

12-2015

African American Graduates of Jefferson Medical College: The First Hundred Years

F. Michael Angelo

Thomas Jefferson University, michael.angelo@jefferson.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://jdc.jefferson.edu/jeffhistoryposters>



Part of the [History of Science, Technology, and Medicine Commons](#), and the [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#)

[Let us know how access to this document benefits you](#)

Recommended Citation

Angelo, F. Michael, "African American Graduates of Jefferson Medical College: The First Hundred Years" (2015). *Posters: Jefferson History*. 2.

<https://jdc.jefferson.edu/jeffhistoryposters/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Jefferson Digital Commons. The Jefferson Digital Commons is a service of Thomas Jefferson University's [Center for Teaching and Learning \(CTL\)](#). The Commons is a showcase for Jefferson books and journals, peer-reviewed scholarly publications, unique historical collections from the University archives, and teaching tools. The Jefferson Digital Commons allows researchers and interested readers anywhere in the world to learn about and keep up to date with Jefferson scholarship. This article has been accepted for inclusion in Posters: Jefferson History by an authorized administrator of the Jefferson Digital Commons. For more information, please contact: JeffersonDigitalCommons@jefferson.edu.



African American Graduates of JMC: *The First Hundred Years*



College Building (built 1898) of JMC, Walnut and 10th Streets, ca. 1910. Jefferson Hospital is to the right of the image.

Beginnings...

The story of early African American physicians begins in 18th century Philadelphia with James Derham who is recognized as the first black allopathic (regular, non-sectarian) medical doctor. The first medical school in the U.S. to admit an African American was Rush Medical College in Chicago that awarded, in 1847, David J. Peck his degree. Dr. Peck came to the "Quaker City" to set up his practice the same year that the A.M.A. was formed, also here in Philadelphia. In 1877, Jefferson doctors protested the seating of the delegates from Howard University, the nation's most important black medical school, in part, because that school admitted men and women students in the same classrooms. In the nineteenth century, JMC had a reputation for the highest standard in medical education and, unfortunately, also shared some of that era's racial and gender prejudices. JMC's conservative admission policies rejected people of color and women applicants until a brief period in the first decade of the 20th century when a modest percentage of African Americans were admitted. But by World War I, the doors had again closed until the late 1940s.

This first generation of "Old Jeff" African American graduates laid down foundations and created original strategies to overcome barriers to not only succeed, but to excel, as they served their neglected community. This exhibition celebrates the remarkable achievements and lives of that handful of early pioneers.

Algernon Brashear Jackson, (Class of 1901)

As Jefferson Medical College's first African American graduate, Algernon Brashear Jackson created opportunities where none had previously existed. Born in 1878 in rural Indiana, he attended Indiana (University) Medical College and transferred to Jefferson Medical College in his senior year. Excluded from internship opportunities because of his race, Dr. Jackson immediately set up his practice at 772 S. 15th Street in Philadelphia. As he developed a clientele he was quickly appointed assistant surgeon at the all-white Philadelphia Polyclinic Hospital, a fact highlighted in several newspapers (one of which claimed he was the first and "only negro physician in the U.S." to hold such a post). In 1904, he co-founded the first African American Greek letter fraternity, Sigma Pi Phi, also known as the Boulé. His intention was to afford the dozen black physicians in Philadelphia access to the city's African American leaders and to extend opportunities for others within the community. The Boulé continues to benefit many African Americans to this day.



One of the first demonstrations of this ambition was the establishment of the city's second hospital for African Americans. Partnering with black alumnus Henry McKee Minton (JMC 1906) and others, Dr. Jackson symbolically opened its doors on Lincoln's birthday in 1907. In *The Jeffersonian*, April 1912, Dr. Jackson was reported to be "a very successful surgeon, and is largely responsible for the foundation of...the Mercy Hospital for Colored People, at 17th and Fitzwater streets." He was named its first superintendent and surgeon-in-chief, and his leadership afforded many positions for non-white doctors, technicians and staff and created a School for Nurses that continued until the institution closed in 1973. Recognized as the first African American Fellow of the American College of Physicians in 1917, Jackson became head of the Department of Bacteriology, Public Health and Hygiene at Howard University College of Medicine in the 1920s. He published widely in American and English medical journals, lectured and also wrote on public policy and health education (he included sociologist and civil rights leader W.E.B. Du Bois as his friend and colleague). He produced several successful popular books such as *Jim and Mr. Eddy: a Dixie Motorlogue* (1930), which to blended humor and social commentary. Dr. Jackson died in Washington, D.C. in 1942.

