Collection Summary

Creator: Carl Beck
Title: College of Physicians and Surgeons -- Pathology -- Faculty Papers -- Carl Beck, 1889-1984
Dates: 1889-1984
Abstract: Dr. Carl Beck was a professor of surgical pathology at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. This collection contains information relating to Beck’s biographical and professional materials (Series I), correspondence and ephemera (Series II), and photographs and scrapbooks (Series III), materials which span his whole medical career.
Quantity: 1 Linear Foot
Identification: 027-12-20-01

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Carl Beck was born in Milin, small village in Bohemia, in 1864. After graduating with “primus” honors from the monastery of the Piarist Monks in Prague, he enrolled in the Medical Department of Carl’s University (the German school) in Prague. During his studies he received a modest travel stipend to visit foreign universities in order to study methods of surgery and pathology. He completed practicums in Leipzig, Jena, and Berlin. After graduating, he entered the surgical service of Professor Gussenbauer, an outstanding assistant of Billroth. There he was appointed second assistant to Professor Schauta, where he spent eight months in the Gynecological Clinic in Prague. He served three months of medical service onboard the Red Star Line steamship “Rhineland.” Onboard he met Dr. Harry Parker Newman, the founder and president of the Post Graduate Medical School in Chicago.

Dr. Beck relocated to Chicago in 1889 and soon thereafter became an attending surgeon at Cook County Hospital. Shortly after immigrating, he began teaching at the Post Graduate Medical School and the College of Physicians and Surgeon in Surgical Pathology, where he remained until 1912. In 1904, Dr. Beck became acquainted with Dr. Alexis Carrell and began sponsoring his early scientific work. Dr. Beck was largely responsible for the giving of the Nobel Prize to Dr. Carrel in 1912, at which time Beck established his own private practice in Chicago. With Carrel, Beck developed an operation that used the stomach for replacement of the esophagus.
Dr. Beck’s contributions to medical literature are well known in the history of modern medicine. They include “Transplantation or the Ureters into the Large Intestine” and monographs on “Hypospadias” and “Epispadias.” He was the first doctor to advocate for the use of Bismuth Paste in sinuses for the purpose of determining their exact location by X-ray. He became a pioneer in plastic surgery, focusing at first on reconstructive work and later elective surgery for the affluent.

In 1906, Beck along with his brothers Emil and Joseph founded the North Chicago Hospital at 2551 North Clark Street. Although all three brothers were active in their own practices and at other hospitals in the city, they intended to use the hospital to research and teach in their respective specialties on their own terms. Carl Beck served as the surgeon-in-chief. Additionally, Beck was a cofounder of St. Anthony’s Hospital in Douglas Park.

Dr. Beck was an avid traveler. By 1939 he had crossed the ocean seventy-two times. His international travels kept him well connected to both the American and European medical and political spheres. A world traveler who documented medical conditions in less-advanced countries, he hosted a soiree for Albert Einstein upon one of the noted scientist’s early visits to the United States. He died in 1952 of pneumonia.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains information relating to Beck’s biographical and professional materials (Series I), correspondence and ephemera (Series II), and photographs and scrapbooks (Series III), materials which span his whole medical career.

Detailed Description/Box and Folder Listing

Series I: Biographical and Professional Materials

Box 1
2. Publication- “Congenital Bilateral and Symmetrical Cartilages...,” Medical Record, 1892
3. Pamphlet- Portrait dedication ceremony, 1984
4. Paper- “Clinical Activities at the Cook County Hospital,” undated
5. Speech- Dr. Beck Honor Banquet Fifty Years in Medicine, 1939
7. Bibliography and biography materials, 1901-1975
8. Honorary Committee of the American Common, Wall of Fame, World’s Fair, 1940

Series II: Correspondence and Ephemera
10. Jane Addams, 1930-1931
11. Roberto Alessandri, 1934
12. Donald Balfour, 1939
13. Alice Beuls, 1939
15. Alexis Carrel, 1902-1925
16. George Crile, 1935
17. Anton and Agnes von Eiselsberg, 1920-1939
18. John R. Ford, 1920
19. Carl Ignatz Gussenbauer, 1896
20. Allen B. Kanavel, 1918
21. Howard Atwood Kelly, 1912
22. Robert D. Kohn, 1940
23. Rene Leriche, 1932
25. P. Ludeck, 1927
26. Halton Luther, undated
27. Dr. William J. and Edith Mayo, 1910-1934
28. Oscar E. Nadeau, 1939-1948
29. Dr. Albert J. Ochsner, 1925
30. Professor Hans Leo Przibram, 1920
31. Eleanor Roosevelt, 1938
32. Julius Rosenwald, 1920
33. Lord Thomas Holmes Sellors, 1979
34. George Edgar Vincent, 1920
35. Ernst Von Bergman, 1896
36. Diplomatic and Consular Offices, 1911-1920
37. Medical Nobel Committee, 1908-1909
38. Postcard- unknown, 1923
39. Program- Sir Watson & Lady Cheyne’s River Party, 27th International Congress of Medicine, 1913
40. Petition- Call for Relief for Vienna, 1919
41. Photocopies- Carrel correspondence from Georgetown University Library, 1890-1941
42. Photocopies- materials from scrapbook, 1889-1952
43. Memorial Certificate, American College of Surgeons, ca. 1952
44. Cartoon- “Chicagoans As We See Them,” 1904

Series III: Photographs and Scrapbooks

45. Photograph- Robert Gersuny, 1920

Box 2
46. Photograph- Dr. and Mrs. William J. Mayo, framed, 1934
47. Photograph- Beck portrait by Fernand de Gueldre, undated
48. Photograph- Group performing surgery, undated
49. Photograph- Dr. Carl Beck Testimonial Dinner, 1939
50. Scrapbook- Dr. Carl Beck Seventy-Fifth Birthday and Fifty Years in the Practice of Medicine, 1939