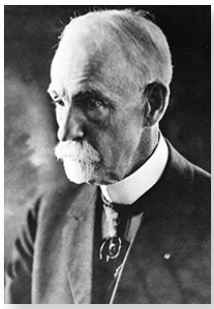
James Decker Munson

Clan Solomon

Munson Medical System

by Lori Hahn

It all started in 1925 with a 55-bed hospital in Traverse City, Michigan, which replaced a temporary general hospital situated in a Northern Michigan Asylum cottage, started in 1915. With substantial community backing, the hospital underwent significant expansion over the years, evolving into a nationally-recognized regional referral center with a capacity of 442 beds. That hospital was named after James Decker Munson.



In 1964, it was rebranded as Munson Medical Center to better signify its regional significance and comprehensive array of services.

Munson Healthcare, formed in 1976 now encompases eight different hospitals serving across a span of 11,00-plus square miles of Michigan and over 500,000 residents.

Who is Dr. James Decker Munson? Munson was born on a farm near Oakland, Michigan, in 1848 to Saron Beach Munson and Harriet Decker.

He graduated medical school at University of Michigan in 1873 and practiced medicine in Detroit for a short time. He was frequently consulted by other doctors in the region. In 1878 he was named Chief Medical Assistant at the Eastern Michigan Asylum in Pontiac. Munson began training at the Kalamazoo Asylum and broadened his understanding of mental illnesses.

He was named head of the new Traverse City State Asylum in 1885. He allowed patients to have visitors, for staff to visit with patients, started gardening and other work projecsts to occupy patients' minds and bodies nd basically brought humanity to the typical dismal existence of mental patients. Striaghtjackets were things of the past. Social workers were hired to work closely with patients to help treat and manage disease. He was a respected expert on the treatment of the mentally ill and had great success with patient recovery.

In 1915, Munson donated a cottage in from the asylum in Traverse City to replace the previously burned down medical clinic. The site became the location for nurse training and internships for doctors and provided medical treatment for the residents of the area. It would become the start of the Munson health system that exists today.

Munson died in 1929. His two wives and his son preceded him.

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