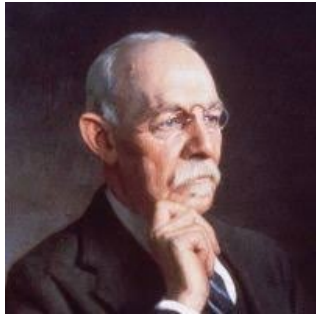




# Daniel Hale Williams: The Orphaned Shoemaker Turned Founding Surgeon



**Annual Meeting of the Halsted Society  
University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston  
September 24-27<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

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Mallory Williams, MD, MPH, FACS

Chair

Department of Trauma and Burn

John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital of Cook County

Professor of Surgery

Rush University Medical College

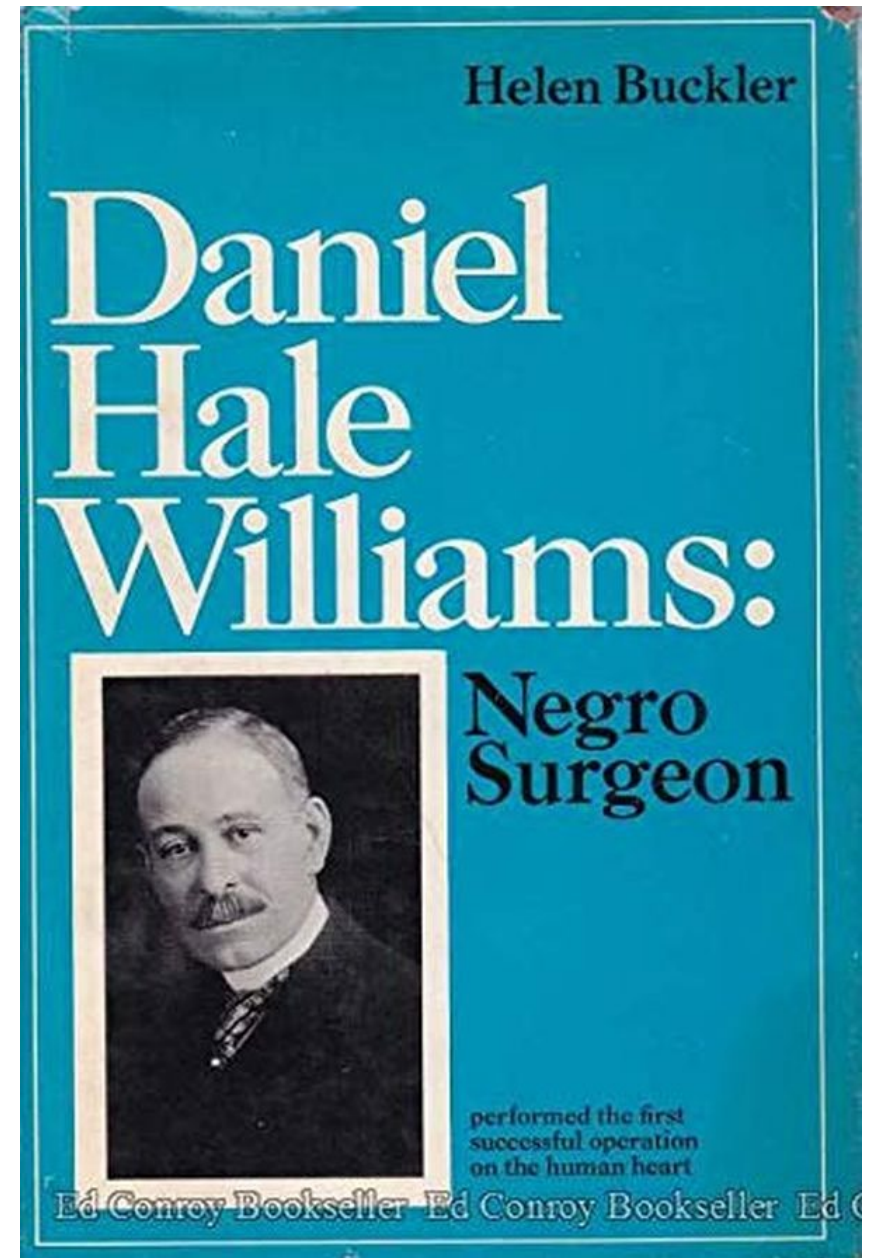


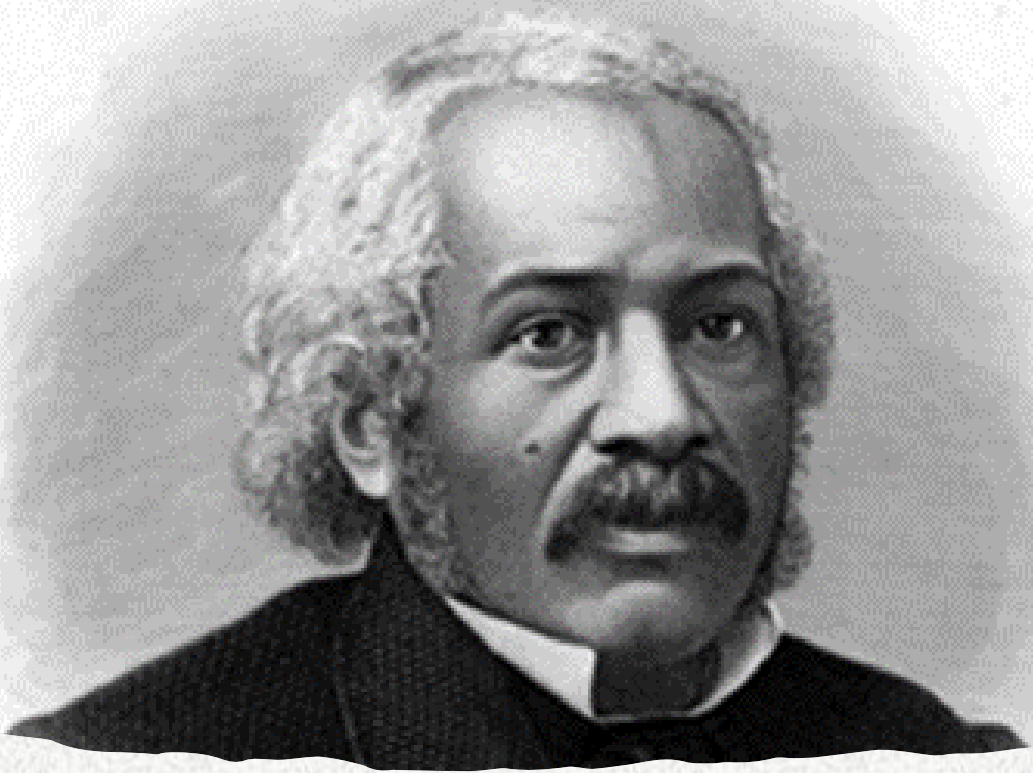
**Photo courtesy of the  
Provident Foundation**

