Allen S. Russell: A Biographical Sketch of a 19th Century Physician

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This paper is dedicated to my father, Dr. James F. Symula. He supplied me with most of the material and encouraged me throughout the writing of the paper. Without his inspiration and love, this paper would not have been possible.

I wish to also express my most sincere gratitude to Dr. Rosenberg who has directed the writing of this paper. He has given me many hours of his time, patience and friendship.
Introduction:

There comes a time in most people's lives when they wonder about their heritage. Some people choose to research their ancestors and discover their "roots." Others may have happened upon an old box in their attics and rummaged through it until they have satisfied their curiosity. I have had the luck to do a lot more than either of the above mentioned choices.

I undertook this paper with two thoughts in mind; first, I wanted to do something with the civil war and, second, I wished to learn the history of the county and more specifically the town from which I come. Through a man named Allen S. Russell I was able to accomplish both. Being a history major I came to be fascinated with all aspects of the Civil War; I also wished to try my talents out as an historian and retrace the history of my birthplace, Wayne County, New York. Wayne County is located in the north-west part of the state, surrounding the Genesee Valley area. Allen Russell was born in Wayne County, New York, and became a very involved physician in the Civil War. At least I had found my connection, and Russell turned out to be much more than just another Civil War veteran.

Some people are satisfied with simply knowing where one was born; however, the writer is not one of these people.
Since the writer was born in Wayne County, this county's history has a very special meaning. Most readers will agree that hometowns may often be viewed with nostalgia and pride.

To understand oneself is to understand one's history. Why one is the person one is is derived from a combination of family and surroundings. Wayne County played a large part of the writer's surroundings. To retrace one's history is to light a new flame in oneself. To see the garden that one's grandfather planted when he first settled the land adds greatly to one's personal fullness and understanding. When one reads and learns about the men who labored and toiled the soil where one was born, one begins to gain and learn the respect that should be accorded to these men of an earlier time.

My father, James F. Symula, shares my interest in the Civil War, or should I say that I share his. He has collected many books and artifacts over the years and I have had his collections to help and inspire me. Several years ago my father had the opportunity to acquire some of those attic boxes, and naturally he was curious. In these boxes he found personal letters, diplomas, army records, dispatches, personal notes, inventory sheets, etc. Included were the personal papers of Allen S. Russell. Being interested in the Civil War, he naturally saved them. Recently I began examining these materials and discovered my modus operandi. I could use his life to profile my
history of Wayne County and the Civil War. Since Russell was a physician I chose to focus on Civil War medicine. However, Allen Russell was also a pharmacist, lecturer and a New York State Assemblyman. His life story could easily be a separate paper in itself. When writing this paper I chose not to focus only on Russell, but to discover the different aspects of the things he did. For example, I chose not to write strictly about Russell's career as a physician, but to write about 19th century medicine in general, using his career as a focal point. The following pages compile a county history and a study of 19th century medicine all profiled by a very extraordinary man.
I. History of Wayne County, New York.

The history of Wayne County, New York, has not been very colorful. Wayne County saw no violent, bloody battles, nor did it suffer through tragic holocausts of floods, famines or fire. Wayne County's history is a story about men and women who settled to begin a new life. It is a story about their facing the harshness of the wilderness in its most natural state. These men and women tamed the wilderness to meet their needs for survival.

The earliest occupiers of Wayne County were the various tribes of the Iroquois Indians who were mainly an agricultural people. They had developed their main staples of corn, squash, beans and potatoes into very constant and reliable sources of food. Their settlements were usually located by lakes and rivers, not only for the fishing but also for the easy communication that water travel offered. These people of the long-houses were very well-established when the French and English came to their land. In Wayne County, the Iroquois wandered freely where the hunting was good until the first white settlers arrived and for a period thereafter.


Like the Iroquois, the first settlers discovered the abundance of food that the thick forests of Wayne County offered. Game, such as deer, was plentiful. Readily accessible were the building materials needed for houses and other structures. The French were the first to claim the land containing Wayne County. However, the French reluctantly succumbed to the British who soon controlled the land. Following the Revolution and the treaty of 1783, the area was given over to the new nation. Both Massachusetts and New York wished to have the western territory and both claimed the region as their own. Finally both states agreed jointly to appoint a committee to decide the future ownership of the land. New York "...ceded, granted, released, and confirmed to Massachusetts all the estate, title and property which the former had to a large territory west of the Military Tract, comprising the whole part of the county through which the Genesee runs." Approximately two million acres of territory was the amount of land which Massachusetts acquired.

In 1788 these same two million acres were sold to Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham for $1,000,000. These

3. Curtis, pp. 5
4. Ibid., pp. 5
5. Ibid., pp.5
two men then proceeded to set up a land office in Canandaigua; it was from these men that the land which is now Wayne County, New York, was purchased. In 1791 Robert Morris, the illustrious financier of the Revolution, acquired part of the Phelps-Gorham land. He divided this land into small tracts and began their sale. Sir William Putney, a London capitalist, bought what was to include the nine western towns of Wayne County.

Not long after Putney purchased the land he sought the help of Charles Williamson. Williamson was an established land agent, and saw that the property was prepared for settlement. The long process of enlarging Indian trails into roads began, and some land was staked off into separate family units. Owing to the speed and skill of Williamson, the land became attractive to settlers. Williamson realized that the thick forest would have to appear to be livable. He proceeded to clear some plots and sell the timber for cash. The cash flow was just what the early settlers needed to entice them to move. The timber was mainly oak and hickory; both were very hard to cut, but brought good market prices. A large segment of this real

6. Ibid., pp. 5-6
7. Ibid., pp. 5-6
8. Ibid., pp. 5-6
9. Ibid., pp. 5-6
estate was named after Williamson and still retains the name today.

