**BU Publications** 

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# New England Female Medical College. Laying of the corner-stone, Boston, June 9, 1870

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Boston University



View of College Building.

# NEW ENGLAND FEMALE MEDICAL COLLEGE.

Laying of the Corner-Stone, Boston, June 9, 1870.

The corner-stone of the new College Building, (of which the above is the design,) now in process of erection on East Concord Street, opposite the City Hospital, was formally laid on the 9th inst. The exercises began with a brief address by Joshua Merrill, President of the College; and prayer was offered by Rev. E. B. Webb, D.D.

The ceremony of laying the corner-stone then took place. Within the stone was deposited a copper box, securely sealed, inclosing the following contents:

A complete file of the Annual Reports of the College, from 1848 to 1869. Publications of the Secretary, Dr. Gregory: Letter to Ladies in favor of Formula Physicians, (1850); Historical Sketch of the College, (1860); Female Physicians, (1862); "Doctor" or "Doctress"? (1868). Circulars; Programme of Ceremonies of Laying Corner-Stone. Copies of Boston daily papers: Advertiser, Post, Journal, Traveller, Transcript, Herald, News, Times; Weeklies: Congregationalist, Christian Register, Universalist, Christian Witness, Christian Era, Watchman and Reflector, Zion's Herald, Commonwealth.

As the heavy block of granite was slowly lowered into its place, the President, with his right hand resting upon it, said:

"In the name of God, from whom the gift of life and health and healing comes—in furtherance of the objects of the New England Female Medical College, and in behalf of its officers and friends—I lay this Corner-Stone. And may the blessing of Heaven crown the work."

### Historical Statement.

When the stone had been laid, Dr. Samuel Gregory, the Secretary of the College, made the following historical statement:—

In 1847, there began in this city a little movement in favor of introducing women into the medical profession. Many regarded it as an absurd and ephemeral affair, worthy only of contempt and ridicule. But the movement had a purpose, and accordingly measures were immediately adopted to carry the idea into effect. A few brave women were found who were desirous to be instructed; two medical gentlemen, in good and regular standing in the profession, were engaged to instruct them; and, on the first Wednesday in November, 1848, a class of twelve members-a good apostolic number-commenced receiving a course of lectures. This was the beginning of the New England Female Medical College, which has continued in uninterrupted operation to the present time, and is the first institution of the kind in the world. Seventynine women have been through the three-years' course and received medical degrees from the College; while over two hundred others have attended a partial course, much to their own advantage and that of the circles in which they move.

The institution began without pecuniary means or educational facilities, not having so much as a skeleton to illustrate the lectures. After a while it borrowed a well-worn manikin of Dr. Calvin Cutter, the author of school books on physiology. But it has been sustained, and now has a respectable foundation in real

and personal estate. It owns the lot on which we are, being a square of nearly an acre, and has permanent productive funds to the amount of thirty thousand dollars.

The first lectures were delivered in a parlor of a private house on Franklin street. The school was soon invited to a house occupied by one of the students, on Hanover street. It next went, on a similar invitation, to a house on Barton street, and then to one on Washington street, near Central court. Thus for two years it was of a migratory character, like a country school-master boarding round in the families of his scholars.

In 1850, the excellent and eminent Dr. Winslow Lewis being about to go to Europe, to spend a couple of years, the managers of the institution hired his house, at the foot of the Common, on the corner of Boylston and Pleasant streets. This was regarded as an advantageous arrangement. Dr. Lewis was friendly to the project, and admitting the school to his own private residence, and allowing it the use of his large and valuable library, gave it sort of an endorsement -a matter of no small moment in that struggling reriod of infancy. This fact was duly set forth in the Annual Reports, the newspapers, and by all other convenient methods. The house, moreover, had the advantage of being in a very conspicuous place. Everybody who went round the Common, or passed through Boylston street, or went to the Providencedepot, was sure to see it. That circumstance, too, was duly availed of, by putting up a sign, sixteen feet long and one foot wide, on the end of the house fronting the Common, so that literally he that ran could read, though in pursuit of the moving cars. It cost the Doctor something when be got home; for, as he told me, he had a great talking to for having let his house for such a purpose. Haven't they spoiled your library? inquired an anxious medical brother. No, said the Doctor; they have taken better care of it than I should if I had been at home. Others were so generous as to be willing to paint his house gratis, for the sake of obliterating the traces of the obnoxious sign!

