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The Mother College: Jefferson College at Canonsburg

Jefferson Medical College did not originate as a free standing or independent institution. In 1824, it started as the Medical Department of a liberal arts college in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, - Jefferson College, located 300 miles west of Philadelphia, about 20 miles south of Pittsburgh. It was not because the small town of Canonsburg needed physicians. In 1820 there were four serving its 356 citizens. It was because the Trustees had received a letter dated June 2, 1824, signed by George McClellan, M.D. and three colleagues, requesting that under the Jefferson College Charter a Medical Department be established as the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia. In a document signed by President Matthew Brown on October 30, 1824, the Trustees of Jefferson College in Canonsburg consented by legally establishing a Medical Department in Philadelphia. This document (Fig. 1) was in fact the birth certificate of Jefferson Medical College under the Charter of Jefferson College at Canonsburg. Thus, for more than fourteen years (1824-38) Jefferson College could boast of having a medical school, although it had little to do with its founding or administration, other than giving its name and making it legitimate. The complexities encountered in the actual founding of Jefferson Medical College will follow, but it is appropriate at this juncture to honor the Mother College at Canonsburg with a review of its own history, both prior to and after its medical college connection in Philadelphia.

History of Jefferson College

According to tradition, the Reverend Dr. John McMillan (Fig. 2), a Presbyterian minister and a graduate of the College of New Jersey which later became Princeton, pushed beyond the Allegheny Mountains to reach Washington County in Western Pennsylvania in 1775. His purpose was to preach and to prepare students for the ministry. After building a house near Canonsburg in 1778, he constructed his first school as a log cabin in 1780.

Not long afterward, a fire destroyed Dr. McMillan's log cabin, but, undaunted, he built a second one in Canonsburg which is preserved to the present day (Fig. 3). On July 1, 1791, Dr.

Fig. 1. Document (October 30, 1824) designating Jefferson Medical College as the Medical Department of Jefferson College at Canonsburg.

Fig. 2. The Reverend Dr. John McMillan built the log cabin school in Canonsburg (1791), preserved to this day. (Courtesy of Historical Collection of Washington and Jefferson College.)
McMillan dedicated his new school in the open air with two students and four other persons in attendance. On this occasion, Dr. McMillan prophetically stated: "This is an important day in our history, affecting deeply the interests of the church, and the country in the West, affecting our own interests for time and for eternity, and the interests, it may be, of thousands and thousands yet unborn." This was his hope. How could it have been insight into the fact that a humble log cabin Academy would become Jefferson College, with for a time a medical department in Philadelphia, and a later merger into what today is Washington and Jefferson College?

On March 11, 1794, the Legislature recognized the school as Canonsburg Academy. Colonel John Canon, the town’s leading citizen was among the original Trustees, and the Rev. McMillan became the senior member.

Efforts were next directed to the Harrisburg Legislature to secure a charter for a college. Accordingly, on January 15, 1802, an Act was passed, establishing a college at Canonsburg, to be called Jefferson College. Joseph Smith, D.D. in his History of Jefferson College (1857), copies of which are in the archives of Washington and Jefferson College as well as Thomas Jefferson University, discusses the question as to why the name of Jefferson was chosen:

"Who had given it this name, whether the Trustees, in their petition, or whether the Legislature, as some have supposed, is not clearly understood. The memorial to the Legislature is not on record. Nor have we access to the Journal and papers on

Fig. 3. Original Jefferson College at Canonsburg, PA, under the charter of which Jefferson Medical College was founded. Frederick B. Wagner, Jr. (JMC, ’41), on left and John N. Lindquist (JMC, ’43), visit the site in July, 1991.
file of the Legislature at Harrisburg. (An unavailing search had been conducted at Harrisburg.) But it is immaterial. It may have been deemed a highly politic measure to secure the success of the petition, with that Democratic Assembly, and also to render their college popular through the West. No name was more respected by the great body of the people in Western Pennsylvania than the name of Mr. Jefferson. He had been inducted into the office of President of the United States in March, 1801. His administration, for some time, was like a continued ovation. The party who had triumphantly borne him forward to this high station was in the utmost state of exultation. To call this first college in the West, this first seat of science in the Valley of the Mississippi, after this idol of the people, would be thought, on all sides, most felicitous. It might have been sincerely thought by the Trustees a compliment to Mr. Jefferson, which he deserved. Possibly William Findley, Esq., who then represented a large portion of Western Pennsylvania in Congress, a Trustee of the Academy, and a warm political partisan of Mr. Jefferson, may have led the Trustees to adopt this name; and may have suggested that a douceur might be given by Mr. Jefferson for the compliment, or he might help them by testamentary provision.”

Legend has it that President Jefferson responded by sending his portrait by an unknown artist. If the fledgling college expected a gift of money, there was disappointment because Jefferson had financial difficulties from lavish personal spending and over generous maintenance of his political office.

The Rev. Dr. McMillan resigned his position on the Board of Trustees to become Professor of Divinity. Under his influence during the next 30 years the Jefferson College graduated nearly 2,000 students of which more than half became ministers, chaplains, or missionaries.

Jefferson College developed a strong tradition in the humanities. As early as 1797, while still an Academy, it had fostered two rival literary societies called the Franklin and the Philo. These became “important auxiliaries to the College in discipline, in maintaining good order, and in training the minds of the students to habits of atten-
tion, accurate discrimination, and oratory, to an extent not to be attained in the ordinary exercise of the College."

The two societies met weekly during the sessions of the College. The meetings which opened and closed with prayer, included spelling, select orations, debating, reading compositions, and recitations in history. The presiding officer at his induction into office was required to read an original composition. The debaters, usually four, were chosen by him. Examples of the debates were: whether the mathematics, or the languages - Latin and Greek - be more necessary; whether the immediate emancipation of the slaves would be right; whether luxury or war is more ruinous to Nations; whether the natural talents of men are superior to those of women; whether the immortality of the soul may be discovered by the light of nature; whether animals, inferior to man in the order of creation, are possessed of immortal souls; whether the soul is created immediately at the time of its infusion into the body; whether capital punishment should be inflicted by civil government; and whether provision should be made by law for the maintenance of the poor. Thirty-six such debates are on record from 1799 to 1857 in Smith's History of Jefferson College.

The Jefferson College Historical Society in Canonsburg (Fig. 4) houses a replica of Franklin Hall in which the debates of the Franklin and Philo literary societies took place (Fig. 5). Within this Museum is also the reconstruction of the original reading room for the society members with a collection of their books (Fig. 6).

There were nine presidents of Jefferson College during its existence from 1802 to 1865. The most outstanding of these was the Reverend Dr. Matthew Brown (Fig. 7). He had been president of Washington College (1806-17) and also pastor of the town's First Presbyterian Church until 1822. In the latter year he transferred to Jefferson College in Canonsburg where he served for the next 23 years until 1845. These were the College's most prosperous years and included the fourteen of its Medical Department in Philadelphia (Jefferson Medical College, 1824-38). He signed the birth certificate of Jefferson Medical College with but one "t" in Matthew (Fig. 1) but in later years he spelled his first name with two "t's". Under his administration there was a steady flow of pre-professional students. In addition to preparation for the ministry, law, and medicine the curriculum expanded to include scientific and engineering programs.

The archives of Thomas Jefferson University contains the Jefferson College Diploma (A.B., 1834) of John Stuart Leech (Fig. 8) who later graduated from Jefferson Medical College in 1841. The Medical College Catalogue for 1839/40 records that Leech was one of a committee of seven students appointed to draft a preamble and resolution expressive of the sentiments of the class with respect to the capabilities of the professors of the institution and the manner in which they had discharged their respective duties. The report of the students unanimously indicated complete satisfaction with the past and present performances of the faculty. The Jeffersonian Alumni Notes for February, 1901, indicated that Dr. Leech who had been the oldest physician in Chester County, Pennsylvania, died January 23, 1901, at Downingtown, age 87.

A most outstanding alumnus of Jefferson College (1845) as well as Jefferson Medical College (1849) was Jonathan Letterman (Fig. 9). As chance would have it, he was born in Canonsburg in 1824, the place and year recorded on Jefferson Medical College's birth certificate. His father, Dr. Jonathan Letherman (spelled differently) was a member of the Board of Trustees of Jefferson College (elected 1820). Letterman had a distinguished military career in which he served as Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War. He achieved permanent fame by revolutionizing the care of the wounded on the battlefield, and his name is memorialized in the Army's Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco, California.

In 1851 an offering was made to the public to purchase endowment scholarships to Jefferson College (Fig. 10). These were authorized to be passed down to future generations in perpetuity. After serving one member of a family, the certificate was valid for another member or designee by direct transfer or by testament. Selling for $25, this
incredible bargain became a financial disaster to Jefferson College as well as the later unified College of Washington and Jefferson. Claimants appeared until the 1940s and the scheme was discontinued in the early 1960s.

The town of Washington, just seven miles south of Canonsburg, had competed with a log cabin Academy and a College in closely parallel years. Early in their mutual history (1806) and again in 1815 there were unsuccessful schemes for uniting the two Colleges. At one point the two had switched presidents. Both the Rev. Dr. Andrew Wylie and Matthew Brown had served both institutions. Academically, Jefferson College was considered the stronger (Fig. 11).

On March 4, 1865, the Pennsylvania Legislature united Washington and Jefferson College under a single Charter. Jefferson College obtained the advantage of conducting three senior liberal
arts classes in Canonsburg. Washington obtained the preparatory school, the joint College's freshman class, an experimental scientific school and an Agricultural Institute.

Unfortunately, the costs of maintaining two locations and of honoring the perpetual scholarships spoiled the already uneasy compromise. Accordingly, in an Act of February 26, 1869, the Legislature authorized the combined Trustees to consolidate at one campus. A subscription was raised in Washington for $50,000, matched by only $16,000 in Canonsburg, and the decision for location went to Washington (Fig. 12). The unhappy Canonsburg citizens fought the decision in court until finally defeated at the Supreme Court level. The legal fees had been substantial and the irate Canonsburg townspeople took the loss badly. When the Jefferson College had to move to Washington in 1871, the Canonsburg people kept and even hid

Fig. 9. Jonathan Letterman (Jefferson College, 1845; Jefferson Medical College, 1849).

Fig. 10. Certificate of Endowment Scholarship. (Courtesy of Historical Collection of Washington and Jefferson College.)
some archival relics. This included the portraits of Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin that eventually were given to Thomas Jefferson University. On the other hand, Jefferson College contributed its excellent teachers.

Time healed the wounds and Washington and Jefferson College flourished as a liberal arts college. The Jefferson Medical College graduating Class of 1991 contained three who had taken their premedical courses there.

Fig. 11. Jefferson College (1850). (Courtesy of Historical Collection of Washington and Jefferson College.)

Fig. 12. Washington and Jefferson College Administration Building (1991), originally built in 1793.
In 1820 the city of Philadelphia had approximately 113,000 citizens concentrated along the Delaware River, spreading westward to Tenth and Eleventh Streets. It was a garden spot of the United States, historically prestigious, commercially thriving, and culturally sophisticated. Already established were the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Philadelphia Museum Company, the Musical Fund Society, the Walnut Street Theater, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the American Philosophical Society, the Pennsylvania Hospital and the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. In 1824 the Franklin Institute was incorporated as well as the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Horticultural Society and the Mercantile Library.

The Medical School of the University of Pennsylvania was founded in 1765. It was the oldest in the country, located on the West side of Ninth Street between Market and Chestnut. With an impressive faculty, it educated more than twice as many medical students as any other school in the country. Among the 15 United States medical colleges with 1,970 students, it enrolled 480. This relative monopoly by the University was about to be challenged successfully by one of its own graduates, George McClellan (Fig. 1).

Although the career of George McClellan has been well documented in Thomas Jefferson University: Tradition and Heritage, a recounting is all the more arresting when anecdotal details are added from the talk delivered by his grandson, Dr. George McClellan (Fig. 2), Professor of Applied Anatomy at Jefferson (1905-13). His original paper was delivered March 23, 1911, at a banquet under the auspices of the Academy, Hare, Keen and Coplin Societies and printed in the Jeffersonian for February, 1913. Except for some editorial modifications, the following is largely adapted from his address entitled Dr. George McClellan.

George McClellan (the Founder)
(Account by his grandson, Professor George McClellan)

"It is undoubtedly a considerable responsibility to start in the race of life with a name which is well recognized and usually accepted as a guarantee of individual promise. To be desirous of proving worthy of one's ancestors is a proper spirit for guidance, but it does not lighten nor lessen the struggle. Since my graduation, in 1870, I have striven to be worthy of the name I bear and to uphold the interest of the students of the Jefferson Medical College. To her students of many classes I have the warmest attachment, having formed their acquaintance first when I was myself a student, then during the period I held a free-lance for anatomy at my private school, and recently since I have been honored by the Professorship of Applied Anatomy in the Faculty.

"These facts are sufficient cause for my being asked to tell you of my grandfather's early
experiences, which led to the founding of this great medical institution and for my acceptance of the opportunity.

"My grandfather, George McClellan (Fig. 1), was born at Woodstock, Wyndham County, Connecticut, December 22, 1796. He was prepared at the Township Academy, at Woodstock, for Yale College which he entered in the Sophomore Class in 1812, and from which he graduated in 1815. During the latter part of the college course he placed himself under the tutelage of Dr. Thomas Hubbard, the local country practitioner, and a prominent surgeon of that time; and showed great aptitude for the profession of medicine.

"He was advised to go to Philadelphia and matriculate at the University of Pennsylvania, which he did in the autumn of 1817, and he entered as private student the office of Doctor Dorsey, who was then Professor of Anatomy at the University. He received his diploma from the University in 1819, and, owing to family difficulties, was about to accept a position to seek his fortune in Brazil, when prudence led him to consult the advice of Professor Silliman, at Yale, who had always taken a warm interest in him, and who urged that his best course, in order to exercise his abilities in the line of his profession, was to stay in Philadelphia and endeavor to make his way there. Young McClellan was at that time hampered by the impossibility of receiving financial aid from his father, whose income from the Connecticut farm was hardly adequate to the support of his family at home.

"The early days of the struggle are interesting and teach a lesson of perseverance and courage, which finally led to unusual success. I have the notes and a diary which my grandfather kept during this period and from whom I glean these facts. He first took a room on Spruce Street above Fourth Street, which served as an office and sleeping apartment, a cot-bed being curtained off in one corner. He had only a few books and fewer instruments. He had made a great many friends and some powerful ones among the faculty of the University, who materially aided him by entrusting to him patients at his first independent start. He was appointed Assistant in Surgery to Professor Gibson, and Dr. Physick recognized his ability and in many kindly ways encouraged it. I find repeated reference in his case-book to patients who were sent to him by Doctor Physick, and in a little while, within four or five months from his graduation, there are entries in the journal which indicate that he was in professional attendance upon Doctor Physick. He says over and over again that he paid $1.50 for hire of a horse and buggy to visit Dr. Physick, who was then living at his out-of-town residence, now known as the Randolph Mansion, in East Fairmount Park.

"That the patients by whom he was first consulted were of the humbler and poorer class is evident from the entries, often 'no charge' and then a few of 'one dollar,' rarely of 'two dollars.' There is a note which tells a story of some hardship - that he had to get his dinner usually in the middle of the day with one or the other of his patients or some kindly friend, and that often meals consisted chiefly of 'crackers and water' at his office.

