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PART I

The Proprietary Years of Jefferson Medical College (1824–1895)
The Early Struggles

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"If there is no struggle, there is no progress."
—FREDERICK DOUGLASS (1817–1895)

The Jefferson Connection: An Overview

How the medical institution we call Jefferson today actually got its name is a complex narrative. It involves a relationship of three cities—Canonsburg, Charlottesville, and Philadelphia. It also involves a relationship of three men—Thomas Jefferson, the namesake; George McClellan, the founder; and Robley Dunglison, the bridge (Figure 1-1).

The first root of the gigantic family tree may be traced to about 1773, when an itinerant Presbyterian minister named John McMillen (1752–1833) traveled to western Pennsylvania to preach the gospel to the Scottish settlers of that area. After founding the Chartiers Hill Presbyterian Church near Canonsburg, he founded Canonsburg Academy in a log cabin around 1780, the first chartered literary institution west of the Alleghenies.¹ The only good road into the area was a military one from Virginia, constructed in 1754 through the forest by General Braddock’s pioneer battalion of 300 axemen. Because the western part of Pennsylvania was largely blocked by impassable mountains, this area was more closely linked to Virginia than to Philadelphia. The Reverend Mr. McMillen’s appeal to prominent citizens of Virginia and Pennsylvania for funds and books included Benjamin Franklin, who sent £50 and some books. Shortly after Franklin’s death in 1790 his portrait was sent.²

In 1802 the trustees chartered the institution as a college and gave it the name of Jefferson in honor of the then third President of the United States (1801–1809).¹ As a token of appreciation Jefferson made a gift of some books, and in 1803 sent a portrait of himself by an unknown artist.³ In spite of the great statesman’s reputed wealth, generosity, and interest in education, he had serious financial troubles. Because of a flamboyant life style, lavish maintenance resulted in a personal debt of $20,000 by the time Jefferson left the presidency. After the British destroyed the Library of Congress in 1814, the former President sold 13,000 volumes from his own library to the nation for $23,950. This temporary relief was erased by the hordes of relatives, guests, and strangers who unashamedly wined, dined, and boarded at his expense, even keeping their horses in his stables. His threatened bankruptcy was saved by a national subscription of $16,500 in 1826, the year of his death. A few months later Monticello itself (now a national memorial) with its furniture, pictures, and silver, was sold to cover the debts.³ Small wonder that Jefferson was unable to send any money to the college honoring his name.

In 1824 events took place in Canonsburg, Philadelphia, and Charlottesville that marked the
CANONSBURG — Jefferson College (1802) — PHILADELPHIA (1824) — Jefferson Medical College

GEORGE McCLELLAN (1796–1847)
The Founder

THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743–1826)
The Namesake

ROBLEY DUNGLISON (1798–1869)
The Bridge

CHARLOTTESVILLE
College of Medicine, Univ. of Virginia (1825)

birth and aided the future of Jefferson Medical College. It was the year in which Dr. George McClellan negotiated the establishment of the Medical Department of Jefferson College at Canonsburg as the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia. His attempts to obtain a separate charter from the Pennsylvania legislature for a second medical college in Philadelphia had been unsuccessful.

In the same year at Charlottesville, Thomas Jefferson was busy with the creation of a medical school for the University of Virginia, which had first opened its doors in 1819. At age 76 Jefferson had already designed much of the physical structure and curriculum of the University. Now at 81 years, in full possession of the intellectual energy and humanitarian spirit that characterized his genius, he was searching for the best possible young man "to teach medicine on historical lines with explanations of its successive theories since the time of Hippocrates for the purpose of affording such information as educated persons would want for the sake of culture." The post was deemed of such importance that the search extended to London, where Francis E. Gilmer, Esq., Jefferson's representative, enlisted Dr. Robley Dunglison. Dunglison was given academic tenure, with $1,500 annual salary, free rent in one of the University pavilions, and a five-year covenant secured by a guarantee of $5,000. It was the first full-time clinical teaching position in a university medical school in this country.

Within two months of Dunglison's arrival at Charlottesville, he was summoned to become the personal physician of Thomas Jefferson. Until then Jefferson had distrusted the medical profession, preferring nature's healing. Yet in his twenties, Dunglison found himself attending the former President of the United States and serving as faculty head in the School of Medicine of the University of Virginia. He faithfully attended Jefferson's last two years and closed his eyelids at his death on July 4, 1826. Jefferson had arranged for Dunglison to receive as a gift the grandfather clock in his bedroom. The clock is now displayed in the main exhibition hall of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and its replica stands in the Board of Trustees' Room of the Scott Administration Building.

Dunglison became a professor at the University of Maryland in 1833 and, in 1836, at Jefferson Medical College, where he remained for the rest of his life. He was just two years younger than McClellan the founder and was the bridge between Jefferson the man and Jefferson the institution.

In 1838 Jefferson Medical College obtained its independent charter from the Pennsylvania State Legislature, "with all of the rights and privileges of the University of Pennsylvania."

In 1870 Samuel D. Gross founded the Jefferson Alumni Association, which spearheaded a building fund campaign for a new detached hospital that was completed in 1877. The goal of $250,000 was oversubscribed at $350,000 in two months.

Until 1895 Jefferson Medical College, like most other medical schools, was a proprietary institution, in that the students paid the faculty professors directly for tickets to the lectures as well as for clinical instruction in the hospital. The professors in turn paid rent to the College to cover taxes and maintenance. On June 1, 1895, under Board President Joseph B. Townsend, Esq., Jefferson became a nonprofit-sharing corporation with a single board of trustees responsible for the complete integration and management of the College and Hospital. In 1949 the first President of the Corporation, Vice Admiral James L. Kauffman, U.S.N., Ret., was appointed. Through this new office the Medical College began to benefit from yearly appropriations from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Also in 1949, a graduate program in various basic medical sciences was organized that led to the formation of the College of Graduate Studies in 1969.

In 1961 Jefferson Medical College first admitted women students, and in 1965 seven received their M.D. degrees. Increasing numbers and involvement of women in all aspects of the institution have most favorably enhanced its welfare and prestige.

A College of Allied Health Sciences was chartered in 1967 to provide both academic and clinical education in the health professions and occupations.

Through the untiring efforts of President Peter A. Herbut, M.D., the scope of Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia was expanded with a new charter and the adoption of the name Thomas
Jefferson University in April, 1969. Jefferson is a privately endowed, tuition- and gift-supported, nonsectarian, nonprofit corporation, which also receives certain grants and appropriations from the federal government, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the State of Delaware. The Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia retains its original identity and is officially known as the Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University. The three other components of the University are the College of Graduate Studies, the College of Allied Health Sciences, and the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

On January 18, 1972, at the second session of the Ninety-second Congress, it was “Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, be and is hereby recognized as the first university in the United States to bear the full name of the third President of the United States.” Further, on November 18, 1974, at the Ninety-third Congress, second session, it was “Resolved, That the Senate congratulates Thomas Jefferson University on its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, commends the faculty, staff, employees, and graduates of its colleges and hospital on their dedication, vision, exemplary professionalism, and extends to them every good wish for continued growth and impact on the health care needs of the Nation.”

The history, tradition, and heritage of Jefferson may in some measure explain the mystique or spirit that evokes the wonderment of alumni of other institutions.

References


Thomas Jefferson: Influence on Medical Theory and Practice

In the context of their times, Thomas Jefferson remains unchallenged as the most informed and versatile of all U.S. presidents. His well-known services in politics and diplomacy may be summarized as follows: member, Virginia Assembly, 1769–1775; member, Continental Congress, 1775–1776, author, Declaration of Independence (at age 33); member, Virginia Assembly, 1776–1779; Governor of Virginia, 1779–1781; minister to France, 1782–1789; Secretary of State under George Washington, 1790–1797; Vice President of the United States under John Adams, 1797–1801; President of the United States, 1801–1809; elder statesman and educator, 1809–1826.

Science was equally a lifelong pursuit of Jefferson’s. Cohn credits him as contributor to the fields of meteorology (United States Weather Bureau), paleontology (father of American paleontology, with study of the Mammoth jeffersoni), ethnology, archeology, astronomy (United States Naval Observatory and Hydrographic Office), architecture (designed Monticello and University of Virginia), chemistry, agriculture, geology, exploration (Lewis and Clark Expedition and Louisiana Purchase), botany, and mechanical engineering. While U.S. Vice President he also served as President of the American Philosophical Society.

Jefferson included medical theory and practice in his preoccupation with the applications of science. Numerous articles attest to his influence on medical education. His opinions and warnings have their relevance not solely within the profession but also with respect to increasing governmental involvement. As regards the latter, he wished to separate science from government equally as well as church from state. He believed in governmental powers to prevent injury to others and to promote scientific investigation for protection against foreign powers, but he sought to preserve scientists’ privilege to arrive at independent unbiased conclusions supported by
proper observation. In this sense he probably would have approved of the scientific studies sections of the present National Institutes of Health, which are administered by nongovernment experts.

Jefferson was always curious about the structure and function of the human body. His library contained the best medical books of the time, many of them presented to him by their authors, and he read the available American medical journals, which began their appearance just before the turn of the eighteenth century. He admired a number of physicians for their compassion for the sick, but in general held a poor opinion of those who practiced the internal medicine of his day. He had suffered the great personal loss of his wife in 1782 and only the eldest of his six children, Martha, reached adulthood. Jefferson articulated distrust of physicians in 1807 in an oft-quoted letter to Dr. Caspar Wistar, in which he asked for supervision of his grandson, who was to study in Philadelphia. The youth's subjects were to include botany, natural history, anatomy, and possibly surgery, but not medicine. The salient reasons were as follows:

"We know, from what we see and feel, that the animal body is in its organs and functions subject to derangement inducing pain, and tending to its destruction. In this disordered state, we observe nature providing for the reestablishment of order, by exciting some salutary evacuation of the morbid matter or by some other operation which escapes our imperfect senses and researches ... Experience has taught us, also, that there are certain substances, by which, applied to the living body, internally or externally, we can at will produce these same evacuations, and thus do, in a short time, what nature would do but slowly, and do effectually, what perhaps she would not have the strength to accomplish ... So far, I bow to the utility of medicine. It goes to the well-defined forms of disease, and happily, to those the most frequent. But the disorders of the animal body and the symptoms indicating them are as various as the elements of which the body is composed. The combinations too of these symptoms are so infinitely diversified, that many associations of them appear too rarely to establish a definite disease, and to an unknown disease there cannot be a known remedy. Here then, the judicious, the moral, the humane physician should stop ... Or if the appearance of doing something be necessary to keep alive the hope and spirits of the patient, it should be of the most innocent character.

But the adventurous physician goes on, and substitutes presumption for knowledge. From the scanty field of what is known, he launches into the boundless region of what is unknown. He establishes for his guide some fanciful theory ... which lets him into all nature's secrets at short hand. On the principle which he thus assumes, he forms his table of nosology, arranges his disease into families, and extends his curative treatment, by analogy, to all the cases he has thus arbitrarily marshalled together ... The patient, treated on the fashionable theory, sometimes gets well in spite of the medicine. The medicine, therefore, restored him, and the young doctor receives new courage to proceed in his bold experiments on the lives of his fellow-creatures. I believe we may safely affirm, that the inexperienced and presumptuous band of medical tyros let loose upon the world, destroys more of human life in one year, than all the Robinhoods, Cartouches, and Macbeths do in a century. It is on this part of medicine that I wish to see a reform, an abandonment of hypothesis for sober facts, the first degree of value set on clinical observation, and the lowest on visionary theories. I would wish the young practitioner, especially, to have deeply impressed on his mind, the real limits of his art, and that when the state of his patient gets beyond these, his office is to be a watchful, but quiet spectator of the operations of nature, giving them fair play by a well-regulated regimen, and by all the aid they can derive from the excitement of good spirits and hope in the patient. ... The only sure foundations of medicine are, an intimate knowledge of the human body and observation on the effects of medicinal substances on that. The anatomical and clinical schools, therefore, are those on which the young physician should be formed. If he enters with innocence that of the theory of medicine, it is scarcely possible he should come out but tainted with error. His mind must be strong indeed, if rising above juvenile credulity, it can maintain a wise infidelity against the authority of his instructors, and the bewitching delusions of their theories."

One example of medical treatment based on scientific fact was vaccination. Jefferson, as a practical man, quickly appreciated the importance of this discovery. In 1766, at age 23, he traveled to
Philadelphia where Dr. William Shippen of the newly opened medical school (subsequently University of Pennsylvania) inoculated him by direct arm to arm. In 1800 Jefferson learned about Edward Jenner's success with the much milder cowpox vaccination and its introduction into the United States by Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse, Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. After studying the experimental and clinical data, Jefferson was convinced of its scientific and therapeutic validity. Upon assuming the presidency in 1801, he introduced generalized vaccination into the southern states. He personally diagrammed the various stages of vaccine reaction in both the whites and blacks and sent this information to a large number of influential physicians. His relatives and plantation population, numbering more than 200, were vaccinated and he kept detailed reports of each reaction. He even improved the vaccine samples by suggesting that some might have been killed in transportation by excessive heat and that larger amounts of nutrient material should be used. Indian chiefs and their wives were encouraged to be inoculated, and Captain Lewis was ordered to take cowpox vaccine on his expedition to vaccinate Indians and settlers. Cohn points out that Jefferson's presidential role in the vaccination program created a precedent for President Gerald Ford's swine flu vaccine program in 1975.

An example of a medical practice not founded on scientific fact was bloodletting. Jefferson was its strong opponent, never allowing the practice to be done in his family or on the workers in his plantation. He thought that his personal friend, Dr. Benjamin Rush, had done much harm in his frequent venesections while erroneously believing he was saving lives. Medical theorists without the slightest scientific support had promulgated many ingenious arguments in its favor. The prominent current British medical journal The Lancet (named for bloodletting), which appeared shortly before Jefferson's death, remains a medical anachronism.

