



**Hargrave, Frank Settle** (27 Aug. 1874–11 Mar. 1942),

physician and surgeon, who specialized in pulmonary medicine, was born in Lexington, Davidson County, North Carolina. Dr. Hargrave was the son of farmer, Henry M. and Laura Hargrave and one of fourteen children. Dr. Hargrave attended local public schools in Lexington, North Carolina prior to attending the State Normal School in Salisbury, North Carolina.

Dr. Hargrave received a B.S. from Shaw University and an M.D. from the Leonard Medical School<sup>1</sup> in 1901. The Leonard Medical School, founded in 1885, was the first four-year medical school to train African American doctors and pharmacists in the South. Leonard Medical College was in existence from 1882-1918. Dr. Hargrave practiced medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina (1901-1903) before relocating his private medical practice to Wilson, North Carolina (1903-1924) and establishing the Wilson Hospital and Tubercular Home.

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<sup>1</sup> 1882-1918-First U.S. medical school to have a 4-year graded curriculum.

In May 1905, Silas and Charity Lucas conveyed a “Sixteen Room House” to African American physician, Dr. Frank S. Hargrave, who established one of the first private hospitals for African Americans in the South. Dr. Hargrave envisioned a larger private hospital and tubercular home, which would include a nurse training school for African Americans. By 1912, Dr. Hargrave was able to enlist the support of two other prominent African American citizens of Wilson, James D. Reid and Samuel H. Vick, for his vision. In October 1913, Dr. Hargrave conveyed the property to Samuel H. Vick, James D. Reid and himself for \$1,400. Initially the property was conveyed to Dr. Hargrave only. One year later, Dr. Hargrave included his two business partners, James D. Reid and Samuel H. Vick as property owners.

These three gentlemen, comprising the board of trustees of the Wilson Hospital and Tubercular Home, Inc., hired the Wilson architectural firm of Benton and Moore to design a suitable hospital building on the property, where the “*Sixteen Room House*” once stood. African American masons were especially prominent in the building of the hospital. This hospital was the only African American hospital in this section of Eastern North Carolina during the early twentieth century.

In the late 1890s and early 1900s increasing numbers of African Americans settled in and near Wilson for employment opportunities, however, health care for African Americans did not keep pace with the population growth. In fact, health care remained inadequate through the first decade of the twentieth century. Even though a white hospital, the Wilson Sanitorium, had been operating since 1896, African

Americans received limited care. As a result, the need for a hospital for the increasing African American population was inevitable for Wilson and its surrounding communities.

“African Americans had little recorded medical service of their own, outside the efforts of Dr. Benjamin Woodard, the first African American physician in Wilson, until Dr. Frank S. Hargrave, the second African American physician in Wilson, established a hospital in 1905. Wilson was fortunate to attract such a promising physician. It is estimated that while there was one white physician for every three hundred whites, there was only one black doctor for every nine thousand blacks in the state.

Noted in the *Wilson Daily Times* during the financial campaign of the Wilson Hospital and Tubercular Home in 1912, “...this sanatorium will probably be the first private institution of its kind exclusively for tuberculous Negroes in the South, and indeed in the United States. In the entire South, with its millions of Negroes and with their enormous death rate from tuberculous, there are not, all told, more than two hundred beds for colored consumptives, and most of these are in the public institutions, where through fear, superstition and politics they are not used...”<sup>2</sup>

Data on the actual number of African American hospitals that existed before 1920 are scarce and often inaccurate, however, *The Negro Year Book and Annual Encyclopedia of the Negro* listed the Wilson Hospital and Tuberculosis Home as one of six hospitals and nurse training schools for African Americans that existed in North Carolina in 1913.

The Wilson Hospital and Tubercular Home established by Dr. Hargrave, was unlike the other five hospitals, which were founded and financed by prominent white philanthropists from North

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<sup>2</sup> Wilson Daily Times, September 10, 1912

Carolina or affiliated with established religious or educational institutions. In essence, the Wilson Hospital and Tubercular Home was the only known private hospital established by African Americans for African Americans with tuberculosis in North Carolina during the early twentieth century.

