



Right.—The Grave of General Mercer in Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pa.—The monument was erected by St. Andrews Society, November 26, 1840, appropriate commemorative inscriptions pay tribute to the hero. Left.—The home of General Hugh Mercer in Fredericksburg—“The Sentry Box”—Back of this, at some distance, is the old Washington farm.



Dr. (afterward Brigadier-General) Hugh Mercer's Apothecary Shop, Fredericksburg, Va. Here General Washington had his desk for the transaction of business when in Fredericksburg.



Wijf Meren

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION

VOL. XV

JUNE, 1926

No. 6

BI-CENTENARY AND SESQUI-CENTENNIAL EVENTS.

Heroes and events of 150 years ago are recalled at this time when the Sesqui-Centennial of American Independence is being celebrated. Many of the events of about 1776, in the historic city of Fredericksburg and the Old Dominion, have a close relation to those in Philadelphia and the Keystone State during corresponding years. At this time the need of an American Pharmacopœia for the Army was recognized and resulted in the preparation of the Formulary¹ compiled and published at Lititz, Pa., by Dr. William A. Brown, a native of Virginia. The father of the U. S. Pharmacopœia, Lyman Spalding, was born June 5, 1775.²

Historical records relating to the birth of Hugh Mercer, as far as the date is concerned, are not in accord, the years 1720–1726 being given; there is definiteness however, as to his baptismal year, namely, 1726; hence, we may say he was born about 200 years ago. He was the son of Rev. William Mercer, who had charge of the Manse at Pittslogo, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, from 1720–1748.

As a young man, Hugh Mercer entered the school of medicine of Marischal College (University of Aberdeen), and graduated with high honors in 1744; this would indicate that the year of his birth antedates 1726. The young physician was just beginning to develop a medical practice when "The Young Pretender" reached Scotland and Dr. Mercer joined these forces as Assistant Surgeon, and after the former's defeat at Drummosie Moor, he deemed it advisable to depart for the United States, arriving in Philadelphia during the summer of 1746. Shortly thereafter he came to Greencastle, Pa., (?) (now Mercersburg) and established a medical practice and also an apothecary shop.

Dr. Mercer did not enjoy quiet life when there was work to do and so he took an active part in the military activities of this period; these are recorded in the pages of American history; few, if any, citizens of this country have a finer record of loyalty, courage and achievement, and he left to his posterity the heritage of a revered and honorable name. He was wounded at Fort Duquesne when

¹ See JOUR. A. PH. A., December 1920, p. 1132. ² See JOUR. A. PH. A., August 1917, p. 675.

General Braddock was killed and here the friendship with General Washington was formed which continued until Brigadier General Mercer's death at the battle of Princeton, January 1777. The attachment which had developed for Washington induced Dr. Mercer in 1763 to move to Fredericksburg, Va., the former home-town of his friend. The histories of Fredericksburg by Quinn and Goolrick, and the "Life of General Hugh Mercer," by the latter, give an insight into the home, social, professional and business life and fraternal relations of many who laid the foundations of these United States. Here we find James Monroe, John Paul Jones, General Weedon, Gustavus Wallace, Mary the mother of Washington, and many notables of that period; here is located and still very active, Fredericksburg Lodge No. 4, in which Washington was obligated as a Mason and over which Dr. Mercer presided as Master for a year. These references are, however, incidental to the purpose of this writing.

Dr. Mercer married Isabella Gordon, daughter of John Gordon, and soon after coming to Fredericksburg he returned to the practice of medicine, and in 1764 opened the apothecary shop at the corner of Main and Amelia Streets—the firm being Mercer & Clement from 1771–1773 and, in November of 1773, was succeeded by Mercer & Julian. It is said that no other business has been conducted here since, but the building for many years was occupied as a dwelling; it is still standing and there is some prospect of its restoration by an historical society of Fredericksburg. Washington had a desk in this store from 1764 to 1776, at which he transacted business whenever he came to Fredericksburg (his mother lived here until her demise in 1789); it may be assumed that part of the business was concerned with the Washington Estate, but much of it related to the services for State and Country, in which he had the counsel of compatriots who met with him in Mercer's apothecary shop and around the open fire place at Rising Sun Tavern. "The Life of General Hugh Mercer" by John T. Goolrick has been drawn upon for most of these data.

On April 8, 1777, a committee of the Continental Congress, duly appointed, reported that "a monument be erected to the memory of General Mercer at Fredericksburg, in the State of Virginia, with the following inscription:

"Sacred to the memory of Hugh Mercer, Brigadier-General in the Army of the U. S. He died on the 12th of January 1777, of the wounds he received on the 3rd of the same month, near Princeton, N. J., bravely defending the liberties of America. The Congress of the United States, in testimony of his virtues and their gratitude, has caused this monument to be erected."

The report slumbered until June 28, 1902, when it was made effective by Congress in directing that a monument at Fredericksburg, to perpetuate the name and fame of Hugh Mercer, be erected.

True it is that pharmacy may have had a small part in this patriot's life, for it was a life of action; still it was part of his work on the battlefield, in preparing for the needs of the wounded and suffering and during the few quiet years when the physician and apothecary served his patients and patrons at Greencastle and at Fredericksburg. The incidents mentioned bring out some historical events of 1726, 1776 and 1926, that have an interest because of the approaching meeting of the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION, during the week of September 13, at which time, it is probable that the ASSOCIATION will order a mail vote to be taken for the selection of the site for the headquarters, in which provision is to be made for a museum of historical pharmacy. E. G. E.