

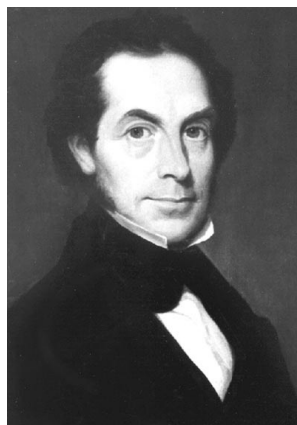
Huth EJ (2006). Elisha Bartlett (1804–1855), an American disciple of Jules Gavarret.



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Elisha Bartlett was born in Smithfield, Rhode Island, USA, a town northwest of Providence, on 6 October 1804, to Quaker parents, Otis and Waite Buffum Bartlett ([Anonymous] 1894; Osler 1900, 1928; Burrage 1964; Galishoff 1984; Miller 1999; Stempey 2005).

Bartlett initially studied medicine with several physicians in New England and concluded his formal medical studies at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, receiving his medical degree in 1826. He then left for Paris to broaden his education under prominent French physicians, surgeons, and biologists such as August-François



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Chomel, Jules-Germain Cloquet, Georges Cuvier, Guillaume Dupuytren, and Geoffrey St Hillaire. He does not mention in his letters meeting [Pierre Louis](#), but the fulsome dedication to Louis of Bartlett's [An essay on the philosophy of medical science](#) suggests that he did come to know Louis at the hospital La Charité.

On returning to the United States in 1827 he settled in Lowell, Massachusetts and two years later married Elizabeth Slater of his home town, Smithfield. Through the rest of his life he held a succession of academic posts: professor of pathological anatomy and *materia medica*, Berkshire Medical Institution, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, 1832; professor of theory and practice of medicine, Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky, 1841, 1846; professor of the theory and practice of medicine, University of Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland, 1844-6; professor of the theory and practice of medicine, University of Louisville, Kentucky, 1849-50; professor of the institutes and practice of medicine, New York University, 1850-2; professor of *materia medica* and medical jurisprudence, College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, 1852-5.

It was not Bartlett's academic appointments, however, that secured his prominence in the history of mid-19th century American medicine; it was his books. The one most acclaimed in his time was *The history, diagnosis, and treatment of typhoid and of typhus fever, with an essay on the diagnosis of bilious remittent and of yellow fever* (Bartlett 1842). William Osler described it thus in his biography of Bartlett (Osler 1899).

From every standpoint, "Bartlett on Fevers" may be regarded as one of the most successful medical books issued from the medical press and it richly deserves the comment of the distinguished editor of the fourth edition: "The question may be fairly raised whether any book in our profession illustrates more clearly the beauties of sound reasoning and the advantages of vigorous generalization from carefully selected facts. Certainly no author ever brought to his labor a more high-minded purpose of representing the truth in its simplicity and in its fulness, while few have been possessed of higher gifts to discern, and gracefully to exhibit it".

The most comprehensive and authoritative single source on Bartlett and his work is the book published by William Stempey in 2005. The introductory essay includes not only a biography of Bartlett; it also offers a short account of the Paris clinical school of the first half of the 19th century and Stempey's perspectives on Bartlett's *Essay on the Philosophy of Medical Science* and his *Philosophy of Therapeutics*. Stempey's book also includes a bibliography of Bartlett's published works, a bibliography of secondary sources, and a bibliography of unpublished manuscripts, including letters held in libraries of Brown University, Harvard University, University of Rochester, and Yale University.

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