



## **USING THE ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE COLUMBIA HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN FOR FAMILY HISTORY, 1866-1953**

During the Civil War, many women came to the District of Columbia in search of missing relatives. Many of these women became ill while in the Nation's Capital and required medical attention. In response to this need, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton authorized the establishment of the Columbia Hospital for Women in 1866. Throughout its history the hospital underwent several name changes, including the Columbia Hospital and Lying-In Asylum, the Columbia Hospital for Women and Lying-In Asylum, and finally the Columbia Hospital for Women.

A report of the Surgeon General's Office in 1869 stated that a large number of the

“patients admitted to the free beds during the year were wives, widows, or daughters of men who were disabled or lost their lives during the war, in the army or navy, overtaken by sickness while seeking information or prosecuting claims in this city. In a few instances, rest and food and shelter only were needed; but in the majority of cases professional skill, careful nursing, and all the appliances of a well conducted hospital, not otherwise obtainable, were demanded for the preservation of life.”

The Columbia Hospital for Women became a pioneer in the field of obstetrics and gynecology. The Federal Government operated the hospital until 1953, when it was transferred to a board of directors and became a private, non-profit hospital.

### **THE COLUMBIA HOSPITAL'S ANNUAL REPORTS**

Congress required Federal agencies to write an annual report providing an overview of their accomplishments. The Surgeon General's Office of the War Department wrote the report for the Columbia Hospital for Women. Because the hospital was located in the District of Columbia and the Department of the Interior acted as the intermediary between many agencies in the District and Congress, the Surgeon General forwarded the report to the Secretary of the Interior, who included the report in his annual report to Congress.

The annual reports do not usually include the names of patients. If you discover from a pension or some other record that your ancestor was admitted to the hospital, the annual reports may help you paint a more complete picture of your ancestor's life. The reports include such information as:

- Numbers of patients admitted and of those dismissed cured and relieved; those remaining under treatment; and those who died.
- Numbers of patients by nativity, or national citizenship, and race.

- Numbers of patients who were wives or widows of U.S. army soldiers or relatives or friends of civilians.
- Numbers of patients by cause of death.
- Numbers of free and pay patients.
- Numbers of births.
- Numbers of U.S. patients by different states represented.
- Financial reports.

## **HOW TO FIND THE ANNUAL REPORTS**

The Columbia Hospital's annual reports are usually available at large university or public libraries, and at U.S. Government Depository Libraries. The National Archives and Records Administration has copies of the reports at its facilities in Washington, D.C. and in College Park, Maryland. The Library of Congress also has a complete set of the annual reports. You can determine the nearest location of a depository library via the Internet at:

**[www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fdlp](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp)**

That website will provide you with information to contact a depository library to ascertain if it has copies of the annual reports.

Please remember that the hospital's report falls under the purview of the Secretary of the Interior. Generally, the Interior Department's annual report has a table of contents, so locating the Columbia Hospital's report will not be difficult.

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