

## Riley Hospital Goes to the Indiana State Fairgrounds

Going to the Indiana State Fairgrounds was a part of the effort from 1922-1924 by the Riley Memorial Association (RMA, now the Riley Children's Foundation) to promote and raise funds to build Riley Hospital for Children. Events at the State Fairgrounds, including the Indiana State Fair, provided opportunity to help many people from across the state learn more about why a children's hospital was important and what kinds of services and care a children's hospital would provide.

When the James Whitcomb Riley Home first opened to the general public on April 13, 1922, a campaign to raise \$2 million to build the hospital was launched. Five weeks later, the Riley Memorial Association had the perfect opportunity to promote why it was important to support Riley Hospital for Children to large crowds of mothers, fathers, and children who came to the James Whitcomb Riley Day on May 20 during the Indiana Health Exposition at the Indiana State Fairgrounds held from May 19-27, 1922. Amidst the child friendly activities offered throughout the day (a pageant, story hour, readings of Riley's poems), the Association put plans and color drawings of the proposed hospital and a large portrait of James Whitcomb Riley on display and presented a line-up of speakers who talked about the need for Riley Hospital for Children.

Later that summer of 1922, the RMA sponsored a statewide contest to engage artists of all ages to design posters to be used to help raise funds to build Riley Hospital. The winning entries were announced and all poster contest entries were put on display at the RMA's exhibit at the 1922 Indiana State Fair (September 4-9) for all Fairgoers to see. Top honors went to: First place winner Eva Sinclair from Atlanta, Indiana who won \$50 in gold and an original painting by Howard Chandler Christy, an illustrator for many of James Whitcomb Riley's poems; Second place winner Elmer E. Frankel from Indianapolis won \$25 and an original painting by Franklin Booth, another illustrator of Riley's poetry ; and Third place winner Harold Quinlan from Indianapolis was awarded \$15 and a drawing by Indianapolis artist Frederick Polley illustrating what Riley Hospital would look like when completed. Winning posters were used in the campaign from October 1-7, 1922 to raise funds to build Riley Hospital.

At the 1923 Indiana State Fair (September 3-9)), Indiana University's exhibit included a display of personal effects of James Whitcomb Riley shown in conjunction with a Riley Hospital for Children exhibit demonstrating types of treatment that would be given to Indiana's children with disabilities. Children who were being treated at Long Hospital for curvature of the spine, club feet and other orthopedic conditions were brought on-site to the University Building to demonstrate to Fairgoers a "work out" in an orthopedic gymnasium constructed on the porch stage of the building. Beatrice O'Hare, in charge of the "corrective" gymnasium at Long Hospital and who would later come to Riley to oversee the Ball Gymnasium in the new hospital, oversaw these demonstrations. Proper nursing care procedures were also demonstrated.

At the 1924 Indiana State Fair (September 1-5), Riley Hospital for Children had prominent exhibition space. The Riley hospital space occupied the first booth to the right upon entering the Indiana University building. In the exhibition space, graphic drawings of the hospital buildings, now partially completed, were shown. These drawings, by Indianapolis artist, Frederick Polley, depicted how Riley Hospital would appear when the present units were completed, additional units finished, and the convalescent home, adjacent to the main hospital buildings, erected.

Photographs illustrating the progress that had been made in construction work since the first shovel of dirt was turned were shown in the exhibit space, and a large drawing in color gave a comprehensive idea of the magnitude of the institution. A card of general invitation was displayed, extending to all visitors at the State Fair an invitation to go to Riley Hospital and inspect the building.

The formal opening of Riley Hospital was only less than 5 weeks away on October 7, 1924. Awareness of Riley Hospital stirred up at the 1924 State Fair provided a springboard for the next step. During the week immediately preceding the formal opening of the hospital, "*Fair Chance for Childhood*" souvenir bonds were offered statewide to subscribers all over Indiana who donated to the hospital building fund to help meet current and future construction costs. These bonds, which are not redeemable and bear no interest, are merely an acknowledgement by the Riley Memorial Association of the voluntary subscription to the hospital building fund. The bond, which is a facsimile of the usual form of negotiable paper, was designed to be a keepsake, to be cherished by the purchaser of evidence of his contribution to an institution dedicated to the care of Indiana's children.

The Indiana State Fair has continued to be a part of Riley Hospital's history. One example: At the 1927 Indiana State Fair, Riley Hospital's Occupational Therapy Department, equipped and supported by the Junior League of Indianapolis, had a booth at the Fair that displayed baskets and fabrics made by young patients as part of their therapy toward.

And, another example: In September 1936, President Franklin Roosevelt was in Indianapolis to do many things, including paying a visit to Riley Hospital to see the hospital's hydrotherapy pool used at the time to primarily provide assistance in rehabilitation of patients with polio. After his visit to Riley Hospital, the President's car immediately took off to the Indiana State Fairgrounds where President Roosevelt provided remarks to officially open the 1936 Indiana State Fair.

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**Photographs:**

**From: Indiana State Library**



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**From: Indiana State Archives #1:**



How to care for a patient with communicable disease exhibit, Indiana State Fair (1927), Indiana State Fairgrounds and Event Center Collection:

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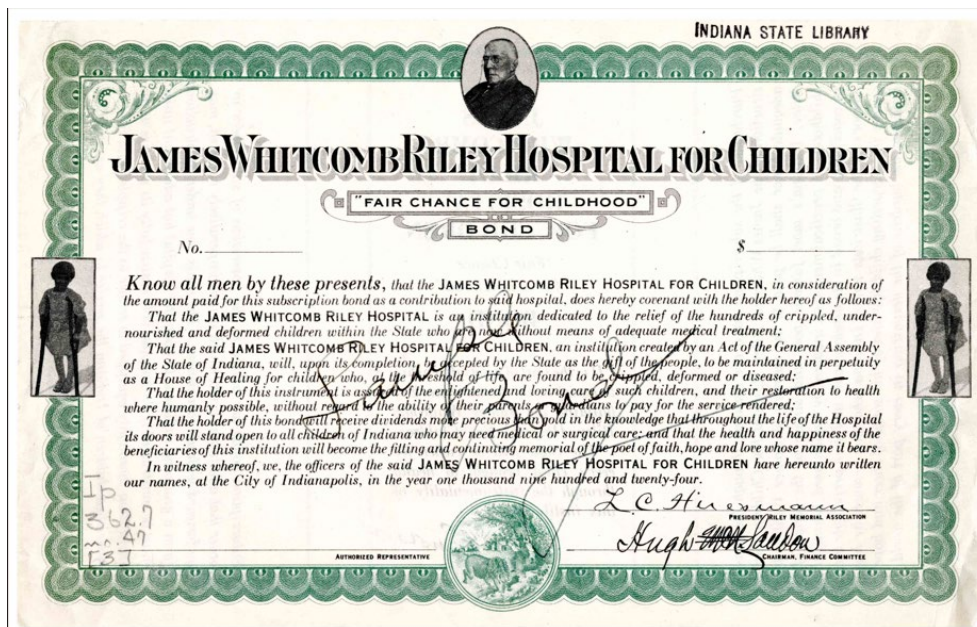


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President F.D. Roosevelt visits the Indiana State Fair, Indiana State Fairgrounds and Event Center  
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