His memory is celebrated at Howard University in the form of the Jackson Prize for the best public health thesis. TJU has established a scholarship program named after its first and very notable African American son.

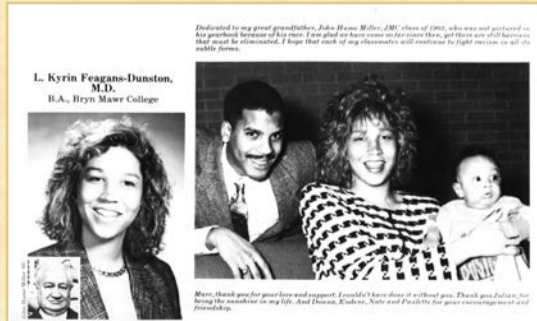
John Hume Miller, (Class of 1903)

Jefferson's second African American alumnus, Dr. John Hume Miller was born in 1877 in South Carolina during Reconstruction. His father, an educator by training, was elected the U.S. Representative from South Carolina, 1889-1891. The Congressman's son graduated from Lincoln University in 1899 and later that year moved north to attend classes at JMC. Upon graduation he established his practice, as well as a pharmacy, in Chester, PA which he maintained for over 40 years, returning to Philadelphia at his 1947 retirement.



In 1953 while visiting family in Charlestown, SC, Dr. Miller died at the age of 77.

Like so many Jefferson graduates, one of Dr. Miller's descendants attended his alma mater nearly a century later: his great granddaughter, Dr. Kyrin Feagans-Dunstan (Class of 1992).



Paul James Taylor, (Class of 1906)

A Virginian by birth (1883), Paul James Taylor graduated from JMC in 1906 and was one of the young African American doctors to take advantage of the openings at the recently-established black-run Douglass Hospital as a Resident and Visiting Physician. In 1910, Dr. Taylor opened his private practice on 19th Street and was for many years also on the staff of the outpatient tuberculosis clinic (238 Pine St.) of Jefferson's Department for Diseases of the Chest.



Anatomy class, ca. 1906. The African American figure may be Dr. Taylor.

A member of the National Medical Association and executive member of the Philadelphia Academy of Medicine and Allied Sciences, Dr. Taylor was also accepted into Sigma Pi Phi, but resigned from this fraternity in 1913. He died in 1956.

Henry McKee Minton, (Class of 1906)

Born on Christmas day in Columbia, SC in 1870, Dr. Minton took his degree from Jefferson in 1906 along with two other African Americans that year. An outstanding graduate (1891) of the Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, he also excelled as athlete, debater, and editor. A year later, he dropped out of UPenn's Law school in order to take a pharmacy degree at Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, which he was awarded in 1895. In 1897 he opened the first pharmacy operated by an African American in Pennsylvania. In 1902, he decided to go back to school and chose JMC for a degree in medicine.



Dr. Minton was the first pharmacist for Douglass Hospital, a hospital for Philadelphia's underserved black community which opened in 1895. He was a proponent of expanding such resources and was one of the founders of Mercy Hospital (1907) and, after Dr. A. B. Jackson's departure in 1920 for Howard University, was appointed superintendent. During his tenure of 24 years, over 200 interns were trained at Mercy, and in 1923 the first social service department was organized. The requirements for admission to the School of Nursing were increased and in 1930 a new, modern nurses home was built at the cost of \$100,000.



Portrait of Henry M. Minton, M.D., by Henry Bozeman Jones.

