

Portville Physicians

By Duncan C. Wormer MD

In 1974, I was asked by Bea Eldridge, a well-known Portville icon, as well as editor and publisher of the Portville Review (a weekly newspaper), if I would complete an essay she had started on Portville Physicians. I said that I would, she gave me her notes, which I have used along with additional comments of my own, and the following is the result 27 years later.

Although physicians practicing in small towns are now few and far between, in the later 1800's and 1900's, perhaps most towns could boast of their own doctor. He (and rarely she) often proved to be the time-honored, beloved family physician. And Portville with a population of about 1500, was no exception. Until very recently, the village had at least one physician living and practicing in it.

Dr. Willard, it is quite safe to say was the first resident physician in Portville. He came from Friendship in Allegany County about 1840 and little else is known about him.

Dr. David Bennie, a Scotsman, came to Portville in 1848 and practiced until his death in 1873.

Dr. Cornelius H. Bartlett, who came to Portville as Dr. Bennie's successor married Dr. Bennie's daughter, but moved to Olean in 1876.

Dr. E. Burdick, from Michigan then became Dr. Bartlett's successor but returned there after a year or so of practice in Portville.

A Dr. Rouse was also an early Portville physician.

Dr. Thomas H. Jackson came to Portville in 1850 and died here in 1882. His son, Dr. Charles P. Jackson began practicing in Portville in 1879, but after his father's death moved to Hampton, NH.

Dr. Wallace Sibley came to Portville in 1850. He practiced medicine also in Ischua, Eldred and Rochester.

After 1876, Dr. J.L. Coronyu came to town but remained only a short time before mov-

ing to Buffalo.

Dr. R.H. Goodrich came to town from Rhode Island in 1882. He moved to Turtle Point, PA and then moved west.

John C. Young was born in 1846 in Little Genesee. He studied medicine in Dr. C.H. Bartlett's office beginning in 1867. Following his graduation from medical school at the University of Buffalo, Dr. Young became a partner of Dr. Bartlett. He married Nancy Comstock, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mark Comstock, a Portville merchant. After two years in Portville, they moved to Cuba. Dr. J.C. Young died in 1930 and he and his wife are buried in the Comstock plot in Chestnut Hill Cemetery.

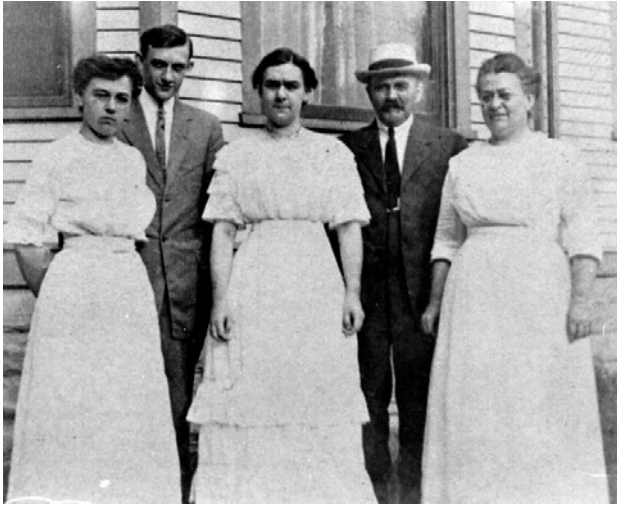
Ransom F. Rowley was born in 1858 and studied medicine with Dr. Young in Cuba. After his graduation from medical school at the University of Buffalo in 1884, Dr. Rowley began his medical career in Salamanca. He came to Portville later in the same year to practice. Dr. R.F. Rowley died in 1914 and his wife died in 1951. They had one daughter.



