

# Paulson, Mary Anna (Wild) (later, Paulson-Neall) (1872–1956)

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## DOUGLAS MORGAN

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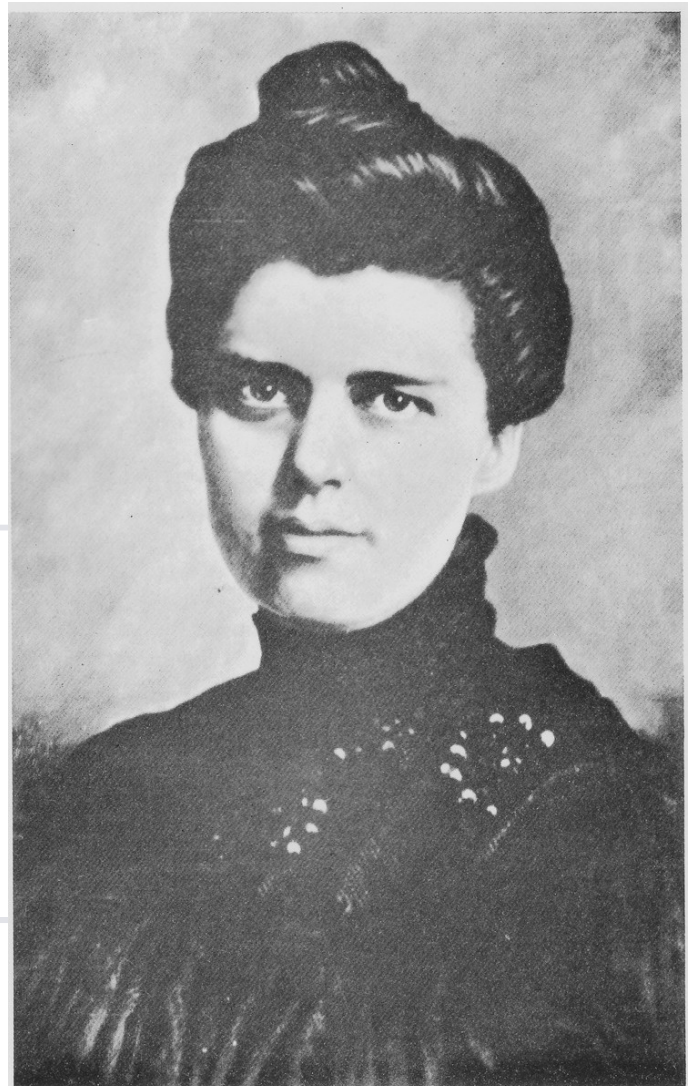
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Mary Wild Paulson, M.D., and her husband, David Paulson, M.D., co-founded Hinsdale Sanitarium near Chicago and led a multi-faceted work on behalf of the city's poor and disadvantaged.

## Family Background

Mary Ann ("Mamie") Wild was born May 21, 1872, to William H. Wild (1836-1917) and Melina Hicks Wild (1852-1919) in Mount Pleasant, Westchester County, New York. Mamie's younger sister and only sibling, Caroline Louise ("Carrie"), was born July 24, 1874.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White remembered William Wild decades later as an "old pioneer" in the Adventist cause.<sup>2</sup> He had joined an Advent Christian church in 1854 and was baptized by Miles Grant, a prominent "first day" Adventist preacher.<sup>3</sup> Grant became a severe public opponent of James and Ellen White but Wild became convinced of the Seventh-day Adventist message in 1860 and was baptized by John N. Andrews in Oneida, New York. Using prophetic charts provided him by James White, Wild engaged in self-supporting Bible work and became one of the earliest to take up canvassing Adventist literature. As of the 1880 U.S. Census, Wild also worked at a shirt factory in



Mary Wild Paulson, M.D.

From *His Name Was David* by Caroline Louise Clough (Review and Herald, 1955).

Westchester County.<sup>4</sup>

## Education, Early Career, and Marriage

Mamie and Carrie both attended church school at Rome, New York, and, as teenagers, followed their father's footsteps in doing colporteur work.<sup>5</sup> The sisters also enrolled at Battle Creek College together in September 1889. Upon arrival, they encountered fellow student David Paulson, assigned to carry their luggage to temporary quarters in Battle Creek Sanitarium. Carrie thought the lanky Dakota farm boy looked "countrified" but Mamie came to see a "diamond in the rough." Mamie entered medical school in 1892, two years behind David, at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. They overlapped there for a year before he went to New York to finish his studies at Bellevue Hospital and she subsequently transferred to Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where she completed her medical doctorate in 1896.<sup>6</sup>

During her final year of medical school, Mamie worked at the original Chicago Medical Mission—a free clinic and dispensary for the poor established by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg in 1893. Through this experience the "utter wretchedness and misery of humanity in some districts of a great city was revealed to me as I could never have conceived it," she wrote.<sup>7</sup> After graduating she joined David Paulson, among others, on the medical staff at Battle Creek Sanitarium as a specialist in gynecology. She also joined the faculty of the American Medical Missionary College (AMMC) that Dr. Paulson, in association with Dr. Kellogg, helped to found in 1895.<sup>8</sup>

