



Summer 2011


Transylvania Medical Alumni Who Served in the Union and Confederate Armies

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Notes/Citation Information

Published in *Ohio Valley History*, v. 2, no. 2, p. 56-67.

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Transylvania Medical Alumni Who Served in the Union and Confederate Armies

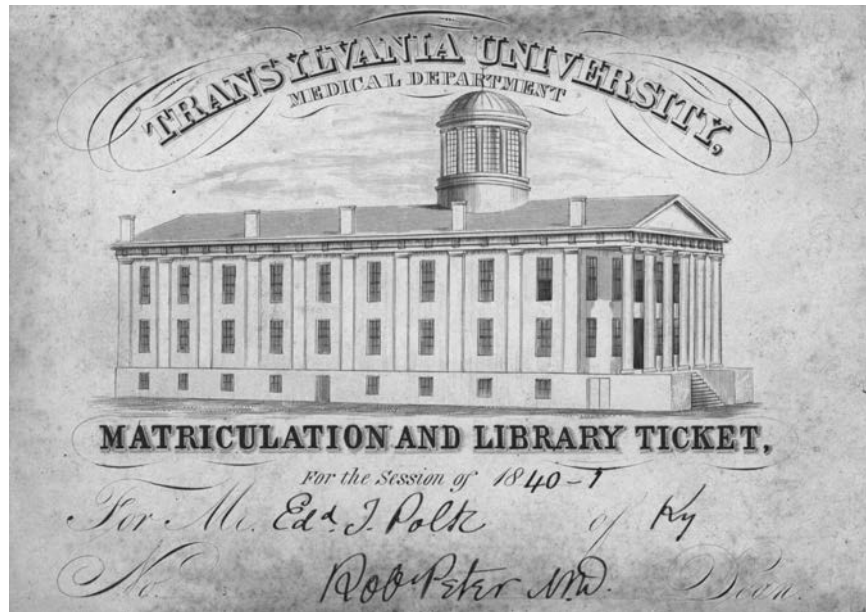
C. T. Ambrose, M.D.

The Medical Department of Transylvania University

In the several decades before the Civil War most of the doctors practicing in the South and the far West trained in Lexington, Kentucky, at Transylvania University's medical school. Between 1818 and 1857, the school enrolled 6,456 students and granted 1,881 medical degrees.¹ Founded in 1799, it became the fifth medical school in the United States, following the creation of medical "institutes" or "departments" at the University of Pennsylvania (1765), King's College (now Columbia University) in New York City (1767), Harvard University (1783), and Dartmouth College (1797). During the 1820s and 1830s Transylvania's Medical Department rivaled Philadelphia's, which was then the largest in the country and judged its best. Transylvania ranked so highly because of its richly endowed medical library and museum and its respected medical faculty.

Initially, the Transylvania medical students were taught by preceptorship—that is, by one-on-one instruction. In 1817, scheduled classes began with the reorganization of the faculty to include five medical professors, each of whom gave three lectures a week per term. A term began on the first Monday in November and ended on the first Saturday in March. To earn a degree, students were required to take two years of courses (first year lectures were repeated largely verbatim in the second year), write a short thesis, and pass two oral examinations.²

