

Backstory: Medical

Midwives, traditional herbal remedies, and the advice of elderly “granny women” were the oldest forms of medical aid in Blowing Rock’s early history. The first recorded doctor in Blowing Rock was Dr. Charles Carter. Unfortunately, not much is known of Dr. Carter. We do know that he registered his medical diploma with the Clerk of Court in Boone in November 1889. Dr. Carter had received his medical degree from Columbia University of New York during the Civil War and had at one time practiced in Philadelphia.



Mary Nelson Carter, wife of Charles, began the Mission House Lend-A-Hand library in the late 1880s. This was the first library in the area. Mary also taught sewing skills to children and held weekly Mother's Meetings (beginning in 1888) with her husband to help instruct new mothers on child rearing. Dr. Carter would bring books from the Mission House to his patients and would often read to them, believing that it was important to heal the body and mind in order to fully recuperate. (Right image: The Carter’s historic residence circa 1896)

Dr. Letcher C. Reeves is the second doctor on record in Blowing Rock. Reeves was born near Sparta in Alleghany County and moved to Blowing Rock in the early 1890s after having lived in Boone for some time. Dr. Reeves practiced medicine in the town while also running a successful drugstore. Unfortunately, Dr. Reeves was diagnosed with appendicitis in 1899 and passed away

in his early 30’s due to a burst appendix. Dr. Reeve’s wife, Sallie Council and their two daughters, Lena and Ruth, continued to manage the drugstore for several years after Reeve’s untimely passing. The historic Reeves home can still be found on Main Street, south of Craig’s Grocery.



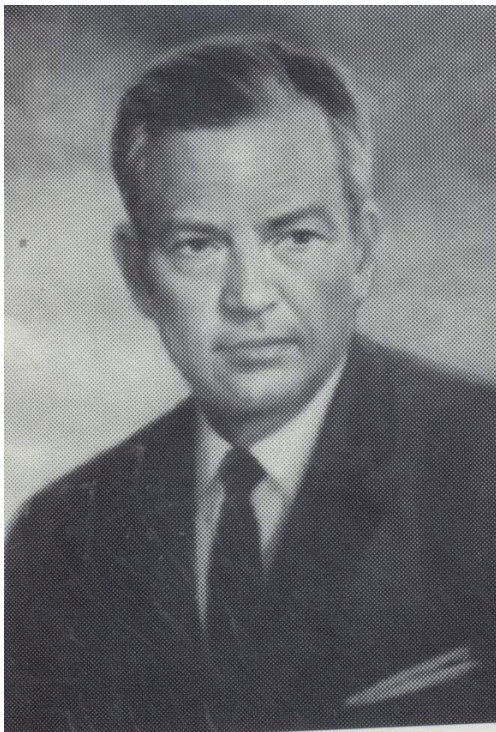
Another notable doctor in the area, Dr. Calvin J. Parlier moved to Blowing Rock in 1899 and by 1901 he was elected mayor (Dr. Parlier pictured left with a teacher from the Skyland Institute). Dr. Parlier opened his practice inside the Blowing Rock Hotel on Main Street. Dr. Parlier passed away in 1914 and with his passing,

another doctor who would go on to contribute significantly to the town stepped up. Dr. James E. Brooks moved to Blowing Rock in 1914 and would go on to revolutionize the way the area approached health, medicine, and sanitation. Brooks came to Blowing Rock to retire but after seeing the shocking state of the town's sanitation practices (or lack thereof) and the unhealthy populace, Dr. Brooks opened a small practice to try and take care of his new community. Brooks was incredibly outspoken against Blowing Rock's sanitation issues which largely stemmed from lack of health/sanitation literacy, open stables and free-roaming farm animals, public urination, and garbage tossed in the streets. He was referred to as "the father of modern sanitation and health education in Watauga County" by Dr. Alfred Mordecai due to his stringent work to increase health literacy and sanitation practices for all Blowing Rock residents. (Pictured right: Downtown Blowing Rock circa 1900).



