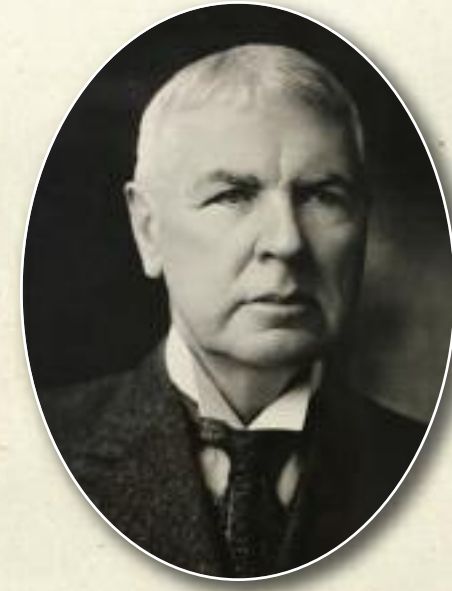


*celebrating 100 years*  
**A Physician and His Ideal**

Decatur Memorial Hospital, 2300 N. Edward St., Decatur, Ill., 62526.  
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# A Physician and His Ideal

*To the hospital he gave his life*

*celebrating  
100 years  
1916—2016*



*Our Mission: To improve the health of the people of Central Illinois.*



*A physician and his ideal*



**William David Barnes, MD**

Sept. 3, 1860—May 1, 1930

*Surgeon and Entomologist  
Builder, Leader, humanitarian*

**To the hospital he gave his life**

The year was 1899. Mrs. Sue Hagaman decided that to get her idea moving, she needed help. Help from a powerful, influential member of the community. So she orchestrated a meeting between herself and THE Dr. William Barnes. That meeting sparked a unique collaboration and 17 years later, Decatur embraced its second hospital; a hospital where babies could be born: **Decatur Memorial Hospital.**



Though built by the determination and grit of many hard-working individuals, the lion's share of the credit for Decatur Memorial Hospital goes to one rare man who took responsibility for helping establish and then directing the hospital's crucial early years: **Dr. "Will" Barnes.**

But who was this man? He remains a mystery. But a compilation of information from a variety of sources provides some insight into this unique individual.

- A physician.
- A surgeon.
- A true visionary.
- And an inspiration—even 100 years later.

*This is the second in a series of pieces DMH plans to produce highlighting its first 100 years of service.*

*Editor's note: Dr. Will Barnes is considered a driving force behind creating a hospital in Decatur where "babies could be born." This information contained in this piece is based on information found in his obituary (a full-page tribute printed in the Decatur Herald May 1, 1930); and from a booklet entitled *A Physician and His Ideal*, published by Decatur Memorial Hospital in 1966.*

*A physician and his ideal*



*Above breaking ground in 1966 for the Staley Pavilion are, from left, William Barnes IV (great grandson to Dr. Will Barnes) G. William Madden (Vice President of the DMH Board of Directors) and Mrs. James H. (Daisy) Winters. Mrs. Winters worked with Mrs. Hagaman in the early 1900s and was present at the hospital's original groundbreaking (inset).*



# A physician and his ideal



## Dr. Barnes and Decatur Memorial Hospital

Unlike his critics at the time, Dr. Barnes did not think it was ridiculous to buy a 40-acre tract of land at 2300 N. Edward St. (located two miles north of downtown Decatur yet beyond the street car line and paved streets). Dr. Barnes dreamed that DMH would someday be a medical center, not just a hospital.



*Always active, Dr. Barnes was a good golfer and one of the first in the community to take up the sport. He was president of the Central Illinois Golf Association. This bas-relief was a gift to the hospital, however, Dr. Barnes would not permit it to be placed in the hospital until after his death.*



*Street car lines were added in the 1920s to go out to Decatur Memorial Hospital.*



## Butterfly Hobby

Dr. Barnes won international recognition—as an entomologist. To scientists the world over, the name ‘Dr. Barnes’ was familiar due to his butterfly collection.

“He spared neither trouble nor expense in bringing together such a collection.

He thought of it as a distinct contribution to science. He never tired of going into his ‘bughouse’ with a shaded lamp to study his butterflies. Sometimes he banteringly suggested that his friends probably thought him a damned fool. ‘You fellows cannot understand my fussing around with butterflies,’ he used to say. Nor did they.”