"He was so enthusiastic and energetic that he never seems to have hesitated to undertake any surgical procedure that seemed justifiable. During the first year are records of numerous operations for cataract, removal of tumors, ligating of arteries and amputations. He read everything he could obtain relating to his profession and to gen-

Fig. 2. George McClellan, M.D., grandson of the Founder.
eral cultivation. He had a very retentive memory, and loved to talk over what he had been reading, so that he became a fluent and ready speaker who gained listeners everywhere. He was undaunted in his conviction after he had reflected upon any question, and became so rapid a thinker and actor that he was at first envied, and then the target for satire and ridicule from those who were unable to keep up with him.

"He appreciated that anatomy must be the foundation for diagnosis and skillful operative work, and he never lost opportunity for dissecting and making autopsies. He was early elected one of the staff at the Philadelphia Almshouse and there are plenty of corroborative stories as to his indefatigable work on the dead body, and the marvelous rapidity of application of knowledge thus obtained upon the living, whenever a case was presented where others hesitated to operate. This led to two distinct factors which determined the subsequent boldness which characterized him as a man, and especially as the founder of the Jefferson Medical College, as well as the opposition which he soon found at every turn from those who were perhaps less gifted and who were certainly more conservative.

"An operation for stone in the bladder by Professor Gibson and a difference of opinion with regard to it led to my grandfather taking up his hat and leaving the University, never again to enter its halls. Within a few days the patient whom Doctor Gibson had pronounced not to have a stone consulted my grandfather, who, in the presence of other surgeons, operated deftly and removed a large stone.

"There was at that time a disposition to regard all innovations as wrong, and, because things had so long been conducted upon certain principles, any one who ventured to pronounce against them or to suggest any new ideas or methods was frowned upon by the elders in the profession. You, who are so used to seeing surgical work of all kinds done under the condition of anesthesia, cannot imagine what it was when surgeons had no such aid in their work. It required confidence in one's own power which cannot be overestimated and to those who were conscientious you can understand that the preparation for any great surgical procedure required study and cultivated practice on the cadaver to embolden one to operate upon a living patient. Such conditions naturally made surgeons of two classes, those who were bold and those who were timid. Of the former the danger lay in overdoing, and there were not wanting those who readily accused my grandfather of rashness, even of foolhardiness. However that may have been, there is plenty of evidence to show that patients realized his skill, if they did not understand his boldness, and his practice grew accordingly; so that a little later in his diary is recorded, 'Bought a horse ten years old and a buggy for $100.' At this time students, who are ever the best critics as to who knows how to teach them, followed him wherever he was able to take them, and thus he very early established himself as a teacher, giving at first instruction in anatomy and surgery at his office at night, and then over a stable on Queen Street.

"I have copious notes of those early lectures, taken by students at the time and they show remarkable knowledge of things as they were understood, and, what is more remarkable, fore-knowledge of what have since become established facts.

"Time hurried him along from one experience to another. Patients and students increased in number. He was called upon by other professional men to operate in and out of town. Recorded surgical feats are innumerable. Coincident with this is the increase of duties which involved necessary financial success - for my grandfather married in 1820, Miss Elizabeth Brinton. The family were one of the oldest and most respected in Philadelphia and it might have been supposed that the connection would have been of great social help, but strange are the vicissitudes of human fortune! Mr. great-grandfather Brinton was angered by his daughter's choice of a poor young doctor from Connecticut, and the family generally looked upon the match as unsuitable to the dignity of the Brintons. Often have I heard the story from my grandmother how when they first went to housekeeping they could only furnish two rooms, besides the office, and that
'George said within a year I should have my own carriage and if I wanted to I might then take my sisters to drive, and he kept his word, and after that things went better.'

'I have some silver plate engraved with my grandfather’s name, which a grateful patient sent him and which was first displayed upon the sideboard when the family thought 'better of our marriage,' as my grandmother used to say. Such experience may come to some of you and I hope that if they do they will have the same outcome.'

**Founding of Jefferson Medical College**  
(Editor’s Account)

By 1823, when McClellan was 27 years old, he began to realize that the time had come for Philadelphia to support another medical school. This idea was not new, for at the session of 1818/19 W.P.C. Barton, Professor of Botany at the University, had applied to the State Legislature for creation of a second medical school. A protest meeting of the University students thwarted this action. It was an act of heresy to start a new medical school in competition with one’s own Alma Mater.

McClellan dared outrageously to circumvent the University’s opposition by securing permission to establish his medical school under the charter of a liberal arts college as far away in Pennsylvania as Canonsburg, just 15 miles south of Pittsburgh. It was Jefferson College, to which he applied in a letter of June 2, 1824, along with John Eberle, M.D., Joseph Klapp, M.D., and Jacob Green, Esq., asking that they be recognized as a faculty under its charter as its Medical Department, - to be known as the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia.

In a document signed by President Matthew Brown on October 30, 1824, the Medical Department in Philadelphia of Jefferson College was established. The "all-important bit of parchment", in fact the birth certificate of Jefferson Medical College (Fig. 3), was displayed by Professor McClellan to the students at the 1911 banquet. It now resides in the Dean’s office of Jefferson Medical College.

The renovated Tivoli Theater at 518-20 Prune Street (now Locust Walk) was opened on March 8, 1825, as Jefferson’s first Medical Hall. Prayer was offered by the Reverend Ashbell Green and the address was delivered by Dean Benjamin Rush Rhées.

The University of Pennsylvania made a protest to the State Legislature in the form of a Memorial on October 25, 1825, to prevent the fledgling Jefferson Medical College from granting the M.D. diploma either by its Faculty or by the parent College in Canonsburg. By March, 1826, it was time for Jefferson’s first graduating class to receive the M.D. degree, but permission for this was pending a vote in the Legislature. McClellan learned just the day before that a vote was to take place in the Legislature on April 7, 1826. This occasioned his legendary ride in horse and buggy to Harrisburg to lobby for Jefferson’s cause. It has been likened to the ride of Paul Revere.

**Continuation of Account of Professor George McClellan**  
(the grandson)

"Without any assured support, McClellan simply told his wife (the morning of April 6, 1826) that he was going to drive to Harrisburg, as the Legislature was in session. There were no telegraph, telephone, steam cars or automobiles in those days, and the stage roads were not of the best. Starting early he drove in his Doctor’s buggy all day to Lancaster where he called on a former classmate, Dr. John L. Atlee, and found the family partaking of the evening meal. Without any preliminaries he asked Dr. Atlee to feed and rest his horse, which was done up, because he must push on to Harrisburg. He was pressed upon to sit and eat, but, as Dr. Atlee records, ‘declined, saying he must not stop, but kept walking up and down the room, talking all the time of his plans and hopes and beliefs.’ Presently the sound of wheels passing on the road and a loud shouting occurred, with cries of dismay. McClellan rushed out of doors and as speedily back again, saying, ‘Atlee, Atlee, let me have your horse those fellows must not get ahead of me!’
The horse was brought around, and, after he had started, it was ascertained that the stage coach, which had met with the mishap of a broken axle on the dark road, contained two of the University's professors and some of their friends, who were on their way to prevent my grandfather from gaining a hearing at the meeting of the Legislature the next day. Meanwhile McClellan drove all night, and Atlee's horse took him into Harrisburg, while the Legislature was in session the following morning. Without a moment's delay, he sought and obtained attention. So ably did he plead his cause and so completely did his hearers agree with him that his petition was favorably received. He did not hesitate to tell the members of the legislature that there was opposition and that it was coming as fast as it could, only that a breakdown enabled him to get there first. This carried the day.

"The ride back to Philadelphia was fraught with no accident, McClellan only stopping to return Atlee's horse and get his own refreshed animal, and talking all the time to his friend, not of his triumph, but of his views about this and that person he hoped to associate with him in the new college faculty.

"It was troublesome times for him and for all who dared sympathize with him, and at first everything was vexatious and disheartening. Every sort of jealous intrigue was resorted to professionally and socially, even lawsuits were concocted and his old friend Doctor Physick was induced to testify against him. However, this was not so bad as it might have been, and possibly was expected to be, for when Doctor Physick was asked as to whether he thought a certain operation in ques-

Fig. 3. "Birth Certificate" of Jefferson Medical College, based on charter of Jefferson College at Canonsburg, Pennsylvania.
tion was advisable, he said, ‘not in his opinion,’ but when asked if he thought any one would undertake it he replied, ‘only McClellan would dare to do it.’

“It is doubly dear to me, as it is the copy in my grandmother’s writing which she made for the occasion. She often told me, in afterdays, of the excitement and anxiety attending the first steps of the Jefferson, but with undiminished pride she often referred to my grandfather’s enthusiasm and devotion to the cause which had impelled him from her first acquaintance with him.

“I may, perhaps, be pardoned if I take this occasion to say that pride in this early entered into my own career, and that I felt justified in directing my own steps along the independent path of anatomy and surgery, in which the man whose name I bear had so strenuously led the way. I may also, I hope, be pardoned if I take this opportunity to call your attention to some striking traits of the man to whom Jefferson students owe so much and which ought to be understood and revered by them for all time.

“When I first went to Europe to pursue my studies after graduation at Jefferson in 1870, I recall with peculiar emotion, when on presenting a card of introduction to the great Professor Billroth, at Vienna, he asked me, not if I were related to the founder of Jefferson Medical College. I doubt if he knew there were such an institution but ‘are you related to the McClellan who so often operated on the parotid gland?’

“Again in Edinburgh I was asked by Professor Anandale if I were ‘kin to the man who first understood the effect of lacerating wounds in diminishing hemorrhage.’ These are only two of the surgical subjects which my grandfather’s fertile brain and ready hand gave him originality in dealing with.

“The removal of the parotid gland is still, as it then was, a problem fraught with so much anatomical difficulty that it was questioned as feasible and doubted as practicable. Some of you may have seen the distinguished surgeons at the hospital remove a parotid tumor. You all ought to know sufficiently well the anatomy of the region involved to be able to judge of the severity of such an operation to the patient, and of its testing to the fullest extent the ability of the operator. I feel sure I am not far wrong when I pronounce it to be the greatest test of surgical knowledge and dexterity. But stop for a moment, you who are to shed future light on surgery and consider what such an operation must have been without ether or chloroform. It was thus that my grandfather did every one of his operations, and they were in all removal of thirteen entire parotid tumors.

“I once knew a man whose leg had been crushed between two beer barrels at a brewery. He told me my grandfather, who happened to be passing, was called in and that he immediately had him carried into an adjacent room and without any preparation cut off the leg and stopped the bleeding vessels by tearing them across. He also told me there was little pain until the bone was sawn. He was well and about in three weeks. We don’t do these things in this way nowadays, but we don’t have any better results. The tearing of the vessels in operation wounds was perhaps one of the most original of my grandfather’s ideas, and was due, as he said, to observation that lacerated wounds produced by sudden accidents are peculiarly free from hemorrhage and not attended with great pain. He therefore after the incision through the integument in the neighborhood of growths, etc., did not hesitate to grasp the part to be removed and to wrench it from its place, only using the knife to nick a band of unyielding tissue here and there. This procedure, although apparently rough, he believed to be more merciful to the patient, both as more rapid and liable to less dangerous consequences than the careful cutting out of the tumor; but it gave occasion for adverse criticism, as his methods and motives were not easily appreciated and often not understood.

“I have thus briefly told you of the struggles and determination that led to the foundation of the Jefferson Medical College. Can you wonder that I have chosen it as my Alma Mater and that I cherish all that belongs to its early history and to the name of George McClellan, which I who bear it in this generation, have striven always to uphold.”
Appraisal of George McClellan by Samuel D. Gross

"McClellan was the master genius of the establishment, a fluent and popular lecturer, full of energy and enthusiasm, but utterly without system. Every student was warmly attached to him, and 'Mac' was the name by which he was generally designated. As an operator he was showy, and at times brilliant, yet he lacked the important requisites of a great surgeon — judgment and patience. He frequently jumped at conclusions and was therefore often at fault in his diagnosis.

"The Commencement day came; McClellan delivered the address to the graduates, and I was one of twenty-seven who received, at the end of the third session of the college, the honors of the doctorate. McClellan, on this as on any other occasion, was not on time. He kept the audience waiting for at least ten minutes, much to the annoyance of President Green, an old man; and when at length, he made his appearance, he could hardly read his manuscript, so badly was it written. In fact, as I afterwards learned, he had been engaged upon the composition of his address up to the very moment of leaving his house for the college.

"He died in 1847, in the 51st year of his age, after a brief illness, of perforation of the bowel. At the time of his death the Collins Printing House had in hand a portion of the manuscript of a work entitled The Principles and Practice of Surgery, a small volume, issued as a posthumous production under the supervision of his son, Dr. John Hill Brinton McClellan. The work proved to be a failure in both a commercial and professional point of view. The best things in it are its cases, most of which are portrayed by the hand of a master. Early in his life he wrote some good reviews, particularly one of Baron Larrey's Surgical Memoirs of Napoleon's Campaigns."

Editor's Continued Account of George McClellan

Ill feelings persisted between McClellan and Francis S. Beattie, Professor of Midwifery and Diseases of Women and Children at Jefferson, which led to a litigation for libel by McClellan in 1829 because of accusations of unethical conduct. The verdict was in favor of the plaintiff (McClellan).

The initial years of the new Jefferson Medical College were plagued with financial problems, in-fighting, and harassment by the University of Pennsylvania. In the early 1830s, new blood in the faculty represented by Granville Pattison (the "turbulent Scot"), John Revere (the son of Paul Revere, the patriot), and Dunglish ("the peacemaker") led to a spirit of independent thinking and challenge against the will of the Founder, who also in his rashness failed to reckon with the power and stability of the Board of Trustees.

McClellan made the mistake of calling the Board "a parcel of politicians" and a "blackguard Board of Trustees." Worse still, he openly and publicly proclaimed that Jefferson was "rotten and going to the dogs." This occasioned a decision by the Board in 1838 to vacate all the chairs and to elect new professors. Final balloting took place on July 10, 1839. Among the candidates for the Chair of Surgery were Thomas Tickell Hewson (age 66, and President of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia) who received one vote; Joseph Pancoast (age 34, a widely respected anatomist-surgeon in the City) received seven votes; and McClellan (age 43, the Founder) received five votes. McClellan's connection with the school he had founded was at an end.

McClellan had to be surprised and even mortified by his dismissal, but was not to be outdone. Irrepressible man that he was, he immediately used the same strategy as he had for Jefferson to found yet another medical school in Philadelphia. He obtained permission from the Pennsylvania College in Gettysburg to establish its Medical Department in Philadelphia, with recognition by the State Legislature. Assembling a good faculty of five associates, he commenced the first course of lectures with nearly 100 students in November, 1839. This school survived for nearly two decades, but was closed by attrition during the Civil War.

McClellan again became involved in a faculty quarrel in 1843 and reluctantly had to resign his final surgical professorship. He spent the
rest of his life in active practice in which his name was a frequent household word. To the poor he was especially generous.

Death came to him unexpectedly on May 8, 1847, at age 51, and at the height of his powers. On that morning he seemed normal and was involved in two operations. By noon he experienced severe abdominal pain which forced him to return home. At midnight he went into shock and died shortly thereafter. Postmortem examination revealed a perforated sigmoid colon.

McClellan was buried in East Laurel Hill Cemetery, overlooking the East River (Kelly) Drive in Philadelphia. A handsome granite tombstone marks the site occupied also by his wife, Elizabeth (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Tombstone of George McClellan and his wife in East Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia.

