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## John Jones: The Father of American Surgery

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# John Jones: The Father of American Surgery

presented by  
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# Ohio Academy of Medical History

Lloyd Library and Museum  
March 25, 2006

## John Jones (1729-1791)

- Sometimes called the “Father of American Surgery”
- Authored the first medical textbook published in colonial America--*Plain Concise Practical Remarks on the Treatment of Wounds and Fractures; To Which is Added an Appendix on Camp and Military Hospitals; Principally Designed, for the Use of Young Military and Naval Surgeons, in North America* (1775).

Sometimes called the “Father of American Surgery”, John Jones authored the first medical textbook published in colonial America, the 1775 treatise *Plain Concise Practical Remarks on the Treatment of Wounds and Fractures; To Which is Added an Appendix on Camp and Military Hospitals; Principally Designed, for the Use of Young Military and Naval Surgeons, in North America*. He was also the first American to be appointed Professor of Surgery and was a principal founder of a colonial medical school and a hospital, both of which were founded prior to the Revolutionary War.

## John Jones (1729-1791)

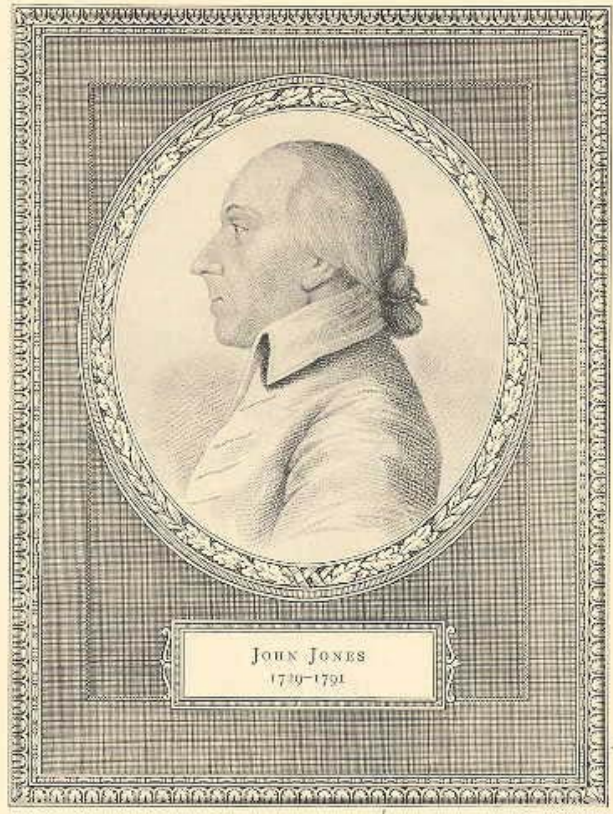
- Third generation physician
- Born in Jamaica, Long Island
- First American to be appointed Professor of Surgery
- One of the founders of King's College Medical School in New York (later become the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons)

Born in 1729 in Jamaica, Long Island, Jones was the third in a line of Welsh physicians, starting with his grandfather, Edward Jones, who had immigrated to the colonies in 1682 and settled in Merion, Pennsylvania.

## John Jones (1729-1791)

- At age 18, apprenticed to cousin Thomas Cadwalader for 3 years (Cadwalader had apprenticed under John Jones' father, Evan Jones)
- Studied in Europe
  - ◆ London
  - ◆ France-earned medical degree at University of Rheims around 1751
  - ◆ Later studied in Netherlands and Scotland

At age eighteen, he was apprenticed to his cousin, Dr. Thomas Cadwalader of Philadelphia. Dr. Cadwalader had previously been apprenticed to Jones' father, Dr. Evan Jones. Like Dr. Cadwalader, Jones chose to go beyond his three years of apprenticeship training, earning a medical degree in Europe around 1751, at a time when only an estimated 100 colonial doctors out of the approximate total of 3500 had a baccalaurate (M.B.) or doctoral degree (M.D.) in medicine. Jones went first to London, studying under the renowned anatomist William Hunter (1718-1783), and Percival Pott, a renowned surgeon at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. He then travelled to France's University of Rheims, where he earned his M.D. degree at the age of 22. During his stay in France, he observed the work of French physician Henri Francois Le Dran (1685-1770). Jones later continued his studies in the Netherlands and at Edinburgh, Scotland.



John Jones (1729-1791), professor of surgery,  
King's College Medical School, 1767-1776.

Portrait of  
John Jones,  
King's College Medical  
School, Professor of  
Surgery,  
1767-1776.

