

## Doctors, Drugs, Dentists

Despite the claim that Iowa was one of the healthiest states in the Union, the medical profession was well represented in Iowa. Most of these doctors were well compensated for their services. Some, however, found it difficult to make a living, and at least one Shell Rock physician committed suicide by taking morphine rather than face another hard year in 1858. At any rate, this twenty-four-year-old doctor is said to have departed this world because of "pecuniary embarrassment," a cause that was not entirely without precedent on the American frontier any more than it was on the more thinly settled Iowa agricultural frontier a century ago.

Ten county medical societies had been established before 1858, and the Keokuk County Medical Association was organized that year. The Iowa State Medical Society, which had been founded in 1850, held its ninth annual meeting in Mount Pleasant on June 9, 10, 1858. Because of incessant rains and swollen streams a scant score were present when President Thomas Siveter of Salem called the meeting to order. Dr. D. L. McGugin of Keokuk gave the evening address in the Universalist Church, describing medicine as an

“inspired science” and severely castigating all quacks. Governor Ralph P. Lowe was the honored guest at a “sumptuous repast at the Brazelton House.”

CONSTITUTION,  
 BY-LAWS  
 AND  
 CODE OF ETHICS  
 OF THE  
*Iowa State Medical Society,*  
 TOGETHER WITH THE  
 TRANSACTIONS  
 OF THE  
 EIGHTH AND NINTH ANNUAL MEETINGS,  
 HELD AT  
 IOWA CITY AND MOUNT PLEASANT,  
 1857—1858.

---

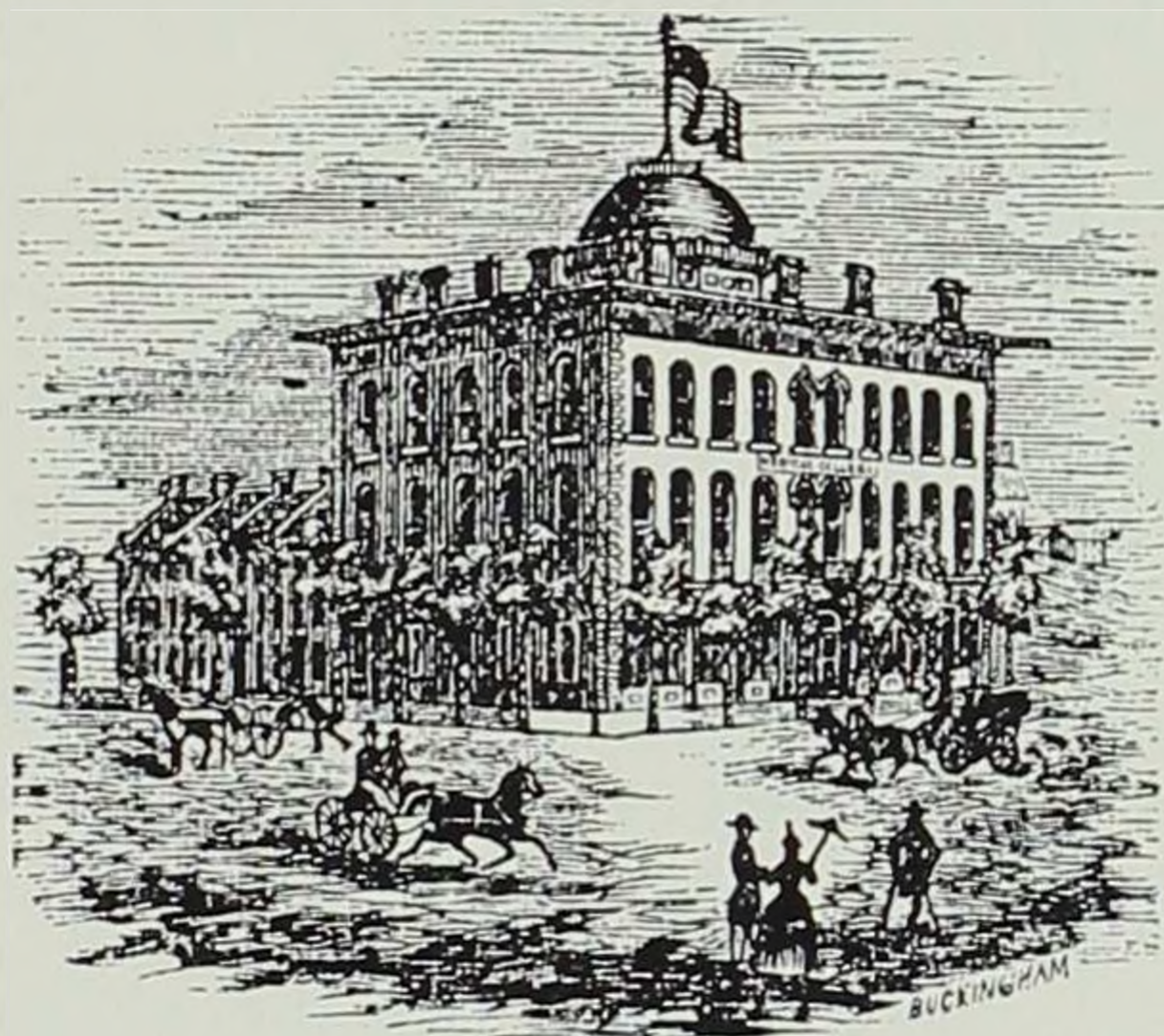
DAVENPORT:  
 PUBLISHING HOUSE OF LUSE, LANE & CO.  
 1858.

