

# The Homeopathic Revolution: Why Famous People and Cultural Heroes Choose Homeopathy

(an excerpt)

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The editor has asked me to select an appropriate excerpt for this journal. In the light of the fact that this excerpt is for the *American Journal of Homeopathic Medicine*, I have selected three Americans who achieved great renown, even if not all of them are household names.

Abraham Lincoln is often considered America's best president. Charles Kettering is rated right up there with Thomas Edison as the greatest American inventor. Least known of them all, but still quite a giant of a man, Royal Copeland, MD, was both a homeopathic physician and a U.S. Senator, representing the state of New York. Copeland authored the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetics Act of 1938, a law which some consider to be the most important consumers right bill ever passed and which gave formal legal recognition to homeopathic medicines.

All of these excerpts are taken from *The Homeopathic Revolution: Why Famous People and Cultural Heroes Choose Homeopathy* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books), 2007. For more detailed information about this book and a sample chapter, see [www.HomeopathicRevolution.com](http://www.HomeopathicRevolution.com).

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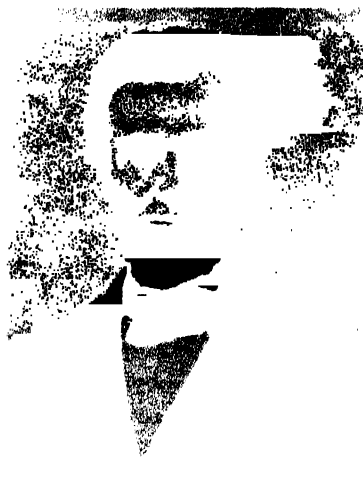
## Abraham Lincoln

The story of what happened to Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of State, William Seward, is a classical story in medical history that exemplifies conventional medicine's attitude toward and actions against unconventional medical treatments and the physicians who provide them.

William Seward (1801–1872) was one of Lincoln's closest political advisors, and he was also an advocate for homeopathic medicine. On the night Lincoln was assassinated, Seward was stabbed in the multi-person assassination plot against the Union.<sup>1</sup> Thanks to the medical care provided by Joseph K. Barnes, MD, U.S. Surgeon General, Seward survived. However, because Seward's personal physician was a homeopathic doctor and because the AMA had a policy that it was an ethical violation to consult with a homeopathic

doctor or even provide care for a homeopathic patient, Dr. Barnes was denounced by the vice president of the AMA for providing medical care (Haller, 2005, 192).<sup>2</sup>

Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) himself showed a special interest in homeopathic medicine. In 1854, before Lincoln was elected president, he was retained as a lawyer to prepare a state legislative proposal to charter a homeopathic medical college in Chicago. Because Chicago was the home of the American Medical Association, which had been founded in 1847 in part to stop the growth of homeopathy, Lincoln's job was no simple effort. However, many of Chicago's most prominent citizens and politicians participated on the board of trustees of the proposed Hahnemann Medical College, including Chicago's mayor, two



Abraham Lincoln

congressmen, an Illinois state representative, a Chicago city councilman, the co-founder of Northwestern University, the founder of Chicago Union Railroad, and several medical doctors who were homeopaths (Spiegel and Kavalier, 2002).<sup>3</sup> Despite significant opposition, Lincoln was successful in obtaining a charter for the homeopathic college.

Today, the Pearson Museum at Southern Illinois University has an exhibit of a nineteenth-century doctor's office and drug store; included in this exhibit is a homeopathic medicine kit from the Diller Drug Store of Springfield, Illinois. The exhibit notes that Abraham Lincoln was a frequent customer of the drug store and a regular user of homeopathic medicines (Karst, 1988, 11).

In addition to choosing Seward to be his secretary of state, several leading advisors were homeopathic advocates. On November 1, 1861, Lincoln appointed Major General George Brinton McClellan (1826–1885) to command the Union army during the Civil War. However, in late December McClellan contracted typhoid fever, which left him unable to go to his office to conduct business (Rafuse, 1997). During the first week of McClellan's illness, two homeopathic doctors arrived from New York to care for the ill general and his father-in-law and chief of staff, Randolph B. Marcy, who was also ill. McClellan's decision to employ homeopathic doctors is particularly interesting considering the fact that the general came from a family of prominent conventional physicians.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this serious illness, General McClellan remained active, giving regular orders to his subordinates, arranging for troop movement and supply transport, meeting with the president on a weekly basis, issuing court martial orders, and even providing commendations to officers. By January 2, he seemed to be much better and shortly afterwards he had no noticeable physical limitations. McClellan lived another twenty-three years.

