

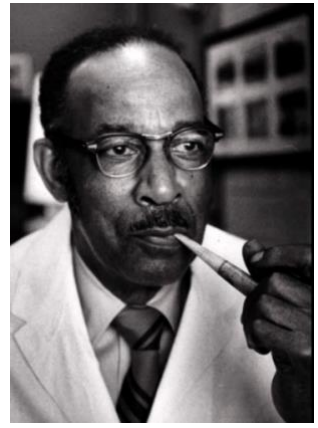
History of Cardiology and Cardiovascular Surgery

- Intersections in Alabama -

Dr. John Burrett, first cardiologist in Alabama, arrived in Birmingham in **1946**. Dr. Burrett had lived on East 88th Street in Manhattan when he graduated in 1937 from New York Medical College, where his father was dean. He subsequently moved to Boston and worked in the physiology lab of **Dr. Walter B. Cannon** at Harvard, then trained as a cardiology fellow with **Dr. Paul Dudley White**, who had begun the first cardiology service in the U.S., at Mass. General Hospital, in **1916**. Dr. Burrett and Dr. White co-published a research article on congenital heart disease in 1945.



One question regarding the John Burrett story is why an established physician from the Northeast would move to the South in the mid-40s and join the faculty of the **Medical College of Alabama**, which had moved in **1945** from Tuscaloosa to Birmingham. The facts are that Dr. Burrett had met Dr. Joseph Donald, an Alabama surgeon, during his military service *and* he had met and married a nurse, Clara Bray, who was training in Manhattan. Her home was in Orlando, Florida, but her extended family was from Georgia.

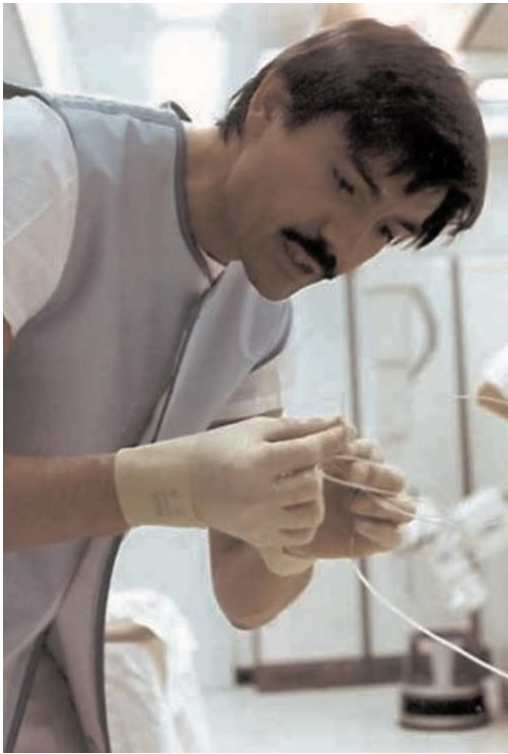


Tinsley Harrison came to **UAB** in **1950**. His roommate and close friend during med school and residency at Johns Hopkins (in the 1920s) was **Al Blalock**, who performed the first-ever elective cardiovascular surgery on **November 29, 1944**, with **Vivien Thomas** talking him through the operative procedure. Two decades later, **Levi Watkins** - by happenstance - followed the pathway of Vivien Thomas to Vanderbilt and later to Johns Hopkins. Levi Watkins enrolled in Vanderbilt School of Medicine in **1966** and then moved through Johns Hopkins as a surgical resident and joined the faculty at Hopkins as a cardiac surgeon.

Earlier, **Luther Hill** had performed the first successful emergency cardiac surgery in the U.S. - in Montgomery, Alabama in **1902** - when he sutured the heart of patient with a penetrating stab wound. **Michael DeBakey**, while a medical student at Tulane in New Orleans, pioneered use of the roller pump for blood transfusions in the 1930s; the roller pump was later used in the first heart-lung bypass machine in 1953. In **1955**, while at Mayo Clinic, significant improvements were made by **John Kirklin** and his team. Kirklin was recruited to UAB in Birmingham in **1966**.



Andreas Gruentzig arrived at Emory School of Medicine in Atlanta in **1980**. One of his cardiology fellows was **Gary Roubin**. While on faculty at Emory, Roubin pioneered development of the intracoronary stent. He came to UAB in **1989**.



Contributions of physicians working in Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Georgia - **Luther Hill, Tinsley Harrison, Michael Debakey, Al Blalock, Vivien Thomas, John Kirclin, Levi Watkins, Andreas Gruentzig, and Gary Roubin** - are thus connected to both early and recent pivotal events in cardiology and cardiovascular surgery.

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See [*pump*](#) and [*balloon*](#) and [*stent*](#) pages.