

The Story of the
Department of Pathology



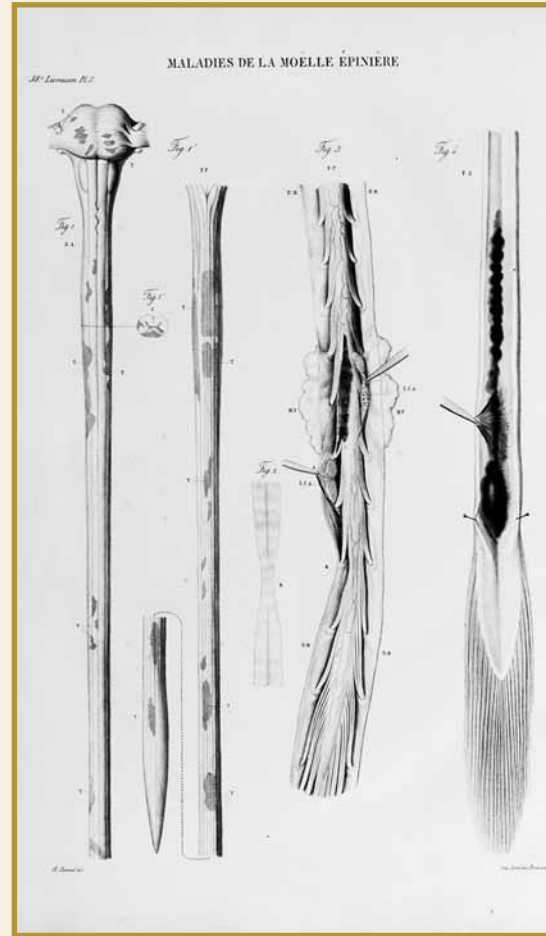
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JEAN FRANÇOIS FERNEL (1497-1558), court physician to King Henri II of France, created the modern science of pathology and coined the term in his 1554 treatise *Pathologia*, published as part two of his three-part *Medicina*. The next major innovations were surgical pathology by Italian surgeon Marco Aurelio Severino (1580-1656) and pathological anatomy by Swiss physician Théophile Bonet (1620-1689). But the real progenitor of pathological anatomy was University of Padua Professor of Anatomy Giovanni Battista Morgagni (1682-1771), the first to correlate specific lesions with specific diseases.

Matthew Baillie (1761-1823), Scottish-born physician to King George III of England, produced several important texts on morbid anatomy and the first good pathological atlas. When Geneva Medical College (GMC) began teaching pathology, the state of the art was the magnificent two-volume atlas, *Anatomie pathologique du corps humain*, issued gradually in forty fascicles from 1829 to 1842 by University of Paris Professor of Pathological Anatomy Jean Cruveilhier (1791-1874). The Health Sciences Library still owns the copy of this atlas that was in the GMC Library. (Shown on page 9.)

PATHOLOGY TEACHERS

Not offered by GMC during its first six years, pathology was originally taught there from 1840 to 1843 by John Delamater (1787-1867), who concurrently taught materia medica. Delamater was one of Geneva's best teachers. He never received a formal MD degree, but, not unusual for his time, served a



These drawings of the spinal cord in Jean Cruveilhier's *Anatomie pathologique du corps humain* illustrate the earliest description of multiple sclerosis. Cruveilhier performed the dissection of a 54-year-old woman who died of uterine cancer in 1838, but did not name the disease. Friedrich Theodor Frerichs called it "Hirnsklerose" ("brain sclerosis") in 1849 and Jean-Martin Charcot called it "sclérose en plaques" ("plated sclerosis") in 1868. It was not commonly called multiple sclerosis until the 20th century.

medical apprenticeship under his uncle, Russell Dorr, and was licensed to practice in Otsego County at the age of 19.

Delamater was succeeded by Thomas Rush Spencer (1818-1872), professor of materia medica and general pathology from 1842 to 1845 and again from 1853 to 1854. In between was Charles Alfred Lee (1801-1872), professor of materia medica and general pathology from 1844 to 1853 and Dean of GMC from 1847 to 1853.

In 1827 Lee established private practice in New York City. He accepted GMC's offer of a teaching position mainly because he thought that the Central New York air would be good for his health. He wrote many scientific articles, revised and enlarged William Augustus Guy's *Principles of Forensic Medicine*, edited the American version of James Copland's

Dictionary of Practical Medicine, and co-founded the *New York Journal of Medicine and the Collateral Sciences* with Samuel Forry.

Caleb Green (1819-1893) succeeded Lee as professor of materia medica and general pathology from 1855 to 1862. The son of a farmer in Lafayette, New York, Green attended Cortland Academy, then studied medicine under Frank Hastings Hamilton (1813-1886) in the early 1840s. When GMC granted him the MD in 1844, he immediately established a private practice in Homer, New York, that he kept his whole life. In 1846 he began lecturing on physiology and anatomy at Cortland Academy, where among his students was Stephen Smith (1823-1922), future founder of the American Public Health Association. Green became well known and declined professorships offered by other medical schools, preferring instead to remain at his practice in Homer. In the 1850s he served as president of the Cortland County Medical Society.

MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE

Oddly enough, pathology at GMC was not tied to medical jurisprudence, which included what we now call forensic pathology. None of the five GMC professors who taught medical jurisprudence ever taught pathology there. GMC separated pathology from materia medica when Green retired from teaching in 1862 and aligned it instead with physiology.

Nelson Nivison (1816-1893) was professor of physiology and pathology at GMC from 1862 until it closed in 1871, then professor of physiology, pathology, and hygiene at the Syracuse University College of Medicine from 1872 to 1886. The students and faculty both became upset in 1884 because Nivison had pawned most of his pathology teaching duties off on young unpaid instructors while he continued to draw full salary. An ad hoc faculty committee studied the situation and voted to cut his pay in half. He thereupon quit teaching pathology, but taught physiology until 1887, then retired.

A. Clifford Mercer (1855-1928), MD 1878, was the first to teach only pathology at Syracuse University. After a two-year residency at St. Thomas' Hospital, London, he began his teaching career in 1880 as instructor in histology and was promoted to lecturer on microscopy and histology in 1882,



William Henry May (1864-1907), MD 1890



Halbert Severin Steensland (1872-1924), MD



Herman Gates Weiskotten (1884-1972), MD '09

lecturer on pathological histology in 1884, and professor of pathology in 1886. Mercer resigned from his chair of pathology in 1893 to become professor of clinical pediatrics.

SYRACUSE CITY BACTERIOLOGIST

Merger's successor, William Henry May (1864-1907), MD 1890, was primarily a bacteriologist. After a one-year residency at New York Polyclinic, he practiced medicine in Syracuse, serving as pathologist to all three major hospitals: Good Shepherd (now University Hospital), St. Joseph's, and Women's and Children's (now Crouse). From 1895 until his untimely death he was Syracuse City Bacteriologist. At the College of Medicine he was lecturer on anatomy and bacteriology from 1892 to 1893 and lecturer on pathology and bacteriology from 1893 until 1900, when he resigned in order to devote full time to his practice.

FIRST FULL-TIME PROFESSOR

Halbert Severin Steensland (1872-1924) received his MD at Johns Hopkins in 1899, did his residency in pathology at Boston City Hospital, then came to Syracuse in 1900 as lecturer on pathology and bacteriology and director of the pathological laboratory. This was the first full-time staffing in pathology at the College of Medicine. He was promoted to associate professor in 1906 and professor in 1908. After bacteriology became its own department in 1913, Steensland taught only pathology.



John Delamater (1787-1867), MD



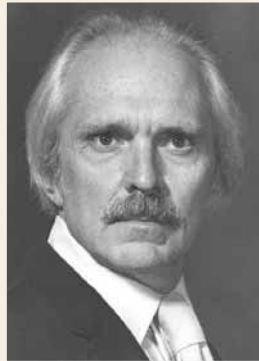
Nelson Nivison (1816-1893), MD



A. Clifford Mercer (1855-1928), MD 1878



John Bernard Henry, MD



Rolla Bennett Hill, Jr.
(1929-1996), MD



Bernard ("Jerry") Gordon, MD



Frederick R. Davey, MD '64

HERMAN W EISKOTTEN

he person who deserves the most credit for bringing the Syracuse University College of Medicine into the modern era of scientific patient care and rigorous medical education was pathologist, and Steensland protégé, Herman Gates Weiskotten (1884-1972), MD '09, who served as dean of the medical school from 1922 to 1950 at Syracuse University and then one more year at the new SUNY Upstate Medical Center. Weiskotten was professor of pathology from 1916 to 1951 and chair of the department from 1924 to 1942.

In addition to his local achievements, Weiskotten also raised national standards of medical education through his involvement with the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC), the American Medical Association (AMA), and several other organizations. From 1934 to 1940 he chaired a commission of the AMA Council on Medical Education and Hospitals to write a follow-up to the 1910 "Flexner Report." In 1940 his team published *Medical Education in the United States, 1934-1939*, known as the "Weiskotten Report," which showed that only 66 of the 79 American medical schools had full four-year programs and that about 20 of the 89 American and Canadian medical schools were below AMA standards. Measures were quickly instituted to rectify those situations.

J. Howard Ferguson (1902-1978), MD '26, spent his whole career in pathology at the College of Medicine. He began as a fellow in 1927 and rose to become chair, remaining in that position until 1969. He also succeeded Weiskotten in 1927 as Onondaga County

necrotomist, serving until 1950.

MEDICAL PHOTOGRAPHY

erguson's labor of love was to compile a six-volume loose-leaf illustrated biographical history of the Syracuse University College of Medicine and SUNY Upstate Medical Center. In preparing it, he drew heavily upon the Medical Photography Unit, which he himself had founded in 1928 with \$500 of his own money. His chronicle was expanded by many hands after his death and is among the most frequently consulted resources in the Special Collections Vault of the Health Sciences Library.

