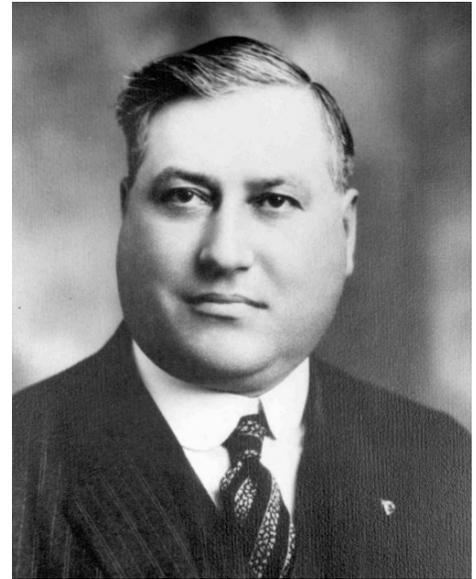


Dr. Victor A. Mason, Marshfield Clinic Founder  
Nominated by Brian Finnegan, MCHS History Archive

Born July 21 1883, at Pictured Rocks, Michigan. The family moved to 300 South Cedar St in Marshfield where Victor's father Walter set up a photographic studio behind the house in a garage-like building bordering East Third Street, where The Kitchen Table restaurant is now. Walter Mason became a highly respected portrait photographer and won several competitions. He was popular in the community, due to his personality and his ability as a singer. Unfortunately he died of pneumonia at age of 49.

At the age of 6, Victor arrived in Marshfield one year before Dr. Karl W. Doege. Victor was only 18 when Dr. H.H. Milbee arrived in town. They were next-door neighbors and they quickly became friends.



By the time Victor graduated from McKinley High he was determined to study medicine. It may have been that Dr. Doege was a role model. Dr. Milbee encouraged him to get his medical training at the University of Toronto. While attending that university he won many medals for academic achievement. He graduated from medical school in 1906 at the age of 23.

In 1901, Ethel Dunlap came to Marshfield to teach music and art. During the five years she taught in the Marshfield Public Schools she was courted by Victor. Her special interests in music and art were admirably suited to his tastes. The two were married immediately after his graduation from medical studies and they left for Europe where he did post-graduate work in medicine and surgery.

Upon return to Marshfield in 1908, Dr. Mason established his practice next door to the offices of his old friend, mentor, and neighbor Dr. Milbee.

That next year, Victor performed the first successful Caesarian section ever performed at Saint Joseph's Hospital. Knowledge of Dr. Mason's surgical skill spread rapidly. He became a popular consultant to many physicians throughout northern Wisconsin along the Wisconsin Central Railroad.

By this time, Dr. Doege had 18 years head start on Mason. But it didn't take long for the aggressive, gregarious young doctor to catch up. He had the latest knowledge, great skill, serious interest, and indefatigable drive to be an outstanding and conscientious physician. Dr. Doege developed genuine respect for Dr. Mason. Both men know the value of consultation. Inevitably they assisted each other at the operating table.

Dr. Mason specialized in orthopedic and brain surgery, and would continue to do general surgery. His schedule was rigorous and invariable. Arising early, he walked to the post office before breakfast to pick up his mail. He read it over a hearty breakfast. On his way to the hospital he picked up Frieda Meyer, his favorite nurse anesthetist. Most of his work day was spent in the operating room.

In his spare work time, he synopsised medical articles, worked on a paper, or read. He was a prolific reader of both medicine and literature, and was commonly seen reading as he walked through the halls.

Dr. Mason had expensive tastes and appreciated the finer things in life. He dined in the best restaurants, befriended their chefs, and collected their favorite recipes. He became a connoisseur of foreign wines and liquors. Victor was the gourmet and gourmand of Central Wisconsin.

Throughout his life Mason was the most avid student of medical science among the six Clinic founders. He possessed the mental agility and medical interest of a good internist and the skills of a dexterous surgeon. Laboratory medicine was just developing and it became an intense interest of his.

While the Clinic idea belonged to Dr. Doege, Dr. Mason was its champion. On several occasions Dr. Doege abandoned the idea because he could not resolve his inner conflict with some of the personalities he was working with. Mason convinced Doege repeatedly that the Clinic was more important than any individual. In the end, Mason was the linchpin, the single cohesive element which kept the group practice concept alive.

By his early 40s, Dr. Mason became excessively obese. He had hypertension and arteriosclerotic heart disease. He died December 1929 at the age of 46.

Dr. Victor Mason played a stellar role in founding and developing Marshfield Clinic.

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