

OVERTON COUNTY TENNESSEE

Bicentennial echoes of the History of Overton County Tennessee

By Robert L. and Mary Eldridge - 1976

Chapter 27: THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE

A large part of the early history of the healing arts or the practice of medicine in this county is fragmentary. The names of the first doctors who practiced in this section are not known to the writer. It is perhaps safe to say that many of the early doctors in this wilderness section practiced without a formal degree from a medical school. Many herbs, roots, barks, mineral waters and chemicals were used as remedies, some of which were learned from the Indians. The treatment of typhoid, pneumonia, and tuberculosis were not generally successful and these diseases were known as the vicious killers.

Many of the pioneer family doctors were long remembered with affection and gratitude. They traveled horseback over rough, dusty or muddy roads, fording swollen streams, carrying their pillbags containing many of their remedies, which were dosed out with a penknife. They also carried forceps for pulling teeth, lances and a few sedatives and supplies for minor operations. They were frequently called to attend childbirth, set broken bones, dress wounds and pull teeth, giving hope to the sick. Operations were performed in the home, many times on the dining table, as no hospitals were available.

One of the earliest doctors in this section of which we find a record was **Dr. Titus T. Barton**, (1766-1827), a graduate of Dartmouth College, an ordained minister of the Congregational Church and a medical doctor, who came to Hilham in the year 1817, where he practiced for ten years, when he left for Jacksonville, Ill., and died enroute.

Another early doctor in this section was **Dr. Samuel Sevier**, (1785-1849), a son of Gov. John and "bonnie Kate" Sevier, who lived on Obey River where he practiced for several years. He later moved with his mother to Russellville, Ala. About 1834, where they both died.

Dr. John G. Goodpasture, born in 1822, a son of Mr. and Mrs. John Goodpasture of near Hilham; served as a soldier in the Mexican War; studied medicine and practiced at Hilham, Algood and Cookeville; moved to Carthage in 1870.

Dr. James M. Goodpasture (1827-1876), a son of Mr. and Mrs. John Goodpasture of Hilham; studied medicine and practiced in Cookeville for many years.

Dr. Arkley Fisk, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Moses Fisk of Hilham; studied medicine and moved to Missouri in 1858. He was murdered by two Negroes one night while making a professional call. The Negroes were apprehended and burned at the stake.

Dr. Simeon Hinds, a son of Capt. and Mrs. Simeon Hinds of near Hilham; educated at Alpine Institute; studied law and admitted to the bar; medicine and practiced medicine at Cookeville for many years.

Dr. H. V. Copeland, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Benton Copeland, a native of Overton County; educated at Alpine Institute; studied medicine; moved to Texas and became the dean of the medical profession in Grand Prairie, where he practiced for around fifty years.

Dr. Spencer McHenry practiced medicine at Monroe and Livingston for a number of years; served as postmaster at Livingston in 1840.

Dr. Michael Gabbard was practicing physician at Overton, now Livingston, as early as 1823. He was perhaps one of the first doctors to practice here.

Dr. John McDonald (1806-1860), is buried in the Alpine Cemetery. He was an uncle of Gov. Albert H. Roberts.

Dr. J. G. Whitney came from Missouri and settled near Monroe. He practiced medicine in that community before, during and after the Civil War.

Dr. David W. Davis was a doctor in the Union Army during the Civil War. He practiced in the Allons community for many years.

Dr. M. G. Sadler, a doctor in the Union Army of the Civil War, was murdered by Confederate guerillas during the war.

Dr. V. A. Biggerstaff practiced medicine in the Hilham community for several years following the Civil War.

Dr. John A. Reece, a native of the Fifth District of Overton County, a confederate veteran, practiced medicine at Algood for several years.

Dr. W. Hamilton Ledbetter (1830-1911), a Confederate veteran, studied medicine for a short while and practiced in the Poteet community for several years. He is buried at Bethsaida.

Dr. Amos Hancock, a Confederate veteran who lived in the Wirmingham community, received some recognition as a doctor of pneumonia. It was said that he used in the treatment of pneumonia a certain mold found on mushrooms, which could have been a form of penicillin.

Dr. Daniel B. Reed (1835-1906), practiced medicine in Livingston for a number of years. He also operated a drug store and hotel.

Dr. William W. Nash, a doctor in the Ninth District around 1880, later moved to East Tennessee.

Dr. Robert L. Ray, who attended Oak Hill Institute in 1883, practiced medicine in Monterey for several years.