During the summer of 1850 the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Upper Mississippi had been moved from Davenport to Keokuk, where it became the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Keokuk, the Medical Department of the State University of Iowa. In October, 1858, a new medical building, constructed through a loan of \$15,000 from state funds, was dedicated. It was located at Seventh and Blondeau streets.

Between 1840 and 1860 fully fifty medical schools were established in the United States, mostly in such states as Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa. The Iowa State Medical Society had been established “for the purpose of harmonizing the profession of medicine, and of promoting its usefulness and respectability.” Better

trained doctors and improved medical schools were two objectives of the state society.

## COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS.



### Located in the city of KEOKUK, IOWA.

The annual sessions of this Institution is open about the last of October or first of November in each year, and continues in session four months. Six Lectures daily. The cost to the student is less than at any other regular Institution in the country.

### HUGHES' MEDICAL AND SURGICAL INFIRMARY AND EYE AND EAR INSTITUTE.

This INSTITUTION is open AT ALL SEASONS for the reception of Patients—a competent Steward and Matron in charge. Boarding, Lodging and Ordinary Attendance, \$6.00 to \$8.00 per week. Reasonable charges for Medical Attention or Surgical Operations.

A study of newspaper advertisements in 1858 reveals a tremendous competition between doctors, skilled and unskilled, legitimate and quack. Many of these early doctors placed more than a simple business card in their newspaper advertisements. Thus, Dr. George W. Scott, a graduate of the Physio Medical College of Ohio, informed readers of the *Dubuque Express and Herald* on Jan-

uary 1, 1858, that he was "opposed to the use of Calomel, Opium, Antomny, Blistering and kindred agencies." He offered his service as "physician, surgeon, and Accoucheur" in his office and residence at 6th and Iowa streets where he had "Pure Botanic medicines" for sale.

Doctor J. C. Lay, who practiced medicine and surgery in Dubuque, had been a student of Dr. Valentine Mott, a graduate of the University Medical College in New York, and subsequently a "Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons, London, England." Before coming to Dubuque, Dr. Lay had practiced two years in Buffalo, New York.

Another Dubuque physician, Dr. Baker, boasted he was a "Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of London and a Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries." Such impressive cards, when supported by the names of as many as a dozen prominent citizens who were still living after the doctors had "practiced" on them, no doubt attracted many ailing patients to a doctor's office.

In addition to being called upon for the usual ailments common to man — coughs, colds, consumption, fever and ague, malaria, the prairie itch, and the diseases women and children fell heir to, frontier practitioners were confronted with a host of emergency ailments and operations.

Thus, late in the fall of 1858 several men entered a Webster City store to make some purchases. They were returning from Nebraska to

their homes in Fayette County. Suddenly one man clutched his breast, gasped, and fell to the floor dead. Physicians were called who pronounced him the victim of "rupture of the heart." The deceased man left a wife and five children. "God help and protect his stricken wife and helpless babes!" exclaimed the editor of the *Hamilton Freeman* fervently.

