

Medical Practice in 19th-Century Chatham County

~ Dr. David Watson ~

By Dr. Brooks Gilmore, MD

and

Abstracts from the Medical Journal of Dr. David Watson Chatham County, NC 1840-1845

By John Hudson Emerson

Dr. David Watson was a medical doctor residing in the Rives Chapel area of Chatham County whose original medical journal for the years 1840 through 1845 has been digitized and is available in the NC Archives. The journal is a remarkably detailed account of the medical practice of a country physician in the early part of the nineteenth century in rural North Carolina, as well as an unpublished source of genealogical information about the families of a section of Chatham County. Each patient treated by Dr. Watson during those years is identified by name and in many instances by a family relationship. The entries specify diagnosis, treatment, drugs, fee charged, and details of any travel involved, providing a detailed view of the illnesses of the period and treatment methods, drugs used, and barter methods sometimes used in the payment of medical charges.

We are fortunate to have two excellent sources of information about Dr. Watson's practice in Chatham County:

[Medical Practice in 19th-Century Chatham County ~ Dr. David Watson](#), by Dr. Brooks Gilmore was published in the November 2000 issue of the Chatham Historical Journal (Volume 13, no. 3). Dr. Brooks provides information about Dr. Watson's background and family, medical practices of the day, and illustrations from Dr. Watson's journal.

In [Abstracts from the Medical Journal of Dr. David Watson Chatham County, NC 1840-1845](#), John Hudson Emerson has abstracted all of the entries from Dr. Watson's journal that relate to his extended family, providing a detailed illustration of the kinds of information available in the entries, as well as brief biographical sketches of the individuals mentioned. Emerson notes that the journal is available for research in the North Carolina State Archives, and that for those who have ancestors in the Hickory Mountain, Matthews, Bear Creek, Center, Gulf and Oakland townships and in that part of Moore County that became Lee County, a glimpse into their personal lives might well be found in Dr. Watson's Journal.

URL for article by Dr. Brooks Gilmore:

<https://chathamhistory.org/resources/Documents/PDFs/Journal/CHJvol13num3.pdf>

URL for article by John Hudson Emerson:

<https://chathamhistory.org/resources/Documents/PDFs/ResearchArticles/Doctor%20Watson%20Journal%20entry%20abstracts%20JH%20Emerson.pdf>

1840

		\$	¢
July 2 nd	Thomas W. Bly to a visit to his little son Thomas in an Hydroptic affection, to the administration of 2 Stimulating injections and one Dozen Hydragogue Cathartics of Cream Tartar & Jalap	1	50
" 3 rd	Matthew Sampson at his own house To a prescription for a child in a case of Crusta Lactea & medicine as follows. To a dose of Calomel, to 70 pounds of Sulphur & magnesia, and 30 of Subborate of Soda	2	75
" 5 th	John Emmerston for his son William to a 36 vial of quinine solution	1	75
" 5 th	Ferrill Brooks (young Ferrill) to a visit to his child to Consultation with Dr. Headen, to a dose of Calomel & Dover powder to 3 doses of Laudanum, to the administration of 2 aperient injections & several other Urines rendered	6	75
" 5 th	Thomas W. Bly to a visit to his little son Thomas & prescription	50	
" 4 th	Eli Emmerston to a visit with Dr. Headen to his man led from Ferrill Brooks to Consultation & a large blistering plaster	1	50
" 5 th	John Park to a visit to his negro for which I only charge him the price of half a visit 3¢ and to 3 1/2 of sulph. quinine at 2¢ per dram	3	75
" 5 th	Robert Hackney to a visit to his wife with Dr. Headen & prescription from Dr. Headen		