

**MEDICAL CENTER ARCHIVES
OF
NEWYORK-PRESBYTERIAN/WEILL CORNELL**

**1300 York Avenue # 34
New York, NY 10065**

**Finding Aid To
THE DAVID PRESWICK BARR, MD (1889-1977) PAPERS**

**Dates of Papers:
1897-1977**

**5 Linear Inches
(1 Box)**

**Finding Aid Prepared By:
The Archival Staff
Undated**

Provenance

This collection was given to the Medical Archives by David Barr's second wife, Fredrica (Jean) Steadman Barr.

Biographical Note

David Preswick Barr was born in Ithaca, New York on August 23, 1889, the oldest son of Fred C. and Priscilla Preswick Barr. Fred Barr owned a local hardware store and his son seems to have been raised in relative comfort.

After attending Ithaca's public schools, Dr. Barr entered Cornell University from which he graduated with an A.B. in 1911. He then entered the Ithaca branch of Cornell University Medical College, transferring to the New York City campus the next year.

He received his M.D. in 1914 and for the next two years was a house officer in the Cornell or 2nd Medical Division of Bellevue Hospital. He was then appointed both a research fellow at the Russell Sage Institute for Pathology at Bellevue Hospital and instructor in medicine at CUMC. At Russell Sage he worked with Graham Lusk and Eugene DuBois, among others, in exploring metabolic and physiological changes occurring in disease states.

With a two year hiatus for active military medical service during WWI, Dr. Barr remained at Russell Sage and CUMC until 1924. He then became Professor and Chairman of the Department of Medicine at Washington University Medical School in St. Louis, Missouri. He was at the time the youngest chairman ever to have been appointed in a U.S. medical school. During his tenure at Washington University he helped lead the medical school to national prominence as well as edit the massive, three-volume Modern Medical Therapy in General Practice.

Dr. Barr returned to The New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center in 1941 as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Medicine. He became an advocate of outpatient care in clinics and of health insurance. His attempts to inaugurate a prepaid system of comprehensive health care at New York Hospital were at first stymied by internal opposition. By the end of the 1940s, however, with help from the Commonwealth Fund, he had established such an outpatient clinic at the hospital.

"Retirement" in 1957 was not the end of Dr. Barr's extraordinary career. He was President of the Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York, 1957-1962, and Visiting Professor at the National Defense Medical Center in Taiwan, 1963-1966.

By all accounts, Dr. Barr was genuinely beloved by his colleagues and students at the New York Hospital -Cornell Medical Center. His Friday afternoon house

staff parties, which he dubbed "Liver Conferences," were legendary. He married twice, first to Mary Washington Walker, who died in 1954 and then, in 1956, to Fredrica (Jean) Steadman, a fellow employee at the Center. Dr. Barr was an enthusiastic gardener, an excellent amateur painter (an avocation he took up in his 70s) as well as a fine piano player and singer.

Scope and Content

The David P. Barr Papers are more a collection of memorabilia than a comprehensive body of material illustrating his life. There is little correspondence and only two notebooks as well as a few reprints. His 17 year career at Washington University is almost completely undocumented.

Still, the collection has several interesting items. Dr. Barr's reminiscences given to the Columbia University Oral History Program in 1964 tell his story in his own words. A journal kept by a fellow Cornell student on a canoe trip Dr. Barr took in 1909 gives an amusing glimpse of the future physician. There are also several folders of notes and speeches on comprehensive health care and health insurance given by Dr. Barr in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition there are programs, certificates, a WWI identity card, and a bibliography of Dr. Barr's articles, 1918 -1957.

Non-Manuscript Material

Forty-seven photographs have been removed from the papers and transferred to the photograph collection, as The Personal Collection of David Preswick Barr.

