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Historical Books and Articles on Yellow Fever
LSU Health Sciences Center Isché Library
About the collection  Aristides Agramonte, MD, was a physician and pathologist whose research on yellow fever earned him an appointment on the Walter Reed Yellow Fever Commission. His dedication to the study of infectious disease eventually brought him to New Orleans, Louisiana, to head the Tropical Medicine Department at the newly established Louisiana State University School of Medicine. Shortly after his move to New Orleans in 1931, Dr. Agramonte died suddenly at the age of sixty-three. His personal library became the first materials acquired by the LSU School of Medicine and the foundation of the school’s first library. The collection included over 500 books, periodicals, and pamphlets including almost 150 items on yellow fever. The School of Medicine officially dedicated the Aristides Agramonte Memorial Medical Library on May 10, 1932.

The Yellow Fever Collection includes materials dating back to the 1790s, and are written in a variety of languages including English, Spanish, French, and German. Books authored by Agramonte himself are included, as well as other notable authors on the subject such as Carlos Finlay and Walter Reed. Many aspects of research are covered in the collection including history, epidemiology, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention.

About the artist  Enrique Alferez was born in Mexico in 1901, and trained in the streamlined Bauhaus style at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1924. He began his career creating pieces for Chicago skyscrapers during the building boom of the early 20th century. Trying to work his way back to Mexico, he arrived in New Orleans in 1929, where he earned his first commission to build five figures for the Church of the Holy Name in Algiers, and he was hired to teach at the New Orleans Arts & Crafts School. He later served as director of the sculpture program of the New Orleans Works Progress Administration (WPA), during which he produced a large body of work for the city’s public spaces. More than twenty of his works grace City Park, and a park street is named for him. In addition to “The Conquest of Yellow Fever,” Alferez completed two reliefs for Charity Hospital, and carved a mahogany panel for the St. Bernard Parish Courthouse. Admiration for Alferez extended well beyond New Orleans. He had commissions across the United States, as well as in Canada, South America, Europe and Asia. But the greatest concentration of his work is in his adopted hometown. Alferez continued to work and live in New Orleans, with extended stays in Morelo, Mexico, until his death in 1999.

1Image courtesy of Historical Collections & Services, Claude Moore Health Sciences Library, University of Virginia (Phillip S. Hench Walter Reed Collection).
About the frieze "The Conquest of Yellow Fever" (1931) is an art deco plaster bas-relief sculpture that was originally housed in the LSU School of Medicine. It was commissioned from artist Enrique Alferez and is significant beyond its aesthetic appeal because of its connection to the city of New Orleans, to the history of medicine and to the LSU School of Medicine.

It depicts the U.S. Army Yellow Fever expedition to Cuba led by Dr. Walter Reed in 1899 and the ultimate conquering of Yellow Fever. The Reed team is illustrated in the sculpture, which important to the LSU School of Medicine because of Dr. Agramonte’s affiliation with the school.

Dr. Aristides Agramonte was born in Cuba on June 3, 1868, “his father being one of those patriots who lost their lives in Cuba’s attempt to gain independence.”¹ At the age of 3 he moved to the United States. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree at New York University in 1886, and graduated in Medicine from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University in 1892.

Agramonte served as Sanitary Inspector and Assistant Bacteriologist to the New York City Department of Health, and as Acting Assistant Surgeon of the U.S. Army in 1898. Working with Dr. Walter Reed’s U.S. Army Yellow Fever Expedition to Cuba beginning in 1899, Agramonte’s participation helped give the final proofs of the relation of the mosquito to the transmission of yellow fever.

Agramonte was appointed Professor of Bacteriology and Experimental Pathology at the University of Havana in 1900, in addition to many other positions. In 1931 Agramonte was appointed the...
first department chair of the Tropical Medicine Department at the newly
founded LSU School of Medicine in New Orleans. Sadly, he died
shortly after arriving in New Orleans from heart disease.

The Yellow Fever Expedition to Cuba and the ultimate conquering of
Yellow Fever marked a turning point in medicine. Throughout the previ-
ous centuries, New Orleans and other cities suffered from horrific epi-
demics of Yellow Fever. The germ theory of disease had not yet been
fully developed and at the time, cannons often boomed through the
night to ward off the disease. The Reed team put forth the first scientific theory regarding
Yellow Fever (the source being discovered as the mosquito).

Upon Agramonte’s death, the American Public
Health Association noted that “science has
lost a devoted servant. His knowledge of tropi-
cal diseases and his great experience in the
practical handling of them made him peculiarly
fitted for the professorship he had just ac-
cepted. Our growing international relationships, coupled with the devel-
opment of rapid transit by steamship and airplane, have brought us
every year more and more into contact with the diseases of other coun-
tries, and especially those in close contact with us on the south. The
importance of tropical medicine has grown step by step with these con-
tacts.”

October; 21(10): 1136-1137.

Titles in the Collection include:
1. Report of the Committee of the Physico-Medical
Society of New-Orleans, on the epidemic of
1820. Published by order of the Society.
2. Memoire sur l’épidemie de fièvre jaune qui a
regne a la Nouvelle Orleans et dans les cam-
pagnes pendant l’année 1867.