Rean describes Jefferson's contributions to the training of physicians as exemplified at the University of Virginia: (1) development of a medical school in a university setting; (2) encouragement of state funding to support the medical school, in order to abolish proprietary medical schools for profit; (3) development of a forum for sharing medical knowledge; (4) encouragement of the study of physiology in order to promote conservatism against nonscientific drug therapy; and (5) promotion of honor in the maturity of physicians.

It took Robley Dunglison to disarm Jefferson of his lifelong distrust of physicians. Dunglison was the perfect model for Jefferson's teaching principles. He believed in giving nature the first chance in the cure of disease, and he was scientifically oriented. As the physician to presidents, the “Father of American Physiology,” and the unique pride of Jefferson Medical College, a great deal more is to be said of Robley Dunglison.

References

Philadelphia circa 1824: Environment for a Second Medical School

Philadelphia in the 1820s was a garden spot of the United States, commercially bustling, culturally sophisticated, historically prestigious, and exciting to live in or visit. Despite the devastation by epidemics, especially yellow fever in 1793, the
population nearly doubled during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, yielding the lead only slightly to New York. In 1820 the City of Brotherly Love spread its 113,000 citizens along the Delaware River; Tenth and Eleventh Streets represented the western borderland beyond which a physician's sign was rarely seen. By 1825 the thriving city with 138,000 people had 69 physicians, about a dozen more than 30 years previously, 10 midwives, 78 so-called nurses; and 18 dentists, although in the few years before and after 1825 there were fewer physicians in proportion to the general population than in any past or future history of the city.

In the election year 1824, John Quincy Adams defeated Jackson, Clay, and Crawford, and Lafayette was concluding his final tour of America. Benjamin Rush had signed the Declaration of Independence, but in the 1820s physicians were turning from political activities to scientific scepticism. Samuel D. Gross, 19 years old in 1824, had little interest in politics, although he later came to know or administer to six presidents of the United States.

In industry, a revolution was under way. Machinery was replacing hand labor, but the social adjustments to that change were only beginning. Entrepreneurs and mechanics had little technical training. The crying need of the time was for education, particularly in the crafts and sciences, but in 1824 there was as yet no high school in Philadelphia.

Culturally, Philadelphia was already established. The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts had been in existence since 1805 and had assembled a fine collection of paintings. The Philadelphia Museum Company was three years old. The Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia had erected a hall on Locust Street between Eighth and Ninth that could handle large-scale performances. Shakespeare's plays were being performed at the Walnut Street Theater; built in 1809, it is today the oldest surviving theater in the English-speaking world. Philadelphians had formed important literary and scientific societies, such as the Library Company of Philadelphia, founded in 1731 (the first subscription library in America); the American Philosophical Society, founded in 1743; the College of Physicians of Philadelphia founded in 1787; and the Philadelphia Medical Society (1789-1846), a precursor of the Philadelphia County Medical Society. The year 1824 saw the incorporation of the Franklin Institute, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, and the Mercantile Library. From a public health standpoint 1824 was the year of the introduction of Schuylkill River water into nearly 4,000 private homes and 185 factories. Many families were to run their first tubful of bathwater from a tap, although most likely that bath was cold. Hospital facilities included Pennsylvania Hospital (the oldest hospital in the United States, founded in 1751), Christ Church Hospital for Poor Widows, Philadelphia Almshouse ( precursor of “Old Blockley,” the now defunct Philadelphia General Hospital), Philadelphia Dispensary (established in 1786), Northern Dispensary, and Friends Asylum for the Insane.

The 1820s was a period of reconstruction, of resistance to old systems, and of an awakening to a new era of scientific spirit. Many of the prominent leaders were Southerners from Virginia and the Carolinas, for example, Nathaniel Chapman, William Horner, John Kearsley Mitchell, Joseph Hartshorne, Charles Caldwell, Charles Delucena Meigs, and Thomas Dent Mütter. Many students from the South were to come north and account for as much as one-half to two-thirds of medical school enrollment. A new generation of Philadelphia physicians started to locate on Chestnut, Walnut, and Spruce Streets. Most were below 35 years of age and many were scarcely 30.

Philadelphia's only medical school was at the University of Pennsylvania, the oldest in the United States, founded in 1765. It was located on the west side of Ninth Street between Market and Chestnut. Its faculty comprised Nathaniel Chapman in Theory and Practice of Medicine, with Samuel Jackson two years later as his assistant for the Institutes; William Gibson in Surgery; Philip Syng Physick (in ill health) in Anatomy with William Horner as adjunct; Thomas James and William Dewees, both in questionable health, in Midwifery; Robert Hare, inventor of the oxyhydrogen blowpipe, in Chemistry; John Coxe in Materia Medica; and...
W.P.C. Barton (later at Jefferson) in Botany. At this time the University had more than twice as many medical students as any other school, 480 enrolled out of 1,970 in the entire fifteen medical colleges of the country. The only competitors were Transylvania in Lexington, Kentucky with 235; University of Maryland with 215; and College of Physicians and Surgeons of New York with 196. This enlarging enrollment in a growing city encouraged provision of larger facilities.

Various threats to the monopoly held by the University of Pennsylvania began to develop. Dr. W.P.C. Barton, appointed Professor of Botany at the University in 1816, conceived plans for a second school and applied to the State Legislature in the session of 1818–1819, creating such concern that a meeting of the University students was called for an expression of views. John Kearsley Mitchell, then a student and later to become Professor of Theory and Practice of Medicine at Jefferson, as well as the father of the even more eminent Silas Weir Mitchell, was chairman, and he presented a strong resolution against a second school. Unexpectedly, another student, Benjamin Rush Rhees, subsequently to become Professor of Materia Medica and Institutes of Medicine as well as the first Dean of Jefferson Medical College, arose to argue against Mitchell. The resolution was defeated at the next meeting, but discussions continued in the Philadelphia Medical Society and in the press.

Eminent practitioners had private pupils, and many gave private and public lectures, which enhanced their prestige as well as their income. One of these, Nathaniel Chapman, collaborated in 1817 with several practitioners in other areas of medical education to give a more generalized course. He renovated the second floor of his stable and created an organization known as The Medical Institute. This systematic course of instruction attracted over 100 students and by 1837 developed into Franklin Medical College, which became extinct in 1848. In 1818 another private practitioner, Dr. Joseph Parrish, developed after several years of outstanding teaching a following of more than 30 students and engaged an assistant, Dr. George B. Wood. In the next 12 years it was necessary to add two more assistants, and in 1830 it became the Philadelphia Association for Medical Instruction, later to become The Philadelphia School of Anatomy. It was located at the upper end of Chant Street (then College Avenue) on the north side, near St. Stephen's Episcopal Church on Tenth Street between Market and Chestnut, as well as near the University on Ninth. The lecture rooms were originally intended as a summer school to extend medical education as well as scientific investigation during the University's long vacation between April and November.

Although European education at Edinburgh, London, Paris, Leyden, Vienna, or Berlin was the common route to medical fame, Philadelphia was the acknowledged place to study in the United States. London and Paris each had only one medical college, too, but Philadelphia was ripe for a second. In this setting of 1824 a young surgeon of genius had the outrageous temerity to found Jefferson Medical College, destined to become the largest private institution of its kind in the country. That surgeon was George McClellan.

References

McClellan's Private School: Founding of Jefferson Medical College

Physicians at the time of George McClellan were general practitioners who treated the ill with emetics, cathartics, and bloodletting. General
anesthesia was a generation away and Listerian principles of antisepsis two generations yet to come. Brilliant men of this era could attain prominence by studying anatomy from obsolete textbooks and then, as was becoming possible, dissect cadavers and perform their own postmortem examinations. Such a man was George McClellan and the men he gathered about himself. It was a simple matter for the medical scholar of that day to switch his lectures from anatomy to surgery, to chemistry, to materia medica, or to midwifery, because established medical facts were limited and controversial theories abounded. Most of the medical literature was British or French, with few of Philadelphia’s physicians contributing anything at all. Medical journals were practically nonexistent, the mainstay being the American Medical Recorder. The only library resources were in the College of Physicians or Pennsylvania Hospital. A medical library was a luxury of the times; the only other medical library of importance in the United States was in New York.

In those days, if one wished to study medicine in the grand manner, it was necessary to come from a relatively well-to-do family. Such was the good fortune of George McClellan, whose father, James, was a respected merchant in the wool business and also the principal of an academy of elementary education. “The Founder” was born in Woodstock, Connecticut in 1796. His ancestry was noteworthy—he inherited the genes of battling Highlanders and American Revolutionary patriots. His great grandfather, Samuel McClellan, fought at the side of Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, who attempted the recovery of the English throne for the Stuarts but was defeated at Culloden Moor in 1746. This forced Samuel to escape for his life to America. The founder’s grandfather, Samuel, Jr., fought in the French and Indian War, later moved to Woodstock, Connecticut, and became a Brigadier General under Washington. The founder’s maternal grandfather had also fought in that war. The military heritage of the family was to continue in the founder’s son, George Brinton McClellan, General of the Union Army of the Potomac during the early part of the Civil War.

“Little Mac,” as George McClellan was called in boyhood because of his short stature, early displayed the traits that were galvanized throughout his life—tireless energy, positive character that emanated as leader rather than teamworker, excellence in mathematics and language, instant comprehension, quick movements, promptness of opinion, and enthusiasm for whatever cause he espoused. One is reminded of the young Napoleon Bonaparte from this description.

McClellan’s preliminary education at his father’s Woodstock Academy grounded him well in Latin, Greek, and mathematics. He entered Yale University at age 16, where he studied the natural sciences with much zeal. After graduation in 1815 he commenced the study of medicine near his home town in the office of Dr. Thomas Hubbard, subsequently Professor of Surgery in Yale Medical School. In 1817 McClellan came to Philadelphia both to be a private pupil of Dr. John Syng Dorsey, Professor of Materia Medica and Anatomy at the University of Pennsylvania, and to enroll in the University. In 1818, one year before obtaining his doctorate degree, McClellan was elected Resident Physician to the Hospital of the Philadelphia Almshouse. Few physicians of that era had as thorough a foundation for a successful career as did McClellan during his student years. His avid reading, capacious memory, copious note-taking, and long hours in the dissecting room placed him in the front rank against all competitors.

Following graduation from the University in 1819 at age 23, McClellan opened clinical practice in an office at the corner of Walnut and Swanwick Streets, just beyond Sixth. Swanwick Street (running north and south between Sixth and Seventh) no longer exists—the Public Ledger Building occupies the entire block from Sixth to Seventh. This area was directly north of Potter’s Field (now Washington Square). Success was immediate, enabling McClellan the following year to marry Elizabeth Brinton, the daughter of a prominent Philadelphia lawyer. McClellan’s reputation attracted a large following of private students for lectures in anatomy and surgery, requiring a move to the corner of George (now Sansom) and Swanwick Streets. The rear of this house was next to the Apollodorian Gallery of Paintings, which Rembrandt Peale had remodeled.
from an old stable at Walnut and Swanwick. When more space was needed, McClellan was able to rent the rear of the gallery. It was the spot where the embryo of Jefferson Medical College would develop.

With mounting increase in size and usefulness of his private school, McClellan called on Dr. John Eberle for assistance. Eberle was a former editor of the American Medical Recorder and a teacher of principles of medicine. Philadelphia possessed other talented practitioners and teachers that McClellan knew and could assemble to complete a medical curriculum. Around 1823, at age 27, he began thinking about founding a new school, but needed the approval of the State Legislature to grant the M.D. degree. The University of Pennsylvania had strong influence with the legislators and had successfully blocked all previous attempts as well as McClellan's to obtain a charter. McClellan resorted to an ingenious strategy. None of the credit for initiative, boldness, persistence, or drama can be denied him. On June 2, 1824, he (age 28), along with Dr. John Eberle (age 38), Dr. Joseph Klapp (age 41), and Mr. Jacob Green, A.M. (age 35), the son of the Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green (former President of Princeton), sent a formal application to the Trustees of Jefferson College at Canonsburg, Pennsylvania (Figure 1-2):

"Gentlemen: The undersigned, believing upon mature consideration, that the establishment of a second Medical School in the city of Philadelphia would be advantageous to the public not less than themselves, have formed themselves into a Medical Faculty, with the intention of establishing such a school; and they hereby offer to the Trustees of Jefferson College to become connected with that institution on the conditions hereafter submitted, subject to such modifications as on a full and free explanation shall be found satisfactory to the parties severally concerned. The undersigned beg leave to submit a plan which they have devised for forming the faculty contemplated, and for conducting the concerns of the same, open to amendments and alterations in the manner already proposed."

The Jefferson College at Canonsburg was controlled by Scotch Presbyterians who may have given McClellan more favorable attention as a member of the same denomination. The following affirmative action was taken:

"The Board of Trustees of Jefferson College situated in Canonsburg, Washington County, Pennsylvania, deeming the creation of a Medical Faculty, in connection with that institution, expedient, passed at their stated meeting held in the month of June, 1824, the following resolutions, viz:

That the Board of Trustees of Jefferson College hereby establish a Medical School in connection with and as a part of the Institution of which they the said Trustees are the legal Guardians and Directors.

That the Medical School if established be located in the city of Philadelphia.

Agreeable to the foregoing resolution, the following Gentlemen were duly appointed to the respective Professorships attached to their names, viz:

Joseph Klapp, M.D., Professor of Theory and Practice
John Eberle, M.D., Professor of Obstetrics
Jacob Green, A.M., Professor of Chemistry
George McClellan, M.D., Professor of Surgery and Anatomy"

At the same meeting articles of union were also drafted and transmitted to the Professors so appointed, in the form of an official document founded on the mutual agreement of the parties thus connected.

The "articles of union" are quoted in full, since they succinctly stated the contract that was amicably held for the next 14 years.

"1. That it is expedient to establish in the city of Philadelphia a Medical Faculty, as a constituent part of Jefferson College, to be styled the JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE.

