

James A. Harrar

August 5, 1877 — January 26, 1970

James Aitken Harrar was born in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, on August 5, 1877. He received his A.B. and M.D. degrees from the University of Pennsylvania in 1899 and 1901, respectively. He spent two and one-half years as a house surgeon at the Episcopal Hospital in Philadelphia and became resident surgeon in the Private Patients' Pavilion of the New York Hospital on April 1, 1904. In December of that same year he was appointed attending surgeon to the Outdoor Department of the Lying-in Hospital. He remained associated with this hospital until his retirement in 1950. The Lying-in Hospital, although it proudly claims to have been founded in 1799, led a very sketchy and sometime existence until 1890, when Dr. James W. Markoe and Dr. Samuel W. Lambert established the Midwifery Dispensary at 312 Broome Street. The Lying-in, which at that time was merely a board of governors, associated itself with the dispensary and became a stable and going institution. Dr. Harrar joined the staff two years after the building (still standing at Second Avenue and 17th Street) was opened.

Dr. Harrar married Florence Humiston of Cleveland, Ohio on October 30, 1909. Two children, a son and a daughter, survive.

Dr. Harrar was for many years in charge of the Outdoor Delivery Service at the Lying-in and spent many hours teaching and instructing the medical students and young attendings. He was an expert with the Kielland forceps, did pioneering work in the use of "twilight sleep," and was unusually clever in doing version and extraction, the latter a very necessary procedure in the first quarter of this century. He was a very gentle, somewhat bashful man (who hated controversy and unpleasantness) but was possessed of an acerbic tongue. He contributed frequently to the Bulletin of the Lying-in Hospital, published continuously from 1904 to 1932, and was the author of many papers in other journals.

He earned steady promotions on the attending staff and at the death of Asa B. Davis in 1930 was made chief surgeon of the Lying-in, the third and last man to have this title. When the hospital was merged with the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical College Center, Dr. Harrar became an attending in obstetrics and gynecology at the New York Hospital and clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Cornell Medical College, posts he held with distinction until he retired. He was associated in the 1920s with Dr. Ralph Lobenstein at the York House Sanitarium, a private obstetrical pavilion, on 74th Street. In 1938 he wrote a very interesting book entitled *The Story of the Lying-In Hospital of the City of New York*.

Dr. Harrar spent the last twenty years of his life in Brookfield, Connecticut; Delhi, Ontario, Canada; and Williamsport, Pennsylvania, his birthplace, where he died January 26, 1970, at the age of 92.

He was a member of the New York Obstetrical Society, the Hospital Graduates Club, the Lying-in Alumni, the American College of Surgeons, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Charles M. McLane, M.D.