

Pioneer Physicians in Martin County:
Dr. Walter J. Richardson, Dr. Malcolm Farrish, and other Pioneer Physicians

The following is the final in a series of articles giving accounts of some of the pioneer doctors of Martin County as documented in the MCHS archives and for this article in the June 10 and June 17, 1978, editions of the *Sentinel*.

Dr. Walter J. Richardson was born near Rochester, New York in 1856. He attended Carlton College, Amherst, and studied anatomy under Oliver Wendell Holmes at Harvard Medical School. In 1885 he graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of New York and then started a practice in Minneapolis. However, he soon relocated in Hutchinson where he stayed until 1892, and then moved to Fairmont.

Richardson practiced medicine in Fairmont for approximately forty years. During that time, he was considered an excellent physician whose practice was considered “intelligent and conservative.”

His rather gruff exterior seemed to shield his tender, sympathetic nature. He frequently made his calls on bicycle, even in the country, with his medicine case hanging on the handlebars. When treating serious cases, he would sometimes live with his patients until their crises had passed. Because of his faithfulness to his patients, it was not uncommon for him to be away from his family for over twenty-four hours at a time.

Although he never sought public office, he was very sincerely interested in the welfare of the community. His advice and opinions were regularly sought by others.

As with many physicians of that era, his speculative ventures often ended up as financial disasters. Probably most noteworthy of these was a Rainy Lake Gold Mine investment. After making a trip to the lake and seeing gold fished out of it, he made an investment. However, there was never any gold, as it had been planted there by unscrupulous individuals fraudulently representing their claims of gold.

He died in Fairmont in 1936 at 79 as a result of a fractured spine. He and his wife had five children, three of which preceded him in death.

Dr. Malcolm Farrish was born in Ontario in 1864. He graduated from Toronto University and Trinity Medical School. He practiced medicine for one year in Minneapolis, he spent one year on the Range, and then moved to Sherburn.

Dr. Farrish was considered a brilliant physician and surgeon with an excellent medical education. It was quite unusual at that time for a doctor of his ability and training to locate in a small town. Soon, however, his practice extended throughout the southern part of Minnesota. His first surgeries were done in homes, and then in the hospital which he built.

An uncompromising life-long Democrat, he held many civic offices and attended state and national conventions. In addition, he was a talented and sought after speaker and writer.

Dr. Farrish passed away in 1915 at the age of 51 in Sherburn. He was survived by his wife and two children.

The following are other pioneer doctors that practiced in the early days of Martin County:

- Dr. William H. Gough – He was born in 1859 in Sioux City, Iowa. He attended medical school in St. Joseph, Missouri, graduating in 1884. He entered private practice in Worthington in 1892 and moved to Sherburn in 1897. In 1905 he moved to Granada to practice medicine.
- Dr. Clarence C. Donaldson – He was born in 1858 in Dundas, Minnesota. He attended Carlton College, studied medicine under a doctor in Northfield, attended lectures in Iowa City, Iowa, and graduated in 1887 from Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. He practiced medicine for a short time in Goodhue County and also in South Dakota. In 1890 moved to Fairmont where he practiced for fifteen years. Donaldson was a big man, weighing over 300 pounds. He was very popular, made many friends, and had a large practice. He was also known as a great horse trader, a hobby which seemed to fit his personality. He left Fairmont and moved to Denver, Colorado in 1905.
- Dr. E. H. Foster – He practiced for a short time in Sherburn in the 1880's.
- Dr. F. W. Weeks – He practiced in Sherburn and Welcome in the 1890's.
- Dr. John Janss – He practiced in Welcome from 1895 to 1910, and then moved to California.
- Dr. Gustav H. Luedtke – He practiced medicine in Fairmont for many years, starting in 1899.
- Dr. Henry P. Johnson – He practiced medicine in Fairmont from 1899 until 1935.

Visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont to learn more about pioneer physicians of Martin County.