2. That the Faculty of the Medical College shall consist of the following professorships: 1st, a Professor of Anatomy; 2nd, of Surgery; 3rd, of the Theory and Practice of Medicine; 4th, of Materia Medica, Botany, and the Institutes; 5th, of Chemistry, Mineralogy and Pharmacy; 6th, of Midwifery and the Diseases of Women and Children.

3. That whenever a vacancy shall occur by death, resignation, or otherwise, it shall be filled by a gentleman who shall be nominated by the remaining professors, or a majority of them, and appointed by the trustees of the College.
4. That a professor may be removed by the Board of Trustees with the consent of a majority of the other medical professors, and after a full and fair investigation of the alleged causes for the removal, but in no other way.

5. That the Medical School shall have no claims whatever on the funds of Jefferson College.

6. That the medical professors shall make arrangements among themselves for the time and place of lecturing, for examinations, and for the general benefit of the school. The time for conferring medical degrees shall be determined by the trustees, on the representation of the Medical Faculty. The same fee shall be paid to the President of the College by the graduates for degree as for a degree in the arts.

7. That this college shall use all suitable influence to send medical pupils to the Medical School connected with it in Philadelphia; and the Medical Faculty shall promote in every way the interest and prosperity of the College.

8. That the young men who have attended the course of lectures in any respectable medical institution shall be admitted to a standing in all respects equal to the one they had left.

Fig. 1-2. Founders of the Medical Department of Jefferson College at Canonsburg (Jefferson Medical College).
9. That ten indigent young men of talent, who shall bring to the Medical Faculty satisfactory testimonials and certificates shall be annually admitted into the Medical School, receive its medical instructions, and be entitled its honors, without any charge.

10. That the following persons duly elected be, and they are hereby appointed to the following professorships, viz: Doctor George McClellan, Professor of Surgery; Doctor Joseph Klapp, Professor of Theory and Practice of Medicine; Doctor John Eberle, Professor of Materia Medica; Jacob Green, Esq., Professor of Chemistry, Mineralogy and Pharmacy.

11. That the President of the board be, and is hereby, appointed to forward these resolutions to the professors elect, and to hold any necessary correspondence with them on the subject until the next meeting of the board.

In October, 1824, these resolutions consummated the founding of the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia as the Medical Department of Jefferson College of Canonsburg.

References

The First Home: Tivoli Theater

The birthplace of Jefferson Medical College was in McClellan's office (Figure 1-3) and the rented portion of the Apollodorian gallery; the charter had been granted by a parent institution, almost a week distant by stagecoach, but not by the State Legislature; and the six professors stipulated in the "articles of union" were represented by only four. To transform a paper existence into a reality it was necessary to complete a faculty, find a suitable home, and regulate the finances. The founders were on their own in matters of management, with only moral support from the Trustees at Canonsburg.

With vestment of authority from the parent body the skeleton faculty proceeded promptly to implement its plan. Lectures continued without interruption in the former buildings, and the first lecture under the charter was given by McClellan himself on October 11, 1824. Dr. Klapp resigned because of poor health, and Drs. Benjamin Rush Rheed and Francis S. Beattie joined the group. The first regular faculty meeting, with still only five members, was held December 20, 1824. Dr. Rheed was appointed as Dean and Drs. Eberle and Beattie and Mr. Green charged as a committee to procure "the building formerly the Tivoli Theater, on Prune street (now 518 Locust Walk), near Washington Square, and owned by George Shaw."

![Fig. 1-3. The Jefferson Medical College Birthplace](image-url)
On December 31 a lease was signed for a period of four years and three months, effective January 1, 1825, at an annual rental of $550.

The building (Figure 1-4) was originally a cotton warehouse that in 1820 had been converted to a playhouse known as the Winter Tivoli (Tivoli) Theater. Many American plays premiered there with some of the favorite actors of the period. For three years the house was fairly successful, owing perhaps to the absence of competition from the old Chestnut Street Theater at Sixth and Chestnut, which had burned to the ground. On October 29, 1823, John Howard Payne's melodrama, *Clari, the Maid of Milan*, played in which the world-famous song, *Home Sweet Home*, was sung for the first time in America. In December of that year the rebuilt Chestnut Street Theater opened again, and thereafter the Tivoli Theater declined rapidly.

At their next meeting, in January, 1824, the faculty assigned the remodeling of the interior of the theater. Green and Beattie were responsible for the carpentry and Eberle for the masonry. Green, as treasurer, was able to collect the assessment of $20 from each faculty member except Dr. Beattie. The latter's default led to recriminations and misunderstandings.

The Hall of the Jefferson Medical College was opened on March 8, 1825, with prayer by the Reverend Ashbel Green and an address by the Dean, Dr. Benjamin Rush Rhees. The audience may have been struck by the unusual surroundings of the neighborhood. To the north and directly in front was the "infamous Walnut Street prison," built in the 1770s. Only the narrow street and a yard for the criminals and debtors separated the two buildings. Potter's Field (now Washington Square) with its 3,000 bodies of British and Continental soldiers, paupers, and Walnut Street prisoners lay to the west. The Free Quaker Cemetery, for those of the sect who had been expelled for fighting in the Revolutionary War, flanked the east. At the rear was a popular ale house, and within a block or two were St. Mary's, St. Peter's, and Holy Trinity Church.

Washington L. Atlee (Jefferson, 1829) describes the opening:  

"Truly a portentious beginning! How like the poor newly fledged doctor—an abundance of penniless patients; all work and no pay; in debt, with prison staring him in the face and a convenient graveyard to bury from sight the victims of his inexperience! Here, driven as if it were, into a corner, with nothing but death and the dungeon to contemplate, overshadowed and opposed by the most renowned medical school of that day, and unsupported by the medical men of the country, a few bold and enterprising adventurers threw down the gauntlet either to conquer or to die."

John Chalmers DaCosta (Jefferson, 1885) aptly wrote: "There was crime and misery in front, death on either side, and consolation in the rear."

The building, long after being vacated by Jefferson for its definitive home in 1828, was used by a bottling concern for carbonated beverages. It was destroyed by fire in the 1920s. The nostalgic visitor can find a bronze plaque commemorating this site placed by the Alumni Association on

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**Fig. 1-4. The Prune Street Tivoli Theater (318–320 Locust Walk), first home (1823–1828) of Jefferson Medical College.**

*Sweet Home,* was sung for the first time in America. In December of that year the rebuilt Chestnut Street Theater opened again, and thereafter the Tivoli Theater declined rapidly.
October 22, 1987 (Figure 1-5). Locust Street in this area is now a brick-paved pedestrian walk overshadowed by the Penn Mutual Towers.

References

The Infirmary Department: A First in Medical Instruction

McClellan was always generous in his care of the poor. These patients were frequently presented for instruction of the students in his private school. A provision was made to continue this method by the faculty of the newly formed Medical College. On January 27, 1825, it was resolved that “in addition to their present arrangements, the committee be instructed to prepare an apartment to be used by the Dean as an office, and to be also appropriated to the reception of indigent patients, whom it is hereby determined to supply with medicine gratuitously.” This action was a new idea for a professional faculty and a historical event for medical colleges in America.

The involvement of students in the care of patients, under supervision, was a deviation from the standard curriculum, which consisted of four months of lectures in each of two successive years. The lectures were the same in the second year, the concept being that a second hearing would allow better comprehension and longer remembrance. This clinical instruction, McClellan’s signal contribution to medical education, was first hailed as “misleading, ineffectual, and superficial.” Enhancement of didactic lectures with clinical experience not only brought Jefferson a widespread reputation for educating excellent doctors but was a model that came to be adopted by all medical colleges.

On April 20, 1825, the Faculty resolved: “That

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Fig. 1-5. Commemorative plaque of Tivoli Theater, first home of Jefferson Medical College (1825–1828).
circulats shall be published setting forth that the
Infirmary of the Jefferson Medical College will be
opened for the reception of patients on the 16th of
May, when all medical cases will be prescribed for
by Dr. Eberle and all of a surgical character
attended to by Dr. McClellan between the hours
of 5 and 6 P.M. every day, Sunday excepted." All
other members of the faculty, except Mr. Green,
who at that time lacked the M.D. degree, were to
lend their services as needed. One week ahead of
schedule, on May 9, the impatient and energetic
Dr. McClellan performed his first operation in the
Infirmary. The formal opening did occur on May
16, at which time a register was established,
showing the names of those receiving prescriptions
and operations. The first benefactions to the
project were supplies from a Mr. George
Glentworth and medicinal articles to the amount
of $20 from a Mr. Jacob Bigonet. This Infirmary,
the first clinic established in any college in the
country, was the forerunner of the Jefferson
Medical College Hospital and the ultimate
Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

The First Faculty: The
Troublesome Dr. Beattie

George McClellan's sagacity in founding the "new
school," as it was called, his promptness in
acquiring a home for it, and his care in the choice
of a faculty were notable achievements. In a strict
sense, "the first Faculty," as named in the charter
from Canonsburg, was theoretical in that Joseph
Klapp resigned before formal classes began. Three
new professors had to be added, and the
curriculum had to be equitably reassigned.
Conveniently, medical scholars of that era were
general practitioners, knowledgeable in all the
branches, and capable of switching courses or
filling in the gaps. Accordingly, John Eberle
changed his Chair from Midwifery to Theory and
Practice, and Midwifery was taken by Francis S.
Beattie to include Diseases of Women and
Children. Benjamin Rush Rhees was appointed to

occupy the Chair of Materia Medica, Botany and
Institutes, and Nathan R. Smith the Chair of
Anatomy. Four of the six men constituting this
first faculty—Drs. McClellan, Eberle, Rhees, and
Mr. Green—were pillars of strength who
supported the College during its critical formative
period and endured its subsequent harassments. A
resume of the group reveals that in most respects
it was outstanding, in spite of financial difficulties
and personal disagreements.

George McClellan

The founder was the star teacher and main
attraction to the school. His lectures were
delivered extemporaneously and with an
exuberance of thought that stimulated and
individually communicated with every member of
the class. He carried his students through his
thought process and made them part of it. The
material was lucid, forceful, and authentic for that
time. His talent was in speaking, not at his
writing desk (Figure 1-6), although he did

FIG. 1-6. The desk of Dr. George McClellan.
contribute a few articles to several of the existing medical periodicals (Figure 1-7). He edited an edition of John Eberle's *Theory and Practice of Physic* with notes and additions. A one-volume *Principles and Practice of Surgery* (1848) was published one year after his death; it was of practical value but greatly dwarfed by the prestigious *System of Surgery* published less than ten years later by his eminent pupil, Dr. Samuel D. Gross. A textbook of anatomy in collaboration with his brother Samuel was never completed. His greatest contribution to medical education was the involvement of students in the care of patients under suitable guidance. This came to be the greatest strength of Jefferson Medical College and was the basis of its traditional reputation for turning out excellent clinicians.

**John Eberle**

The Professor of Theory and Practice (Medicine) had studied medicine in the office of Joseph Klapp and, like McClellan, was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania (1809). His pedagogic talents were the opposite of McClellan's—he was a gifted writer but a dull speaker. Eberle's sobriquet, "The Tripod," was due to his stance while lecturing; he stood immobile with his legs spread far apart and his right hand resting on the podium. He rarely raised his eyes from a prepared manuscript that was informative but usually monotonous. His lectures suffered from the quotation of too many authorities without giving his own decisive opinion as to which was the best for the students to follow. On the other hand, his books on *Materia Medica* and the *Practice of Medicine* went through several editions as standard texts of their day, gaining him a wide reputation at home and abroad. A German translation made of his work on *Materia Medica and Therapeutics* secured him a membership in the Medical Society of Berlin. His treatise on *The Diseases and Physical Education of Children* stamped him as a pioneer in pediatrics.

Eberle spent the happiest years of his professional life at Jefferson. Daniel Drake enticed him in the fall of 1831 to leave for Cincinnati to aid in forming another school of medicine. There Eberle encountered disappointments, vexations, and declining health. He accepted a professorship at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1837. By then his weakness was such that he could not lecture for even half an hour. He died in 1838 at age 50.

**Jacob Green**

The first Professor of Chemistry, although not a graduate physician at the time, held an A.M. degree from the University of Pennsylvania, was licensed to practice law in the State of New York, and had studied theology. Since 1818 he had been Professor of Chemistry, Experimental Philosophy, and Natural History at Princeton University, of which his father was the president. In 1827 he obtained an M.D. degree from Yale, and the following year traveled in Britain, France, Switzerland, and Germany. His lifetime interests
remained in basic science rather than clinical practice. He published *A Text Book of Chemical Philosophy* (1829), and most of his writings were during the 13 years that followed his return from Europe until his death at age 50. Of the four founders he survived the longest at Jefferson and was endearingly called “Old Jaky.” The students under his instruction attended his funeral as a group in February, 1841.

Green’s lectures were carefully organized, delivered without notes, and articulated impressively (Figure 1-8). His experiments before the class were always for instruction and never for show or amusement.

**Benjamin Rush Rhees**

As a first-year student at the Medical School of the University of Pennsylvania in 1818, Rhees had the temerity at a class rally to argue in favor of a second medical school in Philadelphia. Little was “the dapper little fellow” to know that only seven years later he would become Professor of Institutes and Dean of that rival school (Figure 1-9). Institutes is the English equivalent of *Instituciones Medicae*, the title of a book by the celebrated Dutch physician, Hermann Boerhaave, published in Leyden in 1708. It was the first work in which the study of bodily function was treated as a separate scientific discipline. The Chair of Physiology founded at Edinburgh in 1726, the first in the world, was given the name of Institutes in recognition of Boerhaave’s book. Samuel D. Gross never liked the term and denounced it as follows: “This title still disfigures the annual announcement of the College. Literally interpreted, the Institutes embraces—besides Physiology—pathology and therapeutics, or the general principles of medicine.” Despite his objections, this title was to persist at Jefferson until the appointment of

![FIG. 1-8. Tickets for Benjamin Rush Rhees’ lectures on Materia Medica (1825–1826) and Jacob Green’s lectures on Chemistry (1829–1830).](image1)

![FIG. 1-9. Benjamin Rush Rhees, M.D. (1798–1831); Professor of Materia Medica and Institutes of Medicine (1825–1830); First Dean (1825–1827).](image2)
Albert B. Brubaker as Professor of Physiology in 1904.

