

CHAPTER XIV

EARLY DOCTORS

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DR. MARTIN H. W. MAHON

Among the early physicians of this county were Dr. Riley, Dr. Waters and Dr. Colburn.

As far as learned, Doctor Martin H. W. Mahon was the first physician to locate at Van Buren. He removed from here to Fayetteville in December 1833. For the three preceeding years he had made his home with Mr. Thomas Phillips, which fact is mentioned by Mr. Phillips in a recommendation of him to the people of Fayetteville. Nothing more is known of him. An early copy of the Gazette furnished the above information.

DR. JONATHAN MCGEE

Doctor Jonathan McGee must have been the next physician as he was one of the very early settlers in the county and located near Van Buren in 1833. He was a man of ability and his professional services extended as far as Fort Gibson; in those early days a physician made many miles in administering to the sick. For number of years before his death he did very little practicing, devoting most of his time to his farm. He died in 1862.

Dr. Jonathan D. McGee was born in Kentucky in 1800 of Scotch-Irish parentage. He was a graduate of the Lexington, Kentucky Medical College. Soon after his graduation he came to Arkansas and settled about twenty miles below Van Buren. After the overflow in 1833, which was very disastrous to those farming, he removed to Van Buren. He married Miss Mary Moore, daughter of Colonel Benjamin Moore. Miss Moore was a native of Virginia from which state her father had removed to Moore's Rock on the south side of the Arkansas some distance below Fort Smith. Dr. McGee was one of the early settlers of Crawford county; a man of ability and was for years the leading physician in the county, his practice extending to Fort Gibson. He died in 1862 and his wife in 1878. The old homestead which was a large two-story brick was burned during the spring of 1879 or 1880. Later it was replaced by the brick building known as the Meyer home and which still belongs to descendants of Dr. McGee.

DR. STEVENSON

In old letters mention is made of a Doctor Stevenson as being in this county in 1837. He must have settled at Van Buren sometime in 1842 as he says in an advertisement in the Arkansas Intelligencer of February 1843 that he has recently settled here. He must have remained here for some time. Whether he built what was later known as the Turner home is not known but he lived here during the forties. This house opened right on the sidewalk directly in front of the present Turner residence.

DR. J. H. T. MAIN

Doctor J. H. T. Main was also one of the early physicians of Crawford county. We must remember that Fort Smith was in Crawford county until 1851. He was born in Maryland in 1813. He presumably came west after his graduation, as he was in Ohio in 1836 and '37. He then spent six months at Memphis, when he was sent by the government to Fort Smith to care for the health of the men under the direction of General Charles E. Thomas. He was attached to the 7th infantry under Captain Bonne-

ville and Lieutenant Colonel Whistler as assistant surgeon. He spent six months in Florida with Captain Bonneville and Lt. Col. Whistler.

He was the first physician to locate at the town of Fort Smith, and was the attending physician when the first child was born there. He was married to Miss Isabella Armour at Fort Smith in 1848.

In the early part of 1842 he was instrumental in establishing the first Sunday school at Fort Smith. While not a member of any church until a few years before his death he was always interested in religious matters. He took an active part in Masonary and rose to the highest rank and I think at the time of his death was High Priest of the Knights Templar.

Dr. Main remained at Fort Smith all during the War between the States. It is the writer's recollection that he was neutral, ministering whenever necessary to either side.

He had a love for all things beautiful and with a mind stored with a fund of information on all subjects. The writer was a frequent visitor at his home, and in nearly all his conversation he would quote some little sentiment suitable to the subject. He held many prominent positions at Fort Smith during his long residence there. At the time of his death he was having the home on Dodson avenue built but did not live to see it completed; his death occurred at the old home corner of B and 2nd streets September 3th, 1891. He left a wife and one daughter, Mrs. W. W. Bailey.

DOCTOR RICHARD THURSTON

Dr. Richard Thurston was also one of the physicians practicing here in the latter part of the thirties. After practicing for a short time he began the manufacture of pills for fever and ague. They became very celebrated and afforded him a good income. He married a Miss Walker of Missouri. Much of his time was spent in hunting. He was an intimate friend of Albert Pike who was a frequent visitor at his home. He died September 8th, 1885, leaving a widow and one daughter, Mrs. Bowen.

The King school now occupies the location of the Dr. Thurston home.

DR. ISAAC HERRICH

Dr. Isaac Herrich was also one of the early practicing physicians. As he had studied dentistry he gave most of his time to that profession. He removed from here in 1842.

DR. BRADLEY

Dr. Bradley, said to be a native of New York located at Van Buren about 1840; he was a man of unusual ability and was very successful for a while but could not control his appetite so only remained a few years removing to St. Louis where he died at a hospital for nervous disease.

