

The Heitzmann family - pioneers in the medical community

I. Hackstock

S U M M A R Y

Throughout the 19th century there is evidence of activities of the Heitzmann family. Martin (1804-1889) became an army doctor and veterinarian and lived in Vinkovci, later on in Budapest as a Senior Veterinarian of all Hungary. His eldest son Carl (1836-1896) focused on dermatology and pathology in Vienna. In cooperation with Anton Elfinger he was responsible for highly qualified scientific illustrations of the Vienna Medical School. In 1874 he emigrated to New York and was a founding member of the American Dermatological Association. His brother Julius (1847-1922) lived in Vienna, illustrated his own books, mostly on gynecology, and was responsible for the ongoing publication of Carl's books. Today the only descendants of the family live in the United States.

K E Y W O R D S

history of
medicine,
military
medical
service,
veterinary
medicine,
Vienna
Medical
School,
scientific
illustrations,
skin
diseases,
American
Dermatological
Association.

Martin Heitzmann

In Subotica (Szabadka) a son was born to the wine merchant Joseph Heitzmann and his wife Thecla in October 1804. The boy was baptized with the name of Martinus given to him. (1,2,3)

After attending the secondary school in his hometown, Martin decided to pursue a military career. In 1823 he entered the Medical Service but was granted a leave to serve his time of three years as a student at the Military Medical Joseph's Academy in Vienna. In 1829 he graduated, receiving a degree of Master of Surgery, Obstetrics and Ophthalmology. Subsequently he was trained for two years at Vienna's Institute of Veterinary Medicine, completing his studies as a certified veterinarian in 1835. By November of the same year he was

posted with the Brooder Border Infantry Regiment No. 7, obtaining the title of Senior Army Doctor and Veterinarian. He and his wife Franziska Apollonia née Menzel settled in Vinkovci, which today is part of Croatia. Until 1843 the Heitzmanns had two boys and one girl.

Because of his reliability, his expert knowledge and his discipline, Martin Heitzmann was well liked in his Regiment. He was in good command of all the languages that prevailed in this region and mainly devoted himself to veterinary medicine, focusing on epidemic control.

In 1844 Martin Heitzmann applied for the vacant position of a Senior Veterinarian for all Hungary and was accepted.

The family, the couple and their two children Carl and Franziska, moved to Budapest where son Julius was born in 1847.

From 1853 to 1856 Martin Heitzmann was Deputy Head and Professor at the Institute of Veterinary Medicine in Pest, taking over from Prof. Vilmos Zlamál. In the fifties two more children were born to the couple, Gustav in 1855 and Adolf in 1857.

Until 1862 Martin Heitzmann was a member of the official Board of Examiners at the Institute, sometimes acting also as its chairman. In the same year there were considerations to altogether abandon the function of a Senior Veterinarian for all Hungary; however, Martin Heitzmann's expertise could not be dispensed with and it was thus decided to keep him in office until veterinary district commissioners could be installed.

The sons Carl and Julius moved to Vienna in 1857 and 1865 respectively in order to take up their medical studies. Franziska, Gustav and Adolf remained in Budapest with their parents. The two younger sons died of tuberculosis in 1873 and 1882. Franziska Heitzmann survived this tragedy by a mere three years and died in 1885 of heart failure. After the passing of his wife, Martin Heitzmann has taken care of by his unmarried daughter Franziska. He died on April 2, 1889 of old age infirmity. (4)

Carl Heitzmann

He was the oldest son of Martin and Franziska Heitzmann, having been born in Vinkovci, on October 2, 1836. In 1844 he moved to Budapest with his family where he attended the *Piaristengymnasium*, where he graduated in 1854, embarking on a medical career that commenced with a 6-year study at the University of Pest. In the winter semester 1857 he went to Vienna, having been awarded a Maria Theresia grant of 80 Guilders per year. For the subsequent two years he attended lectures by such eminent representatives of the Vienna Medical School as Joseph Skoda, Johann Dumreicher, Johann Dlauhy, Joseph Hyrtl, Ferdinand von Arlt, Carl von Rokitansky, Johann Oppolzer and Ernst Wilhelm von Brücke (7). He successfully passed his final examinations and received the title of Medicinae Doctor (MD) in December 1859. Without granting himself a respite, he started to prepare for the specialist degree in surgery, which he was awarded in April 1861 (5,6).

Heitzmann settled down in the 8th District of Vienna in close proximity to the *Allgemeines Krankenhaus* (General Hospital). He made the acquaintance of Anna Margaretha Wolfram from Drahthammer in Germany, daughter of the master dyer Johann and his wife Theresia. Apparently living in Vienna, she was an embroideress and also did other kinds of needlework.

In August 1861 Anna Margaretha Wolfram gave birth

to a girl who was given the name of Hildegard Caroline. The child born out of wedlock was legitimized by the marriage of Anna Margaretha to Carl Heitzmann in November of that same year. In 1864 Ludwig Joseph was born and in 1867 Wilhelm Martin who unfortunately died of scarlet fever at the age of five. Daughter Carolina Margaretha Theresia, the last of the Heitzmann children, was born in 1868.

