

McCain, Paul Pressly ^[1]

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by Paul M. McCain, 1991

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A photograph of Dr. Paul Pressly McCain published in 1935. Image from the Internet Archive.

^[2]Paul Pressly McCain, physician and leader in the fight against tuberculosis, was born and educated in Due West, S.C., the son of John Irenaeus and Lula Todd McCain. He received an A.B. degree from Erskine College in 1906 and an honorary LL.D. degree from [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[3] in 1936.

In the hope of becoming a medical missionary, McCain taught school for a year after graduation but found that he could not save enough to pay the costs of his medical education. Instead, he borrowed funds and received an M.D. degree at the University of Maryland in 1911. During his internship at Baltimore's Bay View Hospital, he contracted tuberculosis but was able to finish his appointment. After a second flare-up of the disease, he entered Gaylor Farm Sanatorium in Connecticut in 1912 and later took a position on its staff.

In 1914 McCain accepted an appointment as chief of medical service and assistant superintendent of the North Carolina Sanatorium. In 1924 he became superintendent and medical director of the sanatorium and director of its extension service. As the leader of North Carolina's fight against tuberculosis, he was also in charge of the Western Sanatorium when it opened in 1936 and the Eastern Sanatorium in 1941. In addition, McCain was one of the incorporators of the Hospital Savings Association as a Blue Cross plan in 1935, as well as a leader in the effort to expand The University of North Carolina's School of Medicine to a four-year program.

Professionally, he was a Fellow of the American College of Physicians, Diplomat of the American Board of Internal Medicine, and member of the Subcommittee on Tuberculosis of the National Research Council. In 1935 he was elected president of the [North Carolina Medical Society](#) ^[4]. He served as president of the Southern Tuberculosis Conference and held various offices in the National Tuberculosis Association, becoming president for the period 1940–41.

On 17 Oct. 1917 McCain married Sarah Louis (Sadie Lou) McBrayer. They were greatly beloved by people throughout the state because of their personal consideration of patients in the sanatorium. Mrs. McCain herself was a leader. In 1923 she helped organize the Auxiliary to the North Carolina Medical Society and served as its first president. The McCains had five children: Sarah Louise (Mrs. N. H. McCollum, Jr.), Paul Pressly, Jr., Lillian Irene (Mrs. Dan McFarland), [John](#) ^[5][Lewis](#) ^[6], and Jane Todd (Mrs. John Reagan).

McCain was a Democrat, an elder in the Presbyterian church, a Mason, and a member of Kiwanis and Sigma Xi; he served as a trustee of [Flora MacDonald College](#) ^[7]. He was buried in the Bethesda Cemetery, Aberdeen. After his death, the town of Sanatorium was renamed McCain in his honor.

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