[We may now good naturedly allude to early prejudices, that a score of years have softened or extinguished.]

After the sojourn at the foot of the Common, the College took rooms up two flights of stairs at No 274 Washington street. There it abode till 1859, when it took a longer journey than ever before, to the building on Springfield street, now occupied as the Home for Aged Men. Here it tarried three years and a half, and moved to its present quarters, at No. 21 East Canton street, in December, 1862. In October, 1870, God willing, it will move into the building, the corner-stone of which we have now laid.

This will be the first building ever erected for such an institution; and, as Boston was the first to start a medical college for women, it is very natural and proper that it should be the first to erect a building expressly for such a purpose. And we have not a particle of doubt that the good people of our city, our State, and New England, will promptly furnish the remaining funds required to pay for a building consecrated to so noble and philanthropic a work.

And now, friends, if you will pardon a personal allusion, I will close by remarking that, having accompanied the institution in all of its wanderings and sojournings, having known and felt the disadvantages and discomforts of its unsuitable accommodations, and

(fearful to remember!) having perpetaally had an anxious looking for rent day, often knowing not whence the means to meet it were coming, you will believe me when I say—I rejoice and thank God for the laying of that corner-stone.

# Professor Aiken's Address.

Edward Aiken, A.M., M.D., one of the Professors, then delivered the following address in behalf of the Faculty:

So intimate is the relation of the Faculty to the College, that of all others we certainly must regard this occasion,—the laying of the corner-stone of a building erected expressly for the Institution, and to be devoted solely to its benevolent purposes,—with the deepest interest.

I cannot, therefore, better improve the few moments assigned me through the partiality of my colleagues, than by mentioning some of the reasons why we as Instructors hail this event with pleasure.

A general statement of them would be, that here and now we begin to realize our cherished hopes for the College.

We have all of us, for periods varying from one year to fifteen years in length, been making the best of the accommodations afforded us, regarding them, all the while, as temporary and probationary. We have never rested in or been satisfied with them. Excelsior has been our watch-word; and now, at length, we have begun to climb the height whence we shall in due time look out upon an unobstructed horizon!

But to be more explicit: We rejoice in this occasion as affording us the prospect of greater facilities in our several departments of instruction.

Through the favor of Providence, the liberality of friends and our own efforts, we have already secured much valuable illustrative apparatus in certain departments, while in others we are still deficient. We doubt not that the permanence given to our Institution by the erection of this building will place us in a condition to supply our needs.

And, especially, located as we are, at the very doors of a great public charity—knocking perpetually at its gate—we are confident that we shall be able to obtain valuable aid from its female wards for the departments of clinical medicine and surgery, medical chemistry and morbid anatomy.

Again, we rejoice in this occasion as the harbinger of greater inducements to the most valuable class of students.

It is well understood that the expense of living in our cities is very great, and it is also a fact, if not so well understood, that our most valuable students come from a class with limited means, though rich in energy, purpose, will, in great thoughts and noble aspirations — ready to help themselves, but needing a field within the possibilities of their at best moderate circumstances.

With the rooms and boarding conveniences to be afforded by our building, as well as the numerous openings for employment as nurses and hospital assistants which will undoubtedly present themselves, this class will be attracted to our halls, and our opportunities for usefulness be thus largely multiplied.

This leads me to remark, finally, that we, as Instructors, are chiefly interested in this occasion as an era in the progress of the benevolent reform which we have espoused — Female Medical Education.

The first stage, (such is the course of all reforms) of curiosity, when many seeming friends flocked to our standard, who afterwards deserted, is passed—the second stage of persecution, ridicule, opposition from the jealous, ignorant and vulgar, is fast passing away, and by this event we are assured that the third and last stage of universal adoption and full acknowledgment is already about to begin.

That all women should study medicine and become practitioners we do not, of course, maintain, and we emphatically deny that there need be any controversy between male and female physicians; but this we do most confidently assert, that, if women are to practice medicine, they should be thoroughly taught in the science and trained in the art, and that such teaching and training should be given in separate schools. This idea, which others have reached through painful experience, our College has maintained from the first. Of it this building will be the architectural embodiment.