The first white people to settle Wayne County were mainly from Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Connecticut. These pioneers were largely farmers enticed by tales of the availability of good farm land. The route that these early settlers followed was a most difficult one. They came by way of streams, by horseback, by ox cart and even on foot. Much time can well be spent chronicling the narrative of how these first settlers reached their destinations.

One of the more popular means employed by the early settlers to reach Western New York was the all-water route. The pioneers utilized light weight boats which could be carried from stream to stream as needed. In 1790 Humphrey Sherman and his brother, David, followed one such popular route. A light boat was used to carry all their belongings on the Hudson River to Albany. Next they rode westward the full length of the Mohawk River; and after making a short but strenuous overland trip to the Clyde River, they proceeded up the Canarqua River to East Palmyra. Once the long trip was over, they immediately began to

11. Sherman, pp. 1-4
12. Ibid., pp. 1-4
construct a log cabin. Until their house was completed, their boat served as a sufficient shelter.

Much has been written about the early settlers of the west; but many of the qualities exhibited by these western settlers were also very visible in the pioneers of Wayne County. Stories of bravery and unselfishness abound about these early settlers. The area which was finally to become New York grew from an unexplored thick forest region into a rich farming area in half a century. This transformation was accomplished by the strong wills and even stronger backs of the early settlers.

The early accounts of settlers of Wayne County and specifically the town of Marion are full of seemingly impossible feats. One example concerns one of the settlers, Henry Lovell, a "typical" hunter, who has been recorded as having killed 30 deer in one day. Another narrative relates that one individual, Daniel Powell, cleared over 500 acres of land himself, a feat that was not considered all that unusual for the times.

The early settlers tended to seek the high grounds on which to settle. Hills were preferred to the more prolific valleys, most likely to avoid the numerous swampy areas or possible flooding. The first families to move onto these high lands were the Lovells, the Powells, the Sheezeys and

13. Ibid., pp. 1-4
14. Ibid., pp. 6
15. Ibid., pp. 6
16. Ibid., pp. 122
the Caldwells. These four families comprised the first settlers of Marion township during the year of 1795.

The main difficulty one encounters in writing a history of a county is that eventually the land is divided and each segment contains its own history. Williamson, for example, split in 1825 into Williamson and Winchester. On April 15, 1826, Winchester was renamed Marion. The town was renamed after Francis Marion, a popular hero of the Revolutionary War.

The history of Marion Township, even prior to the division, is rather fascinating. It is interesting to note that while the first tavern in Marion was built in 1800, the first church was not established until two years later. Widow Styles owned and operated the first tavern and supplied the overworked men with the scarce liquid refreshment. Until 1805 when David Eddy established the first distillery, this tavern was the only place to buy a glass of whiskey.

Prior to the establishment of the first church, John Case would preach in various houses and barns. Although

17. "Dates When Wayne County Towns Were Established," Marion Enterprise, 1926
18. Ibid.,
19. Vera Curtis, "Francis Marion was a popular hero, Marion named in his honor." Marion Enterprise, 1926
20. Sherman, pp. 1-4
21. Ibid., pp. 1-4
Case was a Methodist, he did not offer what today would be termed a traditional Methodist service. He simply tried to relate his words to the people in hopes of keeping a loving faith in their hearts. There was also a Baptist minister, Elder Fairbanks, who would come into town from time to time and preach to the various settlers.

The first formal church was started up by Elder Seba Norton in 1804. Prior to this date he would come into town once every two weeks from Sodus and preach. On February 29, 1804, he established the first Baptist church of Marion. Until 1828 when the congregation erected a church building, the Mason school house was used for services. After a church structure was built in 1850, the older building was abandoned. It currently houses a hardware store.

The first Congregational church was established in 1808, later to be changed to Presbyterian in 1830, and once again back to Congregational in 1832. The Christian church was established in 1820; Oliver True was the first ordained minister. Porter Mckinster established the first Methodist church in 1845, but it gradually withered away until 1851 when it was reorganized with William W. Manderkille as

22. Ibid., pp. 4
24. Ibid., pp. 22-25
25. Ibid., pp. 22-25
26. Ibid., pp. 22-25
27. Ibid., pp. 22-25
The only other church founded in the 19th century in Marion was the First Reformed Church. This church was established in 1860 as a community of worshipers, and finally as a church in 1870.

While the citizens of early Marion, New York, were very diversified in their religious beliefs, they all agreed upon the necessity of developing a sound educational system for their children. The first teacher, James Rogers, taught his pupils in part of a log building which was located by the village lot that C. C. Potter owned. Rogers has gone down in history for inventing a rather unique punishment for his students. Whenever any of them whispered in class, he made them hold a raw potato in their mouths. As for the size of the potato, there is no hard evidence in support of any size. Ebenezer Kitchum and Asahel Powers succeeded Rogers, as school teacher, respectively.

The first building built specifically for a school was on the Robinson farm; however, this building burned in 1814 and was replaced by the Mason school-house. Another school-house was built at the same time as the Mason school; this was the Centre School located on Mill Street.

