

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
WESTERN RESERVE STUDIES SYMPOSIUM

## BUILDING A MEDICAL COMMUNITY IN THE WESTERN RESERVE

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Allen Memorial Medical Library  
Ford Auditorium

### Cora Millet Holden Murals Asklepios: Greek God of Medicine, His Worship, and Myths Relating to His Life

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Cora Millet Holden was born in Virginia in 1895, reared in Maine, and spent the remainder of her adult life in Cleveland, where she died in 1938. Her roots have psychological links with the Asklepios murals and will be dealt with briefly in the walking tour of the stairwell of the Allen Medical Library. Both Holden's mother, Cora Millet Babb Holden and her maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Millet Babb (1831-1911) were physicians, having graduated from the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1882 and 1872, respectively. Her grandfather Luther Potter Babb was also an M.D. Thus Holden was especially pleased to receive the commission for the murals related to the Greek god of Medicine. In some way she must have felt she had left her ancestors down because in a letter the artist wrote to Dr. Henry L. Sanford in 1926, she said, "My straying from the path is now in some measure compensated."

As early as May 1925, Holden had prepared colored sketches that were available in the office of the architectural firm of Walker and Weeks, designers of the library, for members of the building committee to preview. It was thought at first that a donation to fund the murals would be forthcoming from Mrs. Charles B. Parker as a memorial to Drs. C. B. Parker and J.F. Hopson, but in the end Mrs. W.H. Merriam funded the \$10,000 project in memory of her husband, Dr. Walter Merriam. A contract spelling out the details regarding the murals and the compensation was signed on the 22nd of February, 1926 between Holden and The Cleveland Medical Library Association. In subsequent letters to the artist, then living and studying in Paris, the committee stressed the importance of having at least one panel installed in time from the dedication of the building in mid-September, 1926. It was agreed that upon her return from France the artist could use a room on the third floor of the building to execute the murals. By September 20th, however, the building was not totally completed although one of Holden's murals was!

The theme Holden chose for the murals is the legend of Asklepios, and explores four aspects of his story: Asklepios Taught by Cheiron, Asklepios, Beloved Physician, Machaon, Surgeon-son of Asklepios, and Asklepios, Greek God of Medicine.