

# Manuscript Collections: The Jeannette Dean-Throckmorton Papers

Michael J. Schroeder

A COLLECTION OF PAPERS CONCERNING IOWA PHYSICIANS, medical institutions, and societies was recently donated to the Iowa State Historical Department, Division of Historical Museum and Archives in Des Moines. The collection fills nearly two file cabinets in the Historical Library. The papers of Dr. Jeannette Dean-Throckmorton occupy two file drawers and offer a unique look at the career of a woman physician in a period when women were rare in the medical profession.

Numerous papers of biographical significance are included in the Throckmorton collection. One folder contains a 1932 appraisal of her personal health and that of her immediate family. In addition, there is a biographical sketch of Thomas Lazear, esq., a relative of Throckmorton's paternal grandmother; correspondence between Throckmorton and various physicians who cared for her at different points in her life, and the obituaries at her death in 1963.

Jeannette Throckmorton was born in Derby, Iowa, on January 26, 1883, the third of seven children of Dr. Thomas and Mary Bently Throckmorton. She followed in her father's footsteps, as did two of her brothers, and attained a medical degree. She graduated from Simpson College in 1904 with a Ph.D. degree. She received her medical degree from Keokuk Medical College in 1907, and furthered her medical pursuits at the University of Nebraska, Omaha from 1907 to 1910. She spent twelve years as a general practitioner, seven of them with the U.S. Public Health Department. During this time she was also state

lecturer for women and girls under an Iowa State Board of Health Program. In 1920 she was sent overseas to read a paper before the Royal Institute of Public Health in Brussels, Belgium.

On March 1, 1928 Jeannette married Dr. Charles M. Dean. Her husband died of an illness ten days after the marriage, and Throckmorton never remarried. After her husband's death, Throckmorton became medical librarian of the State Medical Library in Des Moines, and served in that capacity until her death in 1963.

In addition to her work with the Iowa State Board of Health and the State Medical Library, Throckmorton was an active member of the American College of Physicians, the American Medical Association, the Derby Methodist Church, Chapter N of P.E.O. of the Eastern Star, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and various Iowa medical societies.

Her avocations provided Throckmorton with relief from the pressures of professional responsibilities and gave vent to her creative energies as well. In college she liked to read literature, especially the Bible, and to play the violin. She collected stamps, china dolls, bookplates, and the non-medical writings of medical men. She displayed remarkable talent in quilt-making—some of her designs won prizes at the Iowa State Fair.

Personal correspondence, both family and business writings, make up a significant portion of the Throckmorton collection repositied in the Historical Library. Present are letters and articles from Dr. Merrill Moore, a Harvard Medical instructor and friend of Throckmorton's, the Keokuk Medical College Alumni Association, the American Women's Medi-



*Jeannette Dean-Throckmorton*

cal Association, the Simpson College Alumni Association, the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, and the Polk County Medical Society. The collection also includes correspondence from Johnson Brigham, the state librarian, and Governor John Hammill.

The Throckmorton papers contain numerous published and unpublished works by the physician-scholar. Many of these articles were presented by Dr. Throckmorton to the Medical Women's Study Club while she was a state lecturer for the Iowa State Board of Health. Among them are: "Austin Flint and the Presystolic (Flint) Murmur," "Highlights in the History of Medicine," "Early American Medical Journals Available in the Iowa State Medical Library (1940)," "Obstetrics in the Bible," "Mythology as Shown in Medical Words," "The Educational Phase of Public Health," "History of the Iowa State Medical Library," "The Adams-Stokes Syndrome," "A Brief History of the State Society of Iowa Medical Women," "Maude Elizabeth Seymour Abbott," "Sir Dominic John Corrigan," and "Sir James Mackenzie."

Throckmorton's many hobbies are also well represented in the collection. Clippings from the *American Medical Association News*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and the *Des Moines Tribune* pay tribute to her quilting expertise. The latter publication refers to some of her work on exhibit at the Chicago Art Institute. Three loose leaf notebooks listing and assessing the library holdings of non-medical writings of medical men, completed as a hobby by Throckmorton, and a pamphlet from the 1946 American Physicians Art exhibit, which she attended, are also present in the collection.

Of greatest volume in the collection is the information on her hobby of collecting bookplates. Two huge folders of bookplate correspondence and eleven loose leaf notebooks of collected bookplates grace the Throckmorton collection. Papers written by Throckmorton concerning the hobby include: "Medical Bookplates," "Why Collect Bookplates?," "Bookplate Inscriptions," "Bookplates of Physicians," "American Bookplates," and Throckmorton's notes on Edgerton Castle's *English Bookplates* (London, 1892).

Of special interest is a folder of programs and newspaper

clippings of the Inter-State Post-Graduate Assembly of American Doctors' excursion to England and Ireland in 1925. Throckmorton accompanied the group to the British Isles for seminars on medicine. Another folder contains letters requesting information of various births which the doctor attended while a practicing physician. Also present are pictures of the Iowa Medical Association Committee, of which she was a member. The committee authored *One Hundred Years of Iowa Medicine*.

The Jeannette Dean-Throckmorton collection, although limited, is a good source for researchers into the development of medicine in the Midwest. It would merit examination by writers on feminism and on the place occupied by professional women in American society during the first fifty years of the twentieth century. Among the possible uses of the collection are as a source for a biography of Throckmorton; a study of early American medical practices based on her scholarly papers; and an investigation of the art of collecting bookplates.

The Iowa Historical Library in Des Moines has, in addition to the Throckmorton collection, a substantial amount of information on Iowa medical practices, institutions, and individuals. The library collection includes writings from the American Medical Association, information from the Keokuk Medical College, an index to information on Iowa women physicians, papers and programs from the Iowa State Medical Society, and the papers of Walter E. Bierring, an Iowa physician who studied at the University of Vienna under Louis Pasteur in 1893, was president of the American Medical Association, and was long-time head of the Iowa Department of Public Health. Any or all would represent valuable resources to the scholar of Iowa medicine.

*For more information on the Throckmorton collection or any of the other collections mentioned above, contact Phyllis McLaughlin, Manuscript Librarian, Division of Historical Museum and Archives, E. 12 and Grand, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.*

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.