



Brown County Journal

February 15, 2015

Events:

Brown County Historical
Society Dinner - Artist
Gustave Bauman
March 2

Brown County
Genealogical Society
Field Trip - Johnson Co.
Museum
March 10

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Rhonda A. Dunn

The Next Generation of Brown County Doctors

The next generation of doctors that served Brown County rounded the gamut of country doctor to city doctor. As transportation was getting better many of these doctors set up an office with which patients could come into town for treatment of their many ills. They still made house calls, especially to the old, sick, and to deliver babies. With the introduction of the telephone it made it easier for the doctor to get to the sick a lot quicker. Although, travel was still pretty difficult in the countryside.

Dr. John F. Genolin

One wouldn't think of Brown County as the place for immigrants to settle, but we had our fair share. The Genolin family seemed to fit right in with a sense of community involvement and civic pride with Brown County as their new home. Coming to the Americas John Genolin Sr., a native of France, received his naturalization papers in Brown County on Sept. 19, 1850. He then met and married Elizabeth Clark, a native of Ireland, and they had ten children: John F., Glodine, Lucy Jane, Charles, Thomas, Mary, and Clementine.

One of the Genolin boys, Charles, was a pharmacist as well as served in the Indiana Legislature in 1913 representing both Monroe and Brown Counties. He was also County Clerk and ran his pharmacy in Nashville for many years. His store, which was an old brick building across from the Court House, is no longer standing. The building was also formerly known as the Rustic Inn before it was torn down.

One of his sons, John F. Genolin became a doctor and practiced in Nashville from the 1880s to the 1910s. He is the subject of this



A young Dr. Genolin

cloral. Dr. Genolin had not been feeling well for several weeks, but was able to take care of his practice. After calling on patients late Wednesday night he returned to his office to get some medicine for himself. It is thought he took more of the medicine than was his intention and, in his weakened, worn out condition, his system was unable to throw it off.

He had employed a young man as his nurse and the youth did not awaken him yesterday morning, believing that the doctor was getting some much needed rest. Near the noon hour when he did not get up, the young man summoned Dr. J.W. Wiltshire, who has an office adjoining, and after a hurried examination Dr. Wiltshire called in Dr. Luzader, Dr. C.E. Harris and Dr. Throop. It was seen that the patient was almost gone. He had scarcely any

biography. John Jr. was born in Nashville on July 18, 1854. At the age of his majority he went to work at the office of Dr. Phillips and devoted himself to the study of medicine. Two years later he went to college to become a doctor. After graduation he opened his office in Nashville and had a successful practice for many years. In 1881 he married Miss Susie Walton and had two girls, Verna and Maud. For a time he was postmaster of Nashville. Towards the end of his life he moved his family to Bloomington, Indiana to practice medicine.

From Dr. Genolin's obituary from the Bloomington newspaper we get a glimpse into his life.

"Dr. J. T. Genolin Expires After Taking Medicines to Make Him Rest;

Dr. John T. Genolin, aged 56, who has been a physician for about five years with offices in the Buskirk Hill block, died at eight o'clock last night in his office from the effects of two