Jefferson’s Acceptance by the State Legislature:
The Speech of Christian Brobst

The privilege of Jefferson College at Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, to establish a Medical Department in Philadelphia (Jefferson Medical College) was granted under its own Charter by the State Legislature on October 30, 1824. The right and power of the new Medical College to grant diplomas to its graduates was challenged and disputed by the University of Pennsylvania. Legal entanglements followed in which Edward Ingersoll, Esq. on behalf of the Canonsburg College (Jefferson) introduced a petition into the State Legislature on October 25, 1825, that specifically would enable the granting of medical degrees and create an additional Board of Trustees in Philadelphia.

During the next five months the issue was debated off and on in the Legislature. Drs. George McClellan and John Eberle made occasional trips to Harrisburg on behalf of favorable passage of the Bill. The opposition strengthened when on January 30, 1826, a protest was introduced by William Tilghman, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania and Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. In clear and strongly worded logic it fully set forth reasons for its objections.

In the State Senate on February 20 (from notes taken from the Journal of the Senate), four memorials from a number of the members of the medical profession in Philadelphia remonstrated against the establishment of a new medical school in the said city. On behalf of Jefferson, Senator Joel B. Sutherland (several months later to become a member of Jefferson’s Additional Board of Trustees) presented a counter petition from sundry practicing physicians of Pennsylvania, praying for the establishment of a new medical college in Philadelphia. He also presented the petition of sundry practicing physicians from Lancaster County of similar import.

From notes of the Journal of the House of Representatives it is documented that on April 1, 1826,
Representative Jacob S. Walln of Philadelphia presented a remonstrance from sundry students of medicine in the University of Pennsylvania against the incorporation of a new medical school in the City of Philadelphia.

Dr. McClellan learned that a final vote was to be taken in the Legislature on April 7, 1826. It is historical fact that he made a dash by horse and buggy, likened to the famous ride of Paul Revere, to Harrisburg the day before, as related in *Thomas Jefferson University: Tradition and Heritage* (p. 22). The undocumented impression is that he arrived just in time to make an impassioned speech before the Legislature that resulted in favorable passage of the Bill.

New information indicates that McClellan made this last moment trip to lobby once again for passage of the Bill through the Legislature. In checking with the Legislative Historian of Pennsylvania it was learned that the rules would not have allowed a public citizen to intrude himself on the floor and deliver a speech. A newspaper article recently discovered in a scrapbook from Jefferson's archives reports that a legislator by the name of Christian Brobst delivered the official convincing speech that secured passage of the Bill. The legislative records in Harrisburg confirm that Brobst was indeed a representative from Columbia County in the Bloomsburg area and most likely a Democrat. The Bloomsburg Press from which the release is taken is still in existence (1993).

**Bloomsburg Pennsylvania Morning Press, June 20, 1925**

**Man Responsible For Jefferson College**

“At the meeting of the Bloomsburg Rotary Club, Thursday evening, Dr. D.J. Waller, Jr., told the story of how Jefferson Medical College came into existence, - a story heard for the first time and one of county interests.

“It was a Columbia Countian, Christian Brobst, then in the Legislature, who was directly responsible for the establishment of Jefferson Medical College.

“For years the University of Pennsylvania authorities had managed to defeat in the Legislature any attempt to have a second medical school established in the State. Time and time again the effort had been made and failed.

“Dr. George McClellan of Philadelphia was the man most determined to see the new medical college started.

“He got to the ear of Christian Brobst then a power in the Legislature.

“It was the latter’s habit to always time his speech so that it was made just before the Legislature voted.

“The question of an appropriation to make possible the start of the college came up.

“Brobst arose and in German accent spoke somewhat in this fashion.

‘Up at Catawissa, where I live we had to take our grist on horseback and ride with it down to Sunbury. We had no mill. After so many of us had to do that so often, we persuaded a miller to open a mill near us and then we had our grist ground at home. They came from all directions to have it done there and it meant a lot to us.

‘But after a time, they got to saying: ‘the miller has too much work, he is getting sassy.’

‘So it went, and finally we said if the miller is getting sassy and has too much work, we ought to have another mill. And so we went a little farther up the creek, and we had a second mill.

‘Now men, from what I hear this University of Pennsylvania is getting sassy. I think it is about time to ‘go a little farther up the creek and open another mill.”

“The vote was taken immediately after that speech. Jefferson Medical College was given an appropriation and work was started on its erection soon after.

“Dr. Waller said that he had often heard his father tell that story as it came to him from Dr. McClellan, who never met the Rev. Mr. Waller without inquiring about Christian Brobst whom he held in the highest esteem and regard.”

Approval of the Bill by Governor J. Andrew Schulze on April 7, 1826, (as verified in *Executive Minutes of the Governor*) allowed for the first
Jefferson Medical College Commencement, which had been postponed, to take place on April 14. It ratified all previous actions of the mother College at Canonsburg, gave permanence to the composition and function of the Faculty, legalized the granting of the M.D. degree, and allowed the election of a Philadelphia Board of Trustees. The last legal barrier to survival of the new College had been eliminated.

The Controversial
Professor Barnes, the Irascible Professor Barton, and Early Faculty Squabbles
by Dan Flanagan

[Editor's note: The following article is forgivably lengthy because of the blow-by-blow account it gives of the early in-fighting that occurred among the first faculty of Jefferson Medical College. It portrays in graphic detail the situations that rendered the survival of the new school extremely tenuous. When combined with the financial hardships and harassment by the University of Pennsylvania in these start-up years, one appreciates how close the College came to collapsing. The intrigues and squabbles, so unexpected among men of high professional rank, make fascinating reading. Dan Flanagan, Jefferson's archivist technician, obtained this research information from pamphlets in the University archives.]

John Barnes (Fig. 1) was the second Professor of Midwifery at Jefferson Medical College. He was also the second Midwifery Professor to be removed from the faculty, and to react to his ouster by "broad siding" the College.

Aside from the pamphlet, little information has surfaced about Barnes. Until recently, the exact dates of his birth and death were not even known; references specified, only, that he was born in the year 1791. Fortunately, these details have turned up, unexpectedly, on the back of an old photo at Thomas Jefferson University. John Barnes was born in Philadelphia, on December 2, 1791, and died in St. Louis, on May 19, 1870. The photographer's business stamp indicates that the picture was, also, taken in St. Louis.

The photographer did not provide the elderly Dr. Barnes with a very flattering representation of himself. But then, there was only so much a photographer could do. He could use a pencil to restore the wave in Barnes' snow-white hair, but not to smooth out the wrinkles encircling his eyes. Though Barnes managed to keep a thick head of hair, he was not nearly as lucky with his teeth, judging from the "sunken-in" look of his mouth. And if one of the advantages to wearing a high collar included reducing the visual impact of a double chin, Barnes could have selected a larger size.

Because of this lackluster appearance, it should be remembered, that when Barnes delivered his first lecture at Jefferson, in November, 1826, he was
only 34 years old. Among the students that he lectured to that year was a 21 year-old matriculant, who was destined to become one of the greatest surgeons in the history of medicine - Samuel D. Gross.

In his two-volume Autobiography, Dr. Gross delivered a terse commentary on his former teacher’s career at Jefferson.

“Barnes, the obstetrician, held his position only one session. Having been weighed in the balance and found wanting, he was placed on the retired list. He was the dullest lecturer that it was my lot ever to hear, destitute of all the attributes of a successful teacher.”

Though there is little on record, other than the Barnes pamphlet itself, to contradict this assessment, a speech that Dr. Gross delivered before the Jefferson Alumni Association, on March 11, 1871, puts his opinion of Barnes into a broader perspective.

“The fate of the early obstetric professors of our Alma Mater was eminently curious and unfortunate for all parties. The original occupant of the chair was Dr. Francis Smith Beattie, who, at the close of the first session, was replaced by Dr. John Barnes, who in turn, gave way to Dr. Eberle, who taught Midwifery, during my second course of lectures, in conjunction with the theory and practice of medicine. From 1829 until 1831 the chair was filled by Dr. Rheaes, when it fell to the lot of Dr. Usher Parsons...He remained in the school only one session. On his retirement, the chair was tendered to Dr. Samuel McClellan, who, in 1839, was succeeded by Dr. Robert M. Huston, and the latter, in 1841, by Dr. Charles D. Meigs; altogether eight incumbents in the short space of sixteen years! A succession, with an absurdity, forcibly reminding one of Genesis, ‘And Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob!’”

These two citations are probably the most familiar ones known pertaining to Dr. Barnes. They have, unfortunately, led to some confusion. John Barnes was on the Jefferson faculty, as Professor of Midwifery, for two sessions, not one. (Barnes lectured, at Jefferson during the 1826-27 session, and, the 1827-28 session). It is also unclear how Eberle could have instructed Gross in Midwifery. Gross graduated in the spring of 1828. Barnes was not removed from the faculty until June 1828 - two months after Gross graduated!

John Barnes’ ill-fated career at Jefferson Medical College began during the summer of 1826, when he returned to Philadelphia after a three-year hiatus, in the western United States.

One of the first persons that Barnes looked up, when he returned to Philadelphia, was John Eberle, (Professor of Theory and Practice at Jefferson Medical College). Perhaps the best evidence of their decade-long friendship can be found in the affectionate farewell written to Barnes, by Eberle, in the fall of 1823.

“As you are on the eve of removing to a very distant part of the country, I cannot but express to you my regret at the interruption which is about to take place in our social intercourse, although I am persuaded that your future prosperity will be materially enhanced by the step you are taking. In the place to which you are going, you will much sooner realize the full reward of your professional merits than can be expected in this city, where the profession is overcrowded, and where extrinsic influence too often prevails against intrinsic worth...I shall expect to hear from you often; and I beg you, especially, to communicate to me whatever you find interesting or novel in the natural history and diseases of the country to which you are going. If your leisure will admit, I should be much pleased to receive from you a full account of the bilious fever, so common along the Mississippi...Nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to have an occasional paper from you. The articles which you furnished me for the Medical Recorder did much credit to that work; and I feel particularly desirous to have the assistance of your pen for our new medical journal.”

Eberle had more than personal reasons for welcoming Barnes back to Philadelphia in 1826. The chair of Midwifery was about to be “vacated” at Jefferson, and Dr. Barnes seemed tailor-made for the position. Eberle lost no time in steering the course of their conversation towards College affairs and expressed to Barnes his interest in seeing
him become the next Professor of Midwifery. Though Barnes wanted the position, he hesitated about accepting it.

Officially, the Chair was still in the possession of an unyielding Francis Beattie and Barnes shivered at the thought of playing a usurper’s role. Reluctantly, Barnes told Eberle that he could not consent to the proposal as long as Beattie retained his title. Eberle cautioned his friend not to let his concern for a doomed man deprive himself of a situation that would render him “independent for life”; then he warned Barnes that another doctor, who had already expressed interest in the position was about to be approached with the same offer. Once he saw the coveted opportunity receding from his grasp, Barnes gave in and agreed to take the chair of Midwifery, “provided it should become vacant”.

That evening, the faculty forwarded a letter to the Philadelphia Board of Trustees, recommending Dr. Barnes as a replacement for Francis Beattie.

While Barnes worried about assuming an unwanted role in Professor Beattie’s downfall, the thought never occurred to him that his welfare, not Beattie’s, was actually at stake. Barnes did not realize, until it was too late, that he would be threatened by the same considerations which ruined his predecessor.

“The leading design of Dr. McClellan,” Barnes explained retrospectively in his pamphlet, “was to procure the appointment of Dr. James Rush as a member of the Jefferson medical faculty. This object was unreservedly avowed, personally and by letter, during the passage of the act of incorporation. The removal of Dr. Beattie, and the intended introduction of Dr. Rush, were all arranged before Dr. Beattie had concluded his course of lectures, and even before he had made those pretended omissions and pretended mistakes, which have been so deceptively magnified to delude the public.”

The need to displace two members of the faculty complicated McClellan’s already difficult task. Because Dr. Rush preferred the Chair of Theory and Practice, McClellan intended to create a vacancy in Midwifery for the displaced Dr. Eberle. It was an act of consideration that Eberle resisted mightily.

There were good reasons why McClellan was willing to go to so much trouble. Dr. Rush belonged to one of Philadelphia’s most prominent families. After graduating from Princeton in 1805, James Rush obtained his M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, in 1809. Following the example of his father, Dr. Benjamin Rush, he traveled to Edinburgh for extended medical training. He returned to Philadelphia in 1811, and quickly established himself as a private lecturer and medical practitioner. Eight years later, the already prosperous Dr. Rush married Phoebe Anne Ridgeway, daughter of a wealthy Philadelphia merchant. When her father died, Phoebe inherited an estate valued at more than a million dollars! Her husband was, therefore, ideally qualified to join the faculty of McClellan’s struggling, new, medical school.

The rented Prune St. building (the former Winter Tivoli Theater) lacked the space and facilities needed to teach medicine. Because the College was proprietary, the responsibility for bankrolling the enterprise fell squarely on the shoulders of the faculty members, none of whom had financial resources equal to the task. One of the Trustees, the Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely, stepped into the breach and constructed a new building a short distance away from the old Tivoli. Ely worried about his investment, however, and campaigned vigorously with McClellan for the addition of Dr. Rush to the Jefferson faculty. Ely hoped in this way to get rid of a “precarious stock investment, by disposing a considerable part of it to the wealthy connections of Dr. Rush”.

The “precarious stock investment” consisted of a lot on Tenth St., between Walnut and Sansom (then called George St.), purchased in May 1827, for $6,500. The building (named in honor of Rev. Ely) took nearly a year to complete, and cost an additional $10,500. Ely financed the project by creating shares of Jefferson Medical College stock, for which he officiated as the trustee.

George McClellan’s plans to bring Rush into the faculty were made even more difficult by
Jefferson's acquisition of a botanist named William Paul Crillon Barton (Fig. 2). The Barnes pamphlet is noteworthy for the light it sheds on Professor Barton's surprising role in Jefferson's faculty controversies. Rather than confirming that Barton stood apart from the fighting, Barnes portrays Professor Barton as one of George McClellan's most formidable opponents.

Though McClellan could take credit for establishing Philadelphia's second medical school, he was by no means the first person to try. An earlier attempt had been made by W.P.C. Barton in 1818. The University of Pennsylvania automatically opposed the measure, and used its influence in State Legislature to keep Barton from getting a charter. Several years later, McClellan faced the same obstacle, but, he tricked the opposition by incorporating his medical school as a department of a liberal arts college near Pittsburgh. Unfortunately, having "common enemies" with George McClellan did not predispose Barton toward becoming comrades in arms with him. If anything, their shared ambitions contributed to their personal animosity.

W.P.C. Barton (Nov. 17, 1786 - Feb. 29, 1856) belonged to a distinguished scientific and professional family. He graduated from Princeton in 1805 with more than just a classical education. Each member of Barton's class was encouraged to assume the name of some celebrated figure. Barton chose that of Count Paul Crillon, and retained the initials "P.C." for the rest of his life. Studying medicine under the wing of his uncle, Benjamin Smith Barton, he received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1808. Shortly afterwards, W.P.C. Barton obtained an appointment, as a Navy Surgeon. While serving in this capacity Barton assumed additional responsibilities, outside of those associated with his Naval service. When his uncle died in 1815, Barton succeeded him to the chair of Botany at the University of Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, the emoluments derived from his position were not as lucrative as they had been for his Uncle. Shortly after W.P.C. Barton's arrival the chair was removed from the Medical Faculty and placed in the newly created Department of Natural Sciences. The creation of this department had more to do with acquiring a tract of land for a Botanical Garden, and negotiating certain debts owed to the State than satisfying a genuine demand for its services. Because the diploma offered by the Natural Sciences Department had nothing to do with securing profitable employment after graduation, the faculty experienced a great deal of trouble attracting students. Of the five professors in the department, Barton was the only one who lectured regularly. He accomplished this largely by remitting his fees and teaching gratuitously. Though his University position yielded no monetary advantage, it allowed Barton to enhance his prestige and authority as a Botanical writer. During this period Barton directed the greater part of his energies into writing books, which won him acclaim nationwide. In the light of his growing reputation, Barton petitioned the University to restore his chair to the Medical Faculty. Since the University of Pennsylvania refused to take action, Barton eagerly accepted when Jefferson offered him a place on its faculty in 1826. (Two years later, the University of Pennsylvania formally dissolved the Department of Natural Sciences).