Rhees' preceptor was Dr. James Rush,3 son of Dr. Benjamin Rush, who outlived his eminent pupil by 38 years. After graduation from the University of Pennsylvania in 1821, Rhees took a voyage to the East Indies. There he gained experience as a physician for the various vessels in that area. On his return to Philadelphia he took care of numerous cases of smallpox and yellow fever. In his private office he prescribed for the poor, gave a course of lectures on Materia Medica and clinical instruction to a class of young men who had chosen him for preceptor, and systematically arranged a cabinet of botanical specimens. He was on the staff of the Philadelphia Hospital when McClellan appointed him to the Jefferson Faculty.

Unfortunately, Rhees died in 1831 at the age of 33 from tuberculosis, without a literary legacy to perpetuate his name. Physically he was small and frail. His voice, although somewhat weak, held the attention of his class. He always read his lectures but delivered them enthusiastically. The students respected him as a capable instructor, as well as a person erudite and cultivated in belles lettres.

- **Nathan Ryno Smith**

Born in New Hampshire in 1797, Smith took his classical and medical education at Yale, receiving the M.D. degree in 1823. While attending additional lectures at the University of Pennsylvania in 1825 he met McClellan, who enlisted him to teach anatomy at the newly organizing school. Smith was only 29 years of age, but of imposing stature and possessing academic and clinical acumen (Figure 1-10). Although an excellent teacher and well accepted by the students, Smith remained only for two years. The fees from his course were barely adequate, and because he was a stranger in Philadelphia, where many of the best physicians in the country were located, he had little or no practice. In 1827 the University of Maryland offered him the advantage of the Chair of Anatomy with assurance of succession to the Chair of Surgery upon resignation of the old and infirm incumbent. He became an immense success in Baltimore during the next 50 years and was considered by Samuel D. Gross to be a great surgeon. Smith lived to be 80 years of age.

- **Francis Smith Beattie**

After graduation from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1824 and spending several years in naval service on the frigate Constellation, Beattie came to Philadelphia in November, 1824. His acquaintance with medical classmate Rhees, who had just been appointed to the new faculty, led to McClellan, who needed a Professor of Midwifery. Beattie with slim qualifications accepted the Chair. It was soon obvious that he was contentious, incompatible with his colleagues, and beset by financial difficulties. During renovation of the Tivoli Theater he suggested fixtures that were beyond the budget and was insulted when Green, the
treasurer, reminded him that he had not paid his own $20 assessment. In short order he alienated himself by naming Green "a dull fellow," characterizing Rhees as having "a captious and petulant temper" and Smith as "supercilious" with "offensive demeanour," calling Eberle a "tale-bearer," and faulting McClellan for "a most rude and unhandsome reception" in his home. On charges of "uncourteous deportment towards colleagues and incapacity" he received a resolution of dismissal from the President of Jefferson College at Canonsburg on October 28, 1826, after completion of one term of service.

On November 10, 1826, Beattie published a 39-page pamphlet entitled "Statement of Proceedings on the Part of the Members of the Faculty and the Trustees of the Jefferson Medical College against Francis S. Beattie, M.D., Professor of Obstetrics and the Diseases of Women and Children in that Institution" in which he claimed that dismissal was received by him without warning or trial. On November 14, 1826, just four days later, Eberle published an 8-page pamphlet entitled "A Reply to Certain Calumnious Statements Uttered and Published by Francis S. Beattie, M.D." It stated: "The exposition which Dr. Beattie has published of the circumstances connected with his dismissal from our Faculty, is marked throughout with misrepresentations, prevarication, and unparalleled malignity. The Trustees, the professors, and the students of our school have much reason to rejoice in having got rid of him at any price."

After dismissal, Beattie continued to harass McClellan, which, on March 10, 1829, led to "Trial of a Suit brought in the District Court for the City and County of Philadelphia by George McClellan, M.D. against Francis S. Beattie, M.D. for a Libel." As a result of this trial, McClellan's professional ethics were vindicated.

It is likely that Beattie's problems were more of an emotional than an intellectual nature. Gould states that "he is remembered favorably by the older alumni." On November 22, 1831, Beattie and six other physicians attended the formal organization of the Lying-in Charity, a society for aiding maternity cases in their own homes. In 1833 he edited The American Lancet, published every two weeks. After that he faded into obscurity and died in 1841 at age 47.

Such were the men who conducted the academic session of 1825-1826. All considered, they were as competent as any similar group of teachers in the schools of this country at that period. The lecture notes of Nathan Lewis Hatfield (1804-1887) from this pioneer class are preserved in the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. One can judge by reading them that he was an excellent student and that his Professors covered their subjects systematically. Hatfield became a prominent physician in the city, was on the staff of the Philadelphia Hospital, and served as President of the Board of Health in 1845 and the County Medical Society in 1865.

References

The Legislative Act of 1826: McClellan's Legendary Ride

Under the patronage and charter of the Jefferson College at Canonsburg, the Faculty of the Medical Department were able to open their school in Philadelphia. The venture was audacious, experimental, and lacked financial backing from the parent institution. Without guarantee of survival, success or failure rested on the medical faculty alone—it was only a foot in the door. Not unexpectedly, the right and power to grant diplomas to graduates of the Jefferson Medical College, either by its Faculty or the parent College, were challenged and disputed by the University of Pennsylvania. Legal entanglements
led to confrontation when, on advice of Counsellors Edward Ingersoll and J. Coudy, a petition was introduced into the State Legislature on October 25, 1825, that would specifically enable Jefferson College at Canonsburg to grant the medical degree and to create an additional Board of Trustees in Philadelphia on behalf of its Medical Department.

The issue was debated off and on in the Legislature during the next five months, with Drs. McClellan and Eberle making occasional trips to Harrisburg on behalf of favorable passage of the bill. On January 30, 1826, William Tilghman, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania and Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, read a protest before the Senate setting forth reasons for the opposition.

"The medical department of Jefferson College is required by no public necessity and will be followed by very injurious consequences, not only to the University of Pennsylvania, so long and so justly cherished by the state, but to that pre-eminence in medical science and instruction which our city has hitherto enjoyed. The city should not lose this pre-eminence which has been obtained by a concentration of all her force in the support of our medical school, and will inevitably be lost if it shall be distracted and divided among rival institutions. At this moment, a large and essential portion of the revenue of the university is derived from the medical school, and supplied to the support of the collegiate department; and the security and continuance of this revenue depend upon the success and prosperity of that school. The division of the public patronage and support between two rivals institutions will necessarily weaken both; while the rivalry, judging from other similar cases, will degenerate into a sort of hostility, honorable to neither and injurious to both. The competition will probably produce a facility in granting degrees, which will destroy their value, and render them no longer accredited testimonials of professional knowledge and skill.

In Paris there is but one chartered medical college; and but two in France, with her immense population. In Edinburgh there is but one, and in Great Britain but three in actual operation, that is, at Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dublin; and in no instance are two established in the same place. Granting that there are now upwards of five hundred in this school. At the college at Edinburgh, where the means of affording instruction are not superior to ours, there are this year upwards of nine hundred students; at Paris are about fifteen hundred; and, in neither place is it supposed that these numbers render the establishment of another seminary necessary or expedient."

Who could refute these objections as other than logical and honorable?

McClellan learned that a vote was finally to be taken on April 7. Early on the morning of the previous day he decided to make a dash to Harrisburg for one last plea. Some have likened it in fantasy to the ride of Paul Revere. Several versions exist but the eyewitness account of a portion of the incident by Dr. Washington L. Atlee is probably the most accurate. Washington Atlee was later to be a fellow student at Jefferson with Samuel D. Gross, and his brother John had been a fellow student at the University with McClellan. Atlee's reminiscence:

"In the spring of 1826, nearly half a century ago, four young medical students were assembled in the office of Dr. John L. Atlee, of Lancaster, for the purpose of forming a quizzing club. Quietly engaged in our deliberations, we were suddenly disturbed by a startling rap at the door. In a moment a young man, breathless and excited, bounded into our midst. He was a stranger to us, but our preceptor, soon entering, recognized him as a classmate and introduced us severally by name. His features were strongly marked, his gray, penetrating eyes deeply set, and his tongue and body were in constant motion. He seemed to be the embodiment of strong will, indomitable energy and determination, and every action of his small, wiry frame bore the impress of a restless and vigorous brain. At the door stood a sulky, with a sweating, panting horse, which he had driven without mercy over sixty miles that very day, having left Philadelphia the same morning. He must be in Harrisburg, thirty-six miles beyond, that night. His horse could go no further. He must have another. My preceptor's horse and sulky were soon at the door and at his service. Hector, a noble animal, did his work well that momentous night, and before twenty-four hours had elapsed after he had left Philadelphia, this young M.D. was hammering at the door of our legislature! His mission in Harrisburg was soon accomplished, and,

22 * Thomas Jefferson University
as before, he arrived at Lancaster that night. It was very dark, yet, in spite of all remonstrances, he ordered out his horse and off he flew for Philadelphia. He had driven but a few miles, when, while dashing along, he upset in the highway. Here was a predicament from which he could not extricate himself without assistance. It was night and the honest country people were in bed. After repeated halloos a farmer made his appearance with a lantern, which threw some light on the dismal scene. Quite naturally, the farmer began to inquire into all the particulars of the accident instead of at once attempting to right the difficulties. "Come, come, good friend, that won't do. Let us put our shoulder to the wheel and leave explanations until another time." Things were soon put in driving order, and the next day the charter of the Medical Department of Jefferson College was in the city of Philadelphia. . . . Need I say that this genius was young McClellan?"2

The bill was approved by Governor J. Andrew Shultze, becoming law on April 7, 1826. Just one week later, on April 14, the first Jefferson Medical College Commencement, which had been under postponement, was held.

The Act of April 7, 1826, was the first state legislative recognition and approval of the existence of Jefferson Medical College. It ratified all previous actions by the parent College at Canonsburg, gave permanence to all that had thus far been accomplished by the Faculty of its Medical Department, legalized the granting of the M.D. degree, and provided for the election of ten Additional Trustees at Philadelphia. It was a stunning victory for the new school.

James Fyfe Gayley (1818-1894), a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1848, vindicated the existence of a second rival school in his History of the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia as follows: "The College deserves her full share of the honour of preserving to Philadelphia the proud position of being still (1858) the Mecca of the medical profession on the Western continent. This prosperity has not been at the expense of any other institution."3 The occasional reference to Jefferson as the "Mecca" that persists among alumni to this day may be traced to Gayley's use of the expression.

References

The First Class (1825-1826): Enrollment of More than 100

Although the Medical Department of Jefferson College at Canonsburg was founded by Articles of Union in October, 1824, it must be realized that the lectures in McClellan's private school were not interrupted by the proceedings for the new school. On the contrary, McClellan continued to enlarge his classes and add lectures by the men who were forming his faculty while, indeed, the Tivoli Theater was being remodeled and opened on March 8, 1825. In reality that period constituted an unofficial first session for which students could receive a year's credit toward the three years of medical study required for the M.D. degree.

What is officially designated as the first session took place in the rented and renovated Medical Hall (Tivoli Theater) in the winter of 1825-1826. It was a lecture course of four months from the last Thursday in October until the end of February, by the six professors of the first faculty, and with clinical supervision in the Infirmary. As the time for the opening of the session drew near, much effort was made to attract the attention of new students arriving in the city to the merits and advantages of the rival school. McClellan, Eberle, or Rhees lectured every evening except Sunday, without charge or obligation, and undoubtedly made fine impressions. The University of Pennsylvania followed the same practice, thus affording the students a choice between the two schools.

The cost of tuition was calculated by the amount paid to each professor for a ticket to his lectures. In those times it was not necessary to have an M.D. degree to practice medicine, so some students merely took courses to certify that
they had attended certain lectures at Jefferson. That was enough to qualify for a practice in many localities. Because the school was proprietary, the fees were paid directly to the professors. Popular teachers who could attract a larger following naturally did better financially.

The cost of tickets was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anatomy</td>
<td>$14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgery</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materia Medica and Institutes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory and Practice of Medicine</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwifery and Diseases of Women and Children</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In June, 1826, the Board at Canonsburg separated Institutes from Materia Medica with appointment of Dr. William P.C. Barton to the latter Chair. Institutes and Medical Jurisprudence was continued by Dr. Rhees at $12 per ticket. Thus, whereas the tuition for the first session had been $78, the cost thereafter was $90.

It was stipulated in the Canonsburg agreement that each year ten free scholarships would be provided for indigent men of talent with satisfactory testimonials. Applicants for admission received a letter from the dean inquiring about financial ability and, if hardship could be established, the facts were to be submitted in writing. Students with “free tickets” would be unknown to their classmates and to the professors from whom the tickets were issued. Recipients, however, were required to pay $20 toward upkeep of the building. When the Ely Building (New Medical Hall) was opened in 1828, these letters were addressed to the Rose Chamber. This was a room in the basement used by the dean and faculty for meetings and examination of candidates. It was called the Green Room or Rose Chamber because the walls were green and a rose was painted upon the center of the ceiling. The hypothesis held by Gould and Bauer that the Rose Room was so called because the awards were “sub rosa” should be discredited. When Jefferson became entirely independent of its parent institution in 1838, these scholarships were gradually discontinued.

At this time admission requirements were very lax, and it was necessary only to supply sufficient evidence of preliminary education that would enable one to comprehend the lecture material. Emphasis instead was placed upon the requirements for obtaining the M.D. degree. These were as follows:

1. The candidate must be 21 years of age.
2. The candidate must have attended at least two full courses of lectures, one of which must have been in the Jefferson Medical College.
3. The candidate must have studied three years (including the two full courses of lectures) under the direction of a respectable practitioner of medicine.
4. The candidate must write a thesis either in Latin, French, or English on some medical subject, selected by himself, and sent to the dean of the medical faculty before the final examination.
5. At an examination by the entire faculty as a group, the candidate must furnish satisfactory evidence of his medical knowledge and of his being qualified for the practice of his profession.

