

# Pioneer in TB Battle Retires 'Hero of Great War'

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Whitelaw, Wis.—One of the unsung heroes of the great war against tuberculosis is pulling out of the battle line.

Almost 40 years ago Manitowoc county founded the first county tuberculosis sanitarium in Wisconsin. To direct its pioneering medical program they hired Dr. John M. Kelley, a little known country doctor at Cato, Wis., as "visiting physician."

The young horse and buggy doctor knew virtually nothing about tuberculosis treatment. But the white plague had killed 50 persons in his native county that year, and some 2,000 in Wisconsin. He accepted the challenge. He has been fighting a dogged, uphill battle ever since, with remarkable success.

## Tribute Paid at Last

Last week, as Dr. Kelley prepared to retire, those who knew best of the great contribution he had made to the fight against TB arranged for him to receive some of the honor he has shunned so long. A testimonial dinner was held Saturday. Warm praise for this lifetime of service was spoken by Dr. A. H. Heidner, president-elect of the State Medical Society of Wisconsin; by Dr. Oscar Lotz, executive secretary of the Wisconsin Anti-Tuberculosis association, and a host of others.

"I rather tried to discourage it," grumbled the doctor. His reputation in this area as a tuberculosis authority is almost exceeded by his reputation for retiring from publicity. He views his career as satisfying, but not unusual.

"It has been just an ordinary country practice. There has been nothing exciting about it," he says.

## Ranks With Leaders

Others who have fought the great disease know otherwise. The name of Dr. Kelley ranks at the very top among those Wisconsinites who have made this fight their life's crusade.

Manitowoc county gave him one small building, a staff of five and a \$6,000 budget back in 1912. His first patient arrived not long after the institution opened—and died in a matter of days. More arrived steadily. Two more died within two weeks, two more within a month,



Medical director at the first county tuberculosis sanitarium in Wisconsin, Dr. John M. Kelley of Manitowoc, is retiring. He was engaged as physician for Maple Crest sanitarium near Whitelaw in 1912.

—Louis Fandrick

three more within three months. It was a discouraging job.

"I had no experience but nobody else had any either," Dr. Kelley recalled. But he set out to get it.

## Led to New Techniques

He traveled the country attending medical meetings, buttonholing other doctors, seeking out the latest technique in TB treatment the way a prospector hunts for gold.

Back in Wisconsin he pioneered in the introduction of new types of treatment. He led the fight for progressive state legislation on county sanitariums.

Shunning personal praise as he does, he sees only one sure way to measure the accomplishments of his 40 year career in this field—the reduction of the TB death rate.

The figures are impressive. In 1925 Manitowoc county had 42 deaths from TB, a death rate of 76 per 100,000 population. In 1950 the county had five deaths, for a rate of 8 per 100,000. In 1925 Manitowoc county was far above the state average in TB deaths. In 1950 it was well below.