

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS FOR THE YEAR 1929

The year 1929 was eventful in that the Board of Medical Examiners as well as several other boards empowered to grant qualified persons a license or privilege to perform certain functions were moulded into closer cohesion with your Excellency's administration program through the creation of the Department of Professional and Vocational Standards, its affairs now ably administered by Mr. James Collins, who by virtue of his office has become a member of the Governor's Council.

A noteworthy event that manifests a closer union between that national organization known as the Association of American Medical Colleges and the medical examining boards of the United States saw its fruition at the annual meeting of the Federation of Medical Examining Boards of the United States held at the Palmer House, Chicago, Illinois, last February, when by resolution the federation agreed to adopt the classification of the Association of American Medical Colleges as the acceptable qualification either for admittance to examination for a license to practice or as qualification on a reciprocity basis. A most helpful and enthusiastic discussion of the various problems of medical education and licensure demonstrated a closer bond of endeavor. California was honored by the election of the secretary-treasurer of our Board of Medical Examiners, who will succeed to the duties as president of the Federation of Medical Examining Boards at the meeting which opens at the Palmer House, Chicago, February 17, 1930.

CREDENTIALS

The verification of credentials is an all important function of a medical examining board. Even though the applicant may present credentials from a well known and highly reputable medical school, it is always a safe procedure to recheck to their source. It is illogical to argue that this function should be delegated entirely to the medical school, for, as was mentioned in our 1927 and 1928 annual reports, medical schools, innocent of schemes to defraud, have been induced to furnish impostors with transcripts of courses pursued by bona fide students. The original name is then erased, the impostor's substituted and the transcript then used in various ways suiting the needs of the schemer. Impostors have printed what purports to be a valid transcript of medical studies alleged to have been completed in a reputable medical school, fill in the number of hours of asserted study in respective subjects and then forge the name of the school official having custody of the records. In our 1927 report we related:

(1) How Ralph Putnam, using forged credentials from the University of Vermont, gained senior standing in one of our reputable California schools and a medical diploma after one year attendance.

(2) How Weymouth Leopold Swainson had faked his preliminary education certificate, how he obtained from the University of Michigan

the transcript of the course pursued by a bona fide student, erased said student's name and substituted his own, and how on forged credentials bearing the name of McGill University, he had been permitted to enter the senior class of Meharry Medical College and was granted a medical diploma after one year.

(3) How Agnes May Martin, posing as Alma Stevens Pennington, obtained a transcript of the latter's medical course from one of our leading California medical schools and attempted to gain a license in two midwestern states.

(4) How Harry Stewart Wittkopp, with a medical diploma from an extinct San Francisco medical college, the records of which show no evidence of his attendance, succeeded in gaining entrance to the examination in the District of Columbia.



SAMUEL A. CHEATHAM—Taken 1912.

A state medical examining board is a ministerial body legislatively created as a barrier intended to guard the public against the unqualified, as well as the impostor who by fraudulent documents and dishonest procedure seeks a license to practice, and with this in mind, your Excellency signed the "Diploma Mill Bill," chapter 79, Statutes 1927.

The medical board of each state must exercise the utmost vigilance to thwart the schemes of those designing sharpers who seek to gain a license by fraud, for once the impostor gains his license, experience has taught the California board the hopelessness of efforts to revoke. The holder of a license obtained by fraud need only employ an astute attorney, who, by invoking the technicalities of law, is able to successfully block action to revoke his client's license. Two such cases, one for nine years, the other for five years, have been flaunted in the face of the people of the State of California, as represented by its Board of Medical Examiners, and are shining examples of the impos-

sibility of revocation of a California license convincingly shown to have been obtained by fraud.

SAMUEL A. CHEATHAM

In 1927 a slender, well dressed, apparently cultured young man with rather remarkable azure eyes and who spoke with a pronounced southern accent, called at our San Francisco office, introduced by a well known San Francisco resident. He stated he was interested in the

San Francisco, California
June thirtieth, 1927

Arnell Boyd Cheatham, M.D., being sworn, declares the following statement to be true, to the best of his knowledge and belief.