28. Ibid., pp. 22-25
29. Ibid., pp. 22-25
31. Ibid., pp. 125
32. Sherman, pp. 6
33. Ibid., pp. 6
The first instruction in the higher branches of education was taught by Morrison Huggins, beginning in about 1838. He taught a select group in a small upper room of the old school-house. In 1839 he obtained a charter and built the new district school-house. The first principal of the new school, Ornon Archer, was a man of skill and aggressive energy. He built the school up and made it a large success. After he left the school, the skill that he displayed in managing it was lost, and the charter fell abandoned in 1851.

The Collegiate Institute was established in 1865, with J. Sawyer as its first principal. Approximately 90 pupils met in a upper room of the hardware building for their education. In 1856 the still-standing, three story brick building was built for the Institute. The school had two departments each of which employed three teachers. The structure also contained a library, a gymnasium, and a very advanced science laboratory. At the time the school was built its laboratory facilities were the most modern in the state. The school has since been maintained thanks to the generosity of various people of the community.

Wayne County attracted its first settlers mainly because of its rich fertile land. The saying that the farm

34. Ibid., pp. 6
35. Ibid., pp. 6
is the basis of all health held true then for Wayne County, and still does for Marion township. A large number of the communities in Wayne County are agriculturally based. Wheat was the main crop mostly because it could sell most rapidly. Apples and pears along with various small fruits and berries have also been produced in large quantities in Marion and throughout the county.

The people of Wayne County have been noted and respected for their peaceful, law-abiding ways. These people have held fast to their dedication to education and religion. Along with their devotion to education and religion, they respected over everything else their country. A good example of this can be seen in their reaction when, in 1861, President Lincoln called the county to arms.

With the news of the fall and unconditional surrender of Fort Sumpter on April 15, 1861, Marion citizens rallied in support of the Union. Their motto was "Sustain the Government. Stand for Liberty. Down with Rebellion." Leaders of the community made appeals for support of the Union and a mass public meeting was held in the Collegiate Institute Hall on May 6, 1861. A large banner was hung which read, "A symbol of strength and protection to its friends and of dismay and death to traitors."

36. Vera Curtis, "History of the Town of Marion (1795-1930)." p. 29
37. Ibid., pp. 26-27
38. Ibid., pp. 26-27
At that meeting a resolution was passed to train a regiment of minute men. Three thousand dollars was raised to support the families of these willing men.

Marion responded additionally with reinforcements in 1862 when once again the President requested more recruits. Marion sent a total of 186 men to fight in the Civil War. Each man recruited was as proud as the prior enlistees to serve his nation.

From the day the first settlers built their log cabins in Wayne County 187 years have passed. The communities of Wayne County have prospered and grown into very beautiful and enterprising towns. The citizens of these communities owe a great deal to these early settlers who have set the pattern of their lives for many succeeding years. Marion has produced many notable and productive people since those early years; but none have had a greater impact than their pioneer ancestors.

A poem by Vera Curtis, written specifically about the early pioneers of Wayne County captures the unique qualities of its early settlers:

The years have grown then faded away and the wool measured fast from time's loom Since the pioneer came with a bright tinted dream to the uncultured wilds for a home

39. Ibid., pp. 27
40. Ibid., pp. 27
His step was then light and the oak's rugged form
was bowed by his muscular stroke
For a homestead he reared, where his little one played
And the song birds their sweetest strains awoke

And his heart rested there in the lovelight of home
nor sought the world's baubles to share
His future was based on the unfailing Rock
and the magnet of earth's dreams were there

And he smiled with content as old Time hurried by
tho' the frosty touch silvered his hair
As he sat by his own humble fireside at home
and listened to youth's brightest cheer

Or he told of the hardships of years that were gone
and sought by firm precepts and clear
To stamp every sense with the impress of truth
of the loved ones he labored to rear

He sleeps while more youthful feet hurry along
and carelessly pause where he stood
But his footprints still pointing at waymarks toward Heaven
Mark the worn, humble pathway he trod

Such, then, was the atmosphere of Wayne County during
the first period of the 19th century when Allen Russell
first appeared on this earth. Such were the surroundings
which influenced Russell's formative years as he matured
from youth into manhood.
II. The Early Life of Allen Steele Russell

Allen S. Russell was born in Williamson, New York, on June 8, 1834. By the time Russell had arrived, Williamson had split from Marion and was its own community; the history of the two early communities being covered in the first part of this paper.

Russell's father, Moses B. Russell, was a member of the family of the Dukes of Bedford, in England. The Bedford line can be traced back very thoroughly through a period of roughly one thousand years. His mother, Eleanor L. Stoddard, was a direct descendent of John Rogers the Martyr. John Rogers, later martyred, wrote under the pseudonym Thomas Mathew and completed the second full version of the Bible in English in 1536. Russell's grandfather on his mother's side was a soldier in the War of 1812; while his great grandfather lost his life during the Indian massacre at Wyoming, New York. In 1796 Russell's paternal grandfather, Daniel, came from Connecticut and settled in Wayne County. Allen's father was born and raised here.

It is uncertain which school Russell attended the Mason School or the Centre School for his early education.

42. Ibid., pp. 261
43. Medora Westfull, Early Physicians in Marion, 1940, p. 4
44. Ibid., p. 4
45. Ibid., p. 4
However, one can be fairly certain that he attended Ornon Archers upper branch school until it closed in 1851. He continued his education at the famous Marion Collegiate Institute and earned his teaching degree there. It was not atypical of Russell, a man devoted to his career and full of dreams, that he taught at the Institute and later became its principal. It was during these years that he 46 was married to Emily Almira Wright.

