Dr. John Allen Veatch (1808-1870), Nineteenth-Century Nevada Physician

On November 5, Dr. Richard L. Goode, Professor of Otolaryngology at Stanford School of Medicine, gave a talk on “Dr. Curtis Muncie, DO: Quackery in Otology” to the history of medicine club at the Eldorado Convention Center. Eighty-eight people attended, including medical students, medical doctors, and others with an interest in history of medicine. The talk focused on an early otologist, who made a fortune with a fraudulent method of curing deafness by “dilating” the Eustachian tube with his finger.

Editor’s Note: Every once in a while, information is brought to our attention about early healthcare in Nevada or in the territory that included the later State of Nevada. Such was the case when Guy Rocha, who has been a great source of information to our program, contacted us for information about Dr. John Veatch. He had received an inquiry from Denise Cervantes, Dr. Veatch and Charlotte’s (Sheridan) great great granddaughter. We had no information other than that Veatch was in Nevada in the early 1860s. Denise provided us with a sketch of Dr. Veatch and a biography of him from The Handbook of Texas Online. Additional information is from the Southwestern Hist. Quart. (October 1942)

John Allen Veatch was born in Kentucky on March 5, 1808, the first of eight children in a growing frontier family. In 1822 his mother died, and the family moved to Spencer County, Indiana. At nineteen he was back in Kentucky where he began his medical studies, and it is thought he got his diploma by studying under a practicing doctor. Unfortunately, we do not have definitive information about his training. Two years later, in 1929, his restless nature led him to Louisiana, where he taught school and had two children with his first wife, Charlotte Sheridan (also Edwards).
In 1834 the family moved to Texas where Dr. Veatch acquired land and became involved in politics. He was elected delegate from the community of Bevil to the Consultation of 1835, which met to consider autonomous rule for Texas a year before the Texas Declaration of Independence. In the 1840s Veatch practiced medicine in Town Bluff, Texas. During 1846-47 he served as first lieutenant in the Independent Volunteer Company, and later he served as surgeon in the Texas Mounted Volunteers. After Charlotte’s death, Dr. Veatch married Ann Bradley and they had two children. By 1850 he had acquired property and his intellectual interests led him to the study of botany and mineralogy. By all accounts, Dr. Veatch was a brilliant man. Veatch also once owned what would become some of the most valuable land in Texas at Sour Lake and Spindletop, where oil was discovered fifty years later.

Still restless for adventure, he went to California and Ann sued for divorce on the basis of abandonment. During his explorations in California, Veatch discovered borax in Lake County. He explored and surveyed Carros Island off Lower California, was curator of conchology at the California Academy of Sciences from 1858 to 1861, and authored several scientific papers.

The Comstock Lode discovery of June 1859 and the growth of Virginia City drew Dr. Veatch to the mining district, where he practiced medicine and was involved in geology from 1862 to 1863. The Nevada Census shows that he was a resident of Clifton, Lander County, in 1863. In 1865 he married his third wife, Samanthe Brisbee, and moved to Oregon. After an unsuccessful attempt to become state geologist of Oregon in 1868, he took a position as professor of chemistry, toxicology, and materia medica at the newly founded Willamette University Medical School. Willamette was Oregon’s first medical school, and in 1913 it became the University of Oregon School of Medicine. Dr. Veatch died of pneumonia in Portland on April 24, 1870. His obituary listed him as an officer of the Ancient United Order of Druids.

Outstanding “Homegrown” Doctors of Northern Nevada

By John M. Davis, M.D.

In the 1930s there was a cadre of remarkable men native to northern Nevada, who entered into the study of medicine and returned home to become the foundation of the excellent medical community that materialized in the Reno area in the last half of the twentieth century.

This group of men included Fred Anderson (surgeon and Father of the University of Nevada School of Medicine), Donald Atcheson, Edwin Cantlon (surgeon and president of the Nevada State Medical Association), Vernon Cantlon (surgeon and president of the Nevada State Medical Association), Lynn Gerow (family practice), Arthur J. “Bart” Hood II, Dwight Hood (internist and president of Nevada State Medical Association), Louis Lombardi (surgeon and regent of the University of Nevada), Kenneth MacLean (surgeon and secretary of the Nevada Board of Medical Examiners), Leo Nannini (surgeon), Ernest Mack (neurosurgeon and chairman of Washoe Medical Center Trustees), Frank Samuels (obstetrics/gynecology), (George Cann (internist), James Herz (founder of Reno Orthopedic Clinic), and William Arbonies (radiologist).

