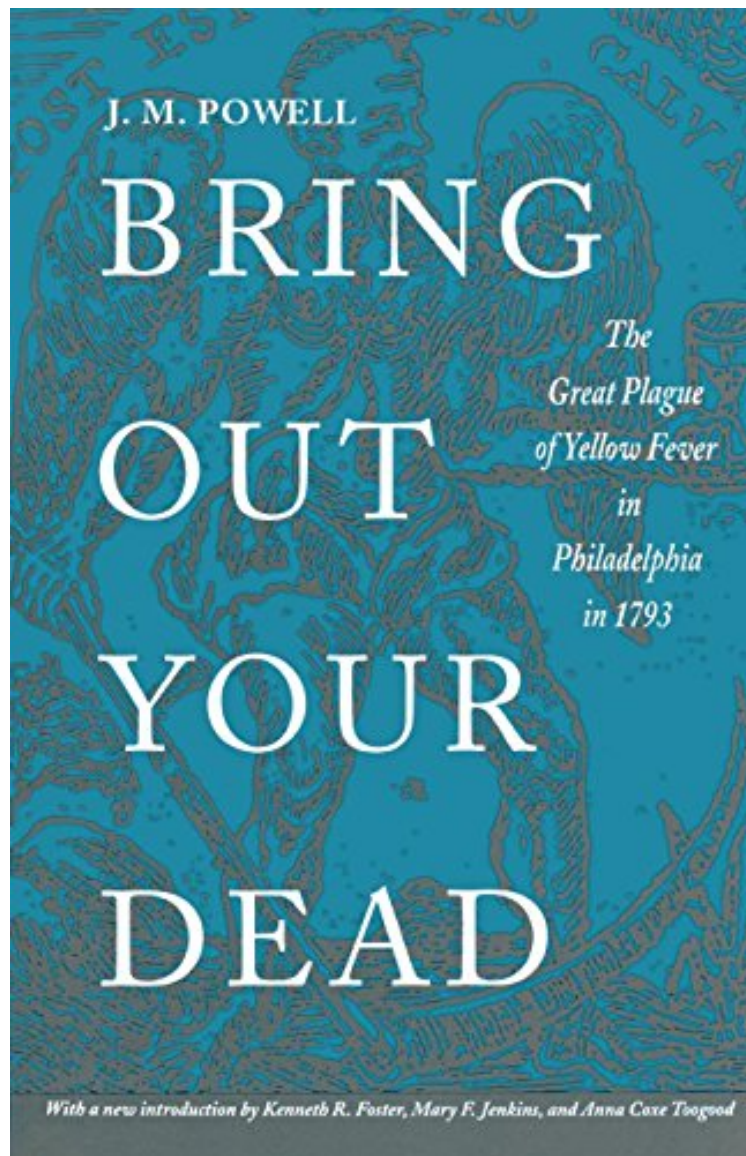


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## Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793 (Studies in Health, Illness, and Caregiving)

*J. H. Powell*

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**J. H. Powell : Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793 (Studies in Health, Illness, and Caregiving)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793 (Studies in Health, Illness, and Caregiving):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Drama of the 1793 Yellow Fever Epidemic By John O. Meekins I bought this book, lost it bought another and then lost that one. So, now I am on my third copy of it, but if I lose it, I will buy another because this is such a fascinating story. By that I mean the story of a yellow fever epidemic that swept Philadelphia in 1793. It is high drama from a local and national view at the time. The local is that of the public officials trying to effectively deal with the plague that eventually kills more than 5,000 people. Another local angle, with larger implications, is the coverage of the black or negro role in the plague. The blacks came to have a prominent role, primarily because of two men who founded what must have been the first black Methodist church--the sect from which the rest of the black African Methodist churches sprang. One of the very interesting threads in the book is how these two black men (former slaves) viewed themselves as equal to the whites of the city. Their views, for that time, I found fascinating because I thought that all black people of the period, particularly former slaves, must have had an inferior view of themselves. These men did not and as they tried to act equal to the whites in the city. Some whites made it clear they were not and told them not to continue worshiping at a white Methodist church. That's when they formed their own church. I do not have the book right at my side at this moment, so, sadly, I do not remember their names. There are pictures of them in the book, or at least one of them, too, that are presented as white men would have been presented at the time, too. These men came to have a major role in the plague by having black citizens help the city by removing and burying bodies. This came about, in part, because of the view that blacks were not as prone to get the disease as whites. The role of the blacks became important, too, because the city government there didn't just need their help, it had to have them as few whites would do what they did. Another most interesting person who comes up in this wonderful story is Stephen Girard one of the wealthiest men in America at the time who personally helped many yellow fever victims. He later founded Girard College in Philadelphia which still exists. Oh, and a major player is Benjamin Rush, a prominent doctor of the city who also was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He, as did the other doctor in the city, did their best to cure people of yellow fever, but they never could because no one knew its cause. Dr. Rush continued to do what he thought would cure the victims, even though most of those he treated died. The story goes on and on, and it is high drama. Another thread in this story is that of Stephen Girard who at the time of the plague was a very wealthy man. With his wealth, he could easily have gone elsewhere during the plague as many did. Yet he didn't. More than that he helped organize a hospital for plague victims and personally attend many of them. This was at a time when no one understood the cause of the disease at all. And, some feared it could be contagious. So most people tended to stay away from or avoid those who came down with the disease. Yet, this very, very wealthy man personally assisted some of these seriously ill people by pulling off their vomit-soaked clothes and cleaning them himself. Truly, he was a remarkable man. You can find more about him on the web and how his loan of many millions of dollars propped up the federal government during the War of 1812 and how he founded a school for the unfortunates in Philadelphia that still exist today. George Washington comes up in the book, by the way, but for having stayed away during the plague--as most federal officials did during the plague. Philadelphia was then the heart of the federal government at the time, and the presence of the disease created some challenges for it. Finally, and probably most interesting, the main thread throughout the book is the doctors in Philadelphia at the time, who had to be the best and most educated in America. And, the main doctor in this book is Dr. Benjamin Rush of American Revolution fame. He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. And, the drama among the doctors is all about their varying ideas of how to treat the disease and how none of them really worked with any certainty, of course, because none of them knew the cause of the disease. Dr. Rush comes out as a very compassionate man, but, as the author says, he also comes out as one of the villains in this terrible saga--though he never knew it and could not know it. Conclusion: If you like to read and you like a good story, get this book. It is a great read and a great story.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Vivid Portrait of a Horrific Epidemic By Thomas Doerflinger This is the classic history of Philadelphia's yellow fever epidemic of 1793. The horrific physical and social effects of the disease are described in revolting detail, and the high-stakes medical debate between the illustrious doctor Benjamin Rush and his opponents is ably recounted. In addition to Dr. Rush, the author presents compelling portraits of the merchant Stephen Girard (who took over management of the key medical facility), Dolly Madison (whose first husband succumbed to the fever) and other important figures. Anyone interested in how Ebola is affecting West Africa today could do far worse than to read this book, even though it describes a different epidemic in a very different time and place.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An excellent, anecdote-driven exploration into one of the most terrifying ... By Gregory Holder An excellent, anecdote-driven exploration into one of the most terrifying epidemics we've faced in this country. Mr. Powell chooses from some wonderful source material and weaves it in a way that delivers a gut-punching impact. In particular, this book touches on some of the most important principles in the history of Public Health in this country, including the battle between advocates of contagion vs miasma theory and the historically-relevant importance of class/societal standing and the effect it has on health.

In 1793 a disastrous plague of yellow fever paralyzed Philadelphia, killing thousands of residents and bringing the nation's capital city to a standstill. In this psychological portrait of a city in terror, J. H. Powell presents a penetrating study of human nature revealing itself. *Bring Out Your Dead* is an absorbing account, from the original sources, of an

infamous tragedy that left its mark on all it touched.

"Unique in its weaving of the timeless aspects of human behavior with an authentic account of a major epidemic in American and medical history, this book is carefully researched and a very good read." *Nursing History* "A brilliant case study of the visitation of the scourge in Penn's city." *American Historical* "A fascinating history of Philadelphia's great plague. Historian Powell's conscientious grubbing among the records pays off with a cumulative effect of horror and heroism seldom found in the most artful fiction." *Time* "A brilliant and model treatment of one of the most macabre incidents in American History." *New York Herald Tribune* About the Author John Harvey Powell (1914-1971) graduated from Swarthmore College and earned his Ph.D. degree in American History at the University of Iowa. Kenneth R. Foster is Associate Professor of Bioengineering at the University of Pennsylvania. Mary F. Jenkins is a Supervisory Park Ranger and Supervisor of the Dolley Todd Madison House and Visitor Center at Independence National Historical Park. Anna Coxe Toogood is Park Historian at Independence National Historical Park.