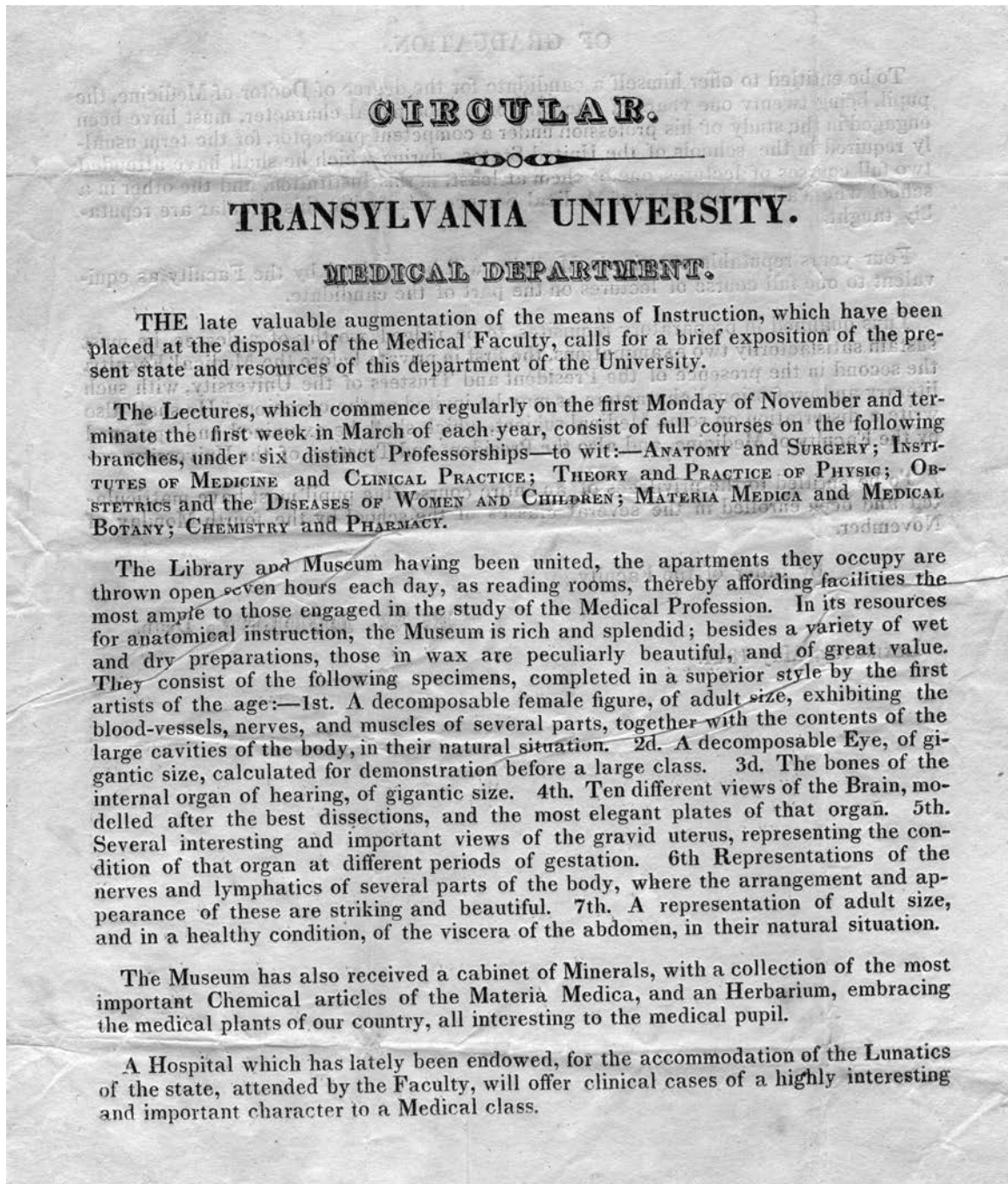
Medical alumni of Transylvania's Medical Department included three groups: graduates whose theses (inaugural dissertations) are extant; graduates for whom no theses survive; and those who took courses for only one or more sessions but later worked as successful physicians without a formal degree. Special Collections at Transylvania's library preserves theses of approximately 1,770 graduates, though dissertations are lacking for sixty-eight known graduates. These theses provide valuable information about what early nineteenth century physicians in the Ohio River Valley thought and taught about the diseases they encountered. Also included among Transylvania's medical degree recipients were forty-five men awarded honorary M.D. degrees, many of whom attended class years earlier. John Lawson McCullough of Lexington received the first medical degree granted from



Lecture and library ticket for Transylvania University Medical Department, 1840.
Edward Polk Miscellaneous Papers.
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Transylvania in 1818. The newly organized Medical Department attracted thirty-seven pupils in its 1819-1820 term. The number rose to 281 in 1825-1826 and for a decade or more remained at this level. In the 1828-1829 term, 262 of the 282 medical students who matriculated came from eleven southern states, and in 1829-1830 a comparable ratio prevailed—two hundred of the 203 who enrolled came from southern states.³ Most graduates undoubtedly returned to their home states to practice medicine, but some moved west.