Two brothers, sons of **Mr. and Mrs. Mike Speck** of the Rushing Springs community, studied medicine at the University of Nashville. **Dr. Horace Speck**, who graduated in 1905, practiced medicine for a number of years. **Dr. Luther P. Speck** (1883-1954), practiced medicine for a short while and moved to Monterey where he served as postmaster for 18 years, and was a hardware merchant.

Dr. J. R. Thompson and **Dr. A. J. Reed** practiced medicine in the Second District for a number of years.

Dr. Henry M. Colquitt came from Mississippi in 1850 and located in Livingston, where he practiced medicine for many years. He served as a District Representative in the General Assembly in 1855 and 1855 and 1871, and as State Senator in 1885.

Dr. Jacob B. Herriford came from Cumberland County, KY, to Livingston where he practiced medicine for several years. He served as trustee of Overton County 1870-72. He also was a merchant and also owned a water mill in the western part of the town. He died in 1881.

Dr. J. Lafayette Colquitt was a practicing physician in Livingston around the year 1880. He moved to Plano, Texas.

Dr. James G. Brown (1841-1891), was a medical doctor in Livingston for a number of years. He was a minister of the Christian Church.

Dr. Henry Stephens (1825-1896), practiced medicine in the Alpine and Monroe communities for a number of years. He was a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Dr. Vollie Waddle lived and practiced medicine in the Hilham community around the year 1890.

Dr. F. Marion Bilbrey, who lived in the Flat Creek community around the turn of the century, was a herb doctor.

Dr. Dawson Morgan, (1856-1897), practiced medicine in the Hilham community around the year 1890.

Dr. Isaac O. Turitt was a doctor in Living around the year 1880. He also operated a drug store which was located on the north side of the Public Square.

Dr. J. N. Chism was a practicing physician in Livingston for a number of years prior to 1885. He also operated a drug store with his brother L. B. Chism.

Dr. John F. Kile was for many years a practicing physician in the Fourth District of Overton County.

Dr. Jacob M. Shelton lived at Monroe and practiced medicine in that community for a number of years. He also operated a general store at Monroe and was very active in the work of fraternal orders. He moved to Bushnell, Florida and died in 1915.

Dr. Thomas B. Langford (1855-1942), practiced medicine in the Hilham community for around sixty years.

Dr. R. L. Burks (1848-1925), a native of Bedford County, a Confederate veteran; located at Beaver Hill and was the only doctor in the Eight District around 1880. He moved to Livingston where he practiced medicine and operated a drug store for many years.

Dr. Melville Boozer Capps (1858-1921), a graduate of Vanderbilt University in 1880 and the University of Nashville in 1881; practiced medicine in Livingston for around forty years. He served as mayor of Livingston, 1905-06; postmaster of Livingston, 1914-20; and Grand Illustrious Master of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Master Masons of Tenn. in 1915. He was the father of **Dr. J. Doak Capps**.

Dr. John Bigelow Cummings (1858-1958), born at Myers Mill in Overton County; taught school at Hilham; attended Sewanee College; MD degree at the University of Nashville in 1898; located at Fort Worth, Texas. He celebrated his one hundredth birthday in Cookeville, Tenn. on Nov. 7, 1958, when he was honored as the Nation's oldest practicing physician. He died a few weeks later.

Dr. William Lafayette Wisner (1860-1945), a son of Mr. and Mrs. Felix Henry Wisner and a great-grandson of Gov. John Sevier; studied medicine for four years under his father-in-law, Dr. James g. Whitney, and practiced medicine in the Monroe community for around fifty years.

Dr. David Reeves, a doctor in the Seventh District of this county and a colonel in the Union Army of the Civil War, was killed at the Battle of Shiloh.

Dr. P. D. Sims (1829-19), a native of Overton County, studied medicine and practiced for many years. He moved to Chattanooga, where he served as city physician for contagious diseases; was crippled in 1914 by being stepped on by a horse.

Dr. Commodore P. Waddell was a practitioner in the Seventh District of Overton County around the year 1880.

Dr. Hale and **Dr. Graham** are mentioned by Mary Spraul in her diary written here during the War Between the States. She was a teacher in Livingston when the war started in 1861.

Dr. J. C. Davis was a practicing physician at Monroe around the year 1888.

Dr. H. M. Kelso, received his MD Degree at the University of Tenn. in 1927. He served as director of the Tri-County Health Department which was organized in Livingston in 1936.