On the same day, October 1, 1858, this same editor chronicled another tragedy:

A few days since a family consisting of a husband, wife and two small children arrived here on their return from the western part of the state, to their old home near the Mississippi. For several days previous one of the children had been gradually declining, but they believed the journey would not prove injurious, and they were pushing along as rapidly as their circumstances would admit. But after arriving here, the child grew worse and in a few hours expired in their emigrant wagon, in the grove on the east side of the town. The family had been unfortunate, another child had died but a short time since, and no crops had rewarded their labors this season, and their means were well nigh exhausted. Their experiences of the west have indeed been of the most gloomy character.

During the summer of 1858 the *Maquoketa Excelsior* told the story of a twelve-year-old lad who was bitten by a rattlesnake while gathering blackberries. He felt the "shock" of the rattler's stroke through his entire body. Despite every effort of doctor and parents the lad died in "great pain." The *Excelsior* cautioned parents not to allow their



in contact with the saw while in motion, on Tuesday last, and had one arm severed from his body and was also severely cut in other portions of the body. His recovery is doubtful."

The Council Bluffs *Nonpareil* recorded the following "singular" threshing accident on January 9, 1858:

The Muscatine *Journal* says that a Mr. Curtis, residing near that city, was shockingly injured by the explosion of a cylinder of a threshing machine. His skull was fractured at the forehead, and his face horribly mutilated. Dr. John B. Coover, of this city, rendered all the surgical aid possible in the case, but the unfortunate man died on Sunday night. We learn that the accident was occasioned by running the machine too fast without feeding it. The cylinder burst into a thousand atoms.

Considering their lack of experience, the operating instruments available, and their ignorance of antiseptics, doctors sometimes effected near miracles. On June 12, 1858, the *Sioux City Eagle* declared:

Drs. Hunt and Saville, of this, removed the right leg of a girl aged about thirteen years, living near St. Johns, Nebraska, a few days since. The limb had been diseased for many months with White Swelling, and threatened to cause death. The limb was taken off about three inches above the knee, and the patient is now convalescing.

Doctors themselves sometimes fell ill, as the following from the Council Bluffs *Nonpareil* of January 9, 1858, readily attests:

Dr. W. C. Grimes, has removed his office from Upper

Broadway, to Second door west of the Post office, upstairs. The Dr. has been ill for some time past, but is now again "upon his pegs," and prepared to attend to professional calls.

### DRUGGISTS

Doctors could probably blame the good health of pioneer Iowans on the amazing patent medicines advertised in newspapers. Some of these medicines claimed to cure all human ailments. Thus, *Ayer's Cathartic Pills* were good for costiveness, Dyspepsia, Sour Stomach, Nervousness, Sick Head Aches, Nausea, Rheumatism, Gout, Inflammatory Fevers, Scrofula, Erysipelas, Liver Complaint, Jaundice, and Bilious Affections. As a "dinner pill" these wonder drugs were "both agreeable and useful" in purifying the blood.

*Ayer's Cherry Pectoral* advertised itself as good for the rapid cure of coughs, colds, hoarseness, bronchitis, whooping cough, croup, asthma, and incipient consumption. The same firm's *Compound Extract of Sarsaparilla* was the most effective remedy for Scrofula, or King's Evil and in addition cured such diseases as "Eruptive and Skin Diseases, St. Anthony's Fire, Rose, or Erysipelas, Pimples, Postules, Blotches, Blains and Boils, Tumors, Tetter and Salt Rheum, Scald Head, Ringworm, Rheumatism, Syphilitic and Mercurial diseases, Dropsy, Dyspepsia, Debility, and, indeed, All Complaints Arising From Vitiated or Impure Blood."



If Ayer's pills did not effect a cure, *Herrick's Sugar Coated Pills* and *Kid Strengthening Plasters* were sure to "Let the Sick Rejoice." *Doctor Morse's Indian Root Pills* were equally miraculous as was *Osgood's India Cholagogue*, *Hos-tetter's Bitters*, or *Dr. Foord's Pectoral Syrup*, and *Sanford's Liver Invigorator*.

