

Hadley, Henry Gilbert (1894–1983) and Anna Virginia (1894–1993)

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Henry Gilbert Hadley was a physician, philanthropist, and founder of the Hadley Memorial Hospital in Washington, District of Columbia. Anna Virginia (Hafenmayr) Hadley was a nurse, medical missionary, and director of nurses.

Early Life, Education and Marriage

Henry Gilbert Hadley was born in West Winfield, New York, on January 25, 1894.¹ Anna Virginia (Hafenmayr) Hadley was born in Virginia on September 23, 1894.²

In 1914, after graduating from the State University of New York, Henry Hadley moved to Washington, District of Columbia, to study medicine at George Washington University Medical School. Around that same time, Anna Hafenmayr, one of the first graduates of Shenandoah Valley Academy in New Market, Virginia, began nurse's training at the Washington Sanitarium (now Washington Adventist Hospital). In 1917, after Henry Hadley graduated from George Washington University and Anna Hafenmayr completed nursing studies, they were



Dr. and Mrs. Henry G. Hadley.

Henry and Anna Hadley, 50th wedding anniversary, 1967

Photo courtesy of *Columbia Union Visitor*, December 14, 1967.

married. Dr. Hadley then interned for two years at the Washington Sanitarium.³ Their union produced two sons, Gordon (b. 1921) and Henry (b. 1922).⁴

The Sixth Street Clinic

Dr. Hadley felt called to use his training to serve the poor in Washington, District of Columbia, as a medical missionary. In 1919, the Hadleys were placed in charge of the Washington Sanitarium Mission Hospital, known as “the clinic,” which opened in 1914 at 1252 Sixth Street Southwest. Initially, the Foreign Missionary Seminary (now Washington Adventist University), along with the sanitarium, operated the clinic for the dual purpose of serving the city’s neediest citizens and training postgraduate nurses and foreign missionary appointees. Anna Hadley served as director of nursing.⁵

In 1923, rather than allow the clinic to close, the Hadleys purchased it and operated it as a self-supporting institution. They made additions to its facilities, increased its services, and, having turned it into a profitable institution, donated it back to the General Conference in 1930. The Hadleys added a new wing to the Sixth Street clinic in 1934, and continued operating it until it closed in 1961.⁶

Living in a low-income section of Washington, District of Columbia, presented the Hadley family with some challenges. Frequent fights in the surrounding community resulted in residents needing medical care, which often disrupted their sleep. Sometimes Henry Hadley was so exhausted that he did not hear the doorbell, so Anna Hadley cared for the wounded alone.⁷ Anna Hadley was also concerned for her two boys, who grew up on the top floor of the clinic.⁸ Because it was unsafe for them to be out on the street, they had to stay within their “small, walled yard” when they played outside.⁹

Hadley Memorial Hospital

In 1945, the visionary Henry Hadley bought six acres of land on Nichols Avenue Southwest in the General Conference’s name on which to build a hospital. Construction lasted from 1946 to 1952. Friends donated one percent of the funds needed. Hadley’s Sixth Street clinic, which by then had a large paying clientele in addition to poor patients, provided the rest.¹⁰

In 1952, the ownership of the property was transferred to the Potomac Conference. The hospital opened July 29, 1952, with seven patients transferred in from the clinic. In 1955, it was dedicated, debt-free, as Hadley Memorial Hospital, in honor of Sarah Hadley, Dr. Hadley’s mother.¹¹ Ownership was transferred to the Columbia Union Conference in 1957.¹² As he had in 1930, Dr. Hadley gave back to the denomination a thriving medical institution that he had built up with his own funds.