Carl Heitzmann's further education and training were sponsored by such celebrities as Franz Schuh, Ferdinand von Hebra, Salomon Stricker and Carl von Rokitansky. From Franz Schuh he received the last touches in surgery, Ferdinand von Hebra was his teacher in dermatology, he worked in Salomon Stricker's Institute for Experimental Pathology and he was Carl von Rokitansky's disciple in pathological anatomy. In 1873 he received his *venia legendi* in this discipline. He was now an Associate Professor and this step in his career made him a likely successor to Rokitansky.

Scientific research soon became a matter of considerable significance to him. In his early publications he primarily focused on cell research, plasma and dermatological problems (8)

Only three years after graduating, he published a *Compendium of Surgical Pathology and Therapy*, using the pen name of Wilhelm Carl Fischer. It was an encyclopedia designed to grant students a better access to this complex topic. The compendium was illustrated with 100 wooden engravings for which Heitzmann himself made the designs. By 1871 three editions of this book had been published, the last one with a supplement on surgical instruments, dressing methods and approaches to surgery.

However, his most important opus was the *Descriptive and Topographic Human Anatomy*, an atlas comprising two volumes with 600 illustrations. It was first published in 1870; nine more editions followed, among them a posthumous one edited by Emil Zuckerkandl between 1902 and 1905. It was translated into several languages and remained the standard textbook of anatomy in the German-speaking area until well into the 20th century.

Carl Heitzmann was highly talented in drawing, but there is no evidence either in Budapest or in Vienna that he ever attended a School of Fine Arts.

Nevertheless, knowledge of his talent spread quickly in Vienna. He cooperated with Dr. Anton Elfinger, a senior colleague of his, in drawing up an atlas on dermatological diseases, most certainly representing the climax of scientific illustrations in the Vienna Medical School of the 19th century. Carl called himself the *paintbrush of the scholars*; for 16 years he designed illustrations comprising all disciplines (9,10).

Ferdinand von Hebra's *Atlas of Skin Diseases* was published in 10 volumes during the years 1856-1876: The sole purpose of this work was to present dermato-

logical pathology for educational purposes. Most probably Elfinger started his work on the original water-colors as early as 1843. In 1859 he was joined by Carl Heitzmann who was a reliable assistant, continuing where Elfinger left off after his death in 1864.

Heitzmann supplemented and finished the tables started by his predecessor and put them through the process of lithography.

Until he left Vienna in 1874, Carl mainly focused on the reproduction of microscopic observations. In the same year it became evident that he could not bank on becoming Rokitansky's successor and like many others, sharing the same fate of having been denied a professional career in their native country, he decided to emigrate to the United States of America.

In October 1874 Heitzmann and his family left Hamburg with destination New York. He settled down in this city, opening a pathology lab and a dermatological practice. He was a founding member of the American Dermatological Association (ADA) and within a brief period achieved a high professional standing. Nevertheless, most American colleagues had a rather doubting approach to Heitzmann because he always gave priority to European scientific results and was somewhat skeptical with regard to achievements of American scientists.

In 1884 the family suffered a severe blow - the youngest daughter Carolina called Carrie died of tuberculosis at the age of only 16.

In 1895 Carl Heitzmann delivered a lecture at the College of Physicians in Vienna, giving an account of 20 years scientific experience in the United States. He was proud to report that 1.000 students had been trained at his Laboratory for Microscopy and that 50 scientific papers had been published emanating from this institution (11,12).

At the beginning of 1896 his wife and daughter Hildegard accompanied Carl on a trip to Germany where he was treated for his cardiac condition. From there they traveled to Rome where he was supposed to recover. However, on December 6, 1896 he suffered a heart attack to which he succumbed, aged only 60 years.

The attempt to track down the Heitzmann family in the United States was severely obstructed by bureaucratic hurdles but finally produced results:

Carl's oldest daughter Hildegard Bernis née Heitzmann had only one daughter of the same name who died unmarried. However, Carl's son Ludwig, who called himself Louis in the United States, continued the genealogical line. He too became a physician and university professor, mainly publishing in the fields of urology and dermatology. He also translated his father's work into English. He was married to a German; the couple had four children. All of them except Erna Keitel née Heitzmann died unmarried. Erna had two

daughters, Vera and Eugenia. Eugenia is still alive and lives in North Carolina. She and her two children are the only descendants of Carl Heitzmann in the United States.

Julius Heitzmann

Julius was born in Budapest on December 22, 1847, the fourth child of Martin and Franziska Heitzmann. Like his brother Carl, he too attended the *Piaristengymnasium* in Pest. When he was 18, he joined his brother in Vienna where he started his medical studies in the winter semester 1865/66. He was an excellent student, graduating in 1871 with a MD. In 1871, he obtained his specialist's qualification in surgery, continuing to work as an intern in the Wiedner Pediatric Hospital. He then changed to the Department of Gynecology at the *Allgemeines Krankenhaus* under Professor Ludwig Brandl, focusing on special problems in gynecology. Several of his own publications are documented.

