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MASTER SURGEONS OF AMERICA

CHARLES B. PENROSE

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ALL men are born, and die. Most men marry. Many men fill, and worthily, public positions, are members of important commissions or boards, acquire wealth. These are matters of import during the life of the individual, or shortly thereafter, and to those with whom he has had social, professional or business relations. The data bearing on these matters are appended to this memorial.

As to the Penrose forbears, his brother, Richard A. F. Penrose, geologist of international reputation, president of the Academy of Natural Sciences, founder and one-time president of the Society of Economic Geologists, answered a query on this subject as follows: "On my father's side our first ancestor in this country was Bartholomew Penrose, who came to Philadelphia with William Penn about 1700. On our mother's side our direct ancestor was Governor Dudley of Massachusetts. Our ancestors on both sides have tried to be respectable, law-abiding people."

Charles B. Penrose was one of a family of long, strong, lean, handsome, active boys; guided in childhood by their exceptionally able, gifted, and devoted mother; later by their cultured and distinguished father, Dr. R. A. F. Penrose, professor of obstetrics in the University of Pennsylvania. To him, their father, because of his worldly wisdom, deep affection, and abiding belief in them, they rendered respect and obedience. With him, because of his vivid interest full understanding, and large charity, they were as unrestrained in thought, word, and action as with each other.

Charles Penrose's first school was the Episcopal Academy; thence he went to Harvard, while a student contributing to scientific journals papers upon mathematical and physical subjects. He graduated with highest honors in physics in his nineteenth year. Such was his aptitude for this branch of science that, together with his A.B. degree, he was offered an assistant professorship, in the belief that he might become one of the leading physicists of his generation.

On leaving Harvard he entered the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania, at the same time continuing his studies in mathematics and physics at Harvard, where, by special permission of the University Council and on condition that he should spend two months of each yearly term at Harvard, he was

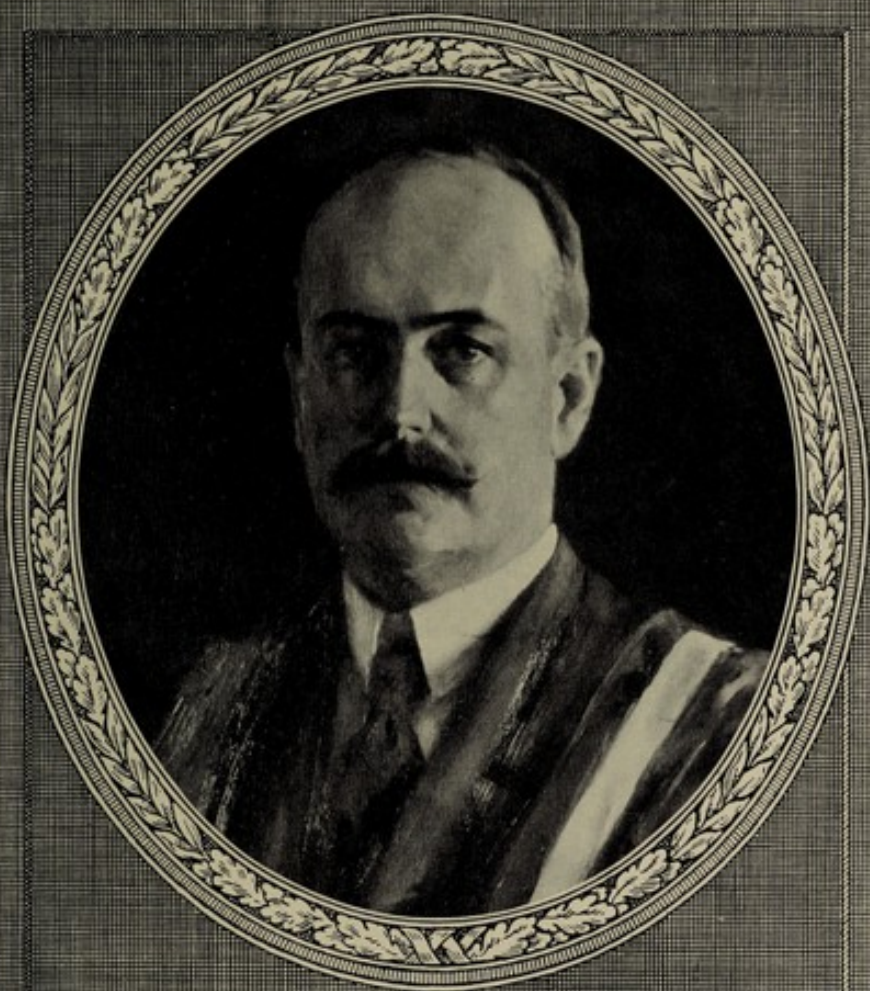
allowed to try for the degree of Ph.D. In the spring of 1884, and at the age of twenty-two, he was given the degree of M.D. by the University of Pennsylvania and that of Ph.D. in physics by Harvard.

