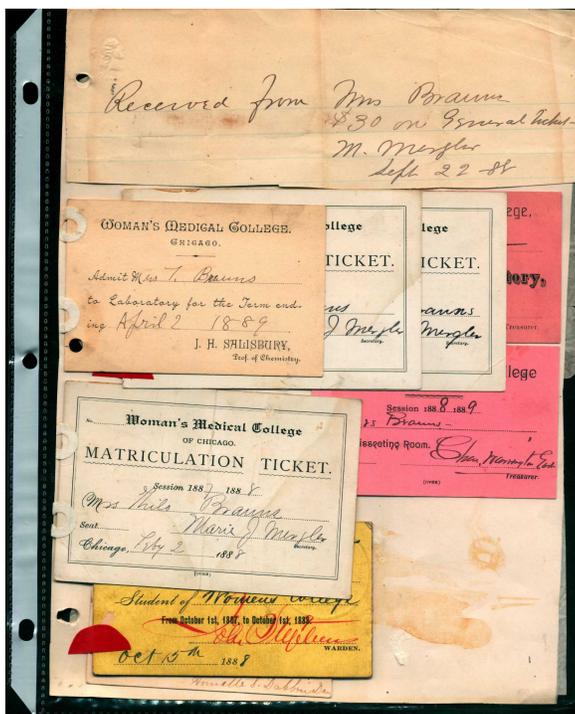


The Brauns Family and the Woman's Medical College of Chicago

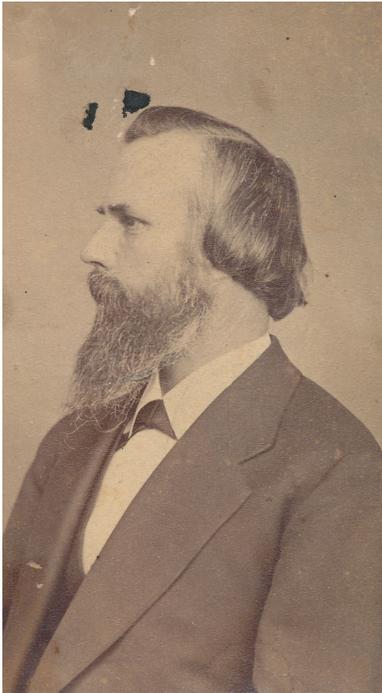
By Ramune Kubilius, Collection Development / Special Projects Librarian

In the fall of 2016, the Galter Health Sciences Library was pleased to accept the donation of three rare medical books made in honor of the Kenneth V. and Blanche E. Brauns family. The books (one bound volume contains a number of brief medical tracts) had remained in the family for years. The family believes the books were consulted often, especially by the grandparents of Kenneth, Dr. Thilo Brauns, and his wife, Dr. Ernestine, as evidenced by their well-thumbed appearance and notes made in them.



The Brauns family has an interesting connection to Woman's Medical College of Chicago, which was renamed in 1879 from its name at founding in 1870, Woman's Hospital Medical College of Chicago. (An official affiliation of the College with Northwestern University was established in 1892 when the College was renamed Northwestern University Woman's Medical School.*) Dr. Ernestine W. (Pickhardt) Brauns matriculated at Woman's Medical College in 1887/88 and 1888/89, where she registered for several courses. Various matriculation cards, class admittance and completion tickets from that era are kept in the Brauns family scrapbook. These include: admittance to the Chemistry and Histological Laboratories, to the Dissecting Room, and proof of completion of the Practical Anatomy course. The Woman's Medical College of Chicago *Catalogue of Students* listed the preceptor of Mrs. T. Brauns as Dr. Thilo Brauns (her husband). Dr. Ernestine Brauns was granted her doctor of medicine certificate not by formal graduation from the Woman's Medical College, but rather, by passing written and oral examinations required by the Illinois State Board of Health. When she also paid the fee and provided letters of reference ("from reputable medical men with regard to the moral and professional character by the applicant"), she was granted her medical license in June 1889.

Dr. Thilo Brauns



The Brauns family scrapbook contains a copy of a biography Dr. Ernestine Brauns wrote upon the death of her husband in 1894, providing highlights of his personal and professional life. Dr. Thilo Brauns (Rappe Thilo Hartig Brauns) was born March 1, 1831 in Ilberstarf, Germany, the son of Captain Wilhelm Brauns and his wife, Julia, the daughter of a physician. After his military service, Captain Brauns became a businessman. A reversal of fortunes prompted him to emigrate alone to the United States and settle in Texas. Thilo, the second son in the family of six children, showed a scientific bent from his early years, first in high school (gymnasium), later in various universities, concluding with medical studies at the University of Berlin in 1855/56. When he received word that his father was ailing, he departed for the United States, but was too late to see him alive. His subsequent stay in America included one year of homeopathic studies in Philadelphia and a successful medical practice in New York City. Upon his return to Germany to settle family affairs, he completed post-doctoral studies at the University of Berlin in 1861. He returned again to the U.S., specializing in gynecology at his practice in New York City, and he traveled for a year with his wife after he went through a bout of ill health. Chicago became the family's permanent home in 1882 where Dr. Theo Brauns established a small private hospital, specializing in abdominal surgery, until his ill health prompted its closing in 1893. He died of cancer on April 30, 1894.

Dr. Ernestine Brauns



Dr. Ernestine Brauns was the eldest daughter in the large family of Ernestine (Schwab) and Gustov Wilhelm Pickhardt, immigrants who arrived in the United States from Germany in 1850. Ancestors of the family were Huguenots from France and the family name was originally Piccard. Brauns family lore includes the interesting fact that Ernestine, born May 18, 1849, was a translator for *Harper's Bazaar* in New York City until her marriage in 1869 at age 21 and the new family's move to Chicago. While raising her children (three children grew to adulthood), she completed her medical studies and obtained her medical license. As a widow, she continued to practice medicine in Chicago after the death of her husband, later moving to Crystal Lake, IL, where she lived with her son, Vernon's, family until her death September 17, 1937.

All photos are courtesy of the Brauns family.

The Galter Health Sciences Library appreciates the generosity of the Brauns family in donating rare books for its Special Collections. Also greatly appreciated was the loan of the family scrapbook by Mrs. Blanche E. Brauns who shared some family stories. Research into the lives of the Drs. Brauns provided a brief but fascinating glimpse into medical education and medical practice of an earlier era, as well as a Chicago medical family's history.

*More information:

- [Remembering the Graduates of the Northwestern University Woman's Medical School \(1870-1902\)](#)
- [History of Co-education at the Medical School](#)

For more information about rare books and artifacts, the history of medicine and dentistry, and the history of the medical school, contact Galter Health Sciences Library Special Collections: ghsl-specialcollections@northwestern.edu.

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