

MILITARY MEDICAL HISTORY

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Dr. Daniel S. Lamb (1843–1929) of the Army Medical Museum

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Dr. Daniel S. Lamb's contributions to military medicine can be seen today in the collections of the National Museum of Health and Medicine (NMHM). His accomplishments include performing the autopsies of an American president and his assassin. His impact can be best appreciated through his generous specimen donations to the then-Army Medical Museum (AMM), today's NMHM, and through his socially progressive activities in the Washington, DC, medical community. Lamb's career is distinguished by lifetime service as staff pathologist to the AMM (1865–1920) and development of the Howard University anatomy program.

Lamb's career in Washington, DC, began as a Hospital Steward in U.S. Army military hospitals during the Civil War. After the war, Lamb worked at the AMM under Surgeon J.J. Woodward. He graduated from Georgetown Medical School in 1868 and was promoted to Acting Assistant Surgeon. His duties involved organizing and collecting medical specimens for the AMM from his postmortem work and from contributors in Washington and military surgeons stationed around the world.¹

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The National Museum of Health and Medicine (NMHM), a Department of Defense (DoD) museum founded as the Army Medical Museum in 1862, is committed to documenting the nation's military medical heritage while sustaining a repository of contemporary medical technology to advance military medicine. This series of articles illuminates objects and collections of interest to AMSUS readers. For more about NMHM, visit www.medicalmuseum.mil.

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In his day, Lamb (Fig. 1) was considered one of the most reliable physicians for conducting autopsies in Washington, DC. He was selected to conduct the autopsies of assassinated President James Garfield and his assassin Charles Guiteau. He also performed the autopsy of former Senator William Taulbee (1851–1890), who was murdered inside the U.S. Capitol.

Former museum curator Major G.R. Callender once said of Lamb that, "... from 1883 until the World War in 1917, Dr. Lamb was the real head of the Army Medical Museum,



FIGURE 1. Portrait of Dr. Daniel S. Lamb by Francis Millet. (CP 3872) (Otis Historical Archives, National Museum of Health and Medicine, Silver Spring, Maryland).

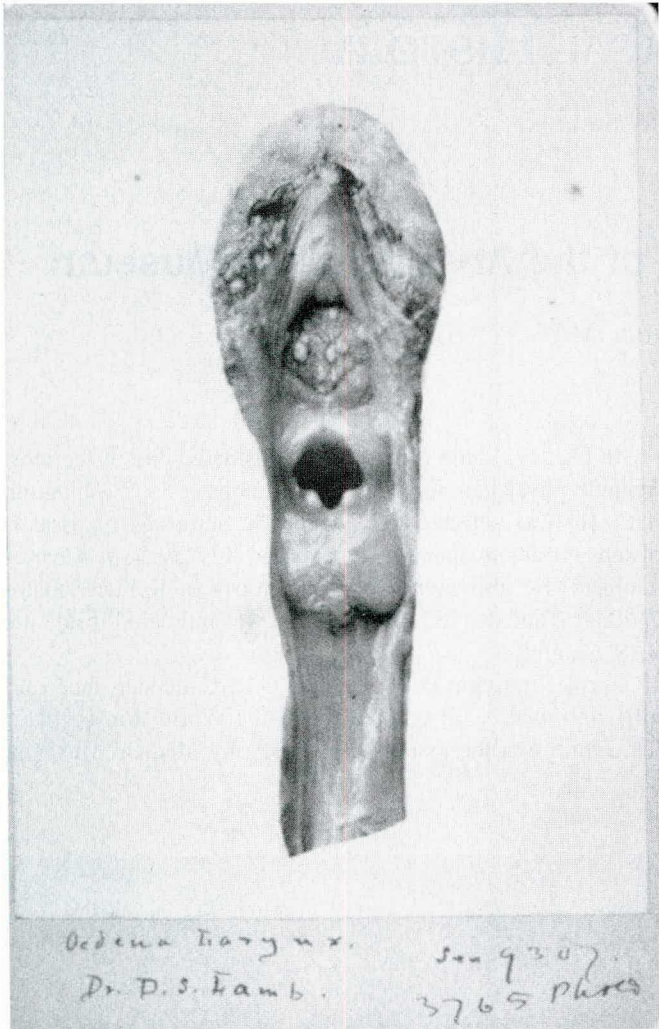


FIGURE 2. Photo of an autopsy specimen of a larynx donated to the Army Medical Museum by Dr. Daniel S. Lamb. The specimen shows edema and ulceration from tuberculosis infection. (AMM PS 9307) (Anatomical Collection, National Museum of Health and Medicine, Silver Spring, Maryland).

the pathologist and except in name, the curator of its collections to which he contributed more specimens than any other who has ever or ever will so contribute.”² By his own account, Lamb contributed over 1,500 specimens to the museum, including Garfield’s mortally injured vertebrae. Lamb’s specimens still comprise a significant percentage of the museum’s collections (Fig. 2).

Dr. Lamb’s career at Howard University Medical School paralleled his work at AMM. He served as the Anatomy Department chair for 46 years (1877–1923).³ Lamb was also a vocal proponent of the advancement of women and African American physicians. The Women’s Medical Society credited Lamb for their admission into the Medical Society of DC. He served in numerous professional organizations including the Medical Society of DC, Washington Anthropological Society, and the Washington Academy of Sciences.

On his death in 1929, Lamb was lauded by eminent physicians and anthropologists throughout Washington. In his later years, Dr. Lamb wrote historical accounts of several of the organizations and institutions he influenced including the AMM.⁴

Dr. Lamb’s substantial contributions to military medicine helped to position the AMM (and today’s NMHM) to support generations of military medical physicians, researchers, and scientists today and into the future.

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