

West Philadelphia Hospital for Women records

SC.160

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Drexel University, College of Medicine Legacy Center

2010.04.08

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Summary Information

Repository	Drexel University: College of Medicine Legacy Center
Creator	West Philadelphia Hospital for Women and Children.
Title	West Philadelphia Hospital for Women records
Call number	SC.160
Date [inclusive]	1899-1932
Extent	1.25 linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	Founded by Dr. Elizabeth Comly-Howell in 1889, the West Philadelphia Hospital for Women was established in order to provide a place in West Philadelphia where women could be treated by women. In 1929, the hospital merged with the Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia. At the time of the merger, it was arranged that all maternity cases would be sent to the West Philadelphia Hospital, and surgical cases would be kept at the Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia. The Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia continued in existence until 1964 when it was absorbed by the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. The collection contains Board of Manager records, Executive Committee records and historical materials.

Cite as:

West Philadelphia Hospital for Women records, 1899-1932. Drexel University College of Medicine, Legacy Center: Archives and Special Collections on Women in Medicine and Homeopathy

Biography/History

Founded by Dr. Elizabeth Comly-Howell in 1889, the West Philadelphia Hospital for Women was established in order to provide a place in West Philadelphia where women could be treated by women. Dr. Comly-Howell called "a few earnest women together, [and] she put the matter so clearly and forcibly before them, that steps were immediately taken to establish such an institution," (Henry, page 834). When the hospital opened in July 1889, in a building at the northeast corner of 41st and Ogden Streets in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, "the extent of the equipment [consisted of] an almost empty, old fashioned house set in a garden of fine old trees, and a dispensary containing a few drugs, a half-dozen instruments, a doctor and a maid," (Peck, page 111).

The need for the West Philadelphia Hospital for Women was quickly realized and its needs grew. In April 1891, the Hospital purchased a house at 4035 Parrish Street as a result of a "generous donation by Anna T. Jeanes of \$10,000 from the estate of her sister, Mary Jeanes," (Henry, page 835). Another donation by Jeanes resulted in the purchase of a building on Odgen Street for a dispensary. In 1894, Anna P. Sharpless built and furnished an operating room and by 1903, a maternity ward was built. Almost immediately after the West Philadelphia Hospital for Women was established, a training school for nurses was begun. According to Elizabeth Peck, the first physician-in-charge who donated her services and time, "the very general testimony of physicians and patients to the character of the work done by [the graduate nurses] " convinced [the Hospital] of the value of the careful training that may be given in small hospitals," (Peck, page 112). An Auxiliary Committee, also established soon after the opening of the Hospital, aided with fundraising, donations, and support.

In 1929, the hospital merged with the Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia. At the time of the merger, it was arranged that all maternity cases would be sent to the West Philadelphia Hospital, and surgical cases would be kept at the Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia.

The Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia continued in existence until 1964 when it was absorbed by the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

Bibliography:

Henry, Frederick P., editor. *Founders' Week Memorial Volume*. "The West Philadelphia Hospital for Women," by Amy Comegys. Philadelphia: City of Philadelphia, 1909.

Peck, Elizabeth, M.D., "The West Philadelphia Hospital for Women," *Transactions of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the Alumnae Association of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: Alumnae Association of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, 1900.

Scope and Contents

The West Philadelphia Hospital for Women records are arranged in three series: "Board of Managers records," "Executive Committee records," and "Historical materials." The "Board of Managers records" includes Regular Monthly Meetings from 1889 to 1901 and 1917 to 1932; Annual Meeting Minutes from 1920 to 1929; and Annual Reports from 1890 to 1893, 1904 to 1910, 1913 to 1914, and 1918 to 1927.

The "Executive Committee records" include Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes from 1908 to 1914.

The "Historical materials" series consists of a history of the Hospital, circa 1899; rules for the Superintendent and Directress of Nurses, 1901; the Charter and By-Laws of the West Philadelphia Hospital for Women, 1912; Broomall Club new members letter, 1916; a descriptive brochure, 1917; and the resolution to merge with Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia, circa 1929.

This collection does not contain patient records or medical or obstetrical casebooks.

Researchers interested in women's history, women in medicine, operation of early woman's hospitals, and medicine in Philadelphia will find this collection to be extremely useful.

Administrative Information

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Sponsor

The creation of the electronic guide for this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives' Project.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may apply. Please contact the Archives with requests for copying and for authorization to publish, quote or reproduce material.

Custodial History note

The West Philadelphia Hospital for Women records were given to the Medical College of Pennsylvania by the University of Pennsylvania in 1974. These records, along with the records of the Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia, went to the University of Pennsylvania when the latter hospital was absorbed by the University in 1964. Through the efforts of Dr. Marion Fay, former Dean of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, these records were transferred to the Medical College of Pennsylvania.

Processing Information note

The creation of the electronic guide for this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' 'Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives' Project.

Finding aid entered into the Archivists' Toolkit by Garrett Boos.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Drexel University College of Medicine, Legacy Center: Archives and Special Collections on Women in Medicine and Homeopathy: Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia records, 1861-1963.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- West Philadelphia Hospital for Women and Children.
- Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Form/Genre(s)

- Annual reports
- Brochures
- Bylaws

- Charters
- Minutes
- Resolutions

Personal Name(s)

- Comly, Elizabeth Howell
- Peck, Elizabeth L.

Subject(s)

- Hospitals
- Medicine
- Nurses
- Physicians
- Women in medicine
- Women physicians

Series I. Board of Managers records

Collection Inventory

Series I. Board of Managers records, 1889-1932.

	Box	Volume
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes (handwritten), 1899-1901.	1	1-4
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes (handwritten), 1917-1919 September.	2	1
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes (typed, includes some financial reports, letters, and secretary report for Annual Meeting in 1921), 1919 October-1923 June.	2	2
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes (typed), 1923 July-1926 May.	2	3
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes (typed), 1926 June-1932 February.	2	4
Annual Meeting Minutes (handwritten and typed), 1920-1929.	2	5
Annual Reports (1st-3rd), 1890-1893.	4	1
Annual Reports (14th-29th), 1904-1910.	4	2
Annual Reports (23rd-24th), 1913-1914.	4	3
Annual Reports (28th-32nd), 1918-1922.	4	4
Annual Reports (34th-37th), 1923-1927.	4	5

Series II. Executive Committee records

Series II. Executive Committee records, 1908-1914.

	Box	Volume
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes (handwritten), 1908 January-1914 January.	3	1

Series III. Historical materials, 1899-1929.

	Box	Folder
<i>History of the West Philadelphia Hospital for Women</i> (printed booklet), circa 1899.	3	2
Rules for Superintendent and Directress of Nurses (2 typed pages), 1901.	3	1
Charter and bylaws (printed), 1912.	3	6
Broomall Club new members (letter), 1916.	3	3
Descriptive brochure (printed), 1917.	3	5
Resolution to merge with Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia (1 typed page), circa 1929.	3	4