Several factors led to the demise of the Department of Medicine, which closed after its 1858-1859 term. By the late 1830s, Louisville and Cincinnati had established rival medical schools. The advent of steam boat traffic on the Ohio River in the 1820s accounted for the gradual economic eclipse of Lexington by these two growing cities. Moreover, Louisville had the Marine Hospital, where medical students could obtain clinical training, while Lexington students had no comparable hospital. Through the nineteenth century anatomical studies filled a greater part of the medical curriculum than today. In 1834, the Kentucky legislature rejected a bill that enabled chartered colleges to dissect and experiment on the bodies of executed criminals.⁴ As a result, medical students had to procure their own anatomical subjects by robbing fresh graves or buying bodies from “resurrectionists.” Students could likely obtain cadavers for anatomical study more readily in populous river towns.



Circular describing the Transylvania University Medical Department, n.d.
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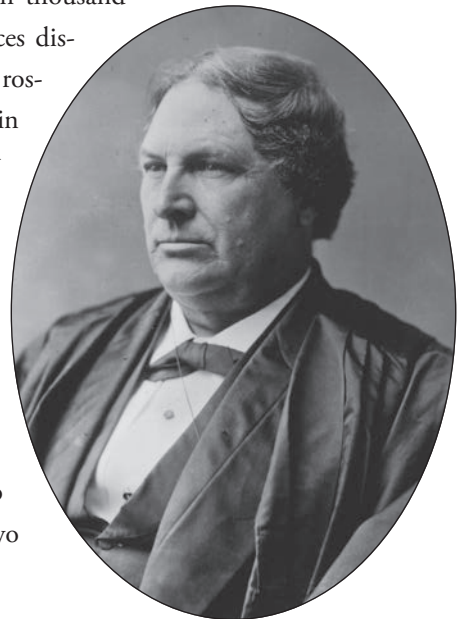
Medicine of the American Civil War

In October 1859, the year Transylvania's Medical Department closed, the abolitionist John Brown seized the federal government arsenal at Harpers Ferry, fifty miles northwest of Washington, D.C. A company of U.S. Marines led by Col. Robert E. Lee soon captured Brown, and the state of Virginia convicted and hanged him for treason in Charlestown, Virginia, on December 2. During the preceding two months, fights had erupted in Philadelphia between northern abolitionists and proslavery southerners. Among the latter were many southern students who rebelled at the instruction of abolitionist-minded professors. On December 22, a trainload of 244 angry medical students left the city to complete their education at Richmond's Medical College of Virginia, which welcomed them with free tuition. Historians have viewed the dramatic migration of southern medical students from Philadelphia as the beginning of "the story of Civil War medicine."⁵ When the war began, the United States Army included 131 physicians—known as surgeons or assistant surgeons—of whom twenty-four resigned to join the Confederate States of America (CSA). Together, the two Civil War armies suffered 618,000 fatalities, with more than two thirds resulting from infectious diseases such as typhoid, dysentery, typhus, and malaria. Their medical dissertations reveal that Transylvania medical graduates had a high degree of familiarity with these diseases.

The Northern Army Medical Corps (see table 1)

By the war's end between eleven and thirteen thousand doctors had served in the Union army (sources disagree about the exact number). A Union roster compiled by N. A. Strait and published in 1882 listed 7,106 entries, but because many doctors worked in successive regiments the total number of surgeons and assistant surgeons amounted to only 6,280. Strait's roster listed the names by regiment in each state except Alabama and South Carolina, which had no regiments in the Union army. New York provided the largest contingent of surgeons (around nine hundred), while some two hundred and sixty doctors served seventy-two Kentucky regiments.⁶