Dr. Barnes’ butterfly collection was housed in a fire proof, storm



*Dr. Barnes pictured here in a fire-proof, storm-proof building behind his family home. The building housed his butterfly collection regarded at the time as the largest and finest in the world with an estimated 473,000 specimens.*

proof museum behind the family home. At his death in 1930, his collection was regarded as the largest and finest in the world with possibly 10,000 species and an estimated 473,000 specimens, even receiving praise in the 1936 National Geographic magazine.

A few months after his death, the U.S. government bought Dr. Barnes’ collection for \$50,000; the collection was to be housed in the Smithsonian Institute. Half of the proceeds was given to the hospital.



*Dr. Will Barnes residence, 500 W. Main St., Decatur*

**Dr. Will Barnes died** in his home at 7:15 am Thursday, May 1, 1930.

“Dr. Barnes had been ill for several weeks, suffering from heart trouble. He passed away in his chair, it being impossible for him to lie down without causing a great heart disturbance. He had been seriously ill since two weeks ago Thursday. Although unconscious a part of the time, Dr. Barnes was able to talk to members of the family until the end. His body will lie in state in his home at which time

friends may call. The body will be taken to St. Louis for cremation. The family asks that no flowers be sent.”

“The Medical Staff has lost its greatest inspiration...he has been a living example of the ideal physician who has given everything at his disposal, time, energy and money toward the relief of suffering,” said Dr. Clarence E. McClelland, DMH Medical Staff president at the time of Dr. Barnes’ death. “The hospital will stand as a monument to this ideal.”

## *A physician and his ideal*

*D* "Dr. Barnes was possessed of a tremendous force, superb ability and integrity which could not be questioned. Many told of the almost uncanny skill he used at his surgery. He was simply a genius in such matters."

*A* "As a physician and surgeon, he ranked with the best."

*I* "It was another of his little fancies to have a birthday party for himself and call in all of his friends. He must have had at least two or three birthdays every year."

*W* "Will Barnes was outspoken. He told his thoughts boldly. He was not much of a diplomat, but he never hesitated, and no matter what the issue, he was always fair."

*A* "And for all his rough exterior, there never was a man with as tender a heart as Will Barnes had. No, Decatur won't soon again know another man like him. His life was jammed to overflowing with kind, charitable acts of which only his more intimate friends ever learned, and then only by accident."

*H* "He had faults; he did not try to conceal them. He had weaknesses; they were perfectly apparent. But his virtues so far outweighed his defects that the defects can be forgotten. His strivings, even his enemies would have admitted, were not for himself."

*I* "In Decatur, everybody knew that here was a man that long since had ceased to care about himself. No ambition for wealth or increased fame moved him. He was utterly selfless."

*T* "The frail body that he had so recklessly driven housed a spirit aflame. His great and only passion was human welfare."

## *A physician and his ideal*

**William David Barnes** was born Sept. 3, 1860, in Decatur, Ill., the son of Dr. William A. and Eleanor Sawyer Barnes—a "pioneer Decatur family."

He graduated salutatorian from the Decatur High School in 1877. Then spent a year at Illinois State University, Normal, followed by a year at University of Illinois,

Champaign. In 1879, he entered Harvard Medical School and graduated in 1886. He completed an internship at Boston City Hospital and then studied abroad in Heidelberg, Munich and Vienna.

In 1890, Dr. Barnes came home to Decatur and opened his medical practice. That same year he married Charlotte L. Gillette. The couple had two children: William Barnes, Jr., and Joan Dean Gillett Barnes.

"As a young man, he came back to his native town with a surgical technique developed by the greatest hospitals of this country and Europe. He would have made a name for himself in any large city. Decatur and central Illinois profited by his skill."

He was often praised as an "outstanding physician and surgeon and as a diagnostician." Not long after opening his practice, Dr. Barnes performed the area's first bone graft. He grafted part of a cat's hip bone to the face of a woman whose nose had been crushed.

"I very soon came to realize that I was working with a master surgeon, with that rare good quality—most excellent judgment. Skillfulness of hand, keenness in diagnosis, quickness of perception, gentleness and true sympathy made him outstanding," said Dr. C.H., Tearnan, who was Dr. Barnes' medical partner for 14 years.

In 1899, community member Mrs. Sue Hagaman orchestrated a meeting with

THE Dr. Will Barnes. She needed his help to build a hospital in Decatur where babies could be born—and **so the story of Decatur Memorial Hospital begins.**

