

Sidbury, James Buren ^[1]

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by Ida B. Kellam and L. H. McEachern, 1994

2 Mar. 1886–7 Jan. 1967

James Buren Sidbury, physician and pioneer in the establishment of pediatrics as a separate medical specialty, was a native of Holly Ridge and the son of Verlinza and Frances Williams Sidbury. After obtaining an A.B. degree from [Trinity College](#) ^[2], Durham (1908) and A.M. and M.D. degrees from the [College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University](#) ^[3] (1912), he served internships at Roosevelt Hospital in New York City in 1914 and New York Foundling Hospital in 1915. In the latter year he began practicing medicine in [Wilmington](#) ^[4], where he remained until his death.

On 6 June 1920 Sidbury established [Babies Hospital](#) ^[5] at Wrightsville Sound to provide the most advanced pediatric care to the children of the area and to those of the summer visitors. The original hospital was destroyed by fire in 1927 and the present one built the next year. At first the hospital was open only for the summer months, but in 1939 it began operating during the entire year. Following [World War II](#) ^[6] it was accredited to train pediatric residents. An affiliated nurses' training school was opened in 1942, and Sidbury donated the home for the nurses. The Babies Hospital Research Center was established in 1961. Sidbury is credited with introducing new methods of infant feeding, immunizations, and pediatric management, and with educating the public and the profession in many principles of pediatrics. The Babies Hospital closed in 1978, as there were more general hospitals able to care for babies and children.



Postcard image of "Baby Hospital, Wrightsville Sound, N.C.," circa 1915-1930, from the Durwood Barbour Collection of North Carolina Postcards, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. James Sidbury established the Babies Hospital at Wrightsville.

^[7]In 1965 the J. Buren Sidbury Chair of Pediatrics at [Duke University](#) ^[8] was created from an endowment given by Sidbury and set up by Duke trustees as a tribute to him. He served as a trustee at Duke (1947–63) and as president of the American Pediatric Society, Medical Society Foundation of North Carolina, [North Carolina Medical Society](#) ^[9], New Hanover County Medical Society, and North Carolina Pediatric Society. Sidbury was a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons and a member of the American Academy of Pediatricians. For many years he was a member of the Rotary Club in Wilmington.

On 1 Jan. 1916 he married Willie W. Daniel (19 June 1889–23 Oct. 1948), the daughter of the Reverend William Wellington and Alice Rowena Aull Daniel. Her father, an attorney and a Methodist minister in South Carolina, became president of Columbia College in that state. Willie Sidbury had attended Columbia College and Columbia University in New York City. Active in local and state affairs, she was a member of [Sorosis](#) ^[10] and president of the North Carolina Association of Parents and Teachers, the North Carolina Garden Clubs, and the North Carolina Medical Auxiliary. During World War II she was in charge of Red Cross volunteer work for the local chapter. After her death Dr. Sidbury gave the chancel window in Grace Methodist Church in memory of her many years of faithful service to that church.

Sidbury and his wife had three children: Billie (Mrs. Robert A. Little), Rowena (Mrs. Ivan Lenart), and James Buren, Jr. (m. Alice Lucas Rayle). Both Rowena and James became pediatricians. Dr. Sidbury, Jr., for a number of years was professor of pediatrics and director of the Clinical Research Unit at Duke University before serving as scientific director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Bethesda, Md.

The Sidburys lived at 15 North Fifth Street beside the First Baptist Church. Sidbury gave the home to the church, and it was used as a Sunday school. Portraits of him—both painted by William C. Fields—are located at Babies Hospital and in Duke Medical Center. James and Willie Sidbury were buried in [Oakdale Cemetery](#) ^[11], Wilmington.

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Additional Resources:

Southeastern Engraving Company. "Portrait of Dr. James Sidbury, founders of Babies Hospital." Photograph. ca. 1960. Accession No. 83.476.2, Online Collection, Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear. <http://hslcf.org/collections/photos/571.shtml> [12] (accessed April 29, 2014).

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