

ception;—3d—the particular months in which they occur;
disease;—5th—the age at which, or between what ages they
occur while living;—7th—their pecuniary circumstances
and the circumstances have over the disease, may lead to results
which, when once excited and seated in the system is necessarily
probably never will be, discovered which will cure the malady
therefore the duty of those who are aware of this fact
on such occasions, to ascertain the exciting causes of the disease
may be avoided.

Luke Howe, M.D.

An Extraordinary Physician of Jaffrey

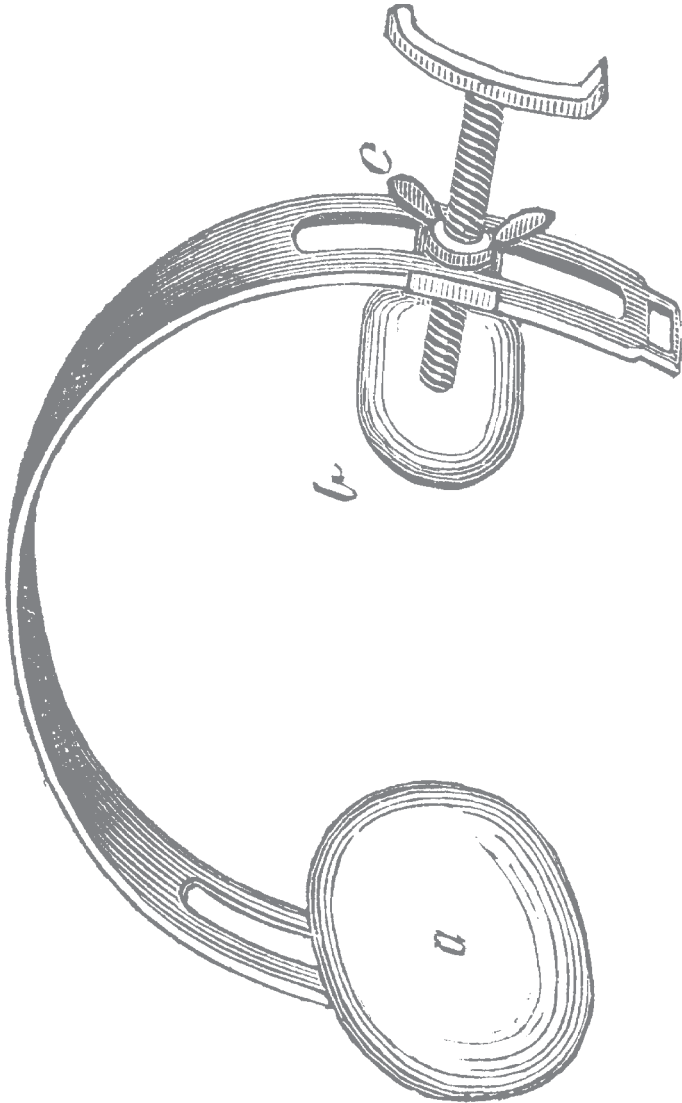
It is to be lessened, it is to be effected by means of prevention
which, if appreciated by the community, will be adopted to a greater
extent than human suffering and of human life will be saved annually
in the labor of collecting facts relating to the disease
is circular. Should the records of mortality which may
prevent you from answering all my enquiries, you will then
gather up as many facts as you may be able to collect.

The object of this circular to obtain, are kept in your town
the information desired from the different Clergymen of
the parishes recording the deaths and the circumstances attending
them. An early answer to this circular, addressed to *Dr. Luke*

D. Glyn Millard, M.D.

Your Obedient

LUKE HOWE.



STUDIES IN JAFFREY HISTORY – No. 2
Jaffrey Historical Society
2005

LUKE HOWE, M.D.
An Extraordinary Physician
of Jaffrey

by

D. Glyn Millard, M.D.

Jaffrey, New Hampshire
Jaffrey Historical Society
2005

STUDIES IN JAFFREY HISTORY

1. Margaret Bean, *Willa Cather in Jaffrey*. 2005
2. D. Glyn Millard, *Luke Howe, M.D. – An Extraordinary Physician of Jaffrey*. 2005

