

Medicine

By Julianne Gruenkorn, Kara Noe and Jamie Washburn

Medical care in Marshall and Clark County has improved greatly since the town's beginning. First came the pioneer doctors of the 1800's. Then improvements were made and the quality of health care increased during the early 1900's. The building of Cork Medical Center in 1972 was another great advancement for Marshall. One final improvement was in the formation of an ambulance service controlled by the fire department.

Early Medicine (Late 19th Century)



The pioneer doctors who first practiced medicine in this area led demanding and lonely lives. The lives of these physicians are a part of the yesterday of Clark County. They faced many demands on a daily basis that no longer exist. These included travel, lack of knowledge, and primitive equipment.

It was difficult to transport a patient to the doctor; so house visits were customary. Traveling from one isolated cabin to the next, the doctor was often away from home for many days.

Horses were the primary forms of transportation. There were no highways to follow. The doctor had to rely on narrow trails through the woods or across the prairies. Bridges did not exist either. The spring floods carried many a helpless rider from his horse to his death.



The early physician had very few instruments and medication. He had no stethoscope, thermometer, or hypodermic. The meager supply he had was carried in a small bag strapped to his saddle. Laboratory procedures

were nonexistent. He had to rely solely on his own senses: his eyes, ears, and fingers. He learned to use these with skill unknown today.....

Simon Jumper was one such doctor in Clark County. Dr. Jumper was born in Richland County, Ohio, on November 14, 1826, one of thirteen children. Most physicians at this time were apprenticed for a year and then went to a four-month course of lectures in a medical school.

However, from the age of twenty-one to twenty-seven, Simon studied medicine in Findley, Ohio, while working as a teacher. In 1854, Simon arrived in Clark County, where he spent the rest of his life. Dr. Jumper was very active in the community and won approval through his sincere efforts to help those in need. No matter how far he had to travel or what time it was, he responded to the urgent calls.

This life was often very lonely. The doctors had no one to consult on a difficult case. There were no telephones, no medical journals, or staff meetings. All of the decisions fell upon the

individual doctor. These pioneer doctors longed for the chance to discuss a case or share experiences with a fellow doctor. This yearning led to the formation of the Aesculapian Society of the Wabash Valley, the earliest medical society west of the Allegheny Mountains. When it was formed in Lawrenceville in 1846, the society was called the "Lawrenceville Aesculapian Medical Society." However, in 1894, the name was changed because it involved a wide area on both sides of the Wabash River (in both Illinois and Indiana).

In order to exchange ideas and experiences, physicians could attend the annual meetings held by the Aesculapian society. These meetings must have been the highlight of the year. They always lasted two days. It took several days to make the trip by horseback. As a result, it took a great effort for the doctors to attend the gatherings, but it was well worth it.

In addition to the early physicians, medical treatments came in the form of patent medicines. These ranged from "King of Pain" liniment to vanilla extract. Men traveled from cabin to cabin throughout an area selling these items. R.A. Mitchell was one of those traveling salesman. In an effort to earn money for his education, he traveled throughout Illinois and Indiana. Mr. Mitchell would trade his goods for food, shelter, and care for his horse, Old Joe. The people of Marshall looked forward to these visits as a source of news. One fellow recalled the visits Mr. Mitchell made to his boyhood home. Every morning Mr. Mitchell would go out to check on Old Joe and say, "Did you sleep well last night? What, you have a toothache! A little 'King of Pain' will fix that."

General Practice during the Early 20th Century

Mr. Mitchell liked the people and the town of Marshall so much that, in 1907, after finishing medical school at Indiana University School of Medicine, he returned to Marshall. Dr. Mitchell's brother, Clarence, came with him to establish a dental practice. From 1907 to 1910, the brothers shared an office on North Hamilton Street (now North Sixth Street). In 1910 they built a new office on Fifth Street. This was a spacious building with eleven rooms. R.A. Mitchell also had a small barn built in back for his horse and buggy.

When he started his practice, Dr. Mitchell used a horse and buggy for his house calls. For a time, he used a bicycle. Then, Dr. Mitchell tried a motorcycle. One night, when responding to a call on a freshly graded road, the headlight went out. He hit a rock and wrecked. That was the last of the motorcycle! Later, around 1910, he bought a Model-T Ford. However, during the winter and rainy spring season, travel was back to horse and buggy because the roads were knee-deep in mud. Dr. Mitchell sometimes hired a driver to take him from one farm to another. This gave him a chance to take a quick nap. If he were going to be at a house for a while, he would sleep on the couch or in the haymow.

During the 1930's, Dr. Mitchell held one-day surgery clinics to remove the tonsils of adults and children. Using an assembly line method, twenty to twenty-five operations were performed each day. Volunteers served as nurses, orderlies, and clerks. The patient was brought in, anaesthetized, and then operated on. He or she was then moved to the back room until the anesthetic wore off.

