



**Washington Psychiatric Society (1949-)
ARCHIVES FINDING AID**

[Processed by W. E. Baxter, 13 March, 1989.]

Following World War II, psychiatrists in Washington, DC, were divided into four different societies, none of which was completely representative. The senior group was the Section on Neurology and Psychiatry of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia, whose interests were predominantly neurological and whose membership was limited to members of the Medical Society. The Washington Baltimore Psychoanalytic Society represented a specialty within a specialty. The Society for the Advancement of Psychotherapy represented a small group of psychiatrists with specialized interests. The Medical Society of St. Elizabeths Hospital restricted its membership to staff and alumni of that institution. Each society had its own monthly or bi-monthly meetings, with much competition among the program chairmen for the best available talent. As a result, the meetings became so numerous and the quality of the programs so diluted that attendance began to drop alarmingly.

At this stage, 24 Washington psychiatrists representing each of the existing societies met to study this problem. The initial meeting was held on January 6, 1949, at which time Dr. Addison Duval was elected chairman pro tem and Dr. Henry P. Laughlin secretary. A committee of six representatives-at-large was subsequently elected to study the problem further and to formulate an appropriate program. It was decided to form a new group, the Washington Psychiatric Society, and invitations to join were sent to all eligible "doctors of medicine specializing in the field of psychiatry" in the area. More than 110 "charter members" attended the first organizational meeting on February 10, 1949. The constitution which had been drafted by the committee was adopted at that time.

Articles of incorporation under D.C. laws identifying the Society as a non profit scientific and educational body were taken out in the early summer of that year. In May, the Society was accepted as a duly accredited affiliate society of the APA. In 1953 a new, but overlapping, professional organization was formed which sought and secured status as a district branch of the APA. Two years later the Metropolitan Washington District Branch of the APA was formally merged with the senior organization. The constitution was revised, permission was secured from the APA to retain the older group's name, and the merged group then took over the functions of both organizations. The main purpose of the Society is "to represent psychiatry and foster progress in the Washington area."

In pursuing these objectives, the Society has provided an outstanding scientific program with many renowned speakers. All scientific meetings are open to all physicians interested in attending. The Society has established and maintained the closest possible relations with the Medical Society of the District of Columbia and the several county medical societies in the metropolitan area. In this way, and by holding joint meetings with other societies, it has promoted closer relationships between psychiatry and other branches of medicine.

One of the earliest projects of the new Society was publishing a directory of psychiatrists and clinical facilities in the Washington area. In 1951 the Society sponsored an essay contest for psychiatric residents and later added a \$100.00 prize for the winner. This project, it is felt, has served to stimulate and encourage psychiatric research among the younger members.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS

The papers of the Washington Psychiatric Society are deposited with the Archives of the American Psychiatric Association through the APA Records Management Program. (Until 2003, WPS rented office space at APA headquarters and shared a number of APA services.) The collection totals .75 linear feet and is comprised of 1 series: Subject Files. These files consist mainly of applications for membership in the WPS from 1949 to 1965, directories, and ledgers. There is no appreciable correspondence yet on file. Researchers should also consult the papers of the Assembly for further materials on the WPS.

SERIES: Subject Files

Archives Box 101137

Folder

- 1-6 Applications for Membership, 1949-1965:
 - 1. A D
 - 2. E G
 - 3. H L
 - 4. M Q
 - 5. R Sn
 - 6. So Z

- 7 Directories, 1949, 1951, 1953, 1957, 1960, 1962, 1964

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Folder

- 8 Directories, 1966, 1968, 1972, 1978
- 9 Ledgers, 1969-1970
- 10 Ledgers, 1971-1976
- 11 Miscellaneous, 1969-1975, 1981-1982