

Medical Education Starts in California

This paper examines the beginnings of medical education in California and argues that the establishment of a medical school in California contributed to the growth of the state's political economy and allowed for further development of the state. After statehood in 1850, California developed necessary infrastructure, including providing healthcare to the California populace. While there were doctors in California in the 1850s, no institution existed for educating new doctors within the state. This changed in 1859 with the founding of California's first medical school, which was formed as the medical department of the University of the Pacific, one of the first two colleges in California and also a Methodist institution. The founders of the medical school noted that the state needed doctors who were locally trained in unique medical conditions resulting from California's climate and mining industry. Although the University of the Pacific was located in Santa Clara, the medical school was north in the state's population center of San Francisco, which was significant to the founders.

California medical education experienced its own changes as a second medical school, the Toland Medical College, was founded as a rival to the University of the Pacific's medical department. This school took away many of the professors from the first medical school, which closed for a few years until several professors returned to reestablish it. The medical department of the University of the Pacific eventually became part of Stanford University and the Toland Medical College became incorporated into the University of California as its first medical school. From these schools came the seeds of California's healthcare infrastructure as both the state's system of medical education and political economy developed.

Prior to the establishment of a medical school in California, doctors had been present in

the state, which by the 1860 census had a population of nearly 380,000.¹ Two years earlier in September 1858, a group of San Francisco doctors, led by R. Beverly Cole, approached the University of the Pacific board with a proposal to form a medical college under the supervision and control of that body. A further element of the proposal was that the board would have no financial obligations with regard to the medical school. The board's main duties would consist of appointing the members of the faculty and voting to confer the degrees of doctor of medicine upon the graduates. Hence, on September 22, 1858, the board elected professors to the state's first medical school in the medical department of the University of the Pacific.² The University of the Pacific now gained the benefit of spreading its name in San Francisco and among professionals in California, and the medical school gained the prestige of being associated with one of the first two colleges in California.

In addresses given to the medical students at the 1859 opening ceremony, various speakers explained the need for a medical school in California and justified its location in San Francisco. These points were articulated clearly by George Barstow, a lawyer and professor of medical jurisprudence in the school. He declared that medical students and doctors should take into account new scientific discoveries, something which he said "California demand[ed] in her

¹Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns or the Eighth Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 28, accessed February 24, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/populationofusin00kennrich#page/n3/mode/2up>.

²University of the Pacific Board of Trustees, *Volume II: Minutes of Board of Trustees 1854-1884*, 120, 124-125, UOP Archives History Trustees Minute Books, 1854-1902, Box 11.4.5.1, University of the Pacific Archives, Stockton, CA. These were the September 16 and September 22, 1858, board meetings.

medical men.”³ Barstow further argued that it was the right time for the state to have institutions where doctors could be trained, stressing that as a new state needing to build up its own structures, California had a demand for knowledge and skills.⁴ Beyond the necessity for doctors in California, he compellingly advocated for in-state medical education by pointing out the many benefits of focusing on and developing remedies accounting for what he termed the “peculiarities of [the] climate [and] the new and peculiar forms of disease” found there.⁵ He further stressed that California was no ordinary new state but one in which a mature civilization was transplanted to the Pacific Coast and thus should have the same sort of institutions as found on the Atlantic Coast.⁶

Barstow also indicated why San Francisco was an ideal site for the first medical school.⁷ San Francisco was the primary port on the Pacific Coast, and its climate allowed medical work to be conducted all year. Additionally, the faculty physicians had large patient practices and were

³George Barstow, “Introductory Address by the Hon. George Barstow,” in *Introductory Address Delivered at the Opening of the Medical Department of the University of the Pacific at San Francisco, California, May 5th, 1859 and Addresses by Rev. Dr. Peck and Rev. Mr. Cutler* (San Francisco: Towne & Bacon, 1859), 9, Record Groups: School of Elocution, Asian Studies, Female Institute, College Park Academy, UOP Medical School, (Misc. Schools), Box 2.7.1.1, Folder Carman & Barstow Addresses; Opening Addresses by Peck & Cutler; 1859, University of the Pacific Archives, Stockton, CA.

⁴Ibid., 13.

⁵Ibid., 14.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Barstow also made explicit a connection between education, including medical, and a theological belief in God and special creation. For instance, he argued that higher education was a way of opening the mind to allow it to gain an understanding of the Creator’s power and goodness. He compared a medical doctor to a mechanic (of the body) and argued that the mechanisms of the eye, ear, hand, and foot lead the mechanic, or the doctor, to the conclusion that there is a more skillful “mechanic,” that being God, as the originator of these. Ibid., 15.

thus well acquainted with the diseases and treatments particular to California. Finally, he argued that California had given its people “mineral treasures,” undoubtedly speaking of gold, and it was the duty of the California people to repay this debt, such as through the development of educational institutions.⁸ Thus, Barstow’s address at the opening of the medical department of the University of the Pacific distinctly laid out the rationale behind establishing such a school and the benefit that its founders saw it could provide to the state. Clearly, the welfare of California was on the minds of the men in the medical department.

