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A TALE OF TWO CONTINENTS: HOW FORTUNE AND ABILITY AFFECTED TWO BROTHERS

Doctor George Carlyle of Cumberland County, England, and
John Carlyle of Alexandria, Virginia

By Jim Bartlinski, Curator, Carlyle House Museum

Two brothers set off on very different life paths because of their birth order. Both were successful. The older, George, was born with the proverbial “silver spoon in his mouth,” and the younger, John, without the spoon, crossed the ocean to seek his fortune in the colony of Virginia.

One of Alexandria’s nine original Trustees, John Carlyle, was born in England near the border with Scotland in February of 1720. As the second son of a titled Scottish family, John was apprenticed to William Hicks, a prosperous merchant in the thriving port of Whitehaven, England. Upon the completion of his apprenticeship, Hicks sent John to the colony of Virginia. By the end of July 1741, the historic record indicates that John was in Virginia serving as a factor, or representative, for Hicks. Like many other second sons that immigrated to the American Colonies, John Carlyle came to Virginia with aspirations of making “a fortune sufficient ... to live independent.” The younger Carlyle’s early financial success, coupled with his subsequent marriage into the very influential Fairfax family, established John as one of northern Virginia’s leading citizens.

What became of John’s older brother George who stayed in England to reap the benefits of that

time-honored custom of primogeniture?¹

Most likely both brothers received the same early education but John’s formal education likely ended at about 10. George’s continued, and he attend-



Doctor George Carlyle, 1765

¹ Primogeniture is the system by which the eldest son inherits the bulk of the father’s estate and receives other opportunities for advancement, such as an excellent education. George, the eldest son, took full advantage of his birth order. He received an excellent education, became a physician and eventually returned to his home town of Carlisle.

ed a university and became a doctor of medicine. It had previously been assumed that George received his academic training as a physician in Scotland. Within a 230 mile radius of George's home of Carlisle are located the distinguished Scottish universities at Aberdeen, Glasgow, St. Andrews, and Edinburgh. By the end of the 18th-century, Scotland had established a reputation for possessing the finest medical schools in Great Britain, as well as on the continent. Therefore, it had been accepted that George traveled north to receive his medical education in Scotland, most likely at the prestigious University of Edinburgh; but the historic record indicates otherwise. New evidence reveals that George attended university in the city of Leiden, located in present day South Holland, The Netherlands, over 600 miles by carriage and sail from Carlisle.

In 1783, London physician Samuel Foart Simmons published the third edition of his *Medical Register*. Simmons' *Medical Register* is a list of qualified medical practitioners in England, her colonies, and most of Europe. The *Register* not only provides names of the various practicing surgeons, physicians, barbers, apothecaries, midwives, and surgeon-apothecaries in England and abroad, it also includes information concerning where they practiced medicine and where they received their medical training. A George Carlyle is listed in Simmons' *Medical Register* for the year 1783 as a physician of Carlisle in Cumberland County, England. The *Register* also states that he is a graduate of Leiden University, class of 1736. Additionally Simmons reports in his publication that as of 1783, there were only 10 practicing physicians (including George Carlyle) in all of Cumberland County. Based on this and other evidence presented in Simmons' *Medical Register*, the "George Carlyle" mentioned is undoubtedly John Carlyle's older brother, George.

George was 21 years old at the time he received his medical qualifications from Leiden in 1736. Why, we may ask did George's father William Carlyle send his son to The Netherlands to be trained. The answer may be twofold. At the time George was preparing to attend medical school in the early 1730s, Leiden was recognized as Europe's preeminent medical school, particularly amongst Englishmen, and had been since the 1580s. Founded in 1575, Leiden became well-known as a leading institute for higher learning throughout Europe and was the oldest univer-

sity in The Netherlands. Several leading scholars of the Enlightenment studied and taught at Leiden, including the French philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650) and the world renowned Dutch physician, anatomist, botanist, chemist, and humanist, Herman Boerhaave (1668-1738).