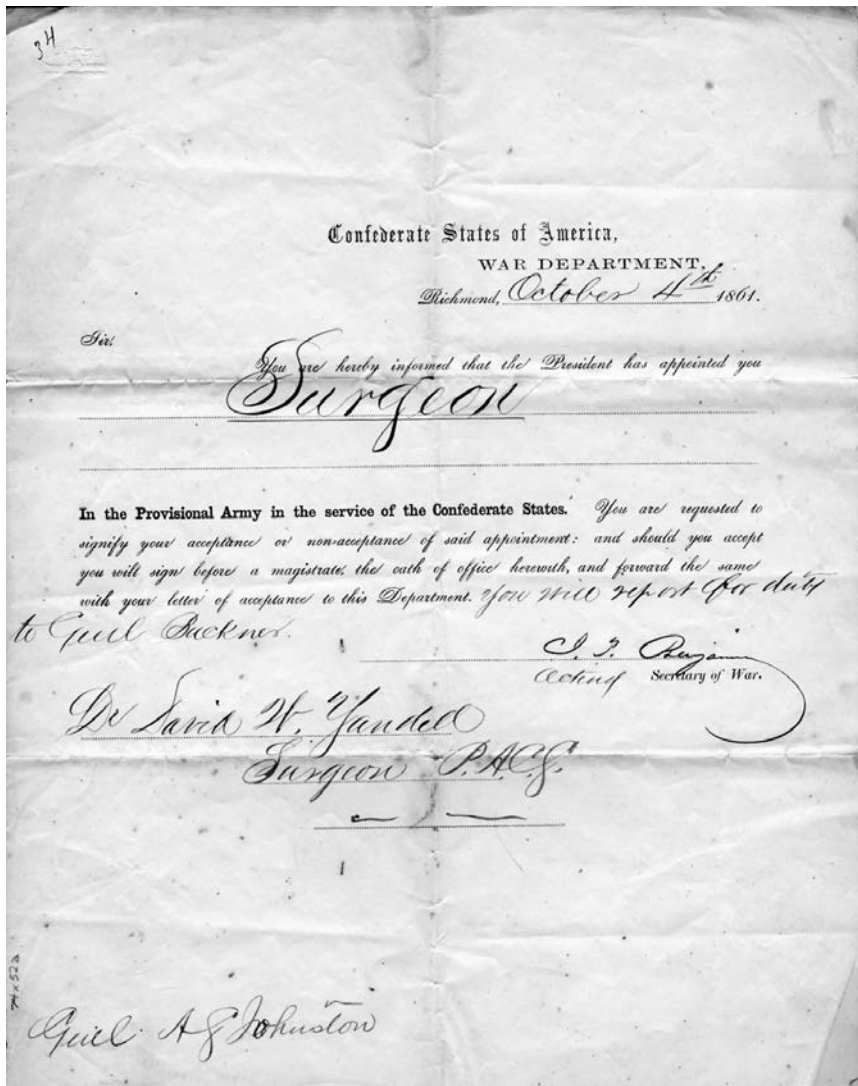
Identifying Transylvania alumni who served in the Union army involved comparing Strait's roster of the Union regimental surgeons and assistant surgeons



Samuel F. Miller, n.d. Attended Transylvania University Medical Department in 1835-37 and served as a surgeon in the Union Army.

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with a master list of students who attended the Medical Department compiled by B. J. Gooch, Transylvania's Special Collections librarian. Ninety-one names appeared in both, although two names proved spurious. Two alumni of Transylvania (W. O. Baldwin, 1837, and A. Dunlap, 1851), had similarly named counterparts who graduated from other medical schools and served in the northern army. The survey was also complicated by the fact that five of the eighty-nine names correspond to pairs of identically named Transylvania students. The correct member of three such pairs could be distinguished by the dates of their theses. However, no theses are listed for two pairs of like-named students, making the service records of



Letter appointing David W. Yandell a surgeon in the Confederate army,
October 4, 1861. Yandell Family Papers.

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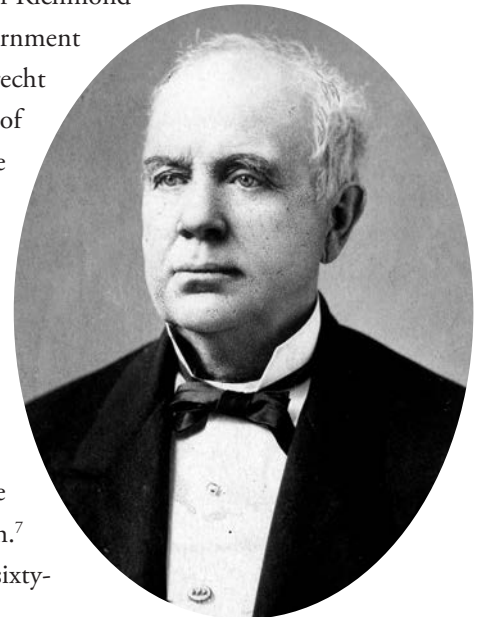
William Campbell of Kentucky (1824) *or* of Tennessee (1837) and John H. William of Tennessee (1838) *or* of Kentucky (1840) unknown. In the accompanying table, both pairs of names are listed but indented together. The largest number of Transylvania medical alumni who served in the Union army hailed from Kentucky (fifty-two to fifty-four) and Tennessee (seven to nine). Seven came from northern states—Indiana, Ohio, and New York—but surprisingly twenty-one Union doctors were from other slave states, including five from Alabama and six from South Carolina. Three of the eighty-nine who attended classes in the Medical Department between 1819 and 1821 were in their sixties when the war began, while James Montmollion from Kentucky, a member of the last class of 1859, was in his twenties.