In 1912, Dr. Hargrave was elected president of the North Carolina Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association. That same year, Dr. Hargrave was elected a member of the Executive Board of the National Medical Association (NMA). The National Medical Association is the nation's oldest and largest organization representing African American physicians and health professionals in the United States.

In 1914, Dr. Hargrave had the honor of being elected President of the National Medical Association, an unusual honor as he was elected practically without opposition.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Hargrave was also the first physician from North Carolina to serve as President of the National Medical Association and served his full one-year term until 1915.

Dr. Hargrave served as President for six years of the Lincoln Benefit Society, headquartered in Wilson, North Carolina. This was a fraternal insurance organization chartered by the Legislature of North Carolina in 1914. The organization established councils in the principal towns and cities of the State. The Lincoln Benefit Society provided low insurance rates, which were in reach of the citizens of the African American community.

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<sup>3</sup> The National Cyclopedia of The Colored Race Volume 1, p. 267

Despite several unsuccessful attempts to receive funding through the North Carolina Assembly during its formative years, the Wilson Hospital and Tubercular Home continued operating until 1929. “Between 1918 and 1924, the hospital suffered from financial difficulties and when the mortgage debt was not retired in 1924, Dr. Hargrave purchased the hospital for \$7,000. The hospital continued to operate until 1929 when it was sold to a group of civic leaders.”

In 1924, Dr. Hargrave moved to Orange, New Jersey where he established his medical practice. From 1927 until his death in 1942, Dr. Hargrave served as Chairman of the Committee on Medical Education for the National Medical Association. He was also a member of the North Jersey Medical Association and the Essex County Medical Society and was active in the New Jersey Tuberculosis League.

In 1930, the Wilson Hospital and Tubercular Home became Mercy Hospital and continued operation until 1964, when the City of Wilson built an integrated public hospital. In 1930, Dr. Hargrave received a Master of Art, honoris, from his alma mater Shaw University.

Dr. Hargrave had political ambitions and served as an Essex County Assemblyman for the State of New Jersey for nine terms from 1929 until his death. In addition, he served as Chairman of the Committee on Public Health for four terms, 1936-1938 and 1939-1940. Dr. Hargrave authored a bill creating a battalion of African American men in the State Militia and a bill creating the Migrant Welfare Commission of which New Jersey Governor Morgan F. Larson appointed him Chairman.

Dr. Hargrave was also the first President of the New Jersey Colored Republican League, which was established in 1936.

Dr. Hargrave's early religious affiliation included the Jackson Chapel First Baptist Church, one of East Wilson's largest and most prominent African American churches. Dr. Hargrave was also a prominent and active member of the North Carolina Baptist State Colored Convention in Wilson, North Carolina and served on its Executive Committee for eleven years. When he moved to New Jersey, Dr. Hargrave became a deacon of the Union Baptist Church of Orange, New Jersey and served as superintendent of its Sunday school.

Dr. Hargrave was also a member of the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.), the fraternal organizations of the Knights of Pythias and the Masons. He also served as President of the Shaw University Alumni Association.

Dr. Frank Settle Hargrave died in 1942 at the age of 67 at his home in Orange, New Jersey. Survived by his wife, Bessie E. Parker, of Wilson, North Carolina, whom he married in 1907. Dr. Hargrave was survived by his wife Bessie, two brothers, Dr. Henry P. Hargrave of New York and James Hargrave of Lexington, North Carolina and three sisters, Fannie Mason, Rose Ellis and Flossie Douglass all of Lexington, North Carolina.

Dr. Frank Settle Hargrave was a prominent and influential African American leader in economic, educational, health and social issues.

## Further Reading

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Dr. Frank Settle Hargrave sitting in front of Booker T. Washington  
Wilson, North Carolina  
Taken on the lawn of Samuel H. Vick's home - circa 1910