Scottish medical preeminence came later. The study of medicine at the universities at Glasgow and



Leiden University, founded in 1575

Edinburgh was relatively new. Medical training was offered at Glasgow in the mid 17th-century, but the modern medical school there did not come into being until 1751, when William Cullen was appointed Professor of Medicine. This was the same year that George Carlyle's younger brother in Alexandria, Virginia, began building his Fairfax Street estate. At Edinburgh the medical faculty was not established until 1726. It is interesting to note that Edinburgh's medical school faculty had all qualified under Boerhaave at Leiden. Edinburgh would not become the leading medical school in the British Isles until the latter part of the 18th-century.

Undoubtedly a second motivation for William Carlyle to send his eldest son to the Netherlands was religious persecution. As a member of the Presbyterian Church, George Carlyle was considered a Dissenter or Nonconformist. The terms Dissenter and Nonconformist were used in Great Britain after the Act of Uniformity in 1662 to describe British subjects belonging to non-Christian or any non-Anglican church after passage of the Act of Uniformity in 1662. The Act of Uniformity barred dissenters from attending English universities. Therefore, as a Presbyterian, George was excluded from attending the universities in England that offered medical training, such as Oxford and Cambridge. William, we assume, wanted

the best for his son. As a result George was sent to Leiden.

We know William was a Dissenter because a 1736 Cumberland County court document (the same year George graduated from Leiden), identifies William Carlyle as a Dissenter of Carlisle. The Carlyle family patriarch was one of nine Presbyterians of the border town who signed a “registration to exempt” dissenters from “the Penalties of certain Laws” for the construction of “a Place of Religious Worship” towards the “lower End of Fisher Street upon a Parcel of Ground purchased sometime since for that purpose.” Despite the fact that William Carlyle was a Dissenter, presumably with no university training, he had established himself as a well-to-do medical practitioner (believed to be a surgeon–apothecary) in his own right. William’s prominence in his community is evidenced by his signature on the aforementioned petition to construct a house of worship. As a result of the elder Carlyle’s affiliation with a non-conformist church, coupled with the probability that he was not formally trained, William’s opportunities for social and professional advancement were limited. By prompting his eldest son to pursue university training as a physician, particularly at the distinguished Leiden University, George Carlyle would obtain the credentials he needed to achieve the status in the medical profession that eluded his father.

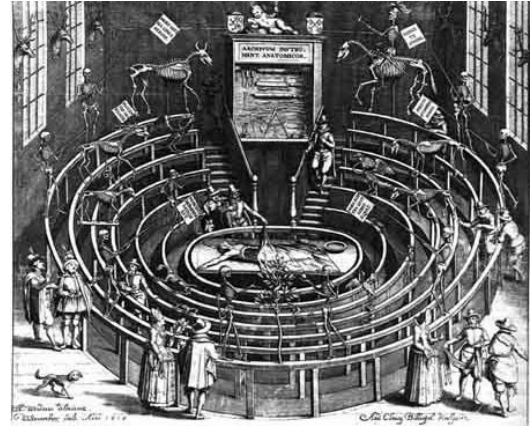
As a surgeon-apothecary of Carlisle, William was undoubtedly well aware of Leiden’s stellar repu-



Doctor Herman Boerhaave, 1668-1738

tation in addition to the renown of the university’s

most famous son, Herman Boerhaave. At Leiden University, George would have the opportunity to study under the celebrated Boerhaave. Boerhaave’s fame was enormous, extending as far as China. As one of the most influential clinicians and teachers of the 1700s, Boerhaave played a huge role in reviving the Hippocratic method of bedside instruction. He also



**Anatomical Theater, Leiden University,
The Netherlands**

insisted on post-mortem examination of patients whereby demonstrating the relationship between symptoms and lesions. Herman Boerhaave is also credited with instituting the first clinico-pathological conferences, providing physicians a forum in which to contribute to the growing body of knowledge concerning the symptoms, as well as pathology of disease, a method of learning still in use today. Boerhaave’s work increased the prestige of the university, especially that of its medical school, to the degree that the monarchs of Europe sent their sons to Leiden. Because of the university’s popularity amongst Europe’s aristocracy, it is said that only the wealthy could afford to send their sons to the Dutch university. It is also worthwhile to note that during Boerhaave’s tenure at Leiden (1701-1738), 1,919 students enrolled in the medical school, and 690 of them came from English-speaking countries.

