

## MAHANOY CITY CHRONICLES/Researched by Lorraine Stanton

# Health care pros of yesteryear...

By BILL O'BRIEN  
Herald writer

**HEALTH CARE** professionals of yesteryear, both medical and dental practitioners, are among the subjects of today's Mahanoy City Chronicles.

**HOLLAND** is a name revered by generations of Mahanoy City people who had illnesses cured, broken bones mended, babies delivered and children restored to health by Drs. David and Mark Holland, a father-son team of physicians.

The Holland story in Mahanoy City began in the mid-1800s when Michael and Mary (Washington) Holland arrived as immigrants from Ireland.

Michael secured work in the mines and lost his life in a mining accident in August 1880, two weeks before the birth of his son, David.

The widowed mother was left with six boys to raise: John, Mark, Thomas, Michael, Patrick and David. The only girl, Bridget, died three years earlier, May 30, 1887. There also had been an earlier son named Michael who died in childhood, and the parents named the second Michael after him. The mother lived until 1913.

David was born on Sept. 1, 1880, and graduated from Mahanoy City High School in 1898. He wanted to be a doctor and made arrangements to study medicine at the local office of Dr. W. F. Horn. A year later he enrolled at Medico-Chirurgical College in Philadelphia and received a medical degree in 1903, whereupon he came home to spend the remainder of his life caring for the people of Mahanoy City.

In 1907 he married Ella Cleary, whose father, Dominic, was a prominent dry goods merchant doing business at 37 W. Centre St. since 1874.

Dr. David was a firm believer in preventative medicine and an advocate of sports activities for local youth — an interest which rubbed off on two succeeding generations of Hollands. His son, Mark, was a star athlete at Mahanoy City High in the early 1920s and went on himself to become a physician and sports advocate.

For more than four decades, Dr. Mark Holland devoted his life to the practice of pediatrics, and countless children have had the benefit of the special kind of skilled care that has been the trademark of this kind and gently physician. Perhaps the crowning achievement of his long and fruitful career was founding the Children's Heart Hospital which once functioned on the grounds of the Ashland State General Hospital.

**DR. GEORGE HENSYL** was another well-known early 20th century Mahanoy City physician whose father was a doctor, although the father never practiced here.

Born in Centre County on Oct. 27, 1883, George was graduated as president of his class in 1900 at Jefferson Medical School, Philadelphia.

After two years in residency at the Ashland State Hospital, he settled in Mahanoy City to commence his practice and took unto himself a wife, Helen K. Bacon.

Dr. Hensyl's parents were Lot and Sarah (Heim) Hensyl. Lot was a native of Trevorton. He fought in the Civil War and located at Ashland in 1866-67 to study medicine with Dr. C. P. Herington, in addition to which he attended lectures at Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia.

After receiving his diploma, Dr. Lot went to Centre County to conduct his practice. He was married there to Sarah Heim whose ancestors were residents of Northumberland County from the 1770s. Her father was a minister, Rev. William Heim, whose paternal grandfather, John Heim, was a trader with the Indians.

Family lore has it that great-grandfather John Heim, the Indian trader, had good relations with the Indians and numbered just one adverse experience in all the years he dealt with them. It happened one day when a party of Indians came to his door and he admitted them and gave them milk and food. One of the younger Indians, a belligerent fellow, began circling Heim's chair while brandishing a tomahawk in threatening manner. Heim stood up, clenched a fist and punched the young brave right out the door while the others looked on



**HARDWARE PIONEERS** — H. P. Stichter was to Mahanoy City residents in 1875 what H. J. Heiser is today — the place to fill all your hardware needs. Stichter was located at 21-23 E. Centre St., but the view at that time was

nothing like it is today. The Stichter building stood alone and covered the spaces now occupied by the Senior Citizens Center and the Heiser Hardware store.

approvingly and informed Heim had done the proper thing.

**DR. A.P. SELIGMAN**, a Mahanoyite born and bred, began practicing medicine here in 1894. He was graduated from Mahanoy City High School and Hahnemann Medical College, Philadelphia.

He served as a member and president of the local school board during the decade prior to World War I and was married to the former Mary Shafer of Mahanoy City, with whom he had two children, Bertha and James.

