

THEODOR I. PREDA HOSPITAL FROM CRAIOVA BETWEEN THE YEARS 1870-1910

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Abstract

One of the most important hospitals in Craiova, hospital Theodor I. Preda, was the result of private initiatives in health care. It was founded in 1870 by the Municipality of Craiova, according to the request expressed by Theodore I. Preda in his will. Until 1910 it functioned in the homes of the donor and the money necessary for the activity came from leasing out the Stârcovița and Cearângul estates that belonged to Theodor I. Preda and were donated to the town hall in order to maintain the hospital that would bear his name. Thanks to the efforts of the city hall but also of accrued income, it was possible to put up another building. The new premises of the hospital, which was opened in 1910, improved work and turned it into a modern hospital.

Keywords: hospital, medical care, Theodor I. Preda, Craiova.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, in Craiova there were some temporary hospitals, which operated in private homes, but did not have everything necessary. The duration of activities of these hospitals depended on the donated amount of funds, which often did not last more than a year or two, and after that period the hospital would be closed. Medicine practiced here for the civilian population was empirical, while the aristocracy resorted to scientific and medical treatments in the West [1].

All these hospitals appeared in response to the necessities of those times but they were not organized, subsidized and controlled by the state. Because of their temporary character and the poor healthcare provided those hospitals cared for the incurable, vagrants and beggars, infirm and dying - they were maintained by the mercy of citizens and unstable funds; they could not cover the constantly growing needs. So they did not meet the terms of the aim pursued, but they were only improvisations that treated patients only during warm seasons, being shut down in the cold season [1].

Other temporary hospitals were the military ones. They functioned before the establishment of the permanent

Military Hospital in August 1831. Temporary military hospitals functioned during the Russian-Turkish wars, but were put out of service immediately after peace was established [2].

In the nineteenth century, specialized hospitals also appeared in Craiova, such as *Madonna Dudu Hospital* and *Hospital for Contagious Diseases*.

The trusteeship of Madona Dudu of the Church built and maintained a settlement of its funds for hospital patients with neuropsychiatric disorders. By 1860, this hospital had been improvised in the cells of the convent and rather had the characteristics of a nursing home. Here were admitted the suffering from all kinds of diseases, but also people without basic means of subsistence. In 1860, the founder Ralian built a small hospital where patients began receiving qualified medical assistance. But only in 1891 can we talk about setting up the specialized hospital *Madona - Dudu* [3], when, due to the financial contribution of the church Madona - Dudu, a new modern building was inaugurated, built in accordance with the international standards of the time.

The other specialized hospital, *Hospital for Infectious Diseases*, was built by the Municipality of Craiova quite late in 1896. By that time contagious patients were placed in makeshift barracks besides *Filantropia*

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hospital.

Regarding the establishment of a county hospital, it was foreseen in the *Organic Regulation* of the Romanian Country already in 1831. In the chapter on finance and state spending, Article 6, paragraph 19, it was stated that of the state budget should be allocated an annual amount of 150,000 lei for the maintenance of the three hospitals. These hospitals were to be built in Bucharest, Craiova, and the third, a city in the middle of Greater Wallachia. But due to lack of financial resources, Filantropia Hospital of Craiova was built with difficulty, during a quarter of a century. It was inaugurated only in 1856. Since the opening date until 1908 when it was finally taken over by the state, hospital Filantropia repeatedly passed from the central jurisdiction under the local one. Meanwhile, due to the instability of leadership, and the lack of funding, the hospital was closed during certain periods of time, or admitted only patients residing in Dolj County.

In the second half of the nineteenth century most medical achievements were accomplished through donations since the Romanian state, which was under full period of formation and organization, did not have a budget to enable it to establish and maintain hospitals, no matter how urgent it would have been the need. To maintain them the local budget was assisted and supplemented by charity acts of some locals as it was the case of Theodor I. Preda hospital.

By his will from 1863, the merchant Theodor I. Preda (1798-1868) (Fig. 1) donated his homes in Craiova to the City Hall, together with the estates Cearângul and Stârcovița from Mehedinți County, in order to establish a hospital that would bear his name [4]. After his death, through royal law no. 1389 of 1868 the city approved the donation of the two houses in the suburb of Sfinților Arhangheli, Mihail Kogălniceanu Street no. 20 [5], which had been built by Theodor I. Preda before 1850 and they served as private residence.

Between 1868-1870, the town hall of Craiova made the necessary arrangements to transfer these buildings into a hospital, which was opened on February 9, 1870. Initially Preda hospital had occupied a central location and filled a trapezoid-shaped land with a total area (including buildings) of 1186 square meters [6]. The main building of the hospital was a two-storey house. Downstairs there were two lounges and two wards for women. Upstairs were two adjoined wards for men, three individual rooms and a small laboratory, which in 1902 was endowed with equipment purchased in Paris, Vienna and Darmstadt. Thus, the laboratory fulfilled any clinical bacteriology requirements. In the hospital courtyard there was a small building composed of four rooms: an office, an operating room with a dressing room and a room for the caretaker. The saloons were low and were poorly ventilated. The hospital did not have a waiting room for patients who came for free consultations, so patients had to wait their turn in the



Figure 1. Theodor I. Preda (1798-1868).

hospital courtyard in front of the chancery (head doctor's office) regardless of the season. The hospital courtyard was small, without a garden, where patients with mild disorders could walk [1].

