DANCING THROUGH RUTGERS MEDICAL COLLEGE, 1826-1828

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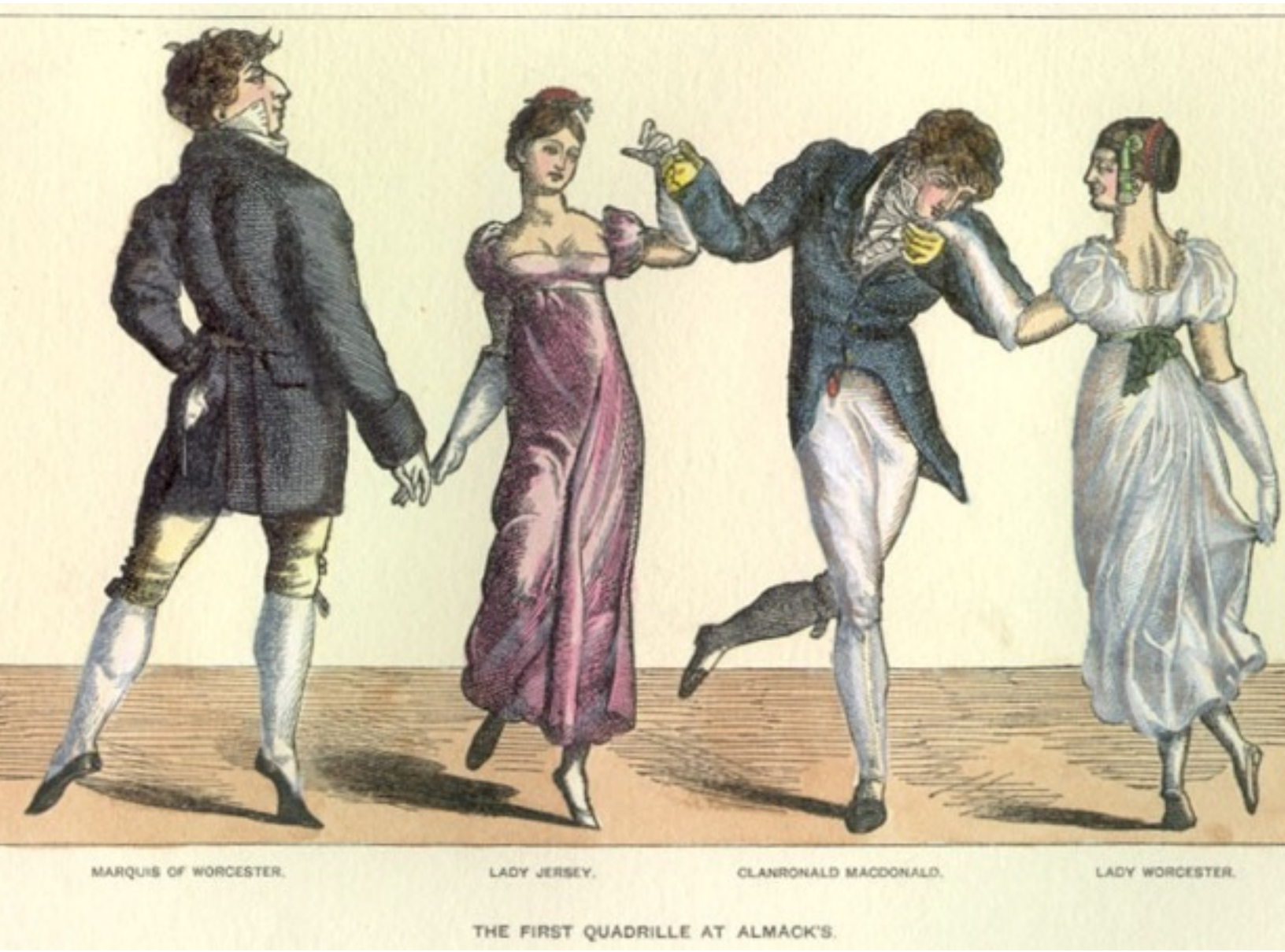


PREFACE

In 1826 Dr. Elijah Rosencrantz of HoHoKus, NJ wrote a letter to his son John, an entering student at Rutgers Medical College in Lower Manhattan. It included this:

> ***You will not disappoint me I hope of keeping yourself and your desires of company and the pleasures of youth under restraint….Return my compliments to Dr. Hossack (sic), you will be very careful and respectful to all the professors [but] particularly Dr. Hossack.***

To his credit, Elijah seemed to realize that all work and no play might make John a dull boy, so he grudgingly agreed to pay for his son to take dancing classes:

> ***So long as its respectable and not too expensive. But this you must keep to yourself, let it not be known here.***

What was going on? Who were Elijah and John Rosencrantz? Who was Dr. Hossack (sic)? Was Rutgers Medical College once located in Manhattan? And why should taking dancing classes be kept a secret? Let me explain.

