

CHAPTER XVIII

SENTINALS OF HEALTH

In the discussion of the vicissitudes of life in our early history it is only natural to think of those whose life was dedicated to easing the pain of the injured, and the health and well being of the entire community. Our Doctors.

The first M. D. in this area was a Dr. J. A. Wheeler, who came to the Mouth of White River in the 1850's. In 1863 and 1865, Dr. Wheeler was selected supervisor of White River Township.

M. D.'s who practiced in Montague before the turn of the century were a Dr. W. B. Grub, Dr. H. Thurtell, Physician and Surgeon, who was a specialist in eye diseases and glasses, Dr. John Meinhardi, who had an office in the Ripley Block before 1882, later moving to Whitehall, where he opened a drug store and put up his own prescriptions. Dr. L. E. Jones came in the 1880's, having his office in the Ripley Block, and continued to practice well into the 20th century. He was a popular doctor. Dr. Joseph G. Williamson came in 1890, and built his office on the corner of Ravine and Dowling. He had worked his way through Rush Medical College in Chicago, and practiced here in the summer, and in LaGrange, Illinois, in the winter. His office building was moved to the Joy Parker farm, where it was made into a residence. Dr. Williamson passed away in the Franklin Hotel in 1913, with Dr. L.E. Jones his good friend, attending him. Dr. H. M. Farnum, a Physician and Surgeon here in the 1890's, delivered some of our well known's of today. He lived at 8581 Old Channel Trail.

Dr. J. W. Switzer, M.D., who is buried in Montague Cemetery, came in 1860 and died in 1888.

Dr. Leslie Keys started practicing in Montague, later moving to Whitehall.

Dr. V. A. Chapman came in 1899; he became a doctor by training under another doctor. During his stay here, 1899 to 1904, he worked very closely with Dr. Charles F. Smith, both later practicing in Montague and Whitehall. Dr. Chapman then went to Muskegon as an Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat specialist, later moving to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He owned Chapman's Landing on Lake Michigan. The Montague Museum has his records and diary.

Dr. W. H. Kennedy was a doctor here in 1905. Dr. A. F. Harrington came in 1906, and had his office over the Farmers State Bank. Later he specialized in Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat, and lived at 8581 Old Channel Trail, prior to moving to Muskegon. Dr. Vigge Jensen then came. He had offices in the Ripley Block. Dr. Henry Kling, an army man and surgeon, came after the turn of the century, Dr. Kinney was here with his office in the Franklin Hotel Block.

Dr. Carl A. Wilke came in 1923. He was mayor of Montague, and

had his first office over Farmer's State Bank, later moving into the Professional Building.

Dr. Martha H. Goltz, who came in 1928, now lives at 1976 On-sikamme, the family home. She was our lady doctor and was born here, taught school here, went on to be a domestic science teacher and a pharmacist, and then to Physician and Surgeon. She was over the Ripley Block, Masonic Temple Building, and last in the Professional Building. She retired in 1962, after a very successful practice.

Dr. James W. Barnes lives at 6262 Indian Point Road, and came to Montague in 1954. He had his first office in the Professional Building and then built a new office on Spring Street. Dr. M. R. Smith was with him from 1959 to 1960, but he returned to the Air Force to become a Neuro-Surgeon. At this writing, Dr. Barnes, our only M.D., and Dr. A. D. Engstrom of Whitehall, give us excellent attention.

Dr. Johnson, probably our earliest dentist, lived on Sheridan at Coon Creek. In the early days, M.D.'s sometimes pulled the teeth. Dr. F. D. Hollis had an office in Montague for many years, coming before the turn of the century. He was followed by Dr. R. E. Cooper, who later moved to Muskegon. Dr. George H. Smith, upon his graduation from U. of M., came in July, 1907, and spent his entire practice here, retiring in 1949. He was very civic minded and loyal to this community. We are fortunate he chose Montague. Dr. Norman H. Taylor came upon Dr. Smith's retirement, and is now in practice in the Professional Building, living at 4897 Williams Street. Dr. Spencer Weersing came in 1964, after his discharge from the service, and lives at 4790 Spring Street. He has his office in the Professional Building, where he immediately built up a large practice and is happily settled in our community.

Our Optometrist, Dr. B. Wayne Gillan, opened his office in the Franklin Hotel in 1949, now has his office in the Professional Building, and lives at 4848 Whitney Street.

An interesting vignette of the life of one of our early M.D.'s is contained in these excerpts from Dr. Chapman's records.

Dr. V. A. Chapman came to Montague starting practice on November 8, 1899. The Montague Museum has his records of his years of practice here and his beginning. "Chronicle 1st. Being a statement of Trials, Tribulations, Triumphs and Trusts, Receipts and Disbursements, Rewards, Faithful and otherwise, which in the Town and Locality of Montague, Michigan, did befall Dr. V. A. Chapman during a period of his life as here is set forth."

Had three patients his first day. December 6, 1899, "visit and medicine for Gertie at Huston's Home and visit to oldest girl at Flower Creek. Got lunch for self at Huston's, got lunch for Dolly (horse) at Flower Creek, arrived home at 10:30 p.m., cold drive. Paid Watson \$7.00 for room and board. Paid up Dolly's

board (horse) at Smith's and moved Dolly from Petersons barn to Caulkins stable, intend to take care of her myself, bought oats from Smith for \$1.25. Office calls were 50¢ house calls, \$2.00 and country calls \$4.00 and \$5.00. Sent \$5.00 to mother (postal order) on December 19, 1899. On December 22nd sent \$1.00 to father and \$1.00 to mother for Christmas present."

"While at Saucrofts, Dolly got loose and ran away, tore blanket and splintered single tree consider that I got off lucky. Got green maple wood from country, paid boy 20¢ for carrying it upstairs. Monday, January 1, 1900. This morning lifes Journey starts upon a new year, a new unknown land to explore. A land full of ? ? ?. Bought a new cutter and on a call on January 1, cutter struck a rock in turning a corner spilled Dr. Smith and I out of cutter, broke thills in several places, spliced them and came home, my new cutter too. On January 2, call had bad drive nearly tipped over 3 or 4 times, had to climb out and get Dolly out of snow banks 3 or 4 times. Office rent was \$4.00 per month. Awful drive, regular blizzard, mud in places, that is not God's country out that way. Got in order for drugs over \$50. worth, can't see how in thunder I'm ever going to pay for them. Blizzards, no trains today and no business were winter entries. February 8, 1900, very hard rain all night, took away heavy snow and flooded the flats found Dolly standing in water. N. H. Webb called to consult me about his blooded heifer which is sick 2 R/X's and directed to give 1/2 # of epon salts after the other medicine. Adam Born shod Dolly all around today. Charles Wiard hauled small load of sawdust for bedding. July 8, 1900, so here endeth 1st Chronicle year. Continuation of year record of trials and tribulations may be encountered in year book styled "Chronicle 2nd" which year records shall be set forth from time to time hereafter in writing of pen and ink."

The doctor kept office hours on Sunday. In September, 1900, his earnings were \$400.55. January, 1901, was \$597.65.