Foreword

I came to Jaffrey in 1954 as a General Practitioner, and some time later, I received a copy of the Town History and became interested in the physicians who had practiced in the past. Luke Howe seemed to be the most interesting, but after a year or two of enquiries, I was getting nowhere. One summer evening in the early 1960s, Robert and Molly MacCready, our next door neighbours, invited us for dinner. They were summer residents at this time. Robert was a physician who worked at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and was instrumental in the development of a test to detect *Phenylketonuria*, a hereditary disorder, which, if undetected, leads to mental retardation. I expressed my frustration concerning my search of Luke Howe, and Molly said, "Look no further. He was my great-grandfather, and many of his papers are in the attic." In boxes, covered with about two inches of bat droppings, was a wealth of papers and letters. Over the next couple of years, I catalogued them and obtained much of what is in this essay. The house next door was built by Samuel Dakin, Luke's "law mentor," and continues to be the Howe family home. It sometimes pays to drop names. Otherwise I might still be frustrated with Luke Howe instead of describing the achievements of this country doctor, a truly remarkable man and an extraordinary physician.

D. Glyn Millard, M.D.



Luke Howe's house on Thorndike Pond Road as it appears today. It was built by Samuel Dakin in about 1805. In 1815 he sold the house to Dr. Adonijah Howe, who died in the same year. Adonijah's widow married her brother-in-law, Dr. Luke Howe, in 1820. Luke's daughter Isabel married John Fox and so the house is often referred to as The Fox House.

It was in this house that the first meeting of the Village Improvement Society was held on August 27, 1906.

LUKE HOWE, M.D.
An Extraordinary Physician
of Jaffrey

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE had been signed eleven years before, and the Revolutionary War had been over for four years when Luke Howe was born in Jaffrey on March 28, 1787. He was the fourth child, third son of Adonijah Howe, the first physician to practice in the town. Adonijah was also a farmer, and Luke worked on the farm before deciding to pursue further education. He entered Dartmouth College as a sophomore in 1808 and graduated in 1811. Soon after leaving college, he began to study law with Samuel Dakin who built the Fox House in Jaffrey Center. This was to become the family homestead of the Luke Howe Family and is so today. Luke also studied law with Samuel Allen of New Salem and Nathan Dane of Beverly in Massachusetts. He began the practice of law in Jaffrey in 1814.

While going through various letters and papers of Dr. Howe, I came across some rambling thoughts of the young men of that day. They were contemporaries of Luke Howe: Esmond Thorndike and William Ainsworth, son of Laban Ainsworth, first minister in Jaffrey. For instance, Luke Howe wrote about the modern woman:

There is nothing more amiable in the character of a female than a proper reserve, without this trait of conduct, a woman may excite our admiration but can never command our esteem. In ancient times, the females were more reserved, consequently more respected. In the present degenerate time, they make themselves too cheap to keep up their consequences, they forget that a woman must first repel before she can attract. When Daphne fled from the embraces of her lover, his passion was only increased by the pursuit, but our modern females are quite another sort of being. Instead of flying from, they run into the arms of their Apollo, and are afterwards surprised to find them grow cool to their charms. Our females I must acknowledge have fine sweeping tails, and carry their heads remarkably high, but when a man of sense would make choice of a wife, he expects other qualities than those which might well recommend a horse. Fools may be caught by the chaff, but a man of sense will make the gem, the object of his attention.¹

Esmond Thorndike wrote: “Nothing can be more disgusting to a truly ingenious mind than pedantry.” And William Ainsworth wrote: “The greatest pleasure which it is possible for a man to receive is in the society of the virtuous, enlightened and ever blooming fair.”

Not to be outdone, Sally Howe, Luke’s sister wrote:

Nearly allied and next to ingratitude is this trait in the human character, that a person must surely have been born and nurtured in the very dregs of society, which is incapable of reciprocating by a proper return of courtesies [courtesies], those acts of friendship which he has received from others. All the outward show of politeness and affectation of affability is undue disgusting to one who sees through the flimsy veil of a pretended gentleman.

It is seen that the young of those days share the same expressions as some of our modern youth, but much more eloquently.

Luke Howe: The Lawyer

Howe began his law practice in Jaffrey. An agreement made and concluded between Samuel Dakin and Luke Howe on October 8, 1814, states:

First. The said Samuel Dakin hereby leases to the said Luke his office situated on the east side of the street leading from the Turnpike Road to Peterborough for a term of three years from this date.

