# Andrew Taylor Still Encyclopedia Article

## Andrew Taylor Still

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**1828-1917**

**American Physician**

Andrew Still, a trained medical doctor, created a new branch of alternative medicine, osteopathy, which grew to be one of the more accepted alternatives to conventional medicine.

Still was born in Virginia on August 6, 1828. His father was also a medical doctor. Still received his formal medical training and degree at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Kansas City, Missouri.

After he was married and had several children, a tragedy occurred that altered the course of his life. His family contracted viral meningitis, and three of his children died of the disease. Still felt helpless as he, a physician, watched them suffer and finally die. He began to envision a method of practicing medicine that would be more instrumental in saving lives and maintaining health.

As he began his search, he combined his medical knowledge with his religious and spiritual beliefs, which told him that nature held the ultimate power and knowledge of the universe. His spiritual beliefs are aptly capsulated by his words: "Nature knows perfectly your powers, plans, and purposes." Because he believed this, he thought that if allowed and in balance, the body would function perfectly. He believed that the structure of the body and the body's function were keenly related. Thus, he named this type of alternative medicine osteopathy. "Osteo" is the Greek prefix for bone; Still related it to the musculoskeletal system.

Still founded the American Academy of Osteopathy in his hometown of Kirkland, Missouri, in 1874. As he conveyed his vision of medicine to others, he attracted followers. Among them were his surviving sons. Once he became famous, medical professionals attempted to lure him to large cities to open academies and give lectures, but he preferred his quiet life in the Midwest. He was known there for his genius in osteopathy and his eccentric habits of dress and personality.

In 1896 Vermont became the first state to officially consider osteopathy a legally distinct school of medicine. Within 100 years, osteopathic physicians would practice in every state and throughout the world and would be considered, by license and practice, equal to medical doctors.