The matriculates of this pioneer class numbered 109. Fourteen states were represented as follows: Pennsylvania (63); New Jersey (10); New York (6); Delaware and Virginia (each 4); Maryland (3); Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, South Carolina and Mississippi (each 2); Ohio, Tennessee, and Kentucky (each 1). There was 1 from the District of Columbia and 1 from Germany, and 4 were from Ireland. The first matriculate, Henry D. Smith of Pennsylvania, a cousin and pupil of Dr. Rhees, did not graduate. He is remembered for having cultivated a garden of rare medicinal plants.

Notice of exercises for the first commencement on April 14, 1826, at Medical Hall on Prune Street, was made public, and private invitations were sent to the clergy. The Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green opened the event with prayer, and Professor Smith gave the graduation address. Twenty of the matriculates received the M.D. degree. Their names, native areas, and theses are worth noting.

George Baldwin, Pennsylvania, “Cholera Infantum”
Peter Q. Beckman, New Jersey, “Syphilis”
attended some lectures, or as an “eclectic,” or, as was common, as a “quack.” The truly elite of the medical profession had a preliminary college degree, the M.D. degree, took postgraduate work for a year in one or more of the famous clinics of Europe, wrote a textbook at an early age, and became a professor in a medical school. Many of Jefferson’s future chairmen did this very thing.

References


Additional Trustees: Changes and Dissensions (1826–1828)

The Act of April 7, 1826, gave the Trustees at Canonsburg the authority to elect ten “Additional Trustees, who may be residents of the city or county of Philadelphia.” Any six of them could constitute a committee to superintend Jefferson Medical College, with the power to appoint and remove their fellow trustees, to hold public commencements, and to confer the M.D. degree as the General Board at Canonsburg might direct. The powers and proceedings of the “Additional Trustees” were thus subject to the censorship and approval of the parent Board, and they would have no voice in the councils of the Board at Canonsburg. The first ten chosen were a notable body from outstanding members of the religious, legal, military, and business community of Philadelphia. William Tilghman, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, who had led the opposition in the senate on behalf of the University of Pennsylvania, had what must have been the embarrassing duty to administer the oath of office to Edward King, LL.D., President Judge of First District Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia. This empowered the latter to give the oath of office to Samuel Badger, James M. Broom, Joel B. Sutherland, Samuel Humphreys, Edward Ingersoll, Charles S. Cox, General William Duncan, the Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green, D.D., LL.D., and Reverend Ezra Stiles Ely, D.D. All were of the highest personal integrity with full cognizance of their responsibilities. They established the tradition of...
strength, sacrifice, and wisdom without which the College could not have survived and that led to its ever-increasing stature.

The Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green had already been serving on the Board at Canonsburg, had witnessed the founding of its Medical Department, and had offered prayer at the opening of the Prune Street Medical Hall in 1825. His election as an “Additional Trustee” in Philadelphia made him liaison as well as the member called upon to preside over the deliberations of the newly established body. His service as President ultimately covered a period of 23 years.

Born in New Jersey in 1762, Dr. Green graduated from Princeton in 1783, entered the ministry, and served as Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at Princeton from 1785 to 1787. From 1792 to 1800 he was Chaplain to Congress in Philadelphia, which brought him into relationship with George Washington. In 1812, he was elected to the presidency of Princeton, which position he held for ten years until taking retirement at age 60. He then conducted a Presbyterian religious journal, The Christian Advocate, for 12 years. Green’s other writings consisted of discourses, a history of Princeton College with tributes to its presidents, and a posthumously published autobiography. At death in 1848, age eighty-six, he had outlived his professional son at Jefferson, “Old Jaky,” by seven years.

On August 9, 1826, the Additional Trustees convened in the College “to inquire into and report whether any changes in the then existing Professorships were necessary or expedient.” At the meeting of September 28 it was recommended that the Chair of Midwifery held by Dr. Francis S. Beattie be vacated, and that Dr. John Barnes (Figure 1-11) be appointed to fill it temporarily during the ensuing session. Dr. Beattie was notified of his dismissal by the President of the Board at Canonsburg October 28 and on November 10 he published his strong objection in the pamphlet referred to earlier in this chapter. Dr. Barnes fared no better. According to Dr. Samuel D. Gross, who attended Barnes’ lectures as a student in the session of 1826–1827, “he was the dullest lecturer that it was my lot ever to hear, destitute of all the attributes of a successful teacher.” Barnes was not reappointed the following year, and he likewise published a pamphlet of 39 pages in objection to the action of the Trustees and members of the faculty. In 1826 Dr. William Paul Crillon Barton (Figure 1-12) was appointed to the Chair of Materia Medica, thus relieving Dr. Rhees of this subject and free to continue in Institutes and Medical Jurisprudence.

The appointment of Dr. William P.C. Barton strengthened the school at this crucial point in its survival. He came from a distinguished family—his uncle, Benjamin Smith Barton, had been a Professor of Materia Medica at the University of Pennsylvania; his brother was John Rhea Barton, an esteemed surgeon of the Pennsylvania Hospital, in whose honor an endowed Chair of Surgery was established in 1876 at the University of Pennsylvania as its first endowed medical...
professorship; his father who had designed the United States Seal, was a member of the bar; and his grandfather was an Episcopal clergyman.

Barton graduated with distinction from Princeton in 1805 and received his M.D. degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1808. After practice in Philadelphia for a year as one of the surgeons to the Pennsylvania Hospital, he received an appointment as Surgeon in the Navy on the recommendation of Drs. Benjamin Rush and Philip Syng Physick. He maintained a career in the Navy for the rest of his life, but had so many periods of shore duty that he was able to secure long periods of leave for academic activities. In 1815 he was chosen Professor of Botany at the University of Pennsylvania, but in a new “Faculty of Natural Sciences” rather than the Medical School. In 1818 he tried to get a charter from the State Legislature for a second Medical School but failed because of opposition from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1826 Barton was sharply rebuffed by the University Trustees when he petitioned them to reunite his College Chair of Botany with the Medical Department. At this point McClellan offered him the Chair of Materia Medica at Jefferson.

Dr. Barton was one of the best botanists of his time, distinguished in early life by a two-volume Flora of North America (1821). His lectures were interesting, authoritative, and delivered without notes. The students regarded him with awe. His style of dress was flamboyant in spite of his limited finances. He usually appeared in class wearing two vests of different colors at the same time and seldom wore the same ones on successive days. A contemptuous smile or a curl of the upper lip frequently accompanied his criticism of students or colleagues. In 1830 after having served for three years he was ordered to sea duty by the Navy. This terminated his connections with Jefferson.

Barton continued his brilliant career in the Navy. In 1842 he was appointed Chief of Medicine and Surgery of the Navy. He wrote a valuable treatise for organization and government of Marine Hospitals. In 1852 he was made President of the Board of Examiners for the Navy in Philadelphia where he remained until his death in 1856. A detachment of marines was detailed to fire over his grave in East Laurel Hill Cemetery—a simple weather-worn headstone marks the site, overlooking the Schuylkill River, not far from the more imposing stones for George McClellan and Robley Dunglison. The Barton family continued in importance to Jefferson; its bequests aided the purchase of the old Broad Street Hospital (Barton Memorial) for diseases of the chest and funded research in cancer, and the Barton Committee of the Women’s Board bears its name. (Dr. James M. Barton, depicted on Eakins’ Gross Clinic, is from a different family.)

An unfortunate phase in the history of the College had a disastrous effect on the class of 1826–1827. Numbers diminished considerably even though the graduates numbered 34, an increase of 14 over the previous year due to a carryover of students who now could satisfy the requirement of...
two years of lectures necessary for the M.D. degree. The decreased student enrollment can be ascribed to institutional financial problems, harassment from the University of Pennsylvania, and infighting among the faculty. The troubled feelings of the faculty have been attributed to jealousies arising from the fee system of charges for the lectures. According to the pamphlet of the disgruntled Dr. Barnes: "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."

A meeting of the Board of Trustees was held on March 22, 1827, at which time the cost of tickets for the lectures was set as follows: Anatomy, $14; Surgery, Materia Medica, and Chemistry, each $14; Theory and Practice, Institutes, and Medical Jurisprudence, each $12; and Midwifery, $10, "so that the whole paid by each student to the seven Professors shall not exceed annually 90 dollars."

In June a code was adopted as "Rules of Government." On August 6, Professor Green was elected Chairman and Treasurer of the Faculty. The deanship held by Dr. Rhees was taken by Dr. Eberle under a former rule that this position could not be held by the same incumbent for two successive years.

Two other problems that retarded the progress of the College were its undesirable location across from the Walnut Street prison and insufficient space for the students. The first official mention of the need for a new medical hall was in February, 1827, just before the close of the second session. It was proposed that the cost should not exceed $20,000 and that funds could be "procured by subscription of joint stock." The faculty delegated Dr. McClellan and Professor Green to confer with the Trustees on this matter. Agreement was unanimous with all parties, but the funds were lacking. There was no one of wealth on the faculty. There was no endowment, and the original stipulation with the Trustees at Canonsburg expressed that there should be no claims on funds of the parent institution. The second academic session was discouraging in that attendance had decreased with associated loss of student tuition. One member of the Board of Additional Trustees of the College had the benevolence and faith to cast aside calculations of poor financial risk and assume responsibility for erecting a new building. That man was the Rev. Dr. Ezra Stiles Ely, D.D., Jefferson's first major benefactor.

References

New Medical Hall (1828): The Reverend Ely's Benefaction

Ezra Stiles Ely (Figure 1-13) was born in Connecticut in 1786, the son of a Presbyterian minister. His father named him after his greatly admired preceptor, Ezra Stiles, a famous President of Yale University. This young man represented the third generation of the family to be graduated from that institution and the seventeenth member to be educated there. Ezra followed in his father's footsteps and became an ordained Presbyterian minister. After two years of service in a local church he moved to New York City as Chaplain of the New York City Hospital and Almshouse. His experience in this ministry provided material for a two-volume book entitled Visits of Mercy, which went through six editions until 1829 and sold thousands of copies. The volumes were compilations of case histories of beggars, thieves, prostitutes, and alcoholics and dealt with their spiritual rather than physical ills. He edited a religious paper called The Philadelphian and wrote a Memoir of the Rev. Zebulon Ely, his father. His writings on polemic theology were important in their day and included The Contrast, Ely's Journal, Sermons on Faith, The Science of the Human Mind, Contrast Between Calvinism and Hopkinsianism,
and Endless Punishment. He was coeditor of a Collateral Bible or Key to the Holy Scriptures (three volumes), and left in manuscript a History of the Churches of Philadelphia. It is speculated that these literary labors provided some of the funds for the Rev. Dr. Ely's tireless activity in the multitude of his good causes. Later events revealed that he was an obsessive entrepreneur whose extensive business empire finally collapsed and almost sent him to prison. He recorded that fascinating account in his memoirs.¹

The Rev. Dr. Ely became pastor in 1814 of Old Pine Street Presbyterian Church, located between Fourth and Fifth Streets, only two blocks away from Jefferson's first College building, the Prune Street Medical Hall. Thus in 1826, when he became one of the "Additional Trustees," Ely came face to face with the physical problems of the school as well as its academic ones. It was he who listened with a sympathetic ear and felt the call to aid the school during its struggle for survival.

On March 27, 1827, Dr. Ely expressed his willingness to erect a suitable building, and one month later the Board resolved

"... that the Additional Trustees of Jefferson College, in their capacity as Trustees, and not otherwise, do hereby agree with the Rev. Dr. Ely, that if he will cause to be erected a Medical Hall for the use of the Medical School, on such plan as shall be approved by this Board, the Additional Trustees will rent the same of him and such persons, if any, as he may associate with him as proprietors of said hall, for a term of time not less than five years, at a rent of one thousand dollars a year, to be paid in the month of November in each of the said five years—after said building shall be fitted for use."

On May 12, 1827, Dr. Ely reported that he had purchased a lot on Tenth Street between Juniper Alley (later Moravian) and George Street (later Sansom) at the cost of $6,500 (Figure 1-14). The dimensions were approved as well as his exhibit of plans for the building. As further endorsement, the trustees, in their capacity as a body and not as individuals, agreed to add another $200 a year rent to the $1,000 previously promised. Beyond rent, there would be expenses for the janitor's salary, heat, light, and incidentals. Because the school was proprietary, the financial responsibility rested upon the faculty. Accordingly, the professors were assessed the following sums to be paid each November: Anatomy, Surgery, Materia Medica, and Chemistry, each $250 (covering the faculty rent of $1,000); Theory and Practice, $137.50; and Midwifery, $125 (the $262.50 for expenses beyond rent). Any professor failing to pay his share would automatically be considered to have vacated his chair and be replaced. Each faculty member signed a statement binding himself to the regulations of the Board.

By August, 1828, the cornerstone had been laid by Board President the Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green; a dedication address had been delivered by Jacob Green (now M.D.), Professor of Chemistry; and the building was ready for occupancy. With periodic renovations and modifications it remained for 70 years in active use, until 1898. This site is still occupied by the old 1907 Jefferson Hospital.

There is no photograph of New Medical Hall as it appeared originally or during the 1830s, because the daguerreotype process was not announced until 1839. Fortunately, however, an architectural depiction of the exterior exists (Figure 1-15).

The building was 51 feet wide, 57 feet deep, and with a five-foot alley on the north. It was well proportioned, two and one-half floors high, with the basement rising seven feet above ground level. The first-floor facade had an arched window panel opening over the two windows and central door. The central second-floor window extended through the floor above to a niche for a statue that formed the focal point of the front. It is not known whether the statue was ever placed. There is no record of the original architect.  

Cost of the building itself was $10,500. Yearly rent was set at $1,200. The upper lecture hall, or “pit,” is depicted in Eakins’ Gross Clinic (1875). The lower lecture hall with the Gross Clinic hanging on the south wall is seen in Figure 1-16.