After completing his internship at the Pennsylvania Hospital, and while attached to its out-patient department and that of the old Philadelphia Dispensary, Penrose, operating in cellar and attic, convinced the profession that recovery from abdominal section could be made habitual rather than occasional; and that thereby many women condemned to a life of misery or a speedy death could be made well. It was about this time that the professor of surgery of the University of Pennsylvania characterized the abdominal operations of his colleague, the professor of gynecology, as "legalized murder"—and with some justice in so far as mortality was concerned.

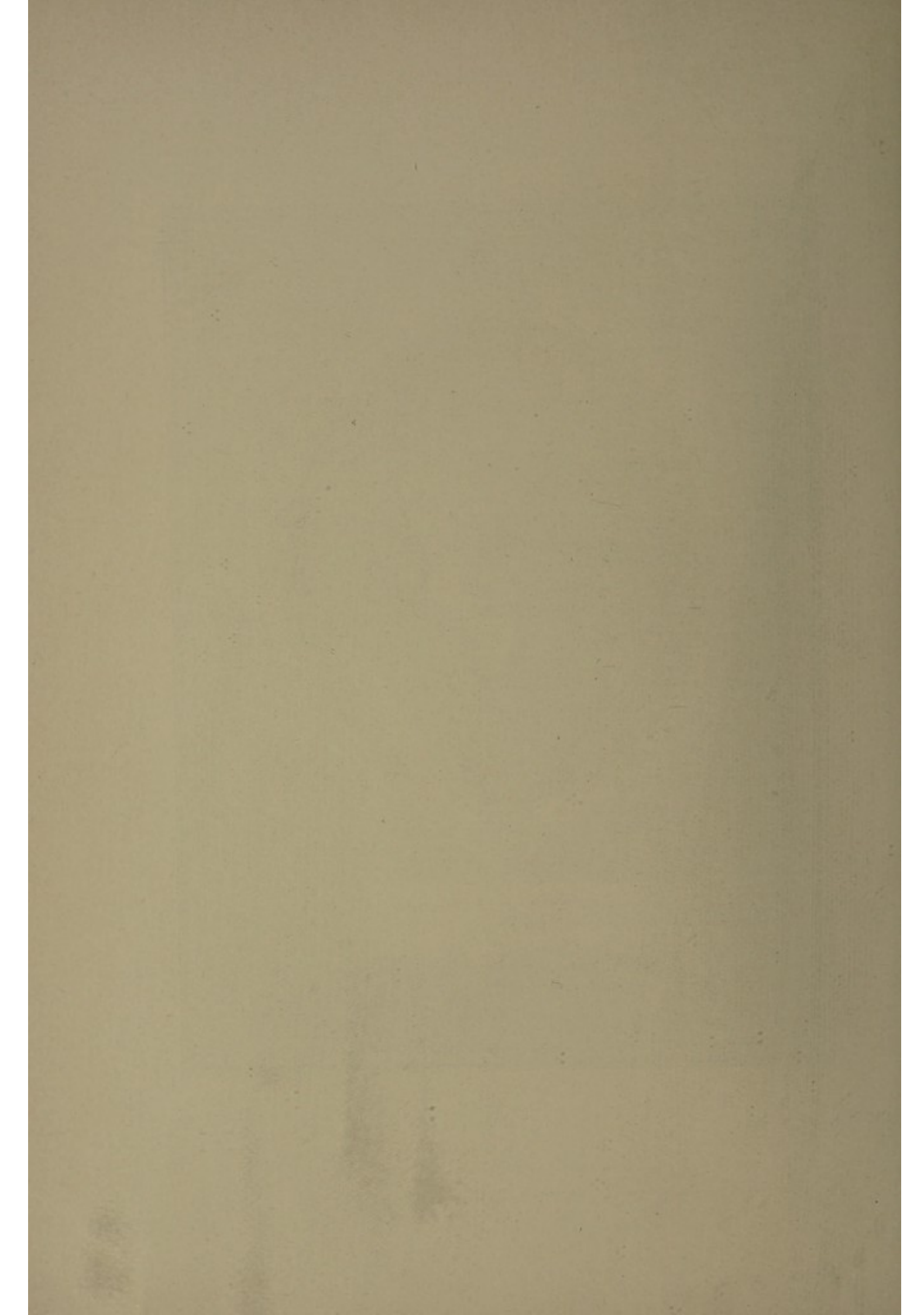
It was while he was demonstrating, to a then skeptical profession, the safety of clean, deft, abdominal surgery, that as an outlet to his super-abundant vitality, Penrose swam the thirteen miles from Philadelphia to Chester. Thereafter, though not necessarily incident thereto, he suffered from a persistent cough with fever and loss of weight. Hoping that air, altitude, sunlight, and exercise might cure him he went to Cheyenne and dug with a shovel daily, leaving a landmark to which strangers were taken for years. Dr. A. W. Barber, then governor of Wyoming, wrote at this time: "Penrose is past all help. I doubt if you ever see him again."