This oil painting hung in Mercy-Douglass Hospital until it was transferred to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia in 1976. "Hen Jones," as he signed himself, was a significant African American artist who studied under, among others, William Merritt Chase.

From 1915 until his death in 1946, Dr. Minton was on the staff of University of Pennsylvania's Henry Phipps Institute and was a recognized authority on tuberculosis.

Author of numerous publications and affiliated with many professional organizations, perhaps his most long-lasting contribution to the advancement of African Americans is his creation of Sigma Pi Phi (the Boulé), the first black Greek letter fraternity. At a time before mass communication and desktop publishing, associations and fraternities were the best instruments for professional contact and development. In 1904 he envisioned this now-exclusive and influential national organization as one which would, "bind men of like qualities, tastes and attainments into close sacred union, that they might know the best of one another."

"I believe that one of the greatest functions of history is to create inspiration, to inspire us to do greater things than have been done."

- Dr. Henry M. Minton, M.D. (Class of 1906)

Cora LeEthel Christian, (Class of 1971)

Dr. Christian was Jefferson's first African American woman graduate, 70 years after the first black male and six years after the first white females. Born in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands of the U.S., she did her undergraduate work at Marquette University. Holder of numerous posts and important awards, Dr. Christian is currently Medical Director for Quality Improvement at the Virgin Islands Medical Institute, and Medical Director for the Hess Oil Refinery.



Thomas Spotuas Burwell, (Class of 1907)

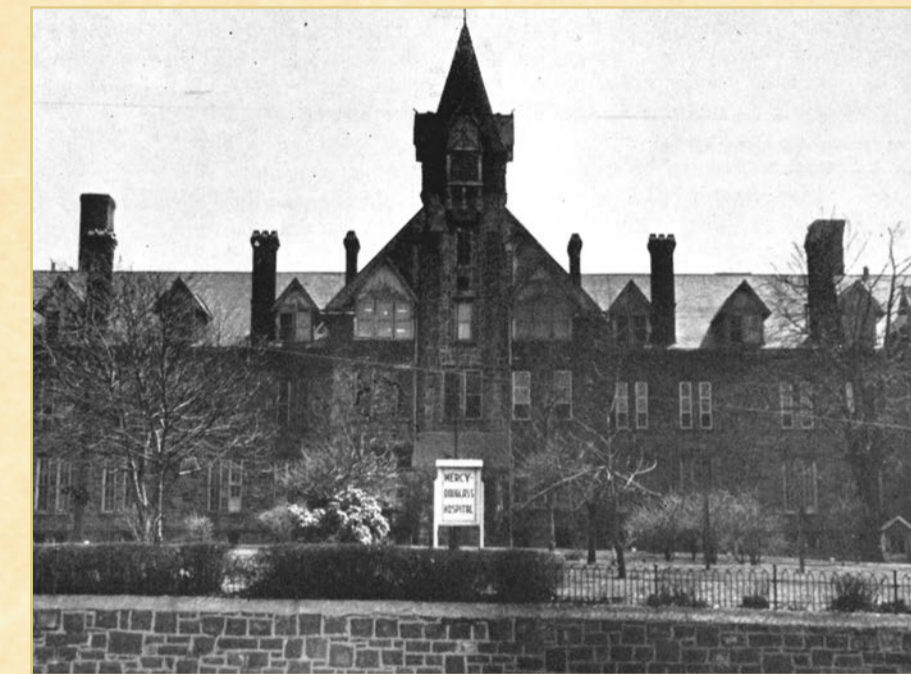
Born in 1876 in North Carolina and educated at Lincoln University, Dr. Burwell received his M.D. from JMC in 1907. Long-time head of staff at Douglass Hospital and practicing physician, he served as president of the National Medical Association in 1929. Dr. Burwell was active on the board of the Y.M.C.A. and president of the Lincoln University Alumni Association. At the age of 61 in 1937, he died of coronary embolus and his body was returned to his home state for burial.