In 2002 I was doing research in the archives of the Hermitage museum in HoHoKus, NJ in preparation for an exhibition I'd soon be curating there about Bergen County's medical history. In the course of my work, I discovered a trove of letters written in 1826 by Dr. Elijah Rosencrantz to his eldest son John who was an entering medical student at Rutgers Medical College in New York City. They were full of paternal advice, including the lines that I've just quoted, and although the archive didn't possess John's side of the correspondence, I decided to pursue the matter as best I could and, hopefully, from a student's perspective.

It should be no surprise that from time immemorial medical students had more than academics on their minds and John Rosencrantz was no exception. Nor were roughly 400 other young men who attended Rutgers Medical College during its four year life span in Manhattan between 1826 and 1830. Many of the students there came from rural backgrounds and were exposed to temptations in Olde New York that they'd never experienced back home, and today we'll consider a few of the experiences of two of them: the aforementioned John Rosencrantz (1809-1885) and also Asa Fitch (1803-1879) from upstate Salem, New York.

John Rosencrantz's father Elijah, who preferred spelling his surname as RoseGrant, was a fourth generation American who was born in Sussex County in 1766. He was one of 14 children of a wealthy landowner who'd been a colonel in George Washington's army and Elijah was the first in the family to go to college, graduating from Queens College (later Rutgers) in 1791. Then he studied theology for sixteen months and was granted a license to preach, but his first sermon was so uninspiring that he began to have second thoughts about a career as an itinerant preacher. Also, as he wrote in a letter to a friend, he was disturbed by "the low state of religion and the neglect paid to ministers in general [so] I prosecuted the study of physik with diligence."

After a two year apprenticeship, Elijah was granted a medical license in 1799 and opened a practice in Paramus, and eight years later he bought fifty-five acres of The Hermitage estate in nearby HoHoKus. For four days in 1778, The Hermitage had served as General Washington's headquarters and his staff included the likes of James Madison, the Marquis de Lafayette, Benedict Arnold and two dashing and competitive young colonels – Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr. But that's another story. In fact, it might make a good Broadway show!

When Elijah Rosencrantz''s oldest son John was fifteen, he was sent to pursue "liberal studies" at an academy in New York City but, because of financial pressure, there was a change of plans and the ailing father arranged for his son to continue in the family business of doctoring. Early letters from John to siblings and friends had described squirrel hunting, sleighing and new clothes which suggests that he was a typical teenager more than a serious scholar. But Elijah reconciled himself — so long as his high-spirited son applied himself and demonstrated what the old doctor called "the cardinal virtues of honesty, justice, temperance and prudence."

> *I wish you my son to apply yourself to your studies, take necessary exercise and amusement but let them not intrude on your hours of study….The many inducements to take you from your studies by the practice and customs of the young people in this country give me some anxiety for fear you will give away too much…Exercise and some company is necessary to become acquainted with the world, but I shall still hope that you will not give yourself too much to the pleasures and diversions of customs of this place…. It is impossible to apply the mind to study when it is continually intoxicated with the idea of company and those bewitching frolics common to this country. You will not disappoint me I hope of keeping yourself and your desires of company and pleasures of youth under due restraint.*

