

The Early Caro Physician

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When looking into the past the last 150 years or so, you will discover that the early Caro physician was an unparalleled person who put the wellness and wellbeing of the client first or foremost. Each was a person whom our community held in the highest regard, and each was a person about whom the community at nearly all times would boast. The early Caro physician spent countless hours in dedication to the betterment of the community. The greatest return that we may expect in our lives in any investment is wellness and good health. In the end that is the greatest indicator or meter of a community's prosperity and wealth. The early Caro physician left a legacy that was especially instrumental in creating the richness and success that we have in our community . . . today.

1800's

The first Caro Physician was Dr. Aaron Dickinson who lived in that part of "Indianfields" that later became the Township of Almer. At that time it was undecided where the local "town" —that would grow to be a city—would be located. Dr. Dickinson was born in Connecticut in 1807. Dr. Dickinson came to the wilderness of "Indianfields" about 1853. Concerning his practice little really is known. In 1862 when our county was still quite young, he passed away.

Three early Caro physicians arrived just after the Civil War: Dr. David S. Stevens was born in NY in 1826. In 1848 he came to Michigan and taught school in Monroe Co. After a short time at teaching in 1849, he studied medicine at what is now the Medical School at the University of Michigan. After graduation in 1853, Dr. Stevens joined the practice of this father-in-law Dr. Newcomb. In 1861 Dr. Stevens enlisted in the Union Army. For two years he served as an assistant surgeon, and in 1863 he was promoted to surgeon. He moved to Centerville, which is now Caro, after the war in 1866. In 1870 Dr. Stevens practiced medicine in Caro with his brother-in-law Dr. Darwin Newcomb. Dr. Stevens' wife Elizabeth passed away in 1872. In 1878 he married as his second wife Julia McGraw. She was likely the widow of Dr. George McGraw. Few physicians realized more respect from the community and won over more friends than Dr. Stevens did in his day. His word was always made good, and he always brought cheer to the bedside or sick room. Dr. Stevens passed away in Caro in 1902.

In 1870 Dr. George McGraw and his wife Julia resided in Caro. Dr. McGraw was born in NY in 1836. He likely died somewhat young as in 1878 Julia McGraw married Dr. David S.

Stevens who was a contemporaneous Caro physician. Dr. McGraw likely passed away about 1878.

Dr. James W. Graves was a radiant and very well known figure in Caro's early history. Dr. Graves was born in Ontario, CAN, in 1845. He graduated from Trinity Medical College, Toronto, CAN, in 1866. Dr. Graves worked for 38 years as a Caro physician. He arrived in Caro just previous to 1870. With his practice, he also owned a small drug store. Dr. Graves was kind-hearted, devoted, and open-handed. Generous to a fault, his accounting books like those of other Caro physicians showed accounts for which a bill had not been rendered or sent because the doctor knew the client was unable to pay. Dr. Graves' congenial good nature earned him many friends in the Caro community. His face was a familiar image to nearly every early settler. His home was a place where people were warmly and cordially invited and received. To aid those in need he often visited the local rural farm home. At this time typically corduroy wood or planks made up many roads. When riding over the roads, it was often jerky and bumpy. Dr. Graves frequently took a long uncomfortable ride into the countryside by horseback or by buggy to care for those who were not well or those who were not in good health. Dr. Graves' reward at times was only the expression of deepest gratefulness and the articulation of a pledged indebtedness. Dr. Graves was very learned, experienced, and skilled as a physician. When he passed in 1901, the cultured mourned the passing of the "good gentleman" while the poor mourned the "good doctor". He had shown them philanthropy and empathy. Dr. Graves was a well loved early Caro physician.

Dr. Sherman F. Chase was a preeminent member of the medical profession in early Tuscola Co. He realized success as a physician and also took on an active role in the development and advancement of the entrepreneurial and moral along with the medical interests of the community. Dr. Chase was a liberal whose aim was that every project should lessen or lighten human affliction and misfortune. Dr. Chase was a genuine health care provider and was compassionate and considerate when it came to the poor. He too permitted many of his medical accounts to be written off rather than put the clients in distress who owed them and who were poor. Dr. Chase was born in Ohio in 1849. Like countless potential doctors at a young age, he worked as a clerk in a drug store. Within a short time, he entered Detroit College of Medicine where he graduated in 1872. That same year Dr. Chase came to Caro, and with conscientious and scrupulous attention to detail he put together a general medical practice that was very successful and fruitful. He also became county coroner that was a position that he held for 30 years. Dr. Chase was Village of Caro President and Commercial State Bank Vice-president. Dr. Chase was a major figure in the local community. In the Mutual Masonic Insurance Co., Dr. Chase was founder and served as Medical Director. Dr. Chase likewise was an organizer of the Gleaners and held the office of Supreme Medical Examiner. Dr. Chase passed in 1917.

