

An Apple a Day ...

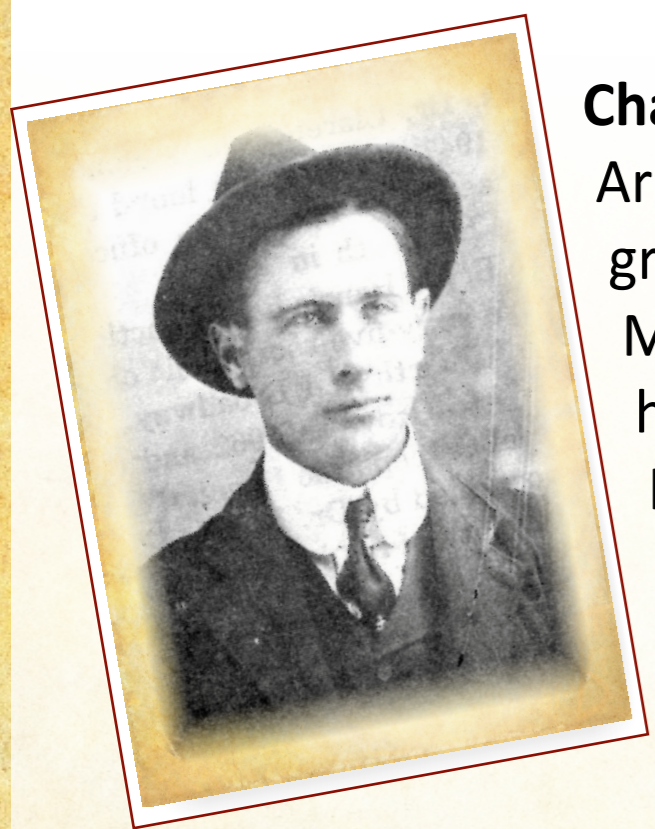
Oklahoma and Indian territories desperately needed qualified doctors, but only a few qualified doctors arrived—along with hundreds of medical quacks. Prior to 1900 Oklahoma had no legal way to evaluate a doctor's qualifications.

In the early 1880s, medical societies were established who campaigned for testing and licensing. In 1903 a federal law regulating medical practice in Indian Nations was passed. By the time of statehood in 1907, numerous quacks had been put out of business.

EARLY DELAWARE COUNTY DOCTORS

In 1937, Matilda Pruitt, born June 30, 1851, shared her memories as a doctor's wife near Grove:

*In 1872 I married **Doctor Harrison Gaither** at Southwest City, Missouri. He was the first doctor to the Cherokees in Indian Territory. My husband was then known as a "bound boy." His mother bound him out to **Doctor Mobely** when he was 14 until he was 22. Doctor Mobley educated him and sent him to Louisville Medical College at Louisville, Kentucky, where he received his medical degree. In 1888 we moved to the Indian Territory and settled near Grove, where he practiced his profession. The Indians usually paid him in food and wood instead of money and many times we would have from ten to a dozen venison hams in our smokehouse. In the early days he made his calls on horseback and his saddle was the pill-pocket type. In later years, when he was older, he drove a horse and buggy.*



Charles F. Walker was born in 1875 in Berryville, Arkansas. He decided to become a surgeon and graduated from the St. Louis University of Medicine in 1902. Walker rode west from his home and set up a practice in Grove Springs, Indian Territory, a practice that was to continue for over sixty years.



Dr. Walker rode horseback to see his patients for the first eight years of his practice, then drove a team on his rounds until automobiles were available.

Most of his patients were fullblooded Indians in the early days so out of necessity he had to know something of the Cherokee language. He learned to read, write and speak most of it.

Babies were always born at home, usually with the help of midwives. **Mrs. Betty Stogsdill**, a fullblooded Cherokee, helped him bring many babies into the world during the early 1900s.

Did You Know?



The doctor's office at Har-Ber Village features Dr. C.P. Sisco's sign and doctor's bag. **Crandall Pleas Sisco** was a physician and surgeon in Springdale, Arkansas, in the 1930s, and was a neighbor of Harvey and Bernice Jones. Harvey sometimes "immortalized" his friends, family and business associates in Har-Ber Village exhibits such as this one.

In the late 1940s, Jones was instrumental in planning a hospital for Springdale, Arkansas. When it was built, Jones's funds helped the hospital to establish its Coronary Care Unit, open a hotel facility for families, and purchase a device used in eye care. Jones also served as chairman of Springdale Memorial Hospital's board.

In the very early years of his practice, Dr. Walker carried all his medicines in his saddle bags. Though there were drug stores in town, the country doctor routinely carried whatever he expected to need on his calls into the wooded, rough hills of the area. The doctor went wherever and whenever he was needed, many times staying overnight or longer until the patient had passed the crisis.

Recollections of John Elmo Pace, born 1904, Grove, I.T.:

I remember that it seemed some of us were laid up so often that my mother had prepared a cot (for the doctor). Many times he'd be out all night. In those days we didn't lock the doors and he would come in sometimes to check on me, as my mother had related this to me— never waked my father and mother up. Then maybe he'd lie down on the cot for a few minutes and take a little rest and then be back on his rounds again. In those days if you had a contagious disease, and I think I had them all, your house was quarantined. This was signified by placing a flag on the porch outside the house. As I recall it, a yellow flag meant smallpox and it seems to me a red flag meant scarlet fever. At any rate, visitors were not allowed to come in and no one but the working man—the man bringing in the money—was allowed to leave the house.



As a young man **Dr. William R. Cowan** made a race into the Cherokee strip in 1893, and from that time was a confirmed Oklahoman, spending most of his 65 remaining years in Delaware County. He was "adopted" by the Cherokees when he moved to Eucha in 1916 and established his practice there. After he moved his office to Jay in 1932, they continued to go to Dr. Cowan, often traveling for miles to describe their latest symptoms to the genial bearded physician, who reportedly has made more charity calls than any other doctor who ever set up office in Delaware County.

