

HOUSE CALL



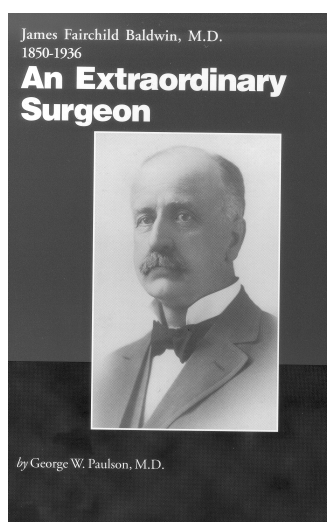
Vol. 9 No. 1

Fall 2005

A publication of the **Medical Heritage Center** at The Ohio State University

James Fairchild Baldwin, MD (1850-1930): An Extraordinary Surgeon

By George Paulson, MD



In his new monograph George Paulson, MD, explores the life of James Fairchild Baldwin, MD, a well-know surgeon and founder of Grant Hospital in Columbus. The following piece provides an outline of Baldwin's life and accomplishments.

The book was made possible by the support of Grant Hospital and the collections of the Medical Heritage Center and can be ordered from the Medical Heritage Center by contacting 614-292-9273 or wiener.3@osu.edu.

In his day, J. F. Baldwin (1850-1930) was the equal of any surgeon in America. A graduate of Oberlin College, where he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and a graduate of Jefferson Medical College, where he was first in his class, Baldwin arrived in Columbus, Ohio in 1874. This was before absolute cleanliness in surgery was accepted, before anesthesia was safe, before sterile gloves or cauteries were in widespread use, and well before electrolyte and fluid control was routine. He had an exceptionally busy surgical and obstetrical practice

with over 17,000 abdominal operations and achieved administrative success as the founder of Grant Hospital, the last hospital still active in America that was founded by a single surgeon. Baldwin published extensively, founded several medical journals, and taught at (and was dismissed from) several medical schools. A colorful character, he was both innovative and controversial.

Baldwin was fascinated by medical advances of all types and made many innovative contributions to the medical field. He developed a new operating table, techniques of plastic surgery for the nose, lips and vagina, and original approaches for abdominal, renal, and gynecological surgery. He was the first physician in Columbus to intubate the trachea, diagnose a case of Klebsiella, advise routine removal of the appendix during abdominal surgery, use cocaine for pain control and plaster casts as a routine procedure.

In addition to the groundbreaking publication of operative and mortality results, Baldwin actively published and promoted publication for others in his field. Interested in unique cases, he wrote up many unusual (even bizarre) ones: a gall bladder with 25,000 stones, a 25-pound fibroma of the mesentery, and even a pregnancy after the ovaries had been removed. Baldwin published articles in prestigious surgical, medical, and association journals, including *The New England Journal of Medicine* and *The Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA). He published over 200 articles, a textbook of over 250 pages, and he founded several medical journals.

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Although Baldwin's work clearly led to advancements and innovations in the field of surgery, he raised many issues that were uncomfortable for other doctors. One of these was fee splitting—a practice that was once almost universal. "Fee splitting" occurs when a surgeon hands over a monetary payment to the referring physician. Baldwin published, in both the lay and medical press, articles critical of fee splitting, including one entitled "Fee Splitting by Physicians: a Disgrace to the Profession and a Menace to the Public." Fee splitting is now uncommon in Columbus thanks largely to the Columbus Surgical Society, which acted several decades after Baldwin's death.

Baldwin also criticized unnecessary and bungled operations, large fees, and a frightful death rate. One article he wrote included statements such as, "Four out of every five deaths at operations in the ordinary run of hospitals can be attributed only to incompetence on the part of the surgeon." Baldwin's direct verbal assault against anesthesiologists for failure to reveal accidents, use of dangerous anesthetic agents, and inadequate training alienated even more doctors, particularly since many surgeons also administered anesthesia.

The enthusiasm of his colleagues was also limited when Baldwin recommended, in his characteristically forceful style, a move toward state medicine: "with state medicine, however, there would be no temptation to make or advise unnecessary operations because there would be no fees attached, and no incompetent operators or specialists would exist as all would be under direct supervision and inspection of their work, as we now have in the surgical services of our United States Army and Navy."

Baldwin alleged that physicians who have total medical control became arrogant autocrats and he argued that the fee system separated physicians from patients, and reduced candor. Baldwin also suggested that salaried doctors were more likely to complete medical research. In another move toward government regulation of medicine, Baldwin insisted that the government should study all medications or any surgical procedures to confirm their efficacy before putting them into practice. These opinions were enough to cause dismay, even among some of his friends.

Still, of all the controversies, the ones about education are the most striking. In 1875, Baldwin's nomination to the faculty of Starling Medical College was rejected, so he and a renegade group of six led by John Hamilton, MD, opened a competing medical college. The Columbus

Medical College, founded in 1876, soon became more prominent and popular than Starling. In 1882, Baldwin, then Professor of Anatomy and Secretary of the College, was dismissed from the staff because he complained about the awarding of the MD degree to an undeserving student. Baldwin next led the development of the Ohio Medical University (OMU). It was soon the busiest of the three competing schools. In 1899, Baldwin was professor and chancellor at OMU, but when he encouraged a merger with The Ohio State University, the board of OMU dismissed him. Baldwin accused them of blocking the merger "in order to keep the monies, graduate any who would pay, and make a profit."

