

Vintage article by Seebert J. Goldowsky, MD, describes founders, physicians, funders of Miriam Hospital

Dr. Goldowsky, surgeon and prolific writer, was longtime RIMJ editor-in-chief

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On June 19, 2025, at a Miriam Hospital event in anticipation of its formal Centennial this year, a time capsule was opened that had been sealed in the cornerstone of its building 75 years ago. Among the papers inside were:

- The Program of Ceremonies at the laying of the cornerstone, dated May 20, 1951 [Figure 1].
- Newspapers from 1925 to 1951, reporting on the history and opening of the Miriam Hospital, first on Parade Street [Figure 2] in Providence, and then on Summit Avenue.
- There was also a May 1951 issue of the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* (RIMJ) [Figure 3]. Inside the issue, there was a photo of the hospital [Figure 4] with the caption "New Miriam Hospital."

Through the writings of **SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, MD**, (1907–1997), longtime RIMJ editor-in-chief, from 1961–1989 [Figure 5], more of the Miriam's history is amplified. A Providence native and graduate of the Harvard Medical School, class of 1932, he was a general surgeon at Rhode Island and the Miriam hospitals for 37 years.

Dr. Goldowsky was also an active member of the Jewish community, civic organizations, a veteran of World War II, and a prolific writer with a historical bent.

An article he wrote in the *Notes of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Society* in 1957¹ detailed facts on the



Figure 5. Seebert J. Goldowsky, MD, (1907–1997), served as RIMJ's editor-in-chief from 1961–1989. A surgeon, as well as a prolific writer and historian, he wrote about the underpinnings of The Miriam's formation. [RIMJ, JAN. 2017]

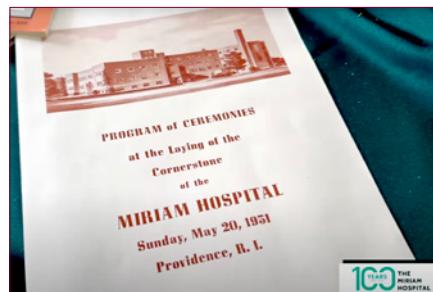


Figure 1. Program of Ceremonies at the laying of the cornerstone, dated May 20, 1951.
[THE MIRIAM HOSPITAL/BROWN HEALTH]



Figure 3. The May 1951 issue of the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* (RIMJ) was among the artifacts inside the recently opened time capsule of The Miriam Hospital. [THE MIRIAM HOSPITAL/BROWN HEALTH]



Figure 2. Photo of the Miriam Hospital, Parade Street, Providence, taken on its tenth anniversary. [PROVIDENCE DIGITAL LIBRARY]



Figure 4. Photo of the hospital inside the May 1951 issue of RIMJ with the caption "New Miriam Hospital." [RIMJ, MAY 1951]

formation of The Miriam Hospital. The women's organization, "Miriam Lodge, Number 13, Order of Brith Abraham was, in all probability, the precursor of later Miriam organizations and was the source of the name of the hospital."

He reported that in 1902 the group reorganized and was chartered by the State as the Miriam



Figure 6. Collection boxes were distributed throughout the Jewish community to raise money for the hospital.¹

Society, Number One. Several years later, the organization was chartered as The Miriam Hospital Association of Providence "for the purpose of building, maintaining and operating a Hebrew Hospital in the State of Rhode."

In 1914, an individual was hired to distribute collection boxes to Jewish homes to raise money for the hospital [Figure 6]. After World War I, a quadruplex brick building with three rooming houses and a hospital on Parade Street became available for purchase. In 1921, a deposit was put down for \$1,000. The eventual cost came to \$27,000, Dr. Goldowsky wrote.

Jacobi Medical Club

In the article, he also reported the formation of the Jacobi Medical Club in 1923, "to satisfy a need for a fuller academic life and to foster social ties." The Club was named after **DR. ABRAHAM JACOBI**, considered a pioneer in pediatrics, who had given a Rhode Island Centennial oration in 1912 on "The Educational Value of Medical Societies and Libraries." **MAX B. GOMBERG, MD**, (1875–1934), was elected the group's first president.

Dr. Goldowsky wrote that the Jacobi Medical Club, anticipating the opening (late in 1925) of the new Miriam Hospital,

assisted in its planning and staffing. Club physicians initiated a campaign "for the establishment of a Jewish-sponsored, non-sectarian hospital."

By 1924, the various campaigns raised approximately \$80,000, and the hospital was chartered by the State on March 25, 1926. At the time, the hospital on Parade Street had 63 beds and 14 bassinets. Photos of the Miriam Hospital medical staff and later, its Board of Trustees, depicted in the *Notes* article, add to the visual history [Figures 7,8].

Decades later, when the need to expand beyond a small neighborhood hospital became evident, a major building fund drive was initiated. The result was \$1.3 million raised and the opening of the new 150-bed Miriam Hospital on 164 Summit

Avenue in 1953—which brings us back to the aforementioned time capsule. A YouTube video of the unearthing event can be found at: <https://www.brown-health.org/locations/miriam-hospital/celebrating-100-years>.

As Centennial celebrations unfold this year, and The Miriam's expansion and additions launch, one hopes a time capsule will be ensconced in a cornerstone—a solid yet tangible lock box of legacies for future generations to unearth and discover. ♦

Reference

1. Goldowsky SJ. "Jews in Medicine in Rhode Island." *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*. Dec. 1957;2(3):172-183.



Figure 7. Medical staff of The Miriam Hospital shown in this 1925 photo.¹



Figure 8. First Board of Trustees shown in this 1932 photo.¹