Second. The said Luke hereby agrees to pay the said Samuel as a rent for the said office ten dollars annually.

Howe had been in practice for approximately twelve months when his older brother Adonijah, a physician associated with their father, died. Luke Howe’s father had hopes that one of his sons would succeed him and take over the practice. He strenuously urged his son, Luke, to relinquish the practice of law and study medicine. Luke yielded to his father’s solicitations. He attended lectures at Harvard and Dartmouth Medical Schools, receiving his M.D. degree from Dartmouth in 1818. Luke must have been in a law partnership with William Ainsworth. Both had graduated from Dartmouth College, and when Luke decided to “switch” to medicine, an agreement was reached for three terms. The first two terms stated

that they share equally the profits after expenses and the third term stated that Luke would get a quarter of the profits. Luke was also to sell his law books to Ainsworth and promised not to practice law in competition unless

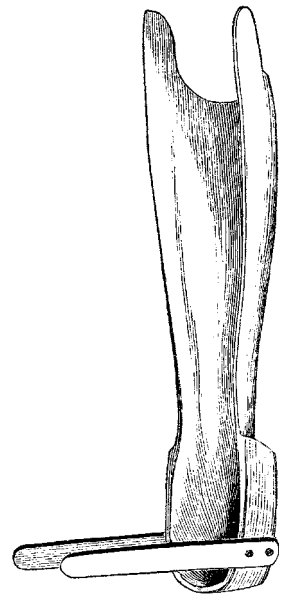
. . . by some accident or inability of body the said Luke shall be rendered unable to practice Physic and in case of such inability of the said Luke shall practice law as approved he shall pay the said Wm. Ainsworth \$50.00 for each year they may have been in partnership as approved, and shall pay the said William the same price for the books he purchased from the said Luke that he, the said William pays the said Luke therefore, and the said parties naturally agree to assist each other in their different professions.

It is obvious that they were more than partners; they were good friends.

Luke Howe: The Medical Man

Howe was described by his contemporaries as “. . . a very industrious and studious, investigating, discriminating and faithful physician. . .”² in the general practice of medicine. He also saw the need for improvement in the management of injuries, particularly fractures of bone, and he was responsible for inventing various splints, for fractures of the lower limbs. He developed methods in the management of hemorrhage and various trusses. Some of his ingenious devices were ahead of his time. He invented the “Posterior Concave Splint” [pictured right], a device used in the treatment of fractures involving the tibia and fibula (bones of the lower limb). At the annual meeting of the New Hampshire Medical Society in June, 1843, Dr. James Batcheller of Marlborough, New Hampshire commented on this splint:

FIG. 4.



It is a most valuable improvement, and ought, in my opinion, to be universally adopted, as it fulfills all the indications more certainly than any other method,

mitigating, in a great degree, the suffering of the patient, as he can leave his bed every day if he desires, and is almost sure to prevent displacement. I wish every physician would try it.

When my family came to the United States in 1953, we put in to Halifax, Nova Scotia before proceeding to New York. While in Halifax, the headline on the local newspaper read, "The Man That Operated Upon Arthur Godfrey Dies." We had no idea who Arthur Godfrey was, but the doctor was very familiar. He was Dr. Smith Peterson, a Boston orthopedic surgeon who pioneered the surgical treatment of intertrochanteric and neck fractures of the femur, using metal nails and pins. Prior to his method of treatment, applying traction along the shaft of the femur was the treatment of choice for

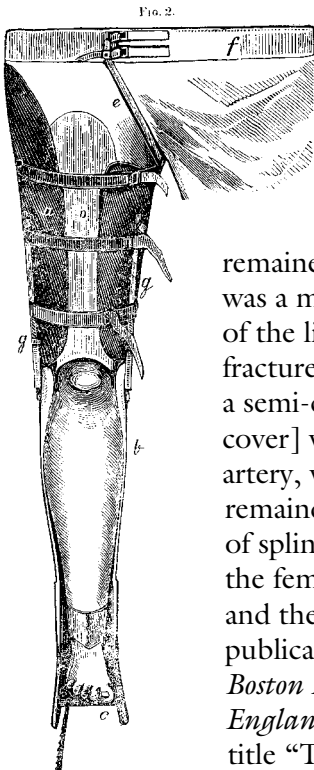


FIG. 2.

