The year was 1853, a smallpox outbreak occurred in Atlanta and the city quickly built a facility to house and segregate the victims. It was the second episode of smallpox in the young city, the first being in 1849. Fulton County had been established in December from a western section of Dekalb County and Atlanta became the county seat.

Another event, particularly, not much noticed by the general public, was the arrival in the city of John Westmoreland, MD, a 1843 graduate of the Augusta Medical College, whose impact on Atlanta’s healthcare continues to this day. Born in 1816 in Jasper County Georgia near Monticello he grew up on a farm in Fayette County near the Pike county border. After graduation, he set up practice in Pike County where he remained until moving his practice to the growing and thriving new city of Atlanta. He brought with him the idea of creating medical college in Atlanta, helped organize the small medical community, and began lectures in the City Hall. The city stipulated that classes could only occur in the winter so as not to interfere with city court. Dr. Westmoreland was elected to the State House of Representatives and he procured funding from the state for a medical school building to educate physicians, the Atlanta Medical College (AMC). The cornerstone was laid in 1855 at the intersection of Butler Street and Jenkins Street (the future Grady Memorial Hospital would be built across the street). The building survived the Civil War thanks to the actions of Dr. Noel D’Alvigny, but classes were interrupted and the facility used as a hospital.

Following the war, the school reopened with Dr. Westmoreland as its leader. The building would survive until 1906. Dr. Westmoreland was also responsible for founding the Brotherhood of Physicians which was the forerunner of the Medical Association of Atlanta. Disagreements within the medical faculty developed primarily around finances and other disagreements developed over spending funds in each department.

Dr. Thomas Powell, a teacher of obstetrics at the AMC decided to breakaway and establish the Southern Medical College (SMC) in 1878 located on Porters Alley (now Equitable Place). The two schools were physically close to each other but remained competitive for another twenty years. Dr. Westmoreland died in 1887 and Dr. Powell died in 1895 and the schools current Deans Dr. William Elkin of AMC and Dr. William Kendrick of SMC merged the two schools and formed the Atlanta College of Physicians and Surgeons (ACPS) in 1898. The new cornerstone was laid in April 7,
1906. Andrew Carnegie donated $40,000 for the construction and spoke at the ceremony. The Atlanta School of Medicine was established in 1905 when Dr Kendrick and several staff member resigned from ACPS and opened the new school. Dr. Elkin remained as the Dean of ACPS and the faculty included outstanding physicians such as George Noble, Stewart Roberts, Edward Davis, and L.C. Fisher. The Atlanta School of Medicine joined with ACPS in 1913 to become the AMC, the original name from 1854. The merger was stimulated by the Council of Medical Education of the AMA when new policies for admission of students were initiated. The school wanted to lower costs and improve curriculum requirements. Dr. Elkin was appointed the new Dean.

In March 1914, the courts of the state of Tennessee decided in favor of the Board of Trustees of Vanderbilt University to remove the school from the governance of the Methodist Church and become a non-sectarian school. The Atlanta campus of Emory is created when Vanderbilt decides to become a nonsectarian school. The Southern Methodists desired to have their own school east of the Mississippi and Bishop Warren Akin Candler, the brother of Atlanta business tycoon and founder of Coca Cola Asa Candler, asked him to help establish the school. Asa offered a gift of $1,000,000 to establish the college contingent upon the school being located in Atlanta. It was suggested the school be named The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce contributed another $500,000 and Wesley Memorial Church offered its facilities as a temporary home for the new school. It would house the school of theology and the fifty bed Wesley Memorial Hospital was made available as a teaching hospital for the proposed School of Medicine. The building was initially purchased by Asa Candler in 1904 for $17,500. In March 1915, Dr Elkin, Wilmer Moore and Frederick Paxon representing AMC met with Asa Candler, William Thomson and Reverend Plato Durham, Dean of the School of Theology from Emory University to discuss a merger of AMC into the university. This was accomplished on June 28, 1915 and Wesley Memorial Hospital would move to its present location in 1922. This was a remarkable passage from 1854 to 1915. The final merger likely the result of the Flexner report of Medical Education to the Carnegie Foundation in 1910 which transformed American medical education. This report recommended the ending proprietary medical schools and that medical education should be at universities associated with teaching hospitals.

We are looking for volunteers to join us as delegates to the MAG House of Delegates Meeting in October. Please consider coming to Savannah it is a wonderful and meaningful experience.

For more information about the history of medicine in Atlanta read Tincture of Time: The Story of 150 Years of Medicine in Atlanta by Martin Moran, MD (docmoran36@gmail.com)

We co-sponsor the J. Willis Hurst Symposium on the History of Medicine which occurs in the fall and will be held this year on October 21st at Emory Medical School

A SPECIAL PROJECT
We would appreciate the support of all the physicians

We would like to develop a catalog of all the historical medical books and objects in the Atlanta Community.