DUBUQUE ADVERTISEMENTS.

201

**JOHN P. QUIGLEY,**

Wholesale &amp; Retail Dealer in

DRUGS AND



MEDICINES.

Paints, Oils, Glass, Dye Stuffs, &amp;c.

56 MAIN STREET, DUBUQUE, IOWA.



**G**LENN has on hand the largest and best selected stock of Drugs, Medicines, Paint, Oil, &c., ever brought west of the Mississippi river, and knows how to put them up *just right*, and *no mistake*. He is receiving a large stock of sugar, molasses, coffee, soda, tobacco, cigars, &c.; and in fact everything usually kept in a first class Drug Store. Also, a fine assortment of Jewelry, which he is selling **AT COST.**      **July 24, 1858—10**

Some of these patent medicines were strongly recommended by medics. Dr. A. G. Doom of Bloomfield, in speaking of Dr. Hall's *Balsam for the Lungs*, declared in the *Democratic Clarion* of December 29th:

I have been practising medicine upward of twenty years in Iowa, and the climate is very productive of coughs, colds, and bronchial affections of the lungs, in connection with bilious derangement. I have sought for a remedy, but have often failed in my investigations. Now, by prescribing Dr. Hall's Balsam, I can exclaim Eureka (I have found it). I unhesitatingly say it is the best medicine ever introduced.

For sale by Sloan & Gibbons, J. B. Glenn, Bloomfield; I. J. Earhard, Troy; Drake & Sons, Drakeville.

Not all doctors were so complimentary of patent medicines. Thus, *Old Sands of Life*, one of the most widely advertised patent medicines, had been compounded by an unsuccessful newspaper man who subsequently built up a fortune approaching \$100,000 on "Old Sands." Dr. Hall, of the *Journal of Health*, analyzed the drug and was quoted as follows in the *Davenport Gazette* of May 21:

"Old Sands of life" charges two dollars, when made from the very purest and most expensive materials used, costs exactly sixteen cents, bottle and all. And he further charges, as do many others, that it is a deleterious article at best. The following, from the *Gleaner*, is a very severe rap: "Messrs. Editors: — Permit me, through your columns, to bear testimony to a valuable medicine. My great aunt has been striving to reach heaven for twenty years. Having a cough, she finally fell into the hands of the 'retired clergyman,' whose 'sands of life have nearly run out.'

She purchased a bottle of the *Cannabis Indica*, from which she gained strength, judging from the violence of her cough. On taking the second bottle her strength so increased, that she was able to cough all day and night without interruption. The third bottle landed her in heaven. Thus in a brief space of time, the fond hopes and anticipations of more than a quarter of a century are realized for the sum of seven dollars, twelve and a half cents. To those persons who are desirous of changing worlds, changing husbands and wives, this medicine is confidently recommended."

## DENTISTS

The dental profession was well-represented, particularly in the larger Iowa towns. Dr. R. S. Barber and Dr. M. W. Hicks were listed in the Keokuk *Business Directory* for 1857. Dubuque listed the following six dentists in the 1858 *City Directory*: V. J. David, Charles J. Ford, C. Poor, J. P. Porter, Henry Smith, and T. A. Spottswood. In Davenport, Dr. R. D. Myers carried an advertisement noting his change of address from Forrest's Block to Third and Perry. Dr. Julius Chesebrough advertised himself as a "Dental Surgeon" who had been trained in "Mechanical and Operative" dentistry in all its branches. Few men carried a larger advertisement than that of Dr. James Morros in the Davenport *Daily Gazette* of May 27, 1858:

JAMES MORROS,  
SURGEON & MECHANICAL DENTIST — Offers his services as such to his friends and the public in general, believing that he can and will give entire satisfaction in all work done in the Dental line. He has been engaged in Dr. Goodrich's office for the last fifteen months, and believing



**JULIUS CHESEBROUGH,**



**Dental Surgeon!**

**DAVENPORT, IOWA.**

Office 83 Perry St., over the Davenport Gas Co.'s, in Merwin's Block.