W.P.C. Barton is usually remembered as a botanist first, a teacher second, and a naval surgeon last. Barton's career in the Navy, however, consumed the greater part of his life (from 1809 to

Fig. 2. William P.C. Barton, M.D., Professor of Materia Medica (1826-29) and Dean (1828-29).
1856). When Barton died on Feb. 29, 1856, he was buried with full military honors. Cornet players led the funeral procession, through the streets of Philadelphia, to Laurel Hill Cemetery, where a detachment of Marines brought the services to a close, by firing rifles over Barton’s grave.

A closer look into Barton’s military record, however, reveals that his career in the Navy, was more irregular than the ceremonies suggested.

In his behavior Barton epitomized a particular breed of Yankee Individualist. It was unnatural for a man like Barton (or McClellan, for that matter) to submit to hierarchical authority, or to allow his personal affairs to be controlled by other people. Consequently, Barton experienced difficulties accepting orders that were incompatible with his personal wishes. When confronted by a situation that was not to his liking, Barton struggled restlessly to bring about changes. This made him an effective campaigner for reform inside the Navy’s hospitals. On a more personal level, however, Barton’s challenges to unwanted duty assignments became almost farcical in nature.

Soon after he joined the Navy, W.P.C. Barton received orders to join the crew aboard the frigate United States. Though the terms “sea duty” and “naval service” are virtually synonymous the grim reality of life at sea proved to be even worse than he imagined it would be. After spending nearly two years aboard ship, Barton reached the limits of his endurance.

“The unsettled and wandering life on board ship not only deters the gratification of professional ambition, but absolutely generates an inaction of mind very inimical to solid improvement of any kind. The sea does not subject me to any corporeal malady, but really produces a spiritless inaction and mental debility which all the resolution I have been able to exert for better than two years has not afforded me the power to overcome.”

This was putting it mildly. Barton was not recording his private thoughts in a journal, or seeking condolences from a sympathetic friend. He was writing to the Secretary of the Navy and asking for a re-assignment to the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

Since the ranks would thin considerably if complaints like Barton’s had their intended effect, the Secretary of the Navy turned the request down—but Barton refused to take “no” for an answer. He used every means at his disposal in an all-out effort to stay ashore. He asked friends and relatives to use their influence in Washington to help him get what he wanted. At one point Barton even traveled to Washington to see President James Monroe about one of the coveted Navy Yard jobs. The Presidential recommendation that Barton received secured the post for him, but, unfortunately, comments Barton had made, just before coming to Washington, got him into trouble. It seemed that Barton had “jacously” remarked, to one of the other doctors at the Philadelphia Naval Hospital, that he had better look to his position there, as he (Dr. Barton) intended to get it for himself. As a result, Barton was charged with “conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman”, and ordered to appear before a court martial.

The accusation was made that, in the process of applying for the Hospital Surgeon’s position at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, Barton “insidiously solicited and procured Dr. Thomas Harris to be superseded and removed from his place at the hospital, and obtained it for himself.” Among the witnesses subpoenaed to appear before the court was President Monroe. Though prevented from testifying in person, because of his official duties as chief executive, President Monroe sent written statements to the court which were highly favorable to Barton’s defense. The court decided that the charge was sustained “to a certain extent only” and sentenced Barton to be reprimanded by his old friend, the Secretary of the Navy.

Later in his career, when Barton became Chief of Bureau (a position analogous to the Surgeon General’s office today), his enviable talent for escaping sea duty, particularly during wartime (War of 1812), led to an attempt to legislate him out of office. Barton’s enemies attached a proviso to a Naval Appropriation Bill, stipulating that any appointee for that office needed to have spent at least five years at sea in order to qualify. In spite of their actions, Barton survived as a Bureau Chief with less than three years service at sea.

Legend and Lore 22
Barton's Naval career bears looking into because his machinations and office seeking tend to support the pamphlet statements made by John Barnes. In one anecdote, Barnes states that while he and Dr. Barton were still waiting for their faculty appointments, Barton offered him the chair of Institutes on the Jefferson faculty if he would resign Midwifery (in favor of an outsider, whom Barton wanted to bring into the faculty). Barnes' characterization of W.P.C. Barton as a "professorial broker" was underscored by the fact that the chair of Institutes had just been created specifically for Dr. Rhoes as a reward for giving up Materia Medica to Dr. Barton.

Though Barton's role in the proceedings surrounding the expulsion of Francis Beattie were minimal, comments made about Barton in Beattie's pamphlet created a furor. Drs. McClellan, Green, Smith, and Rhoes became "decidedly hostile" towards Professor Barton as a result. This made for some memorable moments during the faculty meetings, which were vividly described by Dr. Barnes:

"From the time of my appointment I attended regularly the meetings of the Jefferson medical faculty, most of which, however, were so indecorous and turbulent, owing to the disputes and the ungentlemanly deportment of the members towards each other, that attendance at them was really painful. On one occasion, at a regular faculty meeting, Professor Barton shook his fist in Professor Rhoes' face."

Barnes also found Dr. Barton's "Navy" vocabulary worthy of comment, if not actual repetition. "Dr. Barton was not wanting, on his part, in the free expression of his opinions of some of his colleagues. His favorite epithet, almost constantly applied when speaking of one of the trustees, was so profane and abusive, that from regard to the highly respectable family of this trustee, I shall not mention it."

Though Barnes politely refused to identify the name of this Jefferson trustee, a passage in the Beattie pamphlet suggests that it was Samuel Badger.

"Colonel Carr, of Kingsessing, had observed for some time the gradual decrease of his most valuable hot-house plants. To detect the manner in which they had disappeared, he gave directions to one of his workmen to watch visitors, when about to leave the garden. On a particular day the man so employed went to Colonel Carr and told him some of his plants were now going. The Colonel followed the man to the gig of Dr. Barton, and from it took some one, or more, plants. Colonel Carr then ordered Dr. Barton to leave his garden and forbade him ever to re-enter it. Such was the statement made by Dr. McClellan, which, he said, he received from Mr. Badger, and that Mr. Badger told him that he had it from Colonel Carr." (Editor's note: It has been said that all true garden lovers are thieves.)

If Barton had his detractors in the faculty, he made up for the loss elsewhere. Regardless of whether it was in spite of his caustic personality or because of it, Barton enjoyed extreme popularity among Jefferson's young medical students. He was one of S.D. Gross' favorite lecturers. "He abounded in flashes of wit; and a vein of irony and sarcasm was perceptible in almost everything he did and said...In his criticisms of contemporaneous writers, he was often severe, and even bitter, especially when he had occasion to speak of a certain writer on Materia Medica with whom he had long been on terms of open hostility. He would then often, with a peculiarly disdainful curl of the upper lip, fly off into the keenest satire and invective, much to the amusement of his young auditors, all of whom, with few exceptions were warmly attached to him. It was his invariable practice...to ask the class some questions respecting the lectures of the previous day. On such occasions, Zook, a member of the class, no longer young, frequently became a source of merriment from the particular tone of voice in which his name was called out. "Mr. Z-o-o-k', the lecturer would say, with the peculiar curl of the lip just alluded to, 'Mr. Z-o-o-k, will you be so kind as to state what the composition of aloes, and what are some of its more important uses?' Mr. Zook of course stammered and hesitated, while his more mischievous companions either tittered, or
broke out into a loud laugh.”

Perhaps the most striking thing about this quotation is that while Drs. Gross and Barnes differ in their personal reactions to Dr. Barton, the temperament of the man that each writer describes is remarkably similar. Ironically, the Jefferson Trustees welcomed Dr. Barton into the faculty, while reconsiderations hindered the path of Dr. Barnes. In addition to the complications inherent in prying Dr. Beattie loose from his chair, McClellan delayed the appointment further, by secretly writing a letter to the Trustees counteracting his recommendation of Barnes.

Intent on providing Rush with a faculty position, McClellan hoped to force Eberle out of his chair by condemning each and every Midwifery candidate. McClellan hoped that this would force the Board to assign Midwifery to Eberle during the upcoming session. Barton in the meantime was urging everybody “who had any pretentions to Midwifery” to apply without delay!

In frustration, McClellan began speaking openly about removing Barton, and criticized Eberle as Barton’s “tool” (a word which carries certain non-utilitarian connotations in Farmer’s 18th century Slang Dictionary). With the opening of the new school session approaching rapidly, McClellan settled on the “temporary appointment” of Dr. Barnes. To facilitate McClellan’s control over the situation, Samuel Badger met with Barnes to obtain a note acknowledging the conditional nature of his employment. Though the note was brief, the wording reflected the lengthy deliberation which had taken place between Dr. Barnes and Mr. Badger. During this time, Barnes laboriously struggled to write himself “into” the faculty, while Badger, an attorney, made certain that he was accomplishing precisely the opposite. “I offer my acknowledgments to the board of trustees, for the honor they have done me by this appointment, and consider them in no degree pledged thereby for my continuance in the situation. If the interest of the college and my own, can be promoted by a permanent appointment, I shall entertain no doubt on the subject; otherwise I would be unwilling to fill the chair.”

The temporary faculty status made Barnes vulnerable to acts of coercion on the part of George McClellan, who warned Barnes that, unless he helped to remove Dr. Barton from the College, he would never be permanently appointed. This put Barnes in another strange dilemma.

“Although I had no personal respect for Dr. Barton, and would have rejoiced, heartily, to have seen him separated in some honorable way from the Jefferson medical faculty; yet I would not reconcile it with what I deemed due to an associate, however unworthy, not to apprise him of the designs which were plotting his destruction as a professor...I called on Dr. Barton for the express purpose of apprising him of their existence...In his reply to these remarks, he bid defiance to their efforts, and threatened to destroy their charter, which he said was forfeited in case of his removal.”

Aside from offending Barnes’ sense of fair play, the hostility that McClellan expressed towards him could have had some influence over the decision to approach Barton. Given a choice between George McClellan and W.P.C. Barton, Dr. Barnes perceived the latter as the lesser of two evils. If we are to believe Barnes, John Eberle (clearly the most sympathetic man on the faculty towards Barnes), saw it that way as well.

“The opinion of Dr. Eberle, invariably expressed to me was, that both Dr. Barton and Dr. McClellan were unprincipled in their conduct. Dr. Barton he rather regarded as mischievously unprincipled, excessively jealous, and morbidly suspicious; led away by his vanity, and fostering his feelings of dislike, to the bitterness of deadly hatred...Dr. Eberle considered Dr. McClellan as more desperately unprincipled than Dr. Barton - one who regarded the means as always justified by the end - who was not only totally destitute of veracity, but would, at any moment, sacrifice his best friend to gain his object.”

In his ongoing clashes with Dr. Barton, McClellan announced his intention to give up more than that; if Barton remained on the faculty McClellan promised to quit. Such a departure would, obviously, work to Barnes’ advantage - provided Barton and Eberle stayed on good terms with
him and, with each other.

During the session of 1826-27, the faculty consisted of George McClellan, Surgery; John Eberle, Practice of Medicine; Nathan Smith, Anatomy; Benjamin Rhees, Institutes of Medicine and Medical Jurisprudence; John Barnes, Midwifery; and W.P.C. Barton, Materia Medica and Botany. Since the Act of Incorporation only provided for six chairs in the medical faculty, the introduction of a seventh member had an unwholesome effect on the collection of fees. The complete course of lectures was capped at $90.00 per student. Although the Canonsburg Trustees allowed the Faculty to increase its number, it prohibited any additional costs from being passed along to the students. Their maximum expenditure remained $90.00 and if the faculty wanted to divide that figure by seven, instead of six, it was free to do so, in any manner it saw fit. Since the charter said nothing regarding minimum fees, McClellan wanted to lower Dr. Barton's to the point where he would have to quit, to save his pride, if nothing else. With the additional support of Nathan Smith and Benjamin Rhees, McClellan's plan was just about to be sanctioned by the trustees, when Eberle intervened. It is unclear exactly how Barton could personally threaten the charter's viability, but Dr. Eberle took his warnings very seriously. He convinced Nathan Smith that the consequences would be disastrous and detached his support from the group. At the same time, Eberle went before the Board and asked them to "reduce the fee on his ticket, in preference to creating difficulties with Dr. Barton." The Board complied with the request and lowered Dr. Eberle's fee.

At this point John Barnes did the unthinkable; he had a little talk with Barton about the propriety of his actions (or lack thereof). "Dr. Eberle had made a considerable pecuniary sacrifice, and had rendered himself obnoxious to the invectives of some of the faculty, in order to save the feelings of Dr. Barton, and retain him in his professorship; yet this high minded professor became quite offended, because I hinted at the propriety of his making up the loss to Dr. Eberle, or at least dividing it with him."

Soon after this exchange Barnes learned that Dr. Barton had been discussing the prospects of finding a new Professor of Midwifery with Nathan Smith. Clearly, staying abreast of the shifting alliances, and accruing the benefits of their short lived opportunities, would not be the keys to his future success on the faculty. Although the independence he cultivated had much to do with the indifference of his colleagues, Barnes performed his duties admirably enough to receive the endorsement of the Board of Trustees, when his temporary faculty status came up for review at the end of the term.

"April 23, 1827 -

Dear Sir, - I have the pleasure to inform you that a resolution passed the board on the 21st inst. by a unanimous vote, to recommend you to the general board to fill the chair of midwifery and diseases of women and children; and you may expect the appointment in due season. You are thus placed, as far as it depends on the additional trustees, on the same footing with the other professors.

I am with great regard, your obt. servant and friend, James M. Broom, Secretary pro tem., Add. Board of Trustees, Jefferson College, medical department."

However, other developments at the College obscured the drama surrounding Barnes' appointment to full professorship. As soon as the school session ended in March, McClellan filed a libel suit against Francis Beattie for accusing him of malpractice in his pamphlet. Three months later, Beattie filed a suit, of his own, against the faculty, for ejecting him from the College building while his name was still on the lease.

Though the Board was at liberty to remove Dr. Beattie from the faculty, keeping him out of the College Building was a different matter altogether. As one of the original signatories on the Tivoli lease, Beattie still had a right to use the building, regardless of his affiliation with Jefferson Medical College. On this point the Trustees tried to negotiate with their former professor. They sent the Board Secretary, Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely, to obtain from Beattie some indication regarding the times he wanted to use the building, in order to avoid any
“interference between the professors and himself”. Interference, of course, was precisely what the troublesome Dr. Beattie had in mind. He pointed out to Ely, that, “he (Beattie) had a right to any and every part of the building”, and would use it at “his own pleasure”. He also complained to Ely that he had seen intruders on the premises - namely, the new professors, Barton and Barnes. When Ely persisted to ask Beattie to kindly tell him when he wanted to use the building, Beattie stated, in Ely’s words, that, “he would be willing to express his mind to me as a private gentleman, but as I called in the character of a trustee of Jefferson College, he should give no answer but to some written communication from the Trustees, or the gentlemen concerned.”

