From the History and Archives Collection

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The Delaware Academy of Medicine has a number of books in its historical collection which pertain directly to death and dying, and countless others which provide a window to how end of life has been perceived through the ages.

According to the Hospice Education Institute:

> "Each society throughout history has evolved special ways of caring for the dying and the bereaved. For example: in old China the "death houses" offered a place for the destitute dying to stay; in New Zealand, Maori customs give practical support for the family at the time of death, and encourage the community to participate in the mourning rituals; in East Africa, wise elders give both practical and spiritual support to the dying and bereaved."

They go onto state:

> "(in the) Middle Ages: Religious orders establish "hospices" at key crossroads on the way to religious shrines like Santiago de Compostela, Chartres and Rome. These shelters helped pilgrims, many of whom were traveling to these shrines seeking miraculous cure of chronic and fatal illnesses, and many of whom died while on their pilgrimages."

An excerpt from a book in our collection, "History of Medicine" by Fielding H. Garrison, A.B., M.D., F.A.C.S. donated by the family of Edwin Bird, M.D., one of the founding trustees of the Academy, is shown below (Figure 1). It references hospices directly, and the plan of Saint Gall, a monastic compound dating from the early 9th century which would include a "hospital, with a room for grave cases" (Figure 2).

Figure 1. <u>History of Medicine</u>, by Fielding H. Garrison, AB, MD, FACS
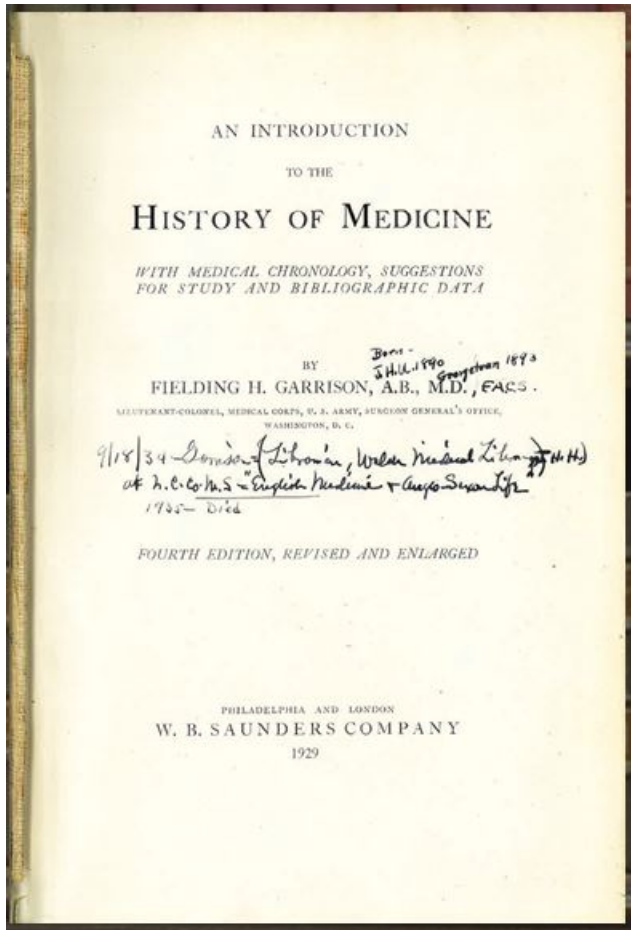
Figure 2. Page 177 of <u>History of Medicine</u>, by F.H. Garrison

hospitals arose at Ephesus, Constantinople, and elsewhere. These eventually became specialized, according to Christian ideas of the obligation of charity and hospitality, as: Nosocomia or claustral hospitals, for the reception and care of the sick alone; Brephotrophia, for foundlings; Orphanotrophia, for orphans; Ptochia, for the helpless poor; Gerontochia, for the aged; and Xenodochia, for poor and infirm pilgrims. At the beginning of the 5th century, hospitals began to spring up in the Western Empire. The first nosocomium in Western Europe was founded by Fabiola about 400, "to gather in the sick from the streets and to nurse the wretched sufferers, wasted with poverty and disease" (St. Jerome).

Other nosocomia were founded in Rome by Belisarius, in the Via Lata, and by Pelagius; and, further west, by Cæsarius at Arles (542), by Childebert I at Lyons (542¹), and by Bishop Masona at Merida (580). The Hôtel Dieu is said to have been founded between 641 and 691 by St. Landry, Bishop of Paris, and was first mentioned in 829. A Milanese hospital was founded in 777 and the first foundling asylum by Archbishop Datheus at Milan in 787. St. Albans Hospital in England dates from the year 794. In the early Middle Ages, infirmaries and hospices grew up alongside the cloisters. The ideal plan of St. Gall (820) included a hospital, with a room for grave cases, dwelling-houses for physicians, bath-rooms for cupping and bleeding, and a pharmacy.² The mountain xenodochia or hospices of Mont Cenis (825) and the Great St. Bernard (962) are still in existence.

After the death of Charlemagne, the larger hospitals began to decline through subdivision or loss of revenue and, in this period, we find the monasteries, such as those of the Benedictine order at Cluny, Fulda and elsewhere, provided with private infirmaries and "eleemosynary hospitals." About the same time arose the various Catholic hospital orders and fraternities for looking after the sick, of which the earliest were the Parabolani who, according to Gibbon, were first organized at Alexandria during the plague of Gallienus (A. D. 253–268). Parabolani sought out the sick, not unlike the monks of St. Bernard today, but soon exceeded their authority and were gradually suppressed. The term "sorority" probably comes from Soror, who founded the hospital Santa Maria della Scala at Siena in 808. Other religious orders which sprang up about the time of the Crusades were the Alexians, the Antonines, and the Beguins; the Hospitallers, comprising the followers of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, who founded two hospitals at Eisenach with a third on the Wartburg; the Sisters of St. Catherine; the order of St. John of Jerusalem, which was founded when the Crusaders reached the Holy City in 1099; and the Teutonic Order, which was started in a field hospital outside the walls of Acre and was approved by Clement III in 1191. The Teutonic Knights vowed themselves to care for the sick and to build a hospital wherever their order was introduced, and played a great part in Germany in medieval times, but eventually died out from lack of funds in the 15th century. Similarly, the Order

¹ Founded as a xenodochium under laic authority; given over to the clergy in 1308.
² F. Keller: Bauriss des Klosters St. Gallen, Zürich, 1844. Cited by Neuburger.

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