DOCTOR JAMES A. DIBRELL

Doctor James A. Dibrell was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1817, being of French-Hugenot descent, his ancestors coming to this country during the reign of Louis XIV, settling first in South Carolina and then removing to Virginia. He was the son of Edwin and Martha (Shewsbury) Dibrell. His grandfather Anthony Dibrell was a member of the Virginia legislature and a soldier of the Revolutionary war, being wounded at Guildford. Edwin Dibrell for twenty years was recorder and ex-officio clerk in the mayor's court at Nashville and under President Polk was a clerk in the Federal treasury department.

His mother, Martha Shewsbury Dibrell was of English descent and a native of Kentucky.

Dr. James A. Dibrell received the principal part of his education in the University of Nashville under Dr. Lindsley. While living at Nashville he studied medicine for three years under Dr. Thomas R. Jennings; from there he entered the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania where he graduated in 1839.

Like many young men of that period he decided to locate in a new country, arriving at Van Buren in the early part of his life. With the exception of the four years of the War Between the States which he and his

family spent at Little Rock, Dr. Dibrell spent his life in Van Buren.

The writer remembers hearing that when a young man he was a member of the choir at the Union church and played the flute.

He was married on March 24th, 1841 at Van Buren to Miss Ann Ellia Pryor. From this union three children grew to manhood and womanhood. Angela Medora, wife of Dr. Elias DuVal of Fort Smith; James Anthony, a prominent physician of Little Rock and during his lifetime was considered one of the five best surgeons in the United States; Ann Eliza, wife of Mr. George Sparkes of Fort Smith. Only descendants of these three are now living. Mrs. Dibrell died in 1854 and in 1855 he married Miss Jane Emily Pryor, a sister of his first wife, of this union four children were born. Sarah Susan, wife of Dr. George F. Hynes of Fort Smith; Edwin, who was a prominent physician of Little Rock, where he died October 2th, 1912; Irene Griffith, wife of Mr. Albert Shibley and Dr. Matt Shewsbury Dibrell who was a prominent Van Buren physician for many years.

Dr. Dibrell, Sr., stood very high in his profession as did his three sons and two sons-in-law who have passed away.

Without a doubt Dr. Dibrell became a member of the Old School Presbyterian church early in life as he was a ruling elder in the church in 1848. He was very strict in observing the customs and rules of the church. The writer remembers seeing him when in attendance at other churches of always standing during prayer as was the custom of his church. He was a member of the Knight Templars. He died February, 1897 at the age of 80 years.

DOCTOR CHARLES FOX BROWN

Doctor Charles Fox Brown was born in Virginia in 1820, a son of Henry and Mary (Brown) Brown. The father, who was of English descent, was also a native of Virginia, being born in 1770. Being too young for the Revolutionary war he showed his patriotism by taking part in the war of 1812. He died in 1823.

The mother was descended from a different family of Browns. She was also a native of Virginia being born about 1790 and dying in 1835. Dr. Brown was quite young when his father died, and at the age of ten removed with his mother to Louisville, Kentucky, where he attended school until the age of fourteen. He was also a student for a time at the Baptist Seminary at Richmond, Virginia.

A year or two later he went to Saint Louis, Missouri and while there made the acquaintance of Major Pullian of Fayetteville, Arkansas, returning home with him, he clerked for a while in his jewelry store. He was only eighteen when he arrived at Fayetteville. About 1840 he began the study of medicine under Doctor T. J. Pollard of Fayetteville, in the meantime clerking in his drug store.

In 1844 he attended one course of lectures at the Medical Department of the Louisville University. He returned the next year to Fayetteville and became the partner of Dr. Pollard.

In 1846 he removed to Van Buren where he practiced until 1848 when he entered the Ohio Medical College from which he graduated in 1849.

He then returned to Van Buren and resumed his practice.

In 1858 he was united in marriage to Miss Heeland Mary Bostick, daughter of Mr. John Bostick. Of this union four children were born.

Doctor Brown was president of the Crawford County Medical Association several times and was also a charter member of the State Medical Society; one of the trustees of the Wallace Institute, a school for young men which was located at Van Buren previous to the War between the States; member of the city council more than once; also member of the school board serving one or more times as president.

At the beginning of the War between the States he was appointed surgeon of the 3rd Battalion, Arkansas Troops, Major McRay commanding. After the battle of Oak Hill in which he took part he was transferred to the Mississippi department. At the time of Lee's surrender

he was on post duty at Mount Prairie, Texas where there were large factories and hospitals.

After the war he returned to Van Buren and again began to build up his practice in which he was very successful.

His first home was on the left hand side of Main street going towards the river just below the tracks, after the war he built the brick house on the corner of Drenen and Pike, known now as south 6th. Doctor Brown died October 11th, 1889, his wife surviving him.