On December 15, 1896, Mamie Wild married David Paulson in a ceremony officiated by Lycurgus McCoy in the chapel of Battle Creek Sanitarium. The newlywed doctors devoted their honeymoon largely to three weeks of post-graduate study in New York City. After her marriage, the childhood name "Mamie" gradually gave way to "Dr. Mary."<sup>9</sup>

## Chicago Medical Mission and Hinsdale Sanitarium

The Drs. Paulson made Chicago their mission field in March 1899. They led a group of 40 first-year nursing students from Battle Creek Sanitarium to the city to reinvigorate the benevolent work initiated by Dr. Kellogg in 1893. Dr. Mary taught the students general nursing at the Chicago Medical Missionary Training-School while Dr. David taught Bible and missionary methods. The Paulsons were resident physicians at the Chicago Medical Mission free clinic and dispensary, by then housed with the Training School at 1926 Wabash Avenue, and at the Chicago Branch Sanitarium, operated for paying clientele, adjacent to the AMMC at Cottage Grove Avenue and 33<sup>rd</sup> Place.<sup>10</sup>

In 1904 the Paulsons' work entered a new phase as they began developing a new sanitarium in Hinsdale, 17 miles west of Chicago. The locale not only afforded the health benefits of a tranquil, semi-rural environment crucial to the sanitarium experience but also served as a base for training workers for ongoing medical

missionary and benevolent endeavors on behalf of the urban poor. The Hinsdale Nurses' Training School that Dr. Mary was instrumental in founding in 1905 offered, along with a high standard of professional education, training in "city rescue work, mission work, jail work, visiting nurses' work and all lines of soul-winning endeavor."<sup>11</sup>

As a gynecologist, Mary Paulson became recognized as "one of the best woman diagnosticians in Chicago," according to Dr. Franklin Martin, a prominent physician in the city who served a term (1928-1929) as president of the American College of Surgeons.<sup>12</sup> Like her husband, Mary was also an activist in the public arena. In 1906, for example, while serving as head of the Medical Temperance Department of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), she organized a presentation on whisky and patent medicines that was reported in newspapers throughout the nation. She and the WCTU women illuminated their meeting in a Chicago convention hall with lamps that burned brightly, "just like an alcohol lamp," using various types of whisky and 70 different patent medicines, unmodified, as fuel. "This is one of the plainest experiments we know of to show the large quantity of alcohol in patent medicines," declared Dr. Paulson.<sup>13</sup>

## Later Career

David Paulson's death from tuberculosis on October 15, 1916, brought an end to 20 years of marriage and partnership in untiring innovation and activism for the betterment of suffering humanity. The work continued to grow and thrive with Dr. Mary giving leadership as medical superintendent at Hinsdale and as associate editor of *The Life Boat* magazine.<sup>14</sup>

Mary's parents, who had resided at Hinsdale since 1904, both died within three years of the loss of her husband. On October 15, 1917, exactly one year after David died, William H. Wild was laid to rest.<sup>15</sup> Melvina Hicks Wild died on July 15, 1919.<sup>16</sup>

In 1921, Mary united in marriage with John Howard Neall, M.D. (1858-1936), who had been a pioneer of Adventist medical work in Guadalajara, Mexico. Later, Dr. Neall served as medical director of Washington Sanitarium in Takoma Park, Maryland, then of Atlanta Sanitarium in Georgia, where his wife, Ida Robinson Neall, passed away in 1918. After the Neall-Paulson marriage, John joined the medical staff at Hinsdale under Mary's leadership.<sup>17</sup>

Mary Paulson Neall remained at Hinsdale until 1933, nearly 30 years after she and David began from scratch to bring into reality what they believed God led them to envision—a sanitarium outside the city that would also be a center for training and sending medical missionaries into the city to bring healing and restoration to those in greatest need.<sup>18</sup>

## Final Years

John and Mary moved to southern Illinois, where Dr. Mary helped establish Quincy Memorial Sanitarium and became its medical director.<sup>19</sup> John served as a physician at Quincy Memorial until death on October 13, 1936.<sup>20</sup> Mary retired to southern California around 1939.<sup>21</sup> She married retired minister James W. Sypher on March 3, 1950, in Los Angeles. Just 16 months later, though, James passed away, leaving Mary a widow for the third time.<sup>22</sup> She continued to reside in southern California in close proximity to her sister Carrie.

Dr. Mary W. Paulson Neall died six years later on March 11, 1956, in Azusa, California, at age 83.<sup>23</sup> She was laid to rest at Bronswood Cemetery, Oak Park, Illinois, in the same plot as her parents and her first husband, Dr. David Paulson.<sup>24</sup>

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[Magan, P. T.]. "Life Sketch of David Paulson, M.D.." *Columbia Union Visitor*, December 7, 1916.

