

Pioneers of Healthcare in Fort Morgan, Colorado

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Prairie High School

Fort Morgan, platted in 1884, is an idyllic rural Colorado town located about an hour and a half northeast of the state capitol. It has a rich history of innovative pioneers and hardworking homesteaders. It also has been host to phenomenal medical professionals in the past one hundred thirty years. Country doctors do not live an easy life but rather one of dedication and compassion for the communities in which they reside. The local doctor was often called upon to make house calls to deliver babies or perform surgeries on the kitchen table. Notable contributors to Fort Morgan's medical history include Dr. Hubert Work, Dr. F. W. Lockwood, Dr. A. F. Williams, Dr. Paul E. Woodward, and Miss Ivo B. Dyar. These pioneers of medical practice in Fort Morgan vastly improved the health care for everyone in the area, and the community is indebted to them for their efforts.

Dr. Hubert Work is arguably Fort Morgan's most nationally recognized physician. Born in 1860 in Marion Center, Pennsylvania, Dr. Work moved to Colorado after graduating from medical school at the University of Pennsylvania in 1885. He practiced in Fort Morgan from 1887 to 1892, one of the town's earliest physicians.¹ At the time, Dr. Work and Dr. J. N. Hall of Sterling were the only doctors in northeastern Colorado. Following Dr. Work's time in Fort Morgan, he relocated to Pueblo, Colorado where he founded the Woodcroft Sanitarium in 1896.² He also became involved in politics in Pueblo, an interest he developed after serving as a town

¹ Community History Writers, "Portraits of the Past: A look at early health care in Fort Morgan," *Fort Morgan Times*, September 14, 2015, accessed February 20, 2017,

http://www.fortmorgantimes.com/btown_test/ci_28798892/look-at-early-health-care-fort-morgan?source=pkg.

² Ibid.

trustee in Fort Morgan.³ Dr. Work decided to pursue a political life. He served many offices in the Republican National Committee throughout his life before being selected to serve in the president's cabinet.⁴ Under President Warren G. Harding, Dr. Work served as the Postmaster General from 1922 to 1923 and as Secretary of the Interior from 1923 to 1928, continuing to hold the office under President Calvin Coolidge.⁵ Even though his life outgrew Fort Morgan, he maintained ties with the town until his death in 1942. He encouraged friend and colleague, Dr. Frederick William Lockwood, to relocate from Pueblo to Fort Morgan, Colorado.

Dr. F. W. Lockwood was born in Port Hope, Ontario, Canada, in 1876.⁶ His family moved to Boulder, Colorado in 1880. Dr. Lockwood attended the University of Colorado for his undergraduate degree and Gross Medical College in Denver, which later became the University of Colorado School of Medicine for his medical degree, where he graduated in 1898.⁷ On his journey to eventually settling in Fort Morgan, Dr. Lockwood served as a resident physician at the Woodcroft Sanitarium from 1899 to 1900. This is where he became acquainted with Dr. Hubert Work, who suggested he and his young wife, Anna Riordan, move to Fort Morgan.⁸ Here he became a prominent member of society, even serving as mayor from 1920 to 1921.⁹ Dr. Lockwood reportedly maintained an interest and connection with his patients throughout his lifetime. According to a biography written by his daughter, Marian, "On each Fort Morgan High School commencement night he was sure to be present, ticking off the names of 'his babies'

³ Ibid.

⁴ Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia. "Hubert Work (1923–1928)." Accessed February 21, 2017, <http://millercenter.org-/president/essays/work-1922-secretary-of-the-interior>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Marian Lockwood, "County Honors Its Pioneers: Dr. F. W. Lockwood," *Fort Morgan Times*, May 20, 1968.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

among the graduates listed.”¹⁰ In 1946, Dr. Lockwood took a two year reprieve to Denver after continuously practicing medicine in Fort Morgan for 45 years. He later returned to live his remaining years in the community he cared about so dearly, passing away in 1955.

One of Dr. Lockwood’s closest colleagues was another of Fort Morgan’s notable physicians: Dr. Arthur Frederick Williams. Dr. Williams was born in Au Sable, Michigan in 1881.¹¹ His family moved to Fort Morgan when he was ten years old in the hopes of improving his father’s health. Aside from his medical school years, he resided at the same house on Prospect Street for the rest of his life. He graduated from Fort Morgan High School in 1899, then went on to attend the University of Colorado and Gross Medical School. In 1903, Dr. Williams returned to Fort Morgan to establish his practice.¹² Throughout his years of family practice, he was active in the medical happenings of the area. He was a founding member of the Morgan County Medical Society and served as president and secretary of this organization.¹³ By living within his means and investing wisely, Dr. Williams and his wife, M. Josephine Inman, amassed a vast fortune. The couple established the Williams Family Foundation in 1956 in order to fund improvements in the medical field both locally and statewide.¹⁴ These charitable pursuits include medical facilities, education, and research. One of the most recognizable contributions to Colorado medicine is the A. F. Williams Family Medicine Center, currently a part of the University of Colorado School of Medicine.¹⁵ The foundation grants numerous scholarships to

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Paul Woodward, “County Honors Its Pioneers: Arthur Frederick Williams, M.D.,” *Fort Morgan Times*, May 22, 1968.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Wesley Kellogg Rickel, ed., “A. F. Williams, M.D.” in *One Hundred Eleven Trees*. (Denver: A. B. Hirschfeld Press, 1976), 52-53.

