

TYPICAL COUNTRY DOCTOR
CELEBRATES 78th BIRTHDAY
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Buffalo Valley, Tenn., Feb. 20 – (Special) – Deep in the warp and woof of the fabric that is America lies the story of the country doctor. As much as the picturesque circuit rider, the pioneer builder of railroads and the hardy homesteader, his is a story interwoven in the development of a nation.

And there is no indication that his day is about over. For a time there were rumors that the specialist mania would definitely limit his field of service, as it would also that of the family doctor in the city. Echoes from all medical conventions of recent date, however reverberate with declarations that modern life will never lighten his load to any appreciable extent and that he will remain a specialist in every field, expected to fall in his diagnosis never.

For more than half a century, Dr. Samuel Denton whose seventy-eighth birthday will be celebrated tomorrow – has been a member of the small but eminent legion of Tennessee doctors who have cared for patients scattered over many counties and yearly sent their number down to Nashville, Knoxville and Memphis for operations and special treatment.

RIDES IN FORD NOW:

All that “modern life” has done for Dr. Denton is to extend his field of service. In his Ford he now goes thirty miles where twenty-five years ago he went five, and calls on a proportionate increased number of patients.

Dr. Denton was born in White County, near Sparta, February 22, 1854, the son of John and Matilda Stevens Denton. His mother was a relative of Alexander Hamilton Stevens, Vice-President of the Confederacy. On the Denton side his line of ancestry was long and illustrious. His great grandfather, Abraham Denton, came into Tennessee from North Carolina with the Watauga settlers. The Dentons in England date back to Roman days. The first American settler by that name came to Connecticut as a Presbyterian minister in the early Seventeenth Century. Of this ministerial relative the Rev. Richard Denton, the Rev. Mather Himself spoke exceedingly complimentary words – and that was much in the good old Puritan days.

Like the other Southern boys of his age, Dr. Denton’s early education as far as formal ways were concerned, was practically eliminated by the Civil War. At first his mother taught him at home where his textbooks were Pilgrim’s Progress, the Bible, the blue-back speller and the almanac. When he was 11 years of age, he was sent to a one-roomed school at Onward. At the age of 19 he was teaching in the county schools.

When he became 24 years of age he studied medicine under Dr. Henry P. Smith of the same community – as was the custom in those days. After two year he was licensed to begin practice. Late he went to Vanderbilt University and received an M. D. degree from Vanderbilt's School of Medicine in 1890.

HANGS OUT SHINGLE:

Algood was elected as the town near which Dr. Denton first hung out his shingle. The practice grew so large and the pay continued so small, however, that the young doctor became discouraged. He was enticed by stories of the plentiful corn and tobacco crops raised on the Caney Fork River near Buffalo Valley, and moved there after his first year.

He found the tales of tobacco and corn true but that neither of these commodities always meant ready money. Dr. Denton liked the location though, and the people liked him. As a consequence he has continued his practice in that locality. He married Miss Minnie Jones whose father owned the drug store. When Dr. Denton is away from home now many of his patients call for Mrs. Denton in preference to other doctors – so well has she learned what her husband would do in various situations.

Dr. Denton's ability as a diagnostician is recognized as superior to that of many doctors. In many other instances his record is remarkable, too. Of the hundreds of obstetric cases he has attended he has never lost a case from infection. For the first eighteen years of his practice he never lost a case of typhoid. When he lost two cases in the same year he was so disappointed he could not eat nor sleep for days. Since that year he has lost no other case. It is said by fellow physicians that he has successfully treated more cases of empyenia than has any other country doctor.

NEVER HAD VACATION:

His favorite sport is fishing, but Dr. Denton has not had time to catch a fish in twenty years – despite the fact that he lives very near the Caney Fork, where clear water fish are abundant. He has never taken a vacation in his life. The chief sports he finds time for now are singing and feeding his wife's flock of white leghorns.

Dr. Denton is a member of the Putnam County, the Upper Cumberland, the Tennessee, and the American Medical Associations. He has taught a Sunday school class in the Church of Christ, which he helped to organize in Buffalo Valley, for a number of years.

The manner in which Dr. Denton views his active live of service is well illustrated in the quotation with which he greeted Mrs. Denton at the close of one of his longest days. When leaving home that morning he had asked Mrs. Denton to visit one of his patients, whom he had dismissed but to whom he though a visit would be a kindly deed.

Living in the country, however, does not always go off as peacefully as it has been pictured – especially if one is a doctor's wife. Mrs. Denton took cinders out of eyes, doctored ears, prescribed medicine, and entertained city relatives all day. She had

promised the visiting children cream puffs for supper – and of course there was the fried chicken as well as the many other things visitors always expect to be so plentiful in the country. While thoughts of these were crowding around a man arrived with a very bad wound to be dressed.

Instead of being “pillars of help”, the visitors fled when the man fainted. Finally, however, the day was over, the supper was eaten and Dr. Denton came home from many calls. When he learned that his wife’s call had not been made, Dr. Denton quoted the time-honored liens about considering the day lost whose low-descending sun finds from your hands no worthy labor done. Naturally, Mrs. Denton had something to say then; but that day was not so far different from many of their days.

FACING FINANCIAL CRISIS:

The honesty and integrity which have characterized all of Dr. Denton’s life is illustrated in the fact that when the Bank of Buffalo Valley, of which he was president, failed along with scores of other banks throughout the United States in the present financial crisis, he felt more sorrow for the depositors than for himself. He told the depositors that if they were willing for the business to be taken out of the State Banking Departments hands that he and the cashier would execute their individual notes and pay dollar for dollar and assuming this responsibility the two men saved the depositors a substantial amount of money, although it meant much sacrifice for them.

During these trying days Dr. Denton’s automobile passed the going stages. With the banking obligations, a new one was impossible and the people in his community knew it. To show the esteem they had for him and their appreciation of his work among them, they presented him with a new automobile.

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