Dr. Ely’s benefaction was a provision rather than a gift, and not financed principally by his own funds. He created shares of Jefferson Medical College stock for which he was the trustee. On March 27, 1827, it was “resolved that any surplus funds which may remain in the hands of the additional trustees after discharging the rent of the Hall and other occupancy expenses, shall by the same trustees be invested in said Medical Hall as often as they deem it expedient, with the intent that they may ultimately become proprietors of the building and hold it in trust for the promotion of the objects and interests of the said school.” With subsequent renovations and enlargements it was not until 1870 that the cost was repaid.

The beginning of Dr. Ely’s ruinous financial entanglements may be traced to his first marriage to Mary Ann Carswell, the daughter of one of his prominent Old Pine Street Church members. Samuel Carswell, the father-in-law, was a merchant of wealth who in later life became involved in fiscal difficulties. At his death in 1822, Dr. Ely...
became executor of the estate as well as trustee for Carswell’s son who also had financial trouble and fled to the West Indies to escape his creditors. Dr. Ely also became the trustee for Mary Ann Ely Carswell, the son’s daughter and his own niece through marriage. The mother-in-law, the niece, and Dr. Samuel McClellan (related to the Elys and brother of Jefferson’s founder) all resided in the Ely parsonage. Matters went smoothly enough until 1835 during which he improved the Old Pine Street Church both in congregation size and physical aspects.

At this time he felt the call of a great opportunity to establish a Presbyterian college and theological seminary in Marion County, Missouri, along with two other Presbyterian ministers. Land was selling at $9 an acre and was predicted to double in value quickly. In 1836 he moved to Missouri with his wife, his mother-in-law, and his ward, Mary Ann Ely Carswell. There he plunged into what he conceived to be the most important work of his life. He became Professor of Polemic Theology, Biblical Literature, and Sacred Criticism in the Theological Department of Marion College.

Dr. Ely built a large land empire, buying thousands of acres in the Marion area with funds from his presbyters, trustee accounts, notes, mortgages, and bonds. His dreams of vast profits for benefit of his religious enterprises were shattered by Andrew Jackson’s attack on the Bank of the United States, the flooding of the Mississippi River, and malaria. Land value depreciated to $6 an acre. There was a financial panic in 1837, with failures of banks and many of the richest merchants. This continued through President Van Buren’s administration (1837–1841). Dr. Ely had endorsed a note of $50,000 on behalf of Marion College. A judgment bond of $100,000 was called with a lien on all his real estate. His creditors accused him of dishonesty and fraud in transferring property to family ownership. By an unforeseen change of times, those he had tried to help were clamoring for money and blaming everything on him.

FIG. 1-16. Lower lecture hall of Ely Building (ca. 1880s) showing large class and Gross Clinic on south wall.
In 1843 Dr. Ely entered into a second marriage with Caroline Thompson Holmes, whose father was Dr. Thompson Holmes of Abington, Pennsylvania. In 1845, after much difficulty with creditors, Dr. Ely was cleared of dishonesty in his financial transactions by the Presbytery of Northern Missouri and returned permanently to Philadelphia for another beginning in the Presbyterian Church of the Northern Liberties (a district along the Delaware, north of Vine Street). Mr. Thomas J. Miles, who had married Dr. Ely's ward, Mary Ann Ely Carswell, now relentlessly pursued Dr. Ely into court. In her estate were listed 44 shares of Jefferson Medical College stock at $500 each, for a total $22,000. On November 1, 1846, the auditors found Dr. Ely indebted to his late ward, Mary Ann Ely Miles, to the sum of $57,409.55, for which a judgment of $49,861.51 was made against him.

The next effort of Mr. Miles was to remove Dr. Ely from the Trusteeship of the Jefferson Medical College stock, which Ely had created by the purchase of the lot and erection of the College edifice. On November 9, 1846, Judge A.V. Parsons ordered and directed “that money due this month from the Board of Trustees of Jefferson College be paid by their treasurer into court for distribution: and that the holders of the stock be permitted to take out of court their respective proportions when proper applications are made.” This created needless delay and expense for the stockholders.

The copy of a protest to the Court of Common Pleas for the City and County of Philadelphia on November 16, 1846, was as follows: “The subscribers respectfully present, that they are stockholders in the stock of the Jefferson Medical College Edifice, on South Tenth Street, Philadelphia; that the Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely, D.D., Trustee of said stock has ever paid us punctually our interest on the same; and that we protest against his removal from said Trusteeship, and another in his place.” In spite of other written stockholder support as well as protest from Dr. Ely’s legal counsel, the judge on the bench was unyielding. He delivered a lecture complimenting Dr. Ely for his skill in theology but deplored his lack of legal knowledge in the management of money. The firm of Raybold and Sharswood was appointed to the office created and formerly held by him. The firm requested and received from Dr. Ely “all the books, papers, documents, certificates, moneys, and property remaining in your hands and under your control, belonging or in any way appertaining to the said Trusteeship.”

On Saturday, March 20, 1847, the time of procuring $50,000 bail for financial insolvency expired. On that day Mr. Miles urged the sheriff to seize Dr. Ely. Dr. Ely, to comply, met Mr. Hancock, the sheriff, in the street and took him to the parsonage. There he read the warrant of arrest and was released on parole so as to be able to conduct his church services the following day. A member of the congregation who had noticed Dr. Ely with Mr. Hancock jokingly asked if he knew he was walking with the deputy sheriff. Dr. Ely replied that he had the pleasure of an acquaintance with him. The insolvent laws of that time meant going to prison if bond was not given. On Sunday, Dr. Ely, while a prisoner but yet at liberty, preached twice with his usual freedom and composure, while none of the congregation except his wife and father-in-law knew the situation. On Monday, March 22, Dr. Thompson Holmes (his father-in-law), Dr. Samuel McClellan, and a friend, Mr. John C. Farr, united to complete the bond. Dr. Ely was thus free, the sheriff bowed in departure, and Dr. Ely paid a few small necessary fees.

In this month of March 1847, Dr. Ely had 23 claims against him ranging from $60 to $49,861.51, for a total of $119,918.18. In May he agreed to settle with his creditors by turning over all estates, real, personal, and mixed, and all effects of whatever kind and wheresoever situated, especially all houses, lands, claims, and credits in the state of Missouri, and to sell and dispose of the same in any manner that was best and in conformity with law and equity.

In November 1847, Dr. Ely was considerably depressed and had lost 34 pounds as a result of his legal harassments. His memoirs relate: “I rode past the Eastern Penitentiary and reflected on the pain it would give my friends, should I, in the course of a few weeks, be confined there, at hard labour.... The worst I had to dread, so far as I know, must be the Eastern Penitentiary for a work-shop, a bed-chamber, a place for prayer, and a house of death.” On November 15, 1847, Dr. Ely’s case was argued in court before three judges. On November 27 he was discharged from all
liability to be imprisoned for past debts, the opinion being unanimous that he had committed no penal offense or suffered any defamation of moral character. Fortunately, his misadventures in business had no ill effect on Jefferson Medical College.

Not long afterward the Trustees of Jefferson Medical College elected Dr. Ely President pro tempore to fill the place of the very aged and venerable Dr. Ashbel Green, who was past the power of attending to his duties and who died the following year. Dr. Ely wrote in his memoirs: “My earnest prayer is, that henceforth I may have little to do with worldly business, and may be more unreservedly devoted to the ministry of reconciliation than in any former part of my life.”

A recount of Dr. Ely’s colorful career would be incomplete without mention of the famous social and political furor he created in 1829 over Peggy Eaton, the wife of President Andrew Jackson’s Secretary of War. On March 18 of that year Dr. Ely wrote Jackson a long accusatory letter in which one of the charges was that Eaton and Peggy before their marriage had registered together as man and wife in a New York boarding house. By early 1830 Dr. Ely had been called to Washington at least three times to substantiate his claims, but in 1831 the matter led to the resignation of Jackson’s whole cabinet.

Ex-President John Quincy Adams in his memoirs for February 6, 1830, wrote “A busybody Presbyterian clergyman of Philadelphia is the principal mischief-maker in the affair.”

Dr. Ely, who held northern antislavery views, became involved in 1831 in a controversy over establishing a school for free negroes in New Haven, Connecticut. He became further involved by his purchase of a slave named Ambrose in order to save Ambrose from being sold into the South away from his home and family. A heated controversy promptly ensued in the northern papers over whether a Presbyterian minister, for whatever reason, could morally be a slaveholder.

The members of Dr. Ely’s first family never forgave him for marrying a second time. In the two marriages he had 12 children. Some must have died early, but others were notable: Samuel Carswell Ely, presumably a son, is listed as a graduate of Jefferson Medical College in the class of 1836. The Rev. Dr. Ely’s son, Ben Ezra Stiles Ely, went to sea at 18, went to California with the forty-niners, and subsequently became a Presbyterian minister. He wrote a narrative of his whaling voyage, *There She Blows*, edited by Curtis Dahl (Dr. Ely’s great-great-grandson). Ben Ezra Stiles Ely had a son, Francis Argyle Ely, M.D., who although not a Jefferson graduate was made an honorary alumnus in 1940.

The “black sheep” among Dr. Ely’s children was a daughter of his second marriage, Harriet Elizabeth Ely. At age 16, two years after her father’s death, she eloped with a railway clerk named Blackford. Her husband died within a short time, presumably of tuberculosis. Without visible financial support, and possessed of unusual physical beauty and cleverness, she was able to establish a residence off fashionable Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia. Seeking an even more exciting existence, she transferred to the Boulevard Malesherbes in Paris and became a well-known courtesan to the French court under the assumed name of Madame Fanny Lear. With the fall of Paris in the Franco-Prussian war in 1871 she followed some of her Russian patrons to St. Petersburg. There she became the acknowledged mistress of the Czar’s nephew, Grand-Duke Nicholas. As one of the most famous courtesans of all Europe she published her memoirs in 1875 in French. A book, *The Scandalous Mrs. Blackford*, published in 1951, revived the spicy details.

However, Dr. Ely did not live to see his little daughter’s teenage elopement. Physically and financially ruined, he preached at the smaller Northern Liberties Church until 1852, when at age 66 he suffered a stroke. Living only on a meager pension and spending the next nine years partially paralyzed, the theologian, author, editor, would-be politician, philanthropist, entrepreneur, and first benefactor of Jefferson Medical College died on June 18, 1861. The survival of Jefferson past its darkest hours may well have been due to the largesse of Dr. Ezra Stiles Ely. As Secretary of the Board of Trustees for many years, he recorded the minutes in a beautiful script that combined beauty with clarity.

References

Faculty Reconstruction (1828–1832): Struggle for Survival

Among the 27 graduates in the third class of 1828 was Samuel D. Gross, destined to become one of the most outstanding alumni in Jefferson's history. The ceremony was held on March 18 in the Prune Street Building because construction of the new Medical Hall would not be completed until the fall session. The Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green conferred the degrees, and Thomas J. O'Flaherty read in Latin his thesis entitled "De Ebrietate" (drunkenness). The main address was delivered by Dr. George McClellan. Gross related: "McClellan, on this as on many other occasions 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 the manuscript, so badly was it written. In fact, as I afterward learned, he had been engaged upon the composition of his address up to the very moment of leaving his house for the college."

In June, 1828, all the Chairs were declared vacant and it was "resolved that all elections of persons to be professors in this institution shall be made by ballot in the Board of Additional Trustees." Secretary Ely was "to inform those gentlemen who were lately Professors and wish to be candidates [that they] must make application or [they] will not be considered as candidates." It was the apparent intent of the board to update the faculty to coincide with opening of the new Medical Hall.

At this time many predictions were afloat that the existence of Jefferson Medical College would be of short duration. An editorial comment in the American Medical Recorder on June 19, 1828, declared: "We are informed that the whole of the Medical Professors in Jefferson College have been removed: the cause of these proceedings we do not know, but if we were to give an opinion, we should say that a few of the old Professors, who no doubt understand they are to be re-elected, have been at their old tricks. We shall notice the proceedings in a future number, and shall conclude for the present by remarking, that we cannot conceive it possible men of standing if elected (pro tem it can only be) will serve in an institution where confusion, irregularity, and discord have prevailed from the moment of its birth."

There were so many changes in the faculty during the critical period of 1828 to 1832 that Bauer refers to the "game of musical chairs." It was a period of instability that threatened the survival of the College. Nathan R. Smith had resigned the Chair of Anatomy at the beginning of the 1827–1828 session. An attempt to secure Dr. Robert M. Patterson for the Chair was unsuccessful in consequence of his accepting a more advantageous offer from the University of Virginia. George McClellan as Professor of Surgery was then called upon to double for the vacant Chair of Anatomy. At this juncture he resourcefully solicited the aid of his brother Samuel who was appointed an Assistant Demonstrator of Anatomy.

Samuel McClellan (Figure 1-17) possessed the same intellectual capacities as his more famous brother, but his personality was entirely different. Four years younger, he was a lamb rather than a lion, shrinking from applause, avoiding political intrigue, and unassuming in character. His educational background was excellent in that he had studied anatomy in 1819 with a respectable physician from his native Woodstock, Connecticut. In 1820 he entered the office of his brother George in Philadelphia while he pursued two years of clinical lectures and practice in the Almshouse and Pennsylvania Hospital, as well as lectures at the University of Pennsylvania. He obtained his medical degree from Yale in 1823. After spending
the next three years traveling through Mexico in the company of an English naturalist, he became interested in diseases of the eye. He returned to Pennsylvania and was practicing successfully in nearby Bristol when called upon by his brother. Samuel McClellan was promoted to Adjunct Professor of Anatomy in 1829 and to the Chair in 1830. In 1831 he gracefully yielded the Chair to the internationally famous anatomist Granville Sharpe Pattison and took the Chair of Institutes, Medical Jurisprudence, and Midwifery. He also served as dean from 1830 to 1834. In the teaching of all his assigned subjects Dr. Samuel McClellan earned the respect and affection of the students, colleagues, and Board of Trustees. He cooperated well in all the stopgap measures that were so important in the survival of the College.

