

# Indiana Medical History Museum

Summer 2012 Newsletter

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## HISTORY HAS CHANGED!

By Norma Erickson

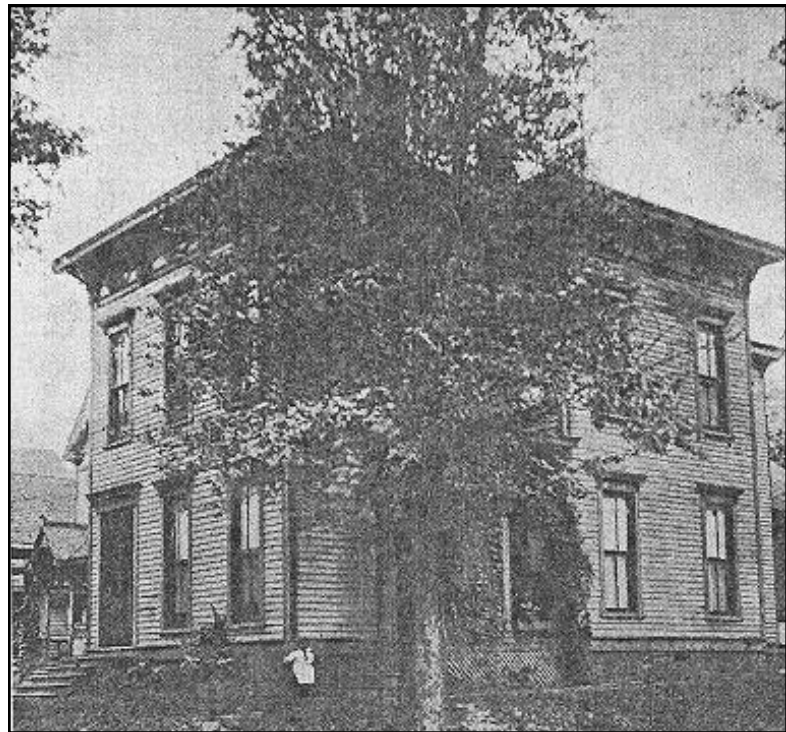
History has not changed, but the subjects and themes historians study seem much different than history I recall from high school. It seemed we read about war after war after war. In the short periods between wars, there was discussion of economic history—depression, recession, or panic—or science history with lists of discoveries, inventions, and “the first this” and “the first that.”

As an academic “late bloomer” in graduate school, I know that historians today emphasize other important influences on American history. By studying the effect of gender, class, and race on the history of the American experience, we gain a more complete understanding of ourselves as a community or even as a nation. I learned how this works when I decided to investigate a story briefly mentioned in a biography of Carl Fisher, an important person in Indianapolis’ history. I found a relatively untouched area to research.

Fisher’s major accomplishments are well documented. He developed Miami Beach, spearheaded the building of the Lincoln Highway, and created the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. But a 1909 incident involving an injured black laborer at the Speedway and a

local hospital that refused to treat the dying man took me beyond the main reasons for Fisher’s fame to discover a person who took a personal interest in the health, education, and wellbeing of African Americans. Along the way, I learned a great deal about

black physicians in Indianapolis. One hospital (City Hospital) accepted black patients, but black physicians were not allowed to practice there. The doctor turned the care and treatment of his patient over to a white physician. In June of that year, a group of



Lincoln Hospital, established in 1909 for black physicians to treat their patients, stood at the corner of 11th Street and Senate Avenue.

healthcare for blacks in Indianapolis at the beginning of the twentieth century. Chiefly, I learned that there was not a great deal of it.

In 1909, there were nineteen

African American practitioners in Indianapolis took a step to honor a patient’s right to choose a doctor and a physician’s right to treat patients in a modern facility. They formed an association with the goal of

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# Volunteers

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## Volunteer Spotlight: Leah McConaghy

We recently interviewed Leah McConaghy, a volunteer librarian and docent at the museum. Here is what she had to say about volunteering at the Indiana Medical History Museum.

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*Five years ago, I was new to Indianapolis. Home in Wisconsin seemed very far away, as did my son there and my daughter in Tennessee. I had grown up in Terre Haute many years ago, but that was a long time ago, and I was eager to find new ways to belong. Before long I read an article in the Star about this unusual museum of medical history, and I wanted to learn more.*



Volunteer Leah McConaghy works to organize and catalog the library collection.

