

A Surprise Beginning:

The Medical and Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University

Conventional wisdom holds that Southern Methodist University opened the doors to Dallas Hall to its first students on September 28, 1915.ⁱ That day, approximately 550 young men and women attended their first classes in the College of Liberal Arts, the School of Theology and the Fine Arts Department. What is sometimes forgotten is that these schools were not the first ones established by the University and that, even though this date was heralded as SMU's first day of classes, these students were not the first ones to attend the University. In fact, by 1915, SMU had already opened and closed its first school, a medical college, and its first degree recipients were awarded medical diplomas in 1912. How SMU came to have a medical school and what happened to it by the time the University opened Dallas Hall in 1915 is an interesting story.

In 1911, an educational commission made up of five Texas Methodist conferences organized to "promote and select" ⁱⁱ a site for a new Methodist university west of the Mississippi River. Among proposals submitted by various cities, Dallas was selected, with members of the Dallas community offering 662 ½ acres of land and \$300,000 in notes to build Dallas Hall.ⁱⁱⁱ Southern Methodist University filed its official charter with the state of Texas on April 16, 1911^{iv} and it called for not only schools in the liberal arts and theology, but also directives for a medical college.

With plans underway for SMU to open in 1915, an opportunity for the University soon developed in 1911. Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, was struggling to operate a medical college. Even though the medical college had completed its "eighth annual session, with results eminently satisfactory to all friends of the institution," ^v inadequate resources prevented the school from becoming a quality program. The Methodist Church decided the medical college was better suited to the newly-chartered SMU, and in 1911 the Board of Trustees of Southwestern University at Georgetown passed a resolution transferring its school of medicine to SMU "in accordance with the plans outlined by the Commissioners of Education, having in charge the general control and correlation of all the Methodist schools of Texas and probably all the Methodist schools of the entire Southwest."^{vi}

SMU was charged with "immediately proceed[ing] with such additions to the building and equipment and teaching facilities as will be necessary to place the Medical and Pharmaceutical Departments in Class A, as determined by the Council on Medical Education of the American Medical Association."^{vii} With money donated by the Dallas community and the Methodist Church, as well as a "large donation expected from the General Board of Education established

by Mr. Jno. D. Rockefeller,” the medical college was well on its way to meeting “in every respect the exacting demands of modern Medical Instruction.”^{viii} The medical college thus became the University’s first school with the first class of students matriculating in the 1911-1912 school year, well before ground was broken on Dallas Hall.

Dallas in 1911 was considerably smaller than the city we know today, boasting 100,000 residents. But similar to today’s Dallas, the city was “constantly growing” and there were several large public hospitals serving Texas and the nearby states. The medical college had associations with St. Paul’s Sanitorium, City Hospital and Children’s Hospital, among others. These hospitals would provide much needed internships for the school’s graduates.

The new school was not housed on the developing Hilltop but was instead located close to downtown on Hall Street near Bryan Street. Facing the St. Paul Sanitorium, the two-story, gray brick building was 90 x 100 feet, and easily accessible by the Bryan, Swiss Avenue and San Jacinto streetcars. Described in the 1911 catalogue as “clean and healthy,” the building housed a dean’s room, an office, a bookstore and a large assembly hall divided by folding doors of which half could be used as a senior lecture hall and the other half as a histological and embryological laboratory. Another spacious hall was “fully equipped with apparatus for physiological work.”^{ix} An amphitheater held 125 students and was fitted with “opera chairs” and a “demonstrating table.”^x A library/reading room was also used as a museum for the many specimens at the college.

The building also housed several laboratories. Besides an anatomical and dissecting hall, a dark room laboratory and a store room for pathological and bacteriological work including microscopes, a chemical laboratory was fitted with 80 individual lockers, gas and water “and every facility for convenience of work.”^{xi}

Much of the information we know about SMU’s Medical College comes from the *Catalogue for Medical and Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University*, “issued quarterly by the Southern Methodist University Medical Department, 1420 Hall Street.”^{xii} According to the 1911 catalogue, the faculty was comprised of 21 members as well as 14 associate faculty members. Led by Dr. John O. McReynolds, dean of the medical department, and Dr. J.M. Pace, chairman of the faculty, the goal of the faculty was to “impress, not alone the salient points that pertain to the purely technical knowledge of the healing art, but also those lofty principles of professional conduct which form such an important part in the life of the true physician.”^{xiii} Departments within the school included anatomy, medicine, surgery and eye, ear, nose and throat, all of which were designed to “equip the student with [the] knowledge of medicine and surgery which will best prepare him for the practical labors of his profession.”^{xiv}

