

# THE BOSTON DISPENSARY

Records, 1871 – 1955

Charities Collection – CC 27

|                            |                                       |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 manuscript box           | Processed April 2000 by Pat Perreault |
| 5 linear inches            | Supervising Archivist: Claire Goodwin |
| Accession number: 2000.019 |                                       |

**ACQUISITION:** In 1911, the Boston Children's Aid Society gave its entire library to the Simmons College School of Social Work Library. This library included the annual reports of many local and international welfare and charitable organizations. With the passage of time, this collection took on historical significance and in 1991, it was transferred to the Simmons College Archives.

As part of donations in 1988 and 1989, Donald Moreland, a local social worker and collector of social work history, gave the Simmons College Archives a large number of annual reports, pamphlets and other materials related to various welfare and charitable organizations. Because neither of these donations is a discrete collection, the materials transferred in 1991 from the School of Social Work Library and related materials donated by Donald Moreland were combined to form the Charities Collection. The Simmons College archives Charities Collection consists of numerous small collections. Accession numbers for the individual collections are assigned during processing.

**ACCESS:** Unrestricted.

**COPYRIGHT:** Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be discussed with the College Archivist.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY:**

The Boston Dispensary, the third such institution in the country and the first in New England was founded September 11, 1796 on three principals:

- 1) The sick, without being pained on a separation from their families, may be attended and relieved in their own houses;
- 2) The sick, can, in this way, be assisted at a less expense to the public than in any hospital, and
- 3) Those who have seen better days may be comforted without being humiliated; and all the poor receive the benefits of a charity, the more refined as it is the more secret

Under the by-laws, each lady or gentlemen who paid five dollars annually into the hands of the treasurer should be entitled to the privilege of having two patients at one time under the care of the Dispensary. Four patients at one time were allowed to those who paid \$10.00, while a donation of \$50.00 gave the donor the privilege of having two patients for life. The patient procured a card of recommendation from a subscriber, which he presented when seeking treatment.

The Boston Dispensary became incorporated in 1801 with the signing of the Act of Incorporation by then Governor, Caleb Strong. In 1837, the Visiting Doctors Association was formed. From the beginning many fine physicians received their training at the Boston Dispensary including Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Jackson, Asa Bullard, Gamaliel Bradford, Pliny Hayes, Edward Warren, Henry Bowditch, Benjamin D. Appleton, Daniel Slade, E. Whitley Blake, and Buckminster Brown.

In 1873 the Boston Dispensary established the 1<sup>st</sup> clinic for the treatment of syphilis and in 1899 the first lung clinic. In 1927 Dr. William A. Hinton perfected a diagnostic test for syphilis which bears his name. The South End Diet Kitchen was established near the Dispensary to furnish food to the needy. 1886 saw the formation of the Instructive District Nursing Association, which is now the Visiting Nurse Association. The Dispensary employed the first social worker in 1908 and in the same year an agreement was reached with the Tyler Street Day Nursery. 1910 saw a medical teaching program initiated with Harvard and Tufts College Medical Schools, and the first evening Pay Clinic Service for the eye clinic was established in 1913 and eventually expanded to include all the major medical and surgical specialties.

In 1918 a Health Clinic was added so that patients who were not acutely ill might have periodic check-ups or physical examinations. The same year saw arrangements made with the Children's Aid Association and later extended to the Church Home Society to examine and correct physical defects of wards of the two societies.

A Fact Finding Committee was appointed in 1926 to study material assets, to inquire into the quality of service rendered by the dispensary and to obtain opinions as to how the community might be served in the future. The committee recommended the use of hospital beds and permanent staff with efforts made to increase the service to patients above level of indigence.

Graduate and undergraduate educational programs with Tufts College Medical School were expanded in 1926 to include instruction in medical social service, nutrition, clinical pathology and public health nursing.

The New England Medical Center formed in 1929 with originating members the Boston Dispensary, Tufts College Medical and Dental Schools expanded so that by 1955 it included the Boston Floating Hospital, and the Pratt Diagnostic Clinic-New England Center Hospital.

In 1955 the Dispensary opened the first Rehabilitation Institute in Massachusetts and a children's rehabilitation clinic, part of the rehabilitation program initiated during the polio epidemic.

All information taken from the Centennial Report of the Boston Dispensary, 1796-1897 and the Annual Report of 1955.

### **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE:**

These records document the history of the Boston Dispensary from 1871 – 1955 and its affiliations with various organizations in the Boston area including the Boston Children's Aid Society, Simmons College, Garland School of Homemaking, Dietetic Bureau of the League for Preventive Work, the New England Medical Center, South End Diet Kitchen, Instructive District Nursing Association, now the Visiting Nurse Association, Tyler Street Day Nursery, Harvard and Tufts Medical Schools, Church Home Society, the Boston Floating Hospital. Also included are names of the Administrators and Physicians affiliated with the Boston Dispensary from 1796-1897.

The Boston Dispensary records, 1871–1955 (with gaps) are arranged into 4 series: I Annual Reports – 1871-1955; II Departments of the Boston Dispensary; III Manuscripts; IV Miscellaneous.

