

Guide to the People's Institute and Portland Free Dispensary Minutes of the Board of Directors 2001-002

Finding aid prepared by Karen Peterson and Max Johnson

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Oregon Health & Science University Historical Collections & Archives

2012-12-04

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Summary Information

Repository	Oregon Health & Science University Historical Collections & Archives
Creator	People's Institute.
Creator	Portland Free Dispensary.
Title	People's Institute and Portland Free Dispensary Minutes of the Board of Directors
Date [inclusive]	1919-1930
Extent	0.21 Linear feet 1 Box
General Physical Description	Materials are in good condition with some ripping/tearing along the edges. Some papers are discolored.
Location	Archives, Room 440, Old Library
Language	English
Abstract	Started in 1904 by Valentine Prichard and a number of interested parties, the People's Institute grew over the years to provide services to the poor and those unable to pay for medical services. In 1910, members of the University of Oregon Medical School were appointed trustees and assigned fourteen staff to the dispensary. In 1931, after 24 years of operation, the People's Institute and Free Dispensary was re-deployed as the Outpatient Clinic and fully under the Medical School. This collection consists of minutes from the Board of Directors covering the years 1919 - 1930.

Preferred Citation

People's Institute and Portland Free Dispensary Minutes of the Board of Directors, Accession Number 2001-002, Oregon Health & Science University, Historical Collections & Archives

Biography - Historical Note

The People's Institute was organized in 1904 to improve living conditions for the women and children in the northern end of Portland. The impetus for the Institute was a report by Valentine Prichard, supervisor of the public school kindergartens and principal of a training school for kindergarten teachers. This report, given in 1902 to Dr. Edgar P. Hill, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, along with Caroline Ladd and her daughter Helen Ladd Corbett, described the deplorable conditions of the women and children in north Portland Unable to provide even the bare necessities for their children, single mothers and their offspring lived in dark, unkempt rooming houses and tenements. Children, surrounded by immorality, often turned to crime, growing up idle and becoming a menace to society. Miss Prichard and a staff of workers visited homes to establish the needs of the women and children and to decide what could be done to help them and to establish the aims of the organization.

The Ladd family donated land at Fourth and Burnside Streets to construct a building for the People's Institute. The first floor housed the Men's Resort, a mission that had already been established by the church, and the second floor housed services for women and children. Caroline Corbett was appointed to form a club to support the effort, and Valentine Prichard was pressed into service as the Institute's organizer. The first meeting was held 1904 November 11; Prichard was voted in as supervisor, officers were elected, and the People's Institute Settlement Work was established. Dr. Hill realizing that the work would need more than one church for support, opened membership to all women who would aid the organization financially or through service.

The aims of the People's Institute centered in four areas--social, educational and industrial, humanitarian, and civic activity. Three centers formed: at Fourth and Burnside (1904 - 1912), Albina, (1912 - 1918), and the South Portland Center at the Fourth Presbyterian Church (1912 - 1915). Each center offered the following services: a kindergarten, sewing school, cooking school, Little Housekeepers Class, Stereoptician Sunday School, gymnasium, lectures for adults, manual training, Girl's Club, Boy's Club, Boy's Brigade, Boy's Printing Club, music, Dramatic Club picture loan, library, free baths, Mother's Club, and the Free Employment Bureau for Women. They also organized and supervised Portland's first public playgrounds in 1906, which they turned over to the Park Board in 1909.

In 1906, after the San Francisco earthquake and fire, the Institute gave clothes, food and medical care to the refugees arriving in Portland. Many doctors and nurses provided free services during the crisis, and some expressed interest in continuing free health work, including Drs. Noble Wiley Jones, Edna Timms and Gertrude French. In addition, the Free Employment Bureau for Women found that many women were not fit for employment due to poor health. They tried to interest the city and county in medical aid to the indigent but were foiled in their efforts. In 1907 the Executive Board of the People's Institute decided that the best way to aid the poor was to help them to achieve health so that they could help themselves. Hence the Free Dispensary was formed with \$30.00 provided by The Mother's Club and was held in the Boy's Club room at Fourth and Burnside. Drs. French, Timms and George Whiteside offered their services as the first attending physicians, while many others were willingly on call. The Visiting Nurse's Association joined the work as well. In the spring of 1909, Dr. Clarence J. McCusker made a report to the University of Oregon Medical School about free medical care being given at the dispensary. The faculty responded

