



Women of Mayo Clinic: The Founding Generation

Virginia Wright-Peterson

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The story of Mayo Clinic begins on the Minnesota prairie following a devastating tornado in 1883. It also begins with the women who joined the growing practice as physicians, as laboratory researchers, as developers of radium therapy and cancer treatments, and as innovators in virtually all aspects of patient care, education, and research. While these women contributed to the clinic's origins and success, their roles have not been widely celebrated—until now.

Women of Mayo Clinic traces those early days from the perspectives of more than forty women—nurses, librarians, social workers, mothers, sisters, and wives—who were instrumental in the world-renowned medical center's development. Mother Alfred Moes persuaded Dr. William Worrall Mayo to take on the hospital project. Edith Graham was the first professionally trained nurse to work at the practice. Alice Magaw developed a national reputation administering anesthesia in the operating rooms there. Maud Mellish Wilson established the library and burnished the clinic's standing through widely distributed publications about its innovations. Virginia Wright-Peterson tells the stories of these and other talented, dedicated pioneers through institutional records and clippings from the period, introducing a welcome new perspective on the history of both Mayo Clinic and women in medicine.

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