

Dr. Samuel Fisk Green's Contribution to Medical Education

(Paper read on December 30, 1998 at Kulendran Hall, Jaffna on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Green memorial Hospital and issue of the commemorative stamp for Dr. Samuel Fisk Green)

Today we are honoring a man who lived with us, and contributed to medical education in a great way, a century and a half ago.

Dr. Samuel Fisk Green, was born in Massachusetts in 1822. He graduated from the college of physicians and Surgeons of New York at the age of 23. He arrived in Jaffna two years later, and lived with us for 26 years until 1873. The green Memorial Hospital at Manipay was named after him, and is a living testimony to his achievements and commitment.

In his own words, he came to Jaffna.

“Firstly to provide medical care to the missionaries working in Jaffna and secondly to take care of those locals who requested for care”.

But after he came here he devoted a major part of his time to medical education.

The credit for opening first medical School in Ceylon goes to Dr. Green. At the time of his arrival there were very few English doctors and none among the Tamils who had any idea of European medical practice.

After a short stay in Vaddukkokkai he shifted to Manipay and started his dispensary, which is given in the picture.

In 1848, his first students were hand-picked from the Batticotta (present Vaddukkodai) seminary which had been in existence for 25 years. The first batch of medical students consisted of J Periyathamby Danforth, J Dennison, and J Waittilingam. The medical course was based on the curriculum in American Universities at that time and lasted 3 years.

Some of his students in the first few batches are in the photograph.

During the twenty six years Dr. Green Served in Jaffna, he had trained a total of 87 medical practitioners. Thirty two passed out in the English medium and 33 were trained in the Tamil medium. When he left Ceylon in 1873, due to failing health, he left behind a class of 18 students hoping to return and continue the teaching. However he could not return. The final batch of Students passed out in 1879.

There were two other batches, and the final batch of students passed out in 1879. It is recorded that a total of 87 medical Practitioners passed out of the Medical School in Manipay.

Some of the Tamil doctors who were trained by Dr. Green are,

Class of 1848 -50

Joshua Danforth	J Dennison	J Waittilingam
-----------------	------------	----------------

Class of 1851 – 53

J Town	N Parker	C Mead
A C Hall		

Class of 1853 -56

T Hopkins	C McIntyre	G M Reid
A McFarland		

Class of 1856 -59

J H Bailey	A Blanchard	J P Harward
F Latimer	J Wilson	J Ropes
J Flud	D P Mann	

Class of 1861 -64

Karthekeser alias M Hitchcock	Ethernayakam alias C T Mills
Swaminather alias S W Nathaniel	Kanakarrathinam alias L S Strong
Vaittilingam alias D W Chapman	S Navaratnam
Sivappirakasam	A Appapillay
L Spaulding	J B Shaw

Class of 1864 -67 (First batch to be trained in Tamil)

K Elayapillai	Kandappar	S Sittampalam
A Sivasidamparam	V Sittampalam	S Sinnappu
Samuel David	Samuel H Murugesu	Daniel Vettivalu
R S Welupillay	S Mandalam	

Class of 1867 -70

A Appapillay	A Appukutty	Arumugam
S Sarawanamuthu	V Seenivasagam	S Saminather
S Kandavanam	Edwards Lovell	V Vannithamby
Visuvanathan	S Vinasithanby	

Class of 1871 -73

J Amarasigar	S Arunasalam	M Ramalingam
V Cathiraveloo	V Sathasivam Bates	S Sarawanamuthu
S Sinnathamby	S. Sinniah	K Thillaiambalam
K Vaithilingam	K Welupillay	

Class of 1872 -75

A Amerasingam	R Ambalam	T Kanagasabai
C Kumaraveloo	Richard S Adams	Banjamin Lawrence
V Sellappah	N L Joshua	N Thambimuthu
M Nannitamby	Abraham V Nitsinger	Joshua K Preatamby
V Ponnambalam	K Ponnambalam	S Ponnambalam
Mutiyah S Ropes	N Mutatamby	V Vetteawanam

Dr. Green's intention in training locals was to "popularize western medicine among local people and wean them from indigenous practices which were injurious to health". To achieve this he expected his students to remain in Jaffna and serve the local people in their villages. But his intentions were defeated as the demand for these graduates increased and they obtained employment in Government and shifted to other parts of Sri Lanka (as is happening in Jaffna today). Some even found employment in countries like India & Malaya.

