

Ann Preston, M.D. papers

WM.SC.537

Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel, May 2011..

Last updated on June 30, 2011.

Drexel University, College of Medicine Legacy Center

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	3
Scope and Contents.....	5
Administrative Information.....	6
Collection Inventory.....	7
Ann Preston files.....	7
Collected copies of Ann Preston files.....	8

Summary Information

Repository	Drexel University: College of Medicine Legacy Center
Creator	Preston, Ann, 1813-1872
Title	Ann Preston, M.D. papers
Call number	WM.SC.537
Date [inclusive]	1831-1880
Extent	0.67 linear feet (1 document box, 1 flat box)
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Ann Preston (1813-1872) was a pioneer in women's medical education. She graduated from the first class of the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania (later the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania) in 1851, served on the faculty, founded the Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia and a nursing school, and became the first woman dean of the Female Medical College in 1866. This collection documents Dr. Preston's early life, and to a lesser degree, her medical career and the successes, as well as the challenges, that she and other women physicians faced in the mid nineteenth century.</p>

Biography/History

Ann Preston (1813-1872) was a pioneer in women's medical education. She graduated from the first class of the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1851, served on the faculty, founded the Woman's

Hospital of Philadelphia and a nursing school, and became the first woman dean of the Female Medical College in 1866. However, in addition to her contributions in medicine, Dr. Preston was also, “both moral and political reformer, visionary, fund-raiser, and institution builder,” (Peitzman, p. 45).

Ann Preston was born on December 1, 1813 at West Grove, Pennsylvania, the daughter of Amos and Margaret Smith Preston. Dr. Preston’s father was a farmer, a land owner and a Quaker minister, who imbued the family with the belief “in the Quaker principles of equality, simplicity and pacifism” (Hertzog, p. 64). Dr. Preston obtained her education at the local Quaker school as well as a Quaker boarding school located in West Chester, Pennsylvania. She left school as a result of her mother’s illness in order to care for her family, but she continued her education informally via local literary associations and the lyceum. During this time, she became active in the Clarkson Anti-Slavery Society and worked towards abolition, temperance and women’s rights. She also wrote poems and a book of children’s rhymes, *Cousin Ann’s Stories*.

Dr. Preston became interested in “educating women about their own bodies,” (National Library of Medicine) and therefore, became a teacher of physiology and hygiene to women. Her interest in medicine led her to apprentice with Dr. Nathaniel Moseley for two years. In 1847, she applied to four medical colleges in Philadelphia, but was rejected from all of them. In 1850, the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania was founded and Dr. Preston enrolled in the first class, graduating in December of 1851 at the age of 38. She remained at the Female Medical College for an additional year of education, and in 1853, she was appointed professor of physiology and hygiene at the College.

Despite the progress made for women’s education in medicine, women were still not entirely accepted by their male colleagues. In an introductory lecture to her students, Dr. Preston states, “while to a large portion of thinking and observing men, the medical education of women appears to be the natural result of the progress of society, there are others who still regard it as some abnormal social phenomenon; some abrupt and fantastic freak of unbridled liberty, unfitted to stand the test of time and experience,” (Preston, page 6). Indeed, in response to those who viewed women in medicine with suspicion, Dr. Preston began three years of fundraising in order to “establish a woman’s hospital in Philadelphia that would help poor women and give women doctors in training clinical experience,” (Hertzog, page 67). She succeeded in 1861 when the Woman’s Hospital of Philadelphia was founded and “women were finally able to obtain a medical education that included both a classroom and a clinical experience, something that male students had been enjoying for decades,” (Hertzog, p. 67). Continuing in her efforts to provide women with education and experience, Dr. Preston established a school of nursing in 1863.

In 1866, Dr. Preston became the first woman dean of Female Medical College of Pennsylvania, which a year later changed its name to Women’s Medical College of Pennsylvania. As dean, Dr. Preston was faced with continued lack of support from male physicians in the city. In 1867, “the Philadelphia Medical Society formally ostracized [the Women’s Medical College of Pennsylvania] making women inadmissible to membership in any of the state’s medical societies and closing teaching opportunities to them” (Lerner, page 408). In response to their statement, Dr. Preston responded, “that we have not had the facilities for acquiring medical information is a charge that, it seem to us, should hardly come from those who have systematically closed hospitals and colleges against our applications for admission, and who have endeavored to prevent the members of the fraternity from assisting us in our struggle for knowledge,” (Lerner, page 414). Dr. Preston, however, continued to work so that her students could attend clinics at both Philadelphia Hospital, Blockley and the Pennsylvania Hospital because, “although her students attended clinics at the Woman’s Hospital of Philadelphia, which [Dr. Preston] had founded in

1861, she did not want their education limited only to female patients or female-related issues,” (Hertzog, page 60). The infamous “jeering incident” occurred in 1869 during which female medical students attending a clinic at Philadelphia Hospital were harassed by male medical students.

In 1862, 1869 and again in 1871, Dr. Preston suffered from what was probably rheumatic fever. She never completely recovered from her illness in 1871 and she died on April 18, 1872 in Philadelphia. According to Steve Peitzman, “it is generally agreed that [Dr. Preston’s] inspiration and leadership carried the school from its tremulous beginnings to its first years of stable credibility,” (Peitzman, page 45).

