

A Brief History of Kansas City Medical Schools
with Kansas City or University of Kansas City as part of their name
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Researchers, most specifically genealogists not residing in this area, who enter “Kansas City College” or “Kansas City University” into an Internet search engine, inevitably find “The University of Kansas City” (now the University of Missouri-Kansas City) on their screen. This usually results in a request to the University of Missouri-Kansas City Archives for records, particularly student information.

Unfortunately, little such information is available. The Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City has the *Jackson County Medical Society Records* (KC088) (the collection used for this brief history), the *Kansas City Academy of Medicine Records* (KC187), and the *Kansas City Medical Library Club Collection* (KC186), which contains brief histories and lists of faculty for many schools, but not students. Additionally, much of the information for this brief history was taken from, *From Shamans to Specialists, A History of Medicine and Health Care in Jackson County Missouri* by Barbara M. Gorman, Richard D. McKinzie, and Theodore A. Wilson (Kansas City, MO: Jackson County Medical Society, 1981). Also available and very useful is, *Hospital Hill: An Illustrated Account of Public Health Care Institutions in Kansas City, Missouri* by James Soward, (Kansas City: Truman Medical Center Charitable Foundation, 1995).

Soon after the Civil War, several types of higher education institutions were founded in the Kansas City area, but none were traditional “four year” liberal arts or professional institutions. These consisted of commercial/business, music, oratory schools, and other private institutions. All were proprietary, meaning privately owned and operated for a profit. By the 1880’s professional schools for law and dentistry had been established.

In 1869 two medical schools were established and by the 1880’s there were many. Some flourished for several decades while others for only several years. Toward the turn of the century fifteen schools existed in Kansas City. Kansas City hosted the second most medical schools in the United States, after Chicago. By the early 1900’s, all the early schools were gone, either by declining, or in the case of two, merging into the University of Kansas School of Medicine. However, one “diploma mill,” The Kansas City College of Medicine and Surgery, existed in the Hospital Hill area until well into the twentieth century.

The list below chronicles turn of the century “Kansas City” medical schools. Additional research for some school closing dates will be conducted in the future. Please note that this list does not include *all* early medical schools in Kansas City, but only those with variations of the words *Kansas City* or *University of Kansas City* as part of their name.

- **Kansas City Medical College**
 - 1869 Kansas City Medical College founded
 - 1870 College of Physicians and Surgeons founded
 - 1871 The above two merge to form the Kansas City College of Physicians and Surgeons
 - 1881 Reorganized as Kansas City Medical College
 - 1905 Merges with the University of Kansas School of Medicine

- **Kansas City Hospital College**
 - 1871-1872 Operating

- **Medical College of Kansas City**
 - 1872-1873 Operating

- **Kansas City Surgical & Medical Institute**
 - 1875-1878 Operating

- **Dr. Payne's Kansas City Surgical & Medical Institute**
 - 1876-1878 Operating

- **Kansas City University (MO)**
 - 1881 Kansas City University (MO) established. Besides medicine, was to include art and law, but art and law never developed. Also referred to as University of Kansas City
 - 1888 Renamed University Medical College of Kansas City
 - 1913 Closed

- **Kansas City Hospital College of Medicine**
 - 1884-1888 Kansas City Hospital College of Medicine taught both regular medicine and homeopathy

- **Kansas City Homeopathic Medical College**
 - 1888 Kansas City Homeopathic Medical College established.
 - 1901 Merges with Kansas City University (KS) College of Homeopathic Medicine and Surgery to form Kansas City Hahnemann Medical College (This school may have been a branch or franchise of the successful Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital of Philadelphia, PA, which was founded in 1848. It moved from homeopathy to modern medicine in the '20's. The school's archive did not respond to a request for information regarding this possibility of Kansas City being a connection)
Closing date not researched at this time.

