

Dr. Amanda Norris, Dean Of Woman Doctors, Has Long Record Of Service

Before The Days Of Medical Schools Open To Women In Baltimore, This Plucky Harford County Woman.

Devoted Her Life To The Profession Of Medicine And Has Practiced 40 Years.

"THE city of Baltimore has been exceedingly appreciative of and kind to its women physicians, as is manifested by their appointment to many municipal positions for which their medical training has fitted them."

The speaker was Dr. Amanda Taylor Norris, 10 West Twenty-fifth street, and Dr. Norris ought to know, for she has the distinction of being the dean, as it were, of local women allopathic physicians. She has been practicing medicine in Baltimore for over 40 years—longer than any other woman physician of the city so far as is known.

"I became a physician by a combination of accident and sudden inspiration," said Dr. Norris. "From the time my brother was in rompers my father, William P. Taylor, of Harford county, had said 'This son is to be a physician,' and he became one, graduating from the University Hospital in this city. I attended the graduating exercises when my brother took his degree, returning the same day to Harford county. On the train I picked up a newspaper and read of the commencement exercises, occurring during the same week, in Philadelphia, of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania. There was no medical school then open to women in Baltimore. Doubtless the commencement I had just attended had made a deeper impression upon me than I knew; some convincing word spoken by those delivering the addresses.

"When I read of the medical opportunity open to women in Philadelphia I suddenly felt that I too wanted to do something; to become a physician, although I had never thought of such professional vocation before, and had never been farther away from my country home than Baltimore and the school I had attended in Western Maryland. I knew life only upon a Maryland plantation, and a pleasant enough life it was, too. My father had taught me to ride horseback and to row and skate upon Bush river, but he was willing to humor what he thought was a passing whim. 'I will give you two weeks to get tired of it all and come home,' he said on bidding me good-by, but the call was stronger than he realized.

Came To Baltimore.

"By the time I had graduated in 1880 and was ready to enter upon my professional life, my father had died. I was undecided whether to practice in Harford county or in Baltimore. My mother, however, preferred to come to Baltimore to live and I had many relatives living here who promised to employ me as their physician, which they did. Hence I started with a practice already assured, which expanded and continues to the present time. One other woman, graduate of a homeopathic medical school, practiced in Baltimore when I began my professional life, but she died.

"I suppose," said the speaker with a most gentle little smile, "that I ought, as a pioneer woman physician, to have had to battle with opposition from men physicians, but truth to tell, I received only encouragement and co-operation at their hands. Dr. J. Edwin Michael, also from Harford county and acquainted with my family, was then practicing medicine in Baltimore and told me if I ever needed his help he would give it. Dr. John Jay and Dr. Opie were also good friends and in any crisis when I feared to rely upon my own knowledge or judgment I was able to call upon these representative men for aid.

"From the beginning I was a general practitioner, and very soon I was appointed upon the faculty of the Maryland Medical College—a co-educational medical school established upon Paca street near Franklin that had a few years' existence and a few graduates, but went out of being when the Johns Hopkins Medical School was established and the Woman's Medical College of Baltimore opened its doors. I was a member of this latter faculty also, holding the chair of materia medica, and my associates of the staff were Dr. John Winslow; Dr. William D. Booker, specialist in children's diseases; Dr. Randolph Winslow, the distinguished surgeon who went later to the University Hospital; Dr. Thomas A. Askby, of Virginia, whose specialty was obstetrics; Dr. E. B. Brown, whose daughters, Jennie and Mary Brown, are now practicing physicians; Dr. J. T. Smith; Dr. Eugene F. Cordell, who gave instruction in the practice of medicine; Dr. Trimble; Dr. John G. Jay, surgeon; Dr. Richard Henry Thomas, half-brother of James Carey Thomas, and Dr. Preston, who specialized in nervous diseases.

An Experienced Staff.

A wonderfully earnest and experienced group of men they were, whose ambition it was to make the standard of the Woman's Medical College so high as to justify its existence to those of the medical profession who opposed the admission of women to medical colleges. It was financially embarrassed much of the time, as it enjoyed no State assistance and had no endowments. I think the city helped it a little in return for free hospital service. The faculty was frequently assessed to sustain it, but it was rich in enthusiasm and able men at the helm. Dr. Claribel Cone was one of my pupils there, and afterward herself one of its faculty, and I instructed Dr. Flora Pollack, Dr. Fannie E. Hoopes and many other women who have added distinction to professional life in this city.

"The admission of women to the Johns Hopkins Medical School removed from the Woman's Medical College of Baltimore its reason for being, but I do not believe Miss Mary Garrett would ever have made her gift to the Johns Hopkins Medical School conditional upon its admitting women to all the privileges enjoyed by men had not the Woman's Medical College of Baltimore given

the occasion happens to cling to my memory. Whereas in those days I pursued my way alone so far as women medical associates were concerned, today there are probably 30 or more women physicians, graduates of allopathic medical colleges, in professional life in Baltimore."

Dr. Norris is a member of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Baltimore and of a group of medical women of the allopathic school who are banded

together and meet monthly, and which includes many of her former pupils.

"Dr. Norris is the Nestor of medical women in Baltimore," said one of them. "As a teacher she was both capable and conscientious and endowed with a gentle, unassuming dignity that endeared her to her pupils."

That same gentle dignity is characteristics of Dr. Norris today. She has the repose of manner combined with alertness of mind and promptness of action

that marked many of the men who helped to mold her professional career.

E. E. L.



DR. AMANDA NORRIS

in its graduates such high examples of womanhood and medical efficiency. The classes were small and each student received individual instruction, which, together with the high requirements, eminently qualified them for their professional work. That college was the entering wedge into professional life for women physicians of Baltimore.

"Medical science has developed greatly during the years I have been practicing, and the days when there were only horse-car lines and a heavy snowstorm was likely to tie them up. I recall once walking through snowdrifts from my office—at that time corner of Harlem and Fremont avenues—to Hampton to attend a patient. Not that this was at that time anything unusual, but