That while serving as Surgeon aboard the S.S. Pres. Harrison, he was aboard the said vessel when she was wrecked on Bonham Rock, China, on the morning of November 6th, 1926, and at that time, or during the subsequent salvage operations, his Diploma, issued by the Memphis Hospital Medical College, June 14th, 1907, was either lost or destroyed. That the regulations of the Dollar Steamship Co., the operators of the said S.S. Pres. Harrison, required that he have his diploma aboard the ship while serving as Surgeon. That the said Arnell Boyd Cheatham obtained his Diploma from the Memphis Hospital Medical College after having attended three years of nine months each at the College; that it was obtained without fraud or misrepresentation, and that he is the identical person mentioned in the Diploma and in/on the records of said Medical College.

That the said Diploma was signed by (this from memory) the following members of the Faculty:-

W.D. Rogers, Dean of Faculty J.B. McElroy, Prof. of Pathology
B.G. Henning, Prof. of Principles and Practice of Medicine
- F. Turner, Prof. of Materia Medica and Therapeutics, Lecturer Diseases of Nervous System. Elmer - Francis, Prof. of Anatomy, Lecturer on Surgery.
- - Minox, Prof. of Ophthalmology, Laryngology, Otology and Hygiene.
Frank - Saythe, Prof. of Diseases of Women. J.H. Venn, Prof. of Physics and Chemistry. Frank Jones, Prof. of Medicine and Physical Diagnosis.
D.M. Hall, Prof. of Physiology and Physiological Anatomy.
- - Andrews, Prof. of Obstetrics and Pediatrics. J.B. McElroy, Prof. of Pathology.

That this affidavit is presented to the State Board of Medical Examiners of the State of California in connection with the above mentioned Diploma.

Sworn to and subscribed before me, this day of June, 1927

Neva A. Turner
Notary Public
San Francisco
Address

My commission expires Sept 2 1927

steps necessary to obtain a physician and surgeon's license in California. He gave his name as A. B. Cheatham, claimed graduation from the Memphis Hospital Medical College, Nashville, Tennessee, 1907, stated that he had been practicing medicine in Texas since that date until recently when he had served as a ship surgeon for one of the prominent steamship companies running out of San Francisco; that unfortunately he had lost his diploma when the steamship on which he was surgeon had been wrecked off the coast of China. He expressed regret that he was unable to obtain a duplicate medical

diploma or verification of his medical course as the Memphis Hospital Medical College had long since closed. In support of his contention that his diploma had been lost in a shipwreck he displayed a verification letter from a steamship office and also presented his personal affidavit as further evidence.

AFFIDAVIT

State of California
County of San Francisco } ss.

Arnold Boyd Cheatham, M.D.

, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

I reside at Hotel Whitcomb in San Francisco in the County of San Francisco in the State of California. I was born in the State of Texas on the 1st day of August, 1882.

1. My education, preliminary to my first medical course, was obtained in Georgia Southern Military College Sainbridge Georgia (Give names of Colleges or Schools, and location.) and was evidenced to such college by Certificate

(Diploma, certificate or examination. If by examination, state before whom, and indicate branches and extent.)
2. I studied medicine for three calendar years, and was in actual attendance upon lectures in the following-named school, or schools, as follows:
First year at Memphis Hospital College of Medicine from September 1904 to June 1905
Second year at Memphis Hospital College of Medicine from September 1905 to June 1906
Third year at Memphis Hospital College of Medicine from September 1906 to June 1907
Fourth year at Memphis Hospital College of Medicine from September 1907 to June 1908

4. I was conditioned in None (Name subject.) in the year of my medical course.

5. The said conditions were removed None (State when.) and by None (State how conditions were removed.)

6. I was allowed the following credits upon my medical course None and the said credits were granted upon the following credentials

7. A medical diploma was issued to me by Memphis Hospital College of Medicine (Name of medical school.) situated at Memphis Tennessee (Country or State.)

I am the person named in said diploma, and am the lawful possessor thereof. I procured the said diploma in the regular course of instruction, and without fraud or misrepresentation of any kind.

8. The requirements of said Memphis Hospital College of Medicine (Title of College of which a graduate.) were, at the time the said diploma was issued to me, in no particular less than those prescribed by the Association of American Medical Colleges for that year, and I complied with all the said requirements.

