

Grady Hospital

The Hospital At the Heart of the City

The year was 1892. The destruction of the Civil War was nearly thirty years in the past. Atlanta was a prospering and growing city. In the wake of the War, people had made their way to Atlanta, hoping to build new lives for themselves and, if they were lucky, to find their fortunes. This was the year that Atlanta opened what was – for the city – a first-of-its-kind hospital.

The Early Days of Grady Memorial Hospital



Early Grady Hospital

The creation of Grady Hospital is said to have originated in the 1880s, in the wake of the closing of a hospital known as the Atlanta Benevolent Home. After years of debate and legal wrangling, the Home's deed was passed to the city, which put it towards a new hospital, which would have a mission of caring for Atlanta's low-income families. There were other hospitals in Atlanta at the time, but most had religious affiliation or relied on wealthy benefactors. Grady would be the city's first public hospital.

In 1889, Henry Woodfin Grady, the onetime editor of the Atlanta Constitution newspaper, passed away. It was determined that a new hospital would be constructed and named for Grady, who had been a major player in civic and political circles. A plot of land was found on Butler Street and construction on the new hospital was underway.

In June 1892, the doors of the three-story Grady Hospital opened for the first time. With 110 beds and one operating room, it was staffed with about 100 people. Early patients were brought to Grady by a horse-drawn ambulance. The wards in the original hospital were divided not just by gender, but by race.



Grady Hospital, c 19402

The Gradys

Once the twentieth century dawned, and Jim Crow laws intensified, so, too, did the separation of patients at Grady Hospital. The wards had always been divided by gender and race. But, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, separate hospital buildings were constructed - one for Black patients and another for white patients. This pattern of segregation – which continued for several decades - would lead to the hospital becoming known as “The Gradys.” It would be 1965 – 73 years after it opened – before the institution was desegregated.

Grady's Role in Medical Education

At its opening, Grady was located near a medical training institution called Atlanta Medical College. A series of mergers followed over several decades resulting, in 1915, with the combined schools coming together as the Emory University School of Medicine.

Several decades later, in 1975, a medical education program was begun at Morehouse College. In 1981, it became an independent school called the Morehouse School of Medicine. Over the years, Grady has both helped to train and benefitted from the students and faculty at the Emory and Morehouse schools of medicine.



Grady Nursing Class of 1900

Beginning in the late 19th century, Grady was home to nursing training schools. One - The Grady Memorial Hospital School of Nursing – opened in 1898, training white nurses. Another - The Grady Memorial Hospital Municipal Training School for Colored Nurses – began in 1917. In the mid-1960s, the two schools merged and remained one institution until it closed in 1982.

Grady Hospital Today

Grady has seen a lot of growth in its more than 130 years of history. From the original three-story site, it is now the Grady Health System, with a level-one trauma center hospital, multiple clinics and a children’s hospitals. From its initial 100 staff members, the System now employs about 5,000 people.

Grady Hospital has also faced its share of challenges. By the first decade of the 21st-century, Grady found itself on the brink of financial catastrophe. Facing budgetary issues, as well as outdated equipment and infrastructure, it got to the point where the hospital’s accreditation was at risk. A group stepped in to oversee the hospital and a fundraising campaign resulted in more than \$200 million being pledged toward the efforts.



Grady Memorial Hospital

- Takeaways:**
1. Grady Hospital has been part of Atlanta since 1892.
 2. Grady was founded to care for the city’s low-income families.
 3. For decades, facilities were separated by race.
 4. Hospital is now part of larger network of care facilities.
 5. Role of Emory and Morehouse medical schools at Grady

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