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A HISTORY OF PSYCHIATRY
IN
LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
 (Until the year 2000)
 By S. Kendrick Eshleman, III, M.D.

Mental illness was recognized and treated by general physicians in Lancaster County from the earliest days. According to John W.W. Loose ¹, the defense in the celebrated murder trial of John Haggerty in 1847 used the "not guilty by reason of insanity" plea for the first time in Lancaster County. The Newspaper, Lancaster Examiner & Herald in its issue for January 27, 1847 reported the trial in detail.² I will quote extracts from this report which are of special psychiatric interest.

"The trial of John Haggerty for the murder of Melchior Fordney³ and Catharine Tripple, in October last, commenced on Thursday morning. The courthouse was densely crowded during the trial. Benj. Champneys, Esq., Attorney General and Wm. Mathiot, Esq., Deputy appeared for the Commonwealth, and George Ford, Esq. and John L. Thompson, Esq., for the prisoner."

"About an hour and a half were occupied in calling a jury; about sixty persons having been called before one was empanelled (sic). The jury was

composed of the following persons: Jno. F. Shroeder, George Lefever, John S. Manning, Henry Brimmer, George H. Bomberger, Isaac Sowers, Michael Musselman, Benjamin Hershey, Jacob Neaveling, George Leaman, Henry W. Hess, and John Shuck."

"Mr. Mathiot opened the case for the prosecution, and then proceeded to call witnesses." The witnesses for the prosecution reported more or less the same information; that is, that John Haggerty came to Mr. Fordney's shop and asked him to shoot his (Haggerty's) horse, which Mr. Fordney declined to do and said he would rather give him "a couple of dollars for to help you out of the scrape", which he had gotten into with another man (Woeh).

Haggerty then went in the shop, took a gun out and loaded it. The Fordneys then tried to get Haggerty to give it up "before you hurt someone."

Haggerty shot at his horse twice but the gun did not fire so he went into his house nearby and brought out an axe with the gun, which, this time, he did fire at the horse. This was on South Queen Street. Haggerty then handed the gun to one of the Fordneys and picked up the axe and ran after Mr. Fordney. He struck Mr. Fordney, as well as Mrs. Fordney (when she went in the shop to assist her husband), and one of their daughters. Earlier Haggerty ran outside behind a passing wagon, looking in to see if a man (Woehr) was there, who he had been looking for since they had had a disagreement. Catharine Tripple came out of the house and tried to disarm

Haggerty. He handed her the gun but then struck her with the axe. A witness, Isabella Gibson, reported that she "saw the bodies after the blows", and said "the back part of Fordney's head was entirely cut off, his legs were both broken, and marrow stuck in his pantaloons when taken off, one arm was broken, blood over the floor, wall and ceiling and the front part of Catharine's head; I saw it was cut with the axe; I saw nothing more; I saw the child; it was cut open on the top of the head, it's brain stuck out I dare say about an inch."

The Fordneys had four children. . . the one hurt was six years old. Nothing else was said about Mrs. Fordney. Additional testimony indicated that after people in the neighborhood realized what had happened they started throwing stones at Haggerty. He chased and threatened some of them and fell and the axe was taken from him and a rope put around his neck and he was dragged away and then taken to prison. Evidently he had been in prison some years before following an altercation with a man who consequently died. Also Haggerty told another witness three months before that he blamed the Fordneys "for meddling (sic) a good deal with his business and that he'd kill them if they would not quit it." There were two medical witnesses for the prosecution. The first was Dr. George B. Kerfoot who said he and Dr. Henry Carpenter had been called in to examine the wounds and their record was presented to the court.

Remarkably the child was gradually recovering, having been unconscious for 12 days and had some persistent paralysis on the right side. Dr. Henry Carpenter concurred with Dr. Kerfoot's report and they stated that "the wounds given the deceased undoubtedly occasioned their deaths." There was conflicting testimony as to whether John Haggerty had an odor of liquor on him on the day of the murders. A Deputy Sheriff who saw him shortly after the murder said he never smelled liquor on him but that his appearance "after he was washed was rather wild and frightened. I have seen him look as wild before though. From his condition, I don't think I have knowledge to define whether he was drunk or crazy, though I smelled no liquor on him." Charles Denues, Esq. (a passerby right after the murder) testified that Haggerty said he gave the gun to Fordney to shoot him and he would not do it, so he had a right to shoot Fordney, and he said "this is the day of Judgment and I can show it by scripture that I have a right to destroy all whoremongers." Mr. Denues further said, "Two persons took him up then and after we tied him he was wrothy, and cursed us. I could not describe his appearance other than he looked like a bull terrier dog flung away from a mad bullock; his eyes were standing out, he looked very wrothy; his eyes appeared very red and about twice as large as now. I smelled no liquor about him." He had a history of frequent alcohol use, however.

