

H. Wickenden

—The Father

Of Blue Cross

When a young social worker named Homer Edgar Wickenden became general director of the half-century old United Hospital Fund in 1929, he read an interesting experiment begun that year at Baylor University Hospital in Texas. The idea was a simple one: the hospital entered into an agreement to provide prepaid care at small cost to a group of schoolteachers. The plan was the beginning of what is now called the Blue Cross movement to pay hospital bills, out of which grew Blue Shield to help pay doctors' bills.

The United Hospital Fund then had a membership of 56 voluntary non-profit hospitals, which provided care for needy patients at nominal cost paid to the UHF with contributions received in annual drives. Mr. Wickenden thought New York City needed some sort of plan like Baylor's to provide prepaid hospital care, not just for the needy, but for persons of moderate means willing and able to pay a reasonable sum for it.

With the active support of the late Dr. Sigismund Schulzoldwater, Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia's energetic Commissioner of Hospitals, Mr. Wickenden appointed a Hospital Survey Committee to look into the matter. He persuaded Dr. Goldwater to head the committee.

The committee completed its survey and recommended to the late Gov. Herbert H. Lehman and the legislature an amendment to the insurance law and the corporation law to pave the way for the organization of a group hospitalization plan in New York City. It was known as the Brien-Garnjost bill, and was signed by Gov. Lehman on May 16, 1934.

Within two months, the Associated Hospital Service of New York had been organized, with Mr. Wickenden as secretary, and the United Hospital Fund had obtained donations of \$15,000 from the Commonwealth Fund and \$5,000 from the Josiah Macy jr. Foundation to finance its beginning. Thereafter, it was to pay

entitled to receive 21 days of care a year from one of the 56 hospitals which were members of Mr. Wickenden's United Hospital Fund.

Mr. Wickenden died yesterday at the age of 75 in Lawrence Hospital in Bronxville of Parkinson's disease, from which he had been ill since his retirement from active social service work in 1956. He had lived in recent years at 5 The Byway, Bronxville.

Before he died, he had seen his Associated Hospital Service of New York, always called the Blue Cross Plan after the Baylor experiment, grow from the five boroughs of New York City to include 12 surrounding counties, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland, Sullivan, Greene Ulster, Putnam, Dutchess, Columbia, Orange and Delaware.

In addition, there are seven other Blue Cross Plans in the New York State and 76 autonomous, independent plans in the nation. His original brain-child last year had 265 member hospitals in its area and commuting communities in New Jersey and Connecticut.

Mr. Wickenden continued as general director of the UHF until 1940 (and noted last year that its member hospitals had grown to 78 voluntary non-profit institutions and its campaign goal to \$3 million.)

From 1941 through 1943, during the war years, he was simultaneously administrator of the New York Medical College and the Flower & Fifth Avenue Hospitals.

But his heart was still in social work, though now his interest shifted to social and kindred workers. From 1944 to 1956, he was vice-president and secretary of the National Health and Welfare Retirement Association.

Mr. Wickenden was born in Toledo and obtained the no longer existing degree of bachelor of philosophy in 1912 from Denison University in Granville, Ohio. Nine years later, he took time off from social service work in Cleveland to obtain a master's degree from the University of Louisville.

Homer Edgar Wickenden Dies; Leader in Health and Welfare

Special to The New York Times

BRONXVILLE, N.Y., Jan. 10.—Homer Edgar Wickenden, for 37 years a leader in New York health and welfare organizational activities, died today in Lawrence Hospital after a long illness. He was 76 years old and lived for 30 years in Bronxville.

Until his retirement in 1958 Mr. Wickenden was secretary and executive vice president of the National Health and Welfare Retirement Association, which he helped organize. This organization, which supplies supplemental income and health insurance to retired health and welfare workers throughout the United States, has a present membership of 55,000 persons.

From 1929 to 1940 Mr. Wickenden served as general director of the United Hospitals Fund of New York City. His interest in this organization caused him to promote legislation in 1932 and 1933 for the establishment of what is now the Blue Cross, the Associated Hospital Service, or more familiarly known then as the "3-cent-a-day plan."

The plan, in effect at the time in various communities throughout the United States, received its real impetus as a national idea from its original success in New York. The first cards sent out to members here bore the name of Mr. Wickenden as secretary.

He served as administrator of the New York Medical College and Flower Fifth Avenue Hospitals in New York City from 1941 through 1943. He was elected honorary Fellow of the College of Hospital Administrators in 1955.

Earlier he had been a director of the Metropolitan Opera Guild. He resigned the post in 1941 to devote more time to hospital and welfare work.

In 1949 Mr. Wickenden served as president of the Bronxville Board of Education. He was a member of that board for five years. He also served as vice president of the Community Social Welfare Fund of Bronxville and was a member of the Bronxville Field Club.

Mr. Wickenden, who was born in Toledo, was graduated from Denison University, Granville, Ohio in 1912 and later the University of Louisville.

Surviving are his widow, the former Elmira Bears Wickenden, former executive secretary of the National Nursing Council for War Service; two daughters, Mrs. Jack Walters of Simsbury, Conn., and Mrs. Alan Abel, Los Angeles; two sons, Dr. Thomas H. Wickenden of Short Hills, N. J., and Dr. Arthur C. Wickenden of Oxford, Ohio, and three sisters.

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H. E. Wickenden

Credited With Role
In Founding Blue Cross

Homer Edgar Wickenden, 76, a former Toledoan generally credited with promoting legislation that founded Blue Cross in 1932 in New York, died Monday in Lawrence Hospital, Bronxville, N.Y.

Mr. Wickenden was engaged in health, welfare, and hospital projects until his retirement in 1958 as secretary and executive vice president of the National Health and Welfare Retirement Association, affiliated with John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co., an association which he also helped organize.

He was born in Toledo, and was graduated in 1909 from the old Toledo Central High School. He had degrees from Denison University and the University of Louisville. His sister, Mrs. Fred W. Klag, resides at 602 Starr Ave.

After graduation from college Mr. Wickenden moved to the east coast and began what became his life work. He served as administrator of New York Medical College and Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital from 1941 through 1943. He was elected honorary fellow of the College of Hospital Administrators in 1955.

From 1929 to 1940 he was general director of the United Hospital Fund of New York City, the group which promoted legislation resulting in the Blue Cross plan. This legislation gave local hospital insurance plans the impetus to develop a national project. Mr. Wickenden was secretary of the New York plan generally known as the "three-cent-a-day" plan when it was conceived.

He was also secretary of the Metropolitan Opera Guild and president of the Bronxville Board of Education.

Surviving besides Mrs. Klag are his wife, Elmira; daughters, Mrs. Ann Walters, Simsbury, Conn.; Mrs. Ruth Abel, Los Angeles; brothers, Dr. Thomas H., of Short Hills, N.J., and Dr. Arthur C., of Oxford, O.; sisters, Mrs. Ida Wroe Nixon, Pomona, Calif., and Mrs. Ruth H. Winans, Ashland, Ky., and five grandchildren.

Services will be tomorrow at 2 p.m. in Reformed Church of Bronxville. The family requests that any tributes be in the form of contributions to Lawrence Hospital building fund, Bronxville.