



National Museum of Health and Medicine

Otis Historical Archives

OHA 84

Abbott Scrapbook on the International Association of Medical Museums

Date of Records: 1907-1924

Finding Aid: Eric W. Boyle 2012

Size: 1 box

Biographical Note: Born Maude Babin in St. Andrews East in 1869, Maude Abbott was orphaned as a young child by the death of her mother. The first cousin (once removed) of Prime Minister Sir John Abbott, Maude was adopted by her maternal grandmother, who had her family name legally changed to Abbott. After graduating in 1885 from a private high school in Montreal, Abbott received a scholarship to study at McGill College, where she enrolled in the Faculty of Arts the following year. She graduated in 1890, and despite receiving the prestigious Lord Stanley Gold Medal, among other honors, when she applied to McGill's Faculty of Medicine her application was turned down. Abbott then applied to the medical school of Bishop's College in Quebec, where she graduated with honors, the only woman in her class, in 1894. She then went to Europe, where she furthered her studies for three more years. Upon returning to Canada, Dr. Abbott opened her own practice in Montreal, where she specialized in treating women and children, and where she later began her research into congenital heart disease, especially in newborn babies. Her research was well received by the medical community, and despite the deep prejudices against women in the medical field, her career began to take off.

In 1898, Abbott was appointed Assistant Curator of the Medical Museum at McGill, and was sent to Washington to study the methods of the Army Medical Museum. During her trip, she met William Osler at John Hopkins. Osler subsequently asked her to write the section on congenital heart disease for his *System of Modern Medicine*. After visiting Abbott at McGill in 1904, Osler wrote to the Dean of Medicine that Abbott's work was the best he had seen. Osler maintained that she had a genius for organizing and there was no collection in North America or Britain that came close to what McGill had to offer.

In 1906, Abbott helped establish the International Association of Medical Museums (now known as the International Academy of Pathology). During her tenure at McGill, Abbott organized the museum's extensive collections and introduced the museum as a learning tool at for medical students and practicing physicians. In 1910, a full eight years before the school admitted women to the Faculty of Medicine, McGill awarded Abbott an honorary medical degree and a lectureship in the Pathology



Department. She was eventually promoted to an assistant professorship. Abbott retired in 1936, upon which McGill awarded her an honorary doctorate. During her distinguished career, Abbott published over 100 papers and books and delivered many lectures. Her *Atlas of Congenital Cardiac Disease* (1936) confirmed her status at the top of her field. Abbott died of a brain hemorrhage in 1940. She was 71. Today, she is remembered not only as a pioneer woman doctor but also as a leader in pathology and cardiology. In 1993, the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada designated her a Person of National Historic Significance. She was inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame in 1994.

Series/Scope and Content Note: Abbott compiled the material in the collection's sole scrapbook in order to document the early history of the International Association of Medical Museums, from approximately 1907 to 1924.

BOX AND CONTENT LIST

Scrapbook Contents:

1. Bulletin of the International Association of Medical Museums
 - a. No.1—May 15, 1907
 - b. No. 2—January 15, 1909
 - c. No. 3—March 15, 1911
2. IAMM Correspondence
3. IAMM Meeting Programmes
4. Circular Letters to Members
5. Membership Lists
6. Reports to Members
7. International Congress of Medicine: Membership and Meeting Information
8. Museum Committee Regulations
9. Obituaries for Sir Jonathan Hutchinson
10. Constitution and By-Laws of IAMM
11. Announcements to Members of the IAMM and American Association of Pathologists and Bacteriologists