The student medical dissertations of forty-four of the eighty-nine Transylvania surgeons who served in the Union army survive in the university library's Special Collections. The theses reviewed various medical topics, but half concerned infectious diseases, including three on typhoid, two on dysentery, three on cholera, six on tuberculosis, and ten on other fevers. Four discussed botanical medicines and other remedies such as cinchona and purgatives. Only three theses had a surgical focus, exploring burns, bandages, and local injuries.

The Southern Army Medical Corps (see table 2)

Many of the records concerning Confederate medical personnel were destroyed near the end of the war to keep them from falling into Union hands, and the fires that swept through the Confederate capital of Richmond in early April 1865 destroyed countless government records. Nonetheless, Dr. F. Terry Hambrecht and his colleagues at the Medical College of Virginia have laboriously compiled a database of the names of 10,563 Confederate physicians. Because of multiple spellings of surnames, however, Hambrecht has concluded that approximately nine thousand individuals served the CSA as surgeons, assistant surgeons, and acting assistant surgeons (that is, contract civilian physicians). The largest group of doctors came from Virginia, while the exact number from Kentucky is unknown.⁷

Hambrecht identified the names of sixty-two Transylvania medical alumni who served in the Confederate army as physicians.⁸ Comparing this list with a master list of medical students at Transylvania



Luke Pryor Blackburn, 1880. Attended Transylvania in 1858-59 and served as a surgeon in the Confederate Army.

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reveals that the largest number who served in the southern army came from Kentucky (twenty), followed by Tennessee (eleven), with twenty-seven hailing from other southern states, and two from New York and Delaware respectively. Two of the sixty-two Confederate doctors attended the Medical Department in 1820-1821, while J. W. S. Frierson of Tennessee matriculated in 1859, the medical school's final year. The dissertations of all sixty-two Confederate doctors are held in Transylvania library's Special Collections. The dissertations cover a variety of medical subjects, but most examine infectious diseases, including one on typhoid, three on dysentery, one on malaria, two on pneumonia, two on syphilis, and twenty on various other fevers. Four theses had a surgical focus, specifically bandages and injuries.

A Tempting Story Destroyed by Two Facts and a Caveat

In comparing the lists of sixty-two southern and eighty-nine northern army physicians, the names of two Transylvania alumni appear in both. Alabama resident William O. Baldwin attended Transylvania medical courses in 1835-1836 and served as a CSA army surgeon. According to Hambrecht, however, another William O. Baldwin received his medical degree from Columbia University in 1852 and served as a Union surgeon in District of Columbia 2nd Infantry until October 1864. Likewise, Arkansas-born Albert Dunlap attended Transylvania medical school in 1850 and became a surgeon for the CSA. Another Albert Dunlap graduated in 1864 from the University of Maryland medical school and served in the Union army as assistant surgeon in Maryland 3rd Infantry from March 1864 to July 1865.⁹ Thus, the number of known Transylvania medical alumni in the northern army totals eighty-nine. This information demolishes an intriguing scenario—that Baldwin and Dunlap served initially in the Confederate army and later crossed over to the Union side.

Probably neither list of Transylvania alumni serving as army doctors is complete. According to Hambrecht, Strait's roster of Union army physicians contains few acting assistant surgeons (contracted civilian physicians, some of whom might have trained in Lexington).¹⁰ In addition, forty-five of the eighty-nine Union army surgeons who attended Transylvania lack an extant thesis in the university's Special Collections. A comparable ratio should appear among Transylvania alumni in the Confederate army medical corp. The fact that all sixty-two names in Dr. Hambrecht's list of southern army physicians wrote a thesis suggests that others who did not are missing from this list.