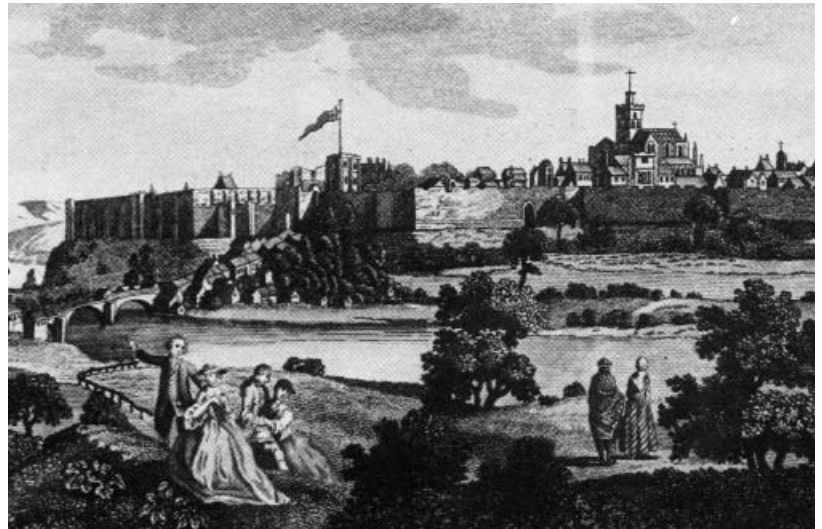
George Carlyle completed his medical education at Leiden University in 1736. He was then entitled to be called Doctor and was not fettered by the manual functions of the apothecary, midwife, and surgeon. With a prestigious degree and few qualified physicians in England in the 1700s, Doctor Carlyle had the credentials, the status, as well as the

advantage of exclusivity to prescribe medical treatment (for a substantial fee) to a wealthy clientele. The average Briton of the period could not afford the services of a doctor and turned to the less expensive and more numerous surgeon-apothecaries, surgeons, apothecaries, or barbers to relieve their ills. In 1783, Simmons recorded in his *Register* that there were sixty surgeon-apothecaries practicing in Cumberland and only ten active physicians.

Many English physicians of the time parlayed their exclusivity and training into lucrative practices, by moving from town to town where they were likely the only doctors treating a community. This practice may account for George Carlyle relocating his Cumberland County practice at least twice during his tenure as a physician. In 1744, eight years after his graduation from Leiden, George is listed as executor of his father William's estate and is referred to as a "Doctor" residing in Kendal. One can only speculate why George began his career in medicine in Kendal and not Carlisle. In all likelihood Carlisle already had an established physician or two, prompting George to look elsewhere to start his practice. It is not apparent why but by the end of 1756, George was practicing medicine near his boyhood home of Carlisle, the county seat of Cumberland County (present day Cumbria County). Evidence of this comes by way of an October 21, 1756 court document stating that an "Alexander Cowen" had rented, as well as farmed a "tenement" belonging to a "Doctor Carlyle of Dadir" for six years. The village of Durdar is three miles south of Carlisle and is considered a suburb of the county seat. Cowen is reported to have paid Carlyle £16 a year for the use of his land.

Doctor Carlyle may have moved his practice from Kendal to Durdar for a number of reasons, one of which may have been a desire to return home. Another possibility is that the county seat was short a doctor, leaving an opening for a qualified hometown son to fill. It could also have been that the population as well as the economy of the border town of Carlisle could support an additional doctor. It is also probable that the competition between physicians in Kendal became too fierce, forcing Doctor Carlyle to practice elsewhere. An indication of this possibility appears in a March 1747 letter George wrote to his brother John in Alexandria. Apparently there was a "young Dr.

[Rotheram]" and his physician father taking, as George put it "a great Deal of Pains to push him [young Doctor Rotheram] forward but I hope all their Efforts for him will not hurt me much tho' considering the Professions of friendship I have had from the Famely and the Promise made me he had no intentions of fixing here I cannot under their present Conduct think myself very generously treated however it has



A Prospect of Carlisle, Cumberland County, England, 1780

yet had no Effect upon me for this Last year my Business has been above one half more than any former year since I came to Kendal." It is possible that the younger Doctor Rotheram reneged on his promise and stayed in Kendal to practice medicine with his father, which may have led to George's departure. Otherwise, his motivation remains unclear.