Rev. Ely wrote about the frustrating encounter to a fellow Board member with instructions, “to please preserve this paper to refresh my memory if there should ever be occasion.”

A few days after meeting with Rev. Ely, Beattie found himself “locked out” of the building, and this “eviction” became the basis for the July, 1827, law suit. The faculty was particularly vulnerable on this point, and their lawyers offered Beattie “generous terms” to settle out of court. The suit was finally settled by arbitration when Beattie accepted $1,000 in damages from the other co-signers on the lease.

The 1827-28 session opened ominously, with a 50% drop in enrollment! The reduction was directly attributable to Beattie’s widely distributed pamphlet, and court battle publicity. The reduction in lecture fees collected by the faculty made the cost of Beattie’s settlement all the more difficult to bear. To make matters worse for the College, Nathan R. Smith submitted his resignation (as Professor of Anatomy) one month before the session started, leaving McClellan with no alternative, but to teach both Anatomy and Surgery. In the midst of this turmoil, Barnes, who was unaffected by the Beattie settlement, tried creating a new role in the College for himself - that of faculty “peacemaker”.

“On all occasions, I endeavored to keep free from the collisions of these parties. I felt it my duty, calmly to represent to them, severally, how much the dignity and prosperity of the institution... depended, at least, upon an apparent cordiality and show of friendship among its professors.”

Unfortunately, no one paid any attention to Barnes, though the need for an effective peacemaker on the faculty was a desperate one, judging from his descriptions of the faculty meetings at this time.

“Language can scarcely convey an adequate idea of the appearance of the faculty meetings at this time; each meeting rather resembled a kennel of strange dogs, let loose upon each other, than an assemblage of professional gentlemen. Tantalizing remarks, insulting observations, and school-boy challenges constituted the prominent features.”

An amazing transformation took place, however, when the 1827-28 session ended in March. All of the fighting stopped, and each member of the Jefferson faculty began displaying an unexplainable show of affection towards the other. Though this was precisely the sort of behavior Barnes had been encouraging, the abrupt change filled him with a sense of foreboding. Any diagnostician worth his salt could tell something was terribly wrong.

“These very high-minded and honorable professors who so long had been wont to brand each other with epithets as contemptuous and vile as language could afford were now seen most sociably and happily congregating together; enjoying no doubt, in anticipation, the pecuniary advantage they would individually derive from their united efforts to sacrifice a colleague.”

This time the “colleague” in question was not the irascible Bill Barton.

Barnes learned of his danger in a series of events, reminiscent of the Beattie affair. Dr. Eberle came forward to inform Barnes that students were issuing complaints about his lectures. Eberle identified these students as participants in a plot to have him removed from the faculty. Upon investigation it was determined that they were almost without exception private students of George McClellan (S.D. Gross falls into this category, incidentally).
Eberle’s loyalties to Barnes, however, may not have been what they seemed.

Though Eberle denounced the methods being used to introduce Rush into the faculty, he now became instrumental in carrying out the plan. After resisting every effort to badger him into participation, Eberle finally succumbed to an ultimatum. Confronted with threat of losing his place on the faculty entirely, unless he cooperated, Eberle finally agreed to switch chairs. In addition to that, he had been compelled to visit Rush in order to convince the wary faculty candidate to say “yes” to the proposition. As a result of Eberle’s salesmanship, Rush agreed to join the faculty. The formalities were about to be taken care of. Then something unexpected happened.

The proposal was just about to be placed before the board of trustees, when a missing board-member returned from a business trip to Washington sooner than anyone expected. When Dr. Sutherland asked what was going to happen to John Barnes, his suspicions were aroused by the news of the professor’s retirement plans. Sutherland decided to see Barnes personally, in order to “have something authentic on the subject”.

Needless to say, the news of his “resignation” came as a complete surprise to Dr. Barnes. He immediately drafted a letter declaring that he had no intention of leaving, and appealing for the appointment of a committee to investigate the circumstances surrounding his case. The letter was read before the trustees at their meeting on June 16, 1828. The Board of Trustees found themselves in an awkward situation when the letter was read at the June 16 meeting.

Allowing Barnes to remain on the faculty was unacceptable, yet avoiding the trauma of a Beattie-style investigation and reorganization was paramount. An alternate plan was desperately needed.

Article Four of the school charter stated that, “a professor may be removed by the Board of Trustees with the consent of a majority of the other medical professors, after a full and fair investigation of the alleged causes for the removal but in no other way.”

The solution was bold, but simple - vacate the entire faculty! To ensure that the measure (which carried by only one vote) would not be subjected to reconsideration, the resolution was dispatched, immediately, to the parent Board in Canonsburg - even though it was nearly midnight, by the time the meeting adjourned.

When Barnes received word the following day that all of the chairs had been vacated, he paid Eberle an unannounced visit in order to discuss this curious turn of events. When asked for his opinion, Eberle seemed momentarily to forget to whom he was speaking. As if in a daze, Eberle confessed that he felt “utterly surprised” by the announcement, because he had been anticipating news of his transferal to Midwifery as a result of the appointment of James Rush to the chair of Theory and Practice.

Barnes exploded in anger when he heard what Eberle said. The expressions of outrage and betrayal immediately brought Eberle to his senses. By way of explanation he said, “It was a heart-rendering thing to me; but I was told that if I did not come into the measure, I would be deprived of my situation in the school entirely; and when I looked at my family the relinquishment of the college seemed too great a sacrifice for me to make, and I could not resist.”

Within days, the Board of Trustees reappointed every member of the old faculty except Barnes. In response to his protests, Barnes received instructions to submit his name as a candidate for the vacated chair of midwifery. Barnes angrily complied with the instructions and waited impatiently for the Board to announce their decision.

On August 14, 1828, the following advertisement appeared in the Philadelphia newspapers:

“Medical Department of Jefferson College

The public are now informed that the new medical hall of Jefferson College is now completed, and that the medical lectures in this college will commence at the usual time, in November next; and be delivered by the following professors, viz.:

On anatomy - George McClellan, M.D., who will be assisted by Samuel McClellan, M.D. as demonstrator in anatomy, whose eminence in this depart-
JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

DR. BARNES respectfully announces, that he will deliver an Introductory Lecture to his course of Lectures on Midwifery, & c. at the Hall of the Franklin Institute, this evening, at seven o'clock. Regarding the late proceedings of the Additional Trustees, as well as those of the General Board at Canonsburg in respect to his chair, as entirely illegal, and therefore null and void, he deems it his duty to caution those persons who may be disposed to attend the Lectures in Jefferson Medical College, that he will take legal measures to oppose the graduation of all those who shall not have complied with the requisitions of the charter in regard to attendance on his course of Lectures.

November 3d, 1828.

Fig. 3. Announcement of Dr. Barnes of his Introductory Lecture on Midwifery to students of Jefferson Medical College at the Franklin Institute (November 3, 1828). This was in protest to his dismissal from the faculty by the Board of Trustees.

Barnes stubbornly refused to acknowledge the right of the Philadelphia Trustees to remove him from the faculty.

"I shall insist on the performance of my duties, and the enjoyment of the privileges of my station until legally deprived of the same. And to this end...I shall feel myself entitled, by every consideration of propriety, to invoke to my aid every honorable means."

Barnes based his argument on charter provisions, limiting the power of the additional trustees in Philadelphia. Technically, their actions could not take place without first being sanctioned by the parent body in Canonsburg. Of course, it was not very realistic to expect the parent board to do anything other than rubber-stamp the recommendations of its Philadelphia counterpart. However, the legality of college business operations was, precisely, the kind of thing that potential medical students worried about a great deal. With that in mind, Barnes placed his own "Jefferson Medical College" advertisement into circulation.

"JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE
INTRODUCTORY LECTURE (Fig. 3)

Dr. Barnes respectfully announces, that he will deliver an Introductory Lecture to his course of Lectures on Midwifery, & c. at the Hall of the Franklin Institute, this evening, at seven o'clock. Regarding the late proceedings of the additional Trustees, as well as those of the General Board at Canonsburg in respect to his chair, as entirely illegal, and therefore null and void, he deems it his duty to caution those persons who may be disposed to attend the Lectures in Jefferson Medical College, that he will take legal measures to oppose the graduation of all those who shall not have complied with the requisitions of the charter in regard to attendance on his course of Lectures. November 3rd, 1828."

Ely returned fire by drawing up a circular which imitated, in turn, the appearance and language of the one Barnes made.

"JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE

Those medical students who may be disposed to enter the Jefferson Medical College are hereby assured that Dr. John Eberle is, for the present session, the legally appointed Professor of Midwifery & the Diseases of Women and Children; and that any student who takes his ticket, and in other respects conforms to the requisitions of the institution, will be lawfully Graduated, agreeably to the act of assembly, without any legal pains, penalties, or obstructions. For the further information of the public, it may be proper to state, that the trustees at Canonsburg have resolved that 'the decisions of the additional trustees shall in all cases be void..."
and take effect, until they shall be reversed'; and that both the additional trustees and the trustees of Jefferson College at Canonsburg, have removed Dr. John Barnes from the professorship held in said college.

Ezra Stiles Ely, Secretary of the Board of Additional Trustees"

Taking a page out of the "Beattie Book", as it were, Barnes cut loose with a 36-page broadside entitled "Jefferson Medical College: A representation of the Conduct of the Trustees and Members of the Faculty, and Circumstances Connected therewith, in Relation to John Barnes, M.D., Professor of Midwifery, and the Diseases of Women and Children, in this Institution." The aspirations that the author had for his pamphlet's circulation can be surmised from remarks prefacing seven testimonials, made in behalf of Dr. Barnes, which the author included in his pamphlet.

"As this publication may circulate in remote parts of the United States and elsewhere, in which I may not be known, I have thought it proper to append a few testimonials, all however received previous to, and therefore furnished without any reference to the present dispute."

Of course, Barnes made his influence mostly keenly felt closer to home.

"I beg it to be expressly understood, however, that I do not implicate Dr. Rush in this business; on the contrary, I believe, that if he knew the intrigues which have been carried on, he would at once discard every idea of a chair. I am well convinced, that the only reason why I am attacked, is not that I have proved incompetent; but that I am in the way of a plan and planners, and that any other man in the same chair would be attacked from the same motives."

If Rush did not know about the "intrigues" before, he certainly found out about them now. He also had plenty of time to reconsider his decision to join the medical faculty at Jefferson during the troubled 1828-29 session.

During the 1829-30 session, Jefferson Medical College formally offered James Rush the chair of Theory and Practice. The minutes for the Board Meeting held on February 15th, 1830, indicated that Rush turned the offer down. This particular Board Meeting has significance for other reasons as well.

In December, 1829, W.P.C. Barton's association with Jefferson Medical College ostensibly ended, when he was recalled to sea duty aboard the frigate, Brandywine. The February 15th minutes describe that Barton was acting under duress in submitting his resignation. During the meeting, Rev. Ely informed the Board, that Dr. Barton had given him a letter -

"...in which (Dr. Barton) formally tendered his resignation of the professorship of Materia Medica and Botany, with a request that if the Board could see it to be fit, they might rescind their vote on the 4th instant by which he was removed..."

The Board was acting, undoubtedly, on the earlier recommendation of the Jefferson faculty.

"At a meeting of the medical faculty of Jefferson College, held on the 23rd inst., (January?) present Drs. Eberle, George McClellan, Green, Rhees, and Samuel McClellan, the following was adopted unanimously as the (?) of the faculty. The recent Circumstances which have transpired in the case of Dr. Barton rendering it evident that his connection with the Naval service of the U.S. is incompatible with the regular performance of his duties as a professor in this institution, therefore resolved that the board of trustees be respectfully requested to accept his resignation, if tendered, and if not, to take such measures, as they may deem proper, to relieve the faculty from the danger of a recurrence of the present embarrassing circumstances in which they have been placed by the inability of Dr. B. to discharge the duties of his station in this college."

It is debatable, given these minute entries, and W.P.C. Barton's personal history, whether he left the faculty because he was recalled to sea duty aboard the Brandywine, or whether he chose to go to sea because he had been ousted from the Jefferson faculty. In any event, Barton's service aboard the Brandywine was of short duration. It only lasted a few months. In July, Barton returned to permanent shore duty. The belated fruition of McClellan's plans did not have
their intended results.
McClellan had moved heaven and earth, just to offer James Rush a role he ultimately turned down. By comparison, it had been far easier to get the college charter from Harrisburg! It is little wonder in the face of such frustration and disappointment that McClellan decided to abandon Jefferson the following year.
During the 1830-31 session Daniel Drake arrived in Philadelphia, ostensibly to teach at Jefferson Medical College. McClellan hoped that Drake’s reputation would add luster to the school’s image, and stimulate enrollment. When Drake responded to the offer, he made it clear that he wanted to retain the option of withdrawing from the faculty at

Fig. 4. Name of George McClellan as Professor of Anatomy and Physiology on circular advertising fall opening (1831) of Dr. Daniel Drake’s new Medical School (Miami) in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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MIAMI UNIVERSITY.

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

The Board of Trustees of Miami University, beg leave, respectfully, to announce, that they have established, in CINCINNATI, a MEDICAL DEPARTMENT, which will go into full operation the ensuing autumn.

The following gentlemen compose the Faculty:

Daniel Drake, M. D., (Late Professor in Transylvania University, and the Jefferson Medical College,) Professor of the Institutes and practice of Medicine, and Dean of the Faculty.
Geo. McClellan, M. D., (Professor of Surgery in the Jefferson Medical College,) Professor of Anatomy and Physiology.
John Eberle, M. D., (Professor of Materia Medica in the Jefferson Medical College,) Professor of Materia Medica and Botany.
James M. Staughton, M. D., (Late professor of Surgery in the Columbian College,) Professor of Surgery.
John F. Henry, M. D., of Kentucky, Professor of Obstetrics and the Diseases of Women and Children.
Tho’s D. Mitchell, M. D., of Philadelphia, Professor of Chemistry and Pharmacy.
Joseph N. McDowell, M. D. of Cincinnati, Adjunct Professor of Anatomy and Physiology.

It will be observed, that most of these gentlemen have, for several years, been public teachers, and are extensively and advantageously known, both by their lectures and their writings. Composed of such distinguished professors, the School, from its very beginning, must bear a comparison with any other in the United States; and, as such, the Board would respectfully commend it to the confidence of the profession generally.

The terms and regulations for the first Course will be published, in due time, by the Faculty.

By order of the Board.

R. H. BISHOP, President.
JOEL COLLINS, Secretary.

MIAMI UNIVERSITY,
OXFORD, OHIO, FEB. 22, 1831.
the end of the session. Drake insisted on this provision because he planned to establish a new medical college, in Cincinnati - the Medical Department of Miami University. Above all other considerations, recruitment for the Miami faculty motivated Drake to come to Philadelphia. When he arrived, he turned the tables on his host and offered McClellan a chair on the Miami medical faculty.