¹⁴ Community History Writers, “History: Williams family’s gift keeps on giving six decades later,” *Fort Morgan Times*, January 30, 2017, accessed February 21, 2017, http://www.fortmorgantimes.com/fort-morgan-local-news/ci_30761841/history-williams-familys-gift-keeps-giving-six-decades.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Morgan County high school graduates who are pursuing careers in a medical profession, contributes to the health sciences program at Morgan Community College, and has endowed multiple University of Colorado Medical School faculty positions. Multiple hospital improvements to the Colorado Plains Medical Center in Fort Morgan have been funded by the foundation. In addition to his philanthropic contributions to the community, Dr. Williams was a charter member of the Fort Morgan Elks Lodge, worked as a pharmacist, and practiced medicine for over 50 years. He died in 1959 of a bone disease that developed as the result of a hip fracture.¹⁶

Dr. Williams' partner in practice for many years was Dr. Paul Eldon Woodward. Dr. Woodward was born in Kirksville, Missouri in 1905 and moved to a homestead in Snyder, Colorado at the age of 14 with his family. He graduated from Brush High School in 1922 and the University of Colorado Medical School in 1929.¹⁷ After an internship in Seattle, Washington, Dr. Woodward returned to Fort Morgan and joined Dr. Williams' practice in 1930. Dr. Woodward was involved in the Chamber of Commerce, the Country Club, the Elks Lodge, the Masonic Lodge, and the El Jebel Shrine.¹⁸ He served as a founding trustee of the Williams Family Foundation and the medical director of Valley View Villa nursing home. Recently, Dr. Woodward has been recognized for his commitment to quality medical care in Fort Morgan with the dedication of the Paul E. Woodward Birthing Center at the Colorado Plains Medical Center. Dr. Woodward reportedly oversaw the birth of upwards of 5,000 babies during his career. Other honors include the Silver and Gold Award from the University of Colorado Medical Association, presented in 1987, and the University of Colorado Community Service Award, presented in

¹⁶ Rickel, "A. F. Williams, M.D.," 52-53.

¹⁷ "Paul Woodward, dean of local doctors, dies," *Fort Morgan Times*, December 5, 1990.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

1984.¹⁹ Dr. Woodward worked tirelessly in family practice for 60 years until just six months before his death in 1990.

While the accomplishments and contributions of these physicians are certainly noteworthy, a summary of Fort Morgan's medical history is not complete without mention of Miss Ivo B. Dyar. While not the first and certainly not the last nurse to serve in Fort Morgan, she was possibly the most influential. Miss Dyar was born in Emerson, Iowa in 1889, but moved to Colorado as an infant. She graduated from Wray High School in 1910.²⁰ Following her high school graduation, Miss Dyar attended Methodist Hospital in Omaha, Nebraska where she completed her nurse's training. She moved to Fort Morgan with her mother and sister in 1916. The Dyar home on Sherman Street became the first hospital in the town, mostly as a maternity ward, with Dr. A. F. Williams using the facility to perform surgery while Dr. F. W. Lockwood administered anesthesia.²¹ This facility operated until 1921, when Miss Dyar moved to Montana to work as a private nurse. In 1923, at the request of Dr. Williams, she returned to Fort Morgan to open a new, greatly needed hospital. This hospital was located in a vacant Great Western Sugar Company dormitory on State Street.²² With the help of several other local nurses including Catherine Yeager Lehman and Molly Greenwald Baker, Miss Dyar's hospital thrived for twenty-eight years.²³ Kathleen (Woodward) Thompson recalls washing bandages and cleaning rooms in the hospital starting at the age of twelve. She testified to the intense standards of cleanliness and frugality with which the hospital was organized.²⁴ In 1952, The Fort Morgan Community

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Wesley Kellogg Rickel, ed., "Ivo B. Dyar," in *One Hundred Eleven Trees*. (Denver: A. B. Hirschfeld Press, 1976), 182-185.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Kathleen Thompson (daughter of Dr. Paul Woodward), in discussion with the author, February 19, 2017.

Hospital opened at the location of the current Colorado Plains Medical Center on Lincoln Street. Miss Dyar continued to work as a nurse for several years at this hospital as well. In fact, she spent the last few years of her life as a patient in a wing of the hospital after suffering from a stroke. Miss Dyar passed away in 1968, but is still remembered as an influential member of the community. She cared about each of her patients and would reportedly receive upwards of 1,000 Christmas cards from those whose lives she had positively influenced.²⁵

Examples of such connections among medical practitioners and community members are evidence of the deep dedication Fort Morgan's health care providers demonstrate throughout their service here. Such pioneers as Dr. Hubert Work, Dr. F. W. Lockwood, Dr. A. F. Williams, Dr. Paul Woodward, and Miss Ivo Dyar cared about their profession a great deal, devoting countless hours to benefiting their patients. They set the standards for medical care in Fort Morgan which their successors strive to attain. Without such individuals, Fort Morgan would not have the same quality health care it enjoys today in facilities such as the Colorado Plains Medical Center, Salud Family Health Center, and Valley View Villa, nor the distinguished medical education programs at Morgan Community College. The community is indebted to these medical leaders and everything they thoughtlessly gave for the benefit of their neighbors.

²⁵ Rickel, "Ivo B. Dyar," 182- 185.

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