Emily was born on September 13, 1835, in Palmyra, New York. She was the daughter of Dr. Elisha Rhodes Wright, a very prominent physician and community leader of Marion, New York. Emily was married to Russell on October 9, 1856, and bore him six children, three of whom survived. Emily was very religious, and from some excerpts of letters to Allen, one can assume that she was very sensitive, perhaps lonely, individual.

Dear Allen, can you not please write to me a little offener. If you knew how sad and lonesome I feel and how eagerly I watch the office and how few letters I get, I am sure you would try and let me hear a few words. 47

How glad I'll be when you get home to stay, time drags wearily along. Do you ever think of being lonesome. I never knew what lonesome was, I believe, until you went off this time, but we have all been protected from harm, God has watched over us and I believe he will 48

46. Ibid., pp. 4

47. Emily W. Russell, letter to Dr. Allen S. Russell at Saranac, Michigan, February 18, 1880.

48. Emily W. Russell, letter to Dr. Allen S. Russell at Coopersville, Michigan, March 6, 1880.
I think that you have been gone so long. -- 
I think so often of you and I cannot help 
saying you must come home a little while, you 
promised not to be away all winter now do not. 
It is so very sad and lonesome. I do not 
think you would be sorry if you were home. 49

It is rather difficult to understand why Russell spent 
so much time away from his wife and children. However, it 
appears that his career was foremost among his priorities, 
for on May 27, 1892, Emily and Allen were divorced after 
three-six years of marriage. Emily lived until January 26, 
1917, when she died in her sleep. 

During the first years of his marriage to Emily, Allen 
taught at the Marion Collegiate Institution. In 1860 
when he left Marion to attend the University of Michigan to 
study medicine, he was twenty-six years old. His father-in-
law, Dr. Elisha Rhodes Wright, appeared to be the person 
who financed Russell's medical education. There is very 
little available information concerning Russell's parents 
from this point of his life until much later when they moved 
to Battle Creek, Michigan.

From a letter written to Allen by Emily one can begin 
to see Allen's interest in working in the laboratory and 
with various drugs. Later in his life he owned and operated

49. Emily W. Russell, letter to Dr. Allen S. Russell at 
Allegan, Michigan, January 20, 1881.
50. Marion Enterprise, (Marion, New York) January 30, 1917.
52. Ibid., pp. 262.
a very large apothecary store.

In a letter from Emily to her husband while he was at Michigan, one can see in what direction Allen's career was leaning, one can also tell a great deal about Emily from what she wrote.

You write a great deal about the laboratory and what you are doing in that department but do not say what are about in the dissecting and Anatomy department. Pa said that he was afraid you were spending too much time in the laboratory and not enough in dissecting and anatomy. He thinks the laboratory is analysing poisons and thinks if a man were to come along and ask you about his bad feelings, that you could not tell about his symptoms and feelings enough to tell him what to do, but if he had taken poison you could tell provided you had things to work with, that so much study in that department would not benefit you as much as in the others.53

It is very clear that Emily's father was not very happy with the direction of his son-in-law's career; however, Emily does a very good job of writing it subtly. In the same letter on can also see that Emily feared pressuring her husband, and she also feared overstepping her place as a wife.

Now Allen I don't know anything about it but I thought I would write what he said on the subject....Allen about what I mentioned in regard to the laboratory don't let it worry you Pa does not complain about you in the least all he feels anxious about is to have you study those things that will benefit most and he thinks Anatomy and the dissecting is the most important as you will have to understand diseases do I write so you can get his meaning.54

53. Emily W. Russell, letter to Dr. Allen S. Russell at Ann Arbor, Michigan, December 17, 1862.

54. Ibid.
Evidently Allen did spend most of his time as a physician working with various drugs and herbs. In 1863 Allen left Ann Arbor to attend the College of Physicians and Surgeons In New York City. Not much is known about this period in Russel's life, except that he graduated with high honors in 1864. Russell was an allopather, which is a physician who practices allopathy. According to Websters Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, an allopatric doctor practices the "system of medical practice that combats disease by remedies producing effects different from those produced by the disease treated." However, he had virtually no time to practice medicine since on April 22, 1864, he enlisted in the Union army. He became an acting assistant surgeon stationed at Lincoln General Hospital in Washington, D.C. He remained there until May 21 of that year when he was appointed Surgeon-in-Charge of the 22nd Army Corps, Third Brigade Hospital. The 22nd Army Corps had its headquarters at Fort Baker, Washington, D.C. Also in 1864, under the command of General U. S. Grant, Russell saw active duty in the Wilderness Campaign that May. He soon became Brigadier-Surgeon and was in charge of what was said to be the best field hospital in the army corps with

55. Westfull, pp. 4


57. Alex McBride and W. H. McElroy, op. cit., p. 262
which he was connected.

During his army career Russell was offered a commission in the medical corps of the United States, an appointment he declined. He also was appointed to serve on the Army Medical Board of Examination and Discharge. When R. E. Lee surrendered on April 9, 1865, Russell was still stationed in Washington. Along with Lee Harvey, the Russells' were present on the White House lawn to hear the final speech of their President.

The Russells' were supposed to attend the theater on April 14, 1865, but Allen unexpectedly changed his schedule of work. In her diary Emily noted that her husband always wished he had not changed his plans; he believed he might have been able to serve the President in his hour of need. At the time of the assassination the Russells were living just a few blocks from the Ford Theater, and could hear the masses of people passing by in order to find out the news of the assassination. Allen left military service in July of 1865 and retired to practice medicine in Marion.

