We’ve recently acquired an interesting collection of applications for surgical positions in the Union Navy. While we have occasionally seen these in recent years, this represents an exceptionally broad offering of applications by a number of surgeons who, during the application process were required to provide responses to a variety of medical related questions in order for the Naval Board to determine qualifications for the position. Many are rich with highly detailed medical content offering an interesting perspective on the medical knowledge and practices of the period. Because of the rapid loss of officers during 1861, the Federal Navy quickly recruited civilian physicians into service. During the course of the war, three ranks existed for naval medical officers; assistant surgeon, passed assistant surgeon and surgeon. While these applications are primarily for the rank of assistant surgeon, some did ultimately reach the rank of surgeon.

C. E. SEVERANCE

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. Seven pages. New York, June 25, 1861. Severance responds to eight questions providing detailed answers on subjects such as the “pathological condition of the lungs in the three different stages of inflammation” and “the protein compounds and their respective peculiarities”. Fine detailed medical content. $275
William H. Leavitt

Application submitted to the President of the Naval Examining Board for a position as an Assistant Surgeon. 8 pages. June 4, 1861. Accompanied by Leavitt’s manuscript Certificate of Physical Capacity. Leavitt provides detailed answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “What are the chemical tests for arsenious acid?” and “What is abscess and how is it treated?”. Snow enlisted 9-30-1861, POW 8-30-1862 2nd Bull Run (exchanged), promoted surgeon 3-13-1863, mustered out 6-9-1865 at Alexandria VA. In addition to the 8 questions and answers, a detailed account of Snow’s previous experience is also included. Fine lengthy medical content.

$275

Frederick Eugene Potter

Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. June 4, 1861. 5 pages. Potter provided detailed answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “the functions of lacteals during digestion” and “How is Bromine obtained and what are its properties and uses?”. Accompanied by Potter’s certificate of physical capacity dated at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital in June of 1861. Potter enlisted on July 30, 1861 and served as an Assistant Surgeon on the USS MONTICELLO and USS NARRAGANSETT. He was promoted to Surgeon on March 25, 1866. Fine, detailed medical content.

$245

David Franklin Ricketts

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 4 pages. Naval Hospital. New York. September 24, 1861. Ricketts answers eight questions including “Explain the different modes of death.” And “Name the most active diuretics and describe their mode of action.” Following his commission, Ricketts served aboard the USS Marmora.

$225

Benjamin Franklin Pierce

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 4 pages. Naval Hospital. New York. September 24, 1861. Pierce answers eight questions including “What are the chemical tests for arsenious acid?” and “What is abscess and how is it treated?”

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George W. Snow

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$275

Orasmus Smith

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. August 11, 1862. 6 pages. Smith gives a detailed account of his background and schooling and answers 8 questions such as “What are the functions of the liver?” and “In the first stages of pneumonia, what signs indicate an unfavorable prognosis?” To the second question his answer includes an account of his first case of pneumonia where the patient “sank” and he was not allowed a post mortem. Fine Medical content. Smith enlisted on August 11, just three days after completing this application. He mustered out on May 7, 1863.

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$245

William H. Leavitt

Application submitted to the President of the Naval Examining Board for a position as an Assistant Surgeon. 8 pages. June 4, 1861. Accompanied by Leavitt’s manuscript Certificate of Physical Capacity. Leavitt provides detailed answers to 8 questions relating to “pathological anatomy of typhoid fever” and the “symptoms of poisoning by lead and the tests for its detection.” Leavitt enlisted as an Assistant Surgeon in the Union Navy on June 10, 1861 and, served on USS OWASCO and in West Gulf Squadron. He resigned on July 23, 1863. Lengthy and detailed medical content.

$275

Frederick Eugene Potter

Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. June 4, 1861. 5 pages. Potter provided detailed answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “the functions of lacteals during digestion” and “How is Bromine obtained and what are its properties and uses?”. Accompanied by Potter’s certificate of physical capacity dated at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital in June of 1861. Potter enlisted on July 30, 1861 and served as an Assistant Surgeon on the USS MONTICELLO and USS NARRAGANSETT. He was promoted to Surgeon on March 25, 1866. Fine, detailed medical content.

