

Mark your Calendar

Be sure to come visit us at these upcoming events in Ridley Park!

Members Meeting

Thursday, May 7

7pm

Borough Hall Community Room

Speaker Series

Thursday, September 16

7pm

Christ Church Community Room

Dr. Jordan Smith

Professor of History, Widener University

Lazaretto Tour

November 2026

Exact Date/Time TBD

Lazaretto

Is your home over 100 years old??

Century house plaques are available to Ridley Park homes and structures that have reached the ripe old age of 100. If you are looking for a special gift or tribute to acknowledge that milestone—here's your opportunity!

Of all the questions we receive from residents, discovering the age and history of their home is the top question. The easiest way to research the age is online at the county's website: www.delcopa.gov/publicaccess/index.html and select the "Real Estate Tax System" tab, or log in as guest on the "Recorder of Deeds" page. You can search by address to find the information on your house.



If you have a few hours, you can also visit the Government Center Recorder of Deeds department and search back in time to the very first deed. You'll be surprised at all you can learn.

The cost of the 6" x 6" solid bronze plaque is \$350. Turn around time will vary depending on when it is ordered. For an additional fee of \$25, the Historical Society will research the history of your home for you.

Please mail a check with the application form and information about your home to us at: **Ridley Park Historical Society, PO Box 264, Ridley Park, PA 19078**. The application form can be found at www.ridleyparkhistorical.org/century-house.

Interested in becoming a Member?

By becoming a member you acknowledge that history is an integral part of Ridley Park's future.

Your membership affords us visibility and recognition in government decisions that have the potential to affect historic preservation.

To learn more about membership please email rphsinfo@ridleyparkhistorical.org



Ridley Park Historical Society P.O. Box 264 Ridley Park, PA 19078

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News of the

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Taylor Hospital: How it all Began, Part II

In the short sixteen years that Dr. Horace Furness Taylor practiced medicine in Ridley Park, he founded the Board of Health, incorporated the medical institution that carried his name, and built a modern 29 bed hospital. Dr. John Cooke Hirst, founder of the American Academy of Surgeons, said "He had accomplished more for the Medical Profession in his 39 years than most doctors could do in 70 years."

When Dr. Taylor died in January of 1920, his hospital had become critical to the health and safety of Delaware County. Records indicate that Dr. Conrad Partridge was the only other physician employed by the hospital, but several local doctors, some with familiar names like Hetzel and Stiles, stepped in to insure the continued success of Taylor Hospital. Katharine Taylor, head nurse and widow of Dr. Taylor, became superintendent of the hospital. Mrs. Taylor was the logical choice as she had worked alongside her husband from the beginning and was very familiar with the daily workings of the hospital. She was also founder of the nursing school and continued to teach and develop training programs.

The biggest concern for the hospital at the time was a lack of space. Newspaper articles frequently mentioned the scarcity of available beds. The 29 bed building on Felton Street was a state of the art facility when it opened in 1913, but by 1920 the population in the area had grown beyond logical predictions. The number of Ridley Park residents increased by one-third from 1910 to 1920. Nearby towns like Norwood and Prospect Park had similar gains and Glenolden and Swarthmore saw their populations double in that time. The growth can



be attributed to the increase in commuter rail travel to and from Chester and Philadelphia, the rise in automobile ownership, and the spread of industry along the Delaware River.

The Baldwin Locomotive Company of Philadelphia opened a plant in Eddystone in 1906. Baldwin was one of the biggest employers in the area with more than 21,000 workers in 1920. The Remington Rifle Company, also in Eddystone, employed over 15,000 workers during WWI and for a time after. These factories were less than a mile away from Taylor Hospital and work-related injuries were common.



Before his death, Dr. Taylor could see that the demand for medical treatment was rising rapidly and he began raising money for building expansion. The Ridley Park National Bank, managed by his friend, undertaker Hank Griffith, issued special bank notes for the cause. An article in the Chester Times dated December 17, 1919 announced a fundraiser with a goal of \$50,000 for a Maternity and Children's addition. The article went on to say that there had been 499 babies born at Taylor since the hospital opened in 1913. Almost 50% of the births were "charity cases" so the hospital absorbed the cost of those deliveries and hospital stays.