Source: Columbia  
University Archives  
web site

[http://library.cpmc.columbia.edu/hsl/archives/  
HSTimeline.html](http://library.cpmc.columbia.edu/hsl/archives/HSTimeline.html)

## John Jones (1729-1791)

- Back in the colonies
  - ◆ Private practice with John Bard, M.D. in New York with an emphasis in surgery, particularly lithotomy; also practiced obstetrics
  - ◆ Voluntarily served in the French and Indian War (appointed army surgeon in 1755)

Upon his return to America, Jones joined a private practice in New York with John Bard, M.D., emphasizing surgery, particularly lithotomy (removal of bladder stones), which he had regularly observed in France. Jones volunteered for service in the French and Indian War and was appointed army surgeon for the colonials and the British in 1755. However, his fame grew after he successfully treated an injured French commander, Baron D'Escoux, for a perforated bladder.



## King's College Medical School

- Medical College of Philadelphia (1765)
  - ◆ William Shippen, Jr. appointed Professor of Anatomy and Surgery; no separate surgery chair, probably due to European influence
- King's College School of Medicine (1767)
  - ◆ Founders included: John Jones, Samuel Bard, Samuel Clossey and Peter Middleton

After successfully petitioning the board of governors of King's College in New York, Drs. John Jones, Samuel Bard, Samuel Clossey, and Peter Middleton opened a medical college there in 1767 (It would later become the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons). On November 4, 1767, Dr. Jones gave his first lecture as America's first medical professor with a sole appointment in surgery. The other colonial medical school at the College of Philadelphia (founded two years earlier) did not have a separate surgery professor, rather a Professor of Anatomy and Surgery. This likely was due to the desire to emulate European medical schools, which did not recognize surgery as an independent medical discipline; rather, it was usually subordinate to medicine or "physick." Surgeons were not expected to have any medical knowledge because they were under the direction of the physician.

## Jones as Professor

- Full Professor of Surgery
- First Lecture: Nov. 4, 1767
- Annual Lecture series until war began.
- Published his manual of surgery in 1775.
  - ◆ Used by surgeons in the field, most of whom had little or no actual surgical training
  - ◆ Also provided tips on maintaining health of the troops and establishing military hospitals

Dr. Richard Stark illustrated that in his book, *Plain Concise Practical Remarks on the Treatment of Wounds and Fractures*, Jones clearly opposed this prevailing European attitude, noting that in the colonies, surgical and medical practice “are generally united.” Jones also stated, “Surgery may, with great propriety, be divided into medical and manual; --the first comprehends an infinite variety of diseases, which require the assistance of both internal and external applications;--the last is confined to those cases which admit of relief from the hand alone, or assisted with instruments.” In addition to providing instruction for surgical treatment of various types of wounds, Jones addressed the structure and organization of military hospitals, particularly emphasizing “means of preserving health in an army” including issues such as nutrition and personal grooming, making it a unique publication at the time. The book also distinguished itself by the fact that it was written for an audience of army surgeons who had little to no formal medical education.

## Jones and New York Hospital

- Recognized need for a teaching hospital
- Jones, Bard, and Middleton petitioned Lt. Governor and the New York Council
- Royal Charter granted in 1771
- Jones drafted the plans
- Went on fund-raising trips

In his paper on Dr. Jones, Dr. Richard Stark also emphasized Jones' instrumental role in founding New York Hospital.

## Jones as Surgeon

- Joined the Continental Army as a Surgeon
- Had to relinquish his army position due to continuing problems with asthma
- Staff Physician at Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia
- Consulting Physician of the Philadelphia Dispensary
- First President of the Humane Society (people not animals)

Jones enlisted as a surgeon in the Continental Army. After 1779, he served as a staff physician at the Pennsylvania Hospital, a consulting physician at the Philadelphia Dispensary, and the first president of the Humane Society (which in that period focused on people). In 1786, he was elected Vice President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons (Philadelphia) and served as personal physician to Benjamin Franklin and (in 1790), George Washington. Jones died on June 23, 1791, due to heart and respiratory complications.

## Jones as Surgeon

- First Vice President of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia (1786-1791)
- Personal friend and physician of Benjamin Franklin
- Consultant on a case regarding Gen. George Washington (1790); appointed Washington's family physician
- One of his last visits was to President Washington

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## Acknowledgements:

Benjamin Shearer, Ph.D., Editor, *Americans at War: A Biographical Dictionary of Americans on the Home Front*. Greenwood Press. (In press. Due Fall 2006).

Note: The 3-volume work edited by Dr. Shearer was actually published in 2007 with the following title: *Home front heroes: a biographical dictionary of Americans during wartime*. Ximena Chrisagis authored the entry about Dr. John Jones.

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Questions?