$245

David Franklin Ricketts

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 6 pages. Naval Hospital. New York. September 17, 1861. Ricketts answers eight questions including “What are the characteristics of Asiatic Cholera?” and “What are the signs of Drowning?” Following his commission, Ricketts served aboard the USS Nahant.

$245

Benjamin Franklin Pierce

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 4 pages. Naval Hospital. New York. September 24, 1861. Pierce answers eight questions including “Explain the different modes of death.” And “Name the most active diuretics and describe their mode of action.” Following his commission, Pierce served aboard the USS Marmora.

$225
“What is Chloroform and how does it differ in its effects from other anesthetics?”

Almond Orlando Leavitt Application submitted to Samuel Barrington, M.D., President of the Naval Examining Board, for a position as an Assistant Surgeon. 5 pages. June 1, 1861. Leavitt provides detailed answers to 8 questions including subjects such as “various methods for treating fractures” and “What is Chloroform and how does it differ in its effects from other anesthetics?” Leavitt enlisted on July 30, 1861 and served on USS POTOMAC. He retired on June 24, 1862. Nice medical content. $245

Wadsworth A. Ward
Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 5 pages. December 4, 1861. Ward provides detailed answers to 8 questions including subjects such as “the anatomy of the parts concerned in Tracheotomy” and “the functions of the kidneys.” Nice, detailed medical content. $225

J.W. Moore
Application submitted to the Board of Medical Examiners. 5 pages. Ca. May, 1861. Moore provided detailed answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as the “anatomy of the bladder” and “the symptoms of Erysipelas.” Moore enlisted as an Assistant Surgeon on May 29, 1861. Nice, detailed medical content. $225

Frank Meacham
Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 3 pages. September 17, 1861. Meacham provided short answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “the Anatomy of the Knee joint” and “What are the signs of drowning?” Meacham enlisted as an Assistant Surgeon on March 30, 1862. He was promoted to Surgeon on July 9, 1863 and later brevettied Lt. Colonel in August of 1865. $200

Marcus R. Vedder
Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 4 pages. June 3, 1861. Vedder provided detailed answers to 6 of the 8 questions presented to him concerning subjects such as the “pathological anatomy of Pneumonia” and the “formation of the shoulder joint”. Vedder left two questions unanswered. $225

James Ralston Wells
Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 5 pages. August 7, 1861. Wells provided answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “the means of suppressing Hemorrhages” and “the anatomy of the Elbow joint”. Nice medical detail. $225

J. F. Norton
Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 1 page. Naval Hospital, New York. August, 1861. Norton details his medical experience and indicates he will be 25 years of age in the following year. $75

William Lillie
Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 3 pages. No date. Although questions are missing, Lillie provides 8 answers on topics including carbonic acid, types of burns and types of tests for Arsenious acid. $200

John P. Treacy
Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 5 pages. Treacy is able to “Describe the anatomy of the elbow joint” in detail and answers other questions in detail but is unable to answer the question “What are the alkaloids of opium and what are their properties?” Good medical content. $200

William H. Tanner
Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 3 pages. Naval Hospital. New York. September 3, 1861. Tanner gives answers to eight questions including “What are the anatomical characters of chronic dysentery?” and “Describe Marshall Hall’s ready method of resuscitating drowned persons?” Hall enlisted at New York on July 20, 1861, as an Assistant Surgeon. He was commissioned into Field & Staff of the NY 47 Infantry and discharged in February of 1863. He was re-commissioned into Field & Staff or the NY Burnside Rifles, from which he was discharged in June of 1863. Tanner was once against commissioned, this time into the Field & Staff of the NY 178th Infantry, from which he was discharged in November of 1864. $225

“J. F. Norton” Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 1 page. Naval Hospital, New York. August, 1861. Norton details his medical experience and indicates he will be 25 years of age in the following year. $75
W.B. Pierce

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 5 pages. June 5, 1864. Pierce provides answers to 8 questions. He was asked to “Describe the intestines large & small” and “Describe the physical qualities of hydrogen gas”. Fine, detailed medical content. $225

