

CHAPTER XX

MEDICAL SOCIETY

All towns of any size have a medical society, and of course there is one in Knox. It was established in the year 1912 with the following officers: Dr. S. I. Brown, president; Dr. P. O. Englerth, treasurer; Dr. James L. Dehaut, secretary. The members: Dr. W. C. Schwier, began practice in Knox in 1905; Dr. D. O. White, began practice in Knox in 1897; Dr. Harry L. Bell, began practice in Knox, 1908; Dr. S. I. Brown, began practice in Knox in 1890; Dr. James L. Denaut, began practice in Hamlet in 1897; Dr. J. R. Abner, began practice in Hamlet in 1898; Dr. P. O. Englerth, began practice in North Judson in 1894; Dr. Albert Fisher, began practice in North Judson in 1904; Doctor Robler, began practice in Hamlet in 1914; Dr. Albert Parker, began practice in Ora about 1900; Dr. J. W. Solt, began practice in San Pierre in 1900; Doctor Hunter, began practice in Grovertown in 1888.

Those doctors all seem to have a fairly good practice. Being located part in North Judson, Hamlet, Knox, Ora and Grovertown gives them a wide range and, while we have a practically healthy neighborhood, yet there is more or less need of a physician in all localities during almost any season of the year.

The first physician to locate in Knox was Dr. Charles Humphrey in the year of 1852. Then after him came Doctor Swingel, Doctor Hoag, Doctor Sparr, Doctor Garner and many others. It is impossible to name all in rotation in the absence of a directory or a list of their names. The names above given are the names of the present practicing physicians in the county.

Doctor Durr practiced in the county in the early '50s, but never lived in Knox. He resided in Pulaski County and when Dr. Charles Humphrey took up the practice of medicine in Knox, having become a permanent resident of the town, he was the only recognized physician for several years. He built the second good frame dwelling house in Knox on the lot south of the present courthouse on the same spot of ground where Aug. H. Knosman now lives. That dwelling was built by Doctor Humphrey in the year of 1854, but burned down in after years, when Oliver Mussellman built the present dwelling on the same place. Doctors, like all other classes of people, have experienced many vicissitudes and spots of pleasure, of privation and "ups and downs"

in their practice of medicine in the county. At the time when this county was a howling wilderness and its broad expanses of timberless swamps, with no road except an Indian trail to guide them from one little settlement to another, it was an awful hardship for doctors to visit the sick.

With no telegraphs or telephones to call a physician to some honest farmer's cabin, the farmer had to wind his way as best he could to call the doctor to see his sick wife, his son or his daughter, and frequently when the doctor did arrive it was too late, having done his best to reach the bedside of that poor family. Forging the streams, as we did not have a bridge in the county; trailing through the swamp, and sometimes hid from view by the tall blue-joint so common on our driest prairies, is it any wonder that the physician would be too late to render any assistance to the sick mother or other members of the family? Now a physician can go miles and miles in a remarkably short time with his automobile, as our county has improved, roads opened up, gravel roads running in all directions, making it possible for the doctors to travel in that way. There are not many in Knox at this time that lived here in those days. Not many here now to tell of the hardships and privations experienced in old times. None of our physicians of the early '50s are here to tell you of their personal experience while practicing their professions at that time; but there are those who lived here then that can tell you that they witnessed those conditions and had a part in them in and around the year of 1850, the year that Starke County was organized.

The members of the Starke County Medical Society can console themselves with the knowledge that they will not be called upon to brave the storm or face the wild ferocious animals as did their brother physicians of the years gone by. The physician had to make his visits mostly on horseback until we began to have better roads through the country, and it was a common thing in those days for a doctor to stay all night when he visited the sick, as he often had to go a long distance, and to ride through the sparsely settled country was not very pleasant, especially after night, with nothing to guide him on his way but some Indian trail and the star-lit heavens above. He often guided his course by the north star, if it should be a clear night; sometimes of a dark night he would dismount and feel his way along the trail as best he could.

It was a common practice for those at home to open wide the window shades, "if they had a window," to let the light shine from their cabins in order to guide the doctor and the farmer to the home of the sick patients, for with nothing but an Indian trail to follow, frequently of a very dark night they would lose the trail and then would depend upon the light to guide them home.

Our people of today do not realize what trials the physician had to endure in the pioneer days. We can step into our automobiles and glide over the country with the swiftness of a steam locomotive, never

thinking or realizing what those doctors had to meet before the advent of fine gravel roads. I have often thought that perhaps it was well enough that we did not understand such conditions as those doctors had to meet.

It would only make the heart ache and perchance a tear drop from the eye to understand the condition of the sick and the efforts made by the doctors and the farmer doing their best to alleviate the suffering at their little cabin home. But all is changed now. We have outlived those conditions and can now look with pride and satisfaction upon the scenes of the present day. To go back to the time of those trying days will never be done by us again, and our children can feel assured of the fact that they will never experience what some of us have experienced in a new and unsettled country like this was fifty and sixty years ago. If Dr. Charles Humphrey could come back and call you all around him where he could give to you the true history of his experience when practicing medicine in this county in the early '50s you could then perhaps sympathize with those who witnessed similar conditions. Then would you realize what it is to practice medicine under the same difficulties as Doctor Humphrey did and some others that followed him soon after he passed on beyond the scenes of time.