

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NHL

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DATE ENTERED	Jan. 7 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Hill-Physick-Keith House

AND/OR COMMON

Hill-Physick-Keith House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

321 South Fourth Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Philadelphia

CODE

42

COUNTY

Philadelphia

CODE

101

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks

STREET & NUMBER

1400 South Penn Square

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

VICINITY OF

STATE

Pennsylvania

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Department of Records

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

STATE

Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

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7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restored	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Hill-Physick-Keith House, as Philip Syng Physick's home is today known, is located at 321 South Fourth Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Constructed in approximately 1786 the building is a three story brick mansion with an attic, four dormer windows, and a shingled hip roof. It is an excellent example of American Federal architecture. The post-Revolutionary flat surfaces are broken by graceful doorways with slender sidelights and large transoms.

On the first floor of the house are: an entry with a marble tiled floor with molded marble subskirting, three parlors, two kitchens, a storeroom, and a pantry. The main rooms on this floor have stucco cornices, yellow pine floors, and molded subskirting and architraves. In addition there are two carved marble mantelpieces. On the second floor are six rooms and two entries. There are five marble mantelpieces on this floor. The third floor has five rooms and two entries. There are four marble mantelpieces in the rooms. The attic has four rooms and an entry. Today the house-museum is furnished in Federal and Empire furnishings with some pieces having belonged to Dr. Philip Syng Physick.

321 South Fourth Street was built approximately 1786 for Henry Hill, a wealthy Philadelphia importer. Hill occupied the house until his death in 1790. After Hill's death Miss Abigail Physick purchased the property for her brother, Philip Syng Physick. The house was Physick's home from approximately 1815 until his death in 1837. It remained in the family until 1965, when it was sold to the Annenberg Fund which presented it to the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks. In 1966-68 George A. Robens, AIA, directed the restoration of the building to its circa 1810 appearance. Today it functions as a house-museum.

The integrity of 321 South Fourth Street is whole. Nearly all the original interior is intact. The exterior has been carefully restored to its 1810 appearance. There are no intrusions.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

In the history of medicine in the United States Philip Syng Physick is remembered for four main reasons: (1) for his introduction of the use of animal ligatures, (2) for his skill as a surgeon, (3) for his ingenuity in designing innovative surgical instruments, and, (4) for the excellence of his teaching and the high quality and later influence of his students.

In the history of medicine, as in the history of science in general, individuals are often best known for a single discovery or contribution to knowledge. Such is the case with Philip Syng Physick. He is best remembered for his discovery of the use of animal ligatures in surgery. The advantage of the animal ligature was that it would dissolve naturally thus removing the necessity for disturbing an intrusion in order to remove stiches. Although Physick is best remembered for this accomplishment, the discovery was not his most important contribution to medicine. According to William S. Middleton, "Physick's most original contribution to orthopedic surgery was the use of the seton (a thread placed under the skin for drainage purposes) in ununited fractures."¹

The use of a seton was only one of Physick's surgical innovations. Although it had been suggested by others, Physick was the first American to use a stomach tube for the removal of poisons. He was expert in operating on the urinary tract and devised new types of catheters. One his most prominent kidney stone patients was Chief Justice John Marshall. Among his other surgical and orthopedic accomplishments were: an operation for building an artificial anus, an original tonsillectomy procedure that employed a snare, manipulation instead of mechanical methods of traction, and a new method of treating hip-joint disease by totally immobilizing the patient.

Physick's mechanical ingenuity was expressed in the design of a variety of new instruments for use in surgery. Among them were: a forceps for securing deep bleeding vessels, a curved bistoury for treating a fistulo-in-ano, a wire snare for removing hemorrhoids, a wire snare for use in tonsillectomy, and new forms of catheters.

¹William S. Middleton, "Philip Syng Physick," Annals of Medical History, (September, 1926), p. 573.

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Physick was also a great teacher. His classes at the Pennsylvania Hospital and the University of Pennsylvania were always well attended. His students went on to occupy leading positions in American medicine. Except for reports in medical journals, Physick was not a prolific writer. However his influence is present in the writings of his students, such as his nephew John Syng Dorsey's basic textbook, The Elements of Surgery (1813). Physick was honored by election to English and French medical societies and he was a member of the American Philosophical Society.

According to William S. Middleton, "The influence wielded by Philip Syng Physick on American medicine was remarkable and his contributions to a backward science in a new country conspicuous."² An historian of the history of surgery calls Physick, "a giant in the panorama of surgery in America."³

Physick illustrated the influence of Great Britain in the development of American medicine. From approximately 1750 to 1820 Americans desiring to study the latest advances in medicine traveled to England and Scotland for their education. Medicine, like science in general, was dependent on Europe at this time. As Physick's Dictionary of American Biography biographer writes, "In estimating Physick's influence on American surgery, much importance should be given to his association with John Hunter."⁴

Physick brought Hunter's surgical techniques and knowledge of anatomy to the United States where he spread them to a new generation of American physicians. In the Hunter tradition Physick himself originated new methods and procedures. Because of his skill as a surgeon, and because of his influence as a teacher, Philip Syng Physick is often called "the father of American surgery."

² Ibid., p. 582.

³ A. Scott Earle, Surgery in America, (Philadelphia, 1965), p. iii.

⁴ Philip Syng Physick, " Dictionary of American Biography, 14, (New York, 1934), p. 555.

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 JAN 13 1971
 NATIONAL
 REGISTER

HILL - PHYSICK HOUSE (321 S. 4th ST.)

— PHILADELPHIA QUADRANGLE —

LAT: 39° 56' 39"
 LONG: 75° 08' 56"