

1927 Apothekan

History of the College of Pharmacy

by Lillian Russell Smith

It gives one a thrilling sensation to let one's imagination travel back almost a hundred years and find oneself a part of one of those interesting groups of men who gathered at the old Shakespeare Hotel. They met to discuss the past, and look forward toward a successful future. They were a group of wholesale druggists. They spoke about conditions in their field and of the increasing difficulty encountered in securing trained men. Druggists were few. The younger men were not inclined toward following the profession.

John Keese, a graduate of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, which had been established in 1821, and a member of the firm of Lawrence, Keese and Company, suggested founding a college. Mr. Keese was of a scientific turn of mind.

At this proposal a preliminary meeting of wholesalers was called and plans were made for organizing all the druggists. Following this, a general meeting was held March 25th. 1829, at the Shakespeare Hotel, with John Keese presiding and his brother Theodore, acting as Secretary. At this meeting, about thirty pharmacists formed an association to supervise the new institution—the College of Pharmacy of the City and County of New York.

At this meeting the following men were elected to office: John D. Keese, President; Henry H. Schieffelin. John L. Embree and Waldron B. Post, First, Second and Third Vice-Presidents, respectively; Theodore Keese, Treasurer; and Oliver Hull. Secretary. The Trustees were Henry T. Kiersted. Patrick Dickie, Constantine Adamson, P. H. Dalenette, J. C. Havilono and Lindley Murray.

Committees were appointed to draw up the Constitution and make the By-laws. The first meeting of the Board of Trustees was held April 2nd, 1829, at the Shakespeare Hotel. The purpose of the College as set forth in the Constitution was to spread the knowledge of Pharmacy. They were to issue circulars and pamphlets, to act as a forum to discuss charges made against unethical druggists, and to prosecute or expel them, if necessary.

The qualifications for membership were good moral character and an aptitude for the profession. At the first meeting of the Board the following committees and appointments were made: The Lecture Committee included Messrs. Schiefelin, Embree, and Harte. It was their business to secure lecturers in Chemistry and Materia Medica. The Library Committee was to obtain books and specimens. The Standing Committee was to decide any dispute that might arise among the members. The first lecturers to be chosen were Dr. John Torrey and Dr. J. Smith Rogers. The former was Professor of Chemistry in the College of Physicians and Surgeons. He delivered lectures in Chemistry and Physics to our

students. Dr. J. Smith Rogers delivered lectures in Materia Medica. The lectures were advertised in the then existing newspapers and notices were left at the drug stores.



On the first Monday of December, 1829, the College officially opened. Lectures were given three times a week for three months, the fee being three dollars. The pharmacy students shared their lectures with those of the medical students in the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

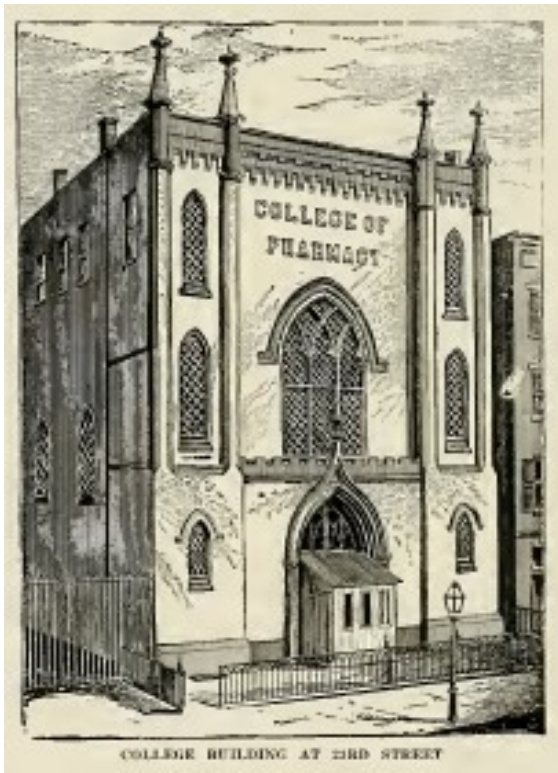
"Dr. Torrey was a very pleasing lecturer and made a lasting impression upon his students. His lectures in Physics and in Chemistry were illustrated. Among the experiments shown were the decomposition of water, burning of metals, Leyden jars and powerful galvanic batteries. Hydrogen and oxygen were exploded in bladders and many other striking and amusing experiments were carried out. Dr. Rogers was a very earnest man. He had a slight protuberance on his cheek. Students could never settle the

question whether the bulging was due to a tumor or a quid of tobacco.

The first year, the Board of Trustees held their meetings at the Shakespeare Hotel, with the exception of one or two meetings which were held at the home of some board member. In 1830 a room for meeting purposes was rented in the "New Dispensary" at White and Center Streets. Here the College held quarterly meetings for a number of years. On March 11th, 1831, the first graduation was held. The members of the graduating class were William W. Lake, Jr., Washington M. Thurman, and George C. Close. The same year, 1831, H. H. Schieffelin was elected President of the College. Through the agitation of members of the College a bill was passed by the City which made it impossible for individuals to practice unless they were graduates with four years of practical experience. Violators were fined \$50.00 and the money was to be used to purchase books for the Library. The act was later modified. The fine was to be used for the support of the Dispensary. Efforts to enforce the act were often vain.

