

Williams, Benjamin Brown ^[1]

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1815–15 Feb. 1894

Benjamin Brown Williams, physician, was the son of Robert, a planter and a prolific enslaver of [Pitt County](#) ^[2], and Mary Williams. Benjamin's brother William (1785–1850) married Nancy May (1792–1858); their daughter Frances May Williams married James Lang Cobb, whose descendants were the noted Cobb family in North Carolina. After receiving an M.D. degree from the Eclectic Medical Institute of Ohio in 1847, Benjamin practiced in Meadville, Pa. He was the author of *A Treatise Upon the Electrical Philosophy and Cure of Cholera* (Richmond, Va., 1849), *A Treatise on Mental Alchemy, Electro-psychology, Biology, Magnetism and Mesmerism with the Cards of Classes, Editorials, &c* ^[3]_[3] (Brooklyn, 1852), *Mental Alchemy: A Treatise on the Mind, Nervous System, Psychology, Magnetism, Mesmerism, and Disease* (New York, 1854), and *Primal Man, and the Science of Self-control, Psychology, and Mesmerism* ^[4] (Meadville, 1887). In all four books the author's name appears as B. Brown Williams.

His 1852 work was dedicated to James Joiner, then an attorney in Washington, N.C., identified as "a boyhood friend of the author's," but who actually was six years younger than Williams. Prefatory notes indicate that Williams lectured on nature and the mind, and the chapters in this book were outlines of his lectures. Included were discussions of the relationship of mind to matter, man's spiritual system, and the natural and spiritual world. The reader was further informed that the author's "deductions . . . are the fruits of an humble plant of the old north state, and they are respectfully presented to the reader for his approval or disapproval."

Williams, survived by his wife who had a disability for several years, was buried in Greendale Cemetery, Meadville. His obituary reports that during his final days he was well cared for by "his housekeeper and family, who were with him until he went to sleep about two hours before he passed away." It is not clear whether *family* refers to that of the housekeeper or of Williams.

References:

Journal of the American Medical Association 22 (3 Mar. 1894).

Roger Kammerer, comp., *Tyson and May Genealogy of Pitt County* (1987).

Meadville, Pa., *Crawford Journal*, 22 Feb. 1894.

National Union Catalog, Pre-1956 Imprints, vol. 664 (1979).

Polk's Medical & Surgical Directory of the United States (1886). ^[5]

Additional Resources:

Williams, B. Brown. *Mental alchemy : a treatise on the mind, nervous system, psychology, magnetism, mesmerism, and diseases in twelve chapters*. New York: Fowlers and Wells. 1853. <https://archive.org/details/60331250R.nlm.nih.gov> ^[6] (accessed March 11, 2014).

Williams, B. Brown. *Primal man and the science of self-control, psychology, and mesmerism*. Meadville, PA: Tribune Pub. Co. 1887. <https://archive.org/details/primalmanscience00will> ^[4] (accessed March 11, 2014).

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