Dr. Leopole Hiram Reeves (1878-1968), a native of Overton County, attended school at Good Hope, Livingston Academy and Tulane. He received his MD degree at the University of Tenn. in 1901. He moved to Fort Worth, Texas where he practiced medicine for over sixty years and was active in the medical societies. He represented Texas in the Western Hemisphere Conference of World Medical Associations, which was held in Richmond, VA in 1953.

Captain Jessie Arnold, a native of Rhode Island, commander of a merchant ship in the War of 1812, came to Hilham in 1817, where he operated a general store and practiced medicine until his death in 1847.

Dr. John T. Chowning (1850-1925), who practiced medicine for a number of years in Clay County, moved to Livingston for a number of years. He also operated a drug store in Livingston.

Dr. James W. Davis (1868-1925), a son of **Dr. and Mrs. David W. Davis**, received his MD degree at Columbia University in Mo. In 1896. He practiced medicine at Allons, Windle and Livingston for a number of years. He also operated a drug store in Livingston.

Dr. Milton H. Wells, a native of the Oak Hill community of Overton County; received his MD degree at the University of Nashville in 1902. He located in Hilham and practiced medicine at Oakley in 1901. He also practiced medicine at Willow Grove and Livingston, before moving to Granite, Okla. He was actively engaged in the practice of medicine for around fifty years.

Dr. J. B. Lansden (1877-1954), born in Livingston, a son of the Rev. and Mrs. John M. Lansden. He was a graduate of Sewanee and the University of Tenn. He began the practice of medicine at Oakley in 1901. He also practiced medicine at Willow Grove and Livingston, before moving to Granite, Okla. He was actively engaged in the practice of medicine for around fifty years.

Dr. Walter Frank Sidwell (1876-1953), born and reared at Willow Grove in Clay County; a graduate of the University of Nashville and the University of Tenn.; he practiced medicine in Clay and Overton Counties for many years. He died in Livingston at the home of his son, **Dr. Frank L. Sidwell**.

Dr. Myrtle Lee Smith (1901-1954), a daughter of Mr. and Mrs., B. O. Smith of Livingston; received her MD degree at the University of Tenn. in 1926, and studied in Philadelphia; served as a medical missionary in Belgian Congo around 1930 for the Disciple of Christ Church., in which church she was an ordained minister. She practiced medicine in Livingston and served as head of the Tri-County Health Department. She was killed in a car accident near Carthage.

Dr. John T. McDonald (1858-1958), a native of the Alpine community, received his MD degree at the University of Nashville in 1900, practiced medicine around Alpine for over 50 years, traveling horseback for many years. He was a Mason and Catholic. He was the last country doctor to practice in Overton County. He is buried in the McDonald Cemetery.

Dr. William M. Breeding (1876-1951), a native of White County, received M. D. degree at the University of Nashville in 1900; came to Livingston where he practiced for over 50 years. He was president of the Overton County Railroad in 1906. He is credited with diagnosing the first case of hookworm in Tenn., and diagnosed the first case of smallpox in Overton County since the Civil War. Served on the County Exemption Board in WWI.

Dr. John Doak Capps (1884-1959), a son of Dr. and Mrs. M. B. Capps, graduate of the University of Nashville in 1908. He practiced medicine in Oklahoma for three years, moved back to Livingston and practiced for over 50 years. He was recognized as one of the best diagnosticians. He was a first lieutenant surgeon in the First Tenn. Regiment in WWI. He is the father of **Dr. Joe Capps** of Nashville.

Dr. William Meridith Brown (1882-1959), a native of Hilham, he received his M. D. degree at the Louisville Medical School in 1915 and attended Tulane University. He practiced medicine at Hilham for nine years and moved to Livingston in 1926. He was also an optometrist. Dr. Brown and his brother-in-law, **Dr. Herman B. Nevans**, opened the Lady Ann Hospital in Livingston in 1937.

Dr. Albert Butler Qualls (1884-1964), received his M. D. degree at the University of Nashville in 1909, and practiced medicine at Livingston for over fifty years, during which time he estimated that he had delivered sic to eight thousand babies. He was examining physician for four counties in WWI. He is the father of **Dr. Donald M. Qualls** of Philadelphia, Pa.

Dr. E. W. Mitchell (1885-1962), a son of Mr. and Mrs. I. W. Mitchell of Livingston; received his M.D. degree at the University of Nashville in 1909; practiced medicine at Crossville for around fifty years and was a vice president of the First National Bank. He was a brother of Congressman J. Ridley Mitchell.

