John Michael Humphrey Fallon was born in Worcester, Massachusetts on September 17, 1901 the only child of surgeon Michael F. Fallon, M.D., founder of the Fallon Clinic in 1928, and Ella (Ford) Fallon. John was said to have witnessed his first operation at age nine and occasionally accompanied his father on rounds in the hospital. It was at this early age he decided he wanted to become a surgeon.

He was an excellent student, graduating from Holy Cross College at 18 and receiving his degree from Harvard Medical School in 1923. He interned at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester and later at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston. His surgical residency was at St. Vincent Hospital and in January 1927 he was appointed a Fellow in surgery at Mayo Clinic. As well as assisting Doctor W. J. Mayo during his last years of performing surgery, Doctor Fallon was also first assistant to Doctor Waltman Walters. While at Mayo, Doctor Fallon was active in the Salerno Club, which later became Mayo Clinic History of Medicine Society, and the Surgeons’ Travel Club.

After his Fellowship ended in 1929 he returned to Worcester and became Director of the Fallon Clinic and chief of surgery at St. Vincent Hospital. He maintained a warm friendship with both Mayo brothers and his instructors and was always proud of his association with Mayo. His first marriage to Kathleen McCann ended with her tragic death following the birth of a son. A few years later at his first Mayo Alumni meeting in 1934, he met Frances Lohbauer and the two were married in December that same year. In honor of the Mayo brothers, Doctor Fallon named one of his sons William Charles Mayo Fallon.

Doctor Fallon was something of a renaissance man -- a prolific writer with more than 150 articles in his bibliography on surgery, gynecology, surgical photography, medical history and poetry. At the time of his death he was editing A Handbook of Medical Photography. He was also a mountain climber, skier, hunter, swimmer, fisherman and sailor. He volunteered for both the Worcester and Shrewsbury Fire Departments and enjoyed taking children and the young at heart for rides in an old Model-T fire truck around his spacious yard. He restored a former colonial inn in Shrewsbury into a beautiful home for his growing family. Two rooms in this house were converted into a library and den for his large and valuable collection of books.

Doctor Fallon attended the June 1951 meeting of the American Medical Association in Atlantic City and met with many friends and colleagues. Shortly after this meeting, on June 21, he was stricken with a heart attack and died at his home.

In September, 1964, during the Mayo Centennial Celebration, Mrs. Fallon and three of her children came to Rochester to present around 200 titles from Doctor Fallon’s extensive library to Mayo Clinic Library. The presentation was held at a business meeting of the alumni of the Mayo Clinic in Plummer Hall. About this generous gift, Doctor Nobert O. Hanson said: They [the books] will serve as the source of intellectual stimulation and pleasure and as the tools for scholastic research for physicians and medical scholars for generations to come.

Dissecting Room

When these were carried down the road
no friends went on ahead To open earth;
There was no cross upon the grave;
There was no grave. These are unwanted dead.

Here are the madman and the knave,
The infected harlot, killer, wastrel, sot.
The worthless of the world, taken from its midden
To be dismembered in this world
of formalin and rot.

I like to think theirs is a privilege, and bidden
As some return for gentleness forgot
or kindness hidden.
For here these worthless find at last a worth
And give their studied flesh to lighten
death and life and birth.

John M. Fallon

The bookplate designed by Dr. John M. Fallon and his father Dr. Michael F. Fallon and used in their library books.

The seal of Harvard Medical School at the top right-hand side contains the word veritas. It is joined by three other Latin words: christo et ecclesiae. The whole motto translated into English reads: “Truth . . . for Christ and the church.”

The seal on the top left-hand side is a composite of the seal of the College of the Holy Cross.
Bibliography:


Post Bulletin September 10, 1964, pg. 7


John M. Fallon, M.D., Surgeon, Bibliophile.

Mayo Clinic Libraries History of Medicine Library vertical files.

Holy Cross Alumnus, v. 25, August 1951.

Mayo Historical Suite, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN.


http://www.massgeneral.org/history/narrativehistory/


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MAYO CLINIC HISTORY OF MEDICINE LIBRARY PRESENTS:

SELECTIONS FROM THE JOHN M.H. FALLON, M.D. (1901-1951) COLLECTION

Mayo Clinic Library bookplate used for the Fallon collection. The “S 1929” indicates Dr. Fallon finished his surgical fellowship in 1929.

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