# Disclosures

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# None





**Dr. James McCune Smith**  
**1837 University of Glasgow**

“No man in this country more thoroughly understands the whole struggle between freedom and slavery than does Dr. Smith, and his heart is as broad as his understanding.” -Frederick Douglass

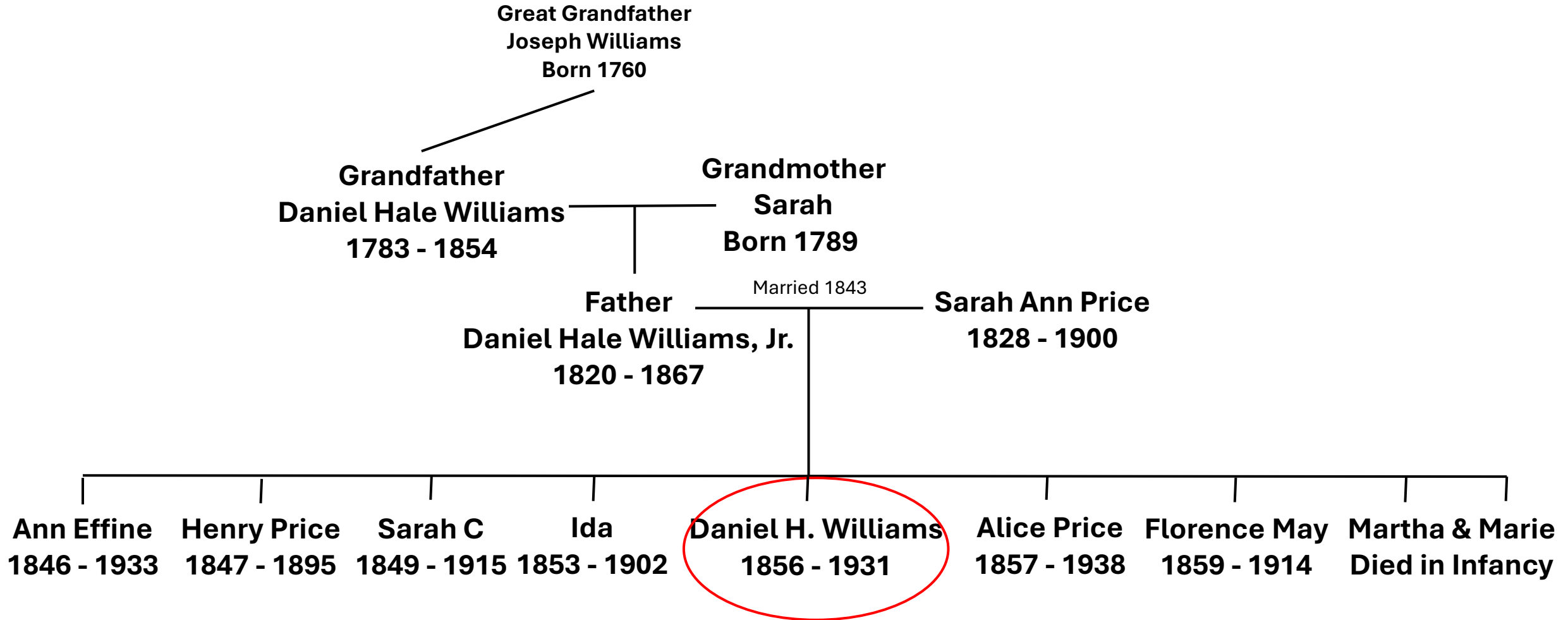
“The closest equivalent I really can say about [him] as a writer is [Herman] Melville,”  
-John Stauffer, Professor of History, Harvard University



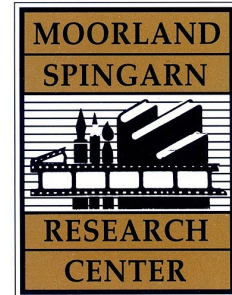
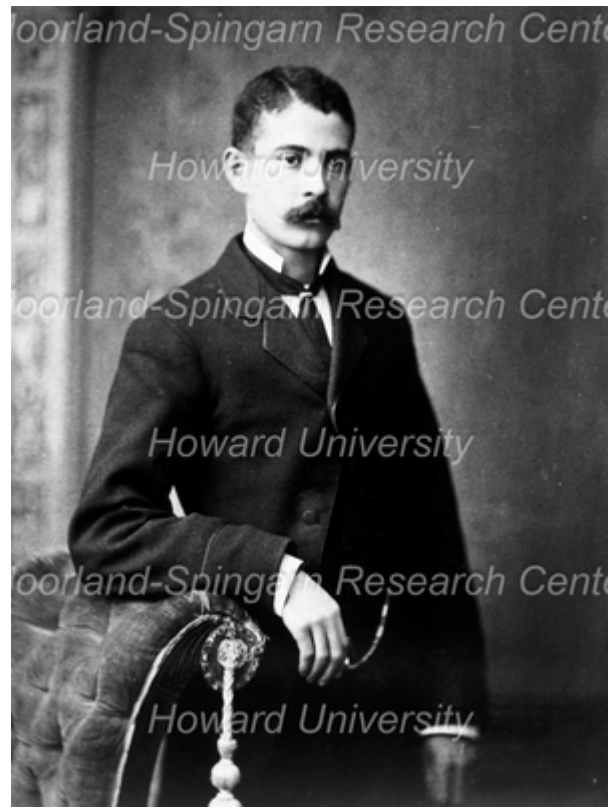
**Dr. David Jones Peck**  
**1847 Rush Medical College**

