

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE AREA? (Cont.)

"His disposition and character were such that, while among us, he made many, many friends who could never forget 'Doc' Brown as he was familiarly known by old and young. He was possessed of a personality that appealed to the masses; his heart was large enough to include all, but the children were his favorites. He could often be seen the center of a group of kids and Doc was apparently as young as any of them." Thus reads a portion of the obituary of Dr. W C. Brown in the October 18, 1919, issue of the local newspaper.

The doctor was a popular fellow in the community; he was active as the manager of the Brighton baseball team and as a member of the old "Ore Creek Fire Department"; postmaster for six years and an active member of many orders and organizations. There are old photographs of him and his son, Irving, who was also a member of the team and the fire department too. Also a photo of his wife and a group of Brighton ladies, all dressed in old fashioned clothing ready to take part in the 1907 Homecoming parade, which the Browns had come from Detroit to attend. (More former Brightonites returned for that homecoming than there were people living in the town at the time.)

The doctor had practiced in Brighton for 23 years except for a few years in South Lyon. In 1903, he had moved to Detroit and practiced until 3-4 days before his death. Dr. Brown is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, Detroit. Tragically, before the year was out his son, and only child, died at the age of 36 of pneumonia shortly after the death of his child in November.

Years after Dr Brown left Brighton, 1903, as late as 1940, the green window shades in the windows on the second floor of the hardware store where his office was located, still displayed "Office of W. C. Brown, M. D."

The practice of acquiring an education in medicine during the first 3/4 of the 1800s consisted of working with a doctor (who usually had decided for himself that he was a doctor) for a few years and reading whatever medical books were available. There were no controls concerning the setting up of a medical practice. Anyone who wished could call himself a doctor. There was no definition by law of who could practice. Occasionally attempts were made to regulate the medical profession. In 1819 the formation of the Medical Society of Michigan was attempted. However the many who called themselves doctors caused much confusion as to who really could be considered a doctor. Between 1825 and 1851, many amendments were made by the governors and courts of Michigan to the terms of incorporation. (By Marieanna Bair. To be continued. Anyone with information regarding the subject matter of these articles is urged to contact her. 229-6402)

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