We are working with Sandra Franklin, the Emory medical librarian, and Clayton McGahee, the archive coordinator for the history of medicine collection, to provide a resource in medical history through the medical library that could help students, physicians and others in medical history projects. We are not asking that you relinquish the book or object only be willing to allow a researcher to view or browse it. However, we would not object if at a future date you or your significant other wanted to donate it to the collection, it would be appreciated.
Message from the President of the Atlanta
Leslie S. Leighton, MD, PhD

Shortly before Mark Silverman’s untimely death, he called me and asked me to be on the board of the Atlanta Medical History Society (AMHS). I was delighted with the offer and now find myself as the President of the Society. As such, and working with the other officers and members of the board, we have embarked on an ambitious agenda to expand the scope and work of the organization. We face a crisis in the knowledge generated by a study of medical history. With numerous advances in medicine, curricula in medical schools now find themselves with more to teach in the basic and clinical sciences and increasingly less time to devote to a discussion about what had come before. If not for our society and others like it, there might be no opportunity to inform students and scores of new physicians about medical history. Currently, AMHS sponsors a meeting in the spring at one of the local hospitals with an invited speaker and CME credit. This was recently held and an excellent talk was delivered on new historical insights into the discovery and early use of Penicillin by Dr. Robert Gaynes at Northside Hospital. In addition, together with Emory University we co-sponsor the J. Willis Hurst Symposium on the History of Medicine which occurs in the fall and will be held this year on October 21st at Emory Medical School. This year we have an excellent line up of speakers which will include a talk by Nanette Wenger, emeritus professor at Emory, and national expert on the topic of heart disease in women. Also included this year, for the first time, following the talks, will be a tour of the health sciences library, which currently has on display an exhibit of 100 years of nursing at Emory. The next exhibit, slated to open February 2018, will showcase the history of teaching medicine at Emory.

The society is now fully linked with the Medical Association of Atlanta which helps with funding and communication of society events. The society is also working with Emory’s Health Sciences Library to promote activities related to the history of medicine including the development of an area in the library fully dedicated to the study of the history of medicine, which will include historical books and artifacts. To this end the society needs the help of its members and all those interested in medical history. Financial contributions are very welcome but the society is also looking for artifacts from members that help tell the story of medicine and its traditions as well as how we arrived at modern day practice. These will greatly help in the education of young doctors and medical students and will insure that a rich history does not get lost on future scores of practitioners and scholars.

Please be sure to join us in October and also let us know if you have any items you would like to donate to the society for use in the expanded space, soon to be available, in the Health Sciences library. If you would like to be informed of AMHS activities or attend AMHS events, please be sure your email is on file with the Medical Association of Atlanta as a member of the Society. A voluntary contribution of $25 per year is also appreciated to further the activities of the society.

Best regards,
Leslie S. Leighton, MD, PhD

From the MAA President Charles Wilmer

The Medical Association of Atlanta held its annual meeting at the Wimbish House; over 200 members of the Association were in attendance. Jonathan Lewin M.D., FACR, CEO of Emory University Health Sciences announced Emory physicians are joining the Medical Association of Atlanta to assist in our programs to help patients and improve medical care in Georgia. This now makes us a whole family, united and always putting our patients first. The MAA has continued to advocate for physicians working with MAG to oppose mega health insurer mergers, to help expand health insurance for the uninsured in the state, address scope of practice issues, and educating the patient via multiple portals including the "top docs" radio program on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.

Simon and Garfunkel wrote the song "Sound of Silence" in which they noted "Silence like a cancer grows". There has been a "silence" between patients and their doctors when it comes to understanding the myriad of changes in the health community. Patients have felt abandoned and this is a major problem. Two years ago the MAA board decided to focus on reaching our patients in a novel way. We went to them and asked them to give us their greatest fear and we committed to try to help. We heard them loud and clear say "get the cell phones out of driver's hands, they are killing us" and "fight for us when insurance companies take advantage of us". We have taken on this opportunity.

Martin Luther King III gave a wonderful speech to open the meeting. He gave great encouragement for our medical society and how we should not go to our grave without trying our best to make a difference in our community. This was followed by Mr. McGehee, a sudden-death survivor. Mr. McGehee talked about how competing hospitals worked together to save his life against all the odds when he was facing a 99% mortality risk from an acute myocardial infarction complicated
by cardiogenic shock and ventricular fibrillation. He showed how patients could use the Internet to help diagnose an illness and save their lives. He also showed that patients care as much for us as doctors as much as we care for them. They are our best allies especially as we charter paths to achieve medical reform.

Our future depends on retaining the trust of our patients. We will continue to fight for ethical treatment of patients by insurance companies. United healthcare is being reviewed as we speak and your MAA leadership has met with Insurance Commissioner, Ralph Hudgens to address these problems. We made it very clear that MAA and MAG are holding United Healthcare accountable for the unethical treatment of our patients in Georgia. Our legislators stand by our side to help us as needed and the patients are with us on this issue.

The MAA will partner with MAG to reduce distracted driving. Dr. John Harsch was struck down by a distracted driver. Let us not forget his sacrifice and that of Mary Carol, his wife. We will work to get distracted drivers off of the road and protect the lives of our patients and our families. The time for "Silence" has ended. Our future is bright for we will help open the conversations that bring a change in Georgia. The social philosopher, Eric Hoffer said "in times of change, learners inherit the earth while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with the world that is no longer."

Here is to a year of killing the "Cancer of Silence." Patients will no longer wonder where we stand on the issues that affect them the most. We will learn together and stand by their side. We look forward to the House of Delegates meeting and representing the interest of Atlanta as we make Georgia a better, safer place.

Charles Wilmer, MD, FACC, FSCAI
President of The Medical Association of Atlanta