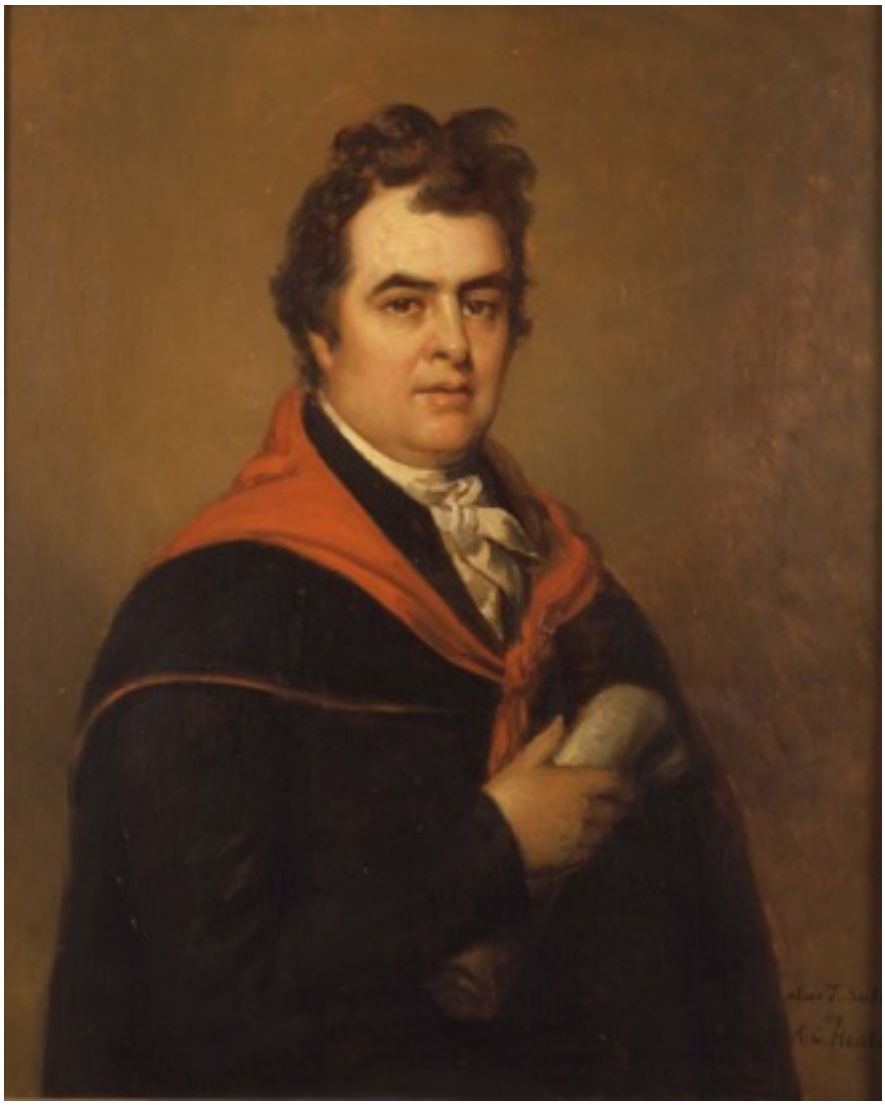
> *Your main object should be knowledge of your intended profession and secondly knowledge of the world which are both indispensably necessary to your becoming useful to yourself and society. ..The field before you is great. Great industry and perseverance is necessary to make your reputation in your profession. This I trust you are sensible of and will not disappoint me in.*

It sounds like Polonius' advice to Hamlet doesn't it? John Rosencrantz attended two terms of classes at Rutgers (1826-7,1827-8) and I once calculated that the total cost of lectures, books, boarding, etc. would have amounted to about $400, or nearly as much as his father made from his medical practice in a good year. But Elijah must have felt that the investment would be worth it, because, as he wrote to John, two slightly older local boys (Garret Banta and Cornelius Zabriskie) already were "making their fortunes" practicing nearby.

I can't say much about John's experiences in Olde New York because I couldn't locate any of his letters from that time, but I'll return to him in due time. However, before I discuss the extra-curricular life of another Rutgers medical student, let's pause to consider a little about the head of the school — "Dr. Hossack" — the man who Elijah especially wanted his son to be solicitous to, although he couldn't spell the doctor's name properly.

David Hosack (*not* Hossack) was born in New York City in 1769. His father had come from Scotland to fight in the French and Indian War under Lord Jeffrey Amherst and afterward decided to stay on. As a young man, David decided to become a doctor, apprenticed with a prominent New York surgeon (Richard Bayley) and then enrolled in Columbia College. In 1788 while studying anatomy at New York Hospital, he was involved in what was known as the "Doctor's Riot" when a mob, enraged by grave robbing and alleged abuse of cadavers by medical students, ran amuck for three days. Professors and students fled for their lives and the militia was called out. When their leader, Baron Von Steuben, was struck by a rock, he ordered his men to "Fire" and five of the rioters were killed and seven or eight severely wounded.

Young David Hosack also was struck on the head by a rock and had to be carried away — and otherwise unscathed, he prudently transferred to the less rowdy College of New Jersey in Princeton — for some reason that's unclear to me, he grumbled that Columbia was "too aristocratic." He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton in 1789 and went on to study medicine at the University of Pennsylvania where he boarded in the home of the famous Dr. Benjamin Rush.