opiates which were probably morphine and



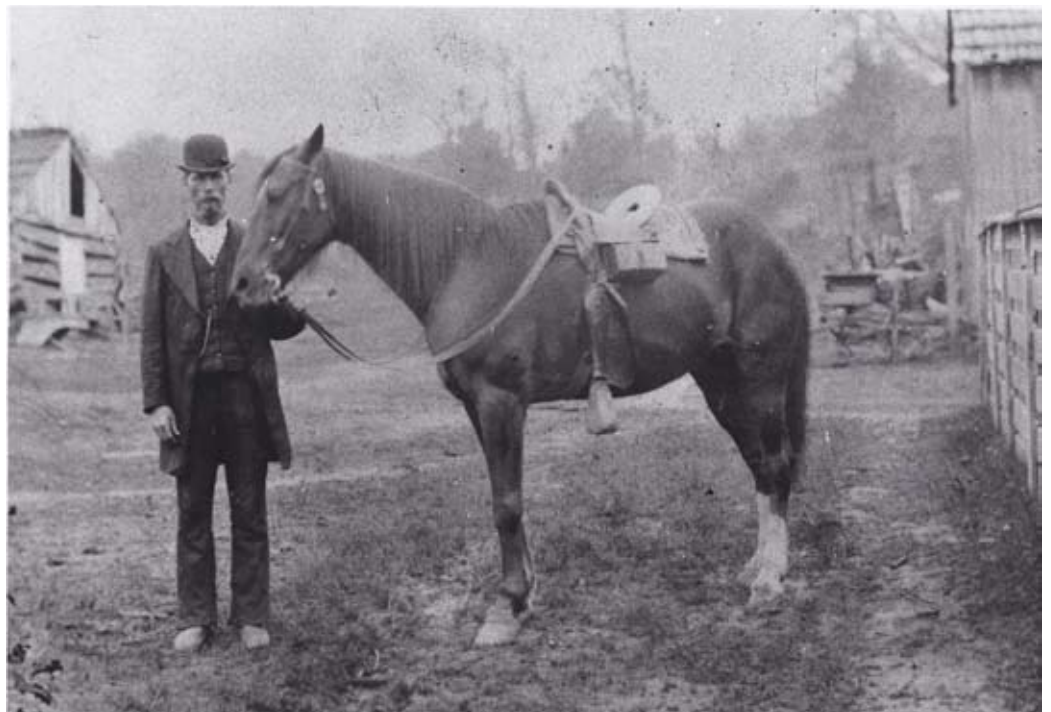
Dr. John T. Genolin

pulse and his breathing was very labored. He was limp and entirely unable to be roused up to walk off the effects of the powerful drugs. It was the opinion of the physicians that he had taken morphine and cloral so as to get rest. Mrs. Genolin who was at her home on South Fess Avenue and the two daughters, Mrs. Lowell Day and Mrs. Alonzo Allison, were summoned and remained in the office until the doctor breathed his last. The body was afterward removed to the home on South Fess Avenue.

Dr. Genolin was a graduate of the medical department of Vanderbilt University at Nashville, Tennessee, and was regarded as an excellent citizen. After moving to Bloomington from Nashville, Brown County, he built a beautiful home on South Fess Avenue. He was a native of Brown County and is survived by the widow and two daughters, and also the following brothers and sisters: Charles Genolin, County Clerk at Nashville; Mrs. Jennie McGrayel, Brown County; Mrs. George Welch, this county; Thomas Genolin of Indianapolis. His widow was formerly Miss Susie Walton of Brown County. Dr. Genolin was a member of the Kirkwood Avenue Christian Church, the Masonic and Oddfellow lodges. Short funeral services will be held at the residence at 7:30 Saturday evening in charge of the Rev. J.C. Todd. The body will be taken to Nashville, Brown County on the 6:02 Illinois Central train Sunday evening and at the latter place the Masons will take charge of the interment.” (Bloomington Herald-Telephone, Jan. 26, 1912). Almost all of the Genolin family is buried at Greenlaw Cemetery in Nashville, Indiana.

Dr. Alfred Jones Ralphy

Dr. Ralphy was born March 28, 1854 in Brown County. He was the youngest of three children to John and Sarah Jones-Ralphy who were natives of England. His parents emigrated to this country in the early 1850s. The family arrived by ship in New Orleans and first moved up to Cincinnati, Ohio. From there they came to Brown County where Dr. Ralphy was the only





one to be born in America of his family. By the age of 16 Alfred's first job was to teach school. Between school terms he worked as a clerk in a drugstore where the knowledge he gained handling medicines became a great asset later in his chosen profession. His brother-in-law, Dr. Arnold Griffitt took him under his wing and began teaching him the practice of medicine in the early 1870s. He decided to go to school to become a doctor and studied medicine at the Cincinnati School of Medicine where he graduated in 1878. Afterwards he went to the Kentucky School of Medicine in Louisville, Kentucky.