Julius too was a great talent in drawing. He worked together with his brother Carl, designing illustrations for the *Surgery Compendium*. At the same time he published his own Gynecology Compendium with 126 wooden engravings according to his own designs. After his brother left Vienna, he devoted himself to the new editions of Carl's *Compendia*. It seems as though Julius had always been in his brother's shadow; although hard working and highly appreciated, he was denied both a *venia legendi* and a professorship. Discouraged by these developments, he withdrew into his office as a General Practitioner in Vienna's 9th District.

In 1873 Julius was wed to Therese Wowczička from Moravia. They had four children, the only son Karl born in 1873 and the daughters Friederika (1875), Karoline (1877) and Emma (1879). The family moved to a place more appropriate to their status in Vienna's *Waehringer StraÙe* and it seems that they were rather well off.

Karl started to study law at the University of Vienna in 1874. However, after one semester he decided in favor of medicine and received his MD in 1901. He moved to St. Georgen/Längsee in the Province of Carinthia where he was appointed District Physician. In 1903 he married Anna Altzinger from Upper Austria but only one year later he died of tuberculosis.

After Martin Heitzmann's death in 1889 Julius' sister Franziska also went to Vienna. She suffered from dropsy and needed her brother's medical care. From the estate procedure after her death in 1918 it may be concluded that Julius' daughter Karoline was no longer alive at that time. It was said that she had inherited her father's gift for drawing and was a painter in her own right.

Therese Heitzmann does not seem to have overcome the early death of two of her children. She left her

husband in 1910 and lived with her daughters Frida and Emma in suburban Vienna. Julius remained alone. In January 1922 he moved to the *Versorgungsheim Lainz* (a municipal home for the aged and disabled) where he died of an airway infection on January 26, 1922, aged 75 years.

The three Heitzmann ladies left Vienna in 1926 and settled in the village of Franzen in Lower Austria. According to a report of a contemporary still alive, the ladies were very elegant, their language sophisticated and in their house they had luxurious furniture. Both Frida and Emma spoke several languages, the former a teacher and the latter a nurse. Emma was posted in Slovenia at the end of World War I. Both daughters had attended

the renowned Vienna School of Music from where they graduated. They owned a piano, which had formerly belonged to their grandparents in Budapest.

Therese Heitzmann died in 1935 at 85 of old age infirmity, her daughter Emma in 1937 as a result of an untreated open fracture of the hip joint. During the Second World War the region around Franzen became a military zone and all the people from this area were evacuated. The surviving daughter Frida moved with her nurse to the *Kamptal*, a scenic valley situated nearby where she was most likely still alive at the end of the war but died of a stroke before the arrival of the Red Army in 1945, aged 70. With her death the genealogical line after Julius Heitzmann had come to an end.

REFERENCES

1. From a lecture in Budapest, Hungarian Association for the History of Medicine, on April 27, 1995.
2. Hackstock I. Martin Heitzmann (1804-1889) Ein Militär- und Tierarzt im alten Österreich. Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift (1997) 109/20:816-819.
3. Research in the Archives of Vienna/Austria, Budapest/Hungary, Regensburg/Germany, Salt Lake City and New York, both USA.
4. Information from Dr.Gabriella Jantsits and Prof.Dr.Dénes Karasszon, Budapest, Hungary.
5. Glesinger L. Vinkovčanin Karlo Heitzmann, zaboravljeni liječnik i umjetnik. Saopćenja. Zagreb 1974;17:193-197.
6. Hackstock I. Carl Heitzmann (1836-1896): physician and illustrator. International Journal of Dermatology 1998; 37:235-240.
7. Lesky E. Die Wiener Medizinische Schule im 19. Jahrhundert. Graz-Köln: Böhlau, 1965.
8. Holubar K, Schmidt C, Wolff K. Challenge Dermatology, Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1993.
9. Hackstock I. Die wissenschaftlichen Illustrationen der Wiener Medizinischen Schule (The Scientific Illustrations of Vienna Medical School), Vienna, 1988, thesis.
10. Holubar K, Schmidt C. Art in Dermatology versus Dermatology in Art. Anton Elfinger (1821-1864) and Carl Heitzmann (1836-1896) Hebra's forgotten Painter-Physicians. International Journal of Dermatology 1994;5:385-387.
11. Heitzmann C. Twenty years of scientific activities in America. Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift 1895; 31:561-564.
12. Heitzmann L. Recollections of my father. Urol Cutan Rev 1938; 42:127-128.

A U T H O R ' S *Ingrid Hackstock PhD, c/o Institute for the History of Medicine, Waehringer*
A D D R E S S *Strasse 25, A-1090 Vienna, Austria*