David Hosack

After graduation and marriage, David Hosack came to realize that the wealthier citizens, whom he coveted, favored doctors who'd studied in Europe. So leaving wife and infant son behind, he followed a familiar route to Edinburgh and London where he stayed for two years and had a grand time hobnobbing with influential people. He found that he was weak in botanical medicine and set out to rectify this so by the time he returned to New York City he probably knew more about medicinal herbs than anyone else and in 1795 he was appointed Professor of Botany at Columbia College.

Six years later, Hosack bought 20 wooded acres of so-called “common land” three and a half miles north of the city limit (between West 47th and 51st Street, Fifth and Sixth Avenues) and in that sylvan setting he built America’s first botanical garden. He named it Elgin after his father’s native city in Scotland, friends (including Thomas Jefferson) sent seeds from around the world and soon there were more than 3,000 varieties and rare trees. Elegantly dressed couples strolled around the manicured grounds and Hosack held an annual Strawberry Festival to emphasize that exotic fruit’s medicinal properties. However, his medical students (P&S, not yet Rutgers) were reluctant to take the arduous trip north of the city limits just to study plants. They had other extra-curricular things on their minds, as we’ll soon see. (For more about Elgin Garden, read *American Eden* by Victoria Johnson.)

In the Broadway musical *Hamilton* an actor carrying a medical bag represents David Hosack, but is not identified by name — and when at the famous duel in 1804 when Alexander Hamilton was killed, Aaron Burr sings (“The World Was Wide Enough”) that Hamilton brought "a doctor that he knew," who turned around so he could have deniability. That fits the conventional narrative that Hosack was crouched in the bushes with his back turned so as not to be an eye witness to an illegal event.

Whether that was true or not, when shots rang out, Hosack rushed over, only to hear Hamilton gasp “It’s a mortal wound, Doctor” — and he was correct. David Hosack helped carry Hamilton to the boat and administered smelling salts and pain killers as they rowed back across the Hudson. Hamilton died in agony the next day and Hosack performed the autopsy. Later he served as a pall bearer, and eventually sent a bill for $50 for “medical services rendered during the final illness.” Hosack also loaned Aaron Burr money for his escape on a ship to Europe where he lived for several years in self-imposed exile — but it’s unclear whether the doctor ever was paid for his “services” to either Hamilton or Burr.

At the beginning of the 19th century American medical education was chaotic and political in-fighting in New York between Columbia College and P&S was especially fierce. Among the gang of rivals, David Hosack may have been the most entrepreneurial and aggressive; one historian (Byron Stookey) called him “the stormy petrel of American education.” Power, profits, perks, personal grievances all were involved and, undaunted by various conflicts of interest, Hosack was on the faculty of both schools. At the same time, he was profitably teaching his own private students because in those days teachers were paid directly by their students — so the more students they had, the fuller their pocketbook. But that was the trouble!

At one time, Hosack held three separate professorships at P&S, but also wanted to be appointed professor of surgery which was especially popular among the students. Thwarted in this, he resigned in fury — his parting shot was, “I can spend my time more profitably than by teaching *unproductive* branches to the College of Physicians….I must not be neglected.”

So in 1825 Hosack opened his own school in what’s now the Tribeca section. He siphoned off the best of the faculty and attracted more than 150 students and, using their own money, the rebels purchased a building on Duane Street, near the old school and adjacent to the 400+ bed New York Hospital. However, the new school needed the backing of a diploma-granting institution and, after negotiations with Union College fell through, Hosack cast his eyes back across the river to the newly reopened Rutgers College. At first the Rutgers trustees were skeptical, but Hosack persuaded them that having a medical school not only would enhance their prestige, but they’d receive a $3 matriculation fee and $25 graduation fee from each student. That sweetened the deal and when the college agreed, critics of the merger grumbled that Queens (now Rutgers) had always been “a sickly institution” and was desperate to compete with their rivals in Princeton.

Dr. Hosack marketed his school aggressively so that when he gave an Introductory lecture to his students in 1826, he was pleased to note that there were 152 of them compared to 90 at what he dismissively called “the old school” (P&S.) I have a copy of Hosack’s introductory speech given at Columbia the year before. It so thrilled the students that they wished to publish it and he graciously gave permission, so long as they paid for it — and they did. The Rutgers students came from fifteen states and four other countries, but of that large group, only 36 would receive degrees from Rutgers College the next spring. No matter -- their time sitting in the lecture hall could be credited toward medical licensure because in those days the usual requirement for state licensure included three years apprenticeship and two years of attending lectures but not necessarily a diploma.