### **How were you first introduced to the Indiana Medical History Museum and why did you choose to become a volunteer?**

*I had recently moved here from Wisconsin when I saw an article about the museum in the Star. At the same time, [museum staff member], Jerry Wheeler, ran an online ad for volunteers in the Indianapolis Not-For-Profit News. He asked for people interested in research in historical items and for docents who would enjoy guiding visitors through the building. I had spent 15 years teaching social studies to teenagers and was intrigued by both.*

### **What is your favorite room, artifact or historical theme in the building?**

*I work in both roles, probably most often as a docent. It's great fun to see and hear people's reactions to the history that has been preserved. But I think I enjoy even more learning about the ongoing work of continuing that preservation. It's a pleasure to know the people dedicated to this work and to do what I can to help with the process. My focus is the Auxiliary Library in which we store books that have been donated to the museum. There I see things like medical notes from medical*

*school from early years and catalogs of many instruments. These volumes are used for background information on new acquisitions, and I find their organization fascinating.*

## How Can You Help?

We are looking for new volunteers to join our fun and fabulous group! Whether you love history, medicine, architecture, or science, you'll find something to love about your volunteer experience here at the Indiana Medical History Museum! It's a great way to meet new and interesting people, learn new things about the history of medicine in Indiana, work with our unique collection, and help us deliver educational and entertaining experiences that our visitors will never forget in the oldest remaining pathology building in the country!

We are looking for new people to catalog artifacts and books, give tours or greet visitors waiting for the next tour to begin. Our operating hours are Wednesday (by appt.) through Saturday from 10am to 4pm. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at the Indiana Medical History Museum, please visit our website at [www.imhm.org/volunteerapp](http://www.imhm.org/volunteerapp) to fill out an application, e-mail Norma Erickson at [imhmvolunteers@imhm.org](mailto:imhmvolunteers@imhm.org), or call the museum at (317) 635-7329.

## Guided Walking Tours

of the

### Indiana Medical History Museum *Medicinal Plant Garden*

Every Saturday morning from  
June through September,  
IMHM offers **free** guided tours  
of the Medicinal Plant Garden  
led by one of the Purdue  
Master Gardeners of Marion  
County who lovingly maintain it.

Tour begins promptly at **11:00** am and does  
not include a tour of the museum.



Indiana Medical History Museum  
3045 West Vermont Street  
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# History Has Changed! (continued from page 1)

founding a hospital where they could tend to their own patients. The Lincoln Hospital opened on December 16, 1909 in an already existing structure that could accommodate seventeen patients on the corner of 11th and Senate. A donation by Carl Fisher paid for a new addition that housed a surgical suite. Any reputable physician could admit patients there.

Sparse documentation of the activities of the Lincoln Hospital exists. The Indiana Historical Society's collection holds only the first annual report, published in 1911. For that reason, some historians state the hospital lasted only one year. New research challenges that claim, as newspaper accounts of incidents and death notices show that it operated until at least December of 1914.

By studying the Lincoln Hospital, we can look closer at African American life in Indianapolis at the turn of the twentieth century. While historians have documented racial and ethnic segregation in the city at that time, tracking the response of the black community to these practices in specific areas—healthcare, for example—needs more work.



Indiana Medical History Museum  
3045 West Vermont St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46222

Executive Director:  
Mary Ellen Hennessey Nottage  
Director of Public Programs:  
Sarah Cole Halter

Officers, Board of Directors  
President: Jeffrey Kellams, MD  
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Museum Hours  
Wednesday - By appointment only  
Thursday-Saturday - 10am - 4pm; last tour  
starts at 3pm

Website: [www.imhm.org](http://www.imhm.org)  
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Telephone: 317-635-7329

## Notice Regarding Admission Prices

Much to our regret, these difficult economic times have made it necessary for us to raise our admission prices. Effective September 15th, admission will be as follows. Children (Under 18) \$3; University Students with valid ID \$5; Adults \$7.

## Upcoming Events...

Saturdays from June through September 11:00am  
**Guided Tours of the Medicinal Plant Garden**

These free tours of the Medicinal Plant Garden are led by one of the Purdue Master Gardeners of Marion County who lovingly maintain it.

Sunday, October 28, 2012 2:00 to 4:00pm

### 8th Annual Wizards Academy

Visit with wondrous creatures from Animalia, Inc. and explore the science behind your favorite boy wizard's magical world through hands-on experiments! A special guest speaker will educate and entertain parents while their young wizards attend classes. Advanced registration required. Registration opens August 30th.

Tuesday, November 6, 2012 6:30 to 8:30pm

### Art & Play in Child Psychiatry

A Spirit and Place Festival event.  
More details to come.

For more information about these and other upcoming events at IMHM, please visit our website at [www.imhm.org/events](http://www.imhm.org/events)