When the big cattlemen with their cowboys and killers rode through Cheyenne on their mission of rustler extermination, Penrose joined them as surgeon, but was taken so desperately ill that in spite of his protests he was sent back to the town of Douglas. He was jailed on sight, which saved him from being shot. Believing his bichloride tablets were intended for poisoning the wells, lynching was promptly decided upon, but postponed until morning in the interest of a larger audience. His cellmate, red-handed murderer and horse-thief, offered him half of a pair of scissors, holding that suicide even by such a poor instrument was better than hanging. A special train from Cheyenne, sent by Governor Barber, carrying a United States marshal, robbed the mob of its anticipated pleasure, for which its appetite had been whetted by shooting through the cell window most of the night.

From Cheyenne he went to Silver City, New Mexico, where he made a rapid and complete recovery. Thereafter he married Miss Kathryn Drexel, of New York, and accepted the professorship of gynecology in the University of Pennsylvania. This department he organized and administered with his characteristic skill and thoroughness. His textbook on *Diseases of Women* was welcomed as a standard. He taught rational, clean, gentle surgery by word and hands in a way both convincing and proselytizing. He had the hero worship of his students, the confidence and respect of his colleagues, a large consulting and private practice, and a leading place among the surgeons of America.



CHARLES B. PENROSE
1862-1925



A recurrence of his lung trouble forced him to resign all this and to devote himself to its arrest or cure.

To meet the obvious and urgent need of a hospital for women, Penrose founded, organized, incorporated, and, through his friends, financed the Gynceean Hospital (1887); having associated with him at first Dr. Joseph Price, then Drs. D. Hayes Agnew and J. Montgomery Baldy; the latter most ably carrying for many years the surgical and executive burden of the institution.

During the late war and thereafter, Penrose and Baldy, in the larger interests of public health and because the need seemed urgent, devoted the hospital to the sequestration, until rendered non-contagious, of venereally infected women sent by the Municipal Court. Room was made for sixty; a dispensary with an average attendance of one hundred was opened nightly for those not under court control. Threatened failure of the city to co-operate in more extensive plans having for their end the lessening of venereal incidence, led to the closing of the Gynceean Hospital in 1924. In accordance with Penrose's wish the interest from the Gynceean Estate of something short of a half million dollars has been devoted to research, now being conducted under the supervision of the genecological department of the University of Pennsylvania.

In 1903 he conceived and created the Pennsylvania Department of Health, giving to its commissioner extraordinary power. His conception was put in such impregnable legal phraseology by Mr. Eli K. Price that all attacks upon it have failed. Penrose saw personally every member of the legislature the night before the passage of his bill and named the first commissioner of health, Dr. Samuel G. Dixon. This might not have been possible except for the active support of his brother, Honorable Boies Penrose, then and until his death the dominant influence in both state and national politics.

In 1899, Penrose was appointed a member of the Game Commission of Pennsylvania¹, becoming its president in 1911. From the beginning of his service therein he was director of its policies.

Dr. Grinnell writes: "For a matter of twenty years Penrose was the leading man on the commission. He devoted to it more time and energy than all the others put together. No legislation was passed and nothing was done that he did not approve."

From the beginning of his direction of the Zoological Garden of Philadelphia, Penrose pursued the policy of making an exhibit unrivaled both in the variety of animals shown and in the maintenance of their health. He, with the assistance of Drs. William Pepper, M. T. Ravenel, C. Y. White, Leonard Pearson, and Herbert Fox, conducted autopsies from the findings of which the principles of preventive

¹Pennsylvania now has thirty-four game refuges, containing about 30,000 acres surrounded by 1,200,000 acres of state forest, the latter available for hunting. Nearly 8000 deer, nearly 1000 bear, over a half million grouse, three to four million rabbits, several thousand turkeys, and other game birds and animals are annually shot by the nearly half-million licensed hunters of the state.

medicine were so applied that, among other betterments in animal health, tuberculosis in the monkey was practically abolished.