There was testimony from Dr. Charles L. Baker who was the attending

physician at the jail when Haggerty was committed. He described his appearance then quoted Haggerty as saying "why did she take the gun from me? It was my gun, it was partly made for that, you'll find it in the Scriptures; from the time I was a child I be to do it; that horse was a devil." Haggerty said sometimes when he would ride it, it was gentle; other times a devil. Also, that he had seen strange things, or had had curious thoughts. He spoke about his having seen his horse on a tree; on that tree the Saints were contending; the Son of God was there; he thought there was a great fight there; his horse was on the side of the Americans, he did not like to kill him on that account. He said his horse was tied on the tree, "prancing and contending" with the things on the tree.

Dr. Baker went on to say "some persons in the room asked, -- what, a horse speak?" Haggerty said, "yes, to be sure it could." Then Haggerty spoke of his horse as being "the great Dragon... and there are three or four hundred killed." Dr. Baker further testified that Haggerty said he thought he loaded the gun with silver bullets, did not know where he got the axe, wanted to chop the horse's head off. He thought the horse was "Anti-Christ". Testimony from a visitor to the jail, Charles Boughter, noted that Haggerty said "they tell me I have killed Fordney and Kitty Tripple." After this remark he then said, "it is all right if I have done it for the competition of the day of Judgment as it could not be done as long as they lived." Haggerty said that it had commenced on Friday night, that the "fiery

dragon” and the “Anti-Christ” had got into his horse and goat and kept a terrible fighting all night. He talked about chickens flying up into the tree where the horse and goat were kneeling and said they (chickens) represented Martin Van Buren. He said "the tree moved up and down with the chickens on it." All this worried him so that he got up and "loaded his gun with a five cent piece." He shot his horse and thought he had destroyed the Anti-Christ, so "the reign of the true Christ" would come. Haggerty also spoke of Fordney as being "a good neighbor and had no animosity against him." His reported statements were often contradictory, rambling and disjointed as well as ungrammatical. Psychologically, his ideas were grandiose and irrational.

There was much additional testimony but essentially repeating the same information, although describing additional bizarre delusions and hallucinations expressed by Haggerty. The newspaper reporter had eighty-five pages of manuscript. Forty-seven witnesses were examined on the part of the Commonwealth and twenty-four on the part of the prisoner. The examination of witnesses was commenced on Thursday and concluded on a late hour on Saturday night. There was testimony by Dr. Francis S. Burrowes who had been a physician at the jail when John Haggerty attempted suicide at one time in the past and he had noted an indentation on his head from a previous injury. Dr. Burrowes said he did not consider Haggerty "perfectly sane at the time." He stated "that state of excitement which is called mania, under its various forms, can be relieved by

copious bleeding. Sleep has the effect of relieving some particular kinds of mania." Dr. William Fahnestock had examined the fracture on the prisoner's head and said "the fracture passes the lower edge of Wonder, Hope, Conscientiousness, and terminates where Cautiousness commences, between Ideality and Hope. Does not pass near Destructiveness or Combativeness". That examination had taken place approximately two weeks before the trial. The physicians did not believe insanity usually followed a skull fracture but could. Another witness indicated that he had known Haggerty five or six years before and "he was very crazy".

Judge Lewis gave the charge to the jury, which is reported at length in the same newspaper on February 3, 1847. To quote from his charge, "The use of a weapon likely to kill – the pursuit of the deceased into his own house- the locking of the [shop] door, apparently to prevent interruption or escape [although the Fordney's son said he had locked the house doors]- the cruel repetition of his blows, show that the case before us is a clear case of murder of the first degree, unless *justified, excused or palliated* by circumstances connected with the state of the prisoner's mind at the time."

The jury found Haggerty guilty of murder in the first degree and the judge sentenced him to death by hanging. In his sentencing, the Judge said "with but few exceptions, the outbreaks of violence that have from time to time characterized your conduct always took place when your passions were excited by intoxicating drink. It is in full proof that you were perfectly aware

of the influence of liquor upon your mind and passions and knew that it was the cause of your repeated acts of violence ... and that on more than one occasion you had a perfect recollection afterwards of all that had taken place."