The Rev. Mr. Cutler followed Barstow’s address by continuing to highlight the role of the medical school in the development of California. He spoke of a new society being created in California and institutions of learning as being an element of civilization. Cutler also noted that a medical institution, in particular, was vital for society through the science that doctors brought to the treatment of ailments. He stated that the sick had no patience with quackery, but instead doctors needed to know proper techniques by learning about the natural world including laws of health and the healing properties of minerals and plants. As a layman, he may have been expressing his own personal distaste for “quacks” and hoping that with better trained doctors, the public would gravitate to properly trained medical men. He further believed that knowledge was an essential requisite in a physician, and through the imparting of such knowledge this first medical school in California would garner the support of the people of California and the whole Pacific Coast.⁹ Medical schools provided a key educational element in the further development

⁸Ibid., 15, 18.

⁹Cutler, “Address by Rev. Mr. Cutler,” in *Introductory Address Delivered at the Opening of the Medical Department of the University of the Pacific at San Francisco, California, May 5th, 1859 and Addresses by Rev. Dr. Peck and Rev. Mr. Cutler* (San Francisco: Towne & Bacon, 1859), 19, 20, Record Groups: School of Elocution, Asian Studies, Female Institute, College Park Academy, UOP Medical School, (Misc. Schools), Box 2.7.1.1, Folder Carman & Barstow

of California and, by extension, the entire western United States.

The University of the Pacific's medical department formally began on May 5, 1859, with the first session concluding in September. Thirteen students had been enrolled with two of them receiving an M.D. degree after having attended other medical schools previously. This led the board to note that the first course of lectures had finished well and that the department was flourishing.¹⁰ Although the board had little to do with the actual operation of the medical department, instead leaving that to Cole as dean and to the other medical professors, the board did take their oversight seriously. They had regular updates from Cole and also had some of the board meetings in the buildings housing the medical department in San Francisco.¹¹

Within a few years of the founding of the University of the Pacific's medical department, a second medical school was also started in San Francisco. This school, the Toland Medical College, was founded by Hugh Hugher Toland, generally known as H. H. Toland. During the Gold Rush, Toland had come to California to try his hand at prospecting but soon went back to practicing medicine. In San Francisco, he became known for diagnosing and prescribing patients by mail without ever seeing them in person. He ran his own drug store and in 15 years filled 581,000 prescriptions, so by 1860 he was making an annual income of \$40,000.¹²

Addresses; Opening Addresses by Peck & Cutler; 1859, University of the Pacific Archives, Stockton, CA.

¹⁰University of the Pacific Board of Trustees Minutes, 136, 145. The June 7, 1859, meeting recorded the opening of the medical department, and the September 16, 1859, meeting discussed the end of the first session.

¹¹Ibid., 231.

¹²Frances Tomlinson Gardner, "The Little Acorn: Hugh Hugher Toland, 1806-1880," 61-65, Reprinted from *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. xxiv, no.1, January-February, 1950, 308z.%647.G225, University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

As Toland was beginning his medical school, one of the main founders of the medical department of the University of the Pacific died. Besides Dean Cole, Elias Samuel Cooper had been a driving force behind the proposal to the University of the Pacific's board that resulted in the creation of the medical department. Although Cole had been the dean of the medical department, Cooper was instrumental in continuing to motivate and recruit faculty, including his nephew, Levi Cooper Lane. When Cooper died, the medical faculty lost the primary individual that had kept them functioning cohesively through the early years of the medical department.

At the same time, Toland needed more doctors to be professors to expand his medical school. He thus recruited doctors from the University of the Pacific's medical department. With Cooper dead, this task was accomplished rather easily, and several of the leading doctors, including Lane and Cole, all left the University of the Pacific to join the Toland Medical College. Although their reasons for joining Toland remain unclear, arguably Toland's ambitious project and relentless drive (along with his ability to make a profit) must have been a factor in their decision. Therefore, with the primary doctors from the medical department gone and a founder dead, the medical department of the University of the Pacific closed.¹³

The moving of faculty from the University of the Pacific to the Toland Medical College was voluntary, but soon Toland's medical community had dissension. In a move that would seem to give his school more credibility, he made Beverly Cole, previously dean of the University of the Pacific's medical school, the dean of the Toland Medical College. In spite of having Cole as dean with his old colleagues, only a few years after the defection from the University of the Pacific, most of those same faculty members returned in 1870 to the University

¹³No mention of the closing was made in the board meeting minutes, and, of course, the catalogues no longer contained any reference to medical education.

of the Pacific to restart a medical school for that institution. Cole, however, did not make the return trip to the University of the Pacific, but instead stayed with Toland.

