

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, December 28, 2015

The Good Doctors of Old: As mentioned in the *Weekly News* of October 7, 2013, in the 1930s Kennett Square was "our town." Along with food shopping and business and social activity, we went to the doctor there when we felt sick or had an accident. There were five country doctors in Kennett, all practicing from an office in their respective homes. Although there were no official connections, they worked together so that not everyone was taking an afternoon off at the same time. One of the physicians was always available in an emergency. Severe cases were referred to the Chester County Hospital in West Chester.

Dr. Ulysses Grant Gifford was the eldest of the five. Born about 1865, he was still practicing in the 1940s. Some 25 years before, he had married Clara Taft, a native of Boston, whose father, George W. Taft, had bought the American Roads Machinery Corporation in Kennett. The Tafts lived in one of the largest Victorian homes in Kennett, at the top of the hill on South Broad Street above the manufacturing plant. Eventually the Giffords took over this home, and Dr. Gifford had his office in two rooms on the first floor. Dr. Chappell, a generation younger, was a protégé of Dr. Gifford and became a fine physician. Dr. Walls was a black man who also had an excellent reputation as a doctor.

Doctors D. Duer Reynolds and Herbert S. McKinstry had parallel careers, and both were highly respected in their profession. Dr. McKinstry had his office in his home at South Union and Mulberry Streets until about 1937 when he moved into a new property on the corner of North Union and Linden Streets. His office, moved to his new home, was modern and efficient. The McKinstrys had a daughter and two sons. I went to kindergarten with both the boys about 1928, and later Herb and I were classmates at Mercersburg Academy in 1941-42. Herb wanted to study medicine and follow in his father's footsteps, but it didn't work out. Bob, the younger of the two by about one year, was in a Navy V-12 program at M.I.T. when I was there in meteorology school. He was studying engineering, but changed course, became a physician, and joined his father, along with James L. Hoobler, in the senior McKinstry's office. Early on a June morning in 1957, Dr. Herbert McKinstry was summoned to Auburn Heights, where he pronounced Dr. Leo Behrendt of Washington (DC) dead. Dr. Behrendt, head of the Music Department at Catholic University in Washington, was staying with us, along with his son Norbert, a Stanley owner, and had died in his sleep. Dr. McKinstry himself had a weak heart and died about two years later.

Dr. Reynolds was a legend in his own time. Born about 1898, he was pictured as a four-year-old standing alongside a flag-draped trolley at State and Union Streets, about to make its initial run to Brandywine Springs Park (through Yorklyn and Hockessin). He established his physician's office and waiting room on the first floor of his large home on West State Street. Dr. Reynolds had many interests. He was president of the school board, he invited prominent statesmen such as Justice Owen J. Roberts of the U.S. Supreme Court (who lived in Phoenixville) to speak at a 1940 dedication in Kennett, and he loved baseball. He usually took his limited vacation time to attend the World Series, with tickets furnished by his good friend Herb Pennock, former pitching star of the New York Yankees. Dr. Reynolds and his wife, Salina, had a daughter Muriel and a son Conrad, but both settled with their families far from Kennett. Dr. Reynolds died in the late 1960s.

Office visits were \$2, increased to \$3 in the late 1930s. House calls were \$5. Dr. Reynolds came to Auburn Heights many times when I was quarantined with a contagious childhood disease. Sometimes I wasn't very sick. I told my mother that I would like to be a doctor so I could drive my car a lot making house calls. She said that was not reason enough to go to medical school.