The Lancaster Examiner & Herald on July 28th, 1847, described in detail the hanging in the yard of the Lancaster County jail, and said "during the time of the execution, the street at the corner upon which the jail was located was thronged with persons, and a number of unsuccessful attempts were made by the assemblage to effect an entrance. Much excitement prevailed throughout the city." The newspaper reported that "Judge Lewis, who tried the deceased, was desirous that examination of his head should be made in the presence of the numerous physicians of the city who were present. Dr. Charles Baker, attending physician at the prison, assisted by Drs. Atlee, Cassidy, Parry, H. Carpenter, Ehler, Smith, Richards and others proceeded to make the investigation." The paper described the dimensions of the head and said the skull was about 1/2" thicker than usual and no fracture was perceptible and "The skull (sic) was then sawed through the middle and the top removed and after the most diligent search, no defect was apparent." The report went on to say "the functions of the brain were in no manner disorganized, and every physician present, on being respectively asked, gave it as his solemn opinion that the injuries to the deceased's head, to which his malconduct had been attributed, did not exist in fact. The skull (sic) was found to be of extraordinary thickness [Paget's Disease

of bone?]. Great satisfaction was experienced on ascertaining the result of the examination, which was conducted with great care and skill. After the medical gentlemen had made some further experiments, the body was restored to the coffin and conveyed to the burial ground belonging to Father Keenan's church and decently interred."

It is of interest that the case just cited followed just a few years after the establishment of the M'Naughten rule for legal insanity (knowing difference between right & wrong) in England. It is still the standard in most United States jurisdictions, although there have been modifications and alternatives, before and since. However, after the Daniel M'Naughten trial in 1843 the English public had great difficulty accepting that a disease of the mind could result in acquittal for a criminal act. Throughout the history of western society the law has tried to accommodate the fact that some people violate social standards because of a defect of thinking, feeling, or behavior and should be granted some degree of leniency. Since the 1800's, the courts have been struggling with how to make reasonable adjustments in this respect. The relationship of psychiatry to the law is most complex and was even recognized in the Haggerty case when Judge Lewis told the jury that doctors did not decide matters of responsibility, only judges and juries. Here is a case, however, in which Haggerty had delusions that his horse was "the great dragon", that it was a duty of necessity to destroy it, with the world at its end, and human laws abolished, and it was like the command of God to kill the deceased. However, the jury did not conclude that this was an excuse for

the murders which were committed. They found no evidence for his beliefs "other than the declarations of the prisoner since the perpetration of the act".

This case is interesting from several standpoints. It involves local history, reflects ideas about mental function existing at that time, as well as legal attitudes and procedures. Certainly there was a question about Haggerty's mental state even though it availed him little. Even if his serious mental disorder would have been acknowledged, they probably would not have known what to do for him legally or medically. Despite major, in fact revolutionary, advances in understanding and treatment of mental illness, it is still a subject that challenges our deeper understanding. I hope future historians will view our efforts more kindly than we do those of the 1840's.

The earliest reference that I have found specifically regarding the care and treatment of the mentally ill in Lancaster County was to "a hospital and insane asylum" built in the early 1830's. Before that the mentally ill were probably kept in the basement of the older hospital, sometimes restrained.⁴ Acts of the Pennsylvania legislature in March 1865 and April 1866 authorized the erection of a "hospital and insane asylum". The new building was completed in the fall of 1868 and the older (1830's) hospital building "was refitted" as a wing. Here there were wards for males and females for the "hopelessly and violently insane."⁵ A final "New Insane Asylum" was erected, as a separate building, in 1898, resulting in some redistribution of patients. Both of these buildings have been replaced by the

present day Conestoga View. The 1868 building was designated for the “sick and infirm and mild lunatics”. The original (1799) county hospital building was not used for patient quarters in recent memory. The county hospital was under the control of a superintendent and psychiatric patients were originally attended by general physicians and later by psychiatrists.

The first physician specifically trained in psychiatry and neurology to reside and practice in Lancaster County appears to have been James S. Hammers, MD. He was born May 7, 1879 and was licensed in Pennsylvania in 1904. Having previously practiced in Indiana County, Chester County, and Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, he came to Lancaster from Mayview State Hospital on December 26, 1935. His first private office was situated on North Duke Street near the Lancaster General Hospital and later at 927 East King Street, where he also resided.⁶ This site is still a private home. He also had an office at the Lancaster County Hospital in the 1799 building, now considered to be the second oldest hospital building in the United States still standing. That building also provided facilities for special therapies. Patients were brought there from other buildings in the complex for these treatments, new at that time. The records indicate that Drs. Green and Himes came from the Harrisburg State Hospital to attend psychiatric patients at the Lancaster County Hospital prior to Dr. Hammer’s arrival. The Harrisburg physicians did not have offices in Lancaster, however. Dr. Hammers died on August 30, 1953, and was survived several years by his wife. They had no children.⁷

Prior to Dr. Hammers there was an individual who worked in the mental health field in Lancaster County, although it is doubtful if she practiced independently. This was Mary Reich Bowman, M.D. She grew up in or near Mount Joy, Lancaster County, and went to college at Wilson College, Chambersburg, PA. She received her M.D. degree from Women's Medical College, in Philadelphia, in 1907, with emphasis in psychiatry. She is said to be the first woman physician from Mount Joy and the first woman psychiatrist in PA and certainly in Lancaster County.