The “Nickel Doctor”

Hadley was well known for providing medical care for poor residents of Washington, District of Columbia. He willingly waived fees when patients could not pay. "In his early career, he charged \$1 for clinic visits, \$2 for house calls, and \$5 for delivering babies."¹³ His willingness to serve patients who did not have sufficient funds earned him the title, "Nickel Doctor."¹⁴

Hadley also made house calls long after the practice had been abandoned by most physicians, and did so into his 80s, despite several muggings.¹⁵ He experienced a particularly violent assault in 1968 while calling on a patient who lived in a section of the city affected by the civil disturbances following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. While walking from the patient's home to his car to retrieve some medicine for the patient, several assailants "tore off his rear pocket with his wallet, knocked him down, tried to strangle him with his necktie, beat him with their fists, and kicked him in the head, face, and body." When the police arrived, he was hardly conscious, yet he was adamant that he had to get back to his patient before going home.¹⁶

A radio station, the metropolitan newspapers, and WMAL-TV publicized the incident. People from all over the city called the radio and television stations and Hadley Hospital to find out how Henry Hadley was doing. Despite the attack, he continued treating patients in the hospital and making house calls, but was more careful about his safety. He sometimes had someone accompany him when he visited dangerous parts of the city.¹⁷ According to Anna Hadley, her husband reluctantly stopped the house calls about a decade later, in the late 1970s, due to muggings from teenagers wanting money.¹⁸

Controversial Cancer Research

Henry Hadley also headed the Cancer Research Foundation, which he established at Hadley Memorial Hospital. It was an active research immunization program.¹⁹ He claimed to have "developed a vaccine that would provide temporary immunity from cancer for two years." Between 1950 and 1972, 22,000 patients received the preparation without cost. Hadley claimed his studies showed that the occurrence of cancer among the recipients was fifty percent lower than normal.²⁰

In 1972, he set up a new clinic in an apartment in Arlington, Virginia, and distributed flyers offering the vaccine to the public. He was forced to discontinue promoting the vaccine when the Virginia State Board of Medical Examiners warned him that there would be a formal hearing if he persisted.²¹

Later Life

After serving the people of southwest and southeast Washington, District of Columbia, for more than sixty years, Hadley retired in 1981. He and his wife moved to Loma Linda, California, to be near their sons.²² Anna Hadley had to purchase round-trip tickets because her husband "wouldn't leave any other way. It was like taking a child away from his mother," she said.²³

Two years later, on June 17, 1983, the 89-year-old Dr. Henry G. Hadley died of congestive heart failure at home in Loma Linda, California.²⁴

The New Hadley Memorial Hospital

In 1986, Anna Hadley, 92, returned to Washington, District of Columbia, for the grand opening of a newly-renovated and expanded Hadley Memorial Hospital. The ceremonies took place September 29 and 30, 1986, officially declared “Hadley Days” by Washington, District of Columbia’s mayor, Marion Barry. “I commend the Hadley Memorial family for their staunch efforts to provide care for every segment of our community” said Mayor Barry, who extended particular gratitude to Anna Hadley.²⁵ Thousands of Hadley babies, delivered by Henry Hadley at the Sixth Street clinic and during house calls received a special invitation to the hospital’s opening ceremony.²⁶

“It’s too bad he [Dr. Hadley] didn’t live to see it,” Mrs. Hadley said of the renovated hospital. “There wasn’t anyone like Doctor. He never took a vacation, and he took everything he earned and put it into that building. He just wanted to start a hospital for those who needed help.”²⁷

Anna Hadley unveiled a bronze bust of her husband located in the hospital’s outdoor atrium. The hospital chapel was dedicated and named for her. Both of her sons, Dr. Henry L. Hadley and Dr. Gordon Hadley, then serving as health director for the General Conference, also spoke for the occasion.²⁸

Anna Virginia (Hafenmayr) Hadley passed away on May 15, 1993, at the age of 98, and was buried next to her husband at Montecito Memorial Park in Colton, California.²⁹ At a ceremony celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary in 1978, Henry Hadley said of his wife: “I’m glad and proud that she decided to accept me years ago. Considering my nature and very difficult hours as a community and family doctor, and making house calls at any hour of the night, I am blessed that she has put up with me all through the years.”³⁰

Contribution

For more than sixty years, Henry and Anna Hadley lived among and served the people of Washington, District of Columbia, especially those most lacking in economic and social advantages and access to good quality medical care. Rather than enrich themselves, they freely gave the institutional fruit of their labor back to the church to strengthen its mission.

