

Medical, Dental, and Nursing Memorabilia 1817-1967

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This year, the Delaware Academy of Medicine and Delaware Public Health Association have been afforded a wonderful opportunity to highlight some of the major accomplishments of DAM/DAHPA as well as exhibit many of the medical, dental and nursing memorabilia housed in our collection as well as that of the Medical Society of Delaware, the University of Delaware, the Delaware Historical Society, and several state museums and historical societies. This has been made possible by the excellent, new exhibit space developed by the Delaware Historical Society at its newly renovated space at Sixth and Market Streets in downtown Wilmington.

As part of its mission, DAM/DAHPA believes it is important to preserve and protect the history of the health professions in Delaware. Since its founding in 1930, the DAM has acquired important and mundane equipment, pharmaceuticals, instruments and documents from members and others interested in preserving this history.

For this exhibit, we selected the approximate time frame of 1817-1967, a span of 150 years, which showed major changes in the practice of medicine. Among the items on display are (see Figures 1 and 2):

- The Margaret Handy-Katherine Esterly collection of infant feeders. These glass, porcelain and other types of bottles and pitchers were used to feed infants prior to the development of the infant bottles we know today;
- A collection of Civil War surgical instruments, primarily used for trauma surgery on wounded soldiers;
- Typical traveling instruments of dentists, opticians and physicians in the days of house calls;
- Nineteenth and early twentieth century microscopes;
- Useful, and sometimes useless or harmful drugs as dispensed by pharmacists, allopathic and homeopathic physicians;
- Nursing uniforms, caps and pins, reminding us of the origins of nursing education in hospitals across the state;
- A look back at the 1962 DAM Health Fair, a massive undertaking put on in the now razed National Guard Auditorium, with over 80 exhibits including the invisible woman, and a replica of the Mercury space capsule;
- Materials relating to the founding of the Medical Society of Delaware, courtesy of the MSD;
- A look back at the development of hospital buildings in Delaware, through pictures and picture postcards;

- A summary of major public health initiatives and programs within Delaware, and nationally.

With some exceptions, the items shown are from a time prior to 1967. It is interesting to contemplate the changes that have occurred in the last 50 years, and then to ponder how these professions will be practiced in 2067, when the items considered state-of-the-art for today will appear in a similar retrospective.

This exhibit is open to the public through October 2017.

Figure 1.



Figure 2



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