After graduation she spent a year at Women's Medical College although it is uncertain if she received specialty training there. In 1909 she became a member of the Lancaster City and County Medical Society and received its 50 year certificate in 1959.

Dr. Bowman worked for the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare in the area of mental health in Lancaster County. She later worked in the states of New York and then Michigan. In New York, she was at King's Park State Hospital and then at Hudson Training School for Girls and was assistant resident physician. She returned to Pennsylvania in 1918 and became consulting psychiatrist for the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare. By 1933, the Lancaster County Office of Probation and Parole appointed her as court psychiatrist. Dr. Bowman retired to Mount Joy and died in 1970 at age 88.

She never married and lived in Mount Joy in the house beside the general store, which was established by her two brothers, John and Milton. Her grandfather (Reich) and two uncles (Reich) practiced medicine in the Mount Joy area.⁸

There have been approximately forty psychiatrists who have practiced in Lancaster County since Dr. Hammers.⁹ In addition, there have been many individuals practicing in the fields of psychology, social work, and addictions plus various types of counseling.

Mention should be made of Kenneth E. Appel, MD who was born in Lancaster on May 15, 1896. A number of his relatives have continued to reside here. He was a nationally known psychiatrist and a former Professor and Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University Of Pennsylvania School Of Medicine. He had an illustrious career, including having served as President of the American Psychiatric Association from 1953 to 1954, and as President of the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health from 1954 to 1960. In addition to his academic appointment at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Appel continued his private practice on the staff at the Institute of the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia where a number of patients from Lancaster were treated under his care. He died at his home in August, 1979 and he was still treating some of his patients at that time.

The first outpatient community psychiatric facility in Lancaster County, of which I am aware, was the Lancaster Guidance Clinic, which started in 1937. It was originally part of the Community Service Association but separated from it in 1947, becoming an independent non-profit, out-patient agency with Community Chest funding. It has undergone changes in recent years in its mission and administration. Ten years after its founding, this facility was able to hire a full time psychiatrist as well as other mental health personnel. The first psychiatrist at the Lancaster Guidance Clinic was Robert Kemble, MD. He also had a part-time private practice with the noted child psychologist, Dr. Psyche Cattell, who was also on the clinic's staff as its chief psychologist. Dr. Kemble left Lancaster in 1958 and was succeeded by Buell C. Kingsley, M.D. and a number of other psychiatrists. The Lancaster Guidance Center, as it came to be called, continues its vital role in the County's psychiatric services, for adults and children. (Significant changes there have occurred since the year 2000.)

The County Mental Health/Mental Retardation program was initiated in 1968 as a direct consequence of the Community Mental Health Act first advanced in 1963 by President John F. Kennedy and enacted during the Johnson administration. It authorized federal money for the construction of community mental health centers (CHC), which made it possible for the transfer of the mentally ill from the state mental hospitals to the community. As a result, two "catchment" areas were designated in Lancaster County with separate psychiatric services to be provided for each catchment area. Originally the line separating the two was the middle of

Queen Street in Lancaster. This geographical separation did not last long in actuality. The St. Joseph Hospital psychiatric unit was to serve one area and the Lancaster General Hospital the other, with a psychiatric floor designated for that purpose opened in 1972. Several years later, psychiatric in-patient units were established at the Community Hospital of Lancaster and the Ephrata Hospital as well. The Columbia Hospital had attending psychiatrists on its staff and an in-patient drug and alcohol treatment center. The St. Joseph Hospital psychiatric facility was organized in 1959 by Dr. Tom B. Metzger in close association with Dr. S. Kendrick Eshleman. That facility was one of the earliest in-patient psychiatric units in a general hospital in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the first in Lancaster County. Dr. Karl E. Buri was probably the first chairman of psychiatry at the Lancaster General Hospital, as well as the last psychiatrist on the staff of the Lancaster County Hospital, which ceased admitting psychiatric patients in 1942. Patients were moved to the Harrisburg State Hospital then, as directed by an act of the State Legislature. Dr. Buri died in 1957 and Dr. Fred G. Holt absorbed his practice and position at Lancaster General Hospital until shortly before his death in 1972.