“I draw inspiration from his fight for social justice and equality...”  
-Theodore Corbin, MD, MPP, FACEP

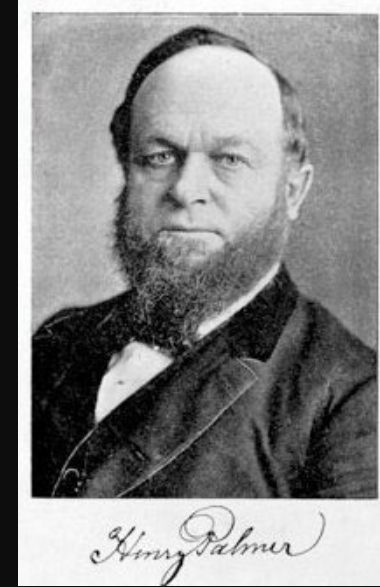
# Genealogical Chart of the Williams Family



# Dr. Dan's Progression



# Henry Palmer, MD



- **Surgeon General, State of Wisconsin**
- **Brigadier Surgeon, Civil War**
- **Mayor of Janesville, Wisconsin**





**Initial Large Contributors**

Dr. Daniel Hale Williams \$200

H. H. Kolsaat, \$200

Mrs. Florence Pullman, \$200

Dr. F. C. Greene, \$200

P. D. Armour \$200

Rabbi Emil Hirsch  
Young Men's Hebrew  
Association \$100

Sunday School of the Third  
Presbyterian Church \$41.40

**29<sup>th</sup> Street & Dearborn**

**PROVIDENT HOSPITAL**

Provident Hospital and Nurse-training School, founded in 1891, in the interests and welfare of the colored people of Chicago, is the second largest institution of its kind in the North. It is operated by a joint board of white and colored directors. Though its capacity is but seventy-five beds, its proximity to the colored neighborhood and the quality of its service make it of special interest to the life of colored Chicago. Located at 29th and Dearborn Streets.

# Advisory Board, Provident Hospital

- Honorable Walter Q. Gresham
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- Dr. Frank S. Johnson
- Dr. Ralph N. Isham