Henry Pearce

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 3 pages. Naval Hospital New York. July 5, 1861. Pearce gives detailed answers to 8 questions including “What are the medical uses of mustard?” and “What are the different causes of convulsions?” Pearce enlisted as an Assistant Surgeon on October 6, 1862 and was commissioned into Field & Staff NY 150th Infantry on November 3, 1862. He served for only a few months before being discharged for disability on April 7, 1864. $275

George F. Winslow

Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 5 pages. (2 torn). Brooklyn, Dec. 21, 1861. Winslow provided answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “the symptoms and treatment of fracture of the clavicle” and “What are the symptoms of poisoning by Corrosive Sublimate?” Winslow enlisted on July 26, 1862. He served on USS OHIO, USS MORSE and USS OSCEOLA. A portion of page two on the application is missing. The questions and answers remain intact. $245

James P. Prince

CV and treatise on Pneumonia for the Naval Board. Five pages. Philadelphia. April 24, 1861. Prince writes four pages on the subject of Pneumonia. Prince was commissioned into the Field & Staff of the MA 22nd Infantry in October of 1861. In August of 1862, he was commissioned into the MA 36th Infantry, from which he was discharged for promotion in December of 1864. That same month, Prince joined the US Volunteers Medical Staff, which he served in until he was mustered out in January of 1866, having attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. In addition to his medical service, Prince is listed as a POW at Gaines’ Mill, VA, on June 27, 1862. He was released the following month, though the place of his release is not stated in military records. $245

Charles H. White

Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 7 pages. December 19, 1861. White provided highly detailed answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “the symptoms, treatment, and morbid appearances of meningitis” and the nature and process of intestinal digests”. Accompanied by White’s Certificate of Physical Capacity dated at Brooklyn on December 19, 1861. White enlisted on December 26, 1861 and served on the USS HURON and the USS ROANOKE. He was promoted to Surgeon on November 18, 1869. He later was promoted medical inspector on July 10, 1888. Nice, detailed medical content. $275

Benedict A. Weeks

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 4 pages. Brooklyn. October 19, 1861. Weeks is asked to give answers to 8 questions including “Described the anatomy of the bladder?” and “What are the signs of poisoning by arsenic?” $225

J. Howard Willets

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 4 pages. Brooklyn. June 1, 1861. Willets gives answers to 8 questions including “Describe the nature and progress to a fatal termination of Typhus Fever?” and “What are the different classe of aiments according to physiologists?” $245
C. H. Stilwell

Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 6 pages. Brooklyn, Oct. 15, 1861. Stilwell provided detailed answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “the functions of the pneumo-gastric nerve”, the “signs of drowning” and the “anatomy of the knee joint”. His explanation of the anatomy of the knee joint includes a small sketch of the knee. Stilwell was promoted to Assistant Surgeon on June 19, 1863.

Frederick Wright Simpson

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. July 19, 1861. 4 pages. Simpson provides answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “What are the various forms of syphilis and how treated?”. When asked “What are the chemical tests and antidotes for the preparations of copper?” he writes “One of the tests for copper is ammonia. The antidotes I do not remember.” Good medical content.

Samuel Burnett Tuthill

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 4 pages. Naval Hospital. New York. July 23, 1861. Tuthill gives answers to eight questions including “What are the cause, symptoms and treatment of fracture of the clavicle?” and “What are the principle acid compounds of Carbon and Oxygen?” Tuthill was commissioned into the Field & Staff of the NY 7th Infantry on April 30, 1861. He was mustered out in June of that year and subsequently served in the US Navy.

Erasmus D. Skinner

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 3 pages. Naval Hospital. New York. September 18, 1861. Weeks is asked to give answers to 8 questions including “Described the Anatomy of the elbow joint?” He is unable to answer the three of the questions: “What are the tests for arsenious acid?” “What are the constituents of the gastric juice?” and “State by symbols the compounds of Oxygen with Nitrogen?”

M.K. Knorr

Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 4 pages. Naval Hospital, New York. August 23, 1861. Knorr provided answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “the chemical formation of chloroform and dangers from its use” and the therapeutic effects of Digitalis”. Fine medical content.