Despite the success of this homeopathic treatment on the military leader of the Union army, that very month, January 1862, the Army Medical Board rejected requests by homeopathic doctors to serve in military hospitals, arguing that to grant this request would invite applications from all types of quacks and charlatans claiming medical expertise.

Typhoid fever caused more deaths during the Civil War and the Spanish-American War than the deaths caused by bullets (Wershub, 1967, 175). Despite the fact that homeopathy gained widespread popularity in the United States and Europe due to its successes in treating various infectious disease epidemics of the mid- and late-1800s, including typhoid epidemics (Bradford, 1900;

Coulter, 1973), the antagonism against homeopathy and homeopaths led to government regulations stipulating that graduates of homeopathic medical colleges could not receive a commission for military service.

In Connecticut, several "irregular" physicians offered their services to the governor, who accepted them, but the examining board of the Union army rejected them and instead accepted recruits from a hastily graduated class from Yale College.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Union army had strict restrictions against homeopathic physicians, the Confederate army did not. In fact, the physician to the wife of the Confederate army's General Robert E. Lee was a homeopathic doctor, **Alfred Hughes, MD** (Hughes, 1904, 39).<sup>6</sup> At least in one incidence, General Lee himself was known to have taken homeopathic medicines (Mainwaring and Riley, 2005).

Thankfully, the antagonism toward homeopaths was not as severe during World War I; almost 2,000 homeopathic physicians were commissioned as medical officers. Even the American Red Cross authorized a homeopathic hospital unit (Dearborn, 1923).

Lincoln was also known to appoint some homeopathic physicians to political positions. For instance, in 1863 he appointed **Dr. J. G. Hunt**, author of a book on homeopathy and surgery (Hill and Hunt, 1855), to be consul to Nicaragua (King, 1905, I, 177). Lincoln also signed a bill into law that gave the president the authority to make appointments to the Union army's medical department, including homeopaths (Haller, 2005, 187). However, orthodox physicians strongly asserted that they would not work with homeopaths in any way, thus creating new and more difficult problems in military medicine.

Although Lincoln surrounded himself with advocates for homeopathy, that didn't protect the medical science from his famous wit. He once called homeopathy "medicine of a shadow of a pigeon's wing."

On a more serious note, it should also be mentioned that the personal physician to Mary Lincoln (1818–1882) during the later part of her life was a homeopathic physician and surgeon from Chicago, **Dr. Willis Danforth**.<sup>7</sup> Mary Lincoln was known to have experienced serious bouts of depression after her husband was assassinated and two of her children died, one at age 11 (1862) and the other at 18 (1871).

Mary Lincoln became the sole heir of the Lincoln estate and her extravagant spending and unusual behavior later in life concerned her son Robert so much that in 1874, he sought to get her

declared insane and sent to a mental asylum. The testimony of her homeopath, Danforth, confirmed her insanity because he noted that Mrs. Lincoln experienced “nervous derangement” and had delusions. She was committed to the asylum, but was free to move about the grounds, and was released three months later. Recent research has uncovered strong evidence to suggest that Mary Lincoln also suffered from syphilis, which may help explain her crazed mental state (Hayden, 2003, 120–132).

### Royal S. Copeland, MD

Royal Samuel Copeland, MD (1868–1938) graduated from the Homeopathic Medical College at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1889. He later served there as professor of ophthalmology and otology (eyes and ear health), and was elected mayor of Ann Arbor in 1901. He moved to New York City because he was appointed dean of the New York Homeopathic Medical College, and he served in this position from 1908 to 1923. He was elected President of the American Institute of Homeopathy in 1908. He was appointed president of the New York Board of Health from 1918 to 1923, and served in this position during the infamous flu epidemic of 1918.



Royal Copeland, MD

Metropolitan Hospital was a very large homeopathic hospital on Ward’s Island in New York with more than 1,800 beds, and it had the lowest mortality rate from the 1918 flu of any city hospital in the United States (Winston, 1999, 234). Due to having several other homeopathic hospitals in New York City at the time,<sup>8</sup> all of which also had extremely low death rates in this epidemic, Copeland bragged that they had the fewest deaths by percentage than any other city in the world (Robins, 2005, 154).