David Hosack had powerful friends, but also plenty of enemies who accused him of being dishonest and self-serving and even sued him for libel. When a law passed in 1827 that precluded using degrees from out-of-state schools for medical licensure in New York State, the intrepid Dr. Hosack turned to Geneva College in the Finger Lakes District (later Hobart College) so that diplomas issued in 1830 read “on the recommendation of the Geneva Medical Faculty AND Rutgers College.”

However, this hybrid arrangement between Hosack's school and Rutgers College was short-lived and lectures were given for only four years from 1826 to 1830. Hosack carried his losing fight to the Supreme Court and legal battles continued for five more years until Hosack finally threw in the towel – and several months later, he died at his Hyde Park estate of a probable stroke at age 66. Enough said for now about the "stormy petrel."

Asa Fitch

Now, let's consider a second Rutgers medical student by the name of Asa Fitch. He was born in 1803 in the tiny village of Salem in upstate New York, near Glens Falls, and from age 12 until his death at age 70 (also in Salem), he recorded details of his life in daily journals, including his single term at Rutgers. Today they're all preserved in one of Yale University's libraries which provided copies for me to review.

Asa Fitch was a virtuous farm boy who had a strict upbringing and, as a teenager, he scolded himself, "I must not idle away my time….I must do better. I *mus*t do better." Although showed aptitude for botany and geology, his father (of the same name) and his grandfather both were doctors and wanted him to enter the family vocation.
So after graduating from high school, he was apprenticed to a local doctor who'd purchased his father's practice and that winter he entered the Vermont Academy of

Medicine in Castleton. After completing a term there, he chastised himself about his insufficient application to study. He wrote, “I regret I have not learned more. I have often been too inattentive, and have heard whole lectures, without remembering scarcely an idea which they contained. It is now… too late to repent, and I must make amends in my future application.”

An opportunity for self-improvement came in November 1828 when Asa enrolled for a term of lectures and surgical demonstrations at Rutgers. It was the school’s third year of operation and Asa wrote that at the opening ceremony, the faculty of six professors entered “to great applause and stamping feet from at least 200 present.” President Hosack discussed political opposition to the school and sarcastically described how their enemies “were glad to bite, but fortunately had no teeth.” Students crowded Dr. Hosack’s lectures and copied down every one of his words in their notes. But the chief’s prickly personality could be off-putting and, although he had a reputation as being a brilliant speaker, he usually read from notes and once when he droned on for nearly three hours, many in the audience snuck out before he wound down.

Asa Fitch spent little time writing about his classes in his journal. In fact, most of the entries described attractions and temptations of big city life — about how he walked wide-eyed along Broadway, the Bowery and Greenwich Village; how he ferried across the East River to visit the Brooklyn Navy Yard; how whenever a fire bell rang out he’d dash off after the engines to watch the show. Museums and theater provided entertainment and his strict religious background was tested as he visited various churches, seemingly more out of curiosity than from religious fervor.

Undoubtedly, the highlight of Asa Fitch’s social life in New York, were dancing classes for men that were given in a hall in the 11th Ward, that was a section famous for its many rowdy beer saloons. At first Asa was shy and clumsy, but he diligently practiced the dance steps in his room at night after it was too dark to read or write. After twenty-three lessons, he became self-confident and comfortable in “gallanting” the young ladies at cotillions. He learned to bow and shake hands according to current etiquette and he wrote that he mastered the “art of conversation.” He justified his passion for dancing by saying, “The profession I have chosen requires an ability to conduct myself in all grades of society with ease and propriety.” Also, he was beguiled by young women — although with some reservations:

Previously, I'd delighted to look on beautiful features and to contemplate the fair sex with admiration [but] my natural diffidence and bashfulness forbade my forming any acquaintance except when circumstances made it unavoidable… [but] New York is no place for [feminine] beauty. All the paraphernalia of art will never supplant this defect. I have not since I arrived here, seen looks so fascinating to me, as those of the country fair ones, where the tyrant fashion has not so [held] sway.

On Christmas Eve Asa was homesick and longing for companionship he went partying with a few friends. They drank hot whiskey punch, gin cocktails and cognac slings and before long the giddy group was full of "life and animation…[and] felt a glow of thought." Their conversation was "frivolous and risable" and they drunkenly stumbled through their dance routines, sang off-tune and staggered home very late. Predictably, this was followed by morning-after sickness, self-recrimination and vows not to repeat the debauch — at least not for a few days.