Augustus Schulze

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 8 pages. Brooklyn December 28, 1861. Schulze gives answers to 8 questions including “What are the means for suppressing hemorrhages?” and “What are the tests for arsenious acid?” Lengthy responses to all questions.

Oscar G. Smith

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 3 pages. Naval Hospital. Brooklyn. June 7, 1861. Smith gives answers to eight questions, which are transcribed by Smith prior to his answers. The topics addressed include “What are the Contents of the Pelvis?” and “What are the therapeutic effects of Iodine?”

Heber Smith

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 6 pages. Naval Hospital. New York. August 7, 1861. Herber gives answers to eight questions including “When should Ergot be used in labor?” and “Describe the anatomy of the elbow joint.” Smith served on the USS Itasca and the US Naval Hospital at New Orleans, La.

M. K. Knorr

Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 6 pages. Brooklyn, Oct. 15, 1861. Stilwell provided detailed answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “the functions of the pneumo-gastric nerve”, the “signs of drowning” and the “anatomy of the knee joint”. His explanation of the anatomy of the knee joint includes a small sketch of the knee. Stilwell was promoted to Assistant Surgeon on June 19, 1863.

$245

$200

$225

$275

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$225

$225

$225
upper extremity?” After being commissioned into the US Navy, Sturtevant served aboard the USS Ohio, USS Tahoma and USS Lillian. He was ultimately discharged on Jan. 18, 1866. $245

Josiah L. Phillips

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 5 pages. Naval Hospital New York. October 31, 1861. Phillips gives answers to 8 questions including “What therapeutic effects may be accomplished by the use of diuretics?” and “Describe Marshall Hall’s ready method of resuscitating drowned persons?” $245

William F. Terry

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 6 pages. Naval Hospital New York. November 25, 1861. Terry gives answer to eight questions including “What are the functions of the pneumo-gastric nerve?” and “What are the characteristics of Asiatic Cholera?” Following his enlistment on January 24, 1862, William Terry served aboard the USS Essex, which saw action at Vicksburg and Port Hudson. $275

James H. Macomber

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon.4 pages. Naval Hospital. New York. July 23, 1861. Macomber answers eight questions including “What are the tests of poisoning by Arsenic?” and “What are the causes symptoms and treatment of fracture of the clavicle?” Following his commission, Macomber served on the USS Seneca and the USS St. Louis. $275

“The pathological condition of the lungs in the three stages of Pneumonia.”

Charles H. Perry

Application submitted to the Naval Examining Board for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 8 pages. August 29, 1861. Perry provided lengthy and detailed answers to 8 questions presented to him concerning subjects such as “the nature and causes of aneurism”, and the “pathological condition of the lungs in the three stages of Pneumonia.” Accompanied by Perry’s Certificate of Physical Capacity dated at Brooklyn, August 29, 1861. Perry enlisted on January 24, 1862 and served on USS KENNEBEC and the USS SUSQUEHANNA. He resigned on May 6, 1865. Highly detailed medical content. $275

“What are the therapeutic uses of the preparations of arsenic?”

George V. Skiff

Application submitted to the Board of Naval Surgeons for a position as Assistant Surgeon. 5 pages. December 20, 1861. Skiff provided answers to 8 questions concerning subjects such as “under what circumstances in labor is ‘turning’ necessary” and “What are the therapeutic uses of the preparations of arsenic?” Skiff enlisted on August 22, 1862. Fine lengthy medical content. $225

James H. Tinkham

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 5 pages. Naval Hospital. June 4, 1861. Tinkham gives answers to eight questions including “What are the most common injuries of the head” and “What are the symptoms of Small Pox?” Following his enlistment in July of 1861, Tinkham served on both the USS Kanawha and the USS Wabash. $245

E. A. Pierson

Application submitted to the Examining Board of Naval Surgeons as Assistant Surgeon. 11 pages. Brooklyn. October 18, 1861. Pierson answers eight questions including “Name and define different tumors. And “Describe the development of the fetus.” Following his commission, Pierson served on the USS Penobscot, which bombarded St. Bernard, Texas, in 1863. $275
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