

Lewis Atterbury Conner

January 17, 1867 — December 4, 1950

On December 4, 1950, at the New York Hospital death came to one of the most distinguished of American physicians. A member of the *Association of American Physicians* since 1908 his 84 years had been rich in accomplishment and his life and acts had merited the affection and esteem of the many students and colleagues whom he had taught and influenced.

Dr. Lewis Atterbury Conner was born in New Albany, Indiana, a son of Charles Horace Conner and the former Katherine Boudinot Atterbury. At the age of 21 he received the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy from the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University. Three years later he was graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University and was awarded a position as House Officer at the New York Hospital, thus commencing an association which was to extend over more than half a century.

His exceptional ability was almost immediately recognized and from the time he completed his internship he was sought for positions of responsibility and prominence. In 1898 he was selected as a member of the original faculty of Cornell University Medical College. Two years later, at the early age of 34, he was appointed Professor of Clinical Medicine, a position which he occupied until 1916, when he succeeded Dr. W. Gilman Thompson as Professor of Medicine.

Over the course of years Dr. Conner's interests and influence embraced many activities. He served as a private in the Spanish-American War and as a Brigadier General in the Army Medical Reserve Corps during the First World War.

He was a friend and advisor of John Masterson Burke and was responsible perhaps more than any other for the concept and development of the Burke Convalescent Home. For many years he served on its Board of Directors and after his retirement from practice acted as its Medical Director.

He was one of the Founders of the American Heart Association and served as its president in 1924 and 1925. He was the first editor of the *American Heart Journal* and to his leadership, wisdom and unselfish devotion during the years from 1925 to 1937 may be attributed its early growth and rapidly expanding influence. It stands today as a monument to his imagination, industry and ability.

Dr. Conner's pre-eminence as a teacher can be attested by all graduates of Cornell and by many others who came into even casual contact with his remarkable example and method. Educated at a time when the unaided senses still represented the only resource in the clinical study and recognition of many diseases, Dr. Conner developed a mastery of physical diagnosis which has seldom been equalled. With this invaluable asset he combined qualities of scholarship and perception which enabled him to appreciate and evaluate newer scientific knowledge and to share the enthusiasm and aspirations of his younger colleagues. His learning, his clinical judgment, and above all his integrity, made him the idol of the students and particularly of those chosen young men who were permitted to work with him as interns or residents in the wards of the New York Hospital. To them and to those who have succeeded them, his acumen and skill have become an unforgettable legend.

Dr. Conner never expected praise or gratitude, but it is pleasant to think that he was frequently honored and that many tributes were offered to him. As head of the Department of Medicine at Cornell University Medical College and Attending Physician and Chief of Service at The New York Hospital, he was guest of honor at the dinner given at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on April 21, 1932, to celebrate the union of the two institutions.

In the last year of his life he received the Gold Heart of the American Heart Association as one of its four living founders. On another occasion while attending a dinner in honor of a former associate he received a prolonged, spontaneous and heartening ovation.

The Medical Board records his death with sorrow, realizing that in his death its members and all who work for The New York Hospital have lost one of its greatest and staunchest friends.

David P. Barr