

# Oration from 1906

## Oration Title:

*The Early Days of the Worcester Hospitals*

## Orator:

Lemuel F. Woodward, M.D.

## Abstract of Oration:

Dr. Woodward begins his history of Worcester's hospitals in 1752, recounting a small-pox epidemic that killed 4% of the city's population when a Dr. Crawford turned his house into a hospital. From 1864 to 1866 an Army hospital was operated for recuperating soldiers. At this same time a private citizen established a hospital for soldiers free-of-charge. Shortly after the war a hospital for Catholic girls was founded.

Following these early, rather temporary hospitals were larger, more permanent institutions. One of the most significant of these was the Worcester Lunatic Hospital, noteworthy because it was "the first hospital established by a state government in this country primarily for the care of the criminal and the poor insane." He describes that facility and the state of treatment and confinement of the insane in the early 19th century, about the time Worcester erected its lunatic hospital. He quotes Horace Mann's writings from this period about the need for more humane treatment of the mentally afflicted. Dr. Woodward offers multiple excerpts from organizations and committees charged with investigating the state of affairs for the insane at this time that describe inhumane conditions and abuse.

The Worcester insane hospital was founded on the principle expounded by another Dr. Woodward that mentally insane patients would respond most favorably to humane, kind treatment. The hospital achieved a 20-25% cure rate for chronic cases and a much larger acute cure rate.

Woodward's next subject is Worcester City Hospital, founded in 1871 for the city's poor. He lists all the visiting and consulting physicians and gives a brief history of each, explaining their medical education and career. He concludes his lengthy section on City Hospital with a timeline of its progress to the present day.

Memorial Hospital is his next focus and after briefly giving its history and listing the practicing physicians at Memorial, he does the same for St. Vincent's. He gives a one-sentence remark about Hahnemann Hospital and the Isolation Hospital.

Woodward's oration is informative and in most cases minutely detailed and well-researched.