In February, 1831, McClellan’s name (Fig. 4) appeared on the circulars advertising the fall opening of the new medical school (Miami). Unfortunately, legal entanglements with the Medical College of Ohio, also located in Cincinnati, prevented Drake’s new medical school from opening its doors as scheduled. When drawn out legal proceedings forced the Miami medical faculty to consolidate with the Medical College of Ohio, McClellan decided, wisely, to stay in Philadelphia. The consolidated faculty was so overstaffed that the trustees were willing to buy McClellan out of his Miami contract. John Eberle, however, who had also been recruited from the Jefferson faculty by Daniel Drake, remained on the Ohio faculty. Thomas D. Mitchell, one of Eberle’s biographers, and one of his closest friends, described it as the worst decision Eberle made in his life.

While George McClellan ultimately decided against going west to seek his fortune, the evidence suggests that John Barnes returned to the Mississippi Valley. In 1854, a valedictory address, delivered at Kemper College, was published in St. Louis, Missouri. The address was delivered by a professor of Materia Medica, Therapeutics and Botany, named John Barnes. There can be little doubt about his identity. The photograph of Barnes in Jefferson’s archives places him in St. Louis. There is also a signature letter in the collection of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia written from St. Louis and dated May 24, 1863, from “John Barnes” to his brother-in-law in New Hope, PA. The letter shows Barnes in a light far different from the combative pamphlet written so many years earlier.

“On my return to the city (St. Louis), last evening...I received your affectionate letter apprising me of the death of my sister, Hannah. Owing to her previous state of health it was an event I was prepared to expect. Still when death does come, under any circumstances, it is attended with a train of Melancholy reflections. Among these reflections, however, there is one, which is a real source of consolation to me; and that is, that she had a kind, affectionate, and religious husband, and an amiable set of step children who regarded her in the light of a true mother and I shall ever regard you as a worthy brother and your children as my near and true relations, and I hope we shall hold an affectionate and frequent correspondence with each other...Having arrived at about the middle of my seventy-second year of life, I duly appreciate the fact that I have outlived the scriptural lease of my life, and that when the land lord demands the premises it becomes me to surrender them, without reluctance in the hope that I will be permitted to remove to a more agreeable residence. Give my love to all your family and accept my kindest regards for yourself and believe me to be your affectionate brother.”

The date of the writer’s birth, derived from the letter (1791), conforms to the date traditionally accepted for the former Jefferson professor. The signature on the letter is also a match for those appearing on old College records.

Barnes lived for 10 more years (1860-70), and died in 1870, at the age of 79. He may not have known, or cared, but he had long outlived every one of his colleagues on the Jefferson Faculty, with the exception of Nathan Ryno Smith (1797-1877).

The year that Barnes died, Jefferson’s oldest graduates organized an Alumni Association. Samuel D. Gross, the Founder, who had risen to international acclaim and an honored place on the Jefferson faculty, was elected President. He delivered the Association’s inaugural address which set the tone, and established the standard, for all who came after.

In 1873, it was Washington Atlee’s turn to address the Alumni Association. Like the previous speaker, Atlee ([JMC, 1829] intended to preserve the memory of those who were there at the beginning. Before he ended his speech, Atlee made a special effort to rekindle the memory of a man, that he
thought of, as a guiding star, and prophet—Dr. John Barnes! Perhaps Barnes impressed Atlee more, because of their common interest in midwifery. Atlee specialized in the field after his graduation. Samuel D. Gross, on the other hand, loved surgery, beyond all other things. Perhaps he remembered Barnes as the dullest lecturer because it was Barnes' misfortune to instruct Gross in his dullest subject. Atlee's comment was as follows:

"Gentlemen, before concluding these reminiscences, I will notice another member of the faculty who must have been omitted inadvertently by the President in his inaugural address to this association; I allude to Professor John Barnes. He occupied the chair of midwifery in 1826-27. I wish to refer to him for two reasons: one is, that through him, Jefferson College was the earliest institution, or one of the earliest, to throw out its warning voice against the abortionist. While lecturing on abortion, I shall never forget with what emphasis he said: 'Gentlemen, let me conjure you, by all that is sacred, never to let your conscience sanction, or your affections or your pockets induce you to do, an act so utterly opposed to the pure principles of our profession, and criminal under the laws of God and man.' "I am proud to say this night that this old text of Jefferson has been the polar star of my life in some trying situations. Another reason for referring to Barnes is that he proved himself a prophet. At the conclusion of his course, he addressed the members of his class, and used these memorable words: 'I cannot feel too great an obligation to every gentleman who has patronized this new institution for the danger he subjected himself to in doing so-for, if it had failed you would have lost your diploma, and at the same time endangered your fortune and reputation. But there can be no doubt that it will triumph over all difficulties, and attain to a great reputation!'

Thank Heaven! the prophecy has been fulfilled!"

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**Cabals, Combinations and Samuel Colhoun**

by Dan Flanagan

[Editors note: The reader will understand, appreciate, and enjoy this article more if placed in its historical context and some preliminary explanations are given.]

The central figure is Samuel Colhoun, M.D. (1778-1841), Professor of Materia Medica (1831-39) and Dean (1835-39). The incidents described in his letters are found in Jefferson's archival treasure trove. The year 1836 was a low point in Jefferson Medical College's struggle to survive and could be compared to the "Great Depression" that would occur in United States history exactly a century later. Faculty in-fighting was a major factor. George McClellan, Samuel McClellan and Colhoun formed the unified opposition to the camp of Green, Pattison and Rever. Robley Dunglison was added to the faculty as Professor of the Institutes of Medicine in 1836 and became known as the "Peacemaker." He is credited with playing a role similar to that of Abraham Lincoln in saving the Union, leading to formation of a strong and harmonious faculty in 1841. The in-fighting described in this article was not limited to Jefferson, but was common in the medical colleges of that era, which were proprietary (for profit of its professors). Cabals (intrigues) and polarized faculty combinations were the order of the day. Many schools did not survive because of this.

James F. Gayley (1818-94) published his History of the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia in 1858. Ironically, he was not a Jeffersonian, but a graduate of the Medical College of the University of Pennsylvania in 1848. It must be understood that whereas in 1836 the University was harassing Jefferson as a rival medical college, by the time of Gayley's book (1858) the "Famous Faculty of 1841" had assured Jefferson's survival, recently enhanced by the arrival (1856) of Samuel D. Gross. Gayley's admiration of Jefferson Medical College is evidenced by his...
referral to it as “the Mecca of the medical profession on the Western continent.”

The student, Crenshaw (William M.) referred to in the article, did graduate in 1836, but there is no record that the other student (Shaw) received his M.D. degree.

The author of this article, Dan Flanagan, is currently (1995) the archives technician at Jefferson.

James Gayley published the first history of the Jefferson Medical College in 1858. The book appeared at a time of great prosperity for the College, a period often described as a “Golden Age.” These circumstances, however, were a far cry from the conditions that existed earlier, between 1824 and 1841. On more occasions than one, the school nearly collapsed, not only because of the University of Pennsylvania’s efforts to crush a rival medical institution, but because of the bitter feuding within the Jefferson faculty itself.

By the 1850s, however, these hardships were only an unpleasant memory. Hostilities with the University of Pennsylvania had ceased and the close-knit Jefferson faculty had no equal in the nation. An understandable desire to promote the good reputation of the College became a major aim of the book, and, accordingly, Gayley downplayed the internal difficulties that characterized the opening decades of the school’s history. The late founder, George McClellan, who had been dismissed from the faculty in 1839, was duly apotheosized for his role in establishing the Medical College. McClellan’s power struggle with the Board of Trustees was not alluded to anywhere, and, of his exclusion from the faculty, Gayley only stated that, “in the year 1838 his connection with Jefferson Medical College ceased.” The greatest delicatess of all, however, was reserved for Francis Smith Beattie, the first Professor of Midwifery. Beattie was described as “a man of ardent temperament, strong and impulsive feelings, a warm friend and decided opponent.” This was a masterpiece in understatement. When Beattie was removed from the faculty on charges of incompetence, he sued the college and condemned the trustees and faculty in a 36-page pamphlet. Enrollment dropped 50% and the statements Beattie made in his pamphlet against George McClellan resulted in a notorious libel trial. No hint of this turmoil is found in the Gayley book, which curiously enough, lauds Beattie as one of the College’s “prominent advocates.”

A faint echo of the early faculty struggles, however, is detectable in an unlikely place - the biographical sketch of Samuel Colhoun. This is, without a doubt, the most peculiar of the eleven biographical sketches. It was contributed to the Gayley history by Abraham H. Senseny, an 1835 JMC graduate, who treated his subject with a surprising amount of sarcasm. Over and over again, Senseny mixed praise with ridicule when he described his former teacher.

“No medical gentleman of his day was a closer reader or had his mind stored with a greater quantity of medical lore, and yet this vast amount of knowledge seemed to lie in an undigested state... His vigorous mind had an ardent craving for mental food, and yet, when gratified to the fullest extent by his patient and studious habits, it failed to furnish the proper stimulus to his brain, or else lost half its value in the peculiar manifestation, - not unlike a well inflated balloon...”

When he turned towards Colhoun’s literary productions, Senseny called special attention to Colhoun’s “Notes to Gregory’s Practice of Medicine.”

“Perhaps in none of the doctor’s productions is his peculiar turn of mind more strikingly manifested than in his notes to Gregory. Well might the student inquire with rueful visage of his medical instructor, when ‘Gregory’s Practice’ was first placed in his hands, ‘Shall I study the large print of the text, or the small print of the notes?’ - the latter, it is well known, being more voluminous than the former. Could Dr. Gregory have anticipated such an appendage to his work, he would doubtless have hesitated about publishing it, unless his mind was of that peculiar cast which judges a compliment by its length, or regards the tail, as... the most important part and beautiful portion of the animal. These remarks are not intended to reflect upon the merit of the doctor’s notes, which are generally considered useful to the old practi-
tioner but rather discouraging to the student."

As if writing an epitaph, Senseny delivered this endearing tribute to Dr. Colhoun at the end of the memoir:

"His faults or peculiarities were those of the mind and not of the heart."

There was much about Senseny's characterization of Colhoun that was suggestive of the kind of partisanship students displayed during the faculty controversies. This, combined with the brevity of peace, raises many questions. Unfortunately, Senseny seems to be the only biographer that Dr. Colhoun ever had. Details about his life are hard to come by, and as a result, not much is known today except a few bare facts. Colhoun was born in Chambersburg, Pa. (1787); he obtained his B.A. from Princeton (1804) and his M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania (1808); for eight years he taught at Jefferson Medical College (1831-39) where he held various professorships and served as Dean from 1835-39 (Fig. 1). He was a close friend of George McClellan and died, a bachelor, in 1841.

Colhoun's story might have ended here had it not been for a bound volume of correspondence and lecture materials preserved in the TJU Archives. Much of the script was written hastily and is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to read. Nearly three-quarters of the way into the volume, however, there is one important exception - a draft letter Colhoun addressed to the Board of Trustees on the subject of "Combinations and Cabals to deprecate the character, and destroy the efficiency of professors." The seven-page letter, dated June 7, 1836, speaks volumes about what went on during those difficult times.

From 1831 to 1836 the faculty consisted of George McClellan (surgery); Samuel McClellan (obstetrics); Samuel Colhoun (materia medica); Jacob Green (chemistry); Granville Sharpe Pattison (anatomy); and John Revere (theory and practice of medicine). The six-man faculty was evenly divided into two camps under the leadership of George McClellan and Granville S. Pattison respectively. In the following appraisal delivered to the Board, Colhoun's allegiance is unmistakable.

"The disposition of Drs. Revere and Pattison to bad temper, vulgarity, and agitation has been annoying in the extreme, ever since their first connection with us. Dr. Green, infirm of purpose, complying and easy in temper, follows every breeze of project which the mind of Dr. Pattison, unstable as water, throws up for adoption... our existence has resembled more the irregularities of a border state than the steady industry and settled purposes of science."

Drs. Pattison and Revere were a formidable duo. Their association dated back to the 1820s when they edited the American Medical Recorder. They joined the Jefferson faculty in 1831 and taught there for ten years. Both resigned in order to accept positions at the University of New York which placed them in charge of the Medical Department's reorganization.

Colhoun disclosed that Revere was chosen for his position at Jefferson because Granville Pattison, the most renowned anatomist of his time, would not accept his appointment otherwise.

"In 1831-32, the practical chair was filled by Dr. Sweetser, who gave great satisfaction. Dr. Revere informed some of the members of the faculty that the seat of Dr. Pattison might be had but that unless he (Dr. Revere) was elected also to a place in the school, Dr. Pattison would not come. The claims of Dr. Sweetser...were overlooked and Dr. Revere was chosen, though not much
known to the profession, without practice, unsettled in his residence and devoted for some time to another business - the preparation and sale of a patent for sheathing ships."

After Revere obtained his M.D. from the University of Edinburgh (1811), he settled in Baltimore and established his medical practice. During this time, he studied chemistry and experimented with a process which would prevent iron from rusting in sea water. If successful, this process would enable ship builders to use iron to protect their hulls, instead of copper, which was far more expensive. Revere went to England in 1829 and stayed there for two years trying to perfect his discovery but the project failed on account of expense and he returned to Baltimore.

Colhoun indicated that Pattison invested heavily into the project and that its failure "ruined him" financially. When the time came to deliver their first course of lectures at the College, the close friendship that existed between the two men had been strained to the breaking point. Though the project had been unsuccessful, there was some money that Revere received for the patent which he was not inclined to share with anyone. Pattison felt outraged and agitated in the faculty against the ungrateful Dr. Revere, saying that "he should be put in Coventry and thus induced to resign." The faculty did intervene but not in the way the angry Dr. Pattison demanded. Samuel McClellan and William Badger (one of the Additional Trustees) stepped in and arbitrated in the dispute between the old friends.

It took more than the restoration of peace between Revere and Pattison, however, to bring peace to the College.

Revere made the mistake of taking Colhoun into his confidence. Revere informed Colhoun that he (Revere) was liable to the U.S. government for a large sum of money, and might be required to leave the College at any moment. Colhoun was incensed by the disclosure because Revere concealed this information at the time of his appointment. He accused Revere of putting his private interests above those of the School and informed him that, had he known this information earlier, he would not have recommended Revere’s appointment. From that moment on, the two men were enemies.

Between 1831 and 1836, there were no changes made in the faculty. Beneath this relative stability smoldered personal antagonisms which threatened to break out into open hostilities at any moment. In 1834, Pattison made a move against George McClellan at a faculty meeting. With the support of Jacob Green, he called for the removal of George McClellan for his failure to attend the meetings regularly. Colhoun protested against the measure and threatened to contact the Trustees immediately, if anyone dared to make such a proposal again. He was particularly contemptuous of Jacob Green for his role in the proceedings. Just three hours earlier, he had listened to Green "eulogize Dr. McClellan as the mainstay and great pillar of the School." Green "turned pale" when Colhoun delivered the warning. The proposal was abandoned but not the conflict. The skirmishing merely shifted to another front. This new campaign was conducted, by proxy, against George McClellan’s brother Samuel.

In November, 1835, before lectures commenced, Samuel McClellan began receiving a series of anonymous letters which criticized his lectures and called on him to resign his chair and give place to Robley Dunglison, a professor at the University of Maryland. After lectures began, certain students in McClellan’s lecture room began to behave “with insulting effrontery.” At first, Colhoun played down Samuel McClellan’s concerns, but with the repetition of these kinds of incidents, and McClellan’s complaints about them, Colhoun’s suspicions about a plot had been raised. Adding to these concerns was a rumor circulating through the school that Dr. Dunglison was expected to visit Pattison over the Christmas holidays; and their meeting was in anticipation of Samuel McClellan’s ejection.

