

John Edward Perry

Physician

1870-1962

by Nancy J. Hulston

Dr. John Edward Perry knew that hospitals were needed to train black physicians and nurses and to provide quality health care to the Kansas City African American community.

Born in 1870, in Clarksville, Texas, Perry was born to former slaves who encouraged him to receive a good education. Perry graduated from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1895.

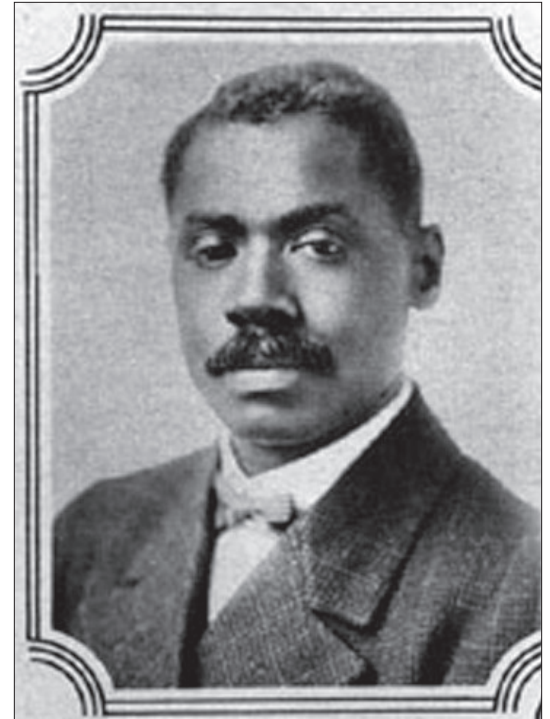
In 1903, Dr. Perry moved to Kansas City and opened an office. He met other local African American physicians and joined them in their struggle to create professional hospitals for minority patients. At that time, Kansas City was rigidly segregated, and powerful people in the white medical community opposed Dr. Perry and his associates' plans.

In 1910, Dr. Perry opened a private hospital, the Perry Sanitarium and Training School for Nurses, at 1214 Vine Street. There he developed strong medical and pediatric units to serve the minority community. The sanitarium became Wheatley-Provident Hospital, a public institution, in 1916. The hospital moved to a new building at 1826 Forest in 1917, and served the community for the last 50 years of Dr. Perry's life. He died in 1962. Because of his dedication, many African American doctors and nurses received quality training, and many patients' lives were saved.

Wheatly-Provident continued on after Dr. Perry's death. The hospital, however, had become too small and outdated to fully serve the community's needs. Through the efforts of many area civic groups, Martin Luther King, Jr., Hospital was built to replace Wheatley-Provident. On June 12, 1972, the last patients of Wheatley-Provident were moved to the new hospital. Martin Luther King, Jr., Hospital survived for another decade, but due to declining admissions it closed its doors forever in 1983.

Sources

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