

Dr. George Emory Plaster

I was born May 12, 1826, on a farm near Unison, Loudoun County, Virginia. My parents were Henry Plaster, Jr. and Frances Lloyd Plaster. I obtained the principal part of my education at New Lisbon Institute, a high grade boarding school.

In 1845 I commenced to read medicine under the direction of Dr. Theodrick Leith, then practitioner at Unison. Later I attended lectures at the University of Maryland in Baltimore during the sessions of 1846-7-8, getting my degree in 1848.

Late in the year of 1848 the report of the gold discovery in California and the great rush to that country set in. Not yet having begun to practice medicine, partly because I had in view no location at which to make a start, I concluded to try my luck in the new El Dorado. Forming a company of eleven, including myself, I made arrangements with the Kirklands of Baltimore for passage in a sailing vessel, the Bark K, for the trip around Cape Horn. After a voyage of 162 days, we arrived in California in August. I went immediately to mining. I had some good luck digging and some bad. I returned from California in 1851 via the Isthmus of Panama, boarded a steamer at Chagres for New York and thence home.

I located at Snickersville, now Bluemont, in July 1852, a little village located at Snicker's Gap. I built up a paying practice on both side of the mountain and in three counties, Loudoun, Clarke, and Jefferson. My scheme of practice was cautious and conservative, faith in nature's healing power and distrust of routine and habit administration of drugs which has led to many mistakes. Careful and thorough examination is essential before setting a diagnosis and beginning the drugs.

In all my practice of obstetrics I never used forceps nor the Twilight System and I never lost a patient in child bed except in one instance and that was due to the nurse's not following directions given and my unavoidable absence so it may be classed as an accident.

As I held and extended my practice for 9 years, until the war came, I may be credited with having made a success.

In 1861 I volunteered. In June '61 I cooperated with Colonel Richard Dulaney in raising a cavalry company, I being elected 2nd Lieutenant. Beside the duties of an officer, I did much first aid among my own regiment and the men were always glad to have me around. I achieved considerable notoriety by extracting teeth with a pocket knife. Scores of teeth I extracted in this way and was known as the "doctor who took out teeth with a pocket knife."

At the battle of Gettysburg, our Adjutant being killed, I was detailed as acting adjutant, served in that capacity less than a year, was promoted to Captaincy and transferred to Company M. I was in nearly all of the battles, skirmishes, and raids that the 6th Regiment was engaged in. In chasing out Gen. Wilson during his raid on the Nottaway River, my chief of squadron, Cap.

Kennerly, was wounded and I became Chief, which I held through the remaining period of the war.

I fought my last battle at Five Forks the day Pickett's Division was destroyed. To show the reduced condition of our cavalry, I was the only commissioned officer left in the three companies I was handling and believe I was the only captain left in service in the regiment. We were captured by a division of cavalry from the enemy. I was sent to Johnson's Island where I was paroled about June 20, 1865. Was furnished transportation to Harpers Ferry where I landed at day break with 25 cents in my pocket. I walked from there home having paid my last 25 cents to an old woman for a little breakfast.

I found Dr. John Chamblin, who had read medicine under me and attended a short course of lectures at Dr. Hugh McGuire's school in Winchester, graduated in Richmond at Virginia Medical College and appointed assistant surgeon to Chew's Battery had located to Snickersville in my absence. I now being forty years of age and finding myself much reduced financially, formed a partnership with Dr. Chamblin and we soon had all the practice we could do.

In 1867 I was elected to the State Constitutional Convention, which had been ordered by the Military Governor, General Schofield. I found the membership made up of carpet baggers, scalawags, and negroes entirely ignorant of the A, B, Cs. At the close of the session I returned to Snickersville to resume my practice, having to do it all myself as my partner, Dr. Chamblin, had to retire on account of ill health. I had a very busy year, doing most of my practice on horseback, having to see twenty-five patients a day during a typhoid epidemic and the families living so far apart I did not get around to all my patients. I did a \$700.00 practice in one month.

In 1869 I took Dr. Joseph Vandevanter as a partner, who was with me three years when he went to Michigan. In 1870 was a school commissioner with Sam Brown and Hugh Marris. We organized the schools of Mt. Gilead District. I served only one year because it interfered with my practice. Was also Magistrate one year.

I was married in June, 1873, to Sallie Meade Taliaferro, daughter of Col. James Monroe Taliaferro of "Hagley," King George County, Virginia.

In the meantime I was associated with Dr. Rufus Humphrey in practice for three years, he then breaking the connection and going in opposition to me. Dr. William M. James read medicine under us.

In three years Dr. Humphrey also went to Michigan leaving me alone in the field. Being broken down, I suffered myself to be elected to the legislature in 1881, returning in 1882 to find Drs. Turner and Fulton had located here. I resumed my practice, finally taking Dr. Fenton Nichols, who also had read medicine under me, in as partner in 1885 and locating him at Round Hill, Virginia, for two years.

I retired from practice about the age of 66 years giving my attention to farming which I retired in 1909, selling my farm to my son, Dr. Henry G. Plaster, who began the practice of medicine here in 1909 and is at the present time a successful practitioner.

Among other doctors with whom I had pleasant relations and consultations were Drs. Stone, Mott, Settle, West, McGill, Taylor, Gorman, Wm. M. Cochran, Luck, Mount, Chamblin, Hoge, Samuel Turner, Davison, Decater Heaton, Towney Heaton, Thomas, Copeland, Harris, all of whom were of Loudoun County.

I have voted seventeen times for President, including Jeff Davis and have lived under the administration of all the Presidents except the first five.

My politics are Jeffersonian Democracy – the shibboleth is equal rights to all, special privileges to none, free trade and sailor's rights.

In regard to my religion, I am inclined to materialism and perhaps should be classed as an agnostic. While I subscribe to the material doctrine of the New Testament, I do not believe in miracles or witchcraft or spiritualism, nor personal not individual and material devils.

Sports – horseback riding.

Recreation – chess and solitaire.

My greatest pleasure has always been books, am an omnivorous reader.