On New Year's Day, Dr. Hosack, himself, invited the students to his elegant home in Kipp's Bay for warm punch and cake. A servant showed them around the grounds, but the great man seemed more interested in talking with the state's Lieutenant Governor about the prospects of the Legislature chartering the school. He boasted that Rutgers had the largest enrollment in New York and disparaged his rivals at Columbia as being mere "amateurs." Asa and his friends sneaked out as soon as possible and went off to celebrate in more congenial surroundings. Like other youth of the day, they enjoyed alcohol and smoking and experimented inhaling nitrous oxide and ether, or resorted to liberal doses of opium in order to "excite the ideas."

Asa Fitch's four months in Manhattan was the longest time he'd ever been away from home and by the end of February he was eager to return to Salem. Before leaving he purchased a medical bag, lancets, chemicals and books and as the end of the term approached, he was pleased that he'd made "rapid strides toward the age of manhood." On his last night in the city, he put on his finery and his "blackened and shining boots," and resolved that "this shall be the happiest, sweetest, liveliest evening I have yet known in New York. I will let out one notch." At the cotillion, while changing to his dancing pumps, Asa became reflective:

When shall I wear them again? I know not, but hope the folks in Salem do not think dancing the awful thing which they have for a few years past. Where is the harm in dancing? I have not yet found it out. I have not yet experienced the least ill consequence from it. Nor does my conscience tell me it's wrong or sinful."….I have now come to a room where many an evening for the last three months I have witnessed the manners and customs of city life, the gayety and frivolity – where many an hour has been passed "treading the steps of the giddy dance, on the light fantastic toe." Ah, they were happy hours – hours of enjoyment. And with this evening they terminate forever.

That night Asa Fitch led some of the quadrilles and proudly held his head "as straight and stiff as a dandy." He knew that when he returned to his sober rural community that both family and church leaders would reprimand him for frivolous behavior, especially his dancing, but he had no regrets and was undaunted. But he'd derived great pleasure from the manners and customs of city life and vowed never to return to "say-nothing-to-nobody-ness"; never again to be an "ill-bred booby." He wrote in his journal…

I am not prepared to renounce it [dancing]…my determination at the outset was to rid myself of the extreme diffidence, timidity, tongue-tiedness…This would never do for me when I was a doctor…I was resolved to cure myself of it….I can now go into company, yes, polite company, and feel myself at home…I have danced, I have played, I have kissed rosy cheeks, I have won maidens' smiles. Yet I do not think I have gone astray, or opened the wounds of my Saviour…or sinned against my God….And if dancing is to be condemned from the vicious habits to which it leads, I can aver that I have not gambled. I have not squandered away money. I have had no illicit connections. I have not even had any such inclinations. Never, no never.

After his single term at Rutgers Medical College, Asa Fitch returned home and apprenticed again with a local doctor. In August 1828 he returned to the Vermont medical school as an advanced student and attended the same lectures that he had during his first term there. Of course, life in Vermont wasn't comparable to what he'd encountered in New York City. He dutifully attended church services, participated in the local debating society and sought opportunities to meet young ladies; the highlight of the year was the arrival of a traveling circus. But Asa was restless and eager to strike out on his own: "Oh, may it ever be my lot to be contented, to be happy, in whatever sphere I may be placed, nor pine away my life, with needless gloomy thoughts, when at best there is sorrow enough."

When Asa Fitch married a local girl, he wrote in his journal that he was “attracted more by her mind than her beauty.” He practiced in her hometown (Stillwater) for six years and his various experiences there left him with a “cordial distaste” for the life of a country doctor. He regarded himself as too honest to compete with the many quacks and charlatans in the profession and, unlike them, he was determined to give medicine only when needed and only in “necessary doses.” In truth, Asa’s passion always had been for something very different than medicine — he was fascinated by ***insects***! Since early childhood he habitually crawled around on hands and knees collecting all manner of creeping things in his “bug net.” The neighbors called him “The Bug Catcher.”

In 1838 Asa gave up medical practice for good, returned to Salem to attend to his ailing father’s business and remained on the family’s 600 acre farm for the remainder of his life. Lots of insects there! In 1855 he was appointed as New York State’s first professional entomologist and, in time, was recognized as America’s leading authority. His fourteen voluminous reports, called “The Noxious and Other Insects of New York State,” were recognized as classics in the field and he was acknowledged to be a prime mover in developing entomology as a profession in America. I don’t know whether he continued to dance, but somehow that sounds incompatible with catching bugs!

