



# Heritage Program

Celebrating Our Past, Inspiring Our Future

## Recognizing the dedication of the Mayo Clinic Ambulance Service

The innovation of civilian ambulance services began in the late 1800s at Bellevue Hospital in New York City. After observing this efficient ambulance service in action during a visit to the city, William Worrall Mayo, M.D., declared it “quite as astonishing as any of the fairy tales.”

Recognizing the need for an effective way to transport patients to their offices and affiliated hospitals, the Mayo brothers purchased a [horse-drawn ambulance](#) from the Studebaker Company in 1905. It was later replaced by Mayo’s first motor-powered ambulance – a 1912 Packard, donated by Mayo Clinic surgeon E. Starr Judd, M.D. In the decades that followed, various ambulances were used, including some specially built for Mayo Clinic. Many of these conveyances were only equipped with an oxygen tank, first aid kit and blankets. The ambulances were driven by personnel from the Section of General Service, with a physician going along on the call in emergencies.

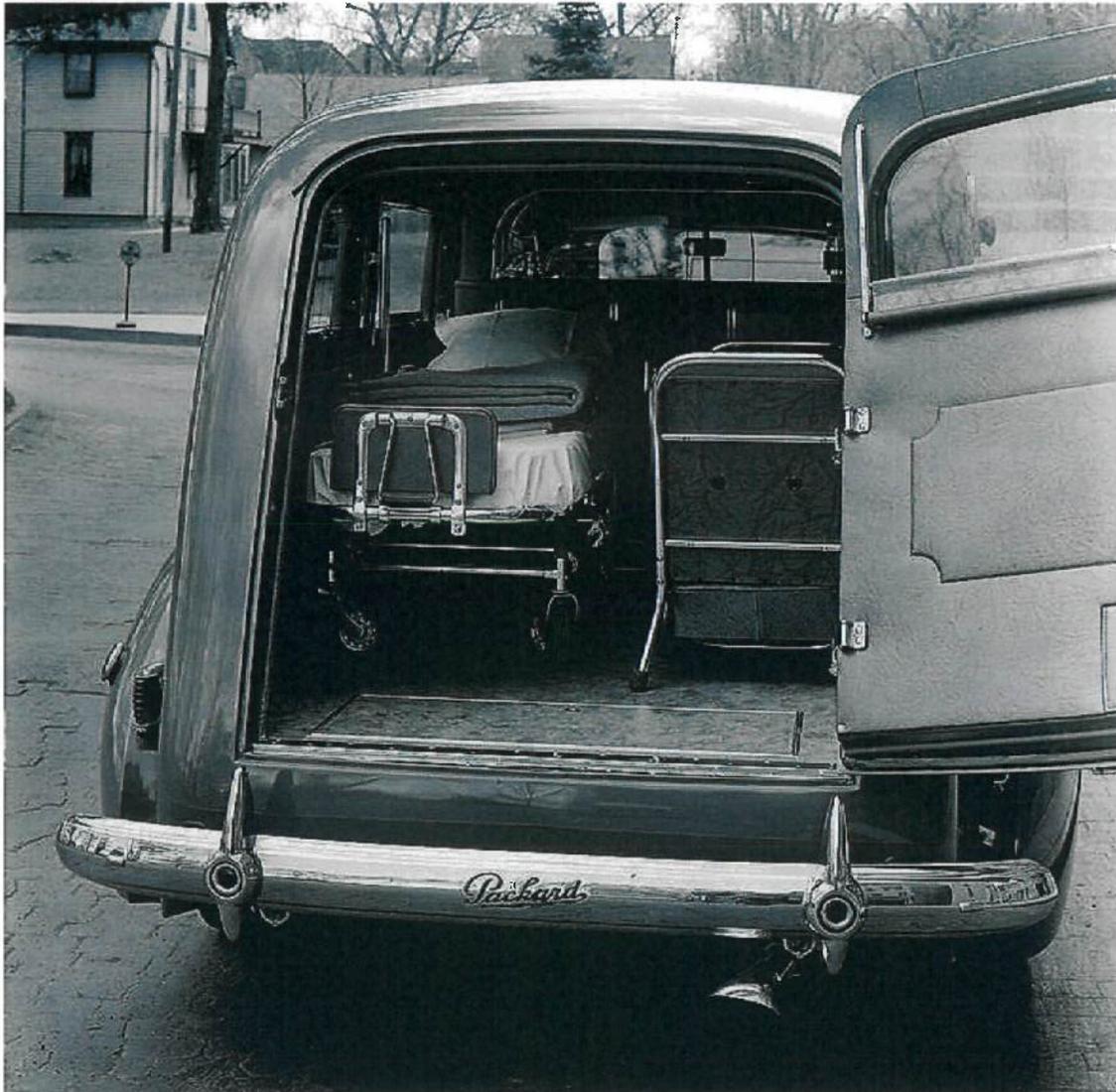
In 1962, Mayo Clinic discontinued its ambulance service and contracted with Gold Cross Ambulance in Rochester to continue coverage. Gold Cross Ambulance became part of Mayo Clinic in 1994. Today, the Mayo Clinic Ambulance Service comprises a team of 625 personnel and a fleet of 80 ground ambulances, four helicopters and one airplane. It provides medical transport services from bases in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Mayo Clinic has made significant contributions to emergency medical services, including equipping police cars and fire rescue personnel with automated external defibrillators. [Roger D. White, M.D.](#), a medical director with Mayo Clinic Ambulance Service since 1994, explains the significance of this contribution: “This was a very innovative approach to making defibrillation available rapidly, since police very frequently were able to reach the cardiac arrest victim before an ambulance. Fire rescue personnel joined our defibrillation program in 1998. We analyzed our data from 1991 to 2016 and published the results in 2017, demonstrating to the EMS world the progressive improvement in survival from cardiac arrest caused by ventricular fibrillation.”

In addition to providing optimal patient care, Dr. White emphasizes that Mayo Clinic Ambulance Service has an obligation “to provide continuing leadership by assessing our performance at all levels and then publishing our experience and sharing it with EMS providers across the world.”

To commemorate [National EMS Week](#), select buildings on Mayo Clinic campuses across the enterprise will be illuminated blue and white on the night of May 22.

*Learn more about the history of medical transportation at Mayo Clinic in this four-minute video, [“Swiftly & Safely: A Century of Transporting Patients to Mayo Clinic.”](#)*



*Many early ambulances carried limited first-aid equipment, as shown in this image of a 1939 Packard ambulance used by Mayo Clinic.*

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