9. I have practiced medicine 19 years, and my last location was at Ship's Surgeon Round the World Service California to California

Subscribed and sworn to before me, this 8 day of August, A.D. 1927. A. B. Cheatham M.D. (Signature of Affiant) Notary Public

The latest American Medical Association directory showed A. B. Cheatham, Millersview, Texas, as the holder of the credentials claimed by our caller, and, assuming that we had been dealing with the bona fide Dr. Cheatham, we investigated no further at that time, although we confess our suspicions were aroused by our visitor's rather evasive

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(Number of years.)

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Second year at Memphis Hospital College of Medicine from September 1905 to June 1906

Third year at Memphis Hospital College of Medicine from September 1906 to June 1907

Fourth year at None from None to None

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(Name subjects.)

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5. The said conditions were removed None, and

(State when.)

by None

(State how conditions were removed.)

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and the said credits were granted upon the following credentials

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(Name of medical school.)

Memphis Tennessee

situated at Memphis Tennessee

(Country or State.)

I am the person named in said diploma, and am the lawful possessor thereof. I procured the said diploma in the regular course of instruction, and without fraud or misrepresentation of any kind.

8. The requirements of said Memphis Hospital College of Medicine

(Title of College of which a graduate.)

were, at the time the said diploma was issued to me, in no particular less than those prescribed by the Association of American Medical Colleges for that year, and I complied with all the said requirements.

9. I have practiced medicine 19 years, and my last location was

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Subscribed and sworn to before me, this

day of August, A. D. 1927

(Signature of Applicant and Affiant.)

Arnold B. Cheatham M.D.
Notary Public

answers. The failure of this individual to file an application for a California license (although two had been given him) further aroused our suspicions, so much so that we informed his sponsor that apparently something was wrong.

Some months later we received a letter dated Reno, Nevada, May 29, 1928, signed A. B. Cheatham, requesting that a reciprocity application be mailed to his office, 311 Byington Building, Reno, Nevada. Several months later this individual again called at our San Francisco office and was given another reciprocity application. Soon thereafter the secretary of the Nevada Board of Medical Examiners notified us that



ANNER BERTRAM CHEATHAM
Taken 1907.

he had endorsed the California reciprocity application of A. B. Cheatham based on his Nevada license, and that although Cheatham had practiced at Reno, he had since located in San Francisco.

Anticipating the early filing of Cheatham's application we started our usual investigation. Nevada became suspicious of this man's credentials soon after notifying us that Cheatham had been endorsed to California. An active correspondence was immediately started both by Secretary Hamer of the Nevada board and the secretary of the California board. Following every clue, the chase lead to Washington, D. C., back to St. Louis, Missouri, then to Georgia, from there to Florida, then back to St. Louis, over to Jefferson City; then to Memphis, Tennessee, to Chicago; back to Pasadena, then San Francisco; over to Reno; then to Boston, to Montreal and finally back to San

San Francisco. In the meantime we were corresponding with the A. B. Cheatham at Millersview, Texas, whose credentials and statements have been verified by the authorities of the University of Tennessee, custodian of the records of the Memphis Hospital Medical College. He stated his name was Anner Bertram Cheatham, born in Texas in 1882, that his father's name was M. R. Cheatham, whereas the subject of our investigation asserts his father (now deceased) was named Henry M. Cheatham. Dr. A. B. Cheatham of Texas described himself as a heavy set, dark complexioned individual, weighing 255 pounds, while the description of the Nevada Cheatham is fair complexion, somewhat slender and weighing about 150 pounds. The Texas A. B. Cheatham stated that he was a graduate of Memphis Hospital Medical College, 1907, that his medical diploma was still in his possession, that he had practiced since 1907 in Millersview, Texas (or in that immediate vicinity), and that he had never served as ship surgeon. The Texas A. B. Cheatham stayed born in one place, whereas the Nevada Cheatham has been born in several places, according to the various documents, affidavits, etc., alleged to have been executed by this former Nevada licentiate.

