

Photo of the Month

Love's Sanitarium



Dr. George Love's Sanitarium, circa 1910. Neg. #N017890

The two-story building located at 506 East Spruce Street is a beautiful example of circa 1880 architecture in Northwest Arkansas. Though no longer believed to be the site of Callahan's Station, this building does sit on land that once belonged to the Callahan family. In 1849 George Jewell Callahan and his family purchased a large section of land including what would become part of Electric Springs as well as the property at 506 East Spruce.

Erwin Funk, an early Rogers newspaper editor wrote about 506 East Spruce Street explaining that Mr. D.C. Githens purchased it in 1885 and built the brick building that still stands today. Githens was the first to operate what then was known as the Summit House Hotel. The property changed hands several times over the years before Mrs. Willie Pennington and her husband Doctor J.C. Pennington, purchased the building and operated a "sanitarium," which was an early version of a hospital.

In 1909 the property was sold to Dr. George M. Love. Love and his wife Alice had moved to Rogers in 1909, and he had a downtown office for a time. When they bought the building they lived in part of it and opened the rest as Love Sanitarium, a small private hospital. Since Love wasn't a surgeon, other doctors performed the operations there.

The first floor included Dr. Love's office (east side) and a recuperation ward (west side), while the second floor was for the operating room (east side) and another recuperation ward (west side). The 1918-19 Rogers city directory bore an ad for the sanitarium and called it "a home-like place for the sick, convalescent, obstetrical, and surgical."

Although Dr. Love continued to practice in Rogers, the Spruce Street property was sold in 1934 to

George and Lula Vroom. They listed the business in the 1939 Rogers telephone directory as the Rogers Sanitarium. The Vrooms were responsible for installing a small, rope-operated elevator in the back of the building to move patients and equipment between floors.

The building was again sold in 1943, this time to Dorothy and L.D. Pettit. They changed the name to Rogers Hospital, remodeled the building, and added some rooms on the back side to bring the patient bed-count to twelve. Among the doctors who performed operations during the Pettit years were Drs. Moore and Jennings, well known Rogers physicians. Dr. Jennings is quoted as saying, after working there following his return from WWII, "The place was clean, the patients received good care, but the operating room was more obsolete than the one I used almost on the front lines in combat."

The Pettits sold the land and building in 1947 to J.O. and Inez Wilmoth, who reorganized the place as the Wilmoth Nursing Home. They first added a kitchen and dining room on the back, and, due to new nursing-home rules in 1954, widened all the doorways, replaced the old stairway with a new one (still in use today), removed the elevator, and added a sprinkler system and steam-heating system. The nursing home had a 30-year history. For three years (1977-1980) the Pettits leased the building and it was home to the Benton County Adult Development Center.

In 1980 the Wilmoth heirs entered a lease-purchase agreement with the Office of Human Concerns, Inc. (OHC), a non-profit organization "to promote the well being of the citizens of Benton, Carroll, and Madison Counties." OHC and the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) continues to provide services at 506 East Spruce Street.