The Origins of Microbiology Education in the United States: Brooklyn’s Hoagland Laboratory

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Abstract
Opened in 1888 in Brooklyn, the Hoagland Laboratory was the “first laboratory in the United States erected, equipped, and endowed by private means for the sole purpose of bacteriology.”1 Founded only two years after the Pasteur Institute and four years before Germany opened the Koch Institute in Berlin, the laboratory was affiliated with Long Island College Hospital, the first college-hospital in the United States to bring clinically-based education to the study of medicine. Under the guidance of its founder, Dr. Cornelius N. Hoagland, a noted photomicroscopist and philanthropist, and the Laboratory’s first director, Dr. George Miller Sternberg, the institution was intended for the “the promotion of medical science and the instruction of students in special branches thereof.”2 Dr. Sternberg, considered by many to be the first American microbiologist, immediately established a program of bacteriology courses and informal public education at a time when no medical school in the country was teaching bacteriology to its undergraduates. In addition to developing courses for advanced and postgraduate medical students, Hoagland Laboratory also developed some of the first microbiology courses for nurses and even for non-scientists at the Pratt Institute and the Packer Institute.