Bibliography:

Hertzog, Kate. *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Pennsylvania Women*. Guilford, CT: TwoDot, 2007.

Lerner, Gerda, editor. *The Female Experience: an American Documentary*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

National Library of Medicine. Dr. Ann Preston. (http://www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/physicians/biography_256.html), accessed June 7, 2011).

Peitzman, Steve J. *A New and Untried Course: Women’s Medical College and Medical College of Pennsylvania*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000.

Preston, Ann. *Introductory lecture to the class of the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: A. Ketterlinus, 1859.

Scope and Contents

The Ann Preston, M.D. papers documents the early life, and to a lesser degree, the medical career of Ann Preston (1813-1872). The collection is divided into two series, "Ann Preston files" and "Collected copies of Ann Preston files."

The first series consists of ten files, most of which were created before Dr. Preston attended the Female Medical College in 1851. These materials include her family Bible, four poems, and *Cousin Ann's Stories for Children*, which was published in 1849. The remaining materials relate directly to Dr. Preston's medical career and include a text book, *System of Human Anatomy, General and Special*; an address regarding the centennial anniversary of the Pennsylvania Hospital; four addresses/lectures by Ann Preston, directly relating to the Woman's Medical College and women physicians; several letters to her friend Sarah Coates; and an 1856 letter to the Board of Managers of the Pennsylvania Hospital, in which she states: "The undersigned--a graduate and practitioner of medicine would respectfully state that a year ago she applied for a ticket to visit this institution, subject to the regulations under which Physicians and students are admitted, but that her application was not successful," and that she "earnestly trusts that this noble charity of her native state may no longer be closed against her" (Ann Preston papers, Box 1,

Folder 6). These materials provide documentation on both Preston's successes as well as the challenges the challenges that all women physicians faced. The materials in this series are arranged chronologically.

The second series, "Collected copies of Ann Preston files," consist of photocopies of materials housed in other repositories, primarily the Chester County Historical Society. Information regarding the collected materials and locations of originals may be found in box 1, folder 16. The bulk of the material is correspondence, especially to Hannah M. Darlington. Other correspondents include Sarah Coates, Lavinia M. Passmore, and Dr. William Darlington. The largest number of letters are addressed to Hannah M. Darlington and discuss friendship, politics, her study of botany, abolition, and current events. She also discusses her education in medicine, stating, "The joy of exploring a new field of knowledge, the rest from accustomed pursuits and cares, the stimulus of competition, the novelty of a new kind of life, are all mine, and all for the time possess a charm," (Box 1, Folder 11). There are several letters from the year 1860 to Ann Preston from William Darlington regarding the Female Medical College. Most of the letters that are included in this series have been transcribed. Finally, there is an address given by Dr. Elizabeth E. Judson on the occasion of Dr. Preston's death providing insight into the wide-reaching effect Preston had on the field of medicine.

Administrative Information

Drexel University, College of Medicine Legacy Center
Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel, May 2011..

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may apply. Please contact the Legacy Center for permission to quote, copy or publish.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Part of this collection was a gift from Mrs. Marc Dowdell, 1950.

Collection Inventory

Ann Preston files, 1586-1870.

	Box	Folder
Preston family Bible (includes family register in center), 1838.	1	1
Poem, "The Child's Playhouse", 1842.	1	2
Poem, "To a departed sister", 1843.	1	3
<i>Cousin Ann's Stories for Children</i> (Philadelphia, J.M. McKim; 36 pages), 1849.	1	4
<i>System of Human Anatomy, general and special</i> , by Wilson Erasmus, M.D. (Philadelphia), 1850. Owned, signed and annotated.	2	1
<i>Address on the Occasion of the Centennial Celebration of the Founding of the Pennsylvania Hospital</i> , by George B. Wood, M.D., 1851. Owned, signed and annotated.	2	2
Addresses and lectures (including an introductory lecture, 2 valedictory addresses, and "Women as Physicians", 1855, 1858, 1867, 1870.	1	5
Letter to the Board of Managers of the Pennsylvania Hospital, 1856.	1	6
Letters to Sarah Coates, 1831 March 21, undated. 1 folder.	1	7
Poem, "It's Good to Live. A Thanksgiving Hymn", undated.	1	8
Poem, "Remember me when far away ...", undated.	1	9

Collected copies of Ann Preston files

Collected copies of Ann Preston files, 1831-1873.

	Box	Folder
Letters to Sarah Coates, 1831, 1846, undated.	1	10
Letters to unknown recipients, 1831, 1854.	1	11
Letters to Hannah M. Darlington, 1833-1851, undated.	1	12
Letters to Lavinia M. Passmore, 1843, 1860, 1868.	1	13
Letters from William Darlington, 1860.	1	14
"Address in Memory of Ann Preston, M.D.," by Elizabeth E. Judson, M.D., 1873 March 11.	1	15
Letter to Dr. Alsop, undated.	1	16
Information regarding the collected copies and locations of originals, 1968-1969.	1	17