To circumvent this trend he started teaching in Tamil. He was handicapped by the absence of Tamil books on western Medicine. Hence he started the massive task of translating English medical books into Tamil. The medical books he authored and translated are given below.

Text Books

Cutter's Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene, Second edition. 204 pages. 1857

Maunsell's Obstetrics. 504 pages. 1857

Druitt's Surgery. 258 pages. 1867

Gray's Anatomy. 838 pages. 1872

Hooper's Physician's Vade Mecum. 917 pages. 1872

Well's Chemistry.

Dalton's Physiology. 590 pages 1883

Warring's Pharmacopoeia of India 574 pages. 1884

Vocabularies

Physiological Vocabulary. 134 pages. 1872

Vocabulary of Materia, Diseases of Women and Children and Medical Jurisprudence. 161 pages. 1875.

Original treatises

The Eye 11 pages

The Ear 11 pages

The Hand 11 pages

The Foot 12 pages

The Skin 16 pages

The Mouth 12 pages

The Body 15 pages

Be Clean 4 pages

Hints for Cholera Time 20 pages

Government Tract on Cholera 11 pages

The Way of Health 4 pages

Work on the book in Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene was done during the period 1852 -1854. The printing was carried out locally at Manipal. His fame spread to South India. He received orders for 134 copies of Anatomy Physiology and Hygiene from Thirunelveli in South India. The total works printed in Tamil amounts to 4500 pages.

He was assisted in this massive task of translating into a language which was not his own, by Dr. Danforth who belonged to the first batch of students, and later by Dr. J Evarts. Both doctors were Tamils.

Dr. Danforth later obtained an honorary degree of Doctorate in Medicine of the college of Physicians and surgeons of New York on the recommendation of Dr. Green. Dr. Danforth succeeded Dr. Green as Medical Superintendent of the Jaffna Hospital, when Dr. Green left the post of medical superintendent in 1868.

In 1850, Percival Ackland Dyke, the legendary Government Agent of Jaffna who served in Jaffna for 20 years, suggested a grant to the medical school. It was in his words " to supplant the old class of

medical sub-assistants, throughout the province by young men trained as Gould, Ewart and Waittillingam have been” These three are students of Dr.Green.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century Cholera, malaria and parangi were causing severe depopulation in Wannu. Dr. James Loos who was the colonial surgeon for the Northern Province in his report ended thus:

“ in connection with the establishment of Hospitals and dispensaries, I cannot refrain from adding a recommendation with the advantages of which I have been long and deeply impressed – the adoption of a plan for medical education in the island itself, for training an efficient class of medical practitioners who will scatter themselves over the country and displace the present class of ignorant quacks. This good work is to a certain extent, being carried out among the Tamils by Dr. Green of the American Mission; but I think the benefits of improved medical practice deserves to be extended to other districts of the island and other classes of the community, and this is my opinion can be best accomplished by the establishment of a medical school in Colombo.”

This laid the foundation for the establishment of the medical school in Colombo and the death knell for the Manipay medical school. The Colombo Medical School was opened on the first of June, 1870. On the first of May, 1879, with Government sanction 7 students of the Manipay Medical School were nominated to follow a shortened 2 years course of studies at the School in Colombo. They were exempted from paying an entrance fee. Although these students had been trained in Tamil they had a fair knowledge of English, and probably the students also jumped at the idea of getting an English degree.

This resulted in the closure of the Manipay Medical School.

Dr. Samuel Fisk Green passed away in his home in Massachusetts on the 28th of May 1884, 5 years after the Manipay medical school for which gave his life was closed down. He was so attached to the Tamils of Jaffna that in his last will he stated.

Should I ever have a gravestone, let it be
Plain and simple and bear the following
Inscription viz:



SAMUEL FISK GREEN

1822 -1884

Medical Evangelist
To the Tamils.

Jesus my all