According to the U. S. Navy records one Samuel Cheatham enlisted at Atlanta, Georgia, in 1911 and gave his place and date of birth as St. Louis, Missouri, March 8, 1890. In his application for a Nevada license Samuel Cheatham, alias A. B. Cheatham, claims he was born in Texas; however when he registered as a voter in San Francisco May 27, 1925, and when he obtained a marriage license in Brookline, Massachusetts, March 23, 1927, he declared he had been born in Canada. The report of the Missouri penitentiary gives Samuel Cheatham's birthplace as Missouri.

The record sent us by the U. S. Navy (including fingerprint classification), disclosed that Samuel Cheatham served as first class hospital apprentice until his discharge April 25, 1911, his record being reported as unsatisfactory. The next chronological event was furnished by our St. Louis, Missouri, investigator and from the records of the St. Louis Police Department (with photograph, description and fingerprint classification, which corresponds with the fingerprint classification sent us by the U. S. Navy). This report, as well as a thrilling story entitled "The Cuff Link Clue," by Detective Allinder, published in a Macfadden magazine known as "Great Detective Stories," briefly sketched relates that Samuel Cheatham fell into fast company on coming to St. Louis Missouri, after his discharge from the U. S. Navy, was hard pressed to keep up his end financially and had borrowed several times at Cowperthwaite's Loan Company. The story goes on to relate that on the night of January 31, 1912, a blizzardy night, he waited until the pawnshop man was alone and entered. He pawned a pair of cuff links bearing his initials "S. A. C." and as the pawnbroker (a young man named Wurzburger) was entering the loan in the ledger, Cheatham leaned partly through the cage window and shot him through the head. Then he climbed behind the rail, tied up his victim with a rope and dumped the dying man into the basement. The knot used was a peculiar sailor's knot. Cheatham had been a sailor. When the loan man was shot his nerveless fingers released one of the cuff links, which rolled behind a book. Wurzburger died February 6, 1912, without

No. _____
Prec. _____
Dist. _____
I hereby authorize the cancellation of my last
previous registration
at _____
Former Name _____

Mapped _____ Nat. Card _____
Filed _____ Stat. _____ No. 24
Taken out _____ Typed _____
Cancelled _____ Compared _____
T. O. Filed _____ Out _____ PRECINCT 31
Transferred to _____ DISTRICT 21

No. 254615

STATE OF CALIFORNIA,

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO } SS.

ORIGINAL

AFFIDAVIT OF REGISTRATION

The undersigned affiant, being duly sworn, says: I will be at least twenty-one years of age at the time of the next succeeding election, a citizen of the United States ninety days prior thereto, and a resident of the State one year, of the County ninety days, and of the Precinct thirty days next preceding such election, and will be an elector of this County at the next succeeding election.

- I have not registered elsewhere in the State since January 1, 1924.
(If applicant has previously registered mark out the word "not" and fill out statement in left margin.)
- My full name is Arnell Boyd Cheatham
(Including christian or given name, and middle name or initial, and in the case of a woman, the prefix Miss or Mrs.)
- My residence is 1731 Market P. O. San Francisco
between 8th and 9th Streets 6 Floor, Room 671
- My occupation is Physician
- My height is 5 feet 10 inches
- I was born in Canada
- I acquired citizenship by _____ (State or Country.)
(Underline method of acquiring citizenship.)

- Decree of court, when _____ where _____
- Marriage to a citizen, when _____ where _____
- Naturalization of my husband, when _____ where _____
- Father's naturalization (Name of husband) _____
☒ Citizenship of father (father) Henry Hughes Cheatham
- Act of Congress. 2. Treaty.

- I can _____ read the Constitution in the English language; I can _____ write my name; I am entitled to vote by reason of having been on October 10, 1911 | a. An elector.
b. More than sixty years of age.
I can _____ mark my ballot by reason of _____
(State physical disability, if any.)