C. Y. White, the first pathologist, was succeeded by Dr. Herbert Fox, whose studies and publications have proved Penrose's belief that a zoological garden may be not merely an exhibit, but a school, having as its main function, contributions to science.

His struggle for health was amazingly successful. When after a period of intensive work his warning came, he hunted, fished, and explored; in the Rockies, the uplands of the South, once in Venezuela. After months of life in the open he came back well. In the spring of 1920 his warnings came and more urgent than ever before—he planned a longer trip than usual, but was held all that summer by the illness of his brother. Nights and days of unremitting care accomplished the impossible. None knew better than Charles Penrose that he was giving his own life for that of the Senator, and that when the time of rest came the sun and air could no longer bring back that which was so far spent.

A banker once spoke slightly of Abraham Lincoln "because he left a small estate." Lincoln left a continent in peace and honor to now one hundred and ten million people. No larger legacy is recorded in history. Even from the narrow standpoint Penrose would have commanded the banker's respect. From the broader one, to many millions he left a longer life, a better health, forests, game in abundance, a zoological garden of first rank contributing largely to science, and a department of research.

Penrose was strikingly handsome, standing six feet and of powerful build. Till within a year of his death, he presented the color, bearing, and appearance of rugged health. He was unemotional, undemonstrative; on the birth of his son, a lady whose life he had saved and who spoke of him as having the face of Endymion, hands of velvet and the tread of a marching regiment, said: "Aren't you thrilled at the coming of Little Boy Blue?" He answered, "He is not a blue baby; I am not thrilled; but, of course, the young of all vertebrates are interesting."

With him all policies were subject to cold deliberation. When approved by reason they were followed by prompt action, the details of which were carefully planned and carried out with a tireless persistence which neither hurried nor delayed. He loved power, but never its display. He shunned publicity and condemned with extraordinary vigor of diction those to whom it came either by choice or chance. Law-abiding, he bitterly opposed the encroachment of national authority over that of the state; and the interference of both with individual rights and privileges.

He shot in perfect form, deliberately and with deadly accuracy. He was a good farmer and gardener; a good horseman; a good fisherman; an admirable host, skilled in cooking, exacting and securing the best; a good sailor. All things he did well; deliberately and efficiently.

On one of his hunting trips, while about to skin a grizzly which he had shot, he was rushed by another bear and severely clawed and bitten before he succeeded in killing it. His own clean surgery promptly applied saved his wrist joint from which the bones were protruding; and, probably, his life.

One hundred years from now a research fellow, passing through the hall of the medical school, may stop for a moment, arrested by the extraordinary beauty of a face painted by Julian Story with more than his usual richness of coloring and delicacy of touch: "Charles Bingham Penrose, professor of Gynecology, 1892-98." Intellect of a high order, strength, determination, ability; all these the artist has written for the reading of those to come. The Fellow may ask why has such a one left no record other than of his brief professorship; little realizing that rich legacy, in which he himself at that moment is sharing, a legacy which grows with the passing years.

Born, 1862. Married, 1892. Died, 1925. A.B., 1881. A.M., Ph.D., 1884 (Harvard). M. D. (class president) 1884, D.Sc. 1910 (University of Pennsylvania). Resident physician. Pennsylvania Hospital, 1885-86. Founder and surgeon of Gynecean Hospital, 1887-99, Surgeon to the German Hospital, 1890. Professor of gynecology, University of Pennsylvania, 1893-99. Retired from active practice, 1899. Member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, College of Physicians of Philadelphia, American College of Surgeons, American Philosophical Society, Academy of Natural Sciences, Park Commission of Philadelphia, American Association for the Advancement of Science. President of the Zoological Society of Philadelphia, president of the Game Commission, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Member of the Pennsylvania Society of Descendants of Colonial Governors; Harvard Club, The Union League, the Philadelphia Club, The Racquet Club, Corinthian Yacht Club, Radnor Hunt Club, University Barge Club, The Rabbit, The Jury, Principio Gunning Club, Maryland; Henry's Lake Club, Idaho; Sand Bridge Club, Virginia; Mud Hole Meadow Club, New Jersey; The Wilderness Club; The Boone and Crockett Club.







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