

Burrill B. Crohn (1884–1983)

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BURRILL B. CROHN (Fig.) was not the first or only Mount Sinai Hospital physician to have a disease named after him. But “Crohn’s disease” continues to resonate worldwide and probably will continue to do so even after the etiology of this enigmatic illness is discovered.

Burrill Crohn was one of twelve children born into a German-Jewish immigrant family. His father settled in New York City and earned a livelihood as a stockbroker. The children never lacked the necessities of life, but had to forego its luxuries. At age 13 (1907), Burrill entered the City University of New York; he graduated at age 18. He obtained his medical degree from Columbia University’s College of Physicians and Surgeons after four years. Having passed a comprehensive examination, he was appointed to The Mount Sinai Hospital for a two-year rotating internship and a year’s fellowship in a clinical laboratory under the direction of Emmanuel Libman (of Libman-Sachs endocarditis). This was the conventional pathway of bright young men at that time at The Mount Sinai Hospital.

In later years, Crohn wrote a short personal biography entitled *Notes on the Evolution of a Medical Specialist 1907–1963* (1). It is delightfully written and gives a picture of his development as he saw it. I had met him, of course, when I entered Mount Sinai for my own internship just seven years after the publication in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* of

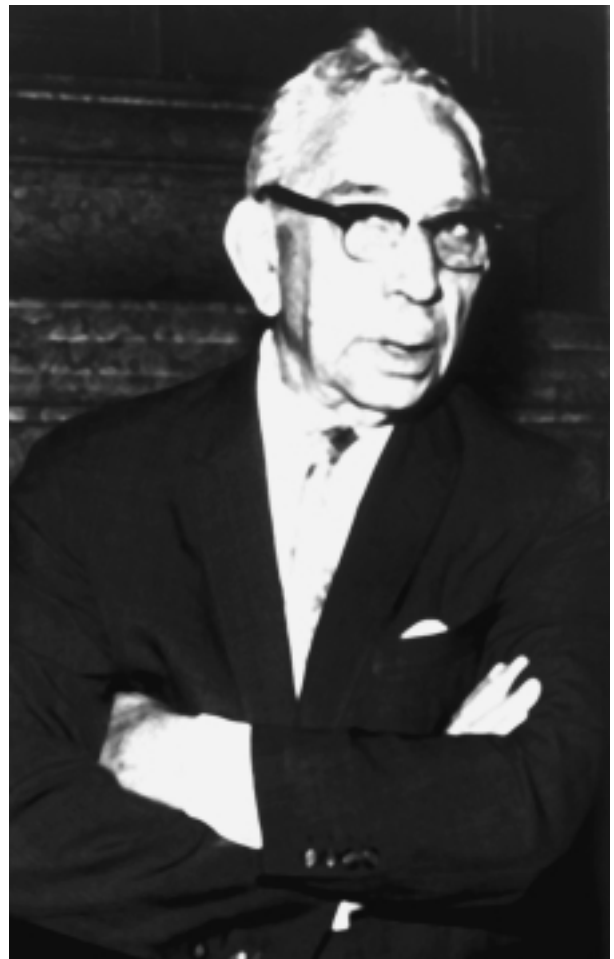


Fig. Dr. Burrill B. Crohn.

the paper on regional enteritis, and was amused by the slightly skeptical medical atmosphere which surrounded the importance of this curious entity of 14 cases. (Hugh Baron’s account of the discovery of this disease, which can be in chapter 19, is in my opinion, the most even-handed and detailed account of the road that led to its discovery.) When I returned to

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