- I intend to affiliate at the ensuing primary election with the Republican party
Subscribed and sworn to before me this

27th day of May 1924

W. J. Light
Deputy Registrar of Voters.

Arnell B. Cheatham
(Affiant's name)
1215 Lombard Street
Address

Ballot

No. _____

Ballot

No. _____

Ballot

No. _____

Ballot

No. _____

Ballot

No. _____

Ballot

No. _____

Ballot

No. _____

Ballot

No. _____

Ballot

No. _____

regaining consciousness. The slayer stole \$500 from the safe, gathered up 200 watches and took a diamond stud from his victim's shirt front. He took other jewels and thought he had both cuff links, and skipped after tearing several pages from the ledger, including the notation of the last loan. Detectives who came to investigate the murder found the one cuff link. Patiently they searched the books of the Cowperthwaite Company through months of loans until they found an entry that fitted the initials "S. A. C." Cheatham was traced from that. He was traced far and wide through the east and south. In Bainbridge, Georgia, a jeweler was found who had engraved the cuff button. Going to his old home Cheatham assertedly pawned some of the stolen watches and pledged others elsewhere. He later shipped 104 of the watches back to his St. Louis room in boxes containing some of his late father's books. The police seized these, waited and the culprit walked into the trap. Shown indisputable evidence of his guilt, he confessed. On October 14, 1912, he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to prison at Jefferson City for life. In a short time efforts to parole or pardon him were started. The father of his victim and hundreds of others bitterly opposed such action. Prominent men of Florida were said to have aided him. A woman, reported to have claimed to be Cheatham's sister, worked hard for him and finally, on the recommendation of the Pardon Board, Governor Arthur Hyde commuted Cheatham's sentence to end May 16, 1922. The woman who said she was Cheatham's sister took him to Chicago and according to the records of the county clerk they were married May 19, 1922. She gave her name as Mrs. Maude C. Miller, a widow, 35 years old.

Reports from the Missouri penitentiary relate that Samuel Cheatham, while an inmate, is asserted to have served as assistant physician and in the same capacity at Boonville. When our investigation started the Missouri penitentiary sent us a photograph of their former inmate No. 14079, recorded as Samuel Cheatham. This photograph shows marks of "retouching," evidently for the purpose of confusing future identification. The prison authorities also sent us the fingerprint classification of Missouri No. 14079, listed as Samuel Cheatham; however these did not correspond with the fingerprint classification of Samuel Cheatham sent us by the U. S. Navy and by the St. Louis Police Department. This discrepancy was brought to the attention of the warden of the Missouri penitentiary, who then wrote us that the fingerprint classification of their inmate No. 19709 had been substituted for those of another inmate No. 14079. The warden reported "that some friend of Cheatham had erased Y——'s name from one set of prints and substituted Samuel A. Cheatham No. 14079 in lieu thereof." With his explanation of this substitution the warden enclosed the correct fingerprint classification of Samuel Cheatham (Mo. 14079), which corresponded with that of the U. S. Navy and the St. Louis Police Department.

The Nevada A. B. Cheatham, besides his fanciful tales about medical education, had made other interesting claims:

(1) That he was in the U. S. Navy as a commissioned medical officer from 1908 to 1914 (although according to the records his U. S. Navy medical experience was reported to have been gained as a hospital steward from the time of his enlistment in 1908 until his discharge,

April 25, 1911). From November 1, 1911, until May 17, 1922, the Missouri state prison claims to have harbored him.

(2) That he left the U. S. Navy in 1914 to take postgraduate work in McGill University, Montreal, Canada. (McGill University authorities report there has never been a student named Cheatham enrolled at McGill.)

(3) That he served with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces as Medical Officer with rank from Lieutenant to Major. (The Canadian military authorities report they find no record of his service.)

(4) That he came west for his health in 1921 and served as ship surgeon with Pacific Mail Steamship Company out of San Francisco up to July, 1922. (The Missouri penitentiary records show Samuel Cheatham an inmate until May 16, 1922.)

The Nevada Board of Medical Examiners reported the revocation of the license of A. B. Cheatham on August 9, 1929, on the grounds that Samuel Cheatham had fraudulently presented the credentials of A. B. Cheatham and thereon obtained a Nevada license.

No doubt Cheatham now regrets the unsavory notoriety visited upon him as a result of his fraud perpetrated on the Nevada board. Had he profited by his prison experience and "gone straight" rather than attempting to establish a record as a modern Ananias, his secret of youthful crime would have remained buried.

Had Samuel Cheatham filed the California reciprocity application on which the secretary of the Nevada Board of Medical Examiners reported he had endorsed A. B. Cheatham's credentials, he would have been charged with a felony under the "Diploma Mill Bill," which became a law by signature of your Excellency in 1927.