These men attended the University of Nevada and came under the influence of Peter Frandsen, who stimulated their interest in science, guided them into medicine, and
The staff of the Greasewood Press would like to wish everyone a wonderful Holiday Season and Happy New Year.

In Memoriam

Greasewood Tableettes was founded to preserve medical history. Unfortunately, we do not have the means to keep abreast of the lives of all healthcare practitioners. If we inadvertently miss a particular obituary, we invite you to send us a copy of a newspaper obituary.

Ken Clark, M.D.

Ken was born April 5, 1924, in Illinois. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II. Following the war he graduated from medical school in Geneva, Switzerland, did a residency in child psychiatry, and practice in Milwaukee before coming to Reno, where he died July 5, 2007, after a battle with cancer.

Gerald W. Jones, M.D.

Gerald died at the age of 82 in his sleep on September 6, 2007, after the recent onset of Alzheimer's disease. He graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School and specialized in family medicine in Las Vegas since 1956.

History of Medicine Donation

We have received several antique medical instruments with supplies donated by Marilyn and Rob Riddervold from the Dr. T.C. Harper estate. Included was this medical case that was used by Dr. John A. Ascher, who was born in 1874, received MD from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Chicago, came to Nevada in 1897, practiced in Cherry Creek, served as Washoe County physician in Sparks, and was state senator in the Nevada Legislature.

helped their admission to medical school. These schools included, McGill, Michigan, St. Louis University, Harvard, Stanford, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Northwestern, and Washington- St. Louis—some of the most prestigious institutions of the time.

It is quite remarkable and a tribute to Professor Frandsen and the educational system at the University of Nevada that a small community fostered such an array of outstanding physicians. These men were instrumental in the development of St. Mary's Hospital, Washoe Medical Center, and the ascension of medicine in northern Nevada. Their knowledge, skills, ethical standards, and influence served as a nucleus in attracting physicians with similar qualities to the area over subsequent decades.
T.C. Harper, M.D.
Clair was born in 1907 and died in Reno July 10, 2007. He grew up in Carlin, Nevada, and moved with his physician father to Sparks in the 1920s. He attended the University of Nevada and Western Reserve Medical School. After serving in World War II, he did an orthopedic residency and practiced in Reno until he retired.

Kern Karrasch, D.M.D.
Dr. Karrasch died September 14, 2007. He was born in Missouri in 1919 and moved to Reno at age six. He graduated from the University of Nevada and University of Oregon Dental School. After serving in the army, he opened a dental practice in Reno in 1949, where he practiced for 42 years.

George Magee, M.D.
George was born in Yerington, Nevada, in 1928. He died June 28, 2007, following a heart attack. He graduated from the University of Nevada, went to Duke Medical School, and did an ophthalmology residency at Johns Hopkins. His life is highlighted in our book, The Cutting Edge.

Peter Mattimoe, M.D.
Peter was born in Roscommon, Ireland, in 1929. He collapsed and died suddenly in Boston on September 11, 2007. He received his education in Ireland, and went did an internship in Toronto. He came to Las Vegas in 1980, where he practiced for 27 years.

Stephen Romeo, D.V.M.
Steve died at home in Las Vegas on August 16, 2007. He was born October 5, 1952, and moved to Las Vegas, where he attended high school. He graduated from the University of Nevada and Kansas State Veterinary School. Dr. Romeo practiced in Pahrump for 7 years and in Elko for 25 years. After retirement he moved to Las Vegas for health reasons.

Iluminada Santiago, M.D.
Dr. Santiago grew up in the Philippines, where she was born October 25, 1932. There, she completed medical school, but came to the U.S. for internship and did a residency in pediatrics. She served in the U.S. military and retired in 1999. She moved to Las Vegas in 2000 and died in Henderson August 12, 2007.