John Rosencrantz

And what became of Elijah Rosencrantz's son John after his sojourn in lower Manhattan? Although Rutgers Medical School already had suspended classes after only four years, in June 1830 John was informed by the secretary of the college's Board of Trustees that he'd been granted an *honorary* medical degree. By then John he was apprenticing with his father and as Elijah's health began to fail, his 21 year old son took over more of the burden. John wrote to his brother, "I am a trudging country doctor with barely power enough to keep my head above water on the ocean of the world. I will ride horseback until we get a sulky." The life of a country doctor was tedious and exhausting and in 1832 this is what he wrote to a friend:

> *I am almost wearied out, driving constantly from 5 to 6 in the morning until 8,9,10 and 12 o'clock at night….The people around here are an infernal set with few exceptions. They don't care to pay bills, we must call for it [even] if it is five miles….If only I had time to collect and people had a disposition to pay…I am a man who is poor who is doing a business of 4 to 7 dollars a day and not able to collect enough to pay a tradesman's bill…*
>
> *I give you some insight into the horrors of the country practice for although I am the son of a country doctor and brought up in this country, yet I know no more of this life and the perplexities of one who practices here and lives by it, than a new born babe….It is a Monday morning and I have just come in and have not a cent…Hell and dander…I wish the profession was in oblivion.*

In another letter, this to his brother, John complained that "unrelenting routine is one of the greatest antidotes to sentiment and the busy imagination of youth…There is no room for fancy in the reality of this world." Presumably, that meant no time for dancing. No wonder that soon after his father died in 1832, John Rosencrantz abandoned the medical practice altogether and moved to Philadelphia where he worked for the large Ripka textile mills and soon married the boss's wealthy daughter. That always was a tried and true method of moving up in the world. (David Hosack had three wives, each richer than the previous.)

Perhaps you may wonder what happened to Dr. Hosack's Elgin Garden? He was unable to afford the uptake, so he sold it to New York State, but there was little interest in the project and, as It went to seed (pardon the pun), ownership repeatedly changed. As the price of real estate skyrocketed, it emerged, eventually, as Rockefeller Center. Today, an inconspicuous granite plaque along the walkway between the statue of Atlas on Fifth Avenue and the ice skating ring reads in part,

In memory of David Hosack, Botanist, physician, man of science and citizen of the world. On this site he developed the famous Elgin Botanic Garden for the advancement of medical research and the knowledge of plants.

More than a century later, Radio City Music Hall's Rockettes danced on what once had been Elgin Garden and I suspect that if Hosack's students, including John and Asa, were still around, they' d have enjoyed watching the ladies kicking up their heels and *"treading the steps of the giddy dance, on the light fantastic toe."* And perhaps, even putting on their own polished dancing shoes and joining in the fun.

Appendix 1: "The Old Doctor's Garden," from *Meanderings in New Jersey's Medical History.*

I mentioned earlier that in 2002 I had curated an exhibition at The Hermitage in HoHoKus about Bergen County's early medical history. On opening night I got to speak about some of the old docs who'd once worked near there and, unbeknownst to me, there was a reporter from a Ridgewood newspaper in the audience. Her review was printed the next day and focused on what I'd said about a local hero — Dr. William Vroom. In March 1888, fresh out of NYU medical school, he'd come from NYC by train to visit his father who'd recently been appointed as pastor of the Paramus Reformed Church. The next day it began to snow and blow, and it continued for three days; there was 21 inches on the ground with 40 to 50 inch drifts. It was the famous "Blizzard of '88" and the young doctor was stranded.

According to legend, Ridgewood's Dr. William Francis asked William Vroom to cover for a few days while he took a well earned rest. The old doc hadn't had a day off for nearly fifteen years and the young man agreed. After all, he couldn't go anywhere; he was marooned. It seems that Dr. Francis couldn't tolerate all the leisure and died shortly afterward. An obituary suggested that he may have worked himself to death. The details are a bit fuzzy, but it makes a good story. Details notwithstanding, William Vroom did take over the old doc's practice and then continued—for 76 years! Indeed, he continued to see patients into his mid 90s when he was hailed as the nation's oldest active physician. He died on August 1, 1966, four months after his 100th birthday party.

Vroom had a remarkable career which I enjoyed describing to the audience. A day or two after the newspaper account of my talk appeared, I received a phone call from a woman who said that about 35 years earlier, she'd been cared for by Dr. Vroom — in fact, that she'd been his very last patient. Would I like to hear about it? And how! For the sake of anonymity, I'll call the woman Mary and she suffered from what today we probably would call a "panic disorder." It was so disabling that she rarely ventured out of her home and several times she'd been admitted to mental hospitals, but not only was her treatment there unsuccessful, it was insensitive and her desperate mother phoned the old doctor for advice. The doctor told them to come right over and when they did, they found Dr. Vroom to be up a tree—literally! Apparently, the old man was perched on a ladder pruning a tree in his garden. He climbed down and briefly listened to Mary's story and then he did something unexpected. He asked her to lend him a hand as he continued to work in his garden. He said that he needed help so, in effect, they reversed roles and now she'd be helping him.