Jefferson lost the McClellan brothers when restless George in 1839 founded another medical school in Philadelphia with the same strategy he had used for Jefferson. That rival school was created as the Medical Department of Pennsylvania College at Gettysburg.

The Chair of Midwifery at the occasion of opening New Medical Hall was also in difficulty; Dr. John Barnes had proven unsatisfactory in the 1827–1828 session. Another doubling of Chairs occurred in 1828 when Dr. John Eberle was appointed Professor of Theory and Practice of Physic as well as Professor of Midwifery and Diseases of Women and Children. Green, Rhees, and Barton retained their prior appointments. A squabble in the Board of Trustees on June 26, 1828, over the reelection of Dr. John Eberle versus Dr. James Rush led to the resignation of two members, Judge Coxe and Edward Ingersoll. At this juncture the Rev. Dr. Ely was appointed Secretary and Treasurer of the Board. Thus, when the new building was finished in August, 1828, the Chairs in the Faculty were not completely filled. Despite the internal strife, an optimistic announcement was made on August 6, 1828, in which “the public is informed that the new Jefferson Medical Hall in south Tenth Street is now completed and furnishes accommodations, which it is believed are surpassed by no building of the kind in our country.”

The parent Board of Trustees at Canonsburg reasserted its authority on October 8, 1828, when President Samuel Ralston announced “that the Board retains power of reversing decisions of the Additional Trustees when in their opinion the interests of the institution demand.”

New tuition fees for students were set at $15 each for Surgery, Anatomy, Chemistry, Materia Medica, Theory and Practice of Physic, Institutes, and Medical Jurisprudence, and $5 for Midwifery and Diseases of Women and Children, for a total of $95.

Before November 15 each Chairman was to pay to Treasurer Ely the sum of $225, except for the Professor of Midwifery, whose assessment was $75. This amounted to a yearly budget of $1,425 for rent, repairs, and janitorial services.

On March 11, 1829, the fourth commencement but the first in the new Medical Hall was held at noon. Of the 25 graduates Washington L. Atlee (Figure 1-18) became the most prominent alumnus, “the man who did more than anyone in the world to establish ovariotomy as a legitimate practice.”

The public exercises commenced with prayer by Board Member, the Rev. Mr. Gilbert R. Livingston; degrees were conferred by President

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**FIG. 1-17.** Samuel McClellan, M.D. (1800–1854); Assistant Demonstrator of Anatomy (1828), Adjunct Professor of Anatomy (1829), Professor of Anatomy (1830), Professor of Institutes and Medical Jurisprudence (1831), Professor of Midwifery (1832–1839), and Dean (1830–1834).
Green; and the address was delivered by Professor Benjamin Rush Rhees.

In early 1830, Dr. W.P.C. Barton, who had held the Chair of Materia Medica with distinction since 1826 and served as Dean, 1828–1829, was called to naval duty on the frigate *Brandywine*. Dr. Rhees was appointed to complete the course, and Dr. Eberle was transferred from the Chair of Practice to that of Materia Medica to take effect at the beginning of the next session (November 1, 1831). Drs. James and William Rush were appointed Professor and Adjunct Professor respectively of Theory and Practice. The two Drs. Rush declined the appointment, and Dr. Daniel Drake (Figure 1-19) of Cincinnati agreed to fill the vacant Chair.

The session of 1830–1831 opened with all Chairs filled for the first time in three years. The addition of Dr. Daniel Drake offered much promise. He had already been prominent in the medical history of the West and brought students with him. His fame as a teacher was only further enhanced at Jefferson by his brilliant lectures, which he delivered spontaneously in a strong clear voice. Drake had risen from the abject poverty of log cabin residence to medical preceptorship under Dr. William Goforth, Jr., of Cincinnati, and a medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1815. The rest of his life was spent in professorships in Ohio, Kentucky, and Philadelphia, as well as private practice, attempts to found medical schools in Ohio, and considerable writing. The most notable of his published works was *Diseases of the Interior Valley of North America*. Dreaming of founding his own medical school in Cincinnati, he stayed at Jefferson only one year, and then took Eberle with him.

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**Fig. 1-18.** Washington L. Atlee, M.D. (1808–1878); Jefferson Class of 1829, established ovariotomy (oophorectomy) as a legitimate procedure.

**Fig. 1-19.** Daniel Drake, M.D. (1785–1852); Professor of Theory and Practice of Medicine (1830–1831).
Losing these two eminent men at one time was the most serious loss of prestige the institution had thus far endured. To make matters worse, Dr. Benjamin Rush Rhees, who only recently had had a pulmonary hemorrhage from tuberculosis and whose lectures on midwifery had been transferred to Dr. Eberle, died in October, 1831.

The much-vacated Chair of Midwifery was accepted by Dr. Usher Parsons (Figure 1-20) in 1831. Parsons came from Providence, Rhode Island, and had received his medical degree from Harvard in 1817. He was primarily a surgeon and anatomist rather than an obstetrician. Nevertheless his undramatic but well-prepared lectures and demonstrations were praised by the students. He taught for only one year but during this time published a paper on The Art of Making Anatomical Preparations. His departure was a disappointment to the students and another blow to Jefferson. The Trustees united the Chair for the time being to that of the Institutes, left vacant by the death of Rhees, and transferred Dr. Samuel McClellan from Anatomy.

The frequent faculty changes and reconstructions of this period resulted in diminishing enrollment with only 18 graduates in March, 1833. Those who had spread rumors that the school would fail had reason to be pleased. It was one of Jefferson’s darkest hours, but the sun was soon to burst through the clouds.

References

Stability Established (1832–1838): Robley Dunglison, the Peacemaker

For the six years from 1832 to 1838 the appointed professors kept their chairs. This stability was reflected in an increase in size of the classes and a growing respect by the medical profession. The graduating class of 1834 numbered 52; 1835 had 58; 1836 had 72; 1837 had 125 and 1838 graduated 108.

The Chair of Anatomy was held by Dr. Granville Sharpe Pattison (Fig. 1-21) who had been elected in 1831. He was a native of Scotland who took his preceptorship at the age of 17 under an anatomist, Dr. Allan Burns, celebrated for his lectures, anatomical rooms, and museum. Pattison then taught anatomy himself in the Andersonian Institute of Glasgow for four years before leaving for the United States in 1818 at the age of 26. He sought the Chair of Anatomy in the University of Pennsylvania recently vacated by the death of Dr. John Syng Dorsey. Dr. Nathaniel Chapman, Professor of Medicine, opposed the appointment on the basis that his letters of recommendation were “extravagant and hyperbolical” and because of a divorce case in Scotland in which Pattison, although exonerated by the court, had been accused as a correspondent. Pattison, “the vivacious and pugnacious Scot” then espoused the movement in 1818 agitated by Dr. W.P.C. Barton.
for the establishment of a second medical school in Philadelphia.¹

Bitterness between Chapman and Pattison attained public exposure in 1820. At this time a University of Pennsylvania student, John Galloway Whilldin, was required to delete some passages from his graduation thesis because they reflected adversely on several members of the faculty. Pattison, as editor of the Medical Recorder, not only published the thesis as originally written but emphasized the objectionable passages in italics. In retaliation Dr. Chapman obtained from Glasgow a transcript of the trial brought by Professor Ure against Dr. Pattison and distributed 8,000 copies in pamphlet form. Pattison, maintaining that the divorce trial was a conspiracy against him by a colleague, challenged Chapman to a duel that apparently did not take place. He did, however, fight a duel in 1822 with General Thomas Cadwalader, a graduate in Arts from the University of Pennsylvania in 1795 and Chapman’s brother-in-law, wounding him in the right arm. These difficulties in Philadelphia did not prevent his acceptance in 1820 of the Chair of Anatomy in the University of Maryland, a post he held for six years. In Baltimore, Pattison achieved professional, social, and financial success, but returned to his native country because of an illness of which it was rumored he would not recover. With restored health he took the Chair of Anatomy at the first organization of the University of London in 1827. As a result of infighting he withdrew shortly thereafter and returned to America. His assumption of the Chair of Anatomy at Jefferson at age 39 added to his established stature. He was an eloquent teacher who enlivened his subject by integrating it with physiology and surgery. Enthusiasm, sound scholarship, and sonorous delivery of his lectures enthralled his students. During his ten-year connection with Jefferson, Pattison founded the museum, enlarged the anatomical rooms, and increased the popularity of the institution. He edited The Register and Library of Medical and Chirurgical Science, Burns’s Surgical Anatomy of the Arteries of the Head and Neck, Masse’s Anatomical Atlas, Cruveilhier’s Anatomy, and The American Medical Recorder. He left Jefferson in 1841 to join in the founding of the Medical Department of the University of New York. His death ten years later was caused by obstruction of the common bile duct. He was much interested in art and participated in establishing the Grand Opera House in New York. At Jefferson his stellar teaching was the precursor for a greater era to follow.

The Chair of Theory and Practice of Medicine vacated by Daniel Drake was filled by Dr. John Revere (Figure 1-22),² the son of Paul Revere, famous silversmith and Revolutionary War patriot. After graduating with honors from Harvard College in 1807, John Revere studied medicine in the office of James Jackson, M.D., of Boston. Visits to various medical centers of Europe culminated at Edinburgh University from which he received his doctorate in 1811. He returned to Boston for private practice but failing health, most likely due to tuberculosis, forced him to Virginia for rest and the sea air of the Chesapeake Bay. With improved health he moved to Baltimore, where he engaged in a small practice, studied

chemistry, translated Magendie's *Physiology*, and published a few papers. Revere visited England in 1829 to solicit interest in his discovery of a process to protect the bottoms of seagoing vessels. Shortly after returning to Baltimore in 1831 he received the call to Jefferson. For a decade in the Chair of Medicine he was highly respected for his scholarship and considered one of the best lecturers of the faculty. His personal traits of faithful study, accuracy, honesty, courtesy, amiability, and command of language gained Revere high rank among teachers in the country and increasing credit to the College, for which he also served as Dean from 1839 to 1841. In his Philadelphia years he edited *The Medical Record*. In 1841, Revere accompanied Dr. Pattison to New York, having been elected to the same Chair in the newly founded University of that city. Six years later, at age 60, Revere died of typhoid fever. The Revere family name became further entrenched in Jefferson history when his grandniece, Grace Linzee Revere, married the younger Gross, Samuel W. The latter was attended by William Osler at death in 1889. The “Widow Gross” married Osler in 1892, and the couple named their son (Edward) Revere.

Samuel Colhoun (Figure 1-23) in 1831 took the Chair of Materia Medica, necessitated by the departure of Eberle for Cincinnati. A native of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, he became well founded in Latin and Greek in his local Academy. He graduated from Princeton in 1804 and from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1808. Despite his broad cultural background, excellent medical qualifications, handsome appearance, and courteous manners, he was not eminently successful in private practice. Dr. Colhoun contributed largely to the various periodicals of his day and was an avid reader of the medical literature. He looked on Dr. George McClellan as a medical idol and was pleased to accept the connection with Jefferson Medical College that lasted for nine years.

Unfortunately, Colhoun’s lectures were dull and
delivered in a monotonous tone. Furthermore, he dwelled more on theory than on its practical application. He was characteristically unable to condense his vast store of knowledge into usable conclusions, thus leaving his students uninspired and at times confused. Nevertheless his kindly manner endeared him to the students, his unquestioned capacity as a physician commanded respect, and he served as Dean from 1835 to 1839. He published an edition of notes with Prout's *Calculus* and another with Gregory's *Practice*, notes frequently more voluminous than the original text. Colhoun was a loyal ally of the McClellan brothers in the various internal struggles of the school and accompanied them in 1839 when they left to found another medical school. He remained unmarried throughout life and, following a brief illness, died in 1841 at the age of 54.

George McClellan in Surgery and Jacob Green in Chemistry represented the founders in the climb toward stability of the school. Samuel McClellan held the Chair of Midwifery, Diseases of Women and Children, and Medical Jurisprudence. An unhealthy situation existed internally in the faculty in that the six professors divided themselves into two camps on points of issue. The McClellan brothers, with Colhoun always on their side, were usually pitched against Pattison, Revere, and Green. In June, 1836, Dr. Robley Dunglison (Figure 1-24) was appointed to the Chair of Institutes of Medicine and Medical Jurisprudence, thus completing the faculty and providing an all-inclusive curriculum. This giant scholar was a connecting link between British and American medicine; he was the bridge between Thomas Jefferson, the namesake, and Jefferson, the Medical College; then he became a fulcrum that balanced the old with the new Jefferson Medical College. If McClellan was the George Washington, Dunglison was the Abraham Lincoln of Jefferson.

Before arrival at Jefferson, Dunglison had already achieved a remarkable series of innovative "firsts," as credited by Radbill. At the University of Virginia, Dunglison had limited his practice to consultation only, thus making him the first full-time Professor of Medicine in the United States. His annual salary was $1,500, with supplementary tuition fees and free rent in one of the University pavilions. A five-year covenant of $5,000 guaranteed the arrangement, an early example of academic tenure. Also, when at the University of Virginia, Dunglison was the first in the country to give a formal series of lectures on Medical History in the curriculum. His treatise on *Human Physiology* (1832) was the first of its kind in America. His medical dictionary in 1833 was the first book of this type in the United States; it went through 23 editions, earning for Dunglison the sobriquet "walking dictionary." When appointed Professor of Hygiene at the University of Maryland in 1833 he became in fact the first Professor of Preventive Medicine and Public Health in the nation, and the publishing of his systematic lectures created the first formal textbook of hygiene on this side of the Atlantic.

Dunglison was warned of the jealousy and pettiness he would encounter among six faculty members of much stature and repute. Undaunted, he was convinced that as a natural peacemaker and by direct intent he could remain nonpartisan in the quarrels. In pursuing an independent course, totally devoid of political innuendo or personal...
gain, neither clique could count on his support. He refused especially to take sides in the increasing tensions developing between George McClellan and the Board of Trustees.

