

Ida Johanna Heiberger (1858 – 16 Jun 1938)

The Washington Post, August 2, 1891, p. 9

Ladies Take A Hand

A New Hospital to Be Erected Here by the Woman's Clinic

Articles of incorporation have been filed for record in the office of the recorder of deeds by an organization to be known by the appellation fo the Woman's Clinic as its corporate name, and having for its immediate object the establishment of an institution for the medical and surgical treatment of women, and children under five years of age, by women physicians. The articles bear date of June 10, 1891, and besides calling for the care of the institution during a period of ninety-nine years, according to the charter law, further contemplates the erection, as soon as possible, of a hospital and sanitarium for the same general purposes.

The plan of the organization, as explained by the document put on record, is that both institutions shall be for the exclusive care of women, diseased or disabled, and similar cases among children, providing the little inmates are under the age upon which the incorporators have determined as the limit.

In addition to the surgical force proposed, consisting entirely of lady physicians, a feature will be made of clinical instruction, particularly in the hospital and sanitarium. The incorporators (five in number) are Dr. Ida J. Heiberger, Dr. Clara Bliss Hinds, M.E. Heiberger, Dr. William Lee, and Dr. D.S. Lamb, who agree that when the organization is fully perfected the board of directors shall not exceed thirty-one in number.

The Evening Star, August 3, 1891

The Woman's Clinic Incorporated

The Woman's Clinic has filed a certificate of incorporation, reciting the object the establishment of an institution for the medical and surgical treatment of women and children under five years of age by women physicians and to establish a hospital and sanitarium for such. The number of trustees is to be thirty-one and the paper is signed by Ida J. Heiberger, Wm. Lee, Clara Bliss Hinds, Minnie E. Heiberger and D.S. Lamb.

The Washington Post, March 24, 1900, p. 4

Work Of Women's Clinic

Many Patients Treated by Women Physicians – Needs Financial Aid

The report of the Women's Clinic, organized in Washington in 180 for the medical and surgical treatment of women and children under five years of age by women physicians, shows that a large amount of work has been done by the earnest women who have directed its affairs, and in the face of discouragement. The clinic is now asking for an appropriation from Congress to enable it to prosecute its work with greater vigor and freedom from debt.

The report of the clinic for the last nine years shows that, in 1891, 980 visits were made to clinics and 598 prescriptions were filled. In the year 1899, 3060 visits were made to clinics and 3,204 prescriptions were filled. The total up to November 1, 1899, from October 31, 1891, was 25,595 visits and 30,773 prescriptions. Some idea of the work done by the women in charge may be gathered from these figures.

The income is derived from a charge of 10 cents from each of the patients visited where they are able to pay it, and contributions by individuals. The total amount of money collected up to November 1, 1898 was \$3,048 from clinics visited, and in the same period of eight years only \$93972 was subscribed by individuals to assist the work. But notwithstanding this the deficiency up to the month of March of the present year was only \$89.37. This shows the care with which the affairs of the clinic have been managed.

Those who have investigated its methods are unanimous in expressions of the excellence of its plans and methods as carried out and the large amount of good that has been accomplished.

It is the purpose of the Women's Clinic to establish, as soon as practicable in or near Washington, a hospital and sanitarium for women and for children, with a view to suitable clinical instruction in both institutions, in addition to the attention to patients. By the almost entire absence of means with which to carry on their work, the women who are conducting its affairs have been seriously hampered. They have strong support in their efforts to secure either an appropriation or such substantial donations as will enable them to prosecute the work.

The officers of the Woman's Clinic for the present year are:

President, Mrs. Emily L. Sherwood; first vice president, Dr. D.S. Lamb; second vice president, Mrs. W.E. Burleigh; treasurer, Miss Minnie E. Heiberger; secretary, Mrs. Mary F. Case.

Clinical staff – Dr. Ida J. Heiberger, Dr. Julia E. Smith, Dr. Adeline E. Portman, Dr. Phoebe R. Norris, Dr. Sofie A. Nordhoff-Jung, Dr. Ada R. Thomas, Dr. Susa Squires, and Dr. Isabel Haslup-Lamb.

Board of Directors – Mrs. E.L. Sherwood, Mrs. W.E. Burleigh, Mrs. Mary F. Case, Dr. Julia E. Smith, Dr. A.E. Portman, Dr. Susan J. Squires, Dr. Isabel Haslup-Lamb, Dr. H.L.E. Johnson, Dr. Mary Parsons, Dr. D.S. Lamb, Miss Minnie E. Heiberger, Dr. I.J. Heiberger, Dr. Ada R. Thomas, Dr. Sofie A. Nordhoff-Jung, Dr. Phoebe R. Norris, Dr. J.H. Bryan, Dr. S.M. Burnett, Dr. H.C. Yarrow, and Dr. Robert Reyburn.