On December 8, Colhoun received a visit from a student named Crenshaw, who informed him that the class was on the “eve of a Rebellion” on account of Dr. Samuel McClellan’s “deficiency as a lecturer.” Crenshaw went on to state that he had been in communication with a former student of
Pattison’s named Dr. Roberts who wrote him several letters on the subject of Samuel McClellan’s shortcomings and that he (Crenshaw) had sent one of the anonymous letters to McClellan telling him to step down.

The following evening, Colhoun received another visitor - Jacob Green. After engaging in some small talk with his host, Green began commenting unfavorably on Samuel McClellan’s lectures and said that he was “a drag on the school.” Colhoun told Green that he was being unduly influenced by the opinions of Dr. Pattison and that he hoped no harm would be done to McClellan. Nevertheless, Green persistently tried to turn Colhoun against McClellan.

“He then, laying his hand upon me as I reclined upon the settle, as if he would persuade me into the measure, said Dr. S. McClellan is the fifth wheel to the coach, he never will be any better. I then replied I will sooner sink into my grave than see an injury done to him.”

The next day, Colhoun confronted Pattison and Green and told them that he believed there was a plot to remove Samuel McClellan from the faculty and that it had to be stopped. Pattison and Green denied the existence of the plot, and although Green admitted making the comments about Samuel McClellan in Colhoun’s office, he insisted that he never meant to suggest that Dr. McClellan should be turned out. Colhoun would not let Green get off the hook that easily and insisted that saying that McClellan was a “drag to the school” and “a fifth wheel” was tantamount to the same thing. Green squirmed under the pressure and said that he had only given the opinion of Drs. Revere and Pattison in making that assertion. Naturally, Pattison denied saying any such thing. Their denials only deepened Colhoun’s conviction that there was a plot and that Green, Pattison, Revere, and Crenshaw were participants. The following day, by some strange coincidence, Colhoun began having trouble with members of his class.

Shortly after his morning lecture started, Dr. Colhoun noticed a student named Shaw making faces and laughing at him “in the most impertinent manner.” While Colhoun reprimanded him, Shaw rose from his seat and attempted to address the class. Colhoun successfully restrained him from doing so. Order was maintained during the rest of the lecture but once the class finished there was an outburst which was, in the words of Samuel Colhoun, “encouraged in the most open and undisguised manner by some of our colleagues.”

A faculty meeting was called for that evening. The contention that there was a plot to remove Samuel McClellan was again denied by Pattison, and Green attempted to discredit Colhoun by claiming that he had never made the comments attributed to him. After much debate, George McClellan and Samuel Colhoun proposed that Mr. Crenshaw should apologize by letter to Dr. Samuel McClellan. This was met with strong opposition by Revere, Pattison, and Green. After the faculty argued the measure for over three hours, Samuel McClellan decided to bring an end to the debate with a simple resolution to the problem. Since the faculty could not reach a consensus regarding the apology, he decided to send Crenshaw his ticket and dismiss him from the class. The measure calling for Crenshaw’s apology passed unanimously after that, and order in the school improved dramatically. Among the faculty, however, there was much resentment directed towards Dr. Colhoun for identifying Crenshaw as the “anonymous” writer. Revere and Pattison continued attempts to undermine Colhoun’s credibility by accusing him of falsehoods. Colhoun tried ignoring them but it only seemed to encourage more accusations. Pattison stated that Colhoun’s class list for the 1834-35 session “was a fiction.” Colhoun furnished the proofs but still the accusations continued. When Revere perused the list for the 1835-36 session, he qualified his approval of it with the comment “if this list is not a falsehood.” Colhoun warned them that his patience was wearing thin. Finally, at a faculty meeting in February (1836), Pattison replied to “some remarks” made by Dr. Colhoun by saying, “it is false. It is a lie.” According to Colhoun, Pattison rose from his seat as he made the accusation and advanced towards him. Colhoun drove him back with “menacing gestures” and threatened a “personal attack” on him. Colhoun felt driven

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to issue similar warnings to Dr. Revere.

Dr. Colhoun explained to the Trustees that he had been provoked by the “the fourth or fifth repetition of their vulgar lies”, and claimed that his change in tactics had the desirable effect of silencing his tormentors. “I threatened violence but I used none...we got through the business of the institution without further difficulty.” The “silence” probably was not due to any hard-won respect for Colhoun, or to any intimidation experienced on the part of his colleagues. More likely, it was because Colhoun had finally provided them with the ammunition they needed to draft their own letters of complaint to the Trustees - as Colhoun revealed at the end of his letter.

“These, Gentlemen, are the facts relating to the reprimand delivered by me to a student before the class, and to the extraordinary scenes in the faculty alluded to by Dr. Revere.”

On June 21, 1836, Pattison and Revere got what they were after - an apology from the man they blamed for forcing Crenshaw to apologize to Samuel McClellan.

To J. Revere, MD

Dear Sir,

Having been informed by the Committee of the Board of Trustees of Jefferson Medical College, that from their late examinations into the state of the institution, it appears that Professor Revere never did charge Professor Colhoun with falsehood, as believed by the latter, and that he distinctly disclaimed such an intention to Professor Colhoun at the time the occurrence is said to have taken place, I feel myself bound and take pleasure in recanting any expressions, which under a misconception of your meaning and intentions have escaped me, and hereby tender the apology due to you on the occasion; alluding more particularly to the meeting at the College on the 17th of February last, referred to by the Committee, and further to state that nothing will be wanting on my part to unite peace and harmony with the Faculty in furthering the great interests entrusted to our care.

I am most respectfully yours,

S. Colhoun

Although Colhoun’s enemies on the faculty may have felt particular satisfaction at his failure to secure the Trustee’s endorsement, it was hardly a decisive blow in their continuing battle for supremacy. Colhoun remained the College Dean and the day-to-day struggles at the school went on just as before.

There were, however, surprises in store when Robley Dunglison joined the faculty in October, 1836. He arrived, not as Samuel McClellan’s replacement, but as the seventh member of an enlarged faculty. The position (Institute of Medicine and Medical Jurisprudence) had been created specifically for him, and, contrary to all rumors and expectations, Dunglison asserted his independence and stayed out of the fighting.

From 1836 to 1839, the faculty remained intact. During this period, changes in the charter, granting Jefferson Medical College independence from its parent institution in Canonsburg, enlarged the power of the Board of Trustees and brought them into direct conflict with the personal authority of the school’s founder, George McClellan. The conflict resulted in an 1839 faculty reorganization which excluded George McClellan and Samuel Colhoun from their teaching positions. Surprisingly, Samuel McClellan was reappointed as Professor of Midwifery; a position he resigned a year later in order to join the faculty of the recently established (1839) Pennsylvania Medical College. This new Philadelphia institution was filled with a host of familiar faces. Its founder was none other than George McClellan! Other Jefferson expatriates included Samuel Colhoun (Professor of Materia Medica and Pharmacy) and at least 100 members of the Pennsylvania Medical College student body.

The departures of Samuel Colhoun and both of the McClellans did not signal the triumph of Pattison’s faction at Jefferson. While Pattison feuded with his associates, another star was rising at the College - Robley Dunglison, the “Great Peacemaker.” Immediately after the sudden death of Jacob Green, in February 1841, both Pattison and Revere announced their intention to leave Jefferson and take command of the medical department at the University of New York. This left Dunglison...
as the senior faculty member. During the summer, Dunglison labored on the creation of what was to become one of the most illustrious faculties in the history of American medical education. The year 1841 marked the dawn of a new era at Jefferson Medical College. It also marked the passing of Samuel Colhoun, who died at the age of 54, shortly after the completion of the first course of lectures delivered at the Pennsylvania Medical College.

It seems surprising that these early years of the Medical College until the dismissal of the Faculty in 1839 by the Board of Trustees should have been jeopardized by in-fighting of such severity by men of high intellect and professional standing. It is equally surprising, but equally fortunate, that despite all the internal strife further aggravated by financial difficulties and harassment by rivalry of the University of Pennsylvania, the classes during this time increased in number accompanied by a growing respect by the medical profession.

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**Early Litigation:**
**Redefining the McClellan “Malpractice” Trial**

by Dan Flanagan

On April 26th, 1883, Dr. Samuel David Gross attended a dinner in Philadelphia honoring Chief Justice Mercur. It was a memorable occasion that Gross described in his *Autobiography*.

"About thirty, chiefly judges and members of the Pennsylvania Bar, sat down at the broad table decorated with flowers...The conversation around the table was of a general character, and became quite animated after the wine had freely circulated...Before we sat down at the table ex-Judge Sharswood and I had a chat about our early Philadelphia reminiscences. Among other things he asked, ‘Do you recollect a trial which took place in 1828, in which Dr. George McClellan was defendant in a suit for malpractice on account of alleged want of skill in a case of cataract?’ ‘Certainly,’ I said, ‘for I was one of the witnesses.’ ‘Did you hear Dr. Physick’s testimony?’ ‘I did not.’ ‘Well, it was curious. A cranky old judge by the name of Barnes presided, and when Physick was called the Judge insisted that he should take a seat with him on the bench, which accordingly he did. ‘Dr. Physick,’ he asked, ‘you must have a large experience in diseases of the eye?’ ‘I have,’ was the answer. ‘Will you be kind enough to state what your experience is in operations for cataract?’ ‘I have performed many operations of this kind, and have occasionally lost an eye; but I have not been quite so unlucky as Baron Wenzel, a German oculist, who declared that he lost a hatfull of eyes before he became an expert.’ ‘Sit down, great man, sit down! That will do great man,’ added the judge. Dr. Joseph Parrish was another witness in this famous trial, but he showed little familiarity with ophthalmic surgery. He wore, I recollect, his Quaker costume, with his legs incased in high boots with buff colored tops. One of McClellan’s counsel, a young man of great promise as a lawyer, afterwards became a forger and fled to Europe whence he never returned. A verdict of five hundred dollars was rendered in favor of the plaintiff. The suit, as most frequently happens, had been instigated by professional enemies of McClellan.”

The conversation takes up little more than a page in the Gross *Autobiography* but for over 100 years that page has been singled out as the basis for stating that George McClellan, founder of Jefferson Medical College, (and father of Gen. George B. McClellan, of Civil War fame) was guilty of malpractice because he blinded a man during a routine cataract operation. 2-4

Gross was a student of George McClellan. When he first came to Philadelphia, in the fall of 1826, it...
was McClellan’s presence at the Jefferson Medical College that lured him away from the University of Pennsylvania. For Gross and Sharswood the trial represented a shared memory of a respected man. The memory was flawed, however, not by the unfortunate circumstances that shaped it, but by an imprecise understanding of exactly what those circumstances were. Sharswood was confused about the exact nature of the trial and Gross failed to recognize the mistake. It is ironic because the oversight contributed to the revitalization of a story perpetuated by one of McClellan’s worst enemies. Unknowingly, Gross brought back to life a libelous accusation that originated with someone he did not mention once in his two-volume Autobiography, - Francis Smith Beattie!

Francis Beattie was a member of the first faculty at Jefferson Medical College. He was an 1821 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and prior to becoming Professor of Obstetrics and Midwifery, he served as a Naval Surgeon aboard the U.S.S. Constellation. There was a certain incongruity about Beattie’s appointment. Midwifery was not practiced very much on the high seas in those days. However, the new Medical College desperately needed a Professor and Beattie had a friend in his old classmate, Benjamin Rush Rhees, the newly appointed Professor of Materia Medica and Institutes. It was through his intercession that Beattie obtained the position. Now that the faculty was complete all efforts were directed towards converting the Tivoli Theater into a college building. The histrionics, however, were not destined to end with the conversion of the old theater.

As the work progressed it was necessary to create a fund to meet the small expenses encountered during the renovations. Each member of the faculty agreed to contribute $20. Beattie found the timing inconvenient and seeing no immediate urgency, neglected to make his contribution when it was expected. Several days later, Professor Green, who functioned as treasurer, found Beattie giving instructions to the carpenters. With an eye toward frugality he (Green) suggested the use of cheaper fixtures. Beattie thought it over and decided he liked the ones he picked out originally. Beattie was “wantonly insulted” when Green fired back, “pay your twenty dollars and it shall be done as you wish.”

Beattie wasted no time in reporting the incident to Professors McClellan and Eberle. To them, he made known his intention to admonish Mr. Green, publicly, at the next faculty meeting for “this outrage on common civility”.

In the meantime his financial troubles were exacerbated by arrangements to liquidate all the debts incurred by the building repairs. Beattie did not have his share of the money and did not know where he could get it. McClellan and Eberle decided to help him out. They interceded on his behalf with Jacob Green who agreed to endorse Beattie’s note and negotiate it with the Pennsylvania Bank. Green required McClellan and Eberle, however, to present him with their note as Beattie’s collateral. Beattie consented but found the terms humiliating. He wanted it understood that he regarded this as a favor coming from McClellan and Eberle and not Jacob Green. Even when the note became due, Beattie refused to have any communication with Green about it. He had Eberle renew the note for him, and deliver the loan’s interest payments. The note was renewed several times and Beattie for all his complaints about the issue, never mentioned paying back the principal.

In November, 1825, lectures were delivered for the first time at the new Medical College. The faculty consisted of Nathan Smith, Anatomy; John Eberle, Theory and Practice; Jacob Green, Chemistry; George McClellan, Surgery; B. Rush Rhees, Materia Medica; and Francis Beattie, Midwifery. In the months that followed Beattie’s standing within the faculty plummeted. He had a falling out with his old friend Rhees, and Nathan Smith soon began to display an “offensive demeanor” towards him. By the time the session ended, McClellan was also fighting with Beattie. At this point, the only faculty member still on speaking terms with him was Eberle, whom he characterized as a “tale-bearer” to the others. The building’s janitor, Mr. Holliday, was another per-
son who remained on speaking terms with Beattie. Unfortunately, because of the terms he selected, Beattie had Holliday fired for "insolence."  

After commencement activities had taken place, Eberle informed Beattie that there was a "combination" against him in the faculty. Eberle refused to identify the participants when Beattie demanded to know. All he was willing to say was that they were determined to remove him from the college and that their efforts would succeed.

Before long charges were sent to the Trustees and rumors circulated through the city about Beattie's difficulties. A story resurfaced about his association with a Navy Purser. In 1819, Beattie signed bonds as a surety for the correct discharge of this man's responsibilities. The Purser died about four years later with a large sum of money in his possession which mysteriously disappeared.

A suit was issued against Beattie, as the surety, and was still pending in August, 1826, when Beattie received formal notification of the charges of "incompetency" made against him at the Medical College. The Committee stated there was evidence he delivered only twenty-five lectures during the last session. An investigation commenced and damning testimony was provided by each of the faculty members regarding the number of lectures, student dissatisfaction, and Beattie's conduct during an examination. Eberle, Smith, and Rhees stated that a question had been put to a candidate for graduation which was answered correctly. Beattie, however, informed the student he was in error and substituted the wrong answer for the right one.

Beattie denied the charges and objected to the proceedings. He declared that it was an injustice to allow his accusers to appear as witnesses against him. Though there were several students who testified on his behalf, Beattie was fighting a lost battle. George McClellan had a cousin and a brother-in-law sitting on the Board of Trustees and Jacob Green's father was the President.

Through August and September, Beattie wrote letter after letter to the Trustees seeking to have the decision postponed until he could submit additional testimony gathered from the Navy Depart-

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ical class that session was half of what it was expected to be. Eberle responded with a pamphlet of his own but it lacked enough punch to counter Beattie’s attack. He sued Beattie in Philadelphia District Court. Beattie sued him in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and won an award for one thousand dollars by arbitrators, in the case of ejectment from the Tivoli building on Prune St. Then George McClellan stepped up to the plate and took Beattie to court for libel.