Although the improvement of existing conditions was attempted, it was obvious that the hospital worked in improper conditions. Also, it was necessary to build a new headquarters, which was made possible by funds from their own income, but also by conducting a public loan.

Since November 1902, the city of Craiova addressed a request to the trusteeship of Civil Hospital in Bucharest to send sketches of the plans of Ralet and Sinaia hospitals from Ploiești to be chosen as a model construction [7]. Mayor Nicolae Romanescu (1854-1931) addressed the director of the Institute Pasteur in Paris, whom he asked to send brochures and opinions of specialists (doctors, architects) to build the hospital in accordance with the requirements of modern healthcare [7].

Hospital design was entrusted to architect Dimitrie Maimarolu (1859-1926) in Bucharest [8], and the construction works were leased to entrepreneur Petre Pascutini [9]. It should be noted that the architect Dimitrie Maimarolu used in its projects French school Academy features. Among the buildings designed by him we can list the Palace of the Patriarchate in Bucharest, and the Vorvorenilor Houses in Craiova, the current headquarters of the Metropolitan of Oltenia [10]. The cornerstone of the new headquarters was laid on August 30, 1906 in the presence of Interior Minister Tache Ionescu (1858-1922), construction work being completed in 1908. The furniture, pharmaceutical and chemical instruments were purchased in 1909 in Paris and Vienna [7].

On February 14, 1910 the new premises of the hospital were inaugurated, with a capacity of 50 budgetary beds and 10 paying beds [1] and in March 1910 the hospital began operating in the new building, located at



Figure 2. Theodor I. Preda Hospital, Central Pavilion, 1908.

the intersection of Boulevard Carol with the street A.I. Cuza. The houses in Mihail Kogălniceanu street were sold to G.G. Vorvoreanu, the money obtained being used for maintaining the hospital [6].

The new building of the hospital was located on an area of two hectares; it had a garden in front and was composed of three pavilions (Fig. 2). The main body consisted of four large lounges and seven private wards in which 50 beds were installed [1].

The most common diseases treated in this hospital were: respiratory diseases, followed by ophthalmologic disorders, rheumatism, malaria, gastric diseases. Most of the surgical operations performed were ophthalmic due to the presence of the famous ophthalmologist in Craiova, Doctor Wilhelm Joseph Fabricius (1830-1888) (Fig. 3), a native of Brasov, a graduate of the Faculty of Medicine in Vienna.

Doctor Fabricius, who worked in all three major hospitals in Craiova, Filantropia, Preda and Madonna-Dudu, was appointed physician at the beginning of 1870 of the newly established hospital Preda [11]. In this capacity he extended the reputation of Preda hospital far outside the borders of Romania. He had over 3000 successful cataract operations in patients across the country and abroad, in the Balkans and Asia Minor.

His work was appreciated by the Superior Health Council which thanked him for the outstanding results obtained as physician in Preda and Madona - Dudu hospitals in Craiova [12].

Among physicians who were heads of Preda hospital after the eminent doctor Fabricius passed away we can recall Doctor Nicolae Roscovschi (1840-1897) (Fig. 4) and Doctor Dumitru Vernescu (1866-1937) (Fig. 5), who conducted an extensive activity in this hospital, which was intertwined with that of organizer of the hospital life. Since 1900, Dr. Vernescu, as chief physician of the hospital, sent a memorandum report to the town hall, in which he reported mistakes and shortcomings and inadequacy of construction for continued operation in Kogălniceanu Street buildings

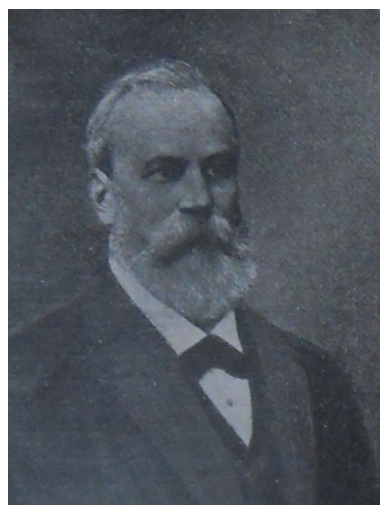


Figure 3. Doctor Wilhelm Joseph Fabricius (1830-1888).



Figure 4. Doctor Nicolae Roscovschi (1840-1897).

and proposed building a new hospital in another place. Under his leadership the new premises of the hospital were built and inaugurated.

As mentioned in the beginning, the hospital Preda



Figure 5. Doctor Dumitru Vernescu (1866-1937).

was endowed by its founder with estates and marketable securities administered by the Town Hall of Craiova. Renting estates was usually a term of seven years, and the amounts obtained were plentiful for hospital maintenance, which had a continuous activity due to constant assigned revenue. In three consecutive financial years, from 1897 to 1901, the hospital budget was in surplus [5].

We conclude that the hospital established by Theodor I. Preda donation was a model of effective management of the business of healthcare.

The establishment of *Theodore I. Preda* hospital study can currently be used as an example of developing a hospital. In the period studied the number of hospitals in Craiova was insufficient as compared to the total population they serve. Therefore, the establishment of *Theodore I. Preda* hospital was welcome. Even more so as it received prestigious healthcare which made the hospital famous across borders.

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