Homeopathy’s success in treating the notorious flu of 1918 is not surprising. The leading reason that homeopathy gained such popularity during the nineteenth century was its significant and obvious successes in treating the many infectious diseases of that era, including epidemics of scarlet fever, typhoid, yellow fever, and cholera (Bradford, 1900, 112–146; Coulter, 1973). And bringing this historical experience up to date, three large modern studies have tested a popular homeopathic medicine from France in the treatment of the flu, and found this medicine to be clinically effective (Casanova and Gerard, 1992; Ferley, et al., 1989; Papp, et al.,

1998). Even the internationally respected Cochran Commission issued a report on this homeopathic medicine asserting that, based on the three studies, the efficacy of this remedy is “promising” (Vickers, 2005).

Of additional interest is the fact that the specific medicine tested is a popular homeopathic medicine called *Oscilloccinum*, made from the liver and heart of a duck. With the present (2006) terror about avian flu, it is impressive to note that homeopaths have known that ducks (and birds) are carriers of various flu viruses since 1928 when this medicine was initially used and have turned this knowledge into the creation of an effective remedy for the flu, with replicated clinical trials to confirm personal and clinical experiences.

After Copeland’s successful term as president of the New York Board of Health, he ran for the U.S. Senate as a Democrat in 1923, at the encouragement of his friend and major power broker, William Randolph Hearst. Franklin D. Roosevelt served as honorary campaign manager in his first election (Robins, 2005, 166). He was elected to the Senate three times.

Copeland was the primary author of the famous Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act of 1938. This important law empowered the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to regulate food, drugs, and cosmetics, and is considered by

some people to be the most important consumer rights legislation ever passed. This Act also gave official and formal recognition to the *U.S. Homeopathic Pharmacopeia* as a legal compendium of drugs. Just two days after this law was passed, Dr. Copeland died.

Copeland expressed frequent concern about the prejudice against homeopathy and homeopaths, asserting that orthodox doctors “have not looked squarely and without bias” at the facts and results of homeopathy, though he felt that this was not the result of ill will but, rather, inertia. He further asserted that orthodox doctors had “an implanted and nurtured skepticism ... because in their early years their colleges mocked and vilified us, and ever since they have fed upon a blinding literature of prejudice and injustice” (Robins, 2005, 54).

### Charles F. Kettering

Charles (“Boss”) Kettering (1876–1958) served as vice president of General Motors, and was

widely recognized as the greatest American inventor and engineer since Thomas Edison. He held more than 300 patents. Some of his inventions included the all-electric starting ignition, ethyl gasoline, and Duco paint (trade name of a lacquer paint used on cars). He also started the Delco Company (which manufactures car batteries and which GM purchased).

Early in his career, Kettering worked for National Cash Register, which maintained a clinic for employees that was staffed by homeopathic doctors. The company's newsletter often provided health tips on such topics as the necessity of physical fitness, the importance of thorough chewing of the food ("Fletcherism"), the usefulness of fasting, the value of hydrotherapy, and the benefits of health sanitariums like the Battle Creek Sanitarium created by Dr. J. H. Kellogg (the man who also created the famous cereal company).

Kettering publicly acknowledged the health benefits he received due to the skills of **Thomas Addison (T.A.) McCann, MD** (1858–1943), his homeopathic physician from Dayton, Ohio (Enstam, 1943, 489).

T. A. McCann, MD, was a respected homeopathic physician who interacted considerably with conventional physicians. In fact, he was one of the few homeopathic doctors to work with the nationwide Federation of State Medical Examining Boards, serving as vice-president in 1914–1915. Dr. McCann is often quoted today as a result of his report on the impressive successes of homeopathic treatment during the flu epidemic of 1918. In 1921 at the 77th annual convention of the American Institute of Homeopathy in Washington, D.C., he reported that 24,000 cases of flu treated in conventional medical hospitals had a mortality rate of 28.2 percent while 26,000 cases of flu treated in homeopathic hospitals had a mortality rate of 1.05 percent (McCann, 1921; Dewey, 1921).<sup>9</sup>