After graduation he returned to Brown County and settled in Nashville to begin his practice. At the time Brown County was still a wilderness and everyone traveled by horseback. He carried his medicines and instruments in specially designed compartments in his saddlebag.

Being so far from the big pharmaceutical companies he often would craft his own medicines. He even had local blacksmiths specially craft some of his medical instruments. After the road became a little more navigable he graduated up to a two-wheel cart. Dr. Ralph thought he was in heaven with this new improvement. Travel was still bad in winter and it was hard for him to keep warm. Dr. Ralph often took his dog, Prince, with him as his traveling companion to keep him company. The dog would lie across his feet as the two bumped along the rutted out roads. He kept Alfred's feet warm and also kept him company on long trips.

On June 12, 1878 he was united in marriage with Adeline Keller whose parents were German immigrants. They had five children together - Clifford, Grace, Eva, and Gladys - whom most became teachers. In 1879 Dr. Ralph helped organize the Brown County Medical Society. He also became a member of the Knights of Pythias, the Fraternal Order of Redmen, and the Masonic Order. In 1891 he served as Coroner for Brown County for several terms. By the 1890s he and his family decided to move out of Nashville and went to New Bellsville where they made their home. Dr. Ralph built his first country doctor's office. The house still stands in New Bellsville across from Harmony Baptist Church on Bellsville Pike.

Dr. Ralph didn't receive much money for his services. More times than most he received payment in farm produce, meat, and firewood. He was on call 24 hours and accepted anything he could use in lieu of money. He charged \$1 for a trip to Stone Head which was a three mile round trip. He also charged for delivering babies, \$5 for easy births and \$10 for difficult births. He had specialized in obstetrics



Ralphy Home & doctor's office

Ralphy had to answer a call to Christiansburg. There being no bridges over creeks at that time many people had to drive through the creeks and most times there was no trouble. On his way back that night after hours of rain he had to cross a torrent of a stream and his buggy overturned. He was thrown out of the buggy. The horses were overwhelmed and became entangled in the harness. Dr. Ralphy floated downstream for about a mile until he came to a cabin where he was pulled out. Both horses, Fred and Bess, which were well known throughout the county were lost. They ended up at Stone Head where they washed ashore. The next day a large crowd gathered for the funeral of Dr. Ralphy's horses, Bess and Fred. That was one of the largest funerals that had been attended here in many years.

As the years went by automobiles started taking the place of horses. Dr. Ralphy never owned a car though, he preferred to make his house calls with his horse and buggy. On the side Alfred was a naturalist, loving to study nature, and collect

while at Louisville. He was known to have delivered over 2049 babies. Money was scarce and many of the hill people had a hard time feeding their families. When they found out that Dr. Ralphy was to be coming their way they would go out and ask him to stop to attend to their sick ones - at no extra charge of course. If there was going to be a long procedure or an overnight stay with a patient, his wife would go with him to help out. By 1902 telephone lines had been run throughout that part of the county. This made it easier to get the doc out to your house a little faster.

On a bad night in January of 1907 Dr.



artifacts. His office looked like an aviary with birds he had collected. He had a cabinet of insects and quite a surprising collection of precious stones all of them collected locally. If anyone found an Indian relic or a rare bird it was taken to Doc's house. As he grew older his favorite pastime was sitting in his hickory chair in the shade of the house reading a good book.

Dr. Ralph served Brown County and its people for nearly 50 years. Regardless of the financial condition of his patients, he put his whole heart, soul, and medical knowledge in each case. In his beliefs the poor received the same attention as did the wealthy. He died on August 28, 1928 at the age of 74 years. Many of his medical instruments, medical books, and mounted specimens can be seen in his office at the Pioneer Village. The Red Men's Lodge had charge of his funeral services and Dr. Alfred Jones Ralph was laid to rest in the New Bellsville Cemetery.

("Reminiscences of a Country Doctor, by Gladys Whitaker Ralph, The Journal of the Indiana State Medical Association, 1972)



Moving Dr. Ralph's office into the Pioneer Village 1976

(Photos from the Brown County Historical Society Archives)