

## Spotlight on Dr. J. McClure Richard, M.D.

If the name of Dr. J. McClure Richard were mentioned in our church now, there would not be a handful of people who could recognize him or his contribution to the church. Dr. Richard was the community physician at the turn of the century and was a contemporary briefly with two other doctors at that time – Dr. Burk Priddy who died in 1914 in a smallpox epidemic and Dr. C.E. Downey who died in 1906 from internal hemorrhage after being kicked in the stomach by a horse. Dr. Richard took his position in the Sale Creek community between 1900 and 1905 when he became the company doctor for the Sale Creek Coal and Coke Company, later the Durham Coal and Iron Company.

Dr. Richard was born in 1873. Upon graduating from high school, he enrolled at Grant University, which was later known as the University of Chattanooga and is known today as the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. In 1898 he enlisted in the U.S. Army and served as a medical corpsman in the horse cavalry. Upon completion of his military duty, he came to Sale Creek to establish his first practice. He became a hard and fast friend of the List family and delivered all four of their children (Alyne, Helen, Bill, and James) as well as many other members of the community including L.G. Coulter.

Dr. Richard remained in the employment of the coal company until it folded in 1913. By that time he was married to Miss Tyda Gray who is the great aunt of Betty Ray and Mary Gray. Tyda was a teacher at the Bethlehem Academy at Bakewell, which had been built around 1890. The couple had at least two sons of which one, Jack Richard, was alive up until a few years ago.

Dr. Richard's office was in the large white house that was across the street from Sale Creek High School. He later sold that office to the church for use as a manse in September of 1926.

Probably the most notable thing that Dr. Richard did while attending the Sale Creek Presbyterian Church was to design the sanctuary. The building committee adopted his completed set of plans on October 13, 1924. Because funds were not available at that time, construction did not start until August of 1925.

In addition to his church of medical duties in the community, Dr. Richard also took part in community concerns and activities. In 1916 a controversy boiled over at the school concerning the principal and the janitor, Absalom H. Morgan who was also a member of the county court that chose superintendents. Dr. Richard accompanied a group of Sale Creek citizens and parents to the school board meeting to support charges that the local school principal, Professor Samuel H. Proffitt, could not make any decision concerning school until he had conferred with his janitor. As well as Dr. Richard several other well-known Sale Creek men were in the delegation including J.A.N Patterson (grandfather of Katherine Sanders), John T. Patterson (Katherine's father), W.H. List (father of Alyne and Bill), T.E. (Ed) Downey, W.L. Coulter (Luther Coulter's father), Benjamin W. Shipley (father of Kathryn Coulter) and about 10 other prominent men of the community

at that time. One newspaper columnist stated that they “hung around the court house rotunda like Grant around Richmond” until they were able to state their case.

Dr. Richard’s tenure in Sale Creek ended in the late 1920’s when he moved to Red Bank and continued his practice of medicine there. He was a beloved and respected member of the church and community and left behind many friends.