58. Ibid., pp. 262
59. Ibid., pp. 263
60. Ibid., pp. 262
61. Ibid., pp. 262
III. Medical Practices during the Civil War Era

At this point would be instructive to describe the types of medical practices that were typical during the era when Russell practiced. Until the 20th century most of the cures and remedies for various ailments consisted of bleeding, blistering, purging, vomiting, and sweating.

The early practitioners believed that one's body must have some type of poison in its system that was causing a disease. It was, therefore, perfectly natural that they needed to get the poison out; all of their practices were aimed at getting the vile substance out of the system. Along with that, of course came the study of the drugs which would procure the desired results. What would cause one to vomit, for example, was of interest to physicians.

These practices seem very barbaric and ignorant to modern readers. In that era, it was almost expected that one would be bled if one were sick. In fact, one of the main problems of progressing into more sophisticated procedures was that of the patient who labeled the physician as a quack if the doctor did not employ the technique of bleeding.

The early practitioners held fast to their vague humoral

beliefs of restoring bodily balance through eliminating all vile agents. The only decision needed was which method should be used to purify the body. As the century progressed the studies of anatomy, pathology, and physiology became more sophisticated. Increasingly, practitioners began to do some clinical experimenting. However, changes were slow in coming. During the mid-1800's hospitals were becoming a little more popular and this helped advance some methods of cures. In hospitals, the practitioners were able to observe hundreds of patients under-going treatment. Another positive outcome of hospitals was that many doctors worked together and could discuss and exchange ideas.

It seems ironic to state that two major epidemics advanced 19th century medicine, but nonetheless it is true. Yellow fever and Asiatic cholera both helped rid medicine of the primitive methods employed until then. The frequent use of emetics and purgatives moderated greatly by the end of the great yellow fever epidemic of 1853. These methods were slowly being replaced by "more prompt and bold administration of tonics, above all the sulphate of quinine." Although bleeding and blistering were still widely practiced, many physicians were changing their beliefs and procedures. It was a rising consensus that a more mild and supportive method of treatment was desirable. Along with these mild treatments, a good nursing plan was also supported.
Asiatic cholera is commonly known as the filth disease. The growing cities, through improvements in transportation, were crowded and dirty, and provided a breeding place for this disease. During the 1832 and 1849 outbreaks, there arose an on-going debate over what methods should be used to combat the disease. Since it was a dehydration disease, blood letting and the other common practices were very unwise methods of treatment. Opium was a commonly used drug when treating enteric disorders like cholera; but the disagreement raged over how much opium to administer and how much opium should accompany the opium.

After the epidemic receded, the debate slowly died. However, the same debate went on almost twenty years later when the disease reappeared. It seems that nothing really had been decided, for in this era, decisions were slow in coming.

Yellow fever and cholera helped to alter the drastic and often excessive methods of treatment of bleeding and other commonly used 19th century practices. They helped to establish a policy of moderation and also helped to emphasize the importance of patient support during illness.

Such was the generally primitive condition of medicine in the United States when the Civil War broke out. When one reads about the Civil War, one is always appalled at the shocking number of deaths which occurred during that conflict. Approximately 600,000 men from both sides died
during this war. This astounding number of casualties was greater than the death totals of all subsequent wars of the United States combined. However, when one examines the evidence more carefully, one can begin to discern the total scope of unnecessary dying that actually occurred.

The Union army enlisted some 2,900,000 men and at peak strength stood strong at 2,100,000. The Confederates enlisted between 1,300,000 and 1,400,000 men. The number is uncertain because Confederate records were mostly destroyed in the burning of Richmond. It seems almost impossible that so many men could have been killed in battle; but what is more shocking is the fact that more than half of these men died from disease rather than from battle field wounds.

A physician named Dr. Joseph Jones is responsible for much of the recorded information extant today on the deaths of Civil War soldiers. Jones is known to have kept voluminous records for the Confederate Medical Board. Dr. Jones came up with a ratio that has held true through the years. He estimated that of the approximately 200,000 soldiers who died for the south, 50,000 died from battle injuries. His ratio is as follows:

\[
\frac{\text{Battle Death}}{\text{Disease Death}} = \frac{1}{3} = \frac{50,000}{150,000}
\]

Confederate Soldiers


\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Battle Death} & \quad 1 \\
\text{Disease Death} & \quad 2 \\
& = \quad 110,000 \quad \text{Union Soldiers} \\
& = \quad 225,000 \quad \text{Soldiers}
\end{align*}
\]

Dr. Jones attributed the lower ratio for the Union casualties to better food, clothing and shelter. Probably the major factor which contributed to this overwhelming disease death rate, was the total lack of organization by the medical departments of both sides.

A very good example of this disorganization may be seen in a comparison between two battles which occurred at the beginning and the middle of the war. The Battle of Bull Run or Manassas in July, 1861, is a fine example of poor organization. It took a week to remove all the dead and injured soldiers from the battlefield. Many men lay dying with absolutely no attention for up to three days. Many of the men who had been wounded, if treated soon after the battle, could have survived. However, since they went totally untreated, infections like gangrene quickly set in. By the time that the Battle of Gettysburg was fought, many of the problems had been solved; as a result, the dead and wounded were removed after each day's fighting.

