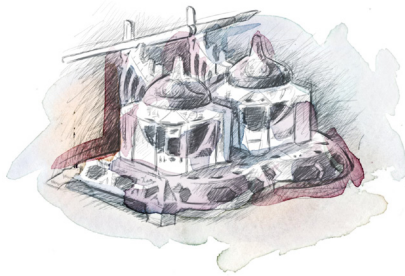




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## CHAPTER FOUR



### STEWARDSHIP

*“... contributions to the general good of humanity.”*

— Deed of Gift

**I**N A SINGULAR ACT OF RENUNCIATION AND DEDICATION, THE MAYO brothers took a series of steps in the years surrounding World War I that would alleviate sickness and suffering for future generations of patients. By transforming Mayo Clinic from a private partnership into a not-for-profit organization, they “made the medical experience of past generations available for the coming one.” In the words of Dr. Will, “Each new generation shall not have to work out its problems independently, but may begin where its predecessors left off.” The brothers solidified their commitment by donating the majority of their life savings, as well as all the physical properties and assets of Mayo Clinic. At the time, the total value of their generosity was more than \$10 million; the equivalent sum today would be many times greater.

According to the Deed of Gift signed by both brothers and their wives, along with other related documents, the Mayos, their partners

and all future Mayo Clinic personnel would receive a salary and not profit personally from the proceeds of the practice. All proceeds beyond operating expenses would be contributed to education, research and patient care. This was a bold step and insured that Mayo would survive beyond its founders' retirements and deaths. From this initiative Mayo Clinic emerged as a distinct institution and a new model of private group practice.

The decision grew out of the Mayo brothers' shared surgical practice that began 30 years earlier. At first the brothers operated together because they found their combined technical skills produced the best results.

Each took turns serving as the other's first assistant. The brothers discussed every feature of their operations and pooled knowledge and ingenuity to meet a crisis when it came. Together, they faced and fought through problems, shouldered responsibilities and won successes. In the process they forged a bond of mutual love and admiration, "a bond so strong that nothing could ever break it."

"My brother  
and I"



Surgeons and  
humanitarian  
leaders.

Despite outward differences, their personal respect and commitment to each other was unshakable. When talking about themselves, they rarely used “I” or “me,” but preferred to say, “my brother and I.” A colleague in later years remarked, “Your great success was not as surgeons. It was as brothers; there has never been anything like it.”

The Mayo brothers’ unqualified trust in each other extended to their finances. Indeed, they shared the same checkbook. Ten years into their surgical practice, when Dr. Will was 33 and Dr. Charlie 29, the brothers took stock of their finances. Over the course of several discussions, they agreed that half of their earnings was sufficient for themselves and their families. The remaining funds, in their words, “should be returned to the people from whom it came in a way that would do them the greatest benefit.” The brothers made a solemn vow to set aside half of their income that year and as much each year thereafter as they could. “They would invest it and increase it to the best of their ability, and someday they would find a way to return it to the people.”





Young doctors  
came to study  
at Mayo Clinic.

By 1917, the brothers' plans moved toward fruition, "but not without a struggle." The brothers transferred funds to the University of Minnesota in order to support advanced specialty training for physicians and scientists using Mayo Clinic facilities and staff in Rochester. Affiliated with the university, their moneys would help establish "the first American graduate school in clinical medicine."

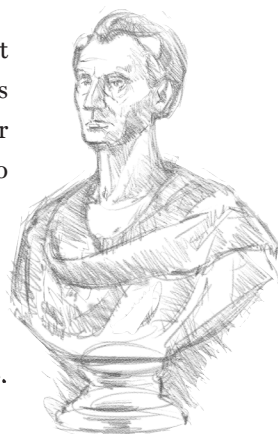
News of the proposed affiliation with the university infuriated many Minnesota doctors. For some, their motive was a long-standing fear and jealousy of the Mayos' success. Others held valid criticisms of the plan as it stood. "None of those elements, however," writes biographer Helen Clapesattle, "can account for the personal spite and malice, the disgraceful misrepresentation." Opponents lobbied the Minnesota legislature to pass a bill against the affiliation. When a public hearing was announced, friends and colleagues urged Dr. Will to speak to the legislative assembly. He hesitated, then responded, "I'm a good soldier. If you gentlemen think it's necessary, I'll do it."

The chamber was crowded the night of the hearing. People hushed as Dr. Mayo began to speak. He

talked without notes, earnestly, simply, colloquially. “Every man has some inspiration; with my brother and I, it came from our father. He taught us that any man who has physical strength, intellectual capacity or unusual opportunity holds such endowments in trust, to do with them for others in proportion to his gifts.” His voice rose. “Now let’s call a spade a spade. This money belongs to the people and I don’t care two raps whether the medical profession of the state likes the way this money has been offered for use or not. It wasn’t their money.” Lowering his tone, Dr. Will recalled the words of Abraham Lincoln, “... that these dead shall not have died in vain.” He said this line “explains why we want to do this thing. ... What better could we do than take young men and help them to become proficient in the profession so as to prevent needless deaths?” The bill failed.

The ultimate success of Mayo Clinic, “past, present and future, must be measured largely by its contributions to the general good of humanity.” Inspired by their founders’ pledge in 1919, future generations at Mayo Clinic went on to greater levels of accomplishment and service.

*Dr. Will admired  
Abraham Lincoln.*







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of Nursing was  
nationally recognized  
for excellence.

## ENDNOTES

- Page 27: The Mayo family's altruistic philosophy is described in Beck, CS: *Teamwork at Mayo Clinic*. Rochester, Minnesota: Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 2014, p. 11.
- Page 28: The evolution of the Mayo brothers' thinking in establishing the not-for-profit organization is described in Hartzell, J: *I Started All This – The Life of Dr. William Worrall Mayo*. Greenville, South Carolina: Arvi Books, 2004, p. 158.
- Pages 30-31: The "Lost Oration," as Dr. Will's informal speech to the Minnesota Legislature was called, is described and quoted in Willius, F: *Aphorisms*. Rochester, Minnesota: Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 1990, pp. 85-92.
- Page 31: Mayo Clinic Archives contain the *Deed of Gift from William J. Mayo and Charles H. Mayo to Mayo Properties Association, October 8, 1919*. The deed's purpose in serving "the general good of humanity" is stated on page 3.



## CHECK YOUR COMPASS

### STEWARDSHIP

*Sustain and re-invest in our mission and extended communities  
by wisely managing our human, natural and material resources.*

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