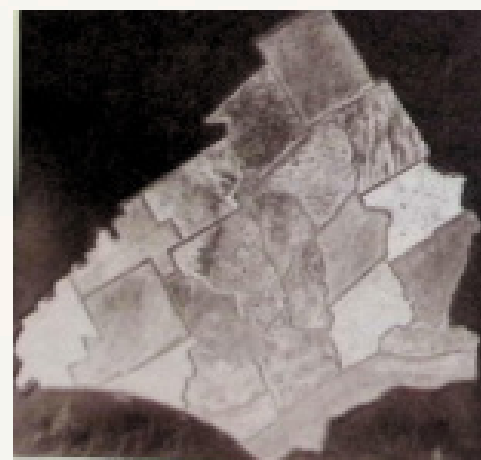
Dr. Taylor also looked to the government for help. Local newspapers quoted him several times petitioning the state for help with funding. Government funding for hospitals would not become available until after WWII.



In the early 20th century, hospitals were designated as charitable institutions responsible for their own funding. Those who could pay had private rooms and those who couldn't afford to pay stayed in the wards. Taylor Hospital had a reputation for never turning anyone away and the wealthy citizens of Ridley Park were happy to contribute to keep the local hospital available to all. By 1920, however, a handful of affluent community members could not sustain the practice.

Dr. Taylor's death left a healthcare void in Ridley Park and the surrounding areas, but his blueprint for prevention and healing left an example for his followers. In 1923, Taylor Hospital became a community hospital governed by a group of trustees, primarily doctors and businessmen from Ridley Park and nearby towns. That year, the board began offering subscriptions to Delaware County residents to raise money for an addition to the hospital. Typical donations ranged from \$5 to \$100. Subscribers were entitled to a discount on services and hospital stays and had the ability to recommend charity cases.

A Daily Times article dated June 9, 1924 reported that more than \$82,000 of the \$100,000 goal came from individual subscriptions. \$54,000 was contributed by one borough that the paper did not identify. Over about two years, total contributions were estimated at \$250,000, almost \$4M today. The largest contribution was \$50,000 from Dr. Taylor's estate, but over 50% of the donation total came from individuals from all over the county. A plaque commemorating the individual towns that contributed to the hospital hung in the hospital lobby until its close in 2025.



Ground was broken for the new addition in the lot behind the 1913 hospital in the summer of 1924. Katharine Taylor laid the cornerstone on November 15 amid a huge celebration. There were at least six speakers on the program led by M. J. Comerford, Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Schoolchildren sang several hymns and former physicians and county officials returned for the ceremony.

The building opened on October 5, 1925 at a height of six stories with 54 beds, an X-Ray Department, Laboratory, and electrocardiograph machine.

It had three operating rooms and seven staff surgeons who performed 760 operations in the first year. Two years later, the Daily Times announced another financing project with a goal of \$110,000. In the four years since the original building fundraiser was announced, the number of patients increased from 814 to 1886, births from 78 to 245, and accident cases from 155 to 725.



Over the years, the Taylor Hospital continued to look to the community to support the hospital. Card parties, fashion shows, and May Fairs are just a few of the events mentioned in the newspapers. Dr. Taylor's hospital improved patient health and saved lives for 116 years. At its height, it was a 156-bed facility that saw over 7,000 admissions and almost 30,000 ER visits each year.

In 1940, a Ridley Park resident named William Stanton wrote his own history of Taylor Hospital. Mr. Stanton had toured the 1913 hospital with Dr. Taylor before it opened. The last lines in his narrative were:

"How I wish some one could conduct him through our Hospital today and have him see his plans come to later fruit, point out the fire-proof building, the many new inventions, the newer Medical practice which we are enabled to use for the cure of the sick and suffering.

Then, he might well say: "After all, I did not work so hard in vain."

This is the second part of the story of Taylor Hospital.

The first installment appeared in our September 2025 newsletter available at www.RidleyParkHistorical.org/newsletter