Many changes for the better, resulting in improved recovery rates, had occurred since the first engagements of the Civil War. The changes came from within the individual Medical Departments. When the war broke out, neither side's Medical Departments were able to handle such a large operation. Another factor which slowed the progress was
that neither side saw the need to organize thoroughly because each assumed that the war would be a short one. The Surgeons General for both sides had never experienced such large and constant demands. However, it appears that the South did a much better job than the North because the North had an established Medical Department, while the South had none. When running the North's Department the Surgeons General had to deal with established red tape, and traditional methods. It was very difficult to change the Union's Medical Department to best serve the Union soldiers. In the South, the newly established Medical Department was free of those bureaucratic problems and could administer to the Confederate soldiers more readily.

The first Surgeon General for the North during the Civil War was Colonel Thomas Lawson, a veteran of the War of 1812. He did little but keep the budget down. His superiors really appreciated the gesture, but the men who could not get medical supplies out in the battle did not. Upon Lawson's death, he was replaced by the lesser of two evils, Clement A. Findlay, a lazy, weak man. At least Lawson was able to keep order in the office, but from day one Findlay slowly worsened the already bad situation. He was unable to cope with the pressures of the job and proceeded to put the Medical Department in total chaos. Findlay was eventually relieved of his post.

All during this time, the unsanitary medical conditions
of the battlefields were causing many soldiers to contract and die from infections. The Sanitary Commission was fighting for necessities like latrines, food and blankets. Needless to say, they were fighting a losing battle, considering the condition of the Medical Department.

After Findlay was fired, the North hired a very competent, yet very young physician, Dr. William A. Hammond, a man who was assertive and who forced changes in the Department. It was his determination that not only got the Department into a working, organized unit, but he was also responsible for many reforms. He was instrumental in getting more hospital ambulances to the scenes of battles, and organizing efficient medical teams. He also developed what was called "ridge ventilation" for the hospitals. This ventilation system kept fresh air circulating through the hospital. Moreover, it was Dr. Hammond who removed the calomel drug from the supply list. He also eliminated Tarter Emetic, a drug used to induce vomiting. However, Hammond rubbed too many of the older, more traditional administrators the wrong way. As a result of the waves that he caused, he, too, was removed from his position.

Hammond's discharge had a very profound effect on the future of the Medical Departments. Many very competent and aggressive young men were discouraged by his removal. Once again, as a result, apathy returned to the Department.

The South had much better success with their Medical Department. As stated earlier, it was newly organized with
no traditions to thwart its program. The Confederate Medical Department was taken over by the very capable and intelligent surgeon, Dr. Samuel Preston Moore.

The major problem that Moore faced was logistical rather than organizational: how to get supplies to the troops in the field. Transportation was a key problem for the South in many areas. However, the Confederate immediately started several new projects to get needed medical supplies to those who needed them.

The Confederate army started building its medical organization right away. In contrast to the Northern troops who depended on the State to appoint their Surgeons, the Southern Medical Department could directly appoint men and women to serve on its medical teams. Another plus for the South derived from the fact that its troops were fighting on home territory. Whenever there was a battle, people from the surrounding areas would flock in to help the wounded and dying.

One problem that both sides seem to have dealt with fairly well, was procurement of medical supplies. When the war broke out, both sides had virtually no inventory of medical supplies. Initially each side relied on private businesses and suppliers. However, by the end of the war, each had established its own drug facilities which aided the troops immensely.

Dr. Jones estimated that every Confederate soldier became ill on the average of six times during his army career.
This average was likely lower in the North because it did have a greater quantity of medical and other supplies overall. Jones' theory did not, however, take into consideration the fact that many men simply went home when they felt sick, and were not treated at army hospitals.

A major disease which spread rapidly through both armies was measles. Especially in the South, measles were prominent because many of the Confederate soldiers were farmers and never had never been exposed to this childhood disease. In the Union ranks alone there were 21,676 cases reported of measles and 551 known deaths. Another childhood disease which was very prominent among the troops was chickenpox. Many soldiers died, and many more were sent home because of these diseases.

Diarrhea and dysentary were both out of control at times during the war. Approximately 215,214 known cases were reported during 1861 and 1862 among the Union forces alone. From these known cases, some 1,194 deaths were recorded. A major causal factor for the high rate of dysentery was the lack of latrines. The Medical Departments were supposed to supply such items, but they were inefficient during the early stages.

Other common illnesses of the war were typhoid, gastrointestinal problems, enteric infections and malaria. Little was done for patients who suffered from these various ailments as very little was known about their causes, treatment and cure.
Turning to the actual battlefields, it is estimated that 94% of all wounds sustained were bullet wounds. 70% of these bullet wounds were received in the arms, legs, hands and feet. The usual procedure was amputation of the affected limb; indeed there was an alarming amount of amputations on the battlefields. Most people may well wonder why a soldier who had been shot in the hand needed an amputation. The response lies in the medical practices of the time. Little was known of the importance of sanitary conditions. Also there were usually hundreds of men who needed attention after battles, and only a few physicians available to help them. Many men had to wait two or three days to be treated. Some conditions were so unsanitary that many forms of infections would set into the wound and gangrene was prominent. The doctor had to amputate the hand in order to stop the infection from spreading to the rest of the arm. Since the conditions of these amputations were often crude and always unsanitary, the soldier might easily bleed to death or die from further infection. Or the soldier might simply die of shock associated with an amputation performed without proper anaesthesia.

During the Civil War there were very few major advances made in surgery. Often amputations were performed on a crude table with a common saw or when desperate, with a sharp pocket knife. However, the war did give many surgeons the opportunity to treat serious injuries. The level of technical
skills of many surgeons was also raised during this period. Perhaps the single most important thing learned during the Civil War, as far as medicine is concerned, was the need for cleanliness and sanitation. It was not until the last part of the war that antiseptics, when available, were used as a rule.