Frederick Miller Hopkins, (Class of 1909)

Born in Philadelphia in 1888 and educated at Central High School, Dr. Hopkins was awarded his medical degree from JMC in 1909. He served in the Medical Reserve with a rank of Captain and managed his private practice on N. 57th Street soon after graduation and was still listed as active in 1968. Dr. Hopkins was a general surgeon and a member of the National Medical Association, American Medical Association, Philadelphia County Medical Society, Pennsylvania Medical Society, Clinical Pathological Society, Academy of Medicine and Allied Sciences, fraternities and was a 32 degree Mason. He died February 18, 1978.

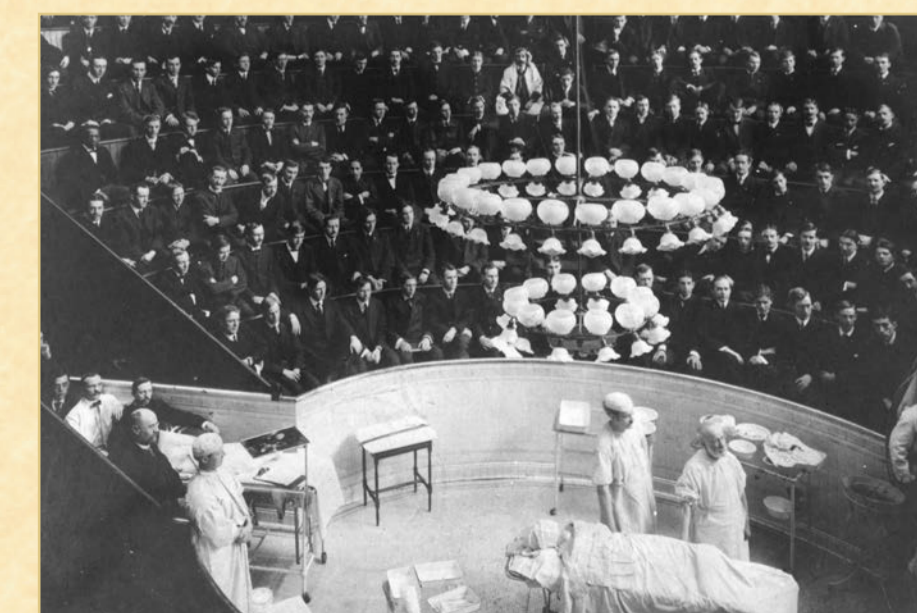
Mercy Hospital and School of Nurses

Philadelphia's second "Negro hospital" was co-founded by Jeffersonian Dr. Henry Minton in 1907 at 17th and Fitzwater Streets. In 1919 the hospital moved to a larger structure, formerly an Episcopal Divinity School, at 50th Street and Woodlawn Avenue and operated there until 1948. That same year, the city's first hospital for African Americans, Douglass Hospital (founded in 1895 by UPenn's first black medical school graduate, Dr. Nathan F. Mossell) merged into Mercy-Douglass and soon afterward boasted a new and fully modern facility. Through much of its existence this institution was largely funded by the community it served, until its closing in 1973.



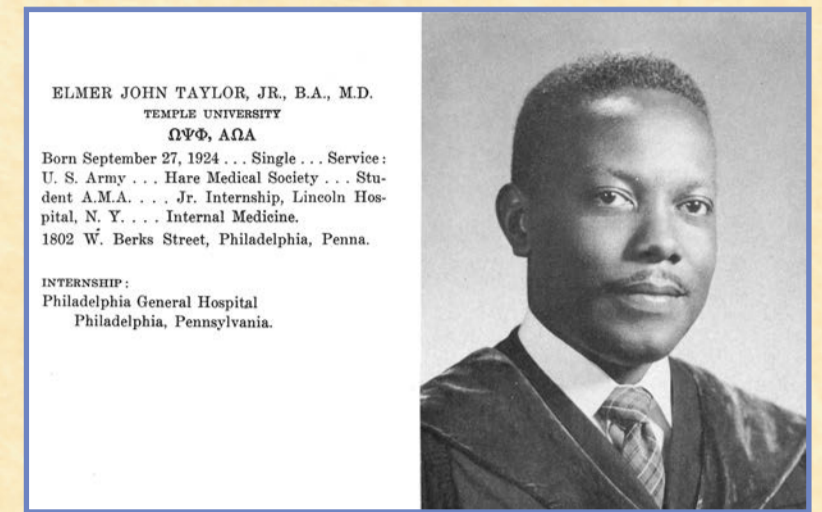
Mercy Hospital (later Mercy-Douglass) was housed in this structure from 1919-1948 and was located in West Philadelphia. A modern nine-story building replaced it in 1955