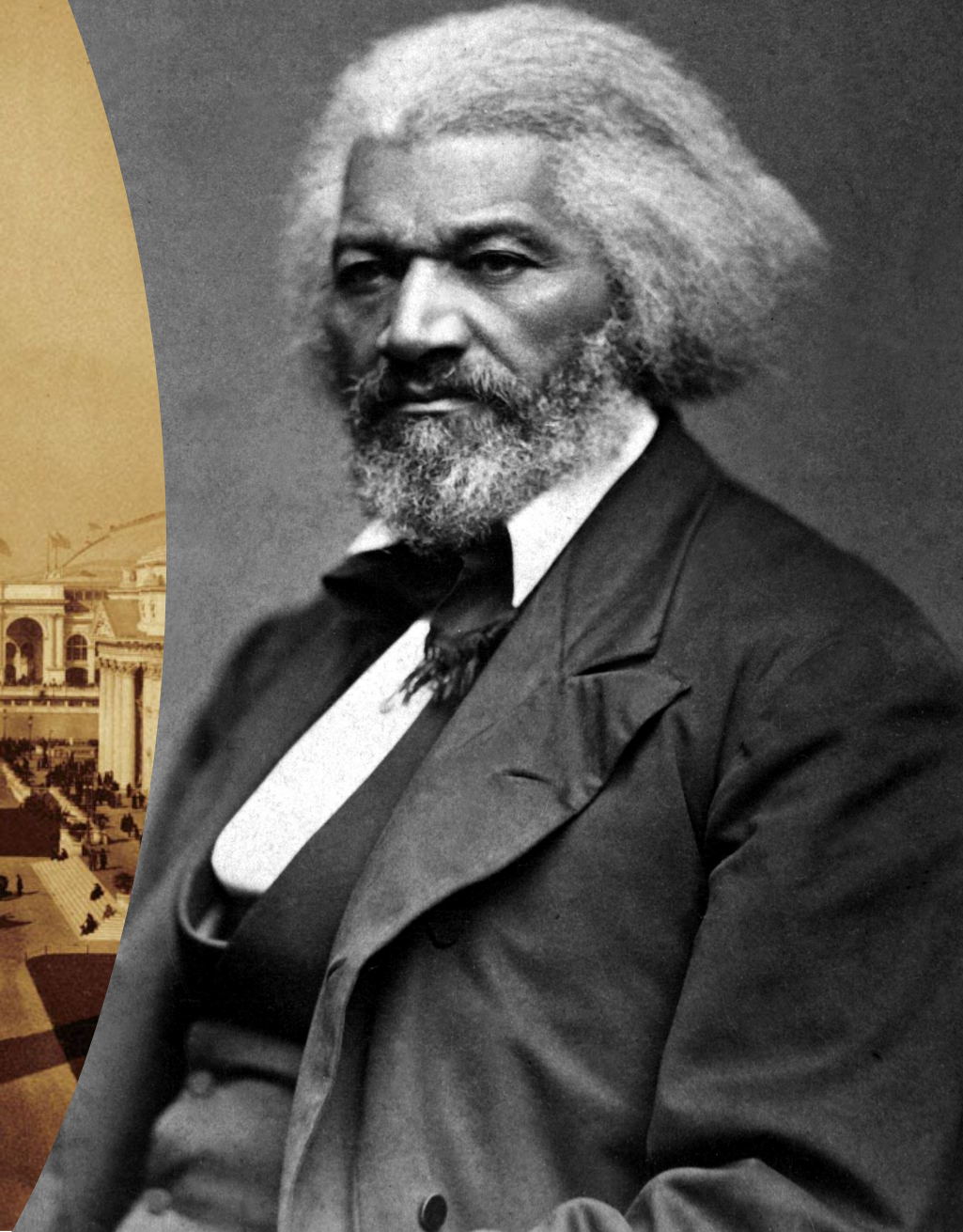
# Frederick Douglass

IMAGES  
of America

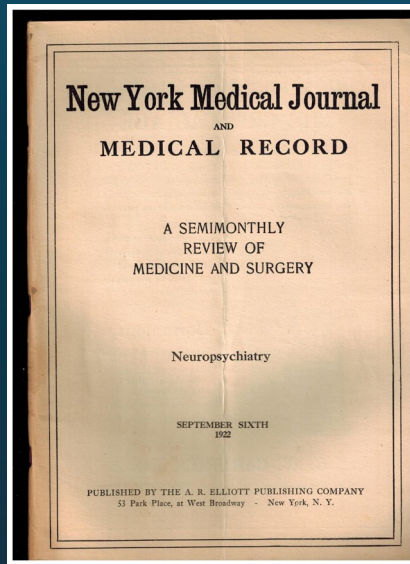
## CHICAGO'S 1893 WORLD'S FAIR

- U. S. Minister to Haiti
- Attended Fair as Commissioner
- “Cousin”
- Speech on Southside – Lynching
- “...override the obstacles in your way . By the power that is within you, my boy.”

Joseph M. Di Cola and David Stone



# Provident Hospital, Chicago, IL



## STAB WOUND OF THE HEART AND PERICARDIUM—SUTURE OF THE PERICARDIUM—RECOVERY—PATIENT ALIVE THREE YEARS AFTERWARD.

BY DANIEL H. WILLIAMS, M.D.

Surgeon, Freedmen's Hospital, Washington, D. C.

The following case is deemed of sufficient importance to be reported three and a half years after its occurrence. The writer's illness about the time of the patient's recovery and a change of duties to his present position have prevented previous publication.

James Cornish, an expressman, aged twenty-four years, during an altercation received a stab wound through the fifth costal cartilage, injuring the internal mammary vessels and wounding the pericardium and heart. The kind of knife and length of blade could not be determined from the patient.

He was admitted to Provident Hospital, Chicago, July 9, 1893, at 7:30 P.M., with a stab wound about one inch long, three-fourths of an inch to the left of the sternum, through and in the long axis of the fifth cartilage. A probe recognized only a superficial wound, but during the night there were such persistent

Fig 3. Title and first paragraphs of Dr. Williams's article from the Medical Record [1].



New York Medical Record 51:457  
March 1897

July 9, 1893

James Cornish



Claude Beck, MD, Elliot Cutler, MD, and Samuel Levine, MD  
Peter Bent Brigham Hospital



Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, Boston, MA

## FIRST SURGICAL OPERATION ON THE HEART

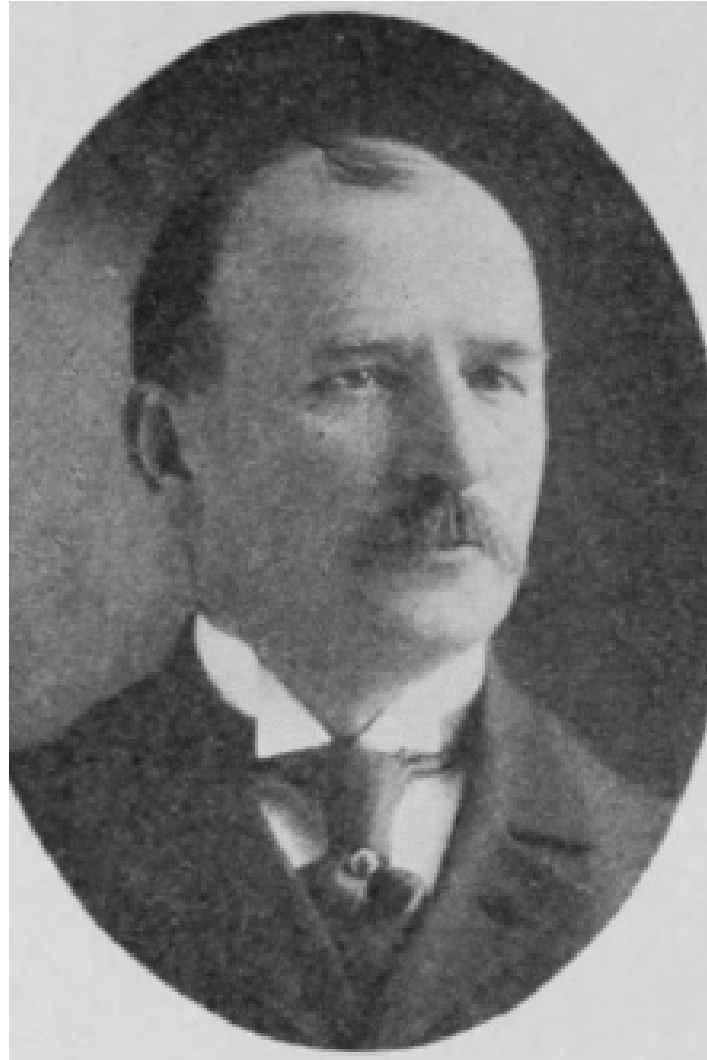
*To the Editor:*—In the Correspondence column of *THE JOURNAL*, Sept. 7, 1935, is a communication from Dr. Charles H. Garvin of Cleveland calling attention to the fact that on July 9, 1893, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, Negro surgeon of the Provident Hospital in Chicago, performed a successful surgical exploration of the heart for a stab wound. Dr. Williams later recorded his case in the *New York Medical Record* (51:437 [March 27] 1897) under the title "Stab Wound of Heart and Pericardium." Dr. Garvin was stimulated to write this article after reading a report by Drs. George Benet and Charles Spivey in the June 1 issue of *THE JOURNAL* because these physicians stated that "the first recorded attempt to suture a stab wound of the heart was made by Cappelen in 1895."