Appendix:

Table One: Eighty-Nine Transylvania Medical Alumni Who Served in Union Army

<i>Name</i>	<i>State, beginning year/s at TU</i>	<i>Thesis subject</i>
Adam, Samuel L.	Kentucky, 1855/57	cholera
Anderson, William	Kentucky, 34/44	leucorrhoea, gyn
Armstrong, J. A.	Kentucky, 43-44	<i>E. perfoliatum</i>
Bailey, Jonathan R.	Kentucky, 35-36	lobelia, botany
Black, James R.	Kentucky, 20/23	conception, obs.
Blackburn, Luke P.	Kentucky, 33-34	burns, surg.
Brown, John R.	Kentucky, 34-35	none
Campbell, James M.	Tennessee, 37	none
? Campbell, Wm.	Kentucky, 24	none
? Campbell, Wm.	Tennessee, 37-38	none
Cartmell, Simon M.	Kentucky, 37	none
Castle, A. B.	Ohio, 43/47	none
Castleman, Alfred Lewis	Iowa, 43	none
Cloak, Burkitt	Kentucky, 38/49	dysentery
Cooper, S.	South Carolina, 42	none
Davis, B. F.	South Carolina, 46	TB
Davis, Joseph W.	Kentucky, 33/37	TB
Duncan, James R.	Kentucky, 49	typhoid fever
Dunn, Williamson D.	Indiana, 41	fever
Field, Nathaniel	Indiana, 47	dyspepsia
Fisher, Elias	Kentucky, 29/31	smallpox, 32
Gray, J. M.	Alabama, 41	opium
Hensley, James W.	Kentucky, 41-44	TB
Houston, William M.	North Carolina, 33	none
Hunt, William	Tennessee, 37-38	heat on system
Jaquess, Geo. D.	Indiana, 47	remittent fever
Johnson, Thomas J.	Kentucky, 21	none
Jones, James H. T.	Alabama, 32	none
Jones, John H. W.	Alabama, 48	typhoid fever, 49
Jones, Lewis J.	Kentucky, 55	none
Jones, William Henry	Kentucky, 55	none
Knight, William	Kentucky, 19	none
Lawrence, Jasper W.	Georgia, 33-35	leucorrhoea, gyn.
Lewis, John M.	Kentucky, 44	none
Lloyd, Frederick	Kentucky, 46	intermittent fever
Lytle, Francis	Tennessee, 39	none
Maguire, Samuel	Kentucky, 39	none
McCann, James	Kentucky, 50-51	pleuritis
McPheeters, Joseph G.	Kentucky, 37/39	bandages
Menzies, Samuel Garber	Kentucky, 28/30	dysentery
Miller, Samuel F.	Kentucky, 35/37	cholera