In 1832 lectures were given by Dr. Ellet and Dr. Rogers in rooms of the Lyceum of National History. During this year the College was chartered and empowered to hold property up to the value of twenty thousand dollars. The name of the college was changed to the "College of Pharmacy of the City of New York." The name is retained till the present day. It was difficult find lecture rooms and during the year 1835-6 the lectures were given in the basement of City Hall. The rooms were sublet from the Mechanics Institute. Funds were

very meagre. The Trustees tried to insure a small income by purchasing a building and collecting rent from the occupants.



During the panic of 1837 the College struggled along on fees paid in by the students. The property had been rented and converted into the Fourteenth Ward Hotel. The store facing Elizabeth Street was rented to a stone cutter named Tibbetts. In the midst of this financial crisis the holder of the mortgage demanded payment. In attempting to find someone to take the mortgage, the Trustees learned that the College had no right to mortgage its property and that to do this a special proviso in the charter was necessary. The building was to be sold at auction, and the College was threatened with terrible loss. One can feel those tense dramatic moments. Then, thanks to John Carle, Jr., one of the members of the College, the building was bought for \$6,750.00. He held it for two years until the required proviso could be inserted. From 1836- 41, lectures were held in the

rooms of the New Dispensary. The room boasted of two metal suspended lamps, a table, several settees, a chemical stove that constantly required repairing, a small library from which books were borrowed but often never returned, and glassware apparatus. Faithful Mr. Fennel, apothecary of the Dispensary, cared for the rooms. The lights and the stove did much to add to the comfort of professors and students. An appeal was made to the City in 1833 for grounds to erect a building. Another was made to the City and Legislature in 1834 and still another to the State in 1838-9 but in vain. In 1841 the College left the Dispensary and found rooms over Lockwood's Bookstore at 285 Broadway. Throughout the next twelve or fifteen years the College progressed fairly well and the Trustees managed to make ends meet. Women have been admitted since 1836. In 1842-3 there were 28 students, five of whom presented themselves for finals. These were conducted orally by members of the Board of Trustees in the presence of the professors. In 1845 Dr. McGreedy and Dr. Reed increased their lecture courses in length and scope. During the presidency of John Millhan, 1847-51, the College took an active part in the agitation of the Federal Drug Inspection Law, which subsequently was placed on the Statute Books. The heated controversy involving several publishers of pharmacopoeias was decided by the College in favor of the pharmacopoeia printed in Philadelphia. The New York publishers were induced to abandon their claims. The years 1855-60 were critical years. Bondholders demanded repayment of capital and at times the College faced dissolution. It was by great economy and sacrifice

together with much litigation that the College managed to pay off its debts and continued to exist. In 1861, Ferdinand Feist Mayer succeeded Dr. Doremus. The former became famous through his alkaloidal reagent. In 1869 he disappeared mysteriously. Dr. John M. Maisch became connected with the school in 1863-4 and gained national distinction for his work in Organic Materia Medica.

Courses under various noted lecturers continued. Dr. Alexander H. Everett, of Columbia University, lectured in Chemistry. Dr. Charles F. Chandler was Teacher and Trustee for 46 years. Dr. Charles Rice was Trustee, Librarian and Examiner for 33 years and Dr. E. R. Squibb, was a Teacher and Trustee for a number of years. These are but a few of the men who stand out in the history of the College.

A Board of Pharmacy was created under the State Law, the members being elected by the New York College of Pharmacy. In 1877, Grace Chapel was purchased and altered for College purposes. This was the first time the College was properly housed.

In 1889 Dr. H. H. Rusby, our present Dean, was appointed to the Faculty. His life has been the greatest single contribution to Pharmacy.

In 1892, during the Presidency of Dr. Fairchild, the College purchased three lots and the present building was erected. It is one of the finest equipped in the country. In 1923 an additional wing was added to the building. The present student body numbers 700 members. Throughout the World War the resources and equipment of the College were at the disposal of the government. Men, selected by proper authorities, were trained in various medical and pharmaceutical sciences, and a Student Army Training Corps established. It was in 1894 that the College became affiliated with Columbia University.

In this brief sketch, many of the most interesting human touches have been omitted. A true history of the College must embrace the stories of the lives of the men who gave their all to mold its character and destiny.

NOTE: The material used in this article was obtained from several articles upon the History of the College of Pharmacy of the City of New York, written for publication by Professor Curt P. Wimmer.

Apothekian, Class of 1927, College of Pharmacy of the City of New York, New York, NY: F. J. Pokorny, 1927.
<http://www.archives.org/details/clarion1927colu>.