Dr. Garvin has further stated in the leading editorial of the November 1935 issue of the *Journal of the National Medical Association* that Dr. Williams "takes priority in successful operation for stab wound of human heart."

Since Dr. Benet's statement rested on information derived from me, I feel it proper to call attention here to the fact that Dr. Daniel Williams in his own report of his case stated that "there was no hemorrhage from the heart or pericardium." Dr. Williams then proceeded to close the wound in the pericardium, having found no wound in the heart. The hemorrhage apparently came from division of the internal mammary vessel. In view of this and in view of a study of Cappelen's original report (*Norsk. mag. f. Lægevidensk.* 11:285, 1896) it seems only fair to give to Cappelen priority in making a deliberate attempt to suture a wound of the heart.

I cannot give accurate data concerning first attempts to suture wounds of the pericardium, in which category Dr. Williams' case belongs, but it is known that Romero of Barcelona as early as 1819 practiced pericardiostomy for pericarditis (see

Henry C. Dalton, MD  
Superintendent  
St. Louis City  
Hospital



September 6, 1891

REPORT OF A CASE OF STAB-WOUND OF THE  
PERICARDIUM, TERMINATING IN RECOVERY  
AFTER RESECTION OF A RIB AND  
SUTURE OF THE PERICAR-  
DIUM.<sup>1</sup>

By H. C. DALTON, M.D.,

OF ST. LOUIS,

PROFESSOR OF ABDOMINAL AND CLINICAL SURGERY IN THE MARION-SIMS  
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE.

THE caption of this paper would give a better idea of its contents had I given it the title of Stab-Wounds of the Thorax; for, in addition to the history of the case of pericardial injury, I discuss thoracic stab-wounds in general.

Eugene L., aged twenty-two, entered the City Hospital, September 6, 1891, with the following history:

One hour before admission, while engaged in a fight, he was cut in the left breast, the injury being followed by a feeling of faintness and nausea. When admitted to the hospital, a wound half an inch in length was found an inch and a half above the left nipple. There was little hæmorrhage from the wound. Percussion showed normal cardiac dulness. The percussion of chest showed absence of dulness.

The wound was cleaned and a dressing of antiseptic gauze applied. Temperature was 99.5° F., pulse 110, respiration 28.

Ten hours after admission to the hospital temperature was 101° F., pulse 112, respiration 40. Percussion now gave dulness over entire left side; respiration was superficial. The patient complained of considerable pain.

He was taken to the amphitheatre and the dressing removed.

<sup>1</sup> Read at the Mississippi Valley Medical Association Meeting at Hot Springs, Ark., November 23, 1894.



PRO HYDROPE PECTORIS, PULMONUM  
ANASARCA, ET HYDROPEICARDIO COGNOSCENDIS;  
ET NOVA METHODUS  
DICTOS MORBOS OPERANDI,  
Cum aliis utilibus Notionibus Apollineam profectibus  
Artem.

A FRANCISCO ROMERO, Medicinæ Doctore, Exer-  
citiuum Hispaniarum antiquitatis Medico, Sertorianæ  
Hosceusis Universitatis in Aragoniâ, olim Medicinæ  
publico Professore, Balnearum thermalium Atha-  
næ Directore, Barcinonensis Collegii chirurgici  
Licentiato, ejusdem civitatis Academiam Medicinæ  
practicæ, et Societatis Medicæ Scholæ Parisiensis,  
in extraneorum Classe recenter creato Socio, et  
Theologiæ Universitatis Cerrariensis Baccalaureo.

*Novum posteritati sanitatis condidi signum,*  
anno 1801.



PARISIIS,

Apud viduam JUVENONIS, in viâ dictâ Hautefeuille,  
NUM. 20.

“I have established a new medical landmark for posterity, in the year 1801”

PENETRATING WOUNDS OF THE CHEST, PERFORATING THE DIAPHRAGM, AND INVOLVING THE ABDOMINAL VISCERA.

CASE OF SUCCESSFUL SPLEEN SUTURE FOR TRAUMATIC HÆMORRHAGE.

BY DANIEL H. WILLIAMS, M.D.,  
OF CHICAGO,

Attending Surgeon to the Cook County and Provident Hospitals.

PENETRATING wounds of the thorax, perforating the diaphragm, and involving the abdominal viscera stand in a class by themselves, presenting features which require immediate decision in diagnosis and departures in treatment not generally advocated or practised. They are discussed in the text-books and literature from a diagnostic point of view, and the treatment most generally advocated is conservative, doubtless on account of the uncertainty of positive conclusions as to the organ or organs involved, and as well the greater uncertainty as to operative results.

Penetrating wounds of the chest, above and not involving the diaphragm, are of common occurrence, and are met with almost daily in the wards of the larger hospitals in cities. They form a very important part of the work of the active surgeon, and are eminently important and intricate, from their very necessary vital relations. In diagnosis many of them baffle interpretation. In treatment only the exceptional one bears active interference.