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## NOTES

1. "Mary Paulson Neall obituary," *ARH*, April 26, 1956, 27; "Caroline Louise Wild Clough obituary," *ARH*, June 19, 1958, 13.

2. E.G. White to W.C. White, June 1, 1904, Letter 183, 1904, in *Letters and Manuscripts*, Vol. 19 (1904), Ellen G. White Writings, <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/14069/info>.
3. Denis Fortin, "Grant, Miles (1819–1911)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, September 7, 2020, accessed December 13, 2023, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=C9DI>.
4. E.W. Carey, "William Henry Wild obituary," *Lake Union Herald*, November 7, 1917, 7; Entry for William H. Wild, "United States Census, 1880," *FamilySearch*, accessed December 18, 2023, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZNF-B2S>.
5. "Mary Ann Wild Neall obituary," *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 7, 1956, 13; Caroline Louise Wild Clough obituary."
6. Caroline Louise Clough, *His Name Was David* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1955), 11-13, 29, 39.
7. Mary Wild Paulson, "The Infancy of the Chicago Medical Mission," *Life Boat*, January 1902, 12; Clough, *His Name Was David*, 57.
8. [P.T. Magan], "Life Sketch of David Paulson, M.D.," *Columbia Union Visitor*, December 7, 1916, 8; Clough, *His Name Was David*, 63; "Mary Paulson Neall obituary."
9. [Magan], "Life Sketch of David Paulson, M.D.," 8; Clough, *His Name Was David*, 63-65.
10. David Paulson, *Footprints of Faith* (Hinsdale, IL: The Life Boat Publishing Company, 1921), 31-34; David Paulson, "Two Years and a half in Connection with the Chicago Medical Missionary Training-School," *Life Boat*, December 1901, 194; J.H. Kellogg, "The Beginning," *Life Boat*, December 1901, 184-185; "The Chicago Medical Missionary Training-School," *Life Boat*, December 1901, 199.
11. "The Hinsdale Sanitarium and Hospital Training School for Nurses," *Life Boat*, June 1909, 182; Clough, *His Name Was David*, 30, 116, 153-154.
12. Clough, *His Name Was David*, 150; "Presidents, Executive Directors, and Presidential Addresses," American College of Surgeons, accessed December 20, 2023, <https://www.facs.org/about-ac/sacs-history/presidents-executive-directors-and-presidential-addresses/>.
13. "Novel Move By W.C.T.U.," *Washington Evening Star*, September 25, 1906, 1.
14. Entry for Mary Wild Paulson Neall, "United States Deceased Physician File (AMA), 1864-1968," *FamilySearch*, accessed December 21, 2023, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:WHXV-V1MM>; Mary Paulson Neall, "The Year 1925 at the Sanitarium," *Life Boat*, February 1926, 51-52.
15. Carey, "William Henry Wild obituary."
16. F.M. Wilcox, "Melina Arvilla Hicks Wild obituary," *ARH*, December 11, 1919, 31.
17. C.T. Redfield, "John Howard Neall obituary," *ARH*, December 24, 1936, 21.

18. Available documents leave murky the exact timing of Mary's shift from Hinsdale to Quincy. August 1934 is given as the time of her resignation from Hinsdale in Hugh G. Dugan, *Hinsdale Sanitarium and Hospital, 1904 to 1957* (Hinsdale, IL: c. 1957), 52. Her previously cited *ARH* obituary states that she established Quincy Memorial Sanitarium in 1930, but she was still serving at Hinsdale as of September 1931 according to W.H. Holden, "Hinsdale Sanitarium," *Lake Union Herald*, September 23, 1931, 16. The year 1933 is used above as the date for Mary's move to Quincy because that is the date indicated in the previously cited *ARH* obituary for John H. Neall for when he joined the medical staff at Quincy.
  19. "Mary Paulson Neall obituary," *ARH*; "United States Deceased Physician File (AMA), 1864-1968."
  20. Redfield, "John Howard Neall obituary."
  21. The last of several want ads or "Business Notices" in the *Lake Union Herald* from Dr. Mary Paulson Neall at Quincy Memorial Sanitarium appear in the June 15, 1937 issue. She is identified as a resident of Pasadena, California, in "About People You Know," *Hemet News*, April 26, 1940, 8.
  22. Entry for James William Sypher and Mary Anna Paulson Neall, "California, County Marriages, 1850-1953," *FamilySearch*, accessed December 21, 2023, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K82W-F14>; "James William Sypher obituary," *ARH*, September 27, 1951, 22.
  23. "Mary Paulson Neall obituary," *ARH*.
  24. "Dr Mary Paulson Wild Neall," *Find A Grave*, Memorial ID 116968235, April 12, 2013, accessed December 21, 2023, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/116968235/mary-paulson-neall>.
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