CLINICAL PATHOLOGY

efore Ferguson, the status of clinical pathology was irregular. As "medical chemistry," it was administered by the Department of Chemistry until 1900, then it came into the Department of Pathology as "clinical microscopy," but in 1905 it went to the Department of Medicine as "clinical chemistry and microscopy." From 1915 to 1945 it had its own departmental standing, first as "laboratory diagnosis," then after 1919 as "clinical pathology." In 1945 it was back in the Department of Medicine as "laboratory diagnosis," but in 1964 Ferguson installed it permanently in the Department of Pathology with John Bernard Henry as professor of pathology and chief of the clinical pathology division.

Henry received his MD in 1955 from the University of Rochester, then studied and taught pathology at Washington University in St. Louis, Columbia University, the National Cancer Institute, Harvard Medical School, and the University of Florida

before coming to Upstate in 1964. He was dean of the College of Health Related Professions from 1971 to 1977, dean of the Georgetown University School of Medicine from 1979 to 1984, and Upstate's fourth president from 1985 to 1992. His research includes enzymology, hematology, and transplantation immunohematology. He is best known as the editor of the standard textbook, *Clinical Diagnosis and Management by Laboratory Methods*.

Ferguson's successor as department chair from 1969 to 1986 was Henry's medical classmate at the University of Rochester, Rolla Bennett Hill, Jr. (1929-1996). Before coming to Upstate as professor and chair in 1969, Hill served as captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps and was a pathologist at Yale University, the University of Colorado, and the University of California at Davis. He collaborated with Robert E. Anderson on several influential publications, including *The Autopsy: Medical Practice and Public Policy* (1988), which aimed to quantify verifications at autopsy of underreporting and misdiagnosis of various diseases. He also co-wrote *The Gastrointestinal Tract* with Fred Kern in 1977, co-edited *Principles of Pathobiology* with Mariano LaVia in 1980 and co-edited *Environmental Pathology: "An Evolving Field"* with James A. Terzian, MD '75, in 1982. Hill won the 1986 Distinguished Service Award of the Association of Pathology Chairs.

The interim chair from 1986 to 1988 was the Director of Anatomic Pathology Gerald Bernard ("Jerry") Gordon, who earned his MD at Yale University in 1959. After interning at Cleveland University Hospital, he was a pathology resident at Yale - New Haven Medical Center, then held a USPHS fellowship at Yale. From 1964 to 1966 he served as captain in the Army Medical Corps at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Washington, D.C. Before coming to Upstate in 1970, he taught pathology at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. His main research interest is the ultrastructural pathology of cell injury.

HEMATOPATHOLOGY

rederick R. Davey, MD '64, did his internship in medicine at Upstate and his residency in pathology at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, Boston. He was also a research fellow in pathology at Harvard Medical School from 1967 to 1971 and a fellow in

hematology at Brigham from 1968 to 1969. He served as major in the Army Medical Corps from 1969 to 1971, then returned to Upstate as assistant professor of pathology. He became associate professor in 1974, professor in 1979, and chair in 1988. He enjoys an international reputation for research in immunohematology and hematopathology.

Gregory Allen Threatte, MD '73, interim chair since Davey's retirement in January 2001, became permanent chair in December 2003. After interning at Upstate, he did two residencies, one in anatomical pathology at Western Pennsylvania Hospital in Pittsburgh, the other in clinical pathology at the University of California at San Francisco. From 1978 to 1981 he was a fellow in hematology at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratories and from 1981 to 1986 an assistant professor of pathology at Georgetown University. He joined the Upstate faculty in 1986 as associate professor of pathology and deputy to the president for minority affairs and was promoted to professor in 1998. Threatte is involved in many community activities and is a member of the board of trustees of his alma mater, Colgate University. He is listed in *Who's Who in America*.

AWARD WINNERS

Upstate pathologists have garnered a commendable number of President's and Chancellor's Awards since the program was instituted in 1988. Winners of the President's Award for Excellence in Teaching are Gordon in 1992, Betty Ann Forbes in 1994, George H. Collins in 1995, Steve K. Landas in 1996, Henry in 1997, Threatte in 1998, Jonathan L. Miller in 1999, and Robert E. Hutchison in 2000. Landas added the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1998. Robert F. Rohner, MD '52, won the President's Award for Voluntary Faculty Service in 1988, followed by Paul A. Granato in 1992, David B. Jones, MD '45, in 1994, Michael R. O'Leary, MD '78, in 1995, and Anna-Luise Katzenstein in 1996. Davey won the 2000 President's Award for Excellence in Faculty Service. Anthony S. Kurec won both the 1997 President's and 1998 Chancellor's Awards for Excellence in Professional Service. Threatte won the 1992 President's Award for Advancement