Subjects

Commencement, CUMC
Insurance
Medical Records
Reprints
Student Activities
Vincent Astor Diagnostic Service
Wartime Activities
Russell Sage Institute of Pathology

Container List

Box 1

- f.1 Biographical Data: Irving Wright speech; Who's Who entry of 1967.
- f.2 Obituary of D.P. Barr, November, 1977, by David E. Rogers.
- f.3 Journal of an Adirondack Canoe Trip, August – September 1909,
probably kept by Robert Morse with an “addendum” by Dr. Barr;
45 pp.
- f.4 A.E.F. Identity Card, 1917 and dog tag, 1917.
- f. 5 Correspondence 1897, 1941, 1964 (3 items).
- f. 6 D.P. Barr to unidentified correspondent, October 16, 1917, describing
his passage with his military medical unit to England.
- f.7 D.P. Barr to Dr. Stanhope Bayne-Jones re the reorganization of the
wards in New York Hospital - Cornell Medical Center, September 5,
1951.
- f.8-9 D.P. Barr's interview for the Columbia University Oral History Project,
1964 (2 copies).
- f.10 Medical License, State of New York, for D.P. Barr. Copy, May 16, 1942,
of original dated September 25, 1914.
- f.11 Certificate of Appreciation, American College of Physicians, to D.P. Barr
1950.
- f.12 The Clinical Research Society, Program, 1958-1959.
- f.13 Certificate of Award, National Academy School of Fine Arts, 1968, to
D.P Barr; also some photo reproductions of Dr. Barr's work
- f.14 Letters written in support of D.P. Barr's attempt to get Health Insurance
Plan (HIP) into the Vincent Astor Diagnostic Clinic, 1946. Includes
letter from Fiorello La Guardia (original removed and in
"Signature" file.)
- f.15 Miscellaneous notes by D.P. Barr, August [1948].
- f.16 Speeches and thoughts on Comprehensive Health Care, 1948 - 49;
1951, 1955, 1959.
- .f.17 Speech by David E. Rogers and reply by D.P. Barr at "surprise" dinner
honoring Barr, April 30, 1956.
- f.17a Speech: Hazards of Modern Diagnosis and Therapy-The Price We Pay,
1955
- f. 18 Health Insurance Plan (HIP) - miscellaneous material, plus 39 note
cards for speech given by D.P. Barr to Practitioners Club, 1963;
also, draft of James Rudel speech re HIP, c. 1957-1961.
- f.19 Bibliography, 1918-1957, D.P. Barr.

- f.20 Reprints, 1922-1959, D.P. Barr:
- 1) Clinical Calorimetry. XXXII. 1922.
 - 2) Relation of Internist and Practitioner to Cancer Problem.
 - 3) Partial reprint of article "Hyperparathyroidism", 1928, republished July 1978, in Journal of the AMA.
 - 4) The Significance of Comprehensive Medical Care, 1946.
 - 5) The Heart in the Disease of the Endocrine Glands, 1959.
- f.21 Necessary Drugs and the Knowledge Essential to Their Use, D.P. Barr, 1932, St. Louis.
- f.22 "Medicine in 1850" paper read by D.P. Barr before the CUMC Phi Chi fraternity meeting, May 12, 1950
- f.23 Prospectus for Modern Medical Therapy In General Practice (edited by D.P. Barr), c. 1930s?
- f.24 "Changes in Tissue Sensitivity ..." typescript of article by D. Graham, S. Wolf and Harold Wolff with comment by D.P. Barr.
- f.25 "Washington University Clinics," paper by Betty Barr [Neagle] for hygiene class at Wellesley College, 1940 - uses information provided by her father, D.P. Barr.
- f.26 Copy of Commencement Program, CUMC, 1914
Notebook, "House Plants," case histories of plants and flowers owned by D.P. Barr; no date
Notebook, case histories of patients, 1948-1949
- f.27 Dr. Barr's address w/ introduction by George Armstrong given at a dinner meeting held in honor of Dr. Barr on July 7, 1964 at NYU Club.
- f.28 Medicine in Taiwan, not dated