Dr. James Preston Miller (1875-1958) a son of Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Miller, a native of Overton County; received his M. D. degree at the University of Pennsylvania and studied medicine in Budapest and Vienna. Practiced medicine in Nashville and Florida. Died in DeLand, Fla., and buried in Good Hope Cemetery in Livingston.

Dr. Harlan H. Taylor (1899-19), a son of **Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Taylor** of Livingston; received his M. D. degree at Vanderbilt University in 1925; practiced medicine at Cookeville several years with his uncle **Dr. W. A. Howard**; received an appointment to West Point in 1918 through Cordell Hull; served in medical corps of the U. S. Army and retired as a colonel; now located in San Francisco, Calif.

Dr. James Elmo Smith (1883-1927), a native of the Alpine community, received his M. D. degree and practiced medicine at Monroe, Willow Grove, Hilham and Livingston; moved to Smith County in 1915, later moved to Denton, Texas, and was killed in a car accident.

Dr. Andy Boswell, a native of Overton County, studied medicine, located in Texas where he practiced for several years. He died in 1926.

Dr. John M. Ford, a native of Morgan County; located in Rickman and practiced medicine for about two years before he was shot and killed in 1925.

Dr. Reid Russel practiced medicine at Hilham in 1925.

Dr. L. A. Ledford located at Rickman in 1914 and practiced medicine there for several years.

Dr. F. O. Pierson of Davidson County, was director of the Upper Cumberland Health Department here in 1937.

Dr. P. A. Ogle (1867-1939), was a medical doctor for over 40 years, practiced for many years in the Hanging Lime community of Overton County, where he died.

Dr. Louis F. Zachry (1865-1933), a native of Pickett County, practiced medicine at Byrdstown for several years, moved to Livingston around 1915 and practiced medicine for a number of years, where he also operated a general store with a drug department.

Dr. Edward W. Clark (1879-1947), a native of Overton County, a graduate of the University of Nashville in 1907. He practiced medicine at Willow Grove and Celina for a number of years, moved to Livingston where he served as director of the Upper Cumberland Health District for 4 years.

Dr. Frank L. Sidwell (1905-1957), a native of Willow Grove, a son of **Dr. and Mrs. Walter F. Sidwell**, taught school for several years; received his M. D. degree at the University of Tenn. in 1945, and practiced medicine in Livingston for about 10 years, and was killed in a car accident.

He is the father of **Dr. Walter F. Sidwell** of Florida and **Dr. Robert Sidwell** of Decatur, Ala.

Dr. Herman Blue Nevans (1906-19), a native of Clay County, received his M. D. degree at the University of Tenn. in 1934. He served as a surgeon in WWII. He, with his brother-in-law, Dr. W. M.

Brown, established the Lady Ann Hospital in Livingston in 1937, in the Sarah Preston dormitory building on Preston Street. He is one of the leading surgeons of the Upper Cumberland. He is a son of the late Mr. and Mrs. T. W. Nevans.

Dr. Denton D. Norris (1918-19), a native of the Alpine community received his M. D. degree at the University of Tenn. in 1945. He practiced medicine at Jamestown and moved to Livingston in 1952, where he has a large practice. He has an interest in the Holt-Norris Drug Co. He is a son of Mr. and Mrs. Center Norris.

Dr. Joe Melville Capps (1925-1973), a son of Dr. and Mrs. J. Doak Capps of Livingston; received his M. D. degree at UT School of Medicine in 1946; practiced for a while in Livingston and moved to Nashville and became a noted surgeon.

Dr. John Kelly Wright (1937-19), a son of Mr. and Mrs. Carson Wright of Livingston; received his M. D. degree at Univeristy of Tennessee in 1959. He located in Nashville.

Dr. William C. Dowell, (1933-), son of **Dr. and Mrs. C. H. Dowell** of Livingston; received his M. D. degree at the University of Tennessee in 1958; served in the U. S. Army in Germany; now located in Chattanooga.

Dr. William S. Taylor (1927-19), a son of Mr. and Mrs. Cato C. Taylor of Livingston; received his M. D. degree at the University of Tennessee in 1951, now located in Cookeville, Tenn.

Dr. Fred Allred (19 - 19), son of Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Allred of Allred, Tenn.; received his M. D. degree at the University of Tennessee in 1953; now located in Cookeville, Tenn.

