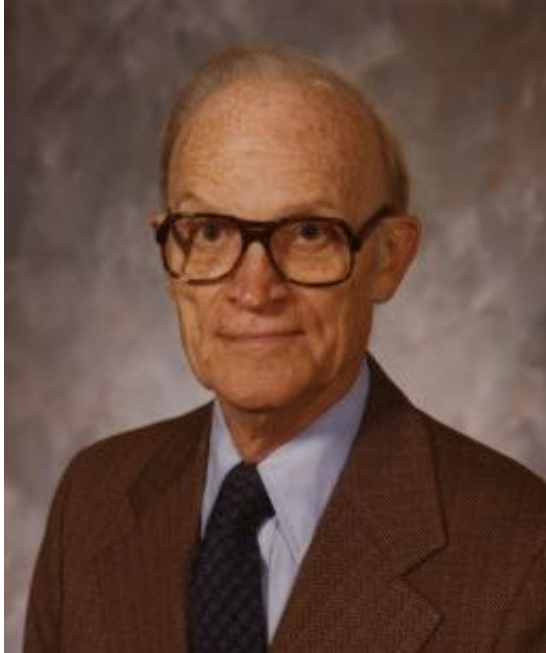


Alcines Clair Siddall, M.D.



(Photo courtesy of the Oberlin College Archives)

Dr. A. Clair Siddall was a family practice doctor who specialized in obstetrics and gynecology and practiced in Oberlin from 1932 to 1973. Dr. Siddall served as a medical missionary in China from 1923 to 1932. He was actively involved in medical research and developed the Siddall Pregnancy Test, which detected hormone levels as a sign of pregnancy. It became one of the forerunners of all future pregnancy tests. Dr. Siddall and his family lived in the Monroe House of the Oberlin Heritage Center from 1935 to 1939. For the next twenty years he rented the downstairs as his office. For his long and distinguished career, Dr. Siddall received numerous academic and community awards. He died in Oberlin in 1980 at the age of 83.

The Siddall Pregnancy Test:

A. Clair Siddall was born in Bascom, Ohio, on June 4, 1897. He received his B.A. degree from Otterbein College, Ohio in 1919, and his M.D. from Western Reserve University Medical School, Ohio in 1922. After completing his residency in 1923, Dr. A.C. Siddall served as a medical missionary for nine years throughout China. He served as the Chief of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Canton Hospital in Canton (now Guangzhou). He lived there with his wife, Annette Brane Siddall, and in the next nine years had three sons: Clair Jr. (1925), John (1927) and Lawrence (1930).

While in China, Dr. Siddall theorized that women's hormones change when they become pregnant, and that this could be a way of testing for pregnancy. He returned to Cleveland for a year in 1928 and performed tests on lab mice with the blood from pregnant women, including his wife, Annette, then pregnant with their second son. He discovered that the hormone hCG could be an indicator for pregnancy in tests. His research was reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association in February 1928, and was the first hormone-based pregnancy test in English medical literature. Dr. Siddall found out later that this method of testing for pregnancy had already been published by Selmar Aschheim and Bernard Zondek a few months before his research. Along with the earlier discovery, the Siddall Pregnancy Test is one of the tests from

which all modern pregnancy tests are based. It could be found in the *Gould Medical Dictionary* for many years.

The Siddalls returned to China where Dr. Siddall resumed his work. Their time was cut short there, however, when his wife, Annette, died in 1932 from an infection following minor surgery. Two months later, Dr. Siddall and his three sons returned to the United States.

Practice in Oberlin:

Dr. Siddall first considered moving to Cleveland to set up his private practice, but realized that due to the Great Depression, physicians there were suffering financially. He then considered Oberlin. He heard mention of Oberlin from a medical school classmate and a couple from Oberlin on the voyage home from Hong Kong. Dr. Siddall and his three sons moved in 1932 and lived in a rented house on 163 Elm Street. His first office was on the second floor of 33 West College Street in downtown Oberlin. He recalled later that some patients struggled to pay a dollar or two for an office visit or house call, paying instead with a dozen eggs or live chicken.