DOCTOR HENRI CHARLES PERNOT

Doctor Henri Charles Pernot was born at Thouars, France, August 1st, 1820, the son of Denis Etienne Pernot a professor of Rhetoric and Philosophy, and for many years inspector of Colleges of the Royal University of France. Doctor Pernot was educated at the Royal University of Poitiers and at the Ecole de Medicine at Paris, France.

He graduated in 1847 after spending ten years in the two schools. Soon after his graduation he sailed for America. Whether he went directly to Saint Louis or not is not known. He practiced at Prairie du Rocher and Ste Genevieve for a time and graduated from the Saint Louis Medical College in 1851. He must have attended there to familiarize himself with the American methods of medicine. In 1851 he was married to Miss Emliy Annie Sargeant, daughter of Doctor Ichabod Sargeant of Ste Genevieve, Missouri. Miss Sargeant was a descendant of Josiah Bartlett, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. She was born at Baton Rouge, Louisiana and died at Van Buren, August, 1905.

Of this union five children were born, four of whom grew to manhood and womanhood. Mrs. J. A. Matthews and Mr. S. A. Pernot were daughter and son.

In the early part of 1852 Dr. Pernot and his young bride arrived at Van Buren to make their future home. During the first few years he had to overcome many obstacles, the principle one being that he was not a native of the United States but he persevered and succeeded in

building up a good practice for it was soon demonstrated that he was a fine physician. He practiced in all the surrounding country including the Indian Territory. In those early days the physicians mostly rode horseback carrying their medicines with them in saddlebags.

The first home of Dr. and Mrs. Pernot was located on the upper part of Main street, between north 7th and 8th streets; later he bought a lot and built the brick home on the corner of South Fourth and Jefferson streets. One room in this house was his office.

He was one of the presidents of the Crawford County Medical Association; at different times he was a member of the city council, being a member at the time of his death.

He also ranked high in the Masonic and Odd Fellows Fraternities. In 1861 he was appointed chief surgeon in charge of the Confederate hospital in Van Buren of which there were a number, in which capacity he served until the federals took charge of Van Buren; as he ministered to the soldiers of both armies he and his family were both protected but soon the commander of the post made him and others sweep around the flag pole and subjected them to other indignities. They naturally resented such treatment and Dr. Pernot was given so many hours to leave town or be shot. He went from here to Fort Washita, Indian Territory where he was appointed surgeon in charge of the hospital post. One of his young assistants was Doctor Edward Blackburn of Van Buren. Later he was joined by his family and remained in charge of the hospital until the close of the war.

He then returned home with his family and began once more to build up his practice and became one of the most eminent physicians in Western Arkansas.

He was Senior Warden of Trinity Episcopal Church. He served as a member of the school board and for several years previous to his death **he was its president.** When the old and new members of the school board met in January 1881 to reorganize, Dr. Pernot as president of the board arose to make a short talk when he was stricken with apoplexy; he was carried to his home but never

spoke again and in a few days his soul passed to the world beyond.

The resolutions passed at his death by the Masons, Odd Fellows, Physicians, City Council, Vestry and others show the high esteem in which Dr. Pernot was held by his associates and friends.

The following was received from the Adjutant General's office, War Department, Washington, D. C.:

To Miss Clara B. Eno,
Registrar Mary Lee Chapter, U.D.C.
Van Buren, Arkansas.

The record shows that H. Pernot name not known as Henri Pernot, was paid May 3rd, 1863, for services rendered as acting Assistant Surgeon Confederate States Army at Van Buren, General Hospital from December 8, 1862 to May 2nd, 1863.

The name H. Pernot, Surgeon, appears on the roster of the staff, and acting staff officer of the district of the Indian Territory, dated Fort Towson C. N., March 5th, 1865, which shows he was appointed April 4, 1864, and his station is shown as Fort Washita, C. N. Other records show that he was in charge of the lamed hospital. No other record of him has been found, and no record has been found as a member of the 3rd Regiment, Arkansas Infantry, Confederate States Army.

The collection of the Confederate State's Army records file in this department is incomplete and the failure to find the complete of any record of any person thereon is by no means conclusive proof that such person did not serve at some period not covered by the records.

Signed E. S. Adams,
Major General
The Adjutant General, by S. K.

DOCTOR WILLIAM R. REVES

Dr. William R. Reves, was born in Searcy County, Arkansas Dec. 4, 1859, and his young boyhood was spent in the community near Batesville.

He came to Alma in 1895, and was a continuous resident of that city until his death in 1932. Dr. Reves was

widely known in the medical profession, is said to have rejected clinical appointments in larger cities, preferring to remain with the practice he had served so many years. In the early days of Dr. Reeves' practice, the horse and buggy constituted the fastest means of travel, and many calls had to be made on horseback because of the bad roads of that time.

