

George Edward Post Pioneer Scientist of the Middle East

As far as we know, he is the only one of AUB's founding fathers to have his own website. Lauded as "the greatest surgeon and botanist in the East,"¹ George Edward Post (1838-1909) played an especially important role in founding the Syrian Protestant College's Medical Department. In a letter he wrote in 1873, Daniel Bliss tells his wife, "Dr. Post is doing more for this College than any other man in Syria. His energy and thoroughness make the Medical Department."²

Professor Lytton John Musselman, who created and maintains the George Edward Post Site (<http://www.odu.edu/sci/lmusselm/post/index.html>), says that although *Flora of Syria, Palestine, and Sinai*, which Post wrote in 1884, is still consulted today, it is his study of the plants of the Bible that is Post's most enduring contribution to the field of botany. (You can find out more about the plants described in Post's *Flora of Syria, Palestine, and Sinai* at AUB's Post Herbarium, <http://www.aub.edu.lb/nhm/Pages/herbarium.aspx>.)

This "pioneer scientist of the Middle East," as Musselman describes him, was born in New York City. His father was a surgeon and professor of surgery at University Medical College of New York where Post earned his medical degree in 1860. After he was ordained in 1861, Post served

as chaplain of the 15th Regiment of New York Volunteers for two years. Remarkably, while administering to the spiritual and medical needs of Union troops, he also managed to



find time to enroll at the Baltimore College of Dentistry and was awarded a doctor of dental surgery degree in 1863. He married Sarah Read the same year. It was also in 1863 that the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions sent Post to Syria; he and his family spent five years in Tripoli before he joined the Syrian

Protestant College as a professor of surgery and botany in 1868.

During his more than 40-year career at SPC, Post worked particularly closely with Doctors Cornelius Van Dyck and John Wortabet. Together, these three extraordinary men lay the groundwork for today's AUB Medical Center. In addition to being a talented surgeon and teacher, Post also proved to be a skilled architect (he designed and supervised the construction of the old Medical Hall and Post Hall), a successful fundraiser, and a deft emissary who represented SPC on several important missions abroad. Post died of pneumonia at his summer home in Aleih less than a year after he retired from the College. In appreciation for the care that he received from Dr. Post, Morris K. Jesup (who was president of the College's Board of Trustees from 1884 to 1908), donated \$20,000 for the construction of a science building on campus. Jesup insisted that it be named for Post, who had designed the building, which was completed in 1911 at a cost of \$40,213. Post Hall has been home to the Archaeological Museum since 1962; the Geology Department is on the second floor.



¹ Henry Harris Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria, Volume 1*, page 272.

² Daniel Bliss, *Letters from a New Campus*, page 132.