

Massachusetts General Hospital Archives and Special Collections
AC 67
Professional Staff and House Officer Appointments
Records, 1817-1977

1.0 cubic feet. in 1 container
(1 records carton)

Processed: by Jeffrey Mifflin, 2016

Acquisition: Found in storage closet under the Bulfinch roof in 2007 (Accession # 2007-13)

Access: There are restrictions on access to portions of the collection containing patient names and 1970s personnel matters. Consult the Archivist for further information.

Copyright: Requests to publish materials from the collection should be directed to the MGH Archivist.

Scope and Content Note:

This collection consists of correspondence, staff lists, manuals, regulations, reports, and other handwritten and/or typed materials pertaining to appointments, titles, staffing needs, duties, resignations, retirements, and general issues pertaining to professional conduct at the MGH from the 1820s through the early-to-mid-20th century. The bulk of the collection relates to the 19th century.

Historical Note:

The first MGH By-laws (1821) gave to Drs. Jackson and Warren the titles of “Acting Physician” and “Acting Surgeon” respectively. In 1838 the titles given to physicians and surgeons were changed to “Physician” and Surgeon.” In 1840 the designations were changed again to “Visiting Physician” and “Visiting Surgeon.” It isn’t clear to me (at this point in my research) what the word “visiting” connoted at that time. However, by the end of the 19th century the title had assumed a special significance, as follows:

Visiting Physicians and Visiting Surgeons were members of the MGH’s professional staff who had served a sort of apprenticeship for a few years in the Out-Patient Department. The OPD staff was divided into two groups designated “Physicians” and “Surgeons.” The path to becoming a member of the “Visiting Staff” involved (or almost always involved) prior experience as a “Physician” or “Surgeon” in the OPD.

There were, around the turn of the 20th century, three Visiting Physicians at the East Medical Service; three Visiting Physicians at the West Medical Service; three Visiting Surgeons at the East Surgical Service; three Visiting Surgeons at the West Surgical Service; and three Visiting

Surgeons at the South Surgical Service. These men rotated, each serving four months per year per service.

In 1912 the General Executive Committee was formed. The GEC decided that “continuous appointments” were more efficient and provided more expertise and better care for patients. It seems as though the term “visiting” was at that time seen to be in opposition to “continuous.”

The “Medical Board” and the “Board of Visiting Physicians and Surgeons” were one and the same.

“House Officers” were roughly equivalent to 21st-century”Interns.”

Lists of professional staff and house officers (and explanations of titles) can be found in appendices to Frederic Washburn, *The Massachusetts General Hospital, Its Development, 1900-1935* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939); and Nathaniel Faxon, *The Massachusetts General Hospital, 1935-1955* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959).

Related Collections Note:

Researchers may also find relevant information in AC 31, MGH Medical Board Records, 1824-1923; Biographical Files; and Subjects Files in the MGH Archives and Special Collections. Ask the Archivist for further guidance.

Box List:**b.1**

Graduate Assistants, 1940

House Officer Chiefs,

House Officers—administration of [mostly 19th-century with summaries compiled at later dates]

House Officers—administration of [mostly 19th-century with summaries compiled at later dates]

House Officers and Residents [articles, transcriptions, summaries, etc., with correspondence]

House Officers appointments, 1850-1876

House Officers---applications of candidates not appointed, ca. 1836-1864

House Officers appointments, 1821-1834

House Officers appointments, 1834-1850

House Officers---history of [articles, transcriptions, summaries, etc.]

House Officers, lists, 1905 [list of House Pupils up to 1905]

House Officers, nominations, 1829, 1844-1900

House Officers—students' tickets of admission to lectures

House Pupils Alumni Association [typed summaries]

Professional Staff appointments to Medical and Surgical Services, 1820-1933

Professional Staff appointments to Out-patient Services, 1863-1898

Professional Staff ---Consulting Physicians and Surgeons, 1817-1837

Professional Staff ---General Executive Committee [typed and printed summaries]

Professional Staff---Graduate Assistants [typed and printed summaries]

Professional Staff---organization of [1820s-1910s, plus summaries]

Professional Staff—Physicians and Surgeons' fees [1880s, plus summaries]

Professional Staff---Research Fellows, 1926

Professional Staff---retirement age, 1880s

Professional Staff---rosters of departments [compiled lists]

Professional Staff---publications, appointments, etc., ca. 1854-1917

Professional Services---Medical Services, organization of [ca. 1820s-1920]

Professional Services---Surgical Services, organization of [ca. 1822-1938]

Professional Services---Surgical Services, abdominal surgery, 1888, plus restricted lists

Professional Services---Surgical Services, special assignments, 1881-1910

Residents and House Officers, regulations, ca. 1950s

Retirement age, 1962

Staff appointments, 1976-1977 [restricted]