At the time of his arrival, Dunglison was 38 years old, and he devoted the remaining 33 years of his life to Jefferson's welfare as, in Samuel D. Gross' words, "an illustrious man, a great scholar, a facile writer, a lucid erudite, and abundant author." Gross also wrote: "Of all the colleagues—nearly forty in number—with whom I have been associated, Robley Dunglison was by far the most learned." To confirm that Gross did not exaggerate Dunglison's virtues in a one-sided view, he also stated: "Dunglison was always brimful of his subject as he stood before his class, but he was monotonous, and did not sufficiently emphasize the great points of his discourse."

The classes had increased to such size that enlargement of the lecture room was necessary. Alternatives were a new, more spacious building or extension of the existing one. A mature deliberation of the Board of Trustees favored an enlargement and renovation of the current building. This apparently simple "growing pain" was to develop significant ramifications.

References

The Charter of 1838: Independence of Jefferson Medical College

The contemplated modifications and additions to the existing Medical Hall involved a considerable outlay of money that could no longer be advanced by the Reverend Ely, who was in serious financial difficulties in Missouri. The faculty likewise were without funds for the purpose. It devolved upon the Board of Trustees to acquire the title to the property then vested in Ezra Stiles Ely. Unfortunately, as legally constituted, the Trustees in Philadelphia were "Additional Trustees" of Jefferson College at Canonsburg and therefore a part of the parent Board. Whatever property they acquired would belong to the parent Board, which from the very beginning had absolved itself from any financial responsibility for its Medical Department. The only solution lay in a new charter that would separate Jefferson Medical College from its parent at Canonsburg.

In the spring of 1838 an application to the State Legislature received prompt and favorable action. The fifth section of the Legislative Act of April 7, 1826, permitted the right to amend or repeal one portion of the charter. The fifth section of an act passed June 13, 1836, related to the general system of education, facilitated the transaction even more smoothly. The new Section V was as follows: "That the Medical Department of Jefferson College be and hereby is, created a separate and independent body corporate, under the name, style, and title of 'The Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia,' with the same powers and restrictions as the University of Pennsylvania; the present additional Trustees . . . to be Trustees of the College created by this Section, with power to increase their number to fifteen."

At a last meeting of the Board of Additional Trustees on April 19, 1838, the new charter was accepted and the following resolution adopted before final adjournment:

"That the president be directed to communicate to the mother board at Canonsburg, that in accepting the charter which separates them from the Jefferson College at Canonsburg, the additional trustees are influenced by the conviction that such a separation is for the mutual benefit and convenience of both bodies, and desired it for no other reason, and that this board will retain a grateful sense of the kind and fostering care ever exhibited towards them by the parent institution, and will in their new capacity be always ready to acknowledge their past obligations, and to exchange in every way in their power, kind offices with Jefferson College at Canonsburg."

Fortunately, although the Trustees at Canonsburg were loath to sever relationship with
their flourishing Medical Department, they raised no serious objections. On the contrary, they sent the Trustees of the new College a “warm God-speed and a prayer for continued usefulness and prosperity.”

It must be reiterated at this juncture that the new independent Jefferson Medical College of 1838 was not the nonprofit corporation that we know today. It was a proprietary school, like most medical schools of the time. As a business venture the professors collected fees for their lectures, paid the rent, and kept the profit. The Rev. Dr. Ely’s benefaction of providing a building at rental to the professors was in itself a business venture on his part. Indeed, in 1831 two of the professors were conjointly delinquent for $403.35, and at the August 31 meeting of the Board, Dr. Ely threatened to forfeit the lease to the “Additional Trustees” and claimed “the right of renting the said College to any other agreeable to his own judgment.” It must also be understood that these were hard economic times; none of the professors became affluent; and most had trouble meeting their financial obligations.

The United States in 1838 was far from the mighty nation it is today. There were 26 states and two territories of Florida and Wisconsin. Most of the land beyond the Mississippi was a vast wilderness, and much of it belonged to Mexico. Texas was a republic with Samuel Houston as President. The population of the country was around 15,000,000, of which approximately one-sixth were slaves. There was no national debt, and income tax was practically unknown. Pennsylvania had only 120 miles of railroad in operation.

The University of Pennsylvania at this time was the most famous among the 28 medical schools of the country because of its age, location, and able faculty. Its building was at Ninth between Market and Chestnut Streets, and the student enrollment numbered 400, representing over one-seventh of the total number of medical students in the land. Philip Syng Physick (1768–1837), a pupil of John Hunter and “the Father of American Surgery,” had recently died as Emeritus Professor of Surgery and Anatomy. He was succeeded in 1839 by William Gibson, the first surgeon to tie the common iliac artery and who had performed two cesarean operations on the same patient with survival of the mother and both children.

Nathaniel Chapman, Professor of Physic and Clinical Medicine, was one of the greatest teachers in America and was destined to become the first President of the American Medical Association. George B. Wood taught Materia Medica and with Franklin Bache edited the U.S. Dispensatory. William E. Horner was the Professor of Anatomy as well as the founder of St. Joseph’s Hospital. Samuel Jackson, Professor of Institutes of Medicine, introduced the principles of Laennec and Louis from France to America. Hugh L. Hodge, whose forceps and pessaries were known internationally, was Professor of Midwifery. Robert Hare, inventor of the oxyhydrogen blowpipe, was the distinguished Professor of Chemistry.

In the national and local setting just described, the Board of Trustees under its new charter settled upon its first task, namely to increase its number to 15. Jesse R. Burden, Joseph B. Smith, John R. Jones, Colonel Samuel Miller, and John R. Vodges were elected. A few days later they arranged for the renovations of Medical Hall.

Thomas Ustick Walter was chosen as the architect. He was a native Philadelphian and pupil of William Strickland, who might have been the original architect. He had designed the Girard College buildings as well as the House and Senate wings and central dome of the national Capitol. His plan, which involved extensive interior and exterior remodeling, included two lecture rooms, each with seating capacity for 450 students. There were rooms for dissecting, for the museum, for the professors, and for the janitor. Improvements in natural lighting, ventilation, heat, and gas illumination were provided. No drawings of the exterior have remained, but the studies of Teitelman suggest a Greek Revival style with Ionic colonnades. On June 15, 1838, the building committee reported the final estimated cost at $7,500, but the Board approved only $5,000 as the maximal expenditure.

The Rev. Ely, although in Missouri, maintained his position and interest on the Board. He made an offer, which was agreeable with the Trustees, to execute a lease on Medical Hall for 20 years, granting the privilege of paying off the principal of the yearly rent at any time before expiration of
the lease. This lease was effective as of November 24, 1838, with annual rent increased to $1,770 and the property appraised at $29,500 before renovation. It represented a 6 percent return on the investment. Work commenced promptly and the building was ready for the 1838–1839 session. By unanimous vote the Board of Trustees elected all the professors to the chairs they previously held under the old arrangement. The condition of the College seemed optimal. There was a stable faculty of respected professors, the building was ample and updated; student enrollment was increasing; and professional and public confidence was widespread. However, the session of 1838 that started so auspiciously developed problems of major proportions.

References


Dissolution of the Faculty (1839): McClellan Dismissed

During the session of 1838–1839 serious dissensions arose within the faculty that cost Jefferson much of the prestige it had gained during the preceding six years. The old infighting over policy and fees had previously been kept under control by the faculty itself. For complex reasons, purely conjectural and poorly documented but certainly involving conflicts of personalities, all attempts at amicable resolution within the faculty failed. Whatever might be unknown about the inner history of this pivotal affair, it is certain that McClellan was the central figure. As the founder he had enjoyed unchallenged power and had come to regard the school as his own. A growing inclination to rebel against his authority by newer forces in the teaching corps was stubbornly repelled by the dictatorial Chairman of Surgery. His professional ability and fame, his magnetic personality, and his popularity with the students were tempered with certain characteristic faults. “Mac” was compulsive in action, easily provoked, often erratic, and obstinate. The 15 members of the Board of Trustees of the newly independent Medical School became more directly involved in its interests and more disposed to exercise authority than in the former years when they were merely “Additional Trustees.” In the increasing tensions for administrative domination by the founder versus that of the Board, McClellan, in uncontrolled frustration, publically proclaimed the Board a “parcel of politicians” and “a blackguard Board of Trustees.” He asserted further that the institution was “rotten and going to the dogs” and “with the rascally Board, Jefferson must go down.”

On April 2, 1839, Dr. Robley Dunglison wrote a “Letter of Appeal to the Faculty” and on the same date the Dean, Dr. John Revere, presented this communication to the Board of Trustees for consideration. The far-reaching consequences of the issue justify a quotation of the salient portions:

“I would call attention to the fact that not among the students but throughout the city, and members of the faculty were grieved to be told by some of the latter, that they had authority for stating that the Institution was “going to the Dogs,” and that for certain reasons it must do so. It is far from the object as it is from the province of the undersigned to lay charges against anyone of his colleagues of desiring to injure an institution to which he is attached. . . . It is the report, that these sinister statements rest on the authority of a member or members of the Faculty, which is detested and which is calculated to exert as baneful an influence on the Institution as if it were founded in truth.

The acts of the Board have met with the most unqualified approbation of the undersigned, and it is not less gratifying to himself than it is just to that body, to attest the devotion and disinterestedness which they appear to him to have exhibited in the cause of the College. . . . The power of managing the affairs of the institution is vested in the hands of the Trustees, and all experience shows that they will not be driven from its exercise by a hostile movement on the part of the Faculty. It is scarcely to be expected, that, in directing the complicated machinery of an extensive institution, the Board of Trustees can always act in such a manner as to give entire satisfaction, but where this is not the result, it is with the Faculty respectfully to represent the matter to the Board and not to allow their objections to become public; still less the impression to go abroad that the acts

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of the Board are objected to by the Professors, and likely to interfere with the prosperity of the school.

In like manner it is scarcely to be expected that entire harmony of sentiment can exist amongst all the members of a Faculty accidentally brought together, owing to their possessing certain intellectual requisites. Yet harmony of action is essential as it is practicable, and this is all that can be meant, when the importance of harmony amongst the members of an institution is spoken of. . . . The undersigned has always thought, that under an energetic Faculty actuated by ordinary prudence and judgment, there is ample space in the city of Philadelphia, for two noble Institutions, and he sees no reason whatever to modify that opinion."

The Board referred the issue to a committee of three of its members "to inquire into the existing state and condition of the medical faculty of the College, and to report to this Board whether any and what measures are required to be adopted in reference thereto; and that said committee have power to call the Professors and such other persons before them as will enable them to accomplish the duties assigned to them and require the production by the Faculty of all its books, papers, and archives."

The committee composed of the Reverend C. C. Cuyler, D.D., J.B. Smith, Esq., and the Hon. John R. Jones recommended on May 2, 1839, that the faculty be dissolved, and this was accepted on June 10. All the faculty wrote letters requesting reappointment except the two McClellans, but the Board ignored their implied protest. Indeed, Samuel McClellan was reelected to the Chair of Midwifery. It took until July 10 to reconstitute the entire faculty. Colhoun was voted out and replaced by Dr. Robert M. Huston in Materia Medica. Two new candidates applied to the Board for the Chair of Surgery. One was Dr. Thomas Tickell Hewson (1773–1848), son of a celebrated London anatomist. He had conducted a private anatomical room and was currently president of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. The other was Dr. Joseph Pancoast (1805–1882), who had reopened the Philadelphia Anatomical Rooms in 1831 and was a widely respected surgeon in the city. Hewson at age 66 did get one vote. Pancoast at 34 fared better and won over George McClellan with a vote of seven to five.

Colhoun was shocked, George McClellan was mortified, and Samuel McClellan resigned. Dr. Robert Huston was transferred to Midwifery, and Dunglison took the duties of Materia Medica in addition to that of the Institutes. Pattison remained in Anatomy, Green in Chemistry, and Revere in Theory and Practice.

"Every institution," Ralph Waldo Emerson has said, "was once the act of a single man." Alas for McClellan; the institution dismissed him. It would be unfair to lose interest in the further career of the founder who had done so much for Jefferson. This irrepressible man immediately used the same strategy to found another school. By going to them in person he again obtained a Charter from the State Legislature for an institution called "The Medical Department of Pennsylvania College" at Gettysburg. McClellan, with brother Samuel, Dr. Colhoun, and three other associates, assembled a good faculty and commenced the first course of lectures with nearly 100 pupils in November, 1839. A quarrel arose in 1843 and McClellan reluctantly had to resign this final professorship. Nevertheless, his second school survived for almost two decades, and many in Philadelphia rated it the best of the three schools. Closed by attrition during the Civil War, it remains associated with Jefferson's history because the three schools were involved in a nationwide effort for the reform of medical education that got under way in 1839 and culminated in the organization of the American Medical Association in 1847.

Retired from lecturing, McClellan spent the rest of his life in practice. He treated all classes of people, but his kindness to the poor spread his name as a household word. He developed a facial neuralgia that gradually involved his lower extremities. Death struck suddenly on May 8, 1847, when he was 51. On that morning he had performed two operations. By noon he was forced home by acute abdominal pain. 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, Section L, Lot 46 (Figure 1-25). The prominent granite tombstone that also bears his wife's name shows little sign of wear.
The strife in the faculty with its associated changes was reflected in the class of 1839-1840, in which the number of graduates fell to 56. This was 40 percent below the previous class and 60 percent below that of 1836. On February 1, 1841, Dr. Jacob Green, the beloved Professor of Chemistry, died suddenly. “Old Jaky” was only 51 years of age, but he represented the last of the original faculty. On returning from Dr. Green’s funeral, Revere (also serving as dean at the time) and Pattison told Dunglison they were resigning to join a new Medical Department of New York University. In one swoop the Jefferson Faculty was again cut in half, but the see-saw of ups and downs was miraculously to raise Jefferson to new and previously unsurpassed heights.

References