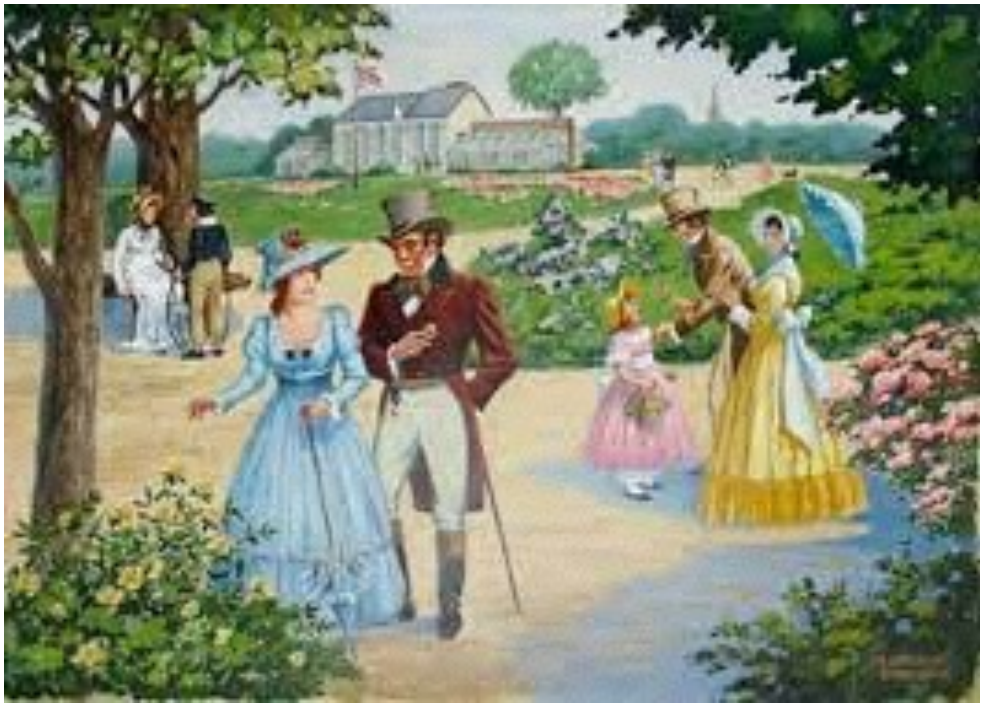
That's what Mary told me, but later I was able to find Dr. Vroom's own account of that meeting. As his 100th birthday approached in 1966, he'd agreed to be interviewed by three much younger Ridgewood physicians and at the end, Vroom mentioned a young woman (Mary) who'd been his last patient: His memory differed slightly, but no matter. Here's what he said:

> *She'd suffered from "a nervous condition" but was not insane. She'd been treated without benefit first at Bergen Pines, then at Morris Plains (Greystone) and now was home "on vacation….So they sent her home and she came to see me and told me all about it. Well, I said, "Go out in my garden with me. Plant seeds and do my transplanting with me and do something. You've never done a stroke of work in your life before." Yes, she came down the next day. She had a pair of overalls on, all fixed for it. I put her to work that day. We worked in the garden . . . . It did her some good. She acted better. Did it again the next day. I gave her work for three or four days. I telephoned Morris Plains, telephoned the doctor there, told him what I had done and how she was acting. He said, "Keep her right there and go ahead.*

It seems that from their weekly work in the garden that a bond of trust had developed and Mary gradually gained self-confidence. Dr. Vroom found her a job working for a local veterinarian and eventually, she emerged as a poised health professional who in later years counseled others who had anxiety disorders. Mary and the old doctor became friends and when Vroom attended her wedding, he said, "I'm not going to leave

until I get a snoot full.” And when she brought her baby to his 100th birthday party, he pointed to them and said, “That’s the best thing I ever did.”

In that true story Dr. Vroom displayed traits which in today’s high tech medical system are no longer as evident. In those less complicated times, empathy and dedication to the patient as an individual sometimes was all that the harried doctors could provide. Nevertheless, common sense — and, yes, even gardening! — sometimes could accomplish a great deal



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Dr. Hosack’s Elgin Botanic Garden