It is interesting to observe the evolution of psychiatry in our country, as well as locally. Prior to the 1940's and World War II, psychiatry was principally centered in large public institutions and small independent ones. The Lancaster County Almshouse and Hospital served this function in our area and was concerned with the safe and humane care of the mentally ill, providing what meager treatment

was available.

The use of insulin, metrazol, and electro-convulsive therapy in 1933, 1935, and 1938 respectively added considerably to the therapeutic resources available at that time. These were first administered in Lancaster County by Dr. Hammers at the Lancaster County Hospital. Dr. Fred Holt was probably the first psychiatrist to use electroconvulsive therapy at the Lancaster General Hospital and Dr. Metzger in his private office. This very helpful treatment was available at the St. Joseph Hospital since 1959, although it has been used much less frequently in recent years because of the development of effective psychiatric medications.

Following WWII, psychiatrists rapidly increased in number, and expanded into the community with the opening of private offices and clinics, as well as psychiatric facilities in general hospitals. Much had been learned about mental illness which could be applied in psychiatric therapy, utilizing psycho-dynamic principles that were previously promulgated, especially by psychoanalysts, and further developed by the experiences of military medicine. There emerged a rationale for understanding mental illness, and while not always accurate in the light of later knowledge, it did provide a more scientific way of thinking about mental disorders and established the foundation for more effective treatments.

In the mid 1950's a major development occurred in psychiatry and has

continued, through the introduction of potent psychiatric medicines. This permitted the discharge of many patients from State Hospitals with treatment to be provided in the local communities instead. This was aided by the Community Mental Health movement, which, while ambitious in its aims, fell short of its intentions because of the great need and limited supply of personnel, facilities and funds. However, this movement stimulated the development of community services consisting of a number and variety of programs. These programs were essentially out-patient facilities, some attached to local hospitals and some not. Alcohol and chemical dependency programs became active in Lancaster County with in-patient detoxification units, as well as residential centers. Also there have been several support groups for the mentally ill, as well as social and residential facilities to accommodate the various needs. The Alpha Club, started by the Mental Health Association of Lancaster County in 1962, was probably the first of these support groups. Physicians specializing in diagnosis and treatment of mental illness (psychiatrists) have been closely associated with many of these facilities. It became possible to obtain most types of modern psychiatric treatment within Lancaster County and those few that were not available here could be sought in nearby specialized centers such as Hershey Medical Center and the medical centers at Philadelphia and Baltimore. Many Lancaster County citizens have received psychiatric care at Philhaven Hospital near Lebanon, Pennsylvania. That private facility also has had personnel working in several places in Lancaster County. Many Lancaster County veterans have received psychiatric treatment at the Department of Veteran Affairs Medical Centers in

Lebanon and Coatesville.

Psychiatry has come a long way from the large custodial institutions of the last two centuries to the modern panoply of services available, utilizing public and private offices, crisis intervention services, community and specialized hospitals and numerous supportive agencies and programs. The history of psychiatry and the attitudes toward mental illness in Lancaster County have essentially paralleled those of the United States, although without most of the passing fads that have occurred in the field from time to time. Generally, the practice of psychiatry here has been within the broader realm of medicine with mutual benefit. The last century was remarkable for the increasingly rapid scientific advances in psychiatry, as in the rest of medicine. Recent developments have largely been in the methods of providing and funding professional care. It is to be hoped that the next century will continue to see such significant innovations as did the last, both scientific and humane.

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References

1. Personal Communication
2. On file at Lancaster County Historical Society
3. Melchoir Fordney wa arguably one of Lancaster’s finest gunsmiths. He and his wife Margaret were separated and he lived with Catherine Tripple. His shop was on South Queen Street, Lancaster, directly across from the Woodward Hill Cemetery entrance.
4. Franklin Ellis and Samuel Evans, “History of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men” (Philadelphia, Everts and Peck, 188), 222; Henry A Showalter in “Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society”, 1995 volume 55, no. 4, page 103.o
5. “An Authentic History of Lancaster County” by J. I. Mombert, D.D., 1869, page 443.
6. Records of Lancaster City and County Medical Society.
7. Personal communication from George Kirchner, former employee of Lancaster County Hospital.
8. Information on Dr. Bowman provided by Vera Albert of the Mount Joy Historical Society.
9. Biographical data cited in related paper by this author on file at the Lancaster County Historical Society (LancasterHistory.org)