

A West Walworth and Lincoln Country Doctor: Dr. Morris

By Dorothy French

Editor's Note: Our series about country doctors continues; this issue features Dr. Robert R. Morris of West Walworth and Lincoln.

Dr. Robert R. Morris was born August 1848 in Ramsen, Oneida County, New York. He married Frances Peacock of West Walworth in 1880; they were parents to five children: Enid Elvira, Robert, Joseph, Rexford, and Donald. The family attended Lincoln Baptist Church.

Dr. Morris was a specialist in pneumonia cases and also performed dentistry. In the beginning of his practice, he had two offices, one in Lincoln and one in West Walworth. The doctor held afternoon office hours in a home on West Walworth Road next to Stalker's Store which was destroyed by fire in 2017.

The 4893 Lincoln Road residence was owned by his wife's family, the Peacocks. After the death of her parents, Frances inherited the farm of 88 acres and the doctor's office was moved there. The visiting room and office were located on the north side of the house. He charged \$1 a visit. In a biography of the Morris/Peacock family, Virginia Burrow Morris wrote that there were 18 rooms in the large house. Actual peacocks strutted about the lawn. Virginia wrote that, when Susan B. Anthony came to Lincoln to lecture, she stayed at the Morris home, as did a number of visiting ministers and speakers.



Undated photo of Dr. Morris; he was a dentist and physician.



Undated photo of the Peacock/Morris home at 4893 Lincoln Road, now owned by Anita Amsler.

In 2008 WHS member Joyce H. Smith spent many hours reviewing "The Physician's Visiting List" books of Dr. Morris which listed his medical services for the years 1877 – 1922. We also have his 1877 medical school book with pages of notes. Another section of the book has weekly call list; memoranda for each month; clinical, birth, and death records; and bills rendered. Using the doctor's notes, Joyce compiled a list of birth and death records for each year. Also included in the doctor's records are New York State Department of Health death certificates. There are approval forms from the Treasury Department of the United States so he could purchase opium, cocoa leaves, compounds, manufactures, salts, derivatives and preparations.

In 1877 Dr. Morris kept a record of his horse's yearly expenses: a load of straw \$2.00, barley \$3.00, and corn \$14.30. Another book contained information about his farm's accounts. On April 1, 1896, he took an inventory of his farm. He had 4 cows \$100, 2 heifers \$25, 2 colts \$50, 5 horses \$300, 21 sheep \$105, and 2 hogs \$25. Wagons, buggies, plows, harrows, cultivator and weeder \$150. One plow \$10.50, seeder and cultivator \$65, mowing machine \$40, 1 scraper \$6.50, and 1 reaper \$40.

Dr. Morris' son, Don, bought a new Ford coupe when Dr. Morris was about 72 years old. Don would drive his dad to visit his patients at night and when the weather was bad.



Left: Dr. Morris Auction poster from museum files

Country Doctors to Be Continued: Next Issue Dr. Esley