

"Big Bang" actor finds roots at Tulane

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Sheldon Cooper has roots at Tulane.

OK, maybe not the hilarious fictional physicist from TV's "The Big Bang Theory," but the Emmy-winning actor who plays him, Jim Parsons, was on Tulane University's uptown campus this summer filming a segment of TLC's reality series "Who Do You Think You Are?"

The documentary-style series pairs celebrities with history experts to go on a cross-country journey to discover their ancestral roots through historical records. In 1842, Parsons' great, great, great-grandfather Dr. Jean Baptiste Hacker graduated from the Medical College of Louisiana, the precursor to Tulane University School of Medicine.

Parsons spent the afternoon on campus at Joseph Merrick Jones Hall in July delving into archives to learn more about Hacker's life at Tulane and as a doctor in Iberville Parish. Hacker was an expert in yellow fever and published an article on the topic in 1854 in the *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal*. Hacker's life was tragically cut short just a few months later.

"Jim Parsons came to New Orleans looking for a French connection in his family's past," said David Gardner, a producer for the series. "Period newspapers kept in Tulane's [Louisiana Research Collection](#) shed more light on Hacker's life and career, including a very dramatic catastrophe that unfolded in December 1854."

The episode airs Tuesday (Sept. 10) at 8 p.m. CT on TLC.

Parsons, who is from Houston, enjoyed his time on campus and even left with a Tulane T-shirt.

"All of us on the production could see that Jim was particularly engaged by his family's Louisiana heritage, and he genuinely enjoyed the research he carried out at

Tulane,” Gardner said. “The production crew also had a fantastic experience working with everyone at Tulane, and we're grateful to the Special Collections team for their help in researching and filming Jim's episode.”