In 1934 Dr. Siddall married Estelle Warner, and from 1935 until 1939, Dr. Siddall and his family lived at 47 College Place, now known as the Monroe House. At the time, the house was owned and leased by Oberlin College. He and Estelle later had two more children: Jane (1939) and James (1943). In 1939, the family moved to their newly-built house on Edgemoor Place in Oberlin. For the next twenty years, Dr. Siddall continued to rent the Monroe House (1939 to 1959) and used the first floor as his office. The upstairs of the house were renovated to provide living accommodations for one of Dr. Siddall's secretaries. Dr. Siddall's interests were family practice and obstetrics and gynecology, but upon relocating his office at the Monroe House, he focused on obstetrics and gynecology.

In 1962, Dr. Siddall and six other local physicians founded the Oberlin Clinic. His practice was based there until he retired in 1973. Based on extensive medical records, Dr. Siddall is estimated to have delivered approximately 5,000 babies during his career.

Honors and Legacy:

Dr. Siddall was recognized for his research on the history of medical practices in Oberlin and as the founder of the cancer control program in Lorain County in 1957. Dr. Siddall was one of the first individual practitioners in the country to introduce cancer detection in the office, using the Pap smear test for the detection of early cancer in the cervix. This was at a time when the Pap smear was still controversial, and many physicians were not willing to cooperate with its

promotion from the American Cancer Society. The Pap smear has remained one of the most successful detections of cancer ever created.

Dr. Siddall was a founder and charter member of the Oberlin Health Commission and received the Oberlin Health Commission Senior Citizen Award in 1964. He was also active in the development of the Allen Memorial Hospital expansion program. For many years, Dr. Siddall served as an adjunct professor of medicine at Western Reserve University Medical School.

In honor of his retirement from the Oberlin Clinic in 1973, his colleagues, members of the community, and his family established the Siddall Educational Fund in conjunction with the Allen Memorial Hospital, to provide education opportunities in the health care disciplines. Also in 1973, Oberlin College gave Dr. A.C. Siddall the Distinguished Community Award. In 1988, eight years after his death, the Allen Memorial Hospital, now the Mercy Allen Hospital, named its birthing center in his memory. The birthing center was removed in the late 1990s.

Dr. A.C. Siddall donated many of his research papers and writings to the Oberlin Archives, where they can be found today.

Siddall Places of Interest:

Please be sure to check for availability before visiting

1. The former location of Siddall's private practice, The Monroe House – Part of the Oberlin Heritage Center, 73 ½ South Professor Street (parking off Vine Street)
2. Oberlin College Archives in Mudd Library, 148 W College Street
3. Mercy Allen Hospital, 200 W Lorain Street



The Monroe House, in its current location at
73 ½ South Professor Street
(Photo courtesy of the Oberlin Heritage Center)

Further Reading:

A. Clair Siddall's unpublished memoirs about family life in China, and about his career as a physician. Oberlin College Archives, located in Mudd Library.

"A.C. Siddall, physician, dies at his home at age 83". Oberlin News Tribune. December 18 1980.

Cunningham, Mary Anne. "Notes compiled from a conversation with Estelle Siddall Palmer". Oberlin Heritage Center. June 21, 1994.

Siddall, Lawrence B. "Early Memories of Oberlin and the Monroe House 1933-1939". Oberlin Heritage Center. July, 2010.

Stagg Elliott, Victoria. "Dr. Pap's Smear: The Test and Its times." *Amednews.com*. American Medical News, 3 Sept. 2007. Web.

<http://www.amednews.com/article/20070903/health/309039956/4/>

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Written June 2013 by OHC Leadership Lorain County intern Michelle Myers

**Oberlin Heritage Center, 73 ½ S. Professor Street Oberlin, Ohio 44074
440-774-1700, www.oberlinheritage.org**