Dr. Mary Cabell Warfield was Blowing Rock's first female physician. Warfield moved to the area in 1930 and established her practice. Warfield was born in Easton, Pennsylvania and attended the Woman's Medical College of Philadelphia. At the time, this was the only medical school in the United States for women. Dr. Warfield would go on to establish a clinic for babies on the south end of Main Street in Blowing Rock, a clinic in Bailey's Camp, and she also held several free clinics to examine children's tonsils. Thanks in part to Dr. Warfield, the Blowing Rock Clinic

opened its doors in 1935. The Blowing Rock Clinic undoubtedly aided many but almost as soon as it began it was underfunded and its staff were overworked. Knowing that the clinic could not survive without aid, a community drive began in 1940. Beginning in 1943, David Ovens began sponsoring concerts at the Blowing Rock Club to fundraise for the clinic. The numerous community-led fundraisers prolonged the life of the Blowing Rock Clinic and in 1949 it moved to a larger location on Wallingford Street. The Blowing Rock Rotary Club contributed significantly to the newly renovated clinic, which was still too small to adequately serve the town.



Dr. Charles Davant, Jr. (pictured left) moved to Blowing Rock in 1948 after having commuted from his practice in Lenoir to treat patients in Blowing Rock on Sundays and weekday afternoons. Dr. Davant was named medical

director of Blowing Rock Hospital in 1950 and would be a key figure in the hospital's expansion. As early as 1951 the Board of Trustees for the clinic began seeking funds to have a twenty-bed hospital built in Blowing Rock. They had secured \$10,000 in funding from Bertha Cone's will and had a \$30,000 donation - if it could be matched - by Anne Reynolds Tate (\$70,000 was the estimated need to build the hospital). The Board created the Summer Residents Committee, the Permanent Residents Committee, and the Special Donations Committee in order to fundraise the matching \$30,000 and reached their goal by the fall of the same year. The new hospital quickly opened in June 1952. The hospital expanded in 1968 with the opening of the Dr. Charles Davant Extended Care Center. Blowing Rock had grown extensively since the opening of the hospital in 1952, had a growing elderly population, and had many residents that required specialized care. The new center had an emergency treatment suite, a physical therapy department, a new surgery complex, in addition to new patient rooms and a nursery thanks to the \$1.5 million raised through grants and individual donations.

The hospital evolved over the decades, becoming known as Blowing Rock Rehabilitation & Davant Extended Care, and joining the Appalachian Regional Healthcare System in 2007. In 2013 the hospital (pictured right - image via High Country Press) announced that it would transition away from being a critical care center to a post-acute and rehabilitation center. With these changes, those requiring emergency services were advised to visit Watauga Medical Center in Boone. The transition from emergency services to rehabilitation was part of a plan to create a brand new rehabilitation center nicknamed, "Chestnut Ridge at Blowing Rock." In early 2017 the last patients were moved from Davant Extended Care to the Foley Center at Chestnut Ridge. Director of Rehabilitation for the Foley, Beth Garrett, stated that the facility sees



short-term patients, outpatients, as well as residents and provides physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy services. Chestnut Ridge consists of the Foley Center, the Harriet and Charles Davant Medical Center, and the Village Pharmacy (part of the Boone Drug chain). (Above image: The Foley Center at Chestnut Ridge in Blowing Rock. Image via ODELL Architecture)



While Davant's name lives on in various medical centers, his legacy directly lives on through his son, Dr. Charles "Bunky" Davant, III, (pictured left: image via UNC Healthcare) who has worked at the Blowing Rock Medical Clinic, the Blowing Rock Rehabilitation & Davant Extended Care



center, and today can still be found caring for patients at Blowing Rock Medical Park, A Division of Caldwell Memorial Hospital. Blowing Rock Medical Park opened in 2016 and offers family and geriatric medicine and is a part of the UNC Health System. (Below image: Blowing Rock Medical Park. Image via Watauga Democrat)

As medicine and technology only continue to improve, there is no telling what advancements and changes await the medical industry in Blowing Rock.