Also included is a bound copy of a testimonial booklet to honor Miss Frances Stern, the founder of the Boston Dispensary Food Clinic.

In addition the Boston Dispensary records contain copies of three studies:

1. *Study of the Food Stamp Plan* by Elizabeth Barden and Elizabeth Carlisle and various publications concerning food stamps.
2. *Efficiency Tests of Out-Patient Work* by Michael M. Davis, Jr. – Director of the Boston Dispensary. Reprint from the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, Vol. CIXVI, No. 25, pp. 915-921; June 20, 1912.
3. Foldered copy of *Den Forsta Dietkliniken Boston Dispensary* by Astrid von Heijne-Liljeblad (Social-medicinsk tidskrift, Sept. 1949) signed by author.

### **SERIES LISTING:**

I – Annual Reports  
II – Departments of the Boston Dispensary  
III – Manuscripts  
IV - Miscellaneous

I – Annual Reports – 1871-1955 (with gaps)

The Annual Reports of the Boston Dispensary include the names of the Board of Managers, various committee members, the Acts of Incorporation and the by-laws. The reports also contain the names of physicians associated with the Dispensary over the years, Annual Reports from the Board of Managers and Treasurer, lists of receipts and expenditures, donations and names of annual subscribers.

A Centennial Report of the Boston Dispensary(1796-1897) is included within this series. This report contains a comprehensive history of the Boston Dispensary. Appendixes include a list of original Contributors (1796); Benefactors 1799-1897; Life Members 1820-1831; Presidents 1796-1893; Board of Managers 1796-1895; Secretaries 1796-1887; Treasurers 1796-1879; Superintendents 1858-1876; Consulting Physicians 1858-1867; Consulting Surgeons 1858-1867; District Physicians 1796-1897; Surgeons 1856-1896; Physicians 1858-1897; Oculists 1867-1896; Aurists 1870-1897; Department for Diseases of the Nervous System 1873-1893; Department for Diseases of the Skin 1873-1896; Department for Diseases of Throat and Nose 1881-1897; Department for Diseases of Women 1881-1897; Department for Diseases of the Genitourinary System 1882-1897; Department for Diseases of the Rectum and Anus 1884-1897; Obstetric Department 1885-1890; Orthopedic Department 1886-1896; Pathologist 1889; Department for Mental Diseases 1897; Dentists 1873-1891; and Apothecaries 1796-1894.

#### II – Departments of the Boston Dispensary

This series consists of a booklet in honor of Miss Frances Stern, the founder of the Boston Dispensary Food Clinic in 1918 and of two copies of the 1911 Annual Report for the Department of Social Service.

#### III – Manuscripts

This series contains three papers:

*Efficiency Tests of Out-Patient Work* by Michael M. Davis, Jr. – Director of the Boston Dispensary. Reprint from the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, Vol. CIXVI, No. 25, pp. 915-921; June 20, 1912.

*Den Forsta Dietkliniken Boston Dispensary* by Astrid von Heijne-Liljeblad (Social-medicinsk tidskrift, Sept. 1949) signed by author.

*Study of the Food Stamp Plan* by Elizabeth Barden and Elizabeth Carlisle with various publications concerning food stamps.

#### IV – Miscellaneous

This series contains a list of missing Annual Reports for the Boston Dispensary as part of the Boston Social Agencies Collection RA982.B7 and also two copies of an Auditor's Report dated December 31, 1938 for the George Robert White Fund, reprinted from the Boston Transcript dated July 20, 1939.

### **CONTAINER LIST:**

| <b>BOX</b> | <b>FOLDER</b>  | <b>CONTENTS</b>  |
|------------|--|--|
|            |  | <b>SERIES I: ANNUAL REPORTS</b>  |
| 1          | 1  | 1871-1908 – with gaps  |
|            | 2  | 1977-1918 – with gaps  |
|            | 3  | 1919-1955 – with gaps  |
|            | 4  | Centennial Report 1796-1897  |
|            |  | <b>SERIES II: DEPARTMENTS</b>  |
|            | 5  | Boston Dispensary Food Clinic: Testimonial to Miss Frances Stern   |
|            | 6  | Annual Report of the Social Service Department – 1911  |
|            |  | <b>SERIES III: MANUSCRIPTS</b>   |
|            | 7  | <i>Den Forsta Dietkliniken Boston Dispensary</i> by Astrid von Heijne-Liljeblad (Social-medicinsk tidskrift, Sept. 1949) signed by author  |
|            | 8  | <i>Efficiency Tests of Out-Patient Work</i> by Michael M. Davis, Jr. – Director of the Boston Dispensary. Reprint from the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, Vol. CIXVI, No. 25, pp. 915-921; June 20, 1912 |
|            | 9  | <i>Study of the Food Stamp Plan</i> by Elizabeth Barden and Elizabeth Carlisle and various publications concerning food stamps   |
|            | <b>SERIES IV: MISCELLANEOUS</b>                        |  |
| 10         | Annual Report for the Boston Social Agencies - 1911    |  |
| 11         | George Robert White Fund: Auditor's Report– 12/31/1939 |  |