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Mills, John	Kentucky, 48	none
Mills, John A.	Kentucky, 49	iritis, ophth.
Montmollion, James	Kentucky, 58-59	none
Moore, James	Alabama, 29/32	emmenagogues
Murphy, Alexander M.	Indiana, 43	congestive fever
Neil, Alexander	South Carolina, 25	none
Parker, John T.	Kentucky, 19-20	none
Pearson, Charles D.	Kentucky, 40	none
Phillips, William H.	Virginia, 48	TB
Pinkerton, L. L.	Kentucky, 41	medicine's progress
Richardson, Edward	Kentucky, 48-49	TB
Rogers, Edwin	Tennessee, 28	none
Sanders, Thomas	Virginia, 22-23	cholera
Scott, John H.	Tennessee, 35	none
Scott, John W.	Kentucky, 39-41	local injuries
Scott, Wm. F.	Kentucky, 48-49	TB
Sharp, William S.	Kentucky, 42-43	phrenitis infantilis
Smith, C. C.	Kentucky, 44	none
Smith, Charles James	Virginia, 23	none
Smith, John R.	Kentucky, 32	none
Smith, Lionel J.	New York, 43	none
Smith, Robert K.	North Carolina, 25	none
Smith, Thomas C.	Kentucky, 54	lobar pneumonia
Smith, William A.	Kentucky, 34/57	none
Smith, William F.	Georgia, 55	typhoid fever
Smith, William H.	Kentucky, 27-28	none
Smydth, W. C.	Indiana, 39	none
Sparks, James B.	Kentucky, 55/57	obstetrics
Spilman, Charles T.	Kentucky, 42-43	cinchona, malaria
Stevenson, Benjamin F.	Kentucky, 39-40	skin
Stewart, William J.	Kentucky, 56/58	pneumonia
Stone, William D.	Tennessee, 35	none
Sullivan, John	Kentucky, 41-42	none
Sweeney, John	Kentucky, 34/36	purgatives
Taylor, Augustus B.	Louisiana, 42-43	none
Taylor, John L.	North Carolina, 32-33	intermittent fever, 34
Taylor, Samuel W.	Kentucky, 50	obstetrics
Taylor, William	Georgia, 39	none
Thompson, James H.	Tennessee, 35	none
Walker, William H.	Kentucky, 33	none
Welch, John C.	Kentucky, 45	menstruation
Wilcox, Thomas E.	Kentucky, 34-35	none
William, J. A.	Georgia, 43,	none
? William, John H.	Tennessee, 38	none
? William, John H.	Kentucky, 40	none
Williams, Thomas	South Carolina, 30-31	intermittent fever

Wilson, James	Kentucky, 28-29	prolapsus uteri
Wilson, John C.	Kentucky, 32	none
Wilson, John P.	Kentucky, 26	none
Young, John	South Carolina, 28	none

Table Two: Sixty-two Transylvania Medical Alumni Who Served in the Confederate Army

<i>Name</i>	<i>State, beginning year/s at TU</i>	<i>Thesis subject</i>
Akin, Joseph William	Kentucky, 1834/50-51	effect of the mind on disease
Avent, Benjamin Ward	Tennessee, 32-33	scarlatina
Baldwin, William O.	Alabama, 35-36	puerperal fever (see table 1)
Barton, Welborn/Wilbern	South Carolina, 44-45/48	syphilis
Beale, Andrew Jackson	Kentucky, 54	dysentery
Benton, Charles H.	Kentucky, 58-59	inflammation
Blackburn, Luke Pryor	Kentucky, 33-34	cholera
Blair, James M.	Tennessee, 46-47	TB
Bouchelle, Ezra F.	South Carolina, 36	puerperal fever
Boyd, Montgomery W.	(?), 43	climate
Boykin, James Owen	Georgia, 40-42	intermittent fever
Bronaugh, George W.	Kentucky, 41-42	endemic medication
Brown, Bedford Jr.	Missouri, 46-47	local disease
Cabaniss, Alfred B.	Alabama, 31-32	cutaneous diseases
Cochran John Lynch	Mississippi, 44-45	pregnancy, proof of
Coffey, Ephraim McDowell	Kentucky, 51	congestive fever
Coombs, Samuel William	Kentucky, 23-24	power of passions on disease
Cooper, William H.	Missouri, 44-45	genital organs
Core, Jesse G.	Tennessee, 40-41	variola
Crockett, Greenbury F. H.	Delaware, 20-21	asthma
Dabbs, Christopher Hunt	Alabama, 27/29	sedatives
Dulaney, Joseph D.	Tennessee, 54	dysentery
Dunlap, Albert	Arkansas, 50	malaria (see table 1)
Duvall, Benjamin F.	Kentucky, 55-56	blood letting/phlebotomy
Fox, Henry Thomas	California, 55-56	bandages
Frierson, J. W. S.	Tennessee, 21-23	fashions in female health
Gaither, William N.	Kentucky, 39/42	hydrocele
Garner, Henry C.	Kentucky, 48-49	medical profession, 1850
Gillespie, Benjamin S.	Kentucky, 56-57	inflammation
Gorham, Boswell, T. P.	Kentucky, 56-57	pneumonia
Hall, Allen M.	Tennessee, 45-47	stricture of urethra
Hamilton, Patrick Henry	Kentucky, 43	inflammation
Harrison, Gabriel	Georgia, 35-36	syphilis
Head, James Marshall	Tennessee, 38/40	fever

