

**FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE BOSTON CITY  
HOSPITAL, JUNE 20, 1914**

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Fiftieth Anniversary of the Boston City Hospital, June 20, 1914 by Various

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BOSTON  
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101 TRIMONT STREET  
1914

**FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BOS-  
TON CITY HOSPITAL, JUNE 20, 1914.**

THE fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Boston City Hospital was observed with appropriate exercises at that institution on Saturday, June 20. The addresses on that occasion deserve preservation in permanent form since they are a valuable contribution to the medical history of this community. The half-century in which has fallen the activity of the City Hospital has been a time of important progress in medical science, whose growth has been ably represented in its work. One of the most notable and creditable of the advances in which the hospital had a pioneer part was the early demonstration of the practical use and efficacy of von Behring's diphtheria antitoxin by Dr. John H. McCollom, now superintendent, then chief of the south department, of the hospital. This was a work of which the hospital and the Boston profession may well be proud.

The Boston City Hospital is to be cordially congratulated and commended on the completion of its first fifty years of growth and activity, and has the best wishes of the medical profession for a future of equal distinction, progress and success.

Introductory remarks of the HONORABLE A. SHUMAN, President of the Board of Trustees.

It gives me much pleasure to welcome, on behalf of the Trustees,—His Honor the Mayor and representatives of the City Government; members of the Staff, past and present; the Alumni; and other guests, to this observance of the Semi-Centennial of the Boston City Hospital.

On May 24, 1864, after many years of earnest endeavor on the part of public-spirited citizens, the Boston City Hospital was dedicated to the cause of the sick and suffering of our city, who without its beneficence would be unable to command the necessary care and treatment for the alleviation of the "ills that flesh is heir to."

The half century that has passed since then has been one of marvellous progress, not only in the growth of the hospital itself, but in the advancement of medical and surgical science, and the work done by those earnest and devoted men who have given so liberally of their time and skill for the mitigation of pain and the restoration to health of their fellow men. I gladly take this opportunity of offering my personal tribute to this long line of high-minded, stout-hearted men, many of whom it has been my pleasure to know well during my long connection with the hospital, who have from the foundation to the present day, done so much to raise it to its enviable position. Two members of the original staff, Dr. David W. Cheever and Dr. John G. Blake, are still with us, to participate in these exercises, and look back with just pride and satisfaction on the work in which they have played so important a part.

It may be interesting to review briefly the successive steps that have been taken in the develop-

ment of the hospital during the fifty years of its existence. Four buildings constituted the original group: the administration building, two pavilions, and the boiler house on Albany Street. The bed capacity was 208. Today we have 46 buildings with a bed capacity of 1061. The number of patients treated has increased from about 800 in 1864, to 116,729 in the last fiscal year. This includes both ward and out-patients. On June 20, 1864, there were 16 patients in the hospital; today, fifty years later, there are 892. The maximum number of patients for the past year was 1067 on March 16th. The original medical and surgical staff consisted of 21 members; the present complete staff consists of 103.

While some of this wonderful growth is due, of course, to the natural increase in the population of our city, the greater part is due to the fact that the pleasant surroundings, the skill and humanity of the physicians, and the faithful and sympathetic care of the nurses and attendants have gradually overcome the almost superstitious dread of hospitals that formerly possessed the general public. It is not now a question of finding patients for the beds, but of finding beds for the patients.

In 1864 no rubber gloves were worn in operating; there was no sterilizing of surgical dressings; catgut ligatures were rarely used; instruments were not sterilized. Sera for the treatment of diseases were unknown. Scientific feeding for certain diseases had not received any attention. The x-ray had not been discovered. The radium treatment for superficial cancer was unknown. There were no microscopes in use at the hospital that at the present time would be worthy of the name of a scientific instrument. When all these things are taken into account, it



will readily be seen that it is much more expensive to carry on a hospital today than it was fifty years ago, yet in spite of this fact the per capita cost has been but slightly increased during that time. In 1865, the cost per patient was \$1.77 per day; in the last fiscal year it was \$1.81. This showing is a tribute to the business principles of strict economy on which the hospital is conducted. All purchases are made by competition from specifications prepared by the Trustees, and contracts are awarded to the lowest bidders. All appointments, professional and otherwise, are made strictly upon merit. This method has brought the hospital to its present high standard of efficiency.

