

# Medical History

On March 12, 1827 the territorial legislature of Michigan passed an act which set the standards for the practice of medicine and surgery, thus protecting the early pioneers from "quacks" and incompetent practitioners. These settlers, the Civil War veterans who homesteaded the area, and residents to this day have benefited from the foresight of these law-makers.

Records from Otsego Lake Village show that a Dr. N.R. Gilbert purchased a lot in 1879 and may have been the first doctor in town.

Dr. Nathan L. Parmater, a Civil War veteran and an 1867 graduate of the Cleveland Homeopathic College, came to Michigan in 1873. To file his claim on his homestead five miles northwest of Gaylord, he traveled to Traverse City and back on snowshoes. His daughter, Vivia A. Parmater, born on October 14, 1874, was the first white baby born and the first recorded birth in Otsego County.

In 1888, Dr. Parmater bought the property and practice of Dr. J.W. Pennock, according to one newspaper clipping. He established his office at what is now 118 South Otsego Avenue in Gaylord. The news clipping stated that he was the only doctor in Otsego and surrounding counties. He practiced in Gaylord until his death on January 10, 1910.

There are reports that a Dr. John Warner, Civil War veteran, practiced as a root and herb doctor.

During the 1880's, Henry Wells Warner, M.D. practiced in Gaylord. A history of Vanderbilt relates that in 1883 Dr. Stanley Woodruff, a graduate of the University of Michigan, and Dr. J.T. Lester, homeopathic physician, practiced there.

From 1882 until 1889 Dr. James Polk Fox practiced medicine, then established a drug store and a grocery store carrying on both businesses in addition to his practice. He established his office on Main Street, approximately where the Coffee Shop is today. He also located his drug store there. In 1900, on the corner of Main and Oak Streets, he built the home which would later become Gaylord's second hospital.

Dr. Elmer L. Ford and Dr. Rulette Olmstead Ford moved to Gaylord in 1898. Born in New York, the Fords had traveled to St. Louis, Missouri to attend medical school. Because she was a woman, Dr. Ruey Ford had a difficult time getting into a medical school. She attended Physicians and Surgeons College. The Fords were married in 1892. Ruey graduated in 1893 and Elmer in 1896.

The two doctors offered a well-balanced medical service with Dr. Ruey specializing in women's and children's diseases, and Dr. Elmer in setting bones, pulling teeth and fitting glasses.



**N. L. Parmater, M. D.**

In 1901, on the site of the present Gaylord State Bank, Dr. Ruey built a two story brick building, and later, a small stone office building. The large building was their home, office, and later a drug store. To conform with the new law which required a registered pharmacist during operating hours, Dr. Ruey attended Warner's School of Pharmacy in Sandusky, Michigan. She completed her course in six weeks.

Dr. Ruey Ford opened an eight bed hospital, considered Gaylord's first hospital. She ran it alone and was forced to close it when a law was passed requiring such institutions to have fire escapes. Because of the construction of the building, none could be attached.

Dr. Elmer Ford died in 1928 and his wife continued to practice until her death in 1940.

About the time the Fords came to Gaylord, Levi A. Harris, M.D. moved here from Vanderbilt. He had been there since 1886, operating a drug store as well as conducting his medical practice. He had been a Probate Judge in 1882 and had served as U.S. Examining Surgeon.

Dr. Harris was a graduate of the Detroit Medical College, class of 1884. He practiced in Augusta, Michigan and Vanderbilt before moving to Gaylord in 1898. His office was on the second floor of the building that is today the Audrain Hardware.

In the early 1900's many doctors practiced in Gaylord for varying periods of time. Andrew H. Elliott, M.D. located here approximately from 1900 to 1910. Dr. Hatt, in Gaylord at about the same time as Dr. Elliott, practiced from his office above a building close to the present site of Quay's Barbershop. Dr. Hatt evidently shared this office with Dr. A.J. Shockley for a while. Dr. Shockley built the large home that now