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The 1939 Scientific Exhibit
of the
Howard University School of Medicine

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Associate Professor of Anatomy, Howard University

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The 1939 Scientific Exhibit of the Howard University School of Medicine

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THE scientific exhibit of the Howard University School of Medicine at the Forty-Fifth Annual Convention of the National Medical Association in New York City, August 14-18, 1939, was the first of its kind sponsored by this institution. Because of the difficulties due to paucity of records encountered by the writer in certain researches into the history of the Negro in medicine, it has seemed wise and proper to make generally available an authentic account of this initial exhibit, for such value as it may have in any sphere.

The convention was held in Public School No. 68, 127 East 127th Street. For its exhibit Howard was allotted the exclusive use of Room 105 of the public school building, a bright and newly painted room, twenty-eight by twenty-four feet. The display was designed to fit this room specifically but to be of such character that as a whole or in parts it could be used in the future on other locations. These objectives were achieved.

The materials of the exhibit were photographs, roentgenograms, drawings, compilations, publications, reprints, and a case containing demonstrations of a casting method. Unity of the display was effected by means of stands and backdrops made of beaver-board painted in blue and white, the Howard colors.

The medical school itself was the central theme of the exhibit. The materials were set up as fac-

tual presentations which showed phases of the activities of the institution. Since the convention was held in New York at the time of the World's Fair keynoting the "World of Tomorrow," the trylon, one of the symbols of this Fair, was incorporated into our design to denote the modern spirit and forward vision of work at Howard.

The visitor on entering the door found his eye directed by the bases of two triangular tables on either side of the room to the apex of a large triangular table in the center. The lines formed by the sides of this central table and the planes of the trylon lying upon the table, focussed the eye on the large photograph of the Howard University School of Medicine in the center of the large backdrop. This photograph of the school was the center of the exhibit and the largest single object in it. It was surmounted by the seal of the University, on either side of which two bisons, traditional symbols of the University, stood guard.

Next in point of conspicuousness were two large exhibit boards on either side of the photograph of the school. The entering visitor was naturally guided to these by the aisles between the central and triangular tables on either side which opened outward as the rear wall of the room was approached. On the left display board were presented exhibits in Pathology relating to syphilis and disorders of the female reproductive system. On the right display board were shown photo-

graphs illustrating an original investigation in Anatomy, concerned with the union of the cranial and facial skeletons. Additional pathological exhibits were on the walls to the right and left of the entering visitor. These concerned respectively, tuberculosis, appendicitis and gall bladder diseases, and cerebral hemorrhage and some common developmental defects. All of these pathological exhibits treated of subjects commonly encountered in the experience of both layman and physician.

On the north wall between the windows was a series of photographs showing the equipment, organization and operation of the Laboratory of Anatomy and Physical Anthropology together with a critique of this laboratory, as an example of the kind of laboratory now operating in Howard Medical School. To the right of the door was an exhibit of casts of the bony labyrinth beneath originals of plates used in illustration of a publication in neuroanatomy.

On the three triangular tables mentioned were three trylons laid on their sides. The largest and central trylon was covered with reprints of scientific publications by members of the faculty of Howard Medical School. The flanking trylons on either side were covered with student work. The left student exhibit featured student health reports and art anatomy, work done as part of the requirements of regular courses. The trylon on the right was covered with pictures of blood vessels and nerve plexuses as uncovered during dissection. These records signified data in the line of original investigation routinely gathered by students. Beneath the photograph of the School of Medicine was an illuminator on which was a series of roentgenograms showing the progress of cases of kidney stones under treatment. This represented the conduct of research in clinical practice. Facing the door was a small booth for the attendant in custody of the exhibit. Here copies of a volume just off press, "The First Negro Medical Society" were obtainable.

The captions were modest and uniform. The subjects of the exhibits, the departmental source and individual contributors were stated for each unit. Amplifying legends were furnished by the respective contributors.

The number of visitors was not recorded but was not as great as for the commercial exhibits due to the location of the scientific exhibits in a more remote portion of the building. This was unavoidable and the site of the commercial exhibits was not to be preferred to our room, in any case, as these displays were all in one large crowded hall in which individual space allotments were quite restricted.

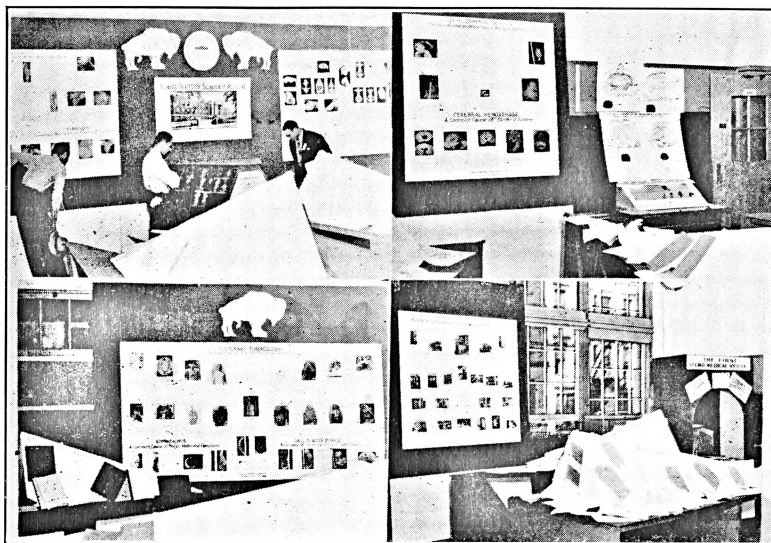
The Howard exhibit was set up and taken down by the Chairman of the Exhibit Committee with the assistance of a school janitor and a hired helper. It was cared for by a lady attendant engaged on the scene. The room was locked each night. All materials were returned to Howard in good condition, and without loss.

The cost of the exhibit itself was \$187.20, apportioned as follows: display equipment, \$105; sundries, including electrical connections, mounting materials, photographs of the exhibit, and assistants, \$51.11; shipping, \$30.20.

Permanent record of the exhibit has been kept in photographs and a scale model reproduction in exact colors.

Materials for this exhibit were requested of each department and faculty member. All materials received were displayed. Contributions were made from the Department of Pathology by Drs. Robert S. Jason and Elmer Collins; from the Division of Urology by Dr. R. Frank Jones; from the Department of Bacteriology, Preventive Medicine and Public Health by Dr. Paul. B. Cornely and from the Department of Anatomy by Drs. W. Montague Cobb and M. Wharton Young.

The design and model of the exhibit were by Dr. Cobb and execution in beaverboard by Mr. Chauncey Brown of the Brown Sign Company.



The Scientific Exhibit of the Howard University School of Medicine at the 1939 Convention of the N. M. A. held in New York.

An appreciative letter subsequently received from Dr. William E. Allen, Director of Exhibits of the National Medical Association indicated that the exhibit had been very favorably viewed by the Association.

The exhibit was prepared under a faculty committee composed of Drs. Robert S. Jason, R. Frank

Jones, Paul B. Cornely, Alonzo deG. Smith, Numa P. G. Adams, ex officio and W. Montague Cobb, Chairman. This committee hopes that its work may serve as a useful basis for further development of the exhibit method of imparting knowledge of science and our institution to the community.