Most of the students in SMU's medical and pharmaceutical departments were from Texas, although a few came from Oklahoma. Tuition was \$100 per year for general instruction and another \$5 for lab fees. Admittance to a medical college was quite different than it is today. In order to be admitted, a student had to have evidence that he graduated from a high school or normal school or "some other institution of high grade,"^{xv} or possess a certificate of entrance to the freshman class of a recognized college or university. He also needed an accredited certificate proving he completed 14 units in "literary work," such as English, History, Mathematics, sciences and foreign languages. This information was due in the registrar's office two weeks prior to admittance along with the required fee of \$1.00. Additionally, each student needed a letter granting permission from the State Board of Medical Examiners certifying the above credentials. It is interesting to note that the 1911 catalogue stated that "the number of students [at the school] has not been large because of the recent organization of the school, and because of the fact that the standard of scholarship required eliminated a large number of students who were simply in search of a diploma."^{xvi}

The School of Pharmacy had less rigorous standards. To enter it, "only one year's attendance at a good high school" was required.^{xvii} Consisting of five faculty members, the pharmacy department taught "professional-technical preparation" and "practical instruction in the daily routine of the druggist's occupation which every competent pharmacist's assistant must have before his services can be regarded as intelligent and satisfactory-the kind of training which a capable manager of a first-class, up-to-date pharmacy might give his assistants if he has time to do so, but which the clerks in smaller pharmacies never get."^{xviii}

In order to receive a degree from SMU's Medical College, graduates were required to be at least 21 years old, possess good character, complete four years of medical college (at least one of which had to be at SMU), be in satisfactory standing with 80% attendance, and owe no money to the University. Additionally, the catalogue stated that "the degree will not be conferred upon any candidate who, without permission, absents himself from the public commencement."^{xix}

In 1911, 66 students matriculated in the Medical School and 27 matriculated in the Pharmacy School. By 1912, a full year after SMU assumed control of the Medical College, *The Dallas Morning News* reported that the school had a record freshman class and all other classes were larger than ever before.^{xx} Students came from "every section of the Southwest" and from over 100 counties in Texas. The building had been completely remodeled, including a \$5,000 expenditure towards "enlarging its outfit for the betterment of the work."^{xxi}

On May 31, 1913, SMU held the 10th commencement of the college and awarded 14 medical degrees to graduates and 10 pharmaceutical degrees. At the banquet following the commencement ceremony, Dr. R.S. Hyer, SMU's first president, delivered a speech entitled,

“The Science of Growing Class A Medical Colleges.” It appeared that SMU was well on its way to developing its first successful college.

Among the medical college graduates in 1913 was a new doctor by the name of John William Macune. The son of a physician and Methodist minister, John Macune was born on January 9, 1882, and grew up in Cameron, Texas, a small town southeast of Temple, Texas. After receiving his medical degree, Dr. Macune served as a First Lieutenant in the Army Medical Corps stationed at Newport News, Virginia during World War I. He later moved his wife and two children to the border town of Eagle Pass, Texas. Although there is no record that Dr. Macune served as an official Methodist medical missionary in Mexico, according to his family he worked two days a week in Allende, Mexico, treating patients. Because Mexican authorities could not verify that SMU had a medical college, they repeatedly arrested Dr. Macune for practicing medicine without a license. For a year, Dr. Macune paid daily fines in order to continue his practice in Mexico. In 1924, the Macunes moved to Ballinger, Texas, where Dr. Macune was a county health officer, city hospital anesthesiologist and general practitioner. He was actively involved in civic work and was a vital member of his community until his death from cancer on April 3, 1945. Upon his death, flags were lowered to half mast in Ballinger in honor of Dr. Macune’s legacy. ^{xxii}

Dr. Macune’s sheepskin medical diploma, donated to the University by his daughter Alida Macune Rappaport, currently hangs in the Laura Lee Blanton Building as a reminder of the first students in a long line of graduates who went on to be outstanding representatives of their *alma mater*.

