

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Medicine in Early Brighton (Part 3)

Dr. Olin C. Wilkinson arrived in Brighton in 1940. In the Campbell house at 420 E. Grand River were two front rooms; one served as a waiting room, the second a treatment room. Doctor Wilkinson practiced osteopathy, the first such doctor in Brighton to hang out his shingle. People were wary of this unfamiliar method of treatment.

At that time McPherson Memorial Hospital, in Howell, refused surgical patients of D.O.s; it was necessary to use the Detroit Osteopathy Hospital for surgery patients. To break the ice and develop his practice, he regularly attended Brighton High School football games offering his services in the event of an injury. He became the team physician for about ten years.

He later had offices until 1950 at the Lee House at 314 E. Grand River. In 1942 a boyhood friend, Dr. William Rice, D.O., joined him. Eight years later, they built a clinic on the southwest corner of E. Grand River and W. North Street and there developed a combined practice.

From 1959 through 1963, Dr. Wilkinson served as mayor of Brighton City. Under his guidance, the first city manager, Bob Beekner, was hired. For three years, Wilkinson and others instigated and supported efforts to have the I-96 and US-23 interchange cloverleaf built near Brighton.

Wilkinson was also Chief of Staff of McPherson Community Health Center when it opened. Dr. Wilkinson died on December 21, 1969. He is buried at Fairview Cemetery. Dr. Rice retired in the early 1970s, died August 10, 1994, and is buried in Green Valley, Arizona.

In 1945, after serving five and a half years in the US Army, Dr. Niles A Clarke received his discharge. To help in determining the location of his future practice, Dr. Clarke visited the Michigan State Medical Society in Lansing. Brighton was among the sites researched. Thomas S. Leith, Mayor of Brighton, intro-

duced him to Dr. Archie McGregor and the decision was made. He opened his practice at 716 Spencer Road in 1945. By the mid 1960s, his office was located in the former Masonic Hall building at 116 W. Grand River. He moved his surgery and obstetrics practice to McPherson Memorial Hospital in Howell by 1948. Clarke served on the steering committee that successfully arranged for D.O.s and M.D.s to practice together. Dr. Clarke died in 1971 and is buried in Fairview Cemetery.

Since the 1970s, the Brighton area has not been without sufficient medical assistance. Clinics serve every physical, emotional and mental distress. Emergency facilities, as well as practitioners of pediatrics, rehabilitation, hearing, vision, naturopathy, chiropractors, and acupuncturists are among the many varieties of assistance available. Within an hour's comfortable drive, one can find the world's finest hospitals.

Much has changed since the first settlers arrived. A dozen eggs, a bushel of apples or a chicken will no longer pay the bill. Nor does one find so many graves of young mothers and children. This writer for one is satisfied with the changes.

Compiled by Marieanna Bair from an interview with Robert Wilkinson and clippings. Cameron was noted in the February Trail Tales. A 1945 Argus photo has him receiving the Army Bronze Star. Additions/corrections requested. 810/229-6402



In Memoriam

The BAHS would like to extend sympathies to the families of :

Harold Salow

and

Lyla Spelbring

Lyla was a member of the Brighton Women's Roll of Honor. Both she and Harold were supporters of the Friends of Lyon School and BAHS Members.