During the Depression (1930's), people often had no money to pay the doctor. R.A. Mitchell's son, Dr. George Mitchell, recalled that many times his father carried a crate with him when he went to the farmhouses. The crate returned filled with chickens or a pig, which Dr. Mitchell took as payment for his services. R.A. Mitchell added this livestock to his farm.



Dr. George Mitchell was born and raised in Marshall. In the 1930s, he left to attend Purdue University. He was studying to become an engineer. However, this was during the Depression and he felt he had the choice to become a doctor or starve.

After World War II, Dr. George returned to Marshall with his wife, Millie, their daughter, and a little over one dollar in his pocket. His father had passed away in 1939, so Dr. George reopened his office. On their opening day, he and his wife Millie, who was his nurse, had only one patient, a case of intestinal flu. Dr. George made \$1.50 for that visit. Despite this slow start, Dr. George was soon working one hundred hours a week.

At this time there were three other doctors in Marshall. One of these was Dr. Illyes. In 1933, Dr. David Illyes was traveling from his father's home in Palestine to Chicago when he was forced to stop in Marshall because of a blinding snowstorm. He stayed to practice medicine until his death in 1969. When Dr. Illyes first arrived, DJ Black, the owner of Black's Hotel and a local preacher, offered the young doctor an office, rent-free, until he could establish himself. Dr. Illyes was soon working twelve to fourteen hours a day. He was a strong family man and often took his children with him on house calls.

During this time, the majority of cases seen by the doctors included farm accidents, pregnancies, car accidents along Route 40, and, in the springtime, epidemics. Every spring brought measles, mumps, chicken pox, and polio. The doctors were often away from home for days while treating patients in their homes. Patients were too sick to go to the office.

All contagious diseases such as whooping cough, polio, and chicken pox were quarantined. A large red sign stating the name of the disease was put up to warn visitors away. This quarantine usually lasted from two to six weeks. During this time, the breadwinner of the family moved out, after being found free of the disease, while the mother remained to care for the children. A deliveryman left groceries and other necessities on the steps.

Dr. George could not recall one epidemic that threatened the entire population of Marshall or put a halt to life in the town. He remembered, as a child, only one time when school was closed for a disease. One student, a friend of Dr. George, was found to have meningitis. Fearing that he could spread the disease and since there were no treatments, school was dismissed. However, that was the only case reported and he survived.

The Cork Medical Center as New Concept in Rural Health Care:

When Dr. George Mitchell came to Marshall to start practicing his learned profession, he was the sixteenth doctor in the county, which had a population of sixteen thousand. Two doctors were practicing in West Union, and at least one in towns such as Westfield, Casey, Martinsville, and Marshall. However, people get old in time and consequently retire or die, and doctors are no exception.

By 1968, the numbers of doctors had dropped to five, and the population essentially remained unchanged. Age was not the only reason for the low numbers of doctors in this county. Some doctors left the town to improve and specialize themselves through education in medical schools. Others just moved because of better conditions or other various reasons. In the end, the county counted two doctors in Casey and Marshall and one in Martinsville.

The doctors in Marshall were Dr. George Mitchell and Dr. Illyes. Through these circumstances, the doctors wanted to form a cooperation to support and help each other. In several meetings, this idea -was discussed with a professional attorney. However, a tragic event happened before any decision was made. Dr. Illyes died of a heart attack. Now, fear was big as people started worrying about their health care because Dr. George Mitchell was the only available doctor for an area of six to seven thousand people. This was impossible to handle.

Consequently, some leaders from Marshall called a meeting in a local restaurant with Dr. George Mitchell in which they discussed the present problem. Although there were many solutions suggested, the people developed a common idea, which was to get new and young doctors. Dr. George brought up the difficulties in finding a young doctor, especially for a rural area, even if the county would offer a home and a free office. He also stated that the time had changed, and new doctors did not spend their lives working hour after hour, seven days a week. They preferred to work in a center with other doctors where they had the assurance of good equipment, free time, and substitutes that were always available.

The Marshall patients had access to several hospitals. For instance, there were two hospitals in Terre Haute, a community hospital in Paris, and one hospital in other towns such as Robinson, Olney, Effingham, and Charleston. This made building a hospital in Marshall impractical.

Two members of the County Medical Society solved the problem. These two persons were the Johnson brothers of Casey, who proposed two medical centers - one in Marshall and the other one in Casey. Although the medical centers were no substitutes for hospitals, they would establish an office for several doctors who could support and help each other.

The proposed medical centers included a complete laboratory, hospital-type x-ray facilities, an emergency room, a physical therapy -department, and several beds for observations of short term patients. Through good equipment and working conditions, they would attract young doctors. The doctors would not have to purchase equipment or a building.

The Marshall leaders liked the proposal and organized more meetings in order to develop it. Dr. George promised guidance and help. The Medical Society proposed to send Dr. Eugene Johnson

to Chicago before going any further. Dr. Johnson had conversations with physicians of the Illinois State Medical Society who were very impressed. The next step was a visit to the American Medical Association who also supported the idea.