I cannot bring these brief remarks to a close without rendering, in behalf of the Board of Instruction, a passing tribute to one who stands, in a sense, midway between Faculty and Trustees, our respected Secretary, the originator of the System of Female Medical Education, certainly in this country, if not in the world! To him this occasion is pregnant with peculiar significance. We almost expect to hear him chant the "Nunc dimittis;" that, however, he will do with greater unction at the Dedication, when we lay the cap-stone with fit rejoicings! God spare us all to see that day! Its fulness of joy we will not anticipate! While others have been seeking pleasure, wealth and honor, our friend long ago bade the recording angel, like the poet's hero,

"Write me as one that loves his fellow men!"
will he not receive, at length, the same plaudit:
"And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!"

### Clergymen.

Rev. Dr. Webb was then called upon, and responded in an earnest and eloquent address in which he fully and heartily endorsed the idea of the education of women for the medical profession. He congratulated the officers of the institution upon the success which had attended their efforts. He believed there was a necessity for such a college in the community, and he should ever stand ready to give it a helping hand and a cheering word.

After the conclusion of the remarks of Dr. Webb, the Doxology was sung and the exercises closed.

Rev. Dr. D. C. Eddy and Rev. Warren H. Cudworth, announced to take part in the exercises, were unavoidably absent. The latter arrived after the close, expressed his regrets, and pledged himself for the Dedication!

## The Building.

The Building is sixty feet in length and thirty-five in the edifice, and share the pleasure in width. The material is brick, with white granite monument of Christian philanthropy?

trimmings; and it will cost something over \$35,000. It is to be completed in October next, in season for the Twenty-third Annual Term, which begins on the First Wednesday of November, 1870. It will be a handsome and commodious edifice, affording excellent educational facilities, and rooms and board for a portion of its students. The Architect is Nathaniel J. Bradlee; who generously donates his services. The Builders are: Jonas Fitch, carpenter work; and Messrs. Lemuel M. Standish and Charles Woodbury, mason work.

### The Lot.

The lot of 40,000 feet of land was purchased of the city, and paid for in full, five years ago, the price being \$15,000, or one-half of its estimated value at the time, the city virtually donating the other half. The location (see Plan of Grounds on next page) is the best in the city for the College, as the students can readily pass back and forth, to assist in the care of the sick, and receive practical instruction in the City Hospital.

### Donations.

Persons desirous to aid the building fund, by sums smaller or larger, can signify the amount they will give when called upon, or can remit their donations to the Treasurer of the College, AMARIAH STORRS, 93 Devonshire street, or the Secretary, at the College, 21 East Canton street.

The Trustees hope and believe that, with a little concerted effort and liberality among the multitude of friends of the institution, they will, with the amount already secured and the donations they will receive, be able to make large advances to the contractors, during the progress of the work, and pay in full when the building is completed.

# To the Reader.

Kind Reader,-You have seen by the foregoing that many years of toil have been expended in initiating and bringing forward this enterprise. You are probably aware that, since it began, the idea it embodies has extended over America and Europe, and that the governments and people of various states and countries have regonized the medical education of women as a necessity for the best interests of society. What here began as an untried experiment has become an assured success; and, by the efforts of Trustees and Professors, the liberality of friends, and the favor of Providence. the little germ has become an established institution, promising a long future of usefulness. We have now come to the crowning work-beyond which there will crrtainly be no hard work to do. Will you not help us? Will you not, at least, place a brick or a stone in the edifice, and share the pleasure of rearing this

For the Board of Trustees,

JOSHUA MERRILL, Pres't, JONAS FITCH, SPENCER W. RICHARDSON. Building Committee.

PLAN OF THE GROUNDS. FRANKLIN SQUARE. SHARON STREET. E. NEWTON STREET. HARRISON ALBANY COLLEGE-CHURCH. STOUGHTON STREET. CATHOLIC 200 feet square. 40,000 square feet. FEMALE MEDICAL COLLEGE. E. CONCORD STREET. HOSPITAL. WORCESTER SQUARE. STREET. AVENUE. E. SPRINGFIELD STREET. EAST CHESTER PARK. The Land between Albany Street and South Bay (a strip about 250 feet wide) is reserved for City purposes. The two wings of the City Hospital on Albany Street are not yet erected.