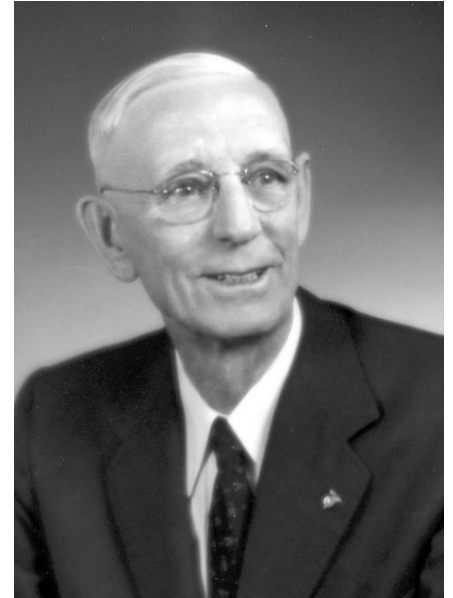


Dr. Roy Potter, Marshfield Clinic Founder  
Nominated by Brian Finnegan, MCHS History Archive

Roy Potter grew up during the era of discovery of the x-ray and became a radiologist. Stalked by a nasty bacterium throughout his life, he, nevertheless, lived to become its oldest member.

Born January 22, 1879 on the family farm in Mauston, WI, Roy was one of four boys. He helped with farm chores and went to Mauston High but dropped out before graduation. A local doctor employed him to do odd jobs. He learned how to compound some of the doctor's prescriptions. In 1899, at age 19, he decided to become a pharmacist. He entered the University of Wisconsin Pharmacy School expecting to complete the course in two years. Roy did not qualify because his apprentice experience with the doctor was judged to be insufficient and this meant three more years of study. He could earn a medical degree in less time so he switched to Milwaukee Medical College in 1899. In 1902 he became ill with tuberculosis and had to drop out for a time, finally graduating in 1903 at the age of 23.



He opened his first medical office in Auburndale where he practiced for seven years. During which time he established good relationships with the doctors in Marshfield. The young general practitioner became respected and popular.

Having had tuberculosis and knowing its ravages, Potter accepted the area wide management of the first Christmas Seals program in America established by the National Anti-Tuberculosis Association (now the American Lung Association).

By the fall of 1910, Dr. Henry Lathrop was failing in health and needed an assistant in his practice. When he invited Roy to come to Marshfield and associate with him, it was an easy decision. Besides buying part of Lathrop's practice, Potter also bought Lathrop's Ford car. This was Potter's first car. Lathrop died the following spring.

Physically, Dr. Potter was a tall, slim, slow moving, easy going sort of fellow. As a person, he was most gentle, kind and friendly. He was especially so to children and children were fond of him in return. Potter was an avid outdoor sportsman and a good one.

After Marshfield Clinic started, the transition of Dr Potter's practice from general medicine to radiology was very gradual. Potter grew up with the ever expanding field of x-ray and gained extensive knowledge and experience in diagnostic and therapeutic radiology.

Dr. Potter remained single until age 40. Eight years earlier, a new teacher came to Marshfield, Josephine Fritch. In 1911, she accepted a position in Marshfield. Josie and Roy met and after a lengthy courtship were married July 1919.

The couple did not have any children and Josie passed away at the age of 70.

Following the death of Dr. Karl W. Doege, Roy Potter became vice president of the clinic. When Dr. H.H. Milbee died in August of 1934, Potter became president and held that position through 1940.

Dr. Potter grew up with the ever expanding field of X-ray and gained extensive knowledge and experience in diagnostic and therapeutic radiology. He published many papers on radiologic subjects and presented throughout the Midwest relating to his specialty experience. He was a founder of the Wisconsin Radiologic Society.

In 1945, at age 66, Dr. Potter chose semi-retirement. He continued to assist the new radiologist, Dr. Wickham, for a few years. At age 80 he fully retired from any medical work. He later developed pulmonary emphysema and associated heart disease. His health gradually failed and the last of the clinic founders died at home in August 1968. He was 89 years old.

Taken from the writings of Stanley Custer, MD, first historian of Marshfield Clinic  
Submitted by Brian Finnegan, MCHS History Archive