

Gove, Anna Maria ^[1]

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by Gladys Avery Tillett, 1986

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Anna Maria Gove, physician, was the only child of George Sullivan and Maria Clark Gove, of an eminent New England family; she was born in Whitefield, N.H., where her father, a graduate of [Dartmouth](#) ^[2], was a physician. Anna's interest in medicine was inspired by her father. It was her own and his plan that she be well educated and that she have the best medical training available in New England. After private schooling and graduation from St. Johnsbury Academy, Vt., she took the premedical course at the [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) ^[3], where she was one of a small group of young women, unusual in their ability and ambition, to "master the course at the hardest school in New England." From Boston she went to New York and was graduated in 1892 from Woman's College of the New York Infirmary. The next year she spent at the New York Infant Asylum, where her "chief" said years later that she did "A 1 medical work," seemed "a born doctor," and "won the hearts of all by her tact and kindness.

In 1893, at age twenty-six, Dr. Anna M. Gove moved to [Greensboro](#) ^[4], N.C., to the newly established State Normal and Industrial School (now The [University of North Carolina at Greensboro](#) ^[5]) at the beginning of its second year. There she served as resident physician, head of the department of physiology and physical culture, and teacher of physiology and hygiene. She was also a pioneer in health education and in medicine as a career for women.

When in 1892 the State Normal and Industrial School adopted a policy of employing a female resident physician, it took a daring step—especially in a state where there were only two women doctors. During her first year at the institution, Dr. Gove took the state medical examinations and was granted a license. As the third woman to receive a medical license in North Carolina, she was invited to join the [Medical Society](#) ^[6]. Although the other physicians were sometimes awkward and embarrassed in the presence of the "female, lady, doctress," we have her own word for it that they were always courteous and kind. The students received her with the open-mindedness of youth, but parents were hesitant. One mother wrote Dr. Gove, "Please don't teach Mary so much about her insides. It ain't decent."

When Dr. Gove arrived at the new Greensboro school, she found it totally lacking in medical facilities. There was no dispensary, no infirmary or rooms set aside for this purpose, no nurse, no office assistant, and no hospital in the town of Greensboro. However, records of the State Normal and Industrial School reveal the steady progress achieved by Dr. Gove. In 1896 an infirmary was built and initially employed a caretaker, followed by a practical nurse and then a trained nurse. A new infirmary, completed in 1912 under her direct supervision, was the first well-equipped infirmary for women students in this part of the United States. Medical and physical examinations were begun when only two colleges, [Amherst](#) ^[7] and [Vassar](#) ^[8], required them. The Greensboro institution was one of the first in the country and the first in North Carolina to add X-rays to these examinations. Under Dr. Gove's directions, a study department of health was established; with her stimulation and encouragement, the department of physical culture gradually developed into a nationally recognized department with two years of physical culture education required of all students.

In the early 1920s, Dr. Gove was instrumental in obtaining for the state three substantial appropriations from the American Social Hygiene Association, Inc. One grant of \$48,929 was for the program at [Samarand Manor](#) ^[9]; a second, of \$26,000, for the prevention, treatment, and control of venereal disease; and a third, of \$21,600, for the State Normal and Industrial School to use in promoting the teaching of health under the school's medical service.

As a physician, Dr. Gove practiced the highest professional ethics. She was affiliated with and participated in the deliberations of numerous medical, health, and civic organizations on the local, national, and international levels. Improvements to health facilities in the college paralleled her own growth and development. Her travels included a leave of absence for graduate study in Vienna and attendance as a delegate at the International Medical Association meeting in Moscow (1896–97); summer vacations at the [University of Chicago](#) ^[10] (1899) and [Cornell University](#) ^[11] (1901); and leaves of absence to teach physiology at Vassar and engage in private practice in Yonkers, N.Y. (1901–3), to study in Vienna (1913–14), and for Red Cross work in Europe during [World War I](#) ^[12] (1917).

Many honors came to Dr. Gove. The infirmary completed at Greensboro in 1953 bears her name. She served as national vice-president of the American Student Health Association and she was given life membership in the American Medical Association of Vienna. After her retirement in 1936, she continued to keep an office and serve in an advisory capacity. She died at age eighty-one.

References:

Nell Craig, *Dr. Anna M. Gove* (1939).

North Carolina Medical Journal 9 (April 1948).

Records of the Alumni Association (University of North Carolina, Greensboro) for information on Dr. Gove.

Some Pioneer Women Teachers of North Carolina (1955).

Additional Resources:

Anna Maria Gove Collection, 1864 - 1952 Add to your cart. Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives, UNC-Greensboro: <https://uncg.as.atlas-sys.com/repositories/2/resources/262> [13]

Subjects:

Biographies [14]

Physicians, Dentists, Pharmacists, and other Medical Professionals [15]

Women [16]

Authors:

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Origin - location:

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1 January 1986 | Tillett, Gladys Avery

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