In 1914 Ohio State University (OSU) formally opened a College of Homeopathic Medicine. To help in these efforts, another homeopathic college (the Cleveland-Pulte Medical College) closed down, donated its medical equipment and library, and sent the proceeds of the sale of its property (\$30,000) to the new homeopathic college. In the homeopathic school's first year, an impressive thirty-nine students were enrolled. In 1915, Kettering and Edward A. Deeds (plant manager of National Cash Register, who had initially hired Kettering)

gave \$2,500 for research work and medical equipment. In 1916 Kettering gave \$8,000 more, and in 1920, he donated \$7,000 worth of radium for the school's X-ray machine.

Because the governor of Ohio at the time was James Cox, a strong advocate for homeopathy, and one of the governor's appointments to the university's board of trustees was Judge Benjamin McCann (the brother of Kettering's homeopath), the homeopathic college had important political support. This strength was further augmented by the employment of W. B. Hinsdale, dean of the University of Michigan Homeopathic School.<sup>10</sup>

However, the AMA could not stand for the development of a college of homeopathic medicine at a public university. N. P. Colwell, secretary of the AMA's Council on Medical Education, went on the offensive. He sharply criticized the president of OSU and arranged for strongly worded attacks against OSU in *JAMA*, and later, he even threatened to downgrade the accreditation status of OSU. Because Colwell's Council on Medical Education had become the national accrediting agency for medical schools, these threats were significant, and made even worse by Colwell's close relationship with the Carnegie Foundation and its president, Henry S. Pritchett. According to the minutes of OSU's board of trustees,



*Charles Kettering*  
Flint Public Library Collection

Pritchett made scurrilous attacks upon the motives of OSU's president and trustees (Roberts, 1986).

In 1920 Kettering made a \$1 million contribution to OSU with a stipulation that it be used to create a homeopathic research laboratory (Mendenhall Papers, 1920; Hertzog, 1949, 1193; Ohio State University, 1922, 440). This action enraged the AMA and the Carnegie Foundation, thrusting them into further proactive efforts to stop this homeopathic college. When Governor Cox left office in 1920 to run as the Democratic candidate for president of the United States, the homeopaths lost some of their political influence.

In 1922, the board of trustees voted to close down the homeopathic college. OSU was forced to return Kettering's donation as well as other donations that were specifically made to and for the homeopathic college, but OSU actually kept the largest and most valuable possession of the homeopathic community, the Homeopathic Hospital and all of its modern equipment, for its own College of Medicine (Ohio State University, 1923,

441). Kettering never trusted OSU after that. Even though he served on the board of trustees of OSU, he never again gave money to the school.

Dr. John Renner (1890–1989), a homeopathic doctor from Chicago who later retired to southern California, reported that Kettering had also planned to give another \$1 million to homeopathy, but the infighting among homeopathic professionals led him instead to work to establish what later became the famed Sloan-Kettering Institute<sup>11</sup> (Suits, 1985, 123). Sadly, the “Boss” is probably turning in his grave, knowing how his institute has turned away from homeopathy and from real healing.

Kettering’s philosophy was summarized in the question he asked and answered of an interviewer: “Do you know what an incurable disease is? It’s one the doctors don’t know anything about. The disease has no objection to being cured at all” (McDowell, 1983). Another reporter asked him about his conquests of the secrets of nature, to which Kettering responded:

“Hah, it’s not the conquest of nature, it’s the conquest of our own ignorance. And as for secrets, there is only one secret of nature I want to pry into. Why is the human skull as dense as it is? Nowadays we can send a message around the world in one-seventh of a second, but it takes years to drive an idea through a quarter-inch of human skull.” (Young, 1961, 193–194)

This doggedness and irreverence led Kettering to continually question conventional medical thinking and to have what the *New York Times* called “a long and expensive flirtation with research into homeopathy” (McDowell, 1983).