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Howze, Horace Lafayette	Mississippi, 46-47	causes of death
Hughes, James Neville	Kentucky, 26/31	puerperal fever
Hughes, William	Kentucky, 51/53/56	obstructive labor, 1856
Humphreys, William F.	Tennessee, 53	hypertrophy of the heart
Jameson, Thomas Y. T.	Tennessee, 53	dysentery
Johnson, Leander B.	North Carolina, 50	fever
Jones, William E.	Mississippi, 40-41	mania
King, John William	Alabama, 40	typhoid fever
Latham, Edward	Louisiana, 50	rubella (measles)
Lewis, Richmond Addison	Kentucky, 45-46	<i>chiasma nervorum opticorum</i>
Long, John	South Carolina, 38-39	phlebotomy/bleeding
McDowell, Joseph Nash	Kentucky, 25-26	dependence of function
Moore, George H.	Alabama, 43	water as a remedy
Owen, J. R. N.	Alabama, 36-37	<i>procidencia uteri</i>
Raines, Charles Baldwin	Virginia, 30	milk sickness
Rice, Cornelius Attwood	Mississippi, 55	pneumonia
Scott, James T.	Kentucky, 38/40/43	gastritis
Sheppard, David	South Carolina, 44-45	intermittent fever
Shomo, Joseph Weatherford	Arkansas, 55	pneumonia
Smith, George N.	Mississippi, 40	fever in Miss., 1840
Swanson, Edward	Arkansas, 25	yellow fever
Taliaferro, Edward/Edwin T.	Tennessee, 42-43	gastritis
Taylor, Charles M.	Kentucky, 54-55	abortion
Todd, George Rogers Clarke	Kentucky, 45-47	young physic
Tompkins, Frank/Franklin A.	South Carolina, 51	intermittent fever
Tracy, James Wright	North Carolina, 49	bilious remittent fever
Willingham, B. V.	Georgia, 36/44	inflammation
Winston, John Dudley	Kentucky, 25-26	injuries of the head

The author is indebted to Mrs. B. J. Gooch, librarian of the Special Collections, Transylvania University, for much assistance in assembling these lists. An early draft of this work appeared in a local university publication.

- 1 Robert Peter and Johanna Peter, *The History of the Medical Department of Transylvania University*, Filson Club Publications, no. 20 (Louisville: J. P. Morton, 1905), 167, schedule B.
- 2 Ibid., 32; Walter Wilson Jennings, *Transylvania, Pioneer University of the West* (New York: Pageant Press, 1955), 169; John Dean Wright, *Transylvania, Tutor to the West* (Lexington, Ky.: Transylvania University, 1975), 84.
- 3 *Catalogue of the Transylvania University Medical Library* (Lexington, Ky.: Transylvania University Press, 1987), 481-612, appendices A and B. The theses were twelve to forty pages in length and could be written in English, French, or Latin. Most students used English. William M. Simpson, a student from Scotland, penned his 1842 thesis on yellow fever in Latin, while C. F. F. Paazig wrote his 1842 thesis on the surgical treatment of an ulcer in German. William Jewell wrote the earliest extant thesis in 1820 on the "medical topography of Shepherdsville and its vicinity." Peter, *History of the Medical Department*, 55 (table); Jennings, *Transylvania*, 105, 169.
- 4 Wright, *Transylvania*, 85.
- 5 James M. Schmidt and Guy R. Hasegawa, eds., *Years of Change and Suffering: Modern Perspectives on Civil War Medicine* (Roseville, Mn.: Edinburgh Press, 2009), 3.
- 6 N. A. Strait, comp., *Roster of All Regimental Surgeons and Assistant Surgeons in the Late War, with their Service, and Last-known Post-Office Address* (Washington: N. A. Strait, 1882), 73-82. Strait's compilation was not an official government listing. He apparently intended to profit from it through private sales.
- 7 Email communication with Dr. F. Terry Hambrecht, Sept. 10, Dec. 6, 2010. Hambrecht is senior technical advisor to the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, in Frederick, Md.
- 8 Email communication with Hambrecht, Sept. 10, 2010.
- 9 Ibid., Dec. 5, 2010.
- 10 Ibid., Dec. 13, 2010.