

FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES, no. 83 – February 2023
Fairfax County Medical Registers
Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center



Happy February, and welcome back to Found in the Archives! In this month's edition we will discuss the Medical Registers housed at the Historic Records Center, why the court retained these, and how the information in them can be useful for researchers.

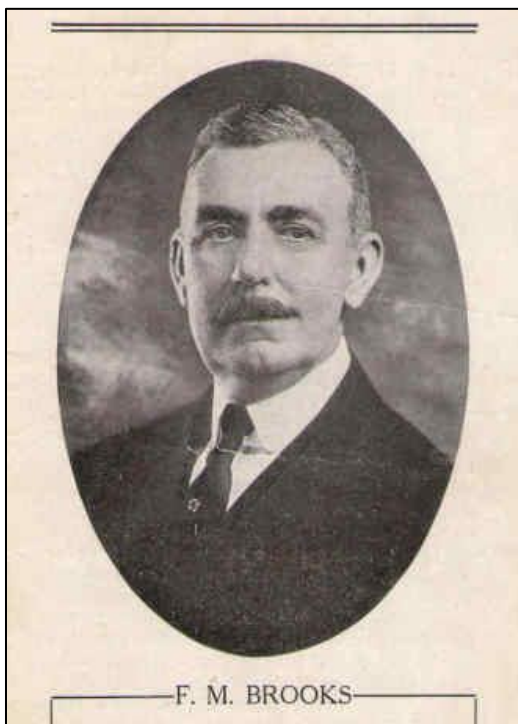
The Historic Records Center has a collection of Medical Registers dating from the late 19th through the late 20th centuries. While the court did not issue these licenses, beginning around 1883, the Code of Virginia required the Clerks of Court to keep a register of medical licenses on file. Though not yet digitized, these ledgers are all indexed by name and are generally in chronological order, so they are relatively easy to use by in-person researchers or Historic Records Center staff.

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While changing slightly over time, each registration features the same basic information about the individual registering to practice medicine in the county, including name, residence, date and place of birth, medical specialty (“School of Practice”), and the entity that issued the medical license, typically the Virginia State Board of Medical Examiners. Most of the later licenses also include the educational background, while only a few of the earlier registrations have that information. The first entries are generally broader in the nature of medical specialty, with many of them listing “regular” or “medicine and surgery” as their specialties.

The first entry in the medical register is for Dr. F. M. Brooks, a Fairfax County native and one of the most well-known doctors in the county, serving as family physician to many for over 50 years, from the late 1880s until his death (while making a house call) in 1941. Graduating from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1883, Brooks’ license was recorded in the Medical Register in 1912, though the Historic Records Center has accounts showing that Dr. Brooks often provided medical care to prisoners in the jail as early as the 1890s.



Dr. F. M. Brooks, circa 1905, photo courtesy of Lee Hubbard

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MEDICAL REGISTER

Name *F. M. Brooks*

Residence *Sweetnam, Va*

Place and Date of Birth *Fairfax County, Virginia, 23rd day of December 1858*

Source of License *State Board of Medical Examiners*

No. of License *Verification certificate #3*

Date of License *October 24th, 1912*

School of Practice *Regular*

OATH OF LICENSEE

I hereby certify that the statements made in the foregoing record of registration are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

F. M. Brooks
Signature of Licensee

CERTIFICATE OF CLERK

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 24th day of December 1912.

F. W. Richards

Fairfax Medical Register Book 1, page 1

While only a handful of doctors registered their licenses in the 1910s, after World War I, we see a significant increase in the number of licenses recorded in the medical registers. A wide variety of practices were available to residents seeking treatment, such as allopathy, naturopathy, osteopathy, and chiropractors. Several doctors registered as “Regular” doctors, perhaps what we might call a General Practitioner today:

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MEDICAL REGISTER

Name *Welton C. Williams*
 Residence *Vienna, Va.*
 Place and Date of Birth *Jacquie County, Va. May 31st. 1873.*

Source of License *State Board of Medical Examiners*
 No. of License
 Date of License *January 2nd. 1919* 19
 School of Practice *Regular*

Welton C. Williams, Vienna, VA

“Regular” Practice

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MEDICAL REGISTER

Name *John W. Marshall*
 Residence *Oakton, Fairfax Co. Va.*
 Place and Date of Birth *Laurel Forks, Shenandoah Co. Va. 19 Oct. 1871*

Source of License *State Board of Dental Examiners*
 No. of License —
 Date of License *10 May 1896* 19
 School of Practice *Dental Surgery*

John W. Marshall, Oakton, VA

Dental Surgery Practice

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While likely not the first female doctor in Fairfax County, the first registration for a female doctor in our medical registers was that of Alice Heyl Kiessling, who indicated that she practiced allopathic medicine. Dr. Kiessling went on to become a well-known psychiatrist in Arlington County, and her and her daughter's medical notebooks from when they were medical students are housed at the Special Collections Research Center at The George Washington University.

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MEDICAL REGISTER

Name Alice Heyl Kiessling
Residence R.F.D. 1 Box 207 A East Falls Church, Va.
Place and Date of Birth May 8, 1903
Philadelphia, Penna.
Source of License State Board of Medical Examiners of Va.
No. of License 7010
Date of License August 14, 1933.
School of Practice George Washington University
Medical School.
Allopathic.

OATH OF LICENSEE

I hereby certify that the statements made in the foregoing record of registration are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Alice Heyl Kiessling
Signature of Licensee

Alice Heyl Kiessling
Allopathic Practice
Fairfax Medical Register,
Book 1, page 40

While not the first African American doctor in Fairfax County, the first registration on file for an African American doctor was Henry Milton Ladrey, who practiced allopathic medicine in Falls Church.

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MEDICAL REGISTER

Name Henry Milton Ladrey
Residence Falls Church, Va
Place and Date of Birth Jamaica, British West Indies
April 3, 1898
Source of License State Board of Medical Examiners of Va
No. of License 6871
Date of License July 21st, 1933
School of Practice Allopathic (Howard University
Medical School)

OATH OF LICENSEE

I hereby certify that the statements made in the foregoing record of registration are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

H. M. Ladrey, M.D.
Signature of Licensee

Henry Milton Ladrey

Allopathic Practice

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page 41

In the later part of the twentieth century, licenses for an even wider variety of specialties appear, including “Physical therapy Assistant” and “Clinical Psychology.”

In addition to detailing the varied medical practices available in Fairfax County, the medical registers can be very helpful for genealogists. The early 20th century entries can be particularly informative, because it can often be difficult to pinpoint exact birthdates and locations for individuals born in the nineteenth century, particularly between the years 1897 and 1912, when the Commonwealth of Virginia did not keep birth or death records.

For more information on these and other records held at the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center, please call 703-246-4168 or email CCRHistoricRecords@fairfaxcounty.gov.

The Historic Records Center is open to both walk-ins and appointments. You can make a research appointment by calling 703-246-4168.

Tours of the 1799 Historic Fairfax Courthouse are given every Friday at 3 pm. Please meet Historic Records Center staff at the green doors of the 1799 Courthouse for the start of the tour.

Sign up for *Found in the Archives*, the monthly newsletter of the HRC:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit/historic-records-center>