

**George Gillasspy notes on lectures delivered by
Benjamin Smith Barton and Benjamin Rush at the
University of Pennsylvania Medical School**

Ms. Codex 1861

Finding aid prepared by Rive Cadwallader.

Last updated on October 05, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2017 October 2

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Gillasspy, George, d. 1832
Title	George Gillasspy notes on lectures delivered by Benjamin Smith Barton and Benjamin Rush at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School
Call number	Ms. Codex 1861
Date [inclusive]	1797-1798
Extent	0.1 linear foot (1 volume)
Language	English
Abstract	This notebook, kept by George Gillasspy (also "Gillaspy"), records the content of lectures delivered by Benjamin Smith Barton and Benjamin Rush at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1797 and 1798. These lectures touch upon a wide range of topics within materia medica, physiology, pathology and therapeutics, and represent the foundations of late eighteenth century medical education.

Cite as:

George Gillasspy notes on lectures delivered by Benjamin Smith Barton and Benjamin Rush at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, 1797-1798, Ms. Codex 1861, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

George Gillasspy (elsewhere spelled “Gillaspy”) was a medical student, military doctor, and apothecary. Gillasspy served as a surgeon with the Second U.S. Infantry Regiment and on the Frigate U.S.S. *United States* during the Revolutionary War, at or around the same time that he kept his book of notes on medical lectures. (Indeed, Gillasspy signs his name along with “Surgeon 2d U.S. Regt [illeg] & act.g Surgn Frigate” at the beginning of the second section of the lecture notes, referring to his role as surgeon of the Second Regiment and on the frigate *United States*.) Gillasspy also served as a surgeon with the First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry from 1806 to 1808, and operated an apothecary shop in Philadelphia with his partner Dr. Joseph Strong. In 1803, Gillasspy and Strong outfitted Meriwether Lewis with \$90.69 in medicines for his expedition west. Gillasspy died in 1832 and is buried in Christ Church Burial Ground in Philadelphia. Benjamin Smith Barton (1766-1815) was a leading botanist and naturalist of his day, and Benjamin Rush (1746-1813) was one of Philadelphia’s foremost physicians in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Both taught at the University of Pennsylvania for much of their careers.

Sources:

History of the First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry: From Its Organization, November 17th, 1774 to Its Centennial Anniversary, November 17th, 1874. (Princeton: 1875). URL:

https://books.google.com/books?id=va8-AAAAYAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s

Kris Fresonke and Mark David Spence. *Lewis & Clark: Legacies, Memories, and New Perspectives.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

Scope and Contents

This volume of notes is organized into three sections, corresponding to three courses of lectures. The first is titled by Gillasspy, “A Syllabus of a Course of Lectures on the Materia Medica by Barton, professor in the University of Pennsylvania with Remarks thereon &c,” and dated 1797. These lectures first address classes of medicines, namely astringents, vegetable tonics, metallic tonics, stimulants (seven consecutive lectures discuss the therapeutic properties of opium), emetics, cathartics, “salivating medicines,” and diuretics. Later lectures describe particular medicines, almost all of which are plant based. These profiles typically provide a medicinal plant’s Latin name, common name, native region, effects upon the human body and pharmacological applications.

The next section of the notebook (1797) contains both handwritten notes and printed material. The first page of this portion of the document is a printed cover of a booklet titled “A Syllabus of a Course of Lectures on the Institutes of Medicine by Benjamin Rush, M.D.. Professor of the Institutes of Medicine and Clinical Practice in the University of Pennsylvania.” The subsequent handwritten notes on these lectures are interspersed with excerpts of the printed syllabus to which they correspond. These lectures address physiology, pathology and therapeutics, in this order. Within the first topic, Rush briefly presents some basic features and functions of the human body (such as respiration, circulation, sensation, and

cognition), before discussing nutrition, digestion and “the secretions and excretions,” and finally outlining the physical differences between men and women, some information about obstetric and gynecological medicine, and what he terms “the stages of life.” The portion of the lecture series on pathology outlines what Rush regards as the four causes of disease -remote, predisposing, occasional and proximate- along with some of the signs of disease. The third and final section of this syllabus, “Therapeutics, OR, of the method of curing diseases,” describes the actions of various types of medicines.

The final section of the book contains notes on “the practice of physic” from lectures delivered by Benjamin Rush in 1798. The first of these lectures relate to the topics of prognosis and diagnosis, “transient symptoms,” and depleting, stimulating and sedative medicines. The rest of the lectures in the volume relate to fevers and their extensive classifications. Along with descriptions of the various febrile “states,” Rush presents the most effective treatments for each. (There is also a short discourse, at the end of this section, on “diseases of the mind”).

The presence of press-printed material in section two, and the closeness of the handwritten text to the spine of the book, suggests that the volume was bound after the notes were taken.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2017 October 2

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Source of Acquisition

Gift of William Pepper.

Processing Information note

Formerly Dewey MS 610.4 R89.5

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

At the American Philosophical Society:

Violetta Delafield-Benjamin Smith Barton collection, 1783-1817, Mss.B.B284d

At the Historical Society of Pennsylvania:

Benjamin Smith Barton papers, Collection 0034

At the Library Company of Philadelphia:

Rush family papers, 1748-1876

At the University of Pennsylvania, Archives and Records Center

Benjamin Smith Barton lecture notes, 1810, UPW1a-13

At the University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts:

Benjamin Rush lecture notes, 1783-1810, undated, Ms. Coll. 225

Benjamin Smith Barton lecture notes, 1810-1823, Ms. Coll. 669

Benjamin Smith Barton lecture notes, 1810, UPW1a-13

Jonathan Murduck notes on Materia Medica lectures delivered by Benjamin Smith Barton at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, 1802, Ms. Codex 1865

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- University of Pennsylvania. School of Medicine.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Lecture notes

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Barton, Benjamin Smith, 1766-1815
- Rush, Benjamin, 1746-1813

SUBJECT(S)

- **Materia medica**
- **Medical education--United States**
- **Medical students**
- **Medicine**
- **Medicine--Study and teaching**

Collection Inventory

	Volume
Notebook, 1797-1798.	1