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## Endnotes


- 1 A correspondent for the *Courier Journal* (Lou-

- isville, Kentucky) reported that the man who attacked Seward was given entrance into his home by pretending to have a homeopathic medicine for Seward from his homeopath, Dr. T. Verdi. This reporter also stated something that this author has not yet fully confirmed: "It is not generally known that Lincoln and his entire Cabinet were homoeopaths." (Other Days, 1887). This reporter also listed Jefferson Davis as a known advocate for homeopathy, though this fact is not yet verified.
- 2 William H. Mussey, vice president of the AMA, sought to censure Surgeon General Barnes, but the AMA's convention delegates did not take his advice.
  - 3 Trustees of the college included Thomas Hoynes, Joseph B. Doggett, John H. Dunham, Norman B. Judd, George A. Gibbs, Orrington Lunt, William H. Brown, George E. Shipman, MD, and David S. Smith, MD.
  - 4 McClellan's father was a prominent surgeon, author, and educator, and his uncle and older brother were highly respected members of the regular medical profession. McClellan's use of homeopathic treatments can be attributed to his wife, Ellen Marcy McClellan. One of the doctors who treated the general was her uncle, Erastus E. Marcy, who was founder and editor of the prestigious *North American Homeopathic Journal*, and had been one of homeopathy's leading advocates during the 1840s and 1850s.
  - 5 Some appointments of homeopathic physicians and surgeons were made surreptitiously, as in the case of G. S. Walker (1820-?). He graduated from an allopathic medical school, Jefferson Medical College, in 1852, and immediately moved to St. Louis. In 1860 he formally declared his interest in homeopathic medicine, and was summarily kicked out of his local medical society for professional heresy. During the Civil War, he initially entered the Union army as surgeon of volunteers and later was appointed brigade surgeon under General Sherman (King, 1905, II, 388-389).
  - 6 In addition to Dr. Alfred Hughes working as a homeopathic doctor in the Confederate army, Samuel Hunt, MD, of Georgia also practiced openly as a homeopath. The story of Hughes, however, is a very interesting one because he practiced in Richmond, Virginia, where many leading Union officers were his patients, including General Peter Michie, the federal quartermaster general who was in charge of all the supplies for the army.
  - 7 Willis Danforth, MD (1826-1891) received his medical training in conventional medicine, though after being cured of sciatica by a homeopath, he began studying and practicing homeopathy. He became a professor of surgery at Hahnemann Medical College in Chicago.
  - 8 Flower Homeopathic Hospital with its 200 beds, Hahnemann Hospital with its 132 beds, New York Homeopathic Medical College and Hospital with its 55 beds, New York Ophthalmic Hospital with its 80 beds, and Laura Franklin Free Hospital for Children with its 75 beds.
  - 9 Dr. McCann's statistics have been frequently misquoted. One modern-day popular book on the flu epidemic of 1918 (Barry, 2004) erroneously criticized the "absurd" statements from homeopaths because he asserted that 28.2 percent of people with the flu could not have died from it or there would have been millions of deaths in the U.S. alone (and there weren't). McCann was specific in his statistics, and he clearly stated that he was comparing the death rates in homeopathic hospitals to those in conventional hospitals. Sadly, as has been historically repeated by critics of homeopathy, they tend to report misinformation to try to substantiate their case against homeopathy.
  - 10 W. B. Hinsdale's son, Albert E. Hinsdale, was also a homeopathic doctor, and he became professor of materia medica at OSU. One of Albert's scientific studies was on the action of *Kali bichromicum* (potassium dichromate), a very important homeopathic medicine that was recently found to be extraordinarily effective in the treatment of patients suffering from chronic bronchitis or emphysema. Called Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), this is the number four reason that people die in the U.S. This study was conducted at the University of Vienna hospital and was published in the highly respected medical journal, *Chest* (Frass, et al., 2005).
  - 11 In homeopathy, as in any medical specialty, there are varied opinions on how to best treat patients. Some significant infighting in homeopathy occurred between those homeopaths who use high-potency doses (diluted 1:10 or 1:100 thirty or more times) and those who used low-potency doses (usually 3X to 30X). There were also conflicting opinions on how to best conduct research. Some homeopaths wanted to emulate conventional medical care and test one drug against a specific disease, while other homeopaths insisted that homeopathy required more individualized prescriptions. One of the more significant conflicts arose from those homeopaths who believed that no conventional drugs should be used at all, and those who were

eclectic and used homeopathic, herbal, and conventional medications. Kettering's homeopath, T. A. McCann, MD, was a classical homeopath who used high potencies and insisted upon individualizing their application to the totality of the patient, not just the disease.


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