By 1920, Baldwin, then president of the Ohio State Medical Association, made an address so controversial that the group would not publish it. He complained about cults, dependence on medicines that are "trash," and reliance on detail men for "scientific facts." However, the real issue was his comparison of the strength of the medical schools in Cleveland and Cincinnati with the one in Columbus: "at Columbus is the Medical Department of the State University, which has no endowed chairs, and has very limited clinical facilities, while its college buildings are in comparison decidedly deficient. Compared with the other two schools in the state, and with other state medical schools, what it has to offer to medical students is certainly beneath the dignity of a state institution of the standing of Ohio."

Baldwin wasn't finished with OSU with just this statement. In 1927, the Board of Trustees of OSU asked Baldwin's opinion about the administration of the medical school. He responded that the dean McCampbell, never had a third year of medical training and "the college under its present management is absolutely a matter of private graft." McCampbell was fired, and he sued Baldwin.

It is misleading to emphasize the controversies and not also note that Baldwin established a major program in nursing education, established Grant Hospital, and did much to elevate the overall standard of medical care in central Ohio.

Baldwin was indeed a controversial and energetic leader in his day and judged by any time, Baldwin is a man to be remembered. Grant Hospital and better medical education in Ohio are among the tributes to him that remain.

2005- 2006 MHC Speaker Series Announced

The MHC is proud to announce its 2005-2006 History of the Health Sciences lecture series. All lectures are free and open to the public and are held at the Medical Heritage Center, Prior Health Sciences Library, 5th Floor, 376 West 10th Avenue, Columbus, Ohio.

Annual Coleman Memorial Endowed Lecture; October 27, 2005; 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Ronald E. Batt, MD, MA, FACOG, FRCSC, will present a lecture entitled, "Professionalization of Clinician Historians." Batt is a professor of Clinical Gynecology and Obstetrics at the Department of Gynecology-Obstetrics, School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, University at Buffalo, State University of New York, and a Ph.D. Graduate Student in History of Science and Medicine at the Department of History, College of Arts and Sciences, University at Buffalo, State University of New York.

MHC and Grant Hospital Community Lecture; February 2, 2006; 4:30-6pm

George Paulson, MD, will speak on the life of James Fairchild Baldwin, founder of Grant Medical Center. Copies of Paulson's book will be available.

Annual James V. Warren Memorial Endowed Lecture; March 16, 2006; 4:30-6pm

Nanette Maciejunes, executive director of the Columbus Museum of Art, will explore the topic of physicians and art. An exhibit featuring artwork of local physicians/artists will accompany the lecture.

William G. Myers Collection Opening: May 2006

The highly anticipated opening of nuclear medicine pioneer William G. Myers collection will take place in May 2006. The opening will feature exhibits and a lecture. More information will follow shortly.

Recent Donations

The Medical Heritage Center thanks those listed for their recent support:

Philip Ballinger: books, equipment manuals, and catalogs • Edwin and Nancy Hamilton: books • Ivan Gilbert, MD: book collection • Louis and Nancy Goorey: books • Ralph Lausa, MD: books and Columbus Medical College announcement • OSU Hospitals East: portrait of D. Tod Gilliam, MD • Mary Rinaldi: books donated in the name of her husband, Edward Roxie Rinaldi • Donna L. Printz: books, archival materials, and equipment manuals and photographs • Dr. Mark L. and Anne Saylor: books and yearbooks • Reba Cobb Schanz: St. Anthony and St. Francis nursing photographs, text books, and memorabilia • Nicholas Slabaugh: *The People's Common Sense Medical Adviser in Plain English; or, Medicine Simplified* (1888) • Russell T. Smith: books • Dr. Robert M. Zollinger, Jr. : additions to the Robert Zollinger Collection

Monetary Donations

OSU Medical Alumni Society (in honor of Dr. George Paulson for the publication of his Baldwin monograph) • Donald Bowers, DDS • Pamela Bradigan • John Harris Dental Museum • Mary M. Manning • George and Ruth Paulson • Tracy Williams • Judith A. and Michael J. Wiener

VanBrimmer Endowment Fund Success

The Prior Health Sciences Library is proud to announce that the Barbara VanBrimmer Scholarship fund has successfully raised enough financial support to be recognized as an official endowment fund of The Ohio State University.

An endowment board is in the process of being formed and grants will soon be offered to information professionals to attend preservation and medical history workshops and professional development opportunities. The endowment was established in the memory of the MHC's founder and first curator, Barbara VanBrimmer.

Contributions to the Barbara VanBrimmer Endowment can be made through the Office of Medical Center Development & Alumni Affairs, 1375 Perry Street, Building 13, 5th Floor, Columbus, Ohio 43201. Please indicate that you are contributing to the Barbra VanBrimmer Memorial Endowment Account.

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For subscription information contact:

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fax: 614-292-9919, website: <http://library.med.ohio-state.edu/heritage>

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