

Sonja Dawson and the Prototype Design of the Mayo Clinic Triple Shield Logo

Peter Southorn, M.D.



A picture of Dr. Brian and Mrs. Sonja Dawson taken in the 1970s.

Mayo Logo 1914



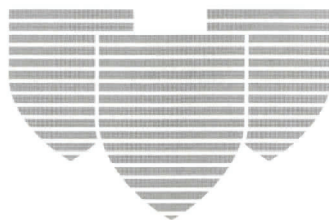
Mayo Logo 1927



Mayo Logo - 1973



Mayo Logo - 1982



Mayo Logo 1986



Many alumni remember Brian Dawson, M.D., with deep affection. He was an outstanding pediatric anesthesiologist, a superb and wonderful teacher, and a tireless advocate for the residents. Many of us can also recall being invited to the parties Brian and his wife, Sonja, had in their historic home opposite the Foundation House on Fourth Street going up to "Pill Hill". These parties were wonderful affairs and routinely attracted all of the major players running the Clinic. On one such occasion, in the mid 1970s, the head librarian of the Clinic, Mr. Thomas Keys, well-known for his contributions to the history of anesthesiology, was talking to Sonja while admiring the shield of Brian's British medical school which was proudly displayed on the dining room wall at their home. Sonja made the bold suggestion to Mr. Keys that Mayo should have a similar shield which could be reproduced on ties, scarves, and other memorabilia and perhaps even be used on Mayo Clinic correspondence. She then proceeded to draw on a table napkin her suggestion for the Mayo logo. It had three interlocking shields, the center one representing the father and the two on either side for his two sons, Will and Charles Mayo. Tom Keys thought that the design had merit and took Sonja's ideas for further consideration by the leadership of the organization. It was rapidly approved with the only one change. Instead of the three shields identifying the three founding Mayo family members, it was designated that each one of the shields would instead stand for an individual component of the Mayo Clinic's work, namely practice, education, and research. Although modified, the triple shield logo has been utilized ever since that time.