Dr. Ransom Florentine Rowley

George W. Winterstein was born in Montour County, PA March 22, 1852. When he was 14, his father died and at the age of 22 he became a merchant in a dry goods store. One year later, he began study-

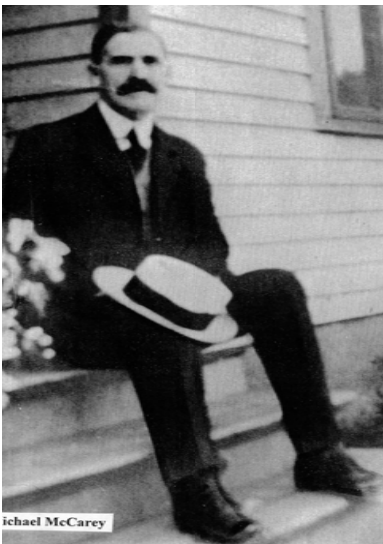
ing medicine with Dr. C.M Martin of Sunbury, PA. After his graduation from Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia in 1876, Dr. Winterstein began his practice at Palinos, then at



Beside Dr. George W. Winterstein's house at 32 Maple in 1913

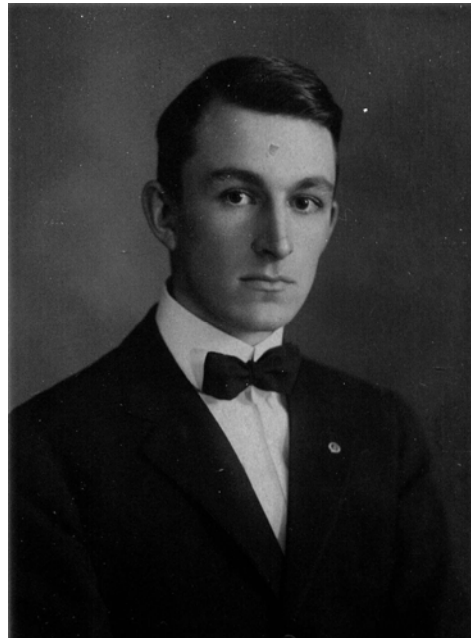
Left to right: Hazel Winterstein, Heston Carr, Blanch Winterstein, Dr. G.W. Winterstein, Mrs. G.W. Hannah

Hickory Grove, PA. and on 1884 came to Portville. He had married Hannah E. Root of Danville, PA in 1875. They had three daughters, one of whom was Mrs. Heston Carr of Portville. Dr. G.W. Winterstein died in 1931.



Dr. Michael J. McCarey

Dr. Michael J. McCarey was born in Turtle Point, PA on May 25, 1860. After his graduation from the Medical College of Columbus, Ohio in 1890, Dr. McCarey settled in Portville. He married Anna Bissett and they had two children -Eugenia and James. James married Vivian Vergason of Portville and moved to Long Beach, California. Dr. McCarey lived on Maple Avenue in Portville and had his office on Temple Street. Dr. M.J. McCarey died in 1924.



Dr. G. Clifford Hackett

G. Clifford Hackett was born in Ceres, NY in 1890 and graduated from Jefferson Medical College in 1914. Dr. Hackett married America Archilla of Puerto Rico in 1913 and began his practice in downtown Portville in 1915. He enlisted in the US Army in WW I and completed his military service in the Medical Corps at Fort Dix, NJ. He then restarted his Portville practice in 1919 in his newly purchased home on Temple Street. They had three children, Dr. Henry C. Hackett, Mrs. Robert Bartley and Mrs. Carmen A. Booth. Dr. George C. Hackett died in 1959.

Duncan L. Wormer was born in 1895 in E. Smethport, PA and moved to Olean when his father became station agent there for the Pennsylvania Railroad. Following service in the Army Reserve in WWI, he graduated from medical school at the Uni-

versity of Buffalo in 1920. After an internship at Moses Taylor Hospital in Lackawanna, Dr. Wormer married Catherine Ann Scheiterle of Olean in 1921. He began his practice in downtown Portville in the same year. He bought Dr. McCarey's office on Temple Street in 1922, where he both lived and practiced. They had four children, Mrs. Carolyn Hannon, Dr. Duncan C. Wormer, Dr. Donald A. Wormer and Mrs. Mary Lou Harrison. His two sons joined him in practice after completing their training. Dr. D.L. Wormer retired from medicine in 1972 and died in 1986.