Consulting staff – Dr. J.H. Bryan, Dr. D.S. Lamb, Dr. Robert Reyburn, Dr. S.M. Burnett, Dr. H.C. Yarrow, Dr. H.L.E. Johnson, and Dr. Mary Parsons.

Honorary consulting staff – Dr. J.E. Brackett, Dr. HW. Hawkes, Dr. W.W. Johnston, Dr. Mary B. Spackman and Dr. J. Ford Thompson; Superintendent of hospital, Dr. Ida J. Heiberger; house committee, Dr. Julia E. Smith, Mrs. W.E. Burleigh, and Dr. Ada R. Thomas.

The Washington Post, May 25, 1912, p. 2

Woman Hurt In Crash

Dr. Ida Heiberger Hurlled to Street as Car Hits Surrey

May Be Internally Injured

Police Say Coachman Failed to Look for Car at Fifteenth and H Streets –

Passing Auto Takes Unconscious Victim to G.W.U. Hospital –

She Is Suffering From the Shock

Thrown violently from her carriage shortly before noon yesterday, when it was struck by a Georgetown car at Fifteenth and H streets northwest, Dr. Ida J. Heiberger, of the Concord apartments, received internal injuries which may prove serious. She was taken unconscious to the George Washington University Hospital.

When the authorities of the hospital telephoned to the home of the injured woman, only Miss Mary Heiberger, who has been bedridden for over four months, was in the apartment. Alarmed at the persistent ringing of the telephone bell, she climbed from her bed, and staggering to the telephone, was told that her sister lay seriously injured at the hospital. Dropping the receiver from the shock of the news and helpless in her weakness, Miss Heiberger crawled back to her bed, where she lay for more than an hour before another sister, Miss Lillie Heiberger, returned from a shopping trip and ascertained the extent of Dr. Heiberger's injuries.

Hurled to the Street

According to the police, the accident may have been due to Dr. Heiberger's coachman, who, they said, drove across the car tracks without first looking to see if a car was approaching. Driving out from the curb, the coachman turned east down H street, and the car, which was going west, struck the vehicle in the rear. The force of the blow threw Miss Heiberger into the street between the car tracks, and demolished the rear of the carriage. The coachman, William Green, was uninjured.

Pedestrians rushed to the aid of Dr. Heiberger, and a passing automobile was pressed into service to remove the injured woman to the hospital, but one block away. Here it was found that besides several bruises from her fall, she possibly had received internal injuries, and was suffering from shock.

In speaking of the accident to her sister, Miss Lillie Heiberger said last night that the fault may have been the coachman's, as he was a new man, of whom they knew little.

The Washington Post, April 29, 1917, p. E10

"At Home" Held By Woman's Clinic

Organization's Work Is Outlined in Record for the Past Year

The last "at home" for the season of the Woman's Evening Clinic was held Wednesday afternoon. The social committee was assisted in receiving by Mrs. Edward B. Clark, president of the Twentieth Century Club, Mrs. C.V. Wheeler, president, and Mrs. William Eches Fendall, second vice president of the Junior League of the National Junior Republic; Mrs. Alexander Sharp, sr., quartermaster of the Nation Service School; Frederick H. Brooke, Mrs. Robert S. Chew, Mrs. Reeve Lewis. The guests of honor were the members of the Twentieth Century Club. More than 100 guests were present, among them Mrs. John J. Duff, Mrs. Charles Hussey, Mrs. R.S. Woodward, Mrs. Seaton Perry, Mrs. H.C. Deland, Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert H. Grosvenor, Mrs. Thomas M. Chatard, Mrs. Atlee Pomerene, Mrs. Loren Johnson, Mrs. E.M. Weaver, Mrs. H.S. Graves, Mrs. Robert S. Yard, William E. Fowler, Miss Elizabeth S. Stevens, Mrs. George H. Wright, Mrs. H. Dimmick, Mrs. H.H.B. Meyer, Mrs. Charles O.H. Cragie, Dr. D.R. DuComb and Reeve Lewis.

The clinic was organized in 1913 to meet a need where white wage-earning women and girls could go without loss of time from work and receive medical attention for a fee they were able to pay. The attending physicians are women.

The fact that patients made over 4,250 visits to the clinic during 1916 demonstrated that there was need in Washington of an evening clinic. If given an opportunity to secure treatment under these conditions the patients will give attention to their health and thus keep up their efficiency. If, on the contrary, they must apply to free dispensary for treatment because they cannot afford to pay a physician's regular fee, they will go without treatment rather than be subjects of charity.

Now that living is going to continue to cost more, owing to the war conditions, more and more wage-earners and families will find their incomes exhausted before the doctor is seen. More and more will need the services of the clinic.

