

Indigenous Influences on American Osteopathy

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Abstract : We explore the historical connection of Andrew Taylor Still with the aboriginal nations placed in Missouri, notably the Shawnee, Pawnee, Kickapoo, Cherokee, and the Pottowattomy. Still was fluent in Shawnee and himself was part Native American (Lumbee). These nations had well-developed forms of hands-on healing as well as practicing lightning bone setting. They were more sophisticated than their European-derived neighbors in treating fractures and dislocations. We trace Still's writings as evidence for his connectedness with these people and respect for their traditions. We explore the traditional hands-on therapies of these nations and discover that they are quite similar to osteopathy. We propose that Still was a translator of traditional manual medicine of the nations into the mainstream of American society. While, surely, he made his own personal contributions to manual medicine, he did not invent osteopathy de novo but relied on methods that were well-developed across centuries for his inspiration.

Keywords : indigenous healing, indigenous bodywork, American osteopathy, Andrew Taylor Still, Cherokee, Shawnee

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