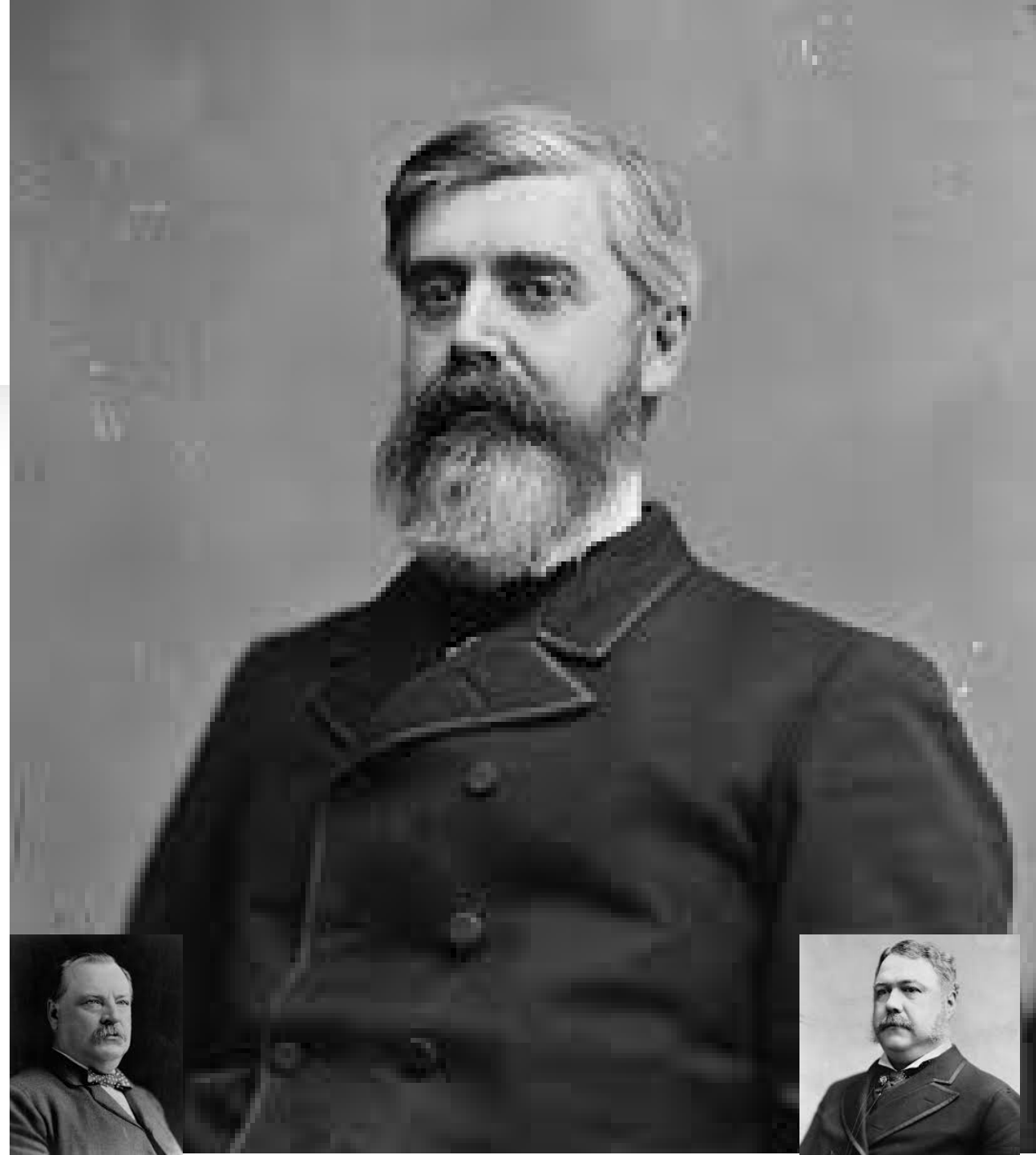
In comparison with the abdomen or brain, the thoracic region is an uncultivated field. Men who are bold in invading other parts of the body, hesitate, palliate, procrastinate, and often withdraw, when confronted with a penetrating wound of the chest, especially when it involves the abdominal viscera. The same hesitancy long controlled operators in dealing with penetrating wounds of the abdomen and organs in the upper

675



# Honorable Walter Q. Gresham

- Member of the Hamilton Club
- Member of the Advisory Board, Provident
- 33<sup>rd</sup> U. S. Sec of State, Pres. Cleveland





**2003 Johnson H. Johnson School of Communications**



**Freedman's Hospital**



# Dr. Dan's Innovation

© Moorland-Spingarn Research Center



© Moorland-Spingarn Research Center

## Founding of the National Medical Association 1895



Booker T. Washington



Piedmont Park, Atlanta, GA

# The Marriage of Dr. Dan to Alice D. Johnson

1898

## To Dan

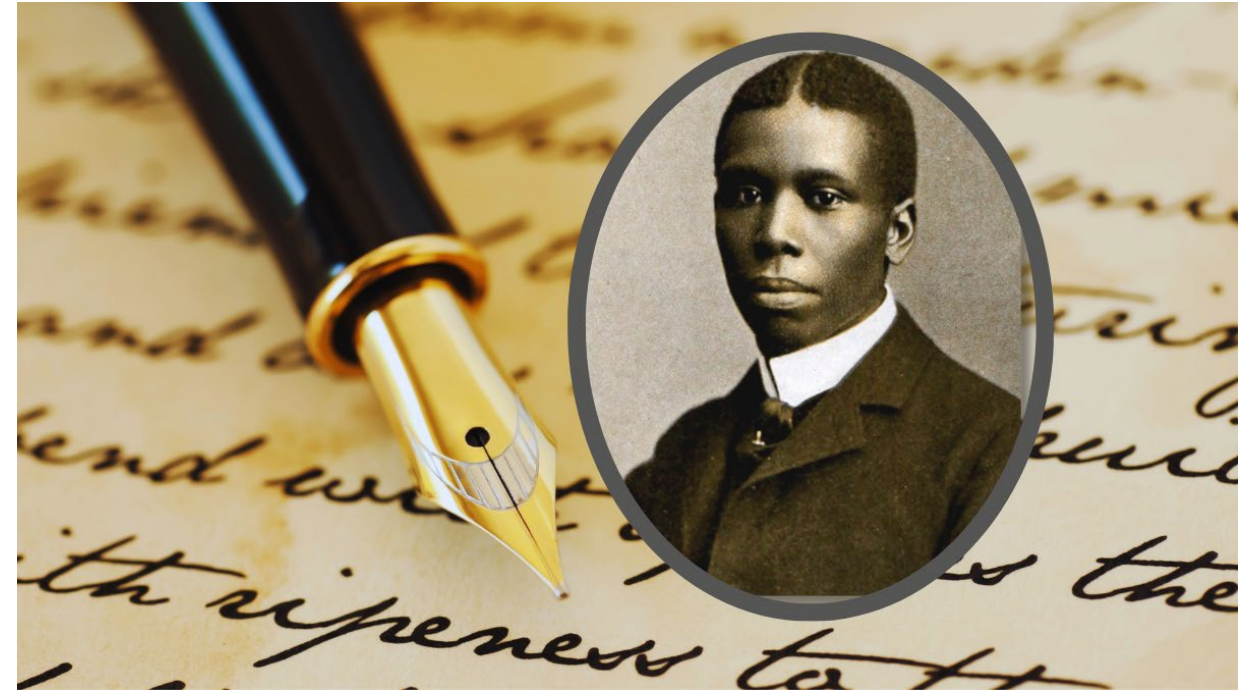
Step me now a bridal measure  
Work give way to love and leisure  
Hearts be free and hearts be gay-  
Doctor Dan doth we today.