FIG. 2.—a, a leather splint or case, embracing the knee, trochanter and shin, and nearly the circumference of the thigh, but facing 6 inches in proportion to its size on its anterior surface, for the pasteboard splint, b, &c, &c, connecting straps, by the screws and thumbnuts of which, the apparatus is adapted to the length of the limb, and extension, in certain cases, made, h, the leg splint, as represented in fig. 3, before the roller is applied, c, the rubber-band windlass, which is connected with the splint by a cord, e, f, the perineal and pelvic straps.

many years.

Howe also invented a method of traction in the treatment of fractures of the neck and shaft of the femur, the bone in the upper leg.

The principle of this method

remained almost unchanged until recent times. It was a method of applying traction along the length of the limb in order to maintain the position of the fracture fragments in an ideal position. He invented a semi-circular tourniquet [pictured on the back cover] which could selectively compress a single artery, without impeding the circulation to the remainder of the limb. He invented several kinds of splints used in the management of fractures of the femur, tibia, and fibula, bones of the forearm, and the clavicle. The use of these splints and past publications on the subjects were reprinted in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, now *The New England Journal of Medicine*, in 1840 under the title "The Use and Application of an Improved Apparatus for Particular Fractures and Dislocations

of the Extremities, Illustrated by Cuts and Cases, with Remarks."

He was awarded the Silver Medal by the Trustees of the Mechanics

Association of the City of Boston in commendation for the valuable articles, which he had exhibited at an industrial fair.

In an editorial entitled “Dr. Howe’s Abdominal Supporter” in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, (volume 22, page 130, April 1, 1840), the following is abstracted:

Luke Howe, M.D. of Jaffrey, N.H., whose mechanical ingenuity is in keeping with his success in surgery, is the inventor of various instruments of utility in the management of fractured limbs, etc., and at a spare moment he has devised an abdominal supporter, quite equal to any now before the public, and apparently much less expensive. He seems not all ambitious to shackle its use by a patent, to enhance the price, but allows anyone to manufacture the contrivance whose circumstances render it necessary to resort to the art.

On April 8, 1840, the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* published a paper “Medical Miscellany: Dr. Howe’s Truss.”

Letters received by Luke Howe show the following. From A.J. Eustis, Pelham, Mass., dated March 22, 1841:

The box of splints which you sent me I have left with the physicians in Amherst for trial. They are desirous to see a full and complete set of your splints for fractures of the lower extremities, supposing you send a full set with directions. My friend Dr. Gridley of Amherst wishes you to send several supports (abdominal supports) into this region for trial. If you conclude to send more, wish you send by letter and bill of the several splints. The price of each singly or by the couple or by the set, with such discounting you may make by the set or box.

From George C. Shattuck, Boston, dated January 30, 1841, in reply to a letter from Luke Howe about an abdominal binder:

When you may visit our city, I beg you to let me see you, as there is much I wish to talk with you about, come directly to my house and then I shall make sure of you. If I do not happen to be in, tell your name to my wife and she will take pleasure in entertaining you until my return. Such accommodation as my humble domicile may afford shall be at your command.

George C. Shattuck is listed as a Consulting Physician along with James Jackson, John Randall and John Homans in the annual report of the Board of Trustees of the Massachusetts General Hospital, 1838.

Dr. Howe received various letters from physicians requesting splints and supporters, and describing the symptoms of various

patients, seeking “have you seen such cases?” and what treatment would Howe advise. In a letter dated September 29, 1840, from a William Follansbee and Albert Smith:

In answer to your enquiries, we would state that the patient for whom we procured your abdominal supporter had been confined to her bed constantly for 4-1/2 months, and had, during all time, been obliged to have her urine drawn by a catheter. Upon the application of the supporter, she very soon got up, and the succeeding day, was able to walk about the house, and before a week elapsed, she could sit up all day, and has had no occasion ever since to use the catheter. It is now four weeks since she applied the supporter and she is now able to do light work, to ride about town in a wagon without any injury and justly attributes her recovery to the efficiency of your invention. If we ever had any doubts as to its utility, we must be skeptical indeed, if they should not yield to such evidence as this. We are fully convinced that this instrument is destined to be of eminent service to mankind, and we most heartily wish you success in your efforts to bring it into more general use.

