

Early Beginnings at Sheppard Pratt

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This photo from the 1920s shows a patient at Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital weaving a basket in the hospital's Casino building. Between 1922 and 1932, Henrietta G. Price founded an accredited school of occupational therapy at the hospital.

Photos courtesy of Sheppard Pratt, Baltimore, Md.

In 1917, Woodrow Wilson was president of the United States, radio was in its infancy, America was getting involved in World War I, and the National Society for Promotion of Occupational Therapy was formed. At the turn of the century an arts and crafts movement gained momentum as a reaction against the dehumanizing effects of industrialization. People felt mass production was shoddy, and many Americans joined craft clubs. At the same time, while medicine was concerned with organs and tissues, some doctors believed that science alone did

not provide the complete answer to the treatment of illness (Hopkins, 1988). One of these dissenters, Dr. Adolph Meyer, professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University, believed in a balanced regimen of work, play, rest, and sleep to produce good health (Meyer, 1922).

At the same time, Dr. William Rush Dunton Jr., a psychiatrist for 29 years at Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital, Towson, Md., believed in the use of occupation for people with mental illness as early as 1895. He is credited with writing the basic concepts of the profession (Forbush & Forbush, 1986). He felt it was important to



black-and-white silent films in the hospital's archives attest to the patients' energy, creativity, and talent. Fine old photographs in the Gatehouse demonstrate patients' industry in woodworking, weaving in the Casino, printing, gardening, and playing in the orchestra. Outdoor exercise, plenty of sleep, and regular attendance at religious services rounded out patients' daily activities during the World War I era.

Price founded an accredited school of occupational therapy in the Casino building between 1922 and 1932. During this time, approximately 191 students graduated from the expanded 21-month course (Price, 1921). The original prospectus identified hospital lectures, craft instruction, practice teaching, and classes at the Maryland Institute of Fine Arts as among the requirements.

According to an old Sheppard Pratt brochure, during and after World War II, work therapy became a regular activity, as patients assisted in dietetics, nursing, maintenance, and the secretarial pool. During the war, some patients rolled bandages or crocheted afghans for the soldiers, while others sewed garments for relief agencies.

Today, the philosophy of Dunton and the other founders that meaningful occupation heals mind, body, and spirit lives on at Sheppard Pratt and in occupational therapy practice. □

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Sheppard Pratt's Casino building (top) used to house a two-lane bowling alley with an adjacent room for billiards. Its first floor had a wide hall for light gymnastics and space for looms, games, art work, sewing, reading, and smoking. Today, the Casino building holds the offices of the Sheppard Pratt Auxiliary and its bargain basement shop.

Occupational therapy director Henrietta G. Price (above), seated third from left, pictured with Sheppard Pratt's occupational therapy staff in 1927.

have trained people directing these activities, so he held classes in occupational therapy and wrote the first text book on the subject, *Occupational Therapy: A Manual for Nurses*, in 1915. He wrote and edited other texts as well. These concepts formed the foundation of the society, the forerunner of today's AOTA. Dunton became the society's second president and the founder and editor of *Occupational Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 1921-1946 (Dunton & Licht, 1950).

Henrietta G. Price followed Dunton as the director of occupational therapy at Sheppard Pratt and, by accounts, was a dynamic woman with great organizational abilities who expanded the program until 90 percent of the patients were included (Forbush & Forbush, 1986). Facilities for these varied activities were in Sheppard Pratt's Casino building, on the halls, and in various shops. Emphasis during the early years of occupational therapy and at Sheppard Pratt focused on meaningful work, such as gardening and farming on hospital grounds, as well as leisure activities such as art, dramatics, dance, sports, picnics, and music. Several old,