- **Kansas City University, (Kansas City, KS)**
1896-1931 Kansas City University, Kansas City, KS established by a descendent of Cotton Mather as an institution with a religious slant. The University was comprised of Mather College, College of Theology, College of Music, Kansas City Academy, School of Oratory and Elocution, College of Physicians and Surgeons, College of Homeopathic Medicine and Surgery. (Mather Hall building still exists)

- **Kansas City College of Medicine and Surgery, Kansas City, KS**
1896 Kansas City College of Medicine and Surgery, Kansas City, KS established.
1899 Moves to Kansas City, MO as Medico-Chirurgical College of Kansas City (known as Medico-Chi)
1905 Merges with the University of Kansas School of Medicine

- **Kansas City College of Medicine and Surgery (MO) (Eclectic)**
1916-1917 Kansas City College of Medicine and Surgery (MO) (Eclectic)
Closing date not researched at this time

- **Kansas City University of Physicians and Surgeons**
1916 This school was not recognized by the American Medical Association or the Association of American Medical Colleges. Its “graduates” were not able to take the examination for practice in Missouri, or in most other states.
1943 The Missouri State Board of Health shuts the school down for inadequate teaching and improper instruction.

- **Kansas City University of Osteopathy and Surgeons**
1916 Kansas City University of Osteopathy and Surgeons established.
1917 Renamed College of Osteopathic Medicine
1970 Renamed University of Health Sciences – College of Osteopathy
2004 Renamed Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences

- **The Kansas City Post Graduate Medical School**
Dates not researched at this time.

In 1933, The University of Kansas City, a four year private liberal arts college, was established. It merged with the University of Missouri system in 1963 to become the University of Missouri-Kansas City. The UMKC six-year medical school was established in 1970.

The University of Kansas Medical Center was established in Kansas City, Kansas, in 1905. Several of the local proprietary medical schools merged into the KU program. Until 1967 medical students began their education in Lawrence and then spent their

clinical years at the Center. Since that date a complete medical education is offered at the Center. Additional information on the KUMC may be obtained from the KUMC Archives.

How and why did the 19th century medical schools evolve into the medical/education system we know today?

Toward the turn of the century a nationwide trend developed for local physicians to form medical societies in their own areas and from that started the movement toward standardized formal medical training in specialized institutions. At the same time some states began requiring licensing.

There were few precedents across the country for public control of medical licensing. Some states enacted licensing laws after the Civil War, but they were weak or totally ineffective. In 1872, the Missouri State Medical Association lobbied for a state board of censors to test graduates of the state's medical schools for competence before allowing them to practice. The idea did not win enough support, but two years later legislators did require all persons entering the medical profession to register with the state. Only those who possessed a diploma from a "regularly chartered" medical college could register.

Missouri's Medical Practice Act of April 1883 provided a beginning by mandating self-proclaimed physicians who did not have a medical diploma or certificate to take an examination administered by the State Board of Health. Reformers applauded the new requirement, but some of them much preferred that the Board of Health also examine physicians, rather than the medical schools that graduated them. The bulk of the law, in fact, dealt with medical school curriculum and credentialing of instructors—the requirements for a "regular charter." Some sixteen Missouri institutions offered the M.D. degree. It seemed to advocates of competency-based licensing more practical to administer tests to the graduates than take on the Herculean task of enforcing the law's vague and unwieldy minimum requirements for a degree.

At the time the Missouri State Board of Health began its program for raising professional requirements, medical schools were a national disgrace, at least by the standards of the late twentieth century. The old apprenticeship system was in rapid decline because in most cases it was easier to obtain a diploma by attending medical school. Between the Civil War and 1900, too many medical schools competed for too few students. In 1886, it was said that the medical colleges of the United States, with rare exceptions, were owned and run by the teachers composing the faculties, and had no other means of subsistence other than the fees derived from students. Inevitably, many medical schools lowered their admissions standards to attract students and lowered performance standards to keep them. In time reformers won stronger admission criteria and a more practical curriculum. The Missouri State Board of Health in 1894 mandated a high school or college diploma or teacher's certificate (which could be obtained by state examination) for matriculation of medical students. In 1907, the Missouri legislature passed a new Medical Practice Act that required applicants taking the examination to be graduates of a four-year reputable medical school (two-year, if they had graduated prior to 1901).

Although some diploma mills managed to survive and bogus doctors holding “degrees” from the Kansas City College of Medicine and Surgery would crop up for several decades after the turn of the century, the medical profession generally was well on the way to a universal standard for quality education by the 1920’s. This standard would require a college degree for admission to medical school, a year’s internship in addition to a four-year course of study and a clinical as well as a written examination by the state or states in which each student wanted to obtain a license to practice medicine.