While Dr. Reeves remained in a small community he did not suspend studies and at regular intervals between 1900 and 1918, he did special work in New York Polyclinic Medical School, and also took special courses at John Hopkins and Mayo clinics. He was one of the outstanding doctors of Arkansas.

Dr. Reeves suffered an injury in an automobile accident in 1931, which resulted in his death a year later. He was returning from a visit with his daughter, Mrs. Robert McVays, who was critically ill at the time. The driver of his car went to sleep, while driving, and as a result of the accident he suffered a broken neck, but apparently was recovering and had returned to his practice, when complications set in, which resulted in his death.

Dr. Reeves in telling of his early life as a doctor, said a big percent of appendicitis cases would recover without an operation, but that it required several months. He said in his early days as a doctor, doctors knew nothing about operating for appendicitis, and that he had lanced many abscesses in the side, and in this way drained the abscess caused by a ruptured appendix.

DOCTOR L. J. WILSON

Dr. La Grand James Wilson, born in 1836, in Lincoln County, Tennessee, was the son of James and Elizabeth (Bourdon) Wilson, natives of Dinwiddie County, Virginia. When Dr. Wilson was five years old his parents moved to Marshall County, Mississippi. He was the ninth of a family of ten children. At the age of eighteen, he began the study of medicine, and graduated from the Jefferson Medical College at Philadelphia, in 1859, which was then the foremost Medical Institute in the United States. He began his practice in De Sota County, Miss., but upon the

beginning of the War between the States, formed Company F First Mississippi Regiment, and served as First Lieutenant, until captured at Fort Donelson; a week later he made his escape, and returning home formed Company D Second Mississippi Volunteer Infantry, and thereupon went to Virginia, serving as a First Assistant Surgeon until the close of the war in the army of Northern Virginia.

After the close of the war, Dr. Wilson resumed his practice in Tate County, Mississippi. He removed to Alma, Arkansas, Dec. 13, 1882; where he enjoyed a liberal patronage.

In 1860 Dr. Wilson married Elizabeth C. Skipworth of Memphis, Tenn., who was the great-granddaughter of Gen. Nathaniel Greene.

Dr. Wilson died at his home in Alma, December 22, 1912, and is buried in the Alma City Cemetery.

Dr. Wilson has two grandsons, who were also the great-great grandsons of Nathaniel Greene, Wilson and Harvey Story, who served in World War II. Wilson Story was captured on the Island of Guam, where he was stationed at the outbreak of the war, and was serving at the time with the Navy, as Chief Pharmacy Mate at the Navy Hospital on Guam.

Wilson was among the first prisoners of war captured by the Japanese. He was taken to Japan, where he was kept until the end of the war.

Harvey Story was in the Navy at the outbreak of the war. He was Machinist Mate. When the Quincy was sunk by the Japanese, he drifted for 16 hours before being picked up. The other ships which he was assigned to were sunk during the war, but he escaped each time.

Dr. Wilson's daughter, Mrs. Clara Story of Alma, has a silver drinking cup presented to her great-great grandfather, Nathaniel Greene, by George Washington, while he was General Washington.

DOCTOR A. M. BOURLAND

Dr. Addison McArthur Bourland was born in Franklin County, Alabama, coming to Franklin County, Ark-

ansas when eight years old, settling near Ozark with his parents.

He received a common school education, and taught for a short time, afterwards studying Medicine at a Medical College, Barry County, Missouri. He served one year as hospital steward in the Mexican War, and was afterwards dispenser at the United States Hospital at the Mouth of the Rio Grande River.

After the war he taught school again, later studying medicines at a Medical College, Nashville, Tenn. He returned to Franklin County, but later in 1864, came to Van Buren where he practiced until his death on April 22, 1913.

DOCTOR OTHELO M. BOURLAND

Dr. Othelo M. Bourland, a son of Dr. Addison M. Bourland, was born at Lone Elm, Franklin County, near Mulberry, January 17, 1859. He came to Van Buren in 1864 when a small child.

He received his early education at Van Buren, and completed his medical training at a Medical College in St. Louis, Mo. before he was twenty-one years of age. As a degree in medicine was not conferred upon graduates until they reached their majority; it was not until Dr. Bourland entered Vanderbilt University that his age qualified him to receive the degree. After finishing Vanderbilt, he entered Columbia Medical College, New York City, where he graduated.

Dr. Bourland practiced medicine in Crawford County for fifty-one years. He was one of the best informed persons in Crawford County on general as well as medical subjects. He was a lover of books, was a scholar and one of the best violinists who ever lived in Crawford County, having been a leader in the musical life of Van Buren for many years.

Dr. Bourland died June 28, 1934.