By the fall of 1913, *The Dallas Morning News* reported that SMU’s Medical College, now in its second year, had “entered upon a new plane of scientific efficiency.”^{xxiii} A record number 120 students were expected, faculty numbers had increased to 44, entrance requirements were raised to include a full year of chemistry, physics and biology at the college level and \$25,000 was spent on lab equipment. In short, the college was “rapidly conforming to those measures required by the AMA for a Class A school.”^{xxiv}

By the following spring, the Texas State Board of Medical Examiners adopted a resolution declaring SMU’s Medical College was “doing a character of work equal to that of the very best medical colleges in the United States” and that it is “thoroughly equipped with laboratory facilities and has an abundant supply of clinical material.”^{xxv} This resolution prompted the Council on Medical Education of the American Medical Association to raise the Medical College’s rating, “placing it among the high medical institutions of the country.”^{xxvi}

In just a few year’s time, the Medical College had reached its goal of Class A status. So it was especially curious that despite its successes, by June of 1915, with the University’s official

“opening” set for September, SMU’s Board of Trustees “temporarily suspended” both the Medical and Pharmaceutical Colleges citing financial concerns.^{xxvii} Although trustees were “delighted” that both departments had received the Class A grade, “financial conditions are such that the great expense of such a department is not considered justifiable for the limited number of students, and the money can be spent to better advantage in the college of liberal arts.”^{xxviii} Additionally, the more rigid entrance requirements needed for the Class A ranking resulted in “only a few of the many applicants able to enter the classes.”^{xxix} These financial concerns, coupled with more stringent admission requirements, were deemed “sufficient for the suspension of the school for the present year.”^{xxx}

One week later, the trustees officially disbanded the medical faculty.^{xxxi} The decision benefitted Baylor University’s fledgling medical school in Dallas. Baylor had not been granted Class A standing at this time by the American Medical Association. Its dean, Dr. E.H. Cary, asked SMU and the Methodist Church for its full cooperation in helping Baylor “take advantage of the clinical privilege of the City Hospital” assigned to SMU.^{xxxii} It was agreed that the “physiological apparatus...laboratory equipment and specimens” be sold to the Baylor College of Medicine.^{xxxiii} The building on Hall Street was used by the Dallas Polyclinic-Postgraduate Medical School, a postgraduate program run by Dallas physicians.^{xxxiv}

SMU did open its doors that September but without a medical college. Now, almost 100 years later, it is interesting to reflect on whether the Board of Trustees made a wise move in disbanding the program. It is difficult to know whether the University’s liberal arts programs could have thrived as they did in those early days had SMU kept its medical school. What we do know, however, is that SMU’s earliest alumni graduated from its little-known medical college four years earlier than the first students to enter the Hilltop through Dallas Hall.

i *The Dallas Morning News*, September 28, 1915

ii *History of Southern Methodist University* by Page A. Thomas

iii *History of Southern Methodist University* by Page A. Thomas

iv *The Dallas Morning News*, April 17, 1911

v *Catalogue for Medical Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University*, August 1911

vi *Catalogue for Medical Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University*, August 1911

vii *Catalogue for Medical Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University*, August 1911

viii *Catalogue for Medical Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University*, August 1911

ix	<i>Catalogue for Medical Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University, August 1911</i>
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xv	<i>Catalogue for Medical Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University, August 1911</i>
xvi	<i>Catalogue for Medical Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University, August 1911</i>
xvii	<i>Catalogue for Medical Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University, August 1911</i>
xviii	<i>Catalogue for Medical Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University, August 1911</i>
xix	<i>Catalogue for Medical Pharmaceutical Departments of Southern Methodist University, August 1911</i>
xx	<i>The Dallas Morning News, October 1, 1912</i>
xxi	<i>The Dallas Morning News, October 1, 1912</i>
xxii	<i>Ballinger Ledger, April 12, 1945 and The Dallas Morning News, October 5, 1987</i>
xxiii	<i>The Dallas Morning News, October 3, 1913</i>
xxiv	<i>The Dallas Morning News, October 3, 1913</i>
xxv	<i>The Dallas Morning News, May 30, 1914</i>
xxvi	<i>The Dallas Morning News, May 30, 1914</i>
xxvii	<i>The Dallas Morning News, June 6, 1915</i>
xxviii	<i>The Dallas Morning News, June 6, 1915</i>
xxix	<i>The Dallas Morning News, June 6, 1915</i>
xxx	<i>The Dallas Morning News, June 6, 1915</i>
xxxi	<i>The Dallas Morning News, June 11, 1915</i>
xxxii	<i>The Dallas Morning News, June 13, 1915</i>
xxxiii	<i>The Dallas Morning News, September 30, 1915</i>