Howe had another paper published entitled “Pneumonia-Malformation” in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (18:90-92) on March 14, 1838, in which he described a case report of a 19 year-old pauper of Sharon, New Hampshire. This patient developed a cold which, following exposure to a severe storm, progressed to a bad cough and the expectoration of dark colored blood. The symptoms gradually improved, but were seen again three weeks later. The patient was extremely short of breath, had a rapid pulse, edema of the extremities, fluid in his chest, and the epistaxis, a nose-bleed. He was able to walk only with assistance. The patient died, and 36 hours later, assisted by two of his pupils and with the reluctant permission of the mother, Dr. Howe performed a “hasty and imperfect examination of the body.” There was deformity of the chest, bloody fluid in the chest, with pneumonia in the left lung: pericarditis due to Tuberculosis. In the abdomen, they found multiple tubercles with ossification of the pancreas and multiple abnormalities. Howe reported, “His mother stated he was not worth a stick to pick up his load, but put it on his shoulders, and he would carry as much as a camel.” The weakness of his mind was in contrast with the strength of his body. His neighbors had supposed him to be a hermaphrodite with little reason.

In the same paper, Howe describes a new born female child,

delivered normally and safely,

. . . but the joy of the parents and attendants was soon turned into surprises and sorrow by the discovery that instead of a nose between the eyes, there was but an orbit, situated where the nose should have been, and suspended above it was a substance resembling an elephant's proboscis.

He describes how the child is breathing through its mouth, and goes on

What was to be done? A tube introduced and retained in the mouth, might perhaps save the life of the child, till she learned to open her lips to breath (for instinct will not supply for the defects of one organ an additional function of another.) This I suggested, but *cui bono* (for whose advantage). What was the duty? How different the sympathies toward the little subject of nature's sport, and those formed according to her perfect model.

The next day, he made a visit, but the child had died just after he left on his previous visit. He was allowed to make an examination and describes the abnormalities of the face. He writes

On my first observing this *lusus naturae* [freak of nature] my eyes were insensibly turned toward a show bill of a menagerie of animals on the wall of the room, but discovered no support to the opinion that the process of foetal organization was influenced by the imagination of the mother, for there was no figure of an elephant, nor of a *monoculous* [one-eyed] animal among the number.

Dr. Howe was a frequent contributor to the medical journals of the day. One effort appeared as "Water from leaden pipes destructive to leeches" in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (11:46, August 27, 1834). Was he ahead of his time? Had he recognized the effect of lead on humans? Probably not. Other of his papers included "Bleeding bands," also in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (12:239, May 20, 1835), and numerous writings on surgical instruments. His last paper was "Ergot in small and repeated doses," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (24:245-249, May 16, 1841). This was delivered as his presidential address at the New Hampshire Medical Society and details the use of these doses in *prepartum* and *postpartum* conditions.

Howe began an investigation of a disease peculiar to clergymen which he termed "The Minister's Ail," a chronic inflammation of the

respiratory tract. His younger brother was a clergyman. He described this in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (20:347, July 10, 1839). Various causes had been suggested such as excessive speaking, the use of cold water during this exercise, to the chilling walls at the backs of the pulpits against which clergymen often rested the upper part of the back immediately after the exercise of preaching. Alice Morse Earle in her book *Customs and Fashions of Old New England*, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1893, describes the winter church of that day:

When we consider the chill and the glow of those unheated freezing churches, growing colder and damper and deadlier with every winter blast, we wonder that grown persons ever could bear the exposure. Ice had to be broken in the christening bowl. Sometimes the child died, "Died being baptized" being the official cause of death. One cruel parson believed in and practiced infant immersion, fairly a Puritan torture, until his own child nearly lost its life.

It is no wonder that Luke Howe became interested in "The Minister's Ail." He suggested a scientific investigation and sent questionnaires to the ministers and practicing physicians to answer such questions as:

1. How many years had the minister preached in health?
2. How often have they usually preached on the Sabbath and during the week?
3. What have been their habits of living in respect to exercise, diet, tobacco, and other narcotics?