The people of Marshall were not wealthy, as most were occupied in farming or light industry. They were hardworking people, however, with a conservative and independent personality. Under no circumstances did they want to have governmental support for this project. They wanted it to be a "people's project." The only way to get money together was through donation.

It was incredible how people pulled together and contributed their money. Children in school sold candy, and pledge cards were made available for people. One of the benefactors was Mrs. Alma Cork. She was a patient in the nursing home and donated \$250,000 for either the expansion of the nursing home or a new medical center facility. Mrs. Cork requested that her husband's name Cork should be the name of the medical center.

The committee also started a fund-raiser campaign. One elderly lady, when asked to sign a pledge card, made a donation of ten thousand dollars, with the request to be an anonymous donor. After Dr. Eugene Johnson gave his approval, construction of the Cork Medical Center could begin. The most impressive thing, Dr. George Mitchell stated, was that everybody worked together despite rivalry between parts of the county. The Cork Medical Center cost about \$500,000 and was eventually opened in 1972. This center is approximately 16,000 square feet. It is joined to the Burnsides Nursing Home so those patients there may have access to the facilities. Dr. Jim Buechler and Dr. George Mitchell were the first doctors employed in the center. Dr. George is still practicing with Dr. Steven Macke, Dr. David Davis, and Dr. Jim Turner.



When it first opened in 1972, the Cork Medical Center had an emergency room with two four bed wards, a pharmacy, and rooms for visiting physicians to practice. However, over the years these facilities have been adapted to satisfy new needs. The emergency room had to be closed because insurance agencies would not recognize it. The pharmacy, too, was closed. Local pharmacists had staffed and supplied it, but, in time, they went out of business. One room of the medical center was originally intended for use as a superintendent's office. It is now used to house the floating nurse; a term that describes a nurse who does different jobs as needed to help other staff. She may administer allergy shots or give blood pressure medication without patients, having to set up an appointment with the doctors. There are office suites for four doctors. Each consists of a series of three exam rooms. All are currently filled.

The center is attached to the Burnsides Nursing Home. This facility was opened in 1963, thanks to Ethel Burnsides. After she and her brother struck oil, she decided to build a nursing home for the people of Marshall. There have been many additions over the years. These include new rooms for patients, lounges, a chapel, and apartments for patients who wish to care for themselves.

The Ambulance:

Until the 1970s, Marshall, like most rural communities, depended on the local funeral directors to provide ambulance service. This arrangement was often unsatisfactory for the undertakers and the patient. They could do little more to help the patient than just transport them to the hospital. This was also a costly thing for the undertakers as they were rarely paid. The belief of the people was that this service should be without payment because the morticians would get their money through future funerals. Under these circumstances, the undertakers tried to get out of the business and issued an ultimatum: as of December 31, 1972, they would no longer offer ambulance service.

Dr. Mitchell developed a plan and gave it to Mayor Frank Pearce to present at the town meeting. The proposed service was to be controlled by the fire district and would be paid for with tax money. An existing state law said that if an ambulance service was run by the fire department, they could respond to calls in or out of the district boundaries. This law would greatly benefit the people. However, the fire board was reluctant to accept responsibility. In an effort to get the plan approved, the city council agreed to pay for the cost of an election so the people could vote on the proposal.

The election was held on December 13, only a few weeks before the new service had to be ready. There was very little publicity, and Dr. Mitchell was certain the plan would be defeated. To his surprise, it passed by about 200 to 1400 votes.

The city council then voted to purchase a new ambulance and sell it to the fire district for one dollar. The next obstacle was deciding who would run the service. Dr. Turner was at the meeting and agreed to be the supervisor. Dr. Turner, at that time, was on leave from medical school to earn money to continue his education. He was a certified EMT and enthusiastically accepted the position.

There was only one problem left - money for the fuel, upkeep, and equipment. No tax money would be available for a year and a half. The answer came in the form of a one thousand-dollar donation from an anonymous donor, the same lady who had donated ten thousand dollars to the Cork Medical Center.

Dr. Turner managed to get everything organized in less than two weeks. Shortly after midnight on December 31, the service made its first run and has been going ever since. Shortly after this, the county board set up a county ambulance service for areas outside of the Marshall Fire District. The two services have complete cooperation and provide back up for one another.

In 1994, the Marshall Ambulance Service improved their service by working with Union Hospital in Terre Haute, Indiana. The hospital agreed to help the service by upgrading their EMT to the EMTI level. This means the ambulance personnel can start IVs and do other advanced emergency procedures for patients. They are under the supervision of the hospital staff and communicate by radio.

In conclusion, there have been many improvements in the quality of medical care available in Marshall. From the pioneer doctors who endured many hardships to practice medicine to the doctors who work at the Cork Medical Center today, it has been a long, hard struggle that has

paid off. Thanks to the efforts of doctors such as George Mitchell, our town has the best service of any small, rural community in this region. The Cork Medical Center has received national recognition as such a project had never been attempted before. The ambulance service, too, is a model for other communities.