JMC Ampitheater ("the Pit")



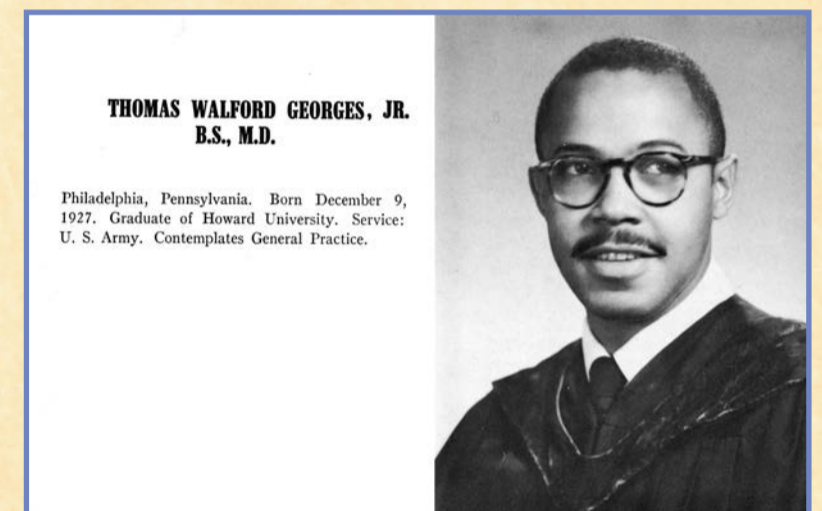
JMC Ampitheater ("the Pit"), ca. 1905. Clinic conducted by Prof. W.W. Keen, M.D. An African American student is at far left and may be Dr. Burwell or Dr. Taylor. The robed figure in the center is a Syrian prince who also received his M.D. in 1906.

Class of 1952



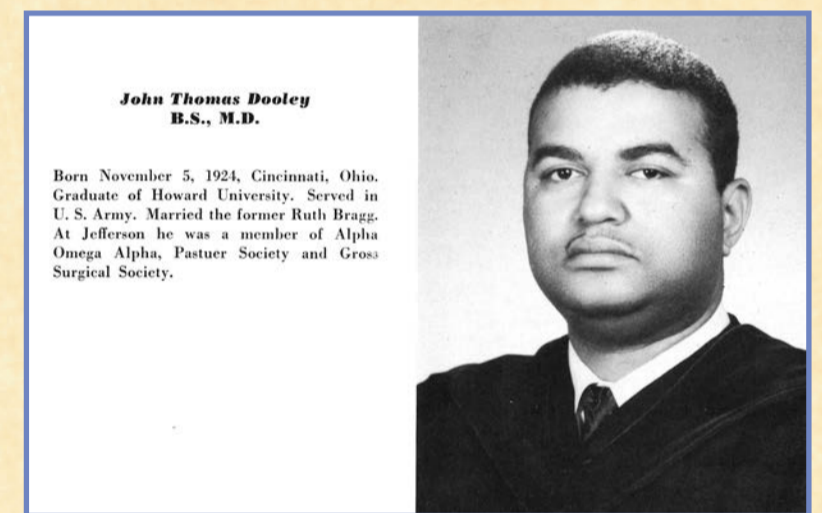
ELMER JOHN TAYLOR, JR., B.A., M.D. JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY DPM, ADA
Born September 27, 1924. Single. Service: U. S. Army. Hare Medical Society. Student A.M.A. Jr. Internship, Lincoln Hospital, N. Y. Internal Medicine. 1802 W. Berks Street, Philadelphia, Penna.
INTERNSHIP: Philadelphia General Hospital Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Class of 1955