He was collaborating with a Dr. John D. Fisher of Boston, who wrote the following to Dr. Howe on April 26, 1841: "I hope the clergymen of your state will be more faithful and ready to answer the enquiries than those of this state have been." Dr. Howe received the following letter from Mr. Nelson Clark of the Theological Seminary, Andover, Massachusetts, on November 18, 1841:

I have this moment received yours of the 16th instant. Upon my arrival, I called Dr. Edwards, our President, stating to him that I had had an interview with you in which you expressed a willingness to come to the Seminary and give us the results of your investigations in respect to the disease of clergymen. The students are very desirous of your coming. Your enquiries, "How is my throat?", it is quite as well as when I saw you and I think some better. I consulted Dr. Jeffreys of Boston about three weeks ago. He recommended a

local application of Tart Emetic ointment to my neck.

The students were very enthusiastic about his talk and sent a letter expressing their thanks to Dr. Howe. The letter was received in Jaffrey on the day of his funeral.

Luke Howe: The Medical Politician

Dr. Howe was very active in medical politics. At the New Hampshire State Medical Society annual meeting in Concord on June 5, 1821, he was elected a Fellow of the Society and worked “through the chairs” being a councillor, delegate to the Medical School in Hanover, and eventually President. On June 5, 1827, he delivered a paper on fractures of the thigh and leg, and an interesting notation is made in the minutes of the meeting: A dissertation by Dr. Howe was read nearly through when the Society was notified by the landlord that they must find accommodations elsewhere. They adjourned to the Court Room in the Town House, the reason being the views of the Society on the subject of temperance.

The role of the physician in those times was well explained in the Town History of Peterborough:

It should be remembered, especially, that the doctor was only asked to prescribe for a patient as a last resort. All the domestic medicines were usually tried and the experience or skill of others in the neighborhood was requisitioned before the doctor himself was called.³

Howe “. . . felt a deep interest in the elevation of the profession and was a deadly enemy to quackery and empiricism, in whatever form. He had no faith in the secret nostrums of the day, comprising the whole family of the popular patent medicines. Some might have thought him too severe in his denunciation, but those best acquainted with him knew that he was influenced by his sincere regard of the welfare of the community, rather than any unworthy motive of self interest. He was in favor of a thorough education preparatory to the commencement of the study of medicine. . .”⁴ and as a Society delegate to the Medical School in Hanover, he expressed his views on this and the curriculum.

In 1838, he was appointed Vice President of the New Hampshire Medical Society, and on June 2, 1840, he became the President and presented a paper on Midwifery. On June 1, 1841, he read his paper "The Minister's Ail." On December 24, 1841, he died in office, the only President to do so.

Luke Howe: The Local Citizen

Howe was the local representative of the Cheshire County Fire Insurance Company, Justice of the Peace, Postmaster of Jaffrey, and Superintendent of Schools. It is interesting that during his administration as Postmaster, Jaffrey went through a period of postal confusion similar to what happened more recently. This was the time when citizens petitioned for a post office in East Jaffrey (now Jaffrey). William Ainsworth, a life-long friend, sent the following letter to Howe, who forwarded it, with his letter, to the Postmaster General. Ainsworth wrote:

Now it seems to me, a statement of the facts will be sufficient to present the change you name. My belief is that you need have no apprehension in retention to the office. So far as I know or have understood from others, your case does not come into the class subject to removal for political patronship as stated in Tyler's address. I hope I shall never see the Whigs adopt a cause which they condemned so strongly in their opponents.

Howe sent this and the following letter to the Honorable Francis Granger, Postmaster General, Washington City:

Enclosed is a letter from William Ainsworth, Esq., cashier of the Manufacturers Bank, New Ipswich on the subject of establishing a Post Office in another village in this town. I am remonstrating against granting the request of the petition for the same. Although he has probably been misinformed in respect to the object of the petition, I have thought it proper that his request be forwarded with a letter to the General Post Office. The definite object of the petition is known here only by the signers of it, but it is supposed to ask the establishment of a post office in the village less than two miles east of this to accommodate mail which for the year past has been carried from Peterborough through Jaffrey and Rindge to Winchendon. As this route as now advertised for a new contract, is entirely unnecessary, has been proved during the last year. I confidently trust that no contract by the department will be made for carrying the mail on this route hereafter, and consequently there will be no reason for

granting the request of the petitioners for the establishment of a Post Office as above stated. The inhabitants of this town have no reason to complain of the location of this office, as the papers of those living in other parts of the town particularly in the above mentioned village, are sent by their request, at their risk, at a place of deposit of their selection. Indeed if there be any complaint of the kind, or in respect to the money, or if this office, it has not come to my attention. The undersigned, two or three weeks since, transmitted to the central Office a certificate showing that a very few only, probably not half of the papers, had been carried by the mail through the route above mentioned, since after the contract was taken out about a year, which I believe to be true, neither over the extension of the route or establishment of one or more Post Offices it render anymore useful or necessary. Allow me to add that the writer of the enclosed is a gentleman of high standing in the vicinity and the state and an unwavering friend of the present administration.

A letter from Luke Howe's cousin, Woodbury, a member of Congress, on December 14, 1841 stated:

There had been no complaints against Howe. I will try to see if there be any new route for the mail or any offices for it in Jaffrey, asked and will request that none be sanctioned without first consulting you and myself.

We know the outcome. A post office was established in East Jaffrey, and eventually became the one of higher priority. In recent times, the post office in Jaffrey Center was closed, and the "postal town" became Jaffrey, New Hampshire.

On April 14, 1839, Luke Howe received a letter from his older brother, Abner, a physician practicing in Beverly, Massachusetts:

You must take good care of yourself and give up business of all sorts, your own and others. I hope you have a physician to assist you. It is important that you should lie by until you feel strong enough to do anything.

This was the first mention of his being ill. However, his death was sudden according to reports. He had visited Boston and Andover where he delivered a talk on "The Minister's Ail" at the Theological Seminary. It had been a "pleasing journey from Boston and Andover, he was under constant excitement, receiving the congratulations of friends and many testimonials of regard." He arrived home on Wednesday evening and considered himself to be in good health. In the morning he complained of a "little indisposition" but was up and about. No dangerous symptoms were discovered until the following

Tuesday morning when Dr. Richardson, his partner, who had been keeping an eye on him, found a deterioration in his symptoms. He died on December 24, 1841. "His funeral was attended by an unusual number of his medical brethren and a large concourse of his immediate friends and townsmen. . ." ⁵ He is buried in the Old Burying Ground in Jaffrey Center.

Among the many contributions described above, Luke Howe was also the representative of an insurance company, Cheshire County Fire Insurance Company, based in Charlestown, Massachusetts. A letter was sent to him after his death from a E. L. Cushing, Treasurer, dated April 16, 1842:

On account of a recent fire in Charlestown, and the liabilities of our Insurance Company arising therefrom, it is desirable to lay before the Board of Directors at their meeting which will be held in May, a statement of cash funds of the company which can be relied on to meet these liabilities. Will you have the goodness to inform me by letter at your earliest convenience whether you have any cash funds of the Company, which can be paid over by the first of June and if any, to what amount.

In the Postscript: "In addition the President directs me to request that the funds in hand may be immediately passed over."

The constitution and By-Laws of the American Statistical Association were published in an address dated 1840, printed in Boston by Perkins and Marrin. These were found amongst his papers, and he was a fellow of the Association. There were many members from the Boston area including Lemuel Shattuck. Martin Van Buren, President of the United States, was also a member. From the address, the history and definition of the subject were quoted:

Statistics may be defined to be ascertaining and the bringing together of those facts, which are fitted to illustrate the condition and prospects of Society. The object of Statistical science is to consider the results which those facts produce, with the view to determine the principles upon which the well being of society depends. Science of Statistics is of recent origin. Achenwall, born in Prussia in 1719 and who died in 1772, was the first who gave the name, and a scientific form, to this branch of knowledge.

Howe's interest seemed to be widespread; among his possessions, there were journals of the American Education Society

dated November 1839, February 1839 and August 1841. No doubt his interest here was part of his work as Superintendent of Schools.