Diagnosis, cease your squalling-  
Check the scalpel's senseless bawling,  
Put that ugly knife away-  
Doctor Dan doth wed today...

Wish them happy days and many,  
Troubles few and griefs not any  
Lift your brimming cups and say  
God bless them who wed today...



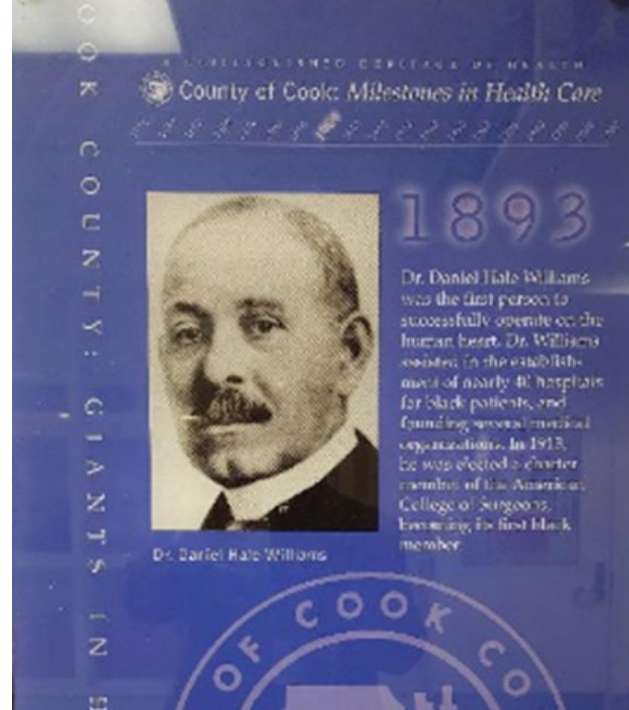
Alice D. Johnson



Paul Laurence Dunbar



DuSable- Daniel H. Williams Preparatory School of Medicine



# MEDICAL HISTORY

## ESSAYISTS, ESSAYS, AND HOSTS: DANIEL HALE WILLIAMS MEDICAL READING CLUB

Theresa Greene Reed, MD, MPH, and C. Carnot Evans, Jr, MD  
Rockville, Maryland and Washington, DC

The 66-year-old Daniel Hale Williams Medical Reading Club is an independent reading club comprised of 65 physicians in the metropolitan Washington, DC, area. Members representing all specialty fields meet six times a year for dinner and fellowship, to consider topics of common interest to the profession, and to hear a prepared lecture given by a featured essayist. Club members take turns as hosts for each meeting. This article gives a historical list of these meetings, naming the essayist and the topic, the hosts, and the site of the meetings. (*J Natl Med Assoc.* 1996;88:663-677.)

Historian Dr. William Montague Cobb (1904-1990) wrote about the Metropolitan Washington, DC, reading clubs in his 1939 book, *The First Negro Medical Society*:

The growth of these small societies has been an interesting phenomenon. There are now six of them, ranging in membership from 11 to 24, and including a total of 100 physicians, who are also members of the Medico-Chirurgical Society, and one zoologist. All of the clubs have essentially the same plan of organization and operation.<sup>1</sup>

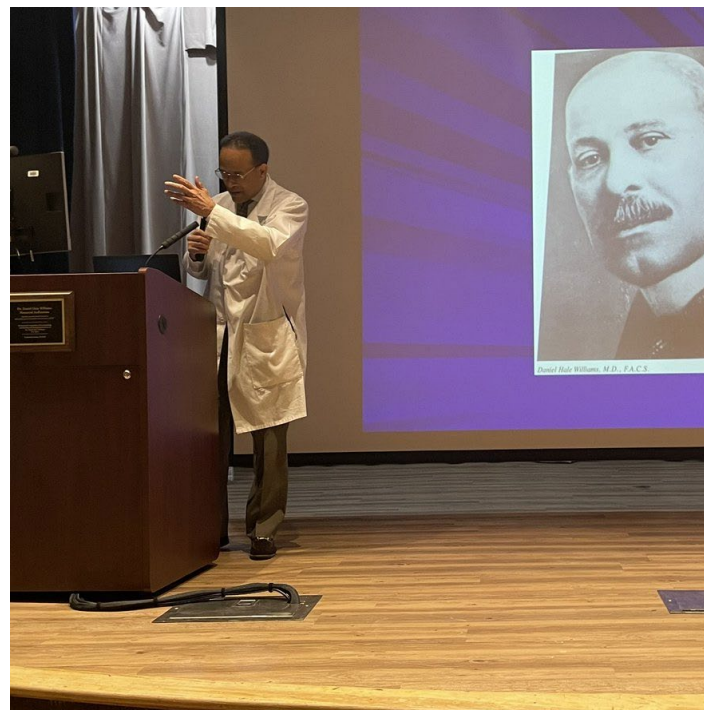
Dr Cobb noted that the social aspects of professional association were emphasized. Clubs met once a month and invariably there was a collation of some sort. The expense was borne jointly by the hosts and members who paid a predetermined fee. Each member entertained his club in roster turn. Club names were the

Physicians' Fortnightly Reading Club, the Alexander T. Augusta Medical Reading Club, the Third Medical Reading Club, the Pasteur Medical Reading Club, the Fourth Medical Reading Club, and the Daniel Hale Williams Medical Reading Club.