It is a matter of pride and satisfaction that the Boston City Hospital has never had to take a low position in the ranks of such institutions. From its inception until the present day, the generous appropriations of the City Government have enabled the Trustees to keep it abreast of the times, and in many cases ahead.

Let us glance at some of the achievements of the hospital during this half century. Chief among them, it seems to me, has been the triumph over the dread scourge of pyemia and sepsis. The present generation has little knowledge of the horrors and dangers that attended the surgery of those early days. Our hearts should be filled with gratitude to those who by their labors and researches have made possible the present happy conditions.

In later years the discovery of the x-ray and the use of radium have opened up unlimited possibilities for good. Wonderful results in the treatment of surface cancer, in the early diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis, the more exact knowledge of fractures and diseases of the bones,

and in the location of foreign bodies, have been attained by these agencies. The hospital has been most fortunate in having the incalculable benefit of the knowledge and skill of Dr. Williams in this important branch of the service.

The x-ray department occupies the entire lower floor of the Lamont G. Burnham Memorial Building. Mr. Burnham became a trustee in 1896, and realizing the good work the hospital was doing, soon became greatly interested, particularly in the x-ray department. He died in 1902, bequeathing to the hospital the munificent sum of \$150,000, from which has been erected the building which bears his name.

The great good accomplished by the South Department must not be overlooked. Opened in 1895, it was the first separate hospital in this country for the care and treatment of infectious diseases. A volume could be written and still not do justice to the noble work that has been done by this department in the saving of human life and the relief of suffering, as well as the prevention and control of epidemics of scarlet fever, diphtheria and measles in our city and community. As an evidence of what this department has accomplished let me merely say that in 1894 the death-rate in Boston from diphtheria was 18 out of every 10,000 inhabitants; in 1913 it was two and a fraction. This diminution of mortality is largely due to effective isolation, fresh-air treatment, and especially the use of anti-toxin. Equally gratifying results are recorded in the treatment of scarlet fever and measles. Through the generosity and coöperation of the former Mayor and the Honorable City Council, the Trustees are now engaged in an extensive addition to this department, follow-

ing the latest and most approved methods for the construction of such hospitals.

Fifty years ago, there was no ambulance station. Patients came to the hospital in hacks or carriages. The hospital now has four-auto-ambulances for the main hospital and three horse-ambulances for the use of the Relief Stations.

The two Relief Stations are of great benefit to the citizens of Boston in the rendering of prompt and efficient aid in emergency cases, while the Convalescent Home is a boon for women who are considered well enough to be discharged from the hospital, and yet who, through lack of proper home surroundings, need care and comfort in their convalescence.

The history of the Boston City Hospital for the past fifty years is a history of faithful, unselfish, devoted service on the part of all who have contributed to its growth: superintendents and their assistants, members of the staff, house officers, nurses and other attendants, employees of all grades—all by their earnest efforts and attention to duty, combined with the labors and cooperation of successive mayors, boards of aldermen and city councils, and the long line of trustees, have contributed to the success and progress of the hospital, and placed it in its present high rank among such institutions.

Many names come to my mind worthy of special mention, many men to whom the hospital and the community are especially indebted, but I feel that I should be lacking in appreciation if I did not call your attention to two names; those of Dr. G. H. M. Rowe, superintendent from 1879 to his retirement in 1909, to whose wise and able administration the hospital owes much, and Dr. John H. McCollom, the present efficient incumbent, who has given the hospital