoenixville Iron Works, files an appeal of the verdict on 1891/12/28, entering into recognizance in the sum of \$400 with D.M. McFarlan as surity.

1891/12/26

Source: Statement of Appeal: Elizabeth M. McGlone vs. The Phoenixville Iron Works

The appeal of the verdict against Phoenixville Iron Works in the above case notes that the appeal is not filed "for purposes of delay, but because he firmly believes injustice has been done". The appeal is signed by David Reeves, President of Phoenixville Iron Works .

1892/08/01

Source: Plaintiff's Statement: Mary Steinberger vs. The Phoenixville Iron Works

In the statement, it is noted that Mary Steinberger she has two children, John B. Jr., 3 years, and Sarah, age 3 weeks. It is claimed that Mary has suffered the loss of her husband who was "constantly earning and in receipt of good wages, supporting and providing said plaintiff and her children and affording them a comfortable livelihood and maintenance." Suit is brought for damages in the amount of \$20,000.

1892/08/01

Source: Plaintiff's Statement: Mary Steinberger vs. The Phoenixville Iron Works

In her complaint, Mary Steinberger claims that her husband John B. Steinberger was injured through the negligence of the defendant on 1892/02/18. John B. Steinberger was injured when a chain connected to a hydraulic riveter broke, causing a 70 foot long, heavy iron girder (weighing about 1 ton) to fall upon John, breaking his legs, etc. John died of the effects of the accident at Pennsylvania Hospital 1893/02/19. Mary Steinberger claims that the defendant did not use due and proper care in and about its premises, and did not furnish her husband John B. Steinberger with a safe and secure piece of equipment as it was its duty to do so.

1892/08/01-1893/02/21

Source: Chester County Appearance Docket #55, p. 240. Mary Steinberger vs. The Phoenixville Iron Works

On 1892/08/01, Mary Steinberger filed a complaint in court against the Phoenixville Iron Works for the wrongful death of her husband, John B. Steinberger. Defendant Phoenixville Iron Works pleads "Not Guilty" 1892/08/19. A jury is impaneled 1893/02/20. On 1893/02/21 the court directs a non-suit to be entered, and judgment is entered accordingly. (Reference is then given to Judgment Docket Y2, p. 562. Chester County Archives does not have this item.)

1892/11/14-1893/11/13

Source: Chester County Appearance Docket #55, 73. Elizabeth M. McGlone vs. The Phoenixville Iron Works

After continuances on 1892/11/14, 1893/02/13, and 1893/05/08, the plaintiff in open court elects to suffer a non-suit on 1893/11/13, and judgment of non-suit is entered accordingly. (Reference is then given to Judgment Docket Z2, p. 206. Chester County Archives does not have this item.)

1892/12/05

Source: *Daily Local News* (December 5, 1892)

Scarlet fever struck two families on East Nields Street. The first victims were the children of Elwood Smith, then the Charles Arment children, followed by Mr. Arment and another Smith child. All recovered.

1893

Source: Shirley Macauley, "W. Chester's squares failed as rectangles" in "*Daily Local News*" (November 13, 1972), 84. NOTE: Centennial issue nø1 of 5 by the *Daily Local News*

The Chester County Hospital began operation in a pair of small brick buildings on the north side of Marshall Square in 1893.

1893/02/15

Source: *Daily Local News*

Mrs. Steinberger, of Phoenixville, is in West Chester today to attend court. She is suing Phoenixville Iron Works for damages sustained in the loss of her husband. While at work in shop 6 about two years ago, a chain of a crane used to hoist a heavy beam broke, and Mr. Steinberger was crushed to death. His wife therefore brings this action to recover damages for his loss.

1893/02/20

Source: Court Testimony: Mary Steinberger vs. The Phoenixville Iron Works, 5-6.

Upon questioning during the trial, Mr. B.F. Johnson admitted to being in charge of the work gang to which John Steinberger was assigned. The gang consisted of the following six men: Michael Durnan, James McCoy, Charles Kennedy, himself (B.F. Johnson), John Steinberger, and a Hungarian whose name he does not know.

1893/02/20

Source: Court Testimony: Mary Steinberger vs. The Phoenixville Iron Works, 1-4.

Upon questioning during the trial, Mary Steinberger states that her husband received wages of \$.11 cents per hour while working approximately 12 hours per day (6 A.M. to 6 P.M.) in Riveter Shop #6.

1893/06/14

Source: *Daily Local News*, clippings, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa. 1893/6/14.

The old Board of Health was comprised of the Chief Burgess and six to eight physicians. The new Board of Health will be appointed by the Chief Burgess and will consist of five members, one of whom will be a physician.

1893/08/03

Source: *Daily Local News*, clippings, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa. 1893/8/3.

A law was passed in May ordering that within 6 months a new Board of Health be established with the power to go on any premises and the duty to keep records of births and deaths etc.. There is no compensation for the office.

1893/09/21

Source: *Daily Local News*, clippings, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa. 1893/09/21.

The first meeting of the new Board of Health took place at Dr. Woodward's office in West Chester on 1893/9/21. Thomas Mercer was elected President and Dr. Woodward was elected temporary Secretary.

1893/10/17

Source: *Daily Local News*, clippings, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa. 1893/10/17.

The borough Council offers \$100 per annum for Health Inspector.

1893/11/27

Source: *Daily Local News*, clippings, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa. 1893/11/27.

"The first indication of the Board of Health in West Chester was on Saturday when the first burial permit was issued by it for the interment of Mrs. Dennis Hayes, East Miner street."

1893/11/30

Source: *Daily Local News*, clippings, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa. 1893/11/30.

Cemetery managers are ordered by the Board of Health not to receive any bodies for interment unless a burial permit is shown by friends. They must first get a certificate of cause of death from a physician and bring this to Dr. Woodward at the Board of Health to get a burial permit.

1893/12/07

Source: *Daily Local News*, clippings, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa. 1893/12/07.

"The rules and ordinances of the Board of Health has been issued in pamphlet form and are ready for distribution. They were published a few days (Nov. 9th) since as an ordinance in the *Daily Local News*."

1894/04/03

Source: *Daily Local News*, clippings, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa. 1894/04/03.

"A rumor about the burial of an Italian babe in a yard at the corner Gay and Wayne Street, is circulating about the town and is apparently believed by some of the neighbors." The matter has been thoroughly investigated by the Board of Health," said Dr. Hoskins this morning, and everything is satisfactory. "The body is in the Catholic cemetery at Oaklands, and there has been nothing improper in the case."

1894/08/18

Source: *Daily Local News*

William Develin, a worker at Phoenixville Iron Works steel plant, was helping to land a 5,000 lb. red-hot ingot when his tongs slipped. He fell back, and the ingot fell on his leg and remained there for almost 3 minutes. The limb below the knee was practically burned away, and physicians at Stratford Hospital were obliged to amputate at once.

1895

Source: Busch, Laws of Pennsylvania (State Printer, no. sec. 36, 1895).

No railroad or steamboat or any other type of transportation shall accept or move a body unless there has been a burial permit issued by the Board of Health.

1896/02/21

Source: "*Daily Local News*," Chester County Historical Society.

From the list of the Annual report from the Poor House a William Simpson was listed on the report but was not in the Death Registry.

1897/04/00

Source: "*Daily Local News*," Chester County Historical Society.

From the list of the Annual report from the Poor House the following were listed as having died during the year but were not listed in the Death Registry:

James Hamill, Hannah Parsons, Richard McMullin, Mary Brophy, John McNichol, James Steen, Harmnan Hill, Benjamin May, John Tillman.

1898/01/05

Source: Coroner's Docket 1897-1905, C.G. Troutman, Coroner, Chester County Archives, #83, Book 23, 13.

Wilmer D. Baum while suffering from an attack of sickness committed suicide by shooting himself in the head with a shotgun, in the kitchen of his residence. Joseph H. Johnson, Deputy Coroner.

1898/03/07

Source: *Daily Local News* (March 7, 1898)

Josiah Burnett was an invalid after 25 years working for the PRR.

1900/05/17

Source: *Daily Local News*

An accident occurred last night at the works of the Phoenixville Iron Works by which Roland B. Johnson, 35 years old, lost his life. Johnson, with several other men, was working on a large 60-foot girder, which had been insecurely propped up. The huge piece of steel toppled over, striking Johnson in the side, breaking several of his ribs and fatally injuring him. After being struck he ran about 20 feet, then fell like a corpse.

1900s/early

Source: Found on the Internet (THE HACHER FAMILY LEDGER, MMS 340).