DR. CHESEBROUGH will endeavor to maintain the reputation which he had at the East, for superior workmanship in the manufacture of the most approved styles of PORCELAIN TEETH. He invites the most critical examination.

Particular attention given to all DENTAL OPERATIONS, which are registered and warranted.

He would respectfully solicit favors from those needing such service, and takes pleasure in referring, by permission, to

Dr. Barrows,	Chas. Powers, Esq.,	Jos. Lambrite, Esq.,	D. S. True, Esq.
" Baker,	B. B. Woodward, "	A. F. Mast, "	Jno N. Rogers, Esq.
" Witherwax,	Rev. J. D. Mason,	H. Y. Slaymaker, "	W. A. Remington, "
A. W. Bailey, Esq.,	" D. T. Packard,	P. Merwin, "	G. W. Smith, "
A. H. Barrow, "	" G. F. Magoun,	Hon. J. M. Cannon,	W. H. F. Gurley, "
	Messrs. Cook & Sargent,	J. M. D. Burrows, Esq	

that he has sustained his former reputation as a Dentist, he asks for a portion of the patronage of his friends and the public. His acquirements in the knowledge of Dentistry, and arrangements in his office and laboratory are such that he is prepared to do any work in the Dental line. His mode of work is different from all others in this section of the country, being more cleanly and durable, and worn with more comfort and satisfaction to the wearer. He will put in artificial indentures from one to an entire set, and do all other work appertaining to Dentistry.

Office and residence connected, on Fourth street, second House West of Main, adjoining Dr. Fountain's residence. Any number of references given if required.

Further out on the frontier, in the less populous towns, dentists who could not find enough work in their home town apparently traveled to other smaller communities as did circuit riding preachers. On August 27, 1858, the *Webster City Hamilton Freeman* carried the following notice of a Des Moines dentist.

Some time during the month of August, I shall visit Webster City for the purpose of attending to my business in the line of my profession. Every kind of Dental Operations performed, and warranted to give satisfaction.

S. C. BROWNELL,

Des Moines, July 1, 1858.

Surgeon Dentist.

Sometimes complaints were raised over the exorbitant professional fees charged by dentists. The *Mitchell County Republican* contains the following item which may or may not have occurred in Iowa.

"Well, Doctor," said a chap, suffering with the tooth-

ache, "how much do you ax for the job? Guy! but you did it quick though!" "My terms," replied the dentist, "are one dollar." "A dollar for one minute's work! One dollar — thunder! Why, a doctor down t'our place drewed a tooth for me two years ago, and it took him two hours. He dragged me all around the room, and lost his grip half a dozen times. I never seed such hard work — and he charged me only twenty-five cents. A dollar for a minute's work! O, git out! you must be jokin!"

A number of notable deaths occurred during 1858. Nationally, one might record the departure of Dred Scott, who had squatted on Dr. John Emerson's claim in Scott County during the 1830's while his owner was stationed at Fort Armstrong. Dr. Isaac Galland, who pioneered in the Half-Breed Tract in Lee County, also died in 1858. Bishop Mathias Loras, the first Roman Catholic Bishop of the Territory of Iowa and a resident of Dubuque since his arrival in 1839, died from a "stroke of paralysis, with which he was struck down some months ago, and from the effects of which he never recovered." Dred Scott, Isaac Galland, and Mathias Loras, each in his own particular way, made unusual contributions to the history of Iowa.

Doctors, druggists, dentists, these professional men had assumed an ever-increasing role in Iowa by 1858. Doctors particularly were already becoming a more professional group and were gaining recognition beyond the borders of Iowa. The *Davenport Weekly Gazette* of February 25, 1858,

was proud to point out that Dr. J. H. Rauch of Burlington had become a visiting professor on the Rush Medical College staff in Chicago. And a Des Moines editor called the attention of readers of the *Iowa Weekly Citizen* to the fact that Dr. J. C. Hughes of the College of Physicians and Surgeons had for the third time operated successfully "for the removal of stone from the bladder" of a seventy-year-old patient. The distinguished professor of surgery of the Medical Department of the University of Iowa at Keokuk had removed "four calculi" in the third operation. Few cases were on record where patients this old had undergone three successful operations. Truly, Iowa was forging ahead in the professions.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN