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Emmet F. Horine and Transylvania’s Special Collections

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Emmet Field Horine was the descendant of Bullitt County Kentuckians dating back to his great-grandfather, Captain George Horine, born in 1790. Emmet Horine received his medical degree in 1907 from the Kentucky School of Medicine in Louisville and practiced general medicine and anesthesiology there until his service as an Army major in Europe during World War I. In 1922-23 he studied cardiology in London and Vienna and afterwards specialized in this clinical field and taught at the University of Louisville’s School of Medicine until his retirement around 1950. He died in 1964 at Louisville’s St. Anthony Hospital, where in 1907-09 he had served as resident physician.

During his professional career, Horine pursued his interest in the history of anesthesiology, cardiology, and pioneer medicine of the Ohio River Valley. He was the author of over 150 scientific and historical papers. In 1961 he published the definitive biography of Daniel Drake (1785-1852), who founded the University of Cincinnati Medical School and taught at the medical schools of Transylvania and Louisville. Horine’s interest in Charles Caldwell (1772-1853) stemmed from the latter’s role in establishing the Louisville Medical Institute in 1837 after two decades of teaching in the Medical Department at Transylvania. Horine’s library of over 15,000 books included about 3,500 rare, old medical volumes, which he ultimately distributed among three universities.

Horine gave a total of 2,000 documents and books about the early development of anesthesia to the Kornhauser Health Science Library at the University of Louisville. His 75 nineteenth-century items on Daniel Drake went to the King Library at the University of Kentucky. In 1946 Horine bequeathed 622 volumes focusing on the early elucidation of the circulation to the Medical Library of the newly established UK Medical School. Finally, shortly before his death in 1964, his remaining early medical books were shipped to the Special Collections at Transylvania University. These included 13 incunabula (books printed before 1500) and 657 volumes published before 1800—51 from the sixteenth century, 231 from the seventeenth, and 375 from the eighteenth.
Horine's bequest to Transylvania complemented the thousands of volumes already in the university's medical collection, acquired during the 60-year existence of its Medical Department from 1799-1859. The acquisition began in 1799 when the university's Board of Trustees authorized Samuel Brown, the department's first professor, to spend $500 on books for its nascent medical library. In 1820 the Kentucky legislature voted $10,000 for Charles Caldwell to purchase medical books and scientific apparatus during a trip to London and Paris. Nine years later, Transylvania's library held 3,000 volumes, rivaling that of the University of Pennsylvania, the first and leading medical school in the U.S. In 1831 Benjamin Dudley bought still more medical books from Europe, and in 1839 the citizens of Lexington raised $15,000 for professors Robert Peter and James Bush to acquire additional volumes and apparatus in Europe for the department.

In 1841 Nathan R. Smith declared that Transylvania had "the best endowed medical school in America," which then included around 7,000 volumes. Finally, with $500 borrowed from a local bank, Thomas Lawson added a further selection of medical books from abroad in 1845. In addition to these purchased volumes were 1,760 theses on medical topics penned by Transylvania medical students from 1820-59.

Horine's bequest to Transylvania was the polymath Constantine S. Rafinesque, who served in this function during his checkered tenure from 1819-26. Robert Peter was librarian from 1838-59. A catalog of the medical books and theses was compiled in the 1970s by librarians Roemel Henry and Kathleen Bryson but does not include the 1964 Horine bequest, nor has the Peck acquisition been thoroughly indexed. To catalog both properly would require a scholar proficient in several languages (Latin, French, etc.) working over many years. During the past decade the responsibility for supervising and guarding this unique treasure has fallen to Special Collections Librarian B. J. Gooch with the support of Library Director Susan Brown.

In 1839 the Lexington city council awarded $35,200 for Transylvania's new medical building at the northeast corner of Second Street and Broadway. This was "a magnificent piece of architecture, of the Grecian Doric order [with the] most commodious apartments for the Library, Museum and [its scientific] Apparatus." The Medical Department ceased with its last class in 1859. During the Civil War the building was used as a military hospital, but in 1863 it was lost to fire along with part of the library not previously moved to the campus.

Today, Transylvania students and faculty have access to the Frances Carrick Thomas Library, erected in 1954, and enlarged in 1985-86 with the J. Douglas Gay Jr. addition. On the second floor, behind a security door and scanned by cameras, are the books, documents, and other items comprising Transylvania's Special Collections. While this essay focuses on rare medical works, the library has been enriched in modern times with an extensive equine collection of 500 books, paintings, and art objects donated in 1984 by Clara Peck, who had maintained a horse farm outside Lexington for many years. The most valuable item in her bequest is the four-volume double elephant folio of John James Audubon's The Birds of America, 1839.

One of the earliest librarians at Transylvania was the last in function during his checkered tenure from 1819-26.

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5 Catalogue, p. vi.
7 Wright, J.D., Jr. Transylvania: Tutor to the West. Lexington, Ky.: Transylvania University, 1975, p. 187.
8 Transylvania Treasures, Summer 2010.
9 Jennings, p. 121.
10 Wright, p. 151.