



Dr Anna E. Broomall was born in 1847 in Chester County, Pennsylvania, the daughter of Pennsylvania Congressional Representative John M. Broomall and Elizabeth B. Broomall. As a young woman, she decided she wanted to study medicine which seemed more plausible at the time than her family's tradition of practicing law. Upon telling her father this, he would say “Be a good doctor,” encouraging her to undertake the challenge. She would be more than a good doctor, instead a revolutionary doctor and woman, who would open doors for women professionals and those seeking care. At just 19, she began her involvement at the Women’s Medical College doing manual labor to pay for her studies until graduating in 1871. Under the dean, Ann Preston, she would be among the first women to attend lectures at Pennsylvania Hospital. After graduation, Dr. Broomall took an internship abroad. During her studies of the skin, nose, and throat in Vienna in 1872, Dr. Emeline Cleveland convinced Dr. Broomall to join her in studying Obstetrics upon Dr. Cleveland’s cancer diagnosis. Dr. Cleveland did this so that Dr. Broomall would take over her position as Chair of Obstetrics if she passed away.<sup>2</sup> Thus Dr. Broomall would eventually move from being a professor of obstetrics in 1875 to a full Professorship of Obstetrics in 1879.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Broomall would spend the next decade making a reality of women’s position in the medical field. She helped teach some of the first formally trained nurses at the Nurse Training School at Friends Hospital providing a higher level of education to women and better care to patients. Concurrently, with Dr. Broomall's appointment as a Physician at The Women's Hospital section on Gynecological cases grew from 1409 cases to 1857 in just one year.<sup>456</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “A Tribute to Dr. Anna Broomall,” Media Arts Council, March 1, 2024, <https://www.mediaartscouncil.org/calendar/a-tribute-to-dr-anna-broomall>.

<sup>2</sup> “Womens Medical College Alumnae Reference Files” (n.d.), Accession #266, Drexel University Legacy Center, Philadelphia, PA, accessed July 8, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> “Anna Broomall,” January 15, 2021, <https://drexel.edu/legacy-center/the-collections/exhibits/professors-from-the-past/anna-broomall/>.

<sup>4</sup> The Women’s Hospital is connected to the Women’s Medical College. Patients and instruction take place on sight.

<sup>5</sup> “Nineteenth Annual Report Board of Managers of the Woman’s Hospital” (1880), Accession #2, Drexel University Legacy Center, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>6</sup> “Twentieth Report of the Board of Managers of the Woman’s Hospital of Philadelphia” (1881), Accession #2, Drexel University Legacy Center, Philadelphia, PA.

Upon realizing a demand for hands-on education, she created an Out-Patient Maternity Ward in 1888, connected to the Women's Medical College which would not only benefit students but provide care for those who could not afford it, with an astoundingly low mortality rate. Now, one can see remnants of work at the maternity ward through the routine history taking that is present at the general physician and gynecologist's office to gauge a patient's reproductive state – as well as the maternity bag full of everything a new mother might need when she goes into labor.<sup>7</sup> Dr. Broomall would work at Women's Medical College for around twenty years, accumulating experience valuable to women everywhere. Towards the latter years of her career, in 1889, Friend's Hospital hired her as their resident gynecologist, instilling a connection between reproductive health and mental health through their deemed necessity for her gynecological expertise, selecting not just a licensed gynecologist, but a true pioneer, teacher, and researcher.

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<sup>7</sup>Gulielma Fell Alsop, *History of Women's Medical College 1850-1950*, n.d., 122.