Dr. Duncan L. Wormer

Henry C. Hackett was born in 1914 and graduated from medical school at Temple University in 1939. Dr. Hackett married Jean Price of Havre de Grace, MD in 1941. After completing his service as a flight surgeon in the US Navy in World War II, he practiced briefly with his father until 1946. He then established his own practice in his home on Maple Avenue. He practiced there until 1972 when he retired to spend full time at his farm in Shinglehouse, PA. Dr. H.C. Hackett died in 1988.



Dr. Henry C. Hackett

Duncan C. Wormer was born in 1925 in Portville. After completing his military service in the US Navy in WW II, he married Anne Elizabeth Miller of Rochester, NY in 1948. He graduated from the School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania in 1950. Dr. Wormer completed his medical training at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, and then joined his father in practice on Temple Street in 1955. They had seven children, Mrs. Judith Cowles, Dr. Duncan D. Wormer (a cardiologist in Syracuse, NY) Mrs. Catherine Feely, Mrs. Mary Jean Jean Muncy, Andrew E. Wormer, Mrs. Elizabeth Webb, and Mrs. Sallie Garten-Wormer.



Dr. Duncan C. Wormer

He founded the Wormer Medical Clinic on N. Main Street in 1970, which later became Allegheny Hills Medical Center. He married Mary Ellen Linnan Coletti in 1979 and they had two daughters, Crystal Camille and Cameron Allyson. In 1988, the Guthrie Clinic of Sayre, PA purchased the medical center and the branch offices in Franklinville, Cuba and Belmont. They operated them as Guthrie Clinic offices until they were closed in 1993. Dr. D.C. Wormer practiced at the Olean General Hospital and then at the Bath VA Medical Center until 1997 when he retired.



Dr. Donald A. Wormer

Donald A. Wormer was born in 1927 in Olean. After completing his military service in the US Army, he graduated in 1955 from the School of Medicine of the University of Buffalo. Dr. Wormer married Elinor Anne Bliss of Wellsville, NY in 1953. Following the completion of his surgical training at Millard Filmore Hospital in Buffalo, he joined his father and brother in practice on Temple Street in 1960. He purchased Dr. G. W. Winterstein's former home on Maple Avenue to live in, but continued his practice of surgery in his father's offices on Temple St. They had four children, Mrs. Carol Inglis, Dr. Thomas A Wormer (a surgeon in Canandaigua, NY), Mrs. Susan Rabenstein and Mrs. Julie Wright. Dr. D.A. Wormer retired from practice in 1989.

Other physicians who practiced at the medical center briefly (except for Dr. Maulik) were Dr. Henry

Born in family practice, Dr. Ashesh Maulik in medicine and cardiology, Dr. Johnny Dy in neurology; Dr. Menon in gastroenterology; Dr. Ratanawongsa in ophthalmology; and Dr. Samara Alwan in pediatrics. Several physician assistants and nurse practitioners also assisted in the large practice.

There has been no resident physician practicing in Portville since the medical center was closed in 1993.

This review, besides providing a niche in the history of a small community, illustrates some ongoing secular trends in medicine. There are progressively fewer and fewer solo medical practitioners found in small towns. There are also fewer family physicians and more medical specialists in general. These practitioners tend to aggregate in groups in urban areas where medical facilities (e.g. hospitals, nursing homes, etc.) are nearby. Also, although small town physician's children may be inspired to go into medical careers, they are unlikely to return to small towns to practice. These trends are driven by the complexity of the business skills and the expense necessary in starting up and operating a medical practice. But more importantly, they are driven by the physician and his/her mate's perception of the best opportunity available that fully utilizes the skills developed by the physician's long training; fulfills the physician's own professional interest and goals; and provides their desired social and monetary return.

Duncan C. Wormer, MD, Portville, NY

I thank Bea Eldridge (posthumously) for this interesting assignment and the Portville Historical Society for help with some of the dates.

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