The 66-year-old Daniel Hale Williams Medical Reading Club was the sixth, the largest, and the last of the clubs to be instituted. It was formed in 1929 by Drs Charles Wendell Freeman, Ogban Napoleon Simmons, William Frank Nelson, and others and had enrolled 24 members by 1939, including Dr Cobb, when he wrote his book. Dr Phillip T. Johnson was the first president. The Daniel Hale Williams Medical Reading Club survives today, uses a similar meeting plan, and is now comprised of 65 members, women and men representing virtually all of the medical specialties. The programs consist of a social hour and dinner followed by an essay on the previously announced subject with informal discussion. In 1939, Dr Cobb wrote that:

The average age of the physicians in this club is probably younger than that of the other reading clubs, and with this group the activities which are properly those of a regular men's club, have reached their fullest expression.<sup>2</sup>

Daniel Hale Williams (1856-1931), an 1883 graduate of Chicago Medical College and founder of Chicago's Provident Hospital, was appointed surgeon-in-chief of Freedmen's Hospital and Asylum, the government's hospital for Negroes in Washington, DC, on February 15, 1894, succeeding Dr Charles Purvis.<sup>3,4</sup> Dr Williams said "Freedmen's Hospital and Asylum was more an



1856-1931

THE COOK COUNTY PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION  
THE LOCAL BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (NMA)

PRESENTS  
THE 38<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
DR. DANIEL HALE WILLIAMS LECTURE  
"VIOLENCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRAUMA"

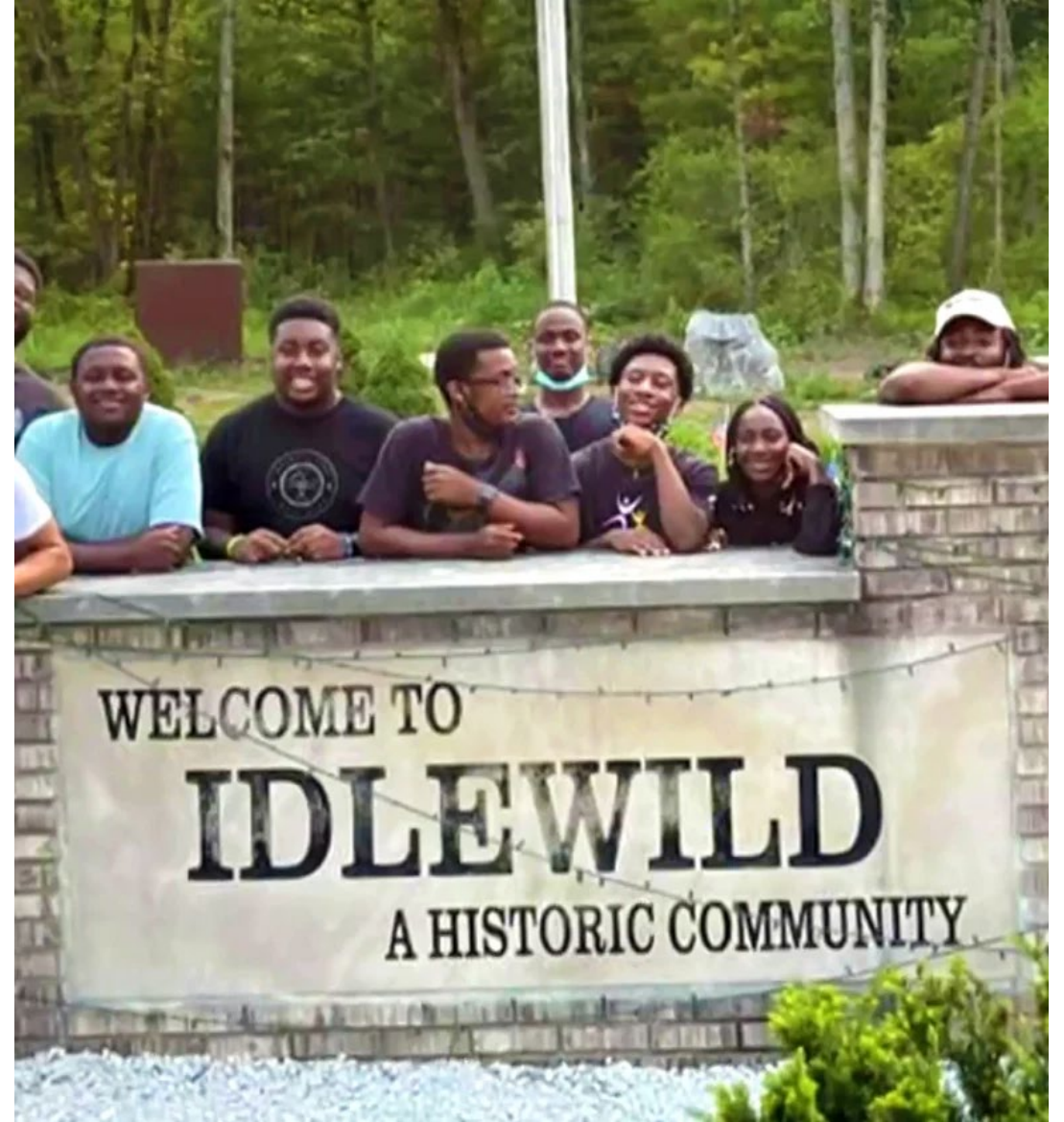
KIMBERLY JOSEPH M.D., F.A.C.S.  
SELWYN ROGERS Jr. M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.S.  
MALLORY WILLIAMS M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.S.  
MARIPAT ZESCHKE, R.N.C.-E.F.M., M.S.N.

OCTOBER 11, 2018  
RUSH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

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15712 Lake Drive, Idlewild, MI



# The Will of Dr. Dan

- Sisters
- Brother's widow
- Housekeeper & Secretary
- \$2,000 Colored YWCA in Washington DC
- \$2,000 for the new OR for interracial hospital, Southside of Chicago
- \$5,000 Meharry Medical College
- \$5,000 Howard University
- \$8,000 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

# The Current Provident Hospital of Cook County

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# Thank You