When the Civil War ended, it was not the end of such practices as bleeding and blistering. However, it was the end of a blind belief in these practices. After the war much more clinical work and research was done. Allen Russell was one of those physicians who went home to a practice in his hometown after being exposed to the horrors of wartime surgery. However, he was one of the few who went back to spend considerable time in the laboratory trying to advance his field.
IV. Allen Russell: Life after the War

Russell returned to Marion in 1865. From then until 1875 he set up a practice in his hometown. The odd thing about his practice was that there was very little in his record about actual patients. There was no solid evidence of people he might have helped. There is, however, an abundance of information on his life as a druggist.

It appears that all the laboratory work he did at Michigan was an indication of the focus he was to pursue in the coming years. Russell ran a drug store in Marion, and spent many hours and much money on new cures and remedies. In a book found among his papers there were listed many of the cures and remedies that Allen trusted and used. The following are a few examples from the book and they nicely illustrate his professional direction:

**Angelica (The Tree) Aralia Spinosa**

The bark infused in brandy, is considered a very sovereign remedy for chronic rheumatism, colic and even gout. A small handful is sufficient for a quart or it may be taken in decoction. An oil obtained from this bark and applied to a hollow tooth removes the pain almost instantly.

**Alder Tag or Tag Alder**

A decoction of these tags are considered a purifier of the blood; the bark is moderately tonic and astringent and makes a good bitter, strengthens the stomach, acutes an appetite, and purifies the blood. Some say it will salivate if dried, reduced to an impalpable
powder, and taken as snuff, cures bleeding at the nose; and why not spitting of blood. The quantities may be regulated at the discretion of any person, as it is not dangerous. Put into good whiskey it gives it a beautiful color and agreeable flavor.

Balm of Gillead (The Tree) Populus Balsamvera

This tree is too well known to need description. The barks of the small limbs makes good bitters.

Emetic or Puking Powders

Whenever a puke is needed: a strong tea of ginger and pepper may be taken to prepare the stomach for the reception of the above valuable and safe puke: after which commence taking the puke, prepared as follows. Put two teaspoonfuls of the composition above mentioned into a teacup, pour it nearly full of water a little less than scalding hot, stir a few minutes, sweeten. Take a large spoonful once in ten minutes until it operates, as soon as it has puked once or twice, take a draught of strong ginger tea, and repeat until the puke has done operating. This puke has the advantage over all others in this respect; that although it may not seem to carry off much bile or bilious matter from the stomach, yet it generally produces perspiration or a moisture on the skin in the most obstinate cases.

In most of the remedies used by physicians like Russell in those days, there was an abundance of alcohol. In fact, people who operated drug stores such as Russell's were required to have a liquor licence. These can be confirmed by receipts and Internal Revenue Coupons in the Russell Collection.

As stated earlier, Russell only practiced in Marion for 10 years after the war. He also served as Justice of the Peace for two years during this period, and in 1875 was the town's clerk. He was also very active in his church,
the Baptist Church of Marion. For eight consecutive years he was appointed as Superintendent for the largest Baptist Sunday School in the county. He took pride in his liberal religious beliefs.

Not much information has been found concerning the condition of his marriage during this ten-year period. The only factual information available details his devotion to his laboratory. However, in 1875 he was elected to the New York State Assembly, representing the Second District of Wayne County. Thus began an interesting transitional period in the life of Allen S. Russell.

63. Alex McBride and W. H. McElroy, op. cit., p.262
V. Life in Transition and Settlement

Russell was elected to the New York State legislature in 1875. He had defeated Hiram Westall, his Democratic opponent by a majority of 767 votes. He was a devoted Republican and was noted for having an excellent attendance record.

During Russell's two consecutive terms in office he served on the Committee of Public Health and Federal Relations. While serving on that committee he vigorously opposed appropriating more funds for the construction of the new Capitol Building. Allen argued that the construction of the building was already too far over-budgeted; he was a very conservative Republican. In a speech that Russell gave in the Assembly during the debate, he had this to say:

I am opposed to granting the appropriation named in the bill of one million dollars for the continuation of work on the new Capitol because there has been already expended upon it a sum much in excess of its proposed cost, as estimated at first.

Russell submitted his first bill to the floor in 1876. This bill requested an amendment to the Act which incorporated Lynons, New York, in 1854. The act was submitted and eventually ratified. After one year in office he had given

64. Ibid., pp. 261
65. Ibid., pp. 262
66. Marion Enterprise, (Marion, New York), 1875
67. Ibid.
the people he represented plenty of reasons to be thankful that they elected him. A newspaper article lauded him for his service:

For the past year Mr. Russell has been the representative of this the second district in the Assembly, and during that time won for himself an enviable reputation as a legislator - common consent according him the honor of being one of the most active, efficient and useful members of that large and honorable body. 88

Unfortunately in 1912 the records of individual participation in the legislature were destroyed by fire; so a detailed outline of Russell's participation is not possible. However, Russell was praised for being a kind and gentle man, yet a very eloquent and forceful speaker. Once again Russell proved himself to be a determined, self-made individual.

There are approximately eleven years that are very sketchy in Russell's life, the eleven years following his two terms in the Assembly and preceding his remarriage to Mary D. Norten in 1899. He was said to have gone on an extensive lecture tour throughout Michigan. From the available material, it is evident that Dr. Russell lectured in the field of medicine, specifically Anatomy and Physiology.