Albert Dudley, administrator of Hadley Memorial Hospital from 1986 to 1992, characterized Henry and Anna Hadley “true medical missionaries.” He observed that Hadley’s clinic started as an outreach to blacks and that many blacks spoke highly of him, some regarding him as a savior.³¹

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NOTES

1. J. Y. Smith, "Henry B[sic]. Hadley, District Hospital Founder, Dies," *Washington Post*, June 22, 1983, C8; "Henry G. Hadley obituary," *ARH*, September 22, 1983, 22.

2. "Anna Virginia Hafenmayr Hadley," Find A Grave, accessed August 12, 2019, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/37851466/anna-virginia-hadley#source>.
3. Smith, "Hadley, District Hospital Founder;" "Profiles of Our Contributors," *Life and Health*, August 1, 1965, 7; "Dr. and Mrs. Hadley Celebrate Golden Wedding Anniversary," *Columbia Union Visitor*, December 14, 1967, 14; "Hospital Founder Enjoys 60th Wedding Anniversary," *Columbia Union Visitor*, January 12, 1978, 2.
4. Dr. Henry Roger Hadley, email message to author, January 10, 2019.
5. "Hadley obituary;" Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., *Thou Who Hast Brought Us Thus Far on Our Way: The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination among African-Americans* (Nashville, TN: Dudley Publications, 2000), 181.
6. Smith, "Hadley, District Hospital Founder;" "Hadley Memorial Hospital." *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed.; "Founder of Hadley Memorial Hospital dies at 89," *Columbia Union Visitor*, August 1, 1983, 16; Brenda D. Barnhart, "The Vision Bold," *North American Regional Voice*, June 1, 1985, 2.
7. ⁷ A Quiet Hour broadcast sermon transcript, September 23, 2001, describes the Hadley's family life in Washington, DC, excerpted in "Henry Gilbert Hadley," WeRelate.org, accessed February 7, 2019, [www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:Henry_Hadley_\(2\)](http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:Henry_Hadley_(2)).
8. James Ponder, "Campus Mourns the Passing of a Legend: G. Gordon Hadley MD, 1921-2012," *Today*, July 27, 2012, 1, accessed August 12, 2019, <http://scholarsrepository.llu.edu/today/50>.
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12. "Hadley Memorial Hospital," *SDA Encyclopedia* (1996).
13. Smith, "Henry B. Hadley, District Hospital Founder, Dies."
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15. "Two AHS Hospitals Get New Presidents," *Columbia Union Visitor*, September 1, 1985, 7.
16. "Dr. Hadley Recovers from Beating," *Columbia Union Visitor*, July 11, 1968, 6-7.
17. Ibid.

18. Margaret Engel, "Hospital Defies the Trends," *Washington Post*, September 29, 1986. Retrieved July 4, 2018.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1986/09/29/hospital>.
19. "Hadley Hospital Continues to Grow," *Columbia Union Visitor*, July 27, 1967, 11; "Hadley Memorial Hospital," *SDA Encyclopedia* (1996).
20. Smith, "Hadley, District Hospital Founder."
21. Ibid.
22. "Founder of Hadley Memorial Hospital dies at 89," *Columbia Union Visitor*, August 1, 1983, 16.
23. Engel, "Hospital Defies the Trends."
24. Smith, "Hadley, District Hospital Founder."
25. Brenda D. Harris, "Hadley Hosts Grand Opening," *Columbia Union Visitor*, October 15, 1986, 8.
26. Engel, "Hospital Defies the Trends."
27. Engel, "Hospital Defies the Trends," The Hadleys did take at least one vacation—a trip in 1963 to Africa, Europe, Asia, then to California to see son Dr. Henry Hadley, as reported in Cassie Roberts, "Dr. H. G. Hadley Returns from Trip Around World," *Columbia Union Visitor*, August 8, 1963, 2.
28. Brenda D. Harris, "A New Era for Hadley Hospital Set to Begin," *North American Regional Voice*, December 1986, 13-15, and "Hadley Hosts Grand Opening."
29. "Anna Virginia Hafenmayr Hadley," Find A Grave.
30. "Hospital Founder Enjoys 60th Wedding Anniversary," *Columbia Union Visitor*, January 12, 1978, 2.
31. Albert Dudley, telephone interview by author, July 8, 2018.

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