Dr. William G. Quarles, Jr. (1933-19), a son of Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Quarles, a native of Gainesboro, Tenn.; received his M. D. degree at the University of Tennessee in 1958; located in Livingston in 1959.

Dr. Malcolm Clark (19 -19), a son of **Dr. and Mrs. E. W. Clark** of Willow Grove; received his M. D. degree at the University of Tennessee in 1946; practiced medicine at Byrdstown for 12 years; located at Livingston in 1959.

Dr. Willie Ray Jouett (1930-19), a son of Mr. and Mrs. William C. Jouett of Route 2, Livingston; received his M. D. degree at the University of Tennessee in 1955; served as a surgeon in the U. S. Army; now located in Nashville.

Dr. Fred B. Looper, son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Looper of Livingston; received his M. D. degree at the University of Tennessee in 1955; now located in Decatur, Ala.

Dr. Jack M. Roe (1932-19), a native of Cookeville; received his M. D. degree at the University of Tennessee in 1957; served as a doctor in the U. S. Army, located in Livingston in 1963.

Dr. Donald M. Qualls, (1919-19), a son of Dr. and Mrs. Albert B. Qualls of Livingston, received his M. D. degree and spent five years, 1948-53, in Liberia, Africa, where he served as a doctor for the Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. He is now located in Philadelphia, Pa.

Dr. Lester Clay Holman, a son of Mr. and Mrs. B. H. Holman of Livingston, received his M. D. degree at the University of Tenn. in 1965. He worked for some time in the University Hospital in Honolulu.

Dr. Danny Myers, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Charlie W. Myers of Livingston, received his M. D. degree at Meharry medical College in June 1975. He will do his intern work in surgery at the Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

Dr. Gerald Arney, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Grady J. Arney of Route 2, Monroe, received his M. D. degree at the University of Tennessee in 1971, and his intern work with the U. S. Army.

Dr. B. H. Copeland, born in 1937, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Copeland of Pickett County, received his M. D. degree at the University of Tennessee in Memphis in 1968. He opened his office in Byrdstown in 1969, and also has a good practice in Overton County.

Dr. J. L. Shipley, born in 1944, a son of Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Shipley of Putnam County, received his M. D. degree at the University of Tennessee in Memphis in 1968, and opened his office in Livingston in 1971.

LADY ANN HOSPITAL

The first hospital in Livingston was opened in 1837, known as the Lady Ann Hospital, and was operated by Dr. William M. Brown and Dr. Herman B. Nevans, who purchased the Sarah Preston Home located on Preston Street, which was formerly operated as a girls' dormitory by the Livingston Academy, under the auspices of the Christian Women's Board of Missions of the Disciples of Christ Church.

This hospital, named for Mrs. Ann Brown, wife of Dr. Brown and a sister of Dr. Nevans, was operated for a few years and was the only hospital in the Upper Cumberland section, until World War II, when Dr. Nevans entered military service as a surgeon, and the hospital was closed, sold and made into a apartment house.

After the close of World War II Dr. Nevans returned to Livingston and soon afterwards a new corporation was formed to build a new hospital, also named Lady Ann Hospital. The new corporation was composed of Dr. W. M. Brown, Dr. H. B. Nevans, J. A. Allred, J. W. Allred, W. B. Brown, A. D. McCormick, and C. R. McCormick. This new hospital was located on a lot purchased on the south side of University Street, just south of the Livingston Academy, where a new building was erected in 1946 and 1947 and dedicated with an opening on May 27, 1947. This new hospital started with 20 beds, modern hospital equipment and trained nurses. A new wing was added in 1956 and other additions made.

A new corporation was formed for the operation of this hospital on January 13, 1961, chartered under the name of the Lady Ann Memorial Hospital, with corporation members listed as Dr. W. M. Brown, Dr. H. B. Nevans, G. S. Shanks, C. R. McCormick, Dr. W. E. Clark, A. D. McCormick, Dr. W. G. Quarles, Willie Mae Stroud, Dr. Joe Clark, Dr. C. E. Clark, Dr. D. D. Norris, Dr. J. R. Billings and G. F. Winningham.

A new lady Ann Memorial Hospital for Livingston is now under construction. This new building will be located on Oak and First Streets, is being erected by the Hospital Corporation of America, with Rogers and Associates as general contractors, with an area of 50,000 square feet.

*See Putnam County Doctors and Surrounding Areas A-L & M-Z.

*See Virtual Community at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>