

Photo of the Month

Dr. William Jasper Curry



Dr. William Jasper Curry (left) and Dr. Clyde McNeil, circa 1930s, when delivery and post-natal care for babies totaled about \$25.
(Neg. #017348)

William Curry was born near Mattoon, Illinois, in 1851, the fourth of eight children. In 1868, while plowing his family's farm with his brother, he saw the village doctor drive by in a handsome buggy drawn by two horses. Curry decided there and then to become a doctor.

During an era when most physicians simply took apprenticeships to learn "doctoring," Curry graduated from medical school in 1875. Two years later he moved his practice to Cross Hollows, just south of Rogers. In fact, the story goes that the driver of the stagecoach Curry took to Arkansas was so drunk that Curry took the reins from the man and drove the stage himself part of the way. After a year in the Hollows, Dr. Curry practiced in Lowell and then moved on to Rogers in 1894.

Like other doctors of the era, Dr. Curry spent much of his time making house calls. For many years he traveled to his patients' homes by horseback or buggy; later he used a Model-T Ford. In fact, during the last five years of his practice he drove 80,000 miles!

Rather than socialized medicine, Curry preferred the old system of taking payment in barter when a patient had a hard time paying, or not asking for payment at all. Reportedly some of his patients offered him everything from hams and pumpkins to rugs and cows.

Dr. Curry married Emma Jane Neal at Cross Hollows in 1887 (she died in 1922) and then Garnett Dunham in 1924. The Currys had seven children.

Dr. Curry was the official physician for the Frisco Railroad for 46 years, and also served as Rogers' health officer for more than 25 years. For most of that time he shared an office, upstairs at the corner of First and Elm Streets, with Dr. Clyde McNeil, whom Curry had delivered in 1898.

In a 1942 interview Dr. Curry described himself as the "black sheep" of the family, explaining that he was "the only son who ever smoked, chewed, or dared to take a drink. All the other toed the line, attending

church regularly. I'm the only one who is still alive, though!" The Rogers Daily News described him in 1941 as someone "who is always whistling when he's not busy or smoking a big black cigar -- and that is a rare moment." Dr. Curry stayed active professionally until death in 1947 at age 96, a total of 70 years of practice.