by offering to affiliate with the clinic, providing equipment and services to men, as well as to women and children. Mrs. Jacob Kamm donated \$1000 for the project, and five more rooms were opened on the first floor of the Men's Resort. The Medical School moved the necessary equipment to the new location and supplied a salary of \$25.00 per month for an attendant. They requested additional support from the Board of Regents of the University of Oregon, and supplemental funds were acquired by subscription from the Arlington Club of Portland. Later, appropriations from the city and county were provided to meet growing expenses.

George B. Storey, Earnest Tucker and Kenneth A. J. Mackenzie, later made chief of staff, were appointed and authorized as trustees to sit with representatives of the People's Institute, the Visiting Nurses Association and the Men's Resort. On January 10, 1910, the first joint meeting of the organization met, and fourteen physicians from the Medical School were assigned to staff the dispensary, now named the Portland Free Dispensary.

Between 1910 and 1913, the dispensary was not extensively used for teaching purposes. But in 1913 attendance became compulsory for students of the Medical School. The dispensary grew in size and in service as a teaching center with, according to Larsell and Prichard, Portland's finest and most capable physicians attending. It was moved to larger quarters on 4th and Jefferson Streets in 1916, leaving the Institute's other projects housed at Fourth and Burnside and at the Lower Albina location. By 1921, the dispensary was taken more under the auspices of the Medical School as an outpatient clinic. In 1923 a Free Baby Clinic was added and in 1926, under the direction of Drs. Noble Wiley Jones and T. Homer Coffen, administrators of the Department of Medicine at the University of Oregon Medical School, new specialty clinics were established at the dispensary: a cardiac clinic directed by T. Homer Coffen, an endocrine clinic run by Homer P. Rush, a diabetic clinic under the direction of J. R. Montague and Blair Holcomb and a tuberculosis clinic coordinated by Ralph and Ray Matson and Marr Bisailon.

The dispensary quickly became overcrowded, and the location was extremely noisy, making examinations and accurate diagnoses difficult. But it was not until 1931, after 24 years, that a gift of \$400,000 from the General Education Fund of New York made it possible to move the clinic to the Medical School campus on Marquam Hill. The money was given with the understanding that the Portland Free Dispensary would turn over its work and financial resources to the Medical School. The four story Outpatient Clinic was built, and the dispensary medical services were transferred to these new and modern facilities, providing better services to patients and instructional clinic opportunities for students.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of two volumes of the minutes of the annual and monthly meetings of the Board of Directors of the Peoples Institute and Portland Free Dispensary. Volume I, contains the minutes dated 1919 January through 1927 January. Volume II contains the minutes dated 1927 January through 1930 January. These include treasurer reports, statistical reports, building and space reports, committee reports, city and county appropriation reports, information on children's welfare, Americanization programs, equipment allocations, correspondence, campaigns and drives, training programs, night school, staffing,

salaries, fees for services, donations, needs, resignations, volunteers, events, conferences and exhibitions, and the development of clinics and organizations. Arrangement is chronological. The materials are in good physical condition. The pages were removed from three-ring binders and filed in folders during processing.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Oregon Health & Science University Historical Collections & Archives 2012-12-04

Restrictions on access

No restrictions on access.

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Acquisition Information

The Board of Directors of the People's Institute and the Portland Free Dispensary created the records. They were transferred to the University of Oregon Medical School Library. No other details of provenance are known. The records were processed July 2001.

Controlled Access Headings

Geographic Name(s)

- Oregon

Personal Name(s)

- Mackenzie, Kenneth A. J., MD
- Prichard, Valentine
- Tucker, Ernest F., MD

Subject(s)

- Medicine and Health
- Outpatient Clinic
- University of Oregon.Medical School

Box 1

Collection Inventory

Box 1

Volume I - minutes dated 1919 January through 1927 January

Volume II - minutes dated 1927 January through 1930 January