In Doctor George Carlyle's time it was customary and often an economic necessity for physicians to engage in several commercial pursuits. By marketing his skills directly to affluent townspeople, an entrepreneurial doctor such as Carlyle was able to maximize the profitability of his practice. Besides his medical practice there is evidence that Doctor Carlyle supplemented his income by operating his own apothecary shop. As the eldest son of a surgeon-apothecary, and as a university trained physician who had studied botany under Boerhaave, George was likely a skilled medical-pharmaceutical practitioner.

George Carlyle's operation of an apothecary shop was not unusual; doctors of the period often operated their own apothecaries offering for sale a wide range of medicinal herbs, remedies, surgical

hometown of Carlisle, England in 1784, at the age of 69.

George's younger brother John had died four years earlier in his adopted hometown of Alexandria, Virginia, at age 60. He was laid to with his first wife Sarah Fairfax Carlyle and their children "under the Tombstone in the enclosed Ground in the Presbyterian Yard [Old Presbyterian Meeting House]."

Although the conventions of the time made it necessary for the Carlyle brothers to follow different paths an ocean apart, they retained a close relationship and each achieved success in his own right.

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Typical Medicine Chest of the Period

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**Sergeant Elton Hummer,
Member of the Alexandria Police
Department Baseball Team, 1928**

The Life and Death of Elton B. Hummer, 1898-1928

In the summer of 1928, Alexandria police sergeant Elton B. Hummer was shot to death. Sergeant Hummer was one of 246 law enforcement officers in the United States who died in the line of duty that year¹ Eighty years later, he is still the only fallen Alexandria officer whose death has not been solved.

Perhaps for this reason, interest in commemorating his life has gained support in the Alexandria community. Hummer's life was not dissimilar to many at that time but his death was, particularly because the case was never solved. Because he was an ordinary and seemingly well-intentioned, although assertive man, his death is more poignant.

Elton Burdette Hummer was born in Loudoun County, Virginia, on August 15, 1898.² His parents, Alpheus P. and Clara Burdette Hummer, owned a farm near present-day Sterling, and his father, known as A.P., also worked as a carpenter. Elton had four older siblings, a half-brother Henry, a sister Maud, and two brothers Vernon and Milton.³

A blue-eyed boy with light-colored hair, Elton attended Sterling School, at least until age 14.⁴ As a young man, he helped on his family's farm with his brothers, and when he was older, he worked on nearby farms to help support his family.⁵

In 1912 his sister married a railroad worker

from Alexandria. She moved to Alexandria, and a few years later Elton's brother Milton moved there, too, and worked for the railroad. Vernon moved to Washington, D.C., where he worked as a mechanic, and later served in World War I.

In the early 1920s, A.P. and Clara Hummer moved from their farm to Alexandria, presumably to be closer to Milton and Maud. They bought a house at 806 Duke Street, and Elton moved to the city with them. Elton likely worked for the railroad for a few years, as some records identify him as a fireman, the person who shoveled coal into the firebox of a locomotive.⁶

