

## Mark your Calendar

Be sure to come visit us at these upcoming events in Ridley Park! We are especially excited to invite you to stop by and visit our Taylor Hospital Exhibit at the Pump House during this year's Victorian Fair.

### Victorian Fair

Sunday, September 28 1

11am - 3pm

Pump House at Ridley Park Lake

### Ridley Park Fall Fest

Saturday, October 11

2pm - 6pm

Ridley Park Business District

### Delco Historical Society Collection

Thursday, October 2

7pm

Ridley Park Borough Hall

### Lazaretto Tour and Luncheon

Saturday, November 8

11am - 2pm

Lazaretto and Lehman's

## 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](http://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 \$200. 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](http://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](mailto:rphsinfo@ridleyparkhistorical.org)



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**Phone: 610-521-9136 Email: [rphsinfo@ridleyparkhistorical.org](mailto:rphsinfo@ridleyparkhistorical.org) Website: [www.ridleyparkhistorical.org](http://www.ridleyparkhistorical.org)**

# News of the Ridley Park Historical Society

Vol 25, No 3

September  
2025

## Taylor Hospital: How it all Began

On February 24, 1904, the Chester Times announced:

**"DR. TAYLOR IS TO GO TO RIDLEY PARK."**

*"The Times has learned from a reliable source that Dr. Horace Furness Taylor of Westtown, Chester County, who recently resigned as a resident physician at the Chester Hospital, will locate at Ridley Park on April 1."*

The article went on to mention that Dr. Taylor was taking over the practice of Dr. D.M. McMasters, Chief of Medicine at Chester Hospital. Although the article focused mostly on the retiring Dr. McMasters' accomplishments, Dr. Taylor was described as "a young man of rare qualifications." The Times did not exaggerate Dr. Taylor's qualifications. At 21, he was the youngest graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Medical College Class of 1903. During medical school, Dr. Taylor traveled to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania to treat lung disease in the miners there. This was valuable experience as tuberculosis was the number one cause of death in the populous areas of the country at that time. After graduation, Dr. Taylor was chosen to be a resident doctor at Chester Hospital, years before formal residency programs began. Furn, as his friends called him, was an ambulance driver as well as a surgeon during his time at Chester Hospital and a few newspaper articles mention his devotion and speedy driving skills. Dr. Taylor's first office was in his home at 27 Hinkley Avenue, near the corner of Hinkley and Sellers. At that time, Hinkley Avenue was a combination of residential and commercial buildings. Across the street from Dr. Taylor's house was Ward's Hall, a storefront with a second



floor where the library was housed and theater productions were staged. Down the street toward Swarthmore Avenue, the Deakyne grocery store was opposite the grand Hetzel house.

Dr. Taylor's practice was very busy from the start according to an article in the Philadelphia Inquirer dated October 14, 1904:

*"Within the short space of six hours, Dr. Horace Furness Taylor, of Ridley Park, Pa., attended twelve patients, administered to their various ills, and journeyed to West Chester, where Miss Katharine Grace Manly... awaited him to become his bride."*

Katharine was a nurse and the couple met while both working at Chester Hospital. Dr. Taylor was six hours late for the wedding, arriving at 10 PM.

When the Taylors arrived in 1904, Ridley Park was 30 years old and a stable, modern town. The three dominant religions, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Methodist, had

built their churches and were holding regular services. The Tome Street School was teaching grades one through twelve, there were shops and a restaurant and electric service was gaining ground in the newer buildings.

Doctors like Taylor were in great demand here as Ridley Park was growing rapidly. From 1900 to 1910, the census shows a population increase of almost 50%. The building boom would have been aided by the town’s first bank, The Building and Loan, founded in 1903. Atlantic Telephone and Telegraph started telephone service in 1906. Ridley Park was evolving from a desirable vacation spot to an attractive place to live.

The 1907 town directory shows the Taylors still living at 27 Hinkley Avenue where Dr. Taylor saw patients, performed surgery, and kept the critically ill in the three extra bedrooms. By fall of 1909, the space could not accommodate the increasing patient load, so the couple bought a large house and lot at the corner of Felton and Dutton Streets. The property was the former farmhouse and grounds of the Burk family and stretched from Chester Pike to Walnut Street and from Morton Avenue to Dutton Street.