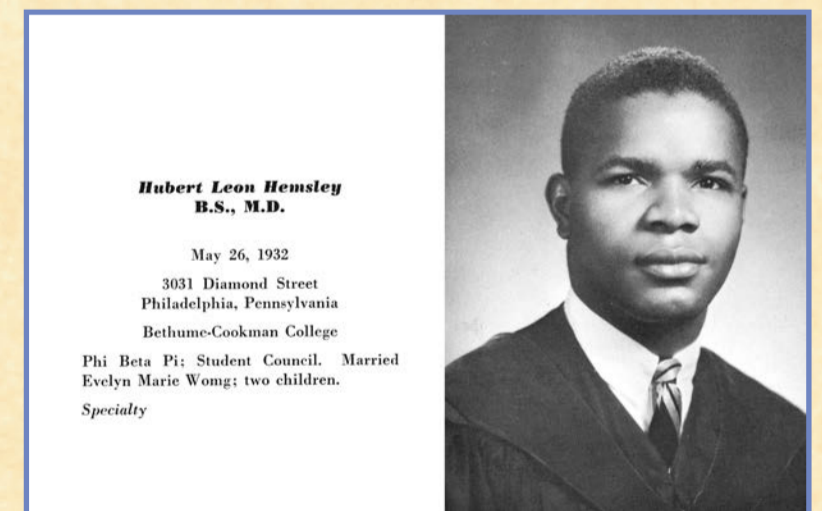
THOMAS WALFORD GEORGES, JR. B.S., M.D.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Born December 9, 1927. Graduate of Howard University. Service: U. S. Army. Otolaryngology General Practice.

Class of 1957



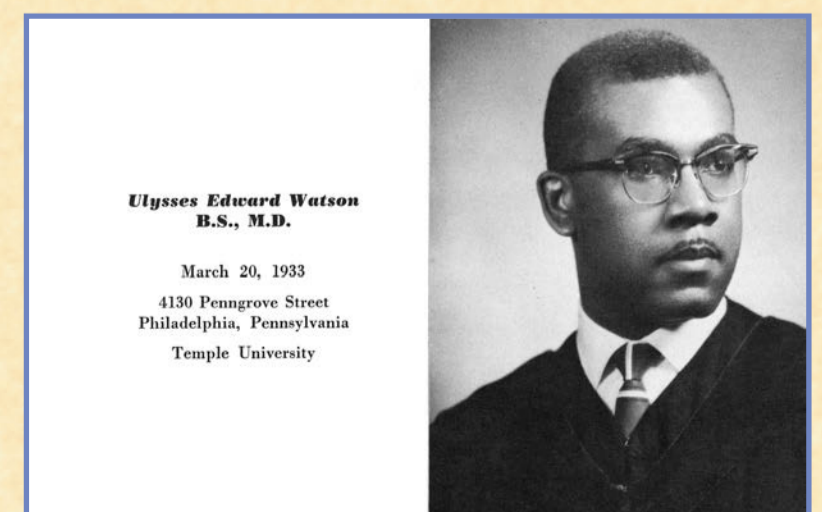
John Thomas Dooley B.S., M.D.
Born November 5, 1924, Cincinnati, Ohio. Graduate of Howard University. Served in U. S. Army. Married the former Ruth Bragg. At Jefferson he was a member of Alpha Omega Alpha, Pasture Society and Gross Surgical Society.

Class of 1960



Hubert Leon Henley B.S., M.D.
May 26, 1922
3031 Diamond Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Bethune-Cookman College
Phi Beta Pi Student Council. Married Evelyn Marie Wong; two children.
Specialty

Class of 1960



Ulgess Edward Watson B.S., M.D.
March 20, 1933
1330 Pennrose Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Temple University