Dr. Ellen G. Stone has been appointed to the position of resident. Dr. Stone is a graduate of Tufts College, and is a competent bacteriologist and pathologist. She will be on duty at the clinic from noon to 9 p.m. daily.

The clinic is doing its part in helping in the great preparedness movement. All the women physicians of its staff are serving on the medical committee of the National Service School. Dr. Elnora C. Folkmar, superintendent of the clinic, is chairman. The other members are Dr. May D. Baker, Dr. Alice Winans Downey, Dr. Martha C. Burritt, Dr. Edith Se Ville Coale, Dr. A. Francis Foye, Dr. June Madison Hull, Dr. Cora Smith King, Dr. Isabel H. Lamb, Dr. Lilliam R. Lekites, Dr. Evelyn G. Mitchell, Dr. Ida G. Heiberger, Dr. Louise Ross, Dr. Amy Rule and Anna E. Mix, Par. D. Two of these doctors are at the camp each day from

noon to 1:30 p.m., and a doctor and the pharmacist are at the camp nights from 7 p.m. to 8 a.m. Two classes in home nursing or one in first aid and one in home nursing are being organized by Miss Virginia Wall. Persons wishing to join will send their names to Miss Virginia Wall, Wardman's Courts.

The clinic is open for evenings a week from 6 to 8 p.m. for wage-earning women and girls, and from noon to 2 p.m. daily except Wednesday and Sunday for the women folk and children of men of limited income. Special clinic for children is conducted on Monday, Thursday and Saturday.

The clinic is supported by membership dues and the small fees of patients. Practically all equipment has been donated. Membership dues are from \$1 to \$25 a year. The organization now numbers 800. The secretary Mrs. Julius Lansburgh, the Woodward, is working hard to raise the membership to 1,000 by the first of July.

The Washington Post, June 6, 1934, p. 15

**First Woman M.D. Here Fought Pioneer Battle
Dr. Bliss Recalls Those Grinding Years When She Was
Trying to Gain Admission to Medical School and,
Afterward, to Get Established**

By Marion Butler

As five young women students in George Washington University's School of Medicine mount platform steps in Constitution Hall tonight to receive a degree in medicine from the university, will be recalling her own commencement of half a century ago.

For many summers as anniversaries of this eventful night pass, white-haired Dr. Finley has sat in her Rockville (Md) home and remembered a June evening in 1887 when she stood, a lone woman graduating among 50 men.

Exercises were held in no impressive auditorium, but in the quiet halls of the Washington Congregational Church. In place of the traditional cap and gown Dr. Finley wore a black silk dress, high-necked, long-sleeved, and with the sweeping skirts of post-Civil War days.

Beginning her medical studies in the days when the profession offered only locked doors and cold shoulders to women aspirants. Dr. Finley, daughter of Dr. D.W. Bliss, chief surgeon at the assassination of President Garfield, fought a pioneer battle.

Repeated seeking for admission into D.C. medical schools brought many rebuffs, but she was given inspiration and encouragement by Dr. Mary Arsons, one of the few successful women physicians in the country at that time, and still a noted medical figure in the Capital.

Crashed It, Finally

In 1884, in company with three other women, she was successful in gaining admittance to the George Washington University Medical School.

These classmates were Mrs. Alice White, Miss Ellen Cathcart, and Miss Sara Scull, vice principal of the fashionable Mount Vernon Ladies Seminary. All were Washington women and members of the highest social circles. Two, including Dr. Finley, had been widely feted debutantes of the seventies.

"They were grinding years," Dr. Finley recalls. "Competing in what was then regarded as purely man's work, we were doing what no woman had done in the school before us. We asked no favors, and would receive none.

"When I entered I was already 32 years old, married, and with a little baby girl to take care of. A degree would mean bread and butter to me. When I did come through though, I guess I felt just as elated as those youngsters who are graduating now."

Though she brushes aside the hardships of her student days, Dr. Finley can still smile over what she calls one of her pet aversions --- the dissecting laboratory.

“A grim, gloomy, grimy place,” she says, “it was far from the trim spic and span ‘lab’ of today. In fact,” she chuckles, “it was so forbidding that Miss Cathcart and I always contrived to do our dissecting problems there in the daylight even though ‘med’ school classes were scheduled in those times all for night hours.”

A medical degree was only half the solution to Dr. Finley’s adversities. Unlike the women graduating tonight who will intern in some of the finest Washington and New York hospitals, the hospitals and clinics of the eighties were closed adamantly to women knockers. Dr. Finley could find no place in which to practice her profession until she met with Dr. Ida J. Heiberger, brilliant woman graduate of a Philadelphia school of medicine. Together they started the Washington Women’s Clinic, a charity institution for medical work among the poor, still in existence today.