The initials A. P. in his name were in honor of his maternal grandfather, Abraham Pott, son of Pottsville's founder, John Pott.

On the paternal side, the doctor's grandfather, Solomon Seligman, came from Germany to the Ringtown Valley, later lived in Port Carbon and spent his final years living in Mahanoy City with a son, Joseph, the father of Dr. Seligman.

Joseph, the doctor's father, was born in Port Carbon and operated a business in Saint Clair before moving to Mahanoy City and securing work in the mines. He eventually became a colliery superintendent but left the mines to become a forestry contractor who supplied timber to many collieries in the vicinity. He was a

director of the Union National Bank and was married to Emma Pott, with whom he had three children besides Dr. Seligman: Bessie, wife of Dr. James Hagenbuch, Bertha and Lettie.

**ONE OF THE** well-known dentists on the local scene during the early 1900s was Frederick Rick Wagner.

He was the son of Franklin B. Wagner and the former Caroline Rick, both of whom came to Mahanoy City from Hamburg in 1873.

The dentist-to-be was born in Mahanoy City on Nov. 20, 1876, and finished schooling here before enrolling at the University of Pennsylvania Dental School. After receiving his degree in 1900 he practiced for seven years at Watertown, N.Y., and was married there in 1904 to May Ross.

In 1907 he moved back to Mahanoy City with his wife and child, Doris.

Dr. Wagner had a brother, Frank, who became a prominent mining engineer in the region. Another brother, Milton, ran the C. R. Wagner store in town. There were also three sisters: Carrie, wife of Harry Newhard; Jovina, wife of Frank Kemery, and Catherine, all in Mahanoy City.

**ANOTHER WAGNER**, not a health professional, who established a wide acquaintanceship for himself by means of another line of work was Alfred Wagner, a cousin of the aforementioned dentist.

He was the bill collector for Mahanoy Electric Light Company, a job which made him a regular caller at homes and business establishments all over town.

Born in the Hamburg area of Berks County, he attended Lebanon Valley College and taught school before coming to Mahanoy in 1873 at age 24. He came here to work as a clerk in a mercantile store operated by relatives, Wagner Brothers, and later joined the mercantile firm of Franklin B. Wagner, father of the above mentioned dentist.

In 1890 Alfred took a clerking job with the Lehigh Valley Railroad Company, and finally joined the light company staff in 1899.

The year after his arrival in Mahanoy he was married to Susan Faust of Auburn. They resided at 220 W. Mahanoy St. and had no children.

**JOHN H. POLLARD** was a man

whose position commanded great respect in and about Mahanoy City during the decade before World War I. He was the superintendent of the Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company collieries in the Mahanoy-Saint Nicholas Division.

Born in Pottsville in 1854, he left school to take a job with the Miners Journal. Working for a newspaper taught him the value of an education, and he returned to the classroom to earn a high school diploma.

He then took a job in the Pottsville office of Harris Brothers, civil and mining engineers for the Girard Estate. He remained there until 1878, when he joined the P&R&C&I Company engineering corps in Ashland, serving as head of the Ashland-Shenandoah engineering division until 1905 when he was appointed division superintendent in the Mahanoy City office.

**DAVE GRAHAM** was a popular man around town around the turn of the century. When he decided to leave with his family to locate at 5130 N. 15th St. in Philadelphia 64 years ago, the January 1924 Record-American noted some of the marks he made on the local ledger:

"Dave Graham was an early settler, a patch lad, and is one of our best citizens. We remember when he lived up at Bowmans and taught young men to play fife and flute, which gave Mahanoy City its famous Liconln Drum Corps of the early days.

"We remember Dave later selling groceries as a partner in the firm of Graham & McCabe at the spot where Joe Cook's barbershop and Meehan's cigar store now stand.

"We recall his ambition in organizing the Peoples Light, Heat and Power Company, his role in the formation of the Merchants Banking Trust Company of which he is now president, and his duty as postmaster which he served with credit.

"Dave represents that type of manhood that builds communities. We hate to see him go but are sure the memories of old Mahanoy and surroundings will never die in the mind of Dave Graham."