By the turn of the century, the Ohio General Assembly considered public health an important issue. Doctors now understood how communicable diseases were spread and how community sanitation affected health.

1905/11/23

Source: *Daily Local News*

J. Preston Thomas dies of illness. Elected to the Directors of the Poor in 1887. Graduate of Haverford College. 1870 elected director of National Bank of Chester County. V.P of bank 1895/01/11, 1901/11/01 made President of Bank. On Board of Trustees of the West Chester Normal School. Helped found Chester County Hospital, and their Board of Mangers. Member of the Downingtown Friends.

1912/04/13

Source: *Daily Local News* (April 14, 1912)

Charles P. Rigg's daughter Mary E. died of diphtheria at the age of 3.5 years. Two siblings survived. (Note: Mary E. was Mifflin Rigg's granddaughter.)

1915

Source: Wm. Stanley Ray, Laws of Pennsylvania (State Printer, 1915).

Act No. 402 sec.1. The State Department of Health took full charge of the registration of births, deaths, marriages and diseases. sec. 3 The state was divided into registration districts. sec. 4 Local registrars were appointed by the Commissioner of Health.

1918/12/04

Source: "Patrick J. Barry" (Obituary) in "Daily Local News" (December 5, 1918)

Patrick J. Barry died on December 4, 1918, at age 63 (or 70, according to the death announcement from the same newspaper). He lived at 323 North New Street. He suffered from pleurisy and died of complications of diseases. After working "for a number of years on the borough force," Barry started construction contracting and had "extensive operations here and elsewhere. He erected quite a number of nice dwellings of moderate size with modern conveniences for working men." He was survived by his wife, Mary Myers Barry; and his children: Jennie Cody (Wilmington DE); Alfred (US Army) and

John (West Chester businessman). The funeral was held at St. Agnes Catholic Church.

1944/02/01

Source: Cull G. John, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Approaches in Spinal Cord Injury (Charles C Thomas, 1977), 44.

On February 1, 1944, what is now known as the National Spinal Injuries Centre was opened at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. Under the brilliant direction and leadership of Dr. Gutman, the various problems associated with paraplegia have been studied, research carried out, and methods of treatment improved; this work still continues there. Not long after the opening of this British centre, similar centres were opened in the United States of America, and , over the years, special centres for paraplegics have been developed in many other countries.

1964

Source: J. J. Walsh, Understanding Paraplegia (J.B Lippincott Company, 1964), 15-17

Of the cases treated at the National Spinal Injuries Centre at Stoke Mandeville, about 70 % are the result of injury. Approximately 30% of the patients at the National Spinal injuries Centre develop paraplegia from causes other than injury. Of these a proportion result from infections of various kinds, and are usually grouped under the heading of "myelitis" or "transverse myelitis." A further proportion are the result of pressure on the spinal cord by non- malignant tumors, "slipped discs," or congenital malformations, while other are due to diseases or abnormalities of the blood vessels supplying the spinal cord.

1964

Source: J. J. Walsh, Understanding Paraplegia (J.B Lippincott Company, 1964), 19

The effects of damage to the spinal cord, whether caused by injury or by disease, will vary according to the particular part of the cord involved, the severity and extent of the damage, and how quickly it occurs.

1977

Source: Cull G. John, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Approaches in Spinal Cord Injury (Charles C Thomas, 1977), 6.

The strict interpretation of the word " paraplegia " is paralysis of the lower limbs, and part or the whole of the trunk, but in its everyday usage the term covers a great number of paralytic conditions due to disease or injury of the spinal cord, affecting voluntary movement of the trunk and all four limbs.

1983

Source: "Paralysis" in Webster's Encyclopedia, Illustrated Family Medical Encyclopedia (Holt and Company, 1983), 119-120

Types of paralysis:

- General paralysis of the insane. a disease due to syphilis of the brain and nervous system, producing progressive dementia, delusions, inability to speak properly, seizures, tremors, the absence of light reflexes in the pupil, and a generalized wasting of the brain cells.
 - paralysis agitans. A chronic disease characterized by rigidity of muscles, muscular weakness, slowness of movements, tremor, flexion of the head, trunk, and limbs, and often with a mask like face which registers little or no emotion. Also called Parkinson's disease.
 - periodic familial paralysis. A familial disease, starting in early life and characterized by periodic temporary paralysis with paresthesia and associated with a disturbance of potassium in the body.
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