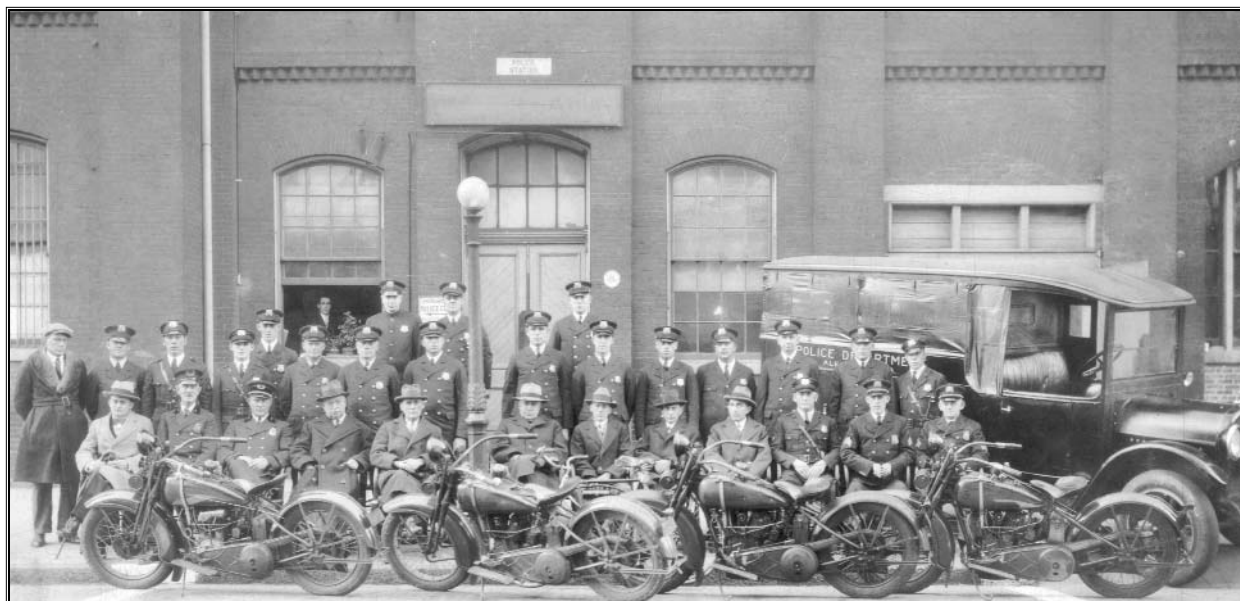
On August 17, 1927, Elton B. Hummer became an Alexandria police officer.⁷ He was sworn in by the deputy clerk of court, issued badge number 15, and soon began making arrests for larcenies, assaults and prohibition violations. Officer Hummer immediately enjoyed success at the police department and was promoted to the rank of sergeant on June 1, 1928. He played on the police baseball team and was described as "fearless" and "one of the most popular officers on the force."⁸

Just a year after joining the police department Sergeant Hummer was killed in the line of duty.

What we know about his death is that on the evening of August 18, 1928, Elton said goodnight to his parents and left home for his midnight shift. About an hour later, he was on foot patrol in the same neighborhood checking the outlying beats. He was just around the corner from his own home when he was shot.⁹

Witnesses reported hearing two men talking in the alley next to 224 South Alfred Street. They then heard one man warn the other in a raised voice that this was the "last time." Two shots rang out in close succession and a third followed. Neighbors ran to see what had happened and found Sergeant Hummer critically injured on the pavement. Sergeant Hummer's weapon was still near his hand; and he was barely alive. He had been shot in the chest and groin, and when he arrived at Alexandria Hospital just a block away, he was pronounced dead.

Investigation revealed that Sergeant Hummer was shot twice with an automatic .45-caliber gun. He had managed to fire his weapon once, and some neighbors told police that after they heard gunfire, they saw a man running west on Duke Street holding his side



A 1927 photograph of the Alexandria Police Department in front of its headquarters on North Fairfax Street (Sergeant Hummer is the sixth person in the second row, from the left)

as though he had been injured.¹⁰

The city manager offered a \$500 reward for information leading to the murderer's arrest and police captain William Campbell, himself the son of a fallen officer, ensured that every necessary resource was available. A massive manhunt ensued, dozens of people were questioned and specialized resources, from an airplane to ballistic experts, were used to search for the assailant. But Sergeant Hummer's murderer was never identified.

On August 20, 1928 hundreds of people attended Sergeant Hummer's funeral service at his home on Duke Street. Fellow officers served as pallbearers and a procession traveled from his home to Ivy Hill Cemetery where he was buried in a family plot.¹¹ Sergeant Hummer, 30, had not married and left no descendants.

Alexandria has lost 18 law enforcement officers in the line of duty: a constable, a night watchman, a deputy and 13 police officers. Sergeant Hummer's murder remains the only unsolved case.

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- ⁸ "Check Clues in Murder of Sergeant Hammer; Killer Escapes, Inquest Tonight," *Alexandria Gazette*, 18 August 1928, p. 1+.
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The Alexandria Chronicle

This issue of *The Chronicle* has two articles. The first is about George Carlyle, an Englishman, who became a doctor in 1736. George Carlyle, while not an American, was the brother of John Carlyle, an important Alexandrian. The story of how George Carlyle earned his medical qualifications describes English values and institutions. By inference it suggests the trials and tribulations a Virginian might experience if he, following the English example, sought a superior medical education.

The second article is set in the 20th century. It is about Elton Hummer, a Virginian, who became a member of the Alexandria police force. His story does not have a happy ending.



“Breathing A Vein”

The National Library of Medicine

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