Dr. William K. Wheat was born in NY in 1830. In 1853 he graduated from Philadelphia College of Medicine. He practiced in Montezuma, NY, until he moved to Bay City, MI, in 1866. Dr. Wheat opened a drug store in 1870. In 1875 he moved to Caro where he became Health Officer and Village of Caro Council member.

Dr. Benjamin D'Arcy: His main office was in Mayville, but he likewise had a practice in Caro. Dr. D'Arcy was a native of Ireland and immigrated to Ontario, CAN, in 1851. In 1864, he attended normal school in Toronto. He then taught school while he studied medicine. In 1868 he went to the University of Michigan, and in 1869 he entered Detroit College of Medicine. After graduation Dr., D'Arcy moved to Mayville where he began his medical career. In addition to the medical office there, he also owned a drug store.

1900's

Dr. Carroll Clark was born in 1862 in Lake Orion, MI. In 1881 he graduated from what today is Michigan State University. Returning to Lake Orion for a short time he farmed. Dr. Clark then studied medicine under Dr. Spencer in Rochester, MI. He entered Detroit College of Medicine in which in 1889 he graduated. Dr. Clark began his medical career in Clifford, MI. He worked there for one year. Dr. Clark then moved to Caro where he provided health care to the community for the following 38 years. Dr. Clark also became a Village of Caro Council member and was a school board member and county coroner. Dr. Clark was widely recognized and well revered. He took on a vigorous role in the medical, civil, and commercial events of the local Caro community. Dr. Clark passed in 1931.

Dr. John E. Handy was a physician in Tuscola County for more than fifty-two years. When a young man he came to Watrousville and later removed in 1906 to Caro. Dr. Handy was of a descent that was Irish and English. He was born September 23, 1858, in Mount Bridges, Canada. He attended the district and high school there until he was eighteen years old then served as a pharmacist in a local drug store for three years more. In 1884 he attended the Detroit College of Medicine from which he graduated in 1877. Immediately following his graduation he came to Watrousville to start on his more than half century of services to the people of the community round Watrousville and later Caro. In 1882 he married Josie McClain who passed two years later. Dr. Handy was married to Margaret L. Lewis I 1890. Dr. Handy seems to have had his office in what became the Ashum Theater Building at 116 E. Frank St. in Caro, which would house a number of doctors in the following years. December 29, 1939 Dr. Handy passed following a heart attack after visiting for a few days for care at the University Hospital, Ann Arbor, MI, and after making a few final house calls in Caro. Dr. Handy was a very much respected Caro physician. One of his pall bearers was his nephew Dr. W. P. Petrie.

Dr. W. Paul Petrie came to Caro in 1928 first practicing with Dr. John E. Handy and later by himself. A few years before the passing of Dr. Handy, they had offices that adjoined. Dr. Petrie was the first physician appointed to examine young men in line for army induction. A member of the Caro School Board, the Caro Exchange Club, the Rotary Club, the Caro American Legion, and the Masonic Lodge of Caro. William Paul Petrie was born December 25, 1899, in Fairview, Kentucky. He was one of eight children, and after preliminary schooling in Atlanta, Georgia, he attended Medical School at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. He graduated in 1925 and immediately went to Hillman Hospital, Birmingham, Alabama, for an internship of one year. Following that experience he moved to Detroit, MI, where he was a resident at Grace Hospital where he spent a year. Dr. Petrie then came to Caro where he lived and practiced. On January 3, 1931, he married Evelyn Edna Chrysler. Dr. W. Paul Petrie passed in 1941 due to "self destruction". The next physician to occupy the offices in the Ashmun Theater Building was Dr. James A. Baird.

Born August 10, 193, in Sarnia, Canada Dr. James A. Baird has his schooling there and served in the Canadian Army during World War I. In 1926 he graduated from Kirksville College of Medicine, Missouri, and after an internship of a year and a half then took post-graduate work in various hospitals in Wisconsin. He was house physician at the Summit Hospital, assistant surgeon at the Veterans Hospital, staff surgeon at Iola Hospital, and chief surgeon of the New Antigo Clinic and Hospital. He was later president, vice-president, and chief surgeon at Marshfield General Hospital. Dr. James Baird came to Caro in 1940 and opened an office in November of that year. November 20, 1924, he married Dorothy E. La Gest. Dr. Baird was interested in a number of civic and fraternal organizations that included the First Presbyterian Church, Mt. Moriah Lodge, and the Rotary Club. He was president of the Eastern Michigan Osteopathic Group and was a prime mover in the Sandusky Rotary Club. Dr. Baird passed from a heart attack at his Port Sanilac cottage August 25, 1959. Dr. Baird was the physician who established osteopathic medicine in the Caro. His medical practice was the predecessor of the Caro Medical Clinic that was established at 116 E. Frank St. by Dr. Earl Branding.