A letter found in his collection praised Russell for his lectures:

89. G. C. Newcomb, letter about Dr. Allen S. Russell at Ravenna, Michigan, March 9, 1880.
Ravenna, Michigan
March 9, 1880

I have had the pleasure of listening to a course of lectures delivered in this place by Dr. Russell in Anatomy and Physiology.

The Doctor is a pleasant speaker, shows himself to be acquainted with his subject, and has abundant means at hand to illustrate the subjects treated by him. His lectures have given general satisfaction and the audience has increased from the first. In addition to the regular course the Doctor favored us with a fine temperance lecture on Sunday evening. I think that my people have been greatly profited by the Dr.'s visit and would be glad to welcome him to my charge again.

Yours truly,

G. C. Newcomb
Pastor M. E. Church
Ravenna, Michigan

Clearly, it appears that Russell was as dedicated to his lecture series as he was to his practice and to pharmacy.

It was also during this time that his marriage of thirty years was failing. It is obvious that he spent very little time at home since he was constantly on the road, and the loneliness of Emily has already been noted. On May 27, 1892, Allen was granted a divorce from Emily. He relocated in Michigan, while Emily remained in Marion where she eventually died.

69. G. C. Newcomb, letter about Dr. Allen S. Russell at Ravenna, Michigan, March 9, 1880.

70. U.S. The National Archives, XC059993, Russell, (File Designation), "Invalid."
Russell apparently set up a business in Flint, Michigan, during this transitional period. The business was most likely another drug store since invoices and receipts may be found for chemicals, alcohol and other pharmaceutical items in the Russell collection. Seven years after his divorce from Emily, Russell married the widow, Mary Norten, who was only twenty-nine years old. They had two children, Luella and Ethel, in their eighteen years of marriage. Apparently, Russell's drug store was remaining lucrative since that it appears that he continued to operate it until he died on January 23, 1917, at the age of 78.

Allen Russell had led a life that most men would envy. He had saved men's lives on the bloody fields of the Civil War; he had advanced his field of medicine by working steadily on new cures and techniques; he served his home-town by representing it in the State capital; and he then proceeded to share his knowledge and experience through lectures and tours. The author cannot judge Russell as a family man since little material is available. However, he did father eight children and support his family's needs. Allen Russell has added much to many different fields; the author can say honestly after examining his life closely, that this man was extraordinary in every way. Russell died leaving a very active and full life behind him.
Conclusion

After writing this paper, the author has come to the very frustrating conclusion that one can never cover a topic completely. It is not possible to focus on all aspects of a given topic; however, the author feels that she has included what she thought relevant to her subjects.

Through close examination of the area of Wayne County, it is apparent that the people that cut out that town with their bare hands, have left a fine example to follow. Those early pioneers gave their descendants fine models to mold their lives to. The early people of Wayne County lived up to the example their ancestors set for them by being well rounded, decent citizens. The early citizens of Wayne County established many churches and religion classes to help raise their children in the moral way they had been raised. They established schools to educate their children, and never forgot their country when the flags of battle were raised. The people who toiled the land contributed just as much as the people who built their schools and went to war. All have added to the history of Wayne County.

From Wayne County a boy was raised who was to play an important part not only in medicine, but also in the politics of the time. Allen Russell was born, raised and educated in Wayne County, and proved to be just as strong-willed as the first settlers who broke through the forests of Wayne County. Russell lived in Williamson, then later in Marion and served the people in those areas with his fine medical
ability and with his fine representation of them in the Assembly. He proved to be a man with many abilities, and one who was determined to excell in all of the choices he made.

Even though medicine was primitive at best, practitioners like Russell worked through the many obstacles and tried to advance their fields. The early physicians of the 19th century practiced dehydrating methods such as bloodletting, purging and vomiting. They had very little knowledge, but they had the opportunity during this period to work on a lot of very badly injured soldiers when the Civil War broke out. The deaths caused by the war were startling, but what is more shocking is the realization that more soldiers died from disease than from battle wounds. Through the Civil War emphasis was soon to be placed on cleanliness and sanitary techniques of practice. Physicians like Russell were to learn through horrifying hours of amputations and death, that sanitary conditions are the key to successful surgery.

The end of the Civil War did not bring about the end of the primitive 19th century medical practices, but it did enlighten the physicians; and when they returned home they would be able to practice what they had learned.

When Russell went home, he returned to a practice in Marion; a practice that soon put the emphasis on the chemical end of the medical scale. He became very involved with working with drugs and different cures. Perhaps he had seen enough people die in his days already, and wished to make
his contribution through research.

Although Russell seemed to be quite content with his medical practice, he ran and was elected to serve in the New York State Legislature, a position for which he only received praise. Russell seems to exemplify all that is in the good citizen. He was educated in his home town, he practiced medicine in his home town, and later represented his home town in the state legislature. Very few men have accomplished even half of what Russell did.

Even though his first marriage failed, he kept up with his work with dedication. He traveled through Michigan and spread his medical knowledge to others who were willing to learn. Russell went through a significant personal upheaval during this period; he was divorced; relocated; and remarried. Once again, he seems to have taken on the challenges with great vigor. He died at the age of 78, a very accomplished person.

Finally, the author would like to add that the subjects examined in this paper are extensive. It was great luck to happen upon a central theme that could follow through a county history and study of the early medical practices of the 19th century.
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