Started a Gym

Three years saw her firmly established in her profession, a specialist in women’s and children’s diseases. One of the first advocates of freer clothing and exercise for women, she started the first gymnasium for women in Washington, on Twelfth street between F and G.

“Here, for the first time,” Dr. Finley says, “women of those days could escape for a few hours from the torturing and disfiguring stays then in fashion, the unhealthy layers of petticoats, and cramping, tightly-laced boots. Under proper medical supervision, they could take the invigorating exercises which so many needed and so few nineteenth century women got.”

Another problem which Dr. Finley faced in her day was on which, as she points out, is still perplexing women medical students now – the old problem of keeping feminine when doing a masculine job. Feminine skirts and ruffles have never been incompatible with doing a good day’s work. With the skirts of modern fashion, it should be easier than ever to be active and busy, yet feminine. In my day, I had to visit my patients with skirts and petticoats that dragged the ground. But I stuck to them and kept womanly. A doctor can be just as good a doctor and still do that!”

The Washington Post, October 31, 1937, p. S8

Woman’s Clinic Arranges Party

A card party for the benefit of the Woman’s Clinic will be given on Friday afternoon at 2 o’clock at the Thomas Circle Club, 1326 Massachusetts avenue northwest.

This clinic, located at 4704 Georgia avenue northwest, is one of the oldest, privately operated, in the city. It was organized in 1890 by Dr. Ida Heiberger. For the last 15 years Dr. Lauretta E. Kress has been in charge and maintains hours from 10 to 12 on Mondays and Fridays, exclusively for women and children.

Mrs. Edgar T. Brown is hostess at the clinic and for more than 30 years has been interested in this project. The board has been affiliated with the District of Columbia Federation of Women’s Clubs since 1905.

Mrs. Ruth H. Snodgrass, secretary, and chairman of the ways and means committee, is in charge of the party, assisted by Mrs. Brown, vice chairman; Mrs. Metta Cole, in charge of candy sale; also Mrs. Otto Hammerslund, Mrs. George Sager, Mrs. John H. Harwood and Mrs. Calvin Lucas.

Mrs. Frank J. Birgfeld, president of the clinic board, heads the list of subscribers.

The Evening Star, June 17, 1938, p. A12

Dr. Ida Heiberger Dies Here at 80

Woman Physician Practiced More Than Forty Years in Capital

Dr. Ida Johanna Heiberger, 80, who was among the first woman physicians in Washington, having practiced here more than 40 years, died yesterday after a long illness.

A native of this city, Dr. Heiberger was graduated from the Women's Medical College of Philadelphia and took post graduate work in Germany and Switzerland. She practiced here until she retired about 10 years ago.

Dr. Heiberger had done considerable charitable work and helped organize the Women's Clinic here. She belonged to the District Medical Society.

Her parents were the late Franz J. and Mrs. Emma J. Heiberger. Her father was in the tailoring business here for many years. Dr. Heiberger is survived by a sister, Mrs. William M. Steuart, 3725 Morrison street N.W. and a number of nieces and nephews.

Funeral services and burial will be private.

The Washington Post, June 18, 1938, p. X15

Dr. Ida Heiberger, Retired, Dies at 80

Dr. Ida Johanna Heiberger, 80, one of the first woman physicians in Washington, died Thursday after a long illness. Dr. Heiberger retired ten years ago, after a practice that extended over 40 years.

A native of Washington, she was graduated from the Women's Medical College of Philadelphia and did postgraduate work in Germany and Switzerland. She helped organize the Women's Clinic here and was a member of the District Medical Society.

She is survived by Mrs. William M. Steuart. Funeral services and burial will be private.

The Washington Post, June 22, 1938, p. 15

Party Set Tomorrow By Woman's Clinic

The board of the Woman's Clinic will hold its annual summer card party tomorrow evening at the Roosevelt Hotel at 8:30.

Mrs. Calvin Lucas, chairman of the ways and means committee, is in charge, assisted by officers and other board members, including Mrs. Fred P. Trott, president; Mrs. Edgar T. Brown, Mrs. Fran A. Birgfeld, Mrs. Frank J. Mann, Mrs. Ruth H. Snodgrass, Miss Laura Berrien, Mrs. Corbin Thompson, and Mrs. HE. Rogers.

The board mourns the loss of its founder, Dr. Ida Heiberger, who died last week at 80. Dr. Heiberger founded the clinic in 1890, as a place where women and children could receive dispensary treatment at small cost. It is maintained by women physicians and public-spirited women. In the early days, the little house at Thirteenth and T streets northwest, was known as "The Cottage Home." This building has since been sold and the property at 4704 Georgia avenue northwest purchased. Dr. Heiberger was superintendent of the clinic for over 30 years. She was succeeded by Dr. Lauretta F. Kress, who is still the superintendent.