In a eulogy presented at the N.H. Medical Society's annual meeting of June, 1843, James Batcheller, M.D. of Marlborough, New Hampshire said of Howe that

He drafted the first set of resolutions that were adopted by any Medical Society on the subject of Temperance, and presented them to the Western District of the New Hampshire Medical Society [presumably Cheshire County]. He delivered many lectures upon the subject. His fees for medical services were low especially to the poor. On the subject of religion, he was a believer in those doctrines termed evangelical. Some eight or nine years before his death, he made a public profession by uniting with the Congregational Church. His Christian work and conversation proved him to be a sincere and devoted member. . . . He had no leisure for idleness. It was a maxim with him to fill up time with duties. He spent his whole time in visiting the sick, perusing his library and contemplating new methods of improvement in the profession.⁶

This appeared in *An American Medical Biography; or, Memoirs of Eminent Physicians*. . . by Stephen W. Williams, published by L. Merriam & Co. in 1845. Also included in this book were Drs. Ezekiel Dodge Cushing, William P. Dewees, George Doane, James Jackson, Jr., Thomas James of Philadelphia, Phillip Syng Physick, and Nathan Smith, giants in their time.

Luke Howe was an extraordinary man. As a physician he contributed extensively in the field of orthopedic medicine and surgery. He was the inventor of many surgical devices, which were not trivial and were accepted by many in the practice of medicine of the day. He was active in medical politics and fought for high standards in medical education, insisting upon a college education as a basic necessity prior to entering medical school. He was a lawyer and a public servant, serving as Postmaster, Justice of the Peace and Superintendent of Schools. "He was a affectionate and devoted husband and a kind and indulgent parent." His daughter, Isabel, married John Fox, M.D., and the Fox House in Jaffrey Center is still in the Howe family.

Francis Bacon set himself a task in “The Advancement of Learning:”

It is my intention to make the circuit of knowledge, noticing what parts lie waste and uncultivated, and abandoned by the industry of man, with a view to engage, by the faithful mapping out of the deserted tracts, the energies of public and private persons in their improvement.

Luke Howe attempted to do the same. As a citizen he was interested in anything to improve the condition of society. As a physician, he was ahead of his time.



Luke Howe's gravestone in the Old Burying Ground, Jaffrey Center.

Some Genealogical Notes

Source: Jaffrey Town History, vols. II and III

ADONIJAH HOWE, born Brookfield, Massachusetts, July 24 or 28, 1758. Died July 1, 1832. Came to Jaffrey following the death of his father in 1776. Built a substantial mansion in 1815, the predecessor of the Shattuck Inn. Married Sarah Ripley. Nine children of which Luke Howe was the fourth.

LUKE HOWE, born March 28, 1787. Died December 24, 1841, age 54. Married Mary Woodbury Howe, his brother Adonijah's widow. Two children: Isabel W. Howe and Adonijah Woodbury Howe.

ADONIJAH WOODBURY HOWE, born September 25, 1825. Died September 9, 1886. Married Martha Dunston Butterfield. Ten children, of which Horace Leonard Howe was the tenth.

HORACE LEONARD HOWE, born June 4, 1875. Died February 1, 1941. Married Alice Hathaway Boardman. Four children, of which Alice Mary Howe was the first.

ALICE MARY HOWE, born May 3, 1913. Died January 17, 2000. Married Robert Alvan MacCready. Four children: Mary Elizabeth, David Adams, Jonathan Howe and Peter Eugene.

Notes

- ¹ This and all other letters to, from or in some cases about Luke Howe included here were transcribed by the author from the originals that were in the attic of Molly and Robert MacCready's house.
- ² Williams, Stephen W., *American Medical Biography . . .* (Greenfield, Mass.: L. Merriam & Co., 1845), p. 285.
- ³ Morison, George Abbot, *History of Peterborough, New Hampshire. Book One—Narrative*. (Rindge: Richard R. Smith Publisher, Inc., 1954), pp. 458-459.
- ⁴ See Williams, p. 285.
- ⁵ See Williams, p. 285.
- ⁶ See Williams, p. 285.

Sources

The cut on the cover is a SEMI-CIRCULAR TOURNIQUET, an invention of Luke Howe, M.D. It is taken from "The Use and Application of an Improved Apparatus for Particular Fractures and Dislocations of the Extremities . . ." which appeared in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, 1840. The cuts in the text are also from that publication.

The photograph of Luke Howe's gravestone is by Robert B. Stephenson

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