The case is registered in the March Term of the 1827 Philadelphia District Court Dockets. It identifies George McClellan as plaintiff and Francis Beattie as the defendant. The Docket indicates that depositions were taken throughout 1828 and on March 9, 1829, a special jury was duly empowered and sworn (Fig. 1). Their verdict was on behalf of the plaintiff (McClellan) for damages amounting to $500.

Soon afterward a 73-page “Report of the Trial” was circulated, comprising the whole of the evidence and the Judge’s charge. The trial described in this Report bears an unmistakable likeness to the “malpractice trial” described in the Gross Autobiography. It indicates that the Plaintiff’s counsel cited a number of books to support his argument. Among them was a German book, by Beer, which was interpreted by S.D. Gross, “who was sworn for the purpose”.

In the Autobiography, Sharswood identified Barnes as the “cranky old judge” who presided and stated that Drs. Physick and Joseph Parrish were witnesses. These details are consistent with the ones found in the libel trial. Sharswood attributed a comment about Baron Wenzel (“he lost a hatfull of eyes”) to Dr. Physick. Such a comment appears in the libel trial but it was Parrish, not Physick, who made it. Most important of all is the court decision. Sharswood declared that a verdict of $500 was rendered in favor of “the plaintiff” (whom neither Gross or Sharswood identify). This is consistent with the information disclosed about the libel trial in the report and on the court docket.

Aside from the minor error made in the attribution of the “Baron Wenzel” comment the only real difference between the two trials was the identification of George McClellan as the defendant. Fifty-four years had gone by since the trial occurred. Sharswood’s memory was correct, in that malpractice on McClellan’s part was at the heart of the debate. The trial itself, however, was not the result of a “malpractice suit”. The court was convened to meet the charges of libel that McClellan, the plaintiff, lodged against Francis Beattie. To defend himself, Beattie pleaded “justification” and went on the attack. William Davis appeared on the stand and testified against McClellan, who successfully defended himself against the charges and won. The fact that McClellan had to fight defensively throughout the course of the proceedings

Fig. 1. McClellan vs. Beattie libel suit, won by McClellan.
led, no doubt, to some confusion about the nature of the trial. When the verdict came down on behalf of the Plaintiff, some people, understandably, mistook McClellan for the defendant.

The “simple unsophisticated truth” of the matter is that a “malpractice trial” had never taken place. No record of any action, by Davis, against McClellan, can be found in either the Philadelphia District Court Dockets or the Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Dockets.32,33

References


19. ibid p. 28
20. Barnes, John. Jefferson Medical College, A Representation of the Conduct of the Trustees and Members of the Faculty and Circumstances Connected herewith, in Relation to John Barnes, MD, Professor of Midwifery in this institution. Philadelphia: 1829, p. 14
21. ibid p. 14
22. Bauer, op cit, p. 19
24. Barnes op cit p. 14
26. A Report of the Trial of an Action for Libel in which Dr. Geo. McClellan was Plaintiff and Dr. Francis S. Beattie was Defendant at Philadelphia, March, 1829, Comprising the Whole of the Evidence and the Judge’s Charge; with Notes Subjoined by an Eye Witness. Philadelphia: 1829, p. 67
27. Gross, op cit, p. 172
29. ibid p. 15
30. ibid p. 71
31. ibid p. 4
The founding of Jefferson in 1824 was followed by the renting of the Tivoli theater at 518-20 Prune street the next year. This renovated structure served for the first few college sessions, but the need for an appropriately planned building in a more desirable location was quickly perceived. Action toward the accomplishment of such a project tested the capabilities of the new “Additional Trustees” appointed by the Trustees of Jefferson College at Canonsburg. The August 9, 1826, swearing in of Edward King, President Judge of the First District Court of Common Pleas, as the first Additional Trustee, by William Tilghman, Chief justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, set the system in motion. Judge King then swore in the other nine members: Samuel Badger, James M. Broom, Joel B. Sutherland, Samuel Humphreys, Edward Ingersoll, Charles S. Cox, General William Duncan, Rev. Ashbel Green and Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely. The Canonsburg Trustees were headed by Samuel Ralston, D.D., President. Clerical Trustees were F. Herron, D.D., Robert Johnson, E.P. Script, Thomas D. Baird, Moses Allen, and William Tiffany; lay Trustees John McDonald, Benjamin Williams, John Litherman and Craig Ritchie.

It would appear that such a complex administrative structure would prove counterproductive of prompt and decisive action but such was not the case, since in March, 1827, the Board passed a resolution leading toward the prompt erection of a new building. The major impetus was provided by Board member Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely who reported to the Board on May 12, 1827, that he had purchased a lot 56 feet wide by 93 feet deep on Tenth Street and had already prepared a plan for a New Medical Hall (Fig. 1). Rev. Ely’s initiative provided a mechanism for funding as well, and construction was authorized.

Poulson’s Advertiser of October 6, 1827, (reprinted by the Evening Bulletin October 6, 1927) published an article describing the laying of the cornerstone on September 29, 1827, just four months after the board action. The article follows:

“The cornerstone of the new Hall of Jefferson Medical College was laid on the 29th ult. [of the previous month: Ed]. A scroll containing the following inscription, together with the coins of the United States, was deposited in the stone-

This Corner Stone

of the

Jefferson Medical College

chartered by an act of the Pennsylvania Legislature on the 7th of April, A.D., 1826, was laid on the 29th of September, A.D., 1827 and the 51st year of Independence, John Quincy Adams being President of these United States and John Andrew Shulze, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. By Daniel Groves, mason, Robert O’Neal, carpenter, and John Jarden, stone cutter.

“Trustees of the College: Rev. Samuel Ralston, D.D., President of the Board (other names follow together with the names of the professors in the College).

Fig. 1. The Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely, Secretary of “Additional” Board of Trustees, who provided initiative for erection of New Medical Hall (Ely Building) in 1828.
"May He who has given healing virtues to the plants and the minerals of the earth favor the exertions of those whose duty it is, or may hereafter be, to give instruction in this hall."

After the stone was laid the Professor of Chemistry, Dr. Jacob Green, pronounced the following short but appropriate address:

"The building to be erected on the cornerstone, which has just been laid, is to be devoted to medical science. Within the walls, which are here to be raised, that practice and these principles of the healing art are to be inculcated, which may enable the practitioner to pour consolation into the bleeding bosom: to rob disease of half its terrors, and to mitigate, if not remove, many of the miseries of man. You all know that there is another institution here devoted to the same objects. The University of Pennsylvania has been an honor to the city, the state and to the country in which she is founded. No injurious or unfriendly designs are entertained toward her by those who govern, or those who teach in, this new establishment. but it is believed that fair, full, open and honorable competition, as it is congenial to the happy and glorious republican institutions of our country, will also conduce to the best interests of medical science in our city. With these views we have laid this cornerstone, and, as long as we pursue them, may heaven and earth prosper the cause."

Dr. Jacob Green was the son of Rev. Ashbel Green, formerly President of the College of New Jersey (Princeton) and President of the Board of Trustees. Jacob Green, along with John Eberle and Joseph Klapp was one of the founding faculty assembled by George McClellan. The address he delivered at the laying of the cornerstone was unusually brief when one reviews the long speeches and prayers commonly delivered at such academic ceremonies of the time.

The Ely Building (designated the New Medical Hall) proved a real asset in Jefferson's early life (Fig. 2). As time went on the needs changed and renovations were necessary. The first took place in 1846 with a change in the facade, the addition of six Corinthian columns and interior alterations (Fig. 3).
Fig. 4. New Medical Hall in 1879 (left) following erection of Laboratory Building (right) at corner of Tenth and Sansom Streets.

Fig. 5. Medical hall and Laboratory Building following 1881 renovation.

In 1879 the Laboratory Building was erected adjacent to Medical Hall (Fig. 4) and in 1881 the Medical Hall was extensively renovated partly to conform to the facade of the Laboratory Building (Fig. 5). The Grecian styling was replaced by a Victorian one and the interior enlarged to increase the seating capacity of the lecture rooms. Another floor was also provided for additional laboratory space.

The Ely Building finally succumbed to further progress with the erection of the New College Building in 1898 at the corner of Tenth and Walnut Sts. Fortunately, three U.S. coins of different denominations were recovered and preserved at the time of demolition (now in Archives). The site was utilized with the erection of the Old Main Hospital, completed in 1907.
In June 1824, the Trustees of Jefferson College in Canonsburg Pennsylvania passed a resolution authorizing the creation of a medical department in Philadelphia "to be styled Jefferson Medical College." The Articles of Union, adopted between the parent institution and its offspring strictly prohibited the medical school from making any claim on the funds of the college. The Articles of Union went on to specify, however, that "the same fee shall be paid to the president of the college by the graduates for a degree as for a degree in the arts." Because no direct reference to this particular fee ever appeared in the medical college announcements - where the costs of enrollment and graduation were routinely addressed - the requirement was generally thought to have been abandoned, giving rise to the belief that just as the medical school made no claim on the funds of the college, the college, in turn, made no claim on the funds of the medical school. A series of letters exchanged between Matthew Brown (Fig. 1), the President of Canonsburg's Jefferson College, and the Medical Faculty in Philadelphia indicates that this was not the case. Matthew Brown's fee was included in the twenty dollars collected from each graduate for the medical diploma. This circumstance created the unfortunate impression that Brown and his medical faculty were charging students simply for putting their imprimatur on the diploma - a practice which had come under severe criticism in schools all over the country. To resolve any doubts about this issue, a clause was added when the medical school expanded its charter in 1826 specifying that "no student shall be required to pay any matriculating fee; nor shall any be demanded for signatures of the diplomas of the graduates..." This did not mean that the diploma fee fell by the wayside (even the ten charity students admitted annually were expected to pay it). The new charter provision merely clarified that the signatures on the diploma had nothing to do with the fee that was being collected.

Based on the information provided by Brown's correspondence and the medical college's annual announcement, it is apparent that the twenty dollar fee was divided into four equal portions. The beneficiaries included Matthew Brown, the Treasurer of Jefferson College in Canonsburg, the Treasurer of the Medical College in Philadelphia, and William Watson, the medical college janitor (in consideration of the "handsome box" provided to each graduate for the diploma's safekeeping). Due to the troublesome events that plagued the early history of the medical college, the income derived from the diploma fee was not always distributed, and on May 21, 1834, Matthew Brown addressed a letter to Samuel McClellan, Dean of Jefferson Medical College, regarding the delinquent payments. In his letter, Brown justified his claim by citing earlier promises made to him by various deans of the medical college (who were, incidentally, no longer associated with Jefferson at the time Brown wrote his letter). In the process of presenting his claim, Brown established a concise historical overview

Fig. 1. Matthew Brown, President of Jefferson College at Canonsburg.
Regarding the Canonsburg presidential fee.

"Previous to the organization of the medical school in Philadelphia under the charter of Jefferson College, it was expressly stipulated by the gentlemen who composed the first faculty that as a consideration for the establishing of the school in Philadelphia, 'five dollars should be allowed to the president of the college for every medical graduate.' When the legislature passed the bill by way of supplement to our charter authorizing 'the appointment of additional trustees' in or near Philadelphia, a clause was introduced prohibiting any charge for signing diplomas. Lest it should be supposed that this prohibition might interfere with the previous stipulation and that the medical faculty might give a more formal sanction to their previous engagement, they passed a resolution in April 1826, of which the following is transcribed and officially signed by Dr. B.R. Rhees, Dean of the Faculty. I transcribe the whole of his letter on this subject: 'You have doubtless perceived that, consistent with the laws of the supplement, no charge can be made upon the graduates in the shape of a fee for signing the diploma. To obviate any difficulty which may arise out of this restriction and to comply with their former engagements with the Board of Trustees, the faculty have therefore determined without reference to the signature of the president to become responsible to him for the sum of five dollars for each individual, who may hereafter receive the honors of the institution. They have also determined and instructed me to inform the Board of Trustees, through you, of their determination to pay into the treasury of the college, the same sum of five dollars for each graduate in medicine, admitted on all future occasions'..."

These funds might not have been pledged so readily if the Jefferson Faculty had any way of anticipating what was going to happen over the next two years. An unfortunate series of court battles, concerned primarily with the expulsion of Francis Beattie from the medical faculty, culminated in 1,000 dollar settlement in favor of the former professor of midwifery. To make matters worse, the publicity generated by the lawsuits had a negative impact on enrollment which, in turn, lowered the professors' incomes even more. The financial strain was exacerbated further by the need to relocate the school to a more commodious site than the former Winter Tivoli Theater, which the faculty had rented and converted into a lecture hall when the school first opened. Against this backdrop, John Eberle dispatched the following letter, dated May 2, 1828, to Matthew Brown:

"With regards to the fees due you as President, we have much reason to ask your pardon for delinquency. The truth is, almost every cent we have hitherto made by the college has been expended in putting our building in order. We have passed a resolution, not to be declined from on any account to pay off old scores to you and next November, without fail, upon this you may calculate with utmost certainty."

After reminding the medical faculty of these promises, Brown explained how they directly influenced his financial situation:

"This sum was considered by the Board as a perquisite constituting a part of my salary and which was supposed by them to have been regularly paid until about a year or 18 months ago. This expectation prevented them from raising my salary agreeably to a previous understanding when I accepted of the office of president. I present these statements with a frankness which may be necessary to prevent misapprehensions. I am aware that there may appear some difficulty and perhaps unfairness in urging a claim which has been accumulating while some of the former members of the faculty no longer remain. This current faculty, however, cannot attach fault to us - as we postponed our claim at the official request of the medical faculty and on account of existing embarrassments - my own view of the matter is (and I believe that of the Board) that the five dollars generously voted for the general use of the college, being a voluntary donation will not be claimed as a matter of right and I believe the Board are entirely willing to relinquish any claim on this account. As to the sum of five dollars to the president for each graduate, this is a consideration due by positive stipulation previous to the organization of the medical school confirmed afterwards by a formal

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vote of the faculty, officially communicated and recognized as a matter of right - year after year, and I should not have deemed it necessary to trouble the faculty with these statements had I not apprehended that the length of time and accumulation on the present members of the faculty...

Though he never referred to William Watson, the persistence of Brown's claim to the presidential fee could have been spurred on by the fact that the medical college awarded its janitor the same five dollars for every student that received the diploma. The probability that the janitor also received his payments with more regularity would have furnished additional food for thought.

The issue concerning the fee was settled amicably on September 23, 1835, when the Board of Trustees at Jefferson College in Canonsburg passed the following resolution:

"Rev. and Dr. Brown having agreed to accept $400 in lieu of all his claims against the medical faculty of this institution, the Board resolved to pay the above sum of $400 to Dr. Brown, and also to accept of the honorarium of $50 annually from the medical faculty according to the proposition of said faculty; and the Board also hereby assumes all responsibility of said faculty to Dr. Brown upon condition that said faculty shall faithfully fulfill their proposition made by Dr. Jacob Green to the committee of this Board, which proposition was recorded September 1834."

How regularly Matthew Brown received this honorarium is unknown at this time. In all likelihood, the arrangement came to an end three years later when Jefferson Medical College obtained an independent charter from the Pennsylvania Legislature.

In 1848, failing health forced Matthew Brown to sever his connection with Canonsburg's Jefferson College. He died in Pittsburgh on July 29, 1853.