

## Ralph Nelson Isham

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Ralph Nelson Isham was born in the town of Mannheim, New York in 1831. After acquiring a good academic education at the Herkimer Academy, at Little Falls, NY, he entered upon the study of medicine and received the degree of M.D. from the University of the City of New York Bellevue Hospital Medical College in 1854. He then served a full term as house physician and surgeon in Bellevue Hospital, at the completion of which he moved to Chicago in November 1855 to enter into practice.

In 1859 he joined with others in the organization of the medical department of Lind University, later the Chicago Medical College, later known as the Northwestern University Medical School, and accepted the chair of surgical anatomy and operative surgery. In the discharge of his duties he acquired a high reputation as a teacher and as a successful surgical operator.

During the Civil War, 1861-1865, he served as a member of the sanitary Commission, and was one of its organizers. He twice went south with supplies and doctors and was in the field at the battle of Shiloh. During the war he led the United States Marine Hospital at Chicago, which then was a military hospital. He continued in charge of the Marine Hospital for several years after the war ended.

At various times he has served as professor of surgery in the Northwestern University, surgeon to the Jewish Hospital, now the Michael Reese Hospital, member of the board of trustees of the North Star

Dispensary, surgeon to the Presbyterian Hospital, consulting surgeon to the Passavant Hospital, and delegate to the International Medical Congress in London in 1881.

He was one of the original guarantors of the Chicago orchestra, also at one time a trustee of the Central church. He was a member of various clubs, societies and organizations, and a member of nearly all of the medical societies, being honorary member of the New York Medical Society.

**NOTABLE FACT:** It was in Dr. Isham's office that the organizational meeting for the Lind University medical department took place and he became the youngest faculty member. Lind University is now known as the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.