Dr. Taylor may have had another reason for the new house. Their son, Horace, Jr., was born January 21, 1910. The Taylors continued to have a very eventful year. They opened the house to patients in February and, on May 21, received a charter from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania incorporating their home as a recognized hospital. In September, Katharine began a nursing school in the house. The school continued until 1934 and graduated 92 nurses in 24 years.

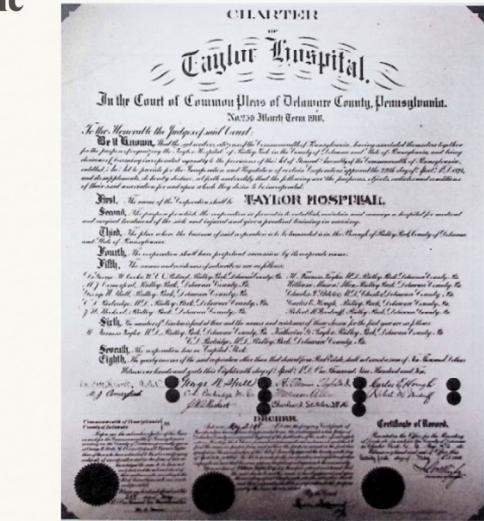


Soon the farmhouse hospital became too small for the Taylor family, the nursing students, and the patients who preferred the local hospital to traveling to Chester or Philadelphia. Dr. Taylor raised money and designed a new hospital building and, on May 10, 1913, the two story, 29 bed hospital was opened.

Typhoid fever was the number two cause of death at this time. Infected milk and open sewers were common ways of spreading the infection. In response, Dr. Taylor, along with other town leaders, started a Ridley Park Board of Health in October of 1914. Early meeting minutes note the milk inspector’s visits to local farms and vendors. The Board also

quarantined people and houses where infectious disease was present and forced property owners to close their sewers.

Dr. Taylor didn’t limit care to those who came to the new hospital. He continued to visit patients in their homes and make ambulance runs in his racing sulky. Or sometimes a borrowed hearse. Taylor was the coroner and undertaker Horace Griffith of Griffith’s Funeral Chapel in Norwood was the deputy coroner. The two became good friends and Mr. Griffith sometimes lent Dr. Taylor his hearse to use as an ambulance when it was available. In 1915, Taylor Hospital was able to purchase a motorized ambulance for \$700, equal to \$22,300 today.



The ambulance was fully paid for with community donations. This automobile allowed Dr. Taylor the full range of his driving skills. He had made it his practice to respond to all fire calls since he first drove an ambulance at Chester Hospital and, with the new machine, the Chester Times reported that he usually arrived at the fire before the fire departments.

The demand for hospital care grew as the population in and around Ridley Park continued to increase rapidly. By 1910, surgery in the United States was becoming commonplace because of antiseptic practices and advances in anesthesia. In the period 1918-1919, Taylor Hospital performed 587 surgeries and delivered 81 babies.

The flu epidemic hit the Philadelphia area in September 1918, and Taylor Hospital was ready. The hospital was full within a few days, and the Borough opened the Auditorium, the current home of the Barnstormers. There were so many patients that, according to the Chester Times, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts helped the Red Cross at the “Emergency Hospital,” mostly running errands and delivering messages. Dr. Taylor must have been very busy because the Chester Times announced on October 10: “Dr. H. Furness Taylor denies that he is dead...” *contrary to the reports that “...the energetic doctor had passed into the great beyond. ‘Doc’ says he doesn’t want to die before he gets a State appropriation for the Taylor Hospital...on its merits.”*

Dr. Taylor did not get his wish. In the summer of 1920, he nicked his finger while performing surgery. Antibiotics were not available at the time, and the doctor became septic and died on December 26, 1920. The hospital that he was planning opened in 1925 under the management of Katharine Taylor. Taylor Hospital continued to provide essential medical care for 105 years after his death. This is the first part of the story of Taylor Hospital. The second installment will appear in the next newsletter.



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