In 1880 William C. Meredith, a medical student, lived with and worked under Dr. Chase in Caro. Dr. Meredith was born in Ontario, CAN, in 1859. He also became an early Caro physician.

Dr. Peter J. Livingstone was born in Ontario, CAN, in 1864. In 1881, his family settled in Cass City. After graduating from what is today the Medical School of the University of Michigan, he came to Caro and developed a practice in medicine. He was greatly influential in our local community. Dr. Livingstone was chairman of Tuscola County Medical Association. In 1906 he studied abroad and returned to work as an Ear, Nose, and Throat Specialist in Detroit. Dr. Livingstone passed in 1916 in Detroit.

Dr. Richard Milo Olin is correctly known as Caro's most famous early physician. Dr. Olin was the early owner of the Almer Street home in Caro that in 1916 he sold to telephone mogul William J. Moore. Dr. Olin was born in Perry, NY, in 1874. Dr. Olin & Son—physician and druggist—in 1910 owned the pharmacy in Caro that later became known as the Moore Drug Store. After growing a flourishing practice in Caro, Dr. Olin left Caro and Tuscola Co. and moved to Lansing, MI, where he had been appointed Secretary of the State Board of Health in 1917. His position was one of the most important health assignments in the State of Michigan. Olin Health Center is well known to those who have attended Michigan State University. After working for the state, Dr. Olin was the first full time MSU physician. In 1925 Dr. Olin was the Director of MSU Health Services, and until his passing in 1938 he held that highly regarded position. Olin Health Center was built in his remembrance in 1939. Much became of this early Caro physician who gained experience and governance in medicine that was cultivated by his early industry during his original days in Caro.

Dr. Lloyd L. Savage practiced medicine for more than 35 years in Caro. He was born in Capac, MI, in 1895. Dr. Savage was a veteran of World War I. In 1927 he graduated from Detroit College of Medicine. After working as a physician for 4 years in Detroit, about 1931, he moved to Caro. Dr. Savage had an office at 147 W. Lincoln St. in Caro that was incredibly familiar to so many people in the community. Children in his practice were often mollified or assuaged before or after a vaccination or shot in the arm with a gift of candy, which made his practice very popular. Dr. Lloyd L. Savage passed away in FL in 1970. Dr. Savage had a wonderful ability in keeping his clients healthy.

Dr. Savage's close associate was Dr. Elmer H. Merrill. Like Dr. Savage. Dr. Merrill was born in Capac, MI. Dr. Merrill became Tuscola County Mental Health Examiner.

Dr. Herbert L. Nigg: During the mid-twentieth century, Dr. Nigg was one of the best known physicians in Caro. He was born in 1914 in Detroit and attended Fishburn Military Academy. He received his undergraduate and medical degrees from the University of Michigan. He graduated in 1939. Dr. Nigg was called into military service in 1941. He served with an Evacuation Hospital in the Asian Theater during World War II. After the war, he came to Caro as an associate under Dr. Theron Donahue who worked in Caro and Cass City. Dr. Nigg established Caro Family Physicians that today is located on Montague St. in Caro. He retired in 1989.

Dr. Edward Miles: Dr. Miles served in the Navy as 1st Petty Officer Pharmacist's Mate on a troop transport ship in the Atlantic during World War II. This led him to pursue a career in medicine. After his service in World War II, he attended the Illinois School of Medicine after which he became a member of Caro Family Physicians. In 1973, Dr. Miles retired and then joined Caro Regional Center where he provided medical health care.

Dr. Nigg and Dr. Miles were exceptionally well liked, admired, and appreciated for the health care that they provided that greatly advanced the wellbeing of the people in our community.

Dr. Earl H. Branding was born in Granite City, IL, in 1935. He attended Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine and graduated in 1960. He interned at Saginaw Osteopathic Hospital in 1961. Dr. Branding operated a general practice in Caro from 1961 to 1977. He founded Caro Medical Clinic. Its office is, today, located on Frank St. just around the corner from Caro Family Physicians. In 1978 Dr. Branding became Director of Clinical Affairs at Caro Regional Center. Dr. Branding was also a member of a number of local organizations.

Dr. John H. Siegner like Dr. Branding attended Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Siegner graduated in 1964. He worked with Dr. Branding at Caro Medical Clinic.

In 1960 Dr. Richard Touma graduated from the University of Minnesota. He then continued his studies as a surgeon in IA. Dr. Touma first settled in Flint but in 1968 joined Dr. Branding and Dr. Siegner at Caro Medical Clinic. Dr. Touma collaborated with Caro Community Hospital and also diagnosed and comforted hundreds of clients at the clinic. In 2008, he retired from the medical profession. He was for 40 years a very distinguished Caro physician.

The early Caro physician provided health care to the local population that directly or indirectly touched many of our lives and improved the productivity and longevity of our lives. The early Caro physician promoted and advanced the wellbeing and health of our community. Because of their efforts our community today is doing well and thrives.