

EDITH SEVILLE COALE, M.D.

Benefactor of the Edith Seville Coale Medical Scholarships

Dr. Edith Seville Coale was born January 23, 1878, in Mansfield OH, of Huguenot stock. She moved to Montgomery County MD, with her family when she was 16 years old. Her father and two brothers died a few years later. Intent on becoming a physician, which was not a popular vocation for women at that time, she trained as a nurse, and with the money she earned was able to finance her education at the Woman's Medical College of Baltimore (which later merged with Johns Hopkins). She was graduated in 1908 when a woman physician was considered "a novelty" and served for the next five years as resident physician at the Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases, Retreat PA.

In 1913, she began her long and successful medical practice in Washington DC. From 1928, until she retired in 1955, she maintained her home and offices at the Hay-Adams Hotel, across from the White House. In addition to her private practice, she served as medical inspector of the public schools, clinician for the Woman's Clinic, a member of the District Child Welfare staff, and for eight years she assisted the District alienist. When the Medical Department of the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company was established in 1921, she was appointed one of the first two examining physicians.

These responsibilities and her large practice, which sometimes required 16 hours a day, left her very little time for recreation, but with her almost unlimited energy and enthusiasm she did find time to belong to 22 professional and civic organizations which she supported generously with her talents and money.

A member of the American Medical Association, she was a member and Past President of Branch One of the American Medical Women's Association and a life member and former Vice President of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia. She spent many summers studying medicine in Vienna and was a life member of the Medical Association of Vienna.

She was elected to the Zonta Club of Washington D.C. in 1923 and served as its President in 1933-34. She was a founder and former director of the Women's City Club, a founder and life member of the Huguenot Society, and a member of the Board of Stewards of the Foundry Methodist Church.

A petite woman, Dr. Coale never lost her femininity and sparkle. She wore smart clothes, and her usual adornment was pearls.

When she died, November 2, 1962, she left no immediate relatives but many heirs, because her will provided that the income from the bulk of her estate be used for scholarships for women medical students under the administration of the Zonta Club of Washington, D.C. Thus, due to her generosity and foresight in behalf of young women who might struggle in vain to achieve the goal which she herself achieved despite great adversity, many future women physicians will recall with affection and gratitude their great-hearted benefactress, Edith Seville Coale.