Although Cole had loyalty to Toland and his medical school, this did not mean that Cole was a personal admirer of the man. Years after Toland's death, Cole recounted his views on Toland. Throughout several pages of his recollections, Cole mostly disparaged Toland and his professional ethics. Based on his years of experience working with Toland as dean of his medical school, Cole stated that while Toland was a fine surgeon and medical doctor in general, he was also unprofessional, "supremely selfish," "a man of limited intellectuality," and "a man of inordinate vanity."¹⁴ While other views of Toland existed, none were as strong in their defense of Toland as Cole was in his criticism.

Toland's true nature was a complicated and controversial one. His drive brought about the creation of a second medical school in California and arguably furthered the development and standards of the medical profession in the state due to the competition that his school provided. With the medical department of the University of the Pacific refounded and the Toland Medical College continuing to operate under the leadership of Cole and Toland, a rivalry and competition developed between the schools.

Once the medical department of the University of the Pacific restarted in 1870, the core faculty remained the same throughout the next years in spite of other institutional changes. A few years after the department was reconstituted, the faculty again made a change, although this time it appears to have been one that was much more amicable than what had happened with

¹⁴Beverly Cole, "Dictation of Dr. R. Beverly Cole, Sep'r 12th regarding Dr. H. H. Toland," 1, Biographical sketch of Hugh H. Toland, with related material, 1889, BANC MSS C-D 842, Folder 4 "Toland, Hugh Hugher, 1809-1880 dictation of Beverly Cole," University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

Toland. Due to the distance between the medical department in San Francisco and the main campus of the University of the Pacific in Santa Clara, the faculty of the medical department decided in 1872 to again leave the University of the Pacific and this time to move as a school to another college. This particular college, University City College, was Presbyterian and located in San Francisco. This enabled the medical faculty to derive advantages that would have come with being adjacent to the rest of a college's faculty and overall institutional support.¹⁵

After a few years as the Medical College of the Pacific under the sponsorship of University City College, a change was once again made to the first medical school in California. This time it became a completely independent institution. Levi Cooper Lane, during his tenure as one of the longtime faculty members, had also financially prospered as a doctor. With his wealth, he was able to provide the necessary funding to support an independent school. He named it after his uncle, Elias Samuel Cooper, and called it Cooper Medical College. This latest incarnation continued to exist until the early twentieth century, when the medical school found its permanent home as the medical school of Stanford University.

As for the Toland Medical College, its path was not quite so meandering as its competitor. Soon after the University of California was founded in 1868, Toland began to discuss the possibility of incorporating his school into that institution. One of his main stipulations was that the medical school would still continue to be named after him. However, the Regents of the University of California said that a school would not be named for an individual. Toland and the university president, Daniel Coit Gilman, continued to negotiate on a

¹⁵Unlike with the prior move, this change was discussed in the catalogues for the medical department, now called the Medical College of the Pacific. The explanation seemed to be one that made logistical sense, although again no mention of this split was made in the University of the Pacific board minutes.

reasonable compromise. It was finally decided that a building would be named for him instead of the school and a Toland Chair of Surgery would also be created. With this agreement in place, the Toland Medical School became the medical school for the University of California. At this time, the only campus for the state university was located in Berkeley. Eventually, though, the medical school was the forerunner of the University of California, San Francisco—the only campus of the University of California to not have undergraduate students but to focus solely on graduate and professional students in the health sciences. The fate of Toland’s personal legacy was not as long lasting in the ways he had hoped. He did indeed have a building named after him, but only a few years later the building was torn down. The other part of the agreement—a named chair in surgery—never happened. Nonetheless, Toland’s legacy did live on through his medical school that brought medical education into the University of California educational fold.

Through the saga of the start of medical education in California, it is important to keep in mind the significance that training doctors within California had on the state’s political economy. Not only did the first schools provide a model for future medical schools in the state, but it also further developed the important healthcare infrastructure. Having more than one medical school in the state allowed more doctors to be locally trained and able to treat the local population.

Additionally, caring for the state’s citizens by providing health services was an important development in California history. Although medical services would not have been among the main considerations for those entering the gold fields, as the state became more developed such services were arguably another important factor in deciding where to locate and how comfortable society would seem for women and children. While this “comfort factor” is difficult to quantify, undoubtedly individuals in the mid-1800s would have wanted to care for their families just as individuals do so in the twenty-first century. Likewise, the presence of doctors would also allow

individuals to work better and for more years. Doctors had, of course, immigrated to California and would continue to do so, but, with the population rising rapidly, more doctors were needed to keep up with the growing populace. Thus, these medical schools provided a valuable and fundamental public good through their training of doctors. These California-trained doctors, as well as the doctors that made up the faculty of the medical schools, saw patients, staffed hospitals, and ran pharmacies—all of which are important aspects of a developed society and ones that would foster further growth.

The schools provided a crucial step in California's development through the founding of medical education in the state. Although modest in beginnings, the University of the Pacific's medical department and the Toland Medical College would be the first of a long line of medical schools in the state. Their founding and rivalry allowed California to further its healthcare infrastructure and grow the political economy, all from the work of a small group of doctors in the 1850s and 1860s in San Francisco.

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