



Currently serving as an office building, the Medical Clinic served the community for over 40 years as a hospital.



Dr. Bethel Campbell Smoot



David Foster Ray



Dr. John T. Mason



Dr. Charles Meadows Clark



## A building full of memories

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Dr. Charles Meadows Clark, Dr. John T. Mason, Dr. Bethel Campbell Smoot and David Foster Ray are familiar names to many Warren County residents, especially if you have memories of the Medical Clinic. The clinic was unique in many respects, as it received no financial aid from the city, county, state or federal government. It served the community as the only hospital for more than 40 years.

Descendants of three of the owners recently had the opportunity to meet each other and share stories and memories of their family members.

Anne Clark Foster, daughter of Dr. Clark, resides in New Hampshire after spending years in Italy. She has not been able to visit McMinnville often, but has kept in touch with longtime friend Rachel Killebrew. The building was purchased by First Presbyterian Church in 1999 and has been restored, and renamed "The Clinic Office Building, A place of Hope, Health and Healing."

"How proud and pleased my father would be to see the Medical Clinic and Hospital reborn as The Clinic Office Building," said Foster. "This extraordinary work of preservation, carried out under the direction of the church, has been a monumental task. The preservation was carried out so sensitively that the presence of the beloved doctors and nurses can almost be felt. This beautiful building has not been severed from its past but remains a place of healing, hope and health."

The medical facility was the brainchild of Clark, who purchased land on West Main Street in 1936 for \$3,000. Three months later he transferred half interest to John Mason for \$1,500. Construction started in September 1937 by the owners, with them moving in their new clinic on Dec. 31, 1937.

The original Art Deco structure was one story with a basement. The building featured a large reception room, three suites of offices, an X-ray room, dark room, laboratory, large hall, a recovery room and four bathrooms.

The cream-faced brick structure was desperately needed in the community, with additions immediately planned and completed in 1938, adding a second floor to the building.

In 1939, Mason and wife Elizabeth Mason sold their half to Clark, making him the sole owner.

In July 1939 David Foster Ray joined the staff of the Medical Clinic as the laboratory and X-ray technician, and later hospital administrator.

Smoot started working at the hospital in 1941, and became a partial owner in 1946. Another addition was added in 1942,

doubling the size of the facility.

With the passing of Dr. Clark, the property was deeded from Smoot and the heir of Clark to S.R. Moore and J.W. Gentry, thus ending The Medical Clinic and Hospital's service to the area. The date of the deed was June 30, 1978. After changing hands again, it was purchased by First Presbyterian Church in 1999.

### DR. CHARLES MEADOWS (PETE) CLARK

The dedicated healer worked his way through medical school, graduating in 1928 from the University of Tennessee, starting his practice in McMinnville that same year.

According to his daughter, Anne Clark Foster, "He paid house calls, with no destination too remote, no road too rough or dusty or muddy, no night too cold. I sometimes accompanied him, little realizing the service he was rendering would soon be a thing of the past."

She also recalls him never refusing a charity case or refusing admittance to the clinic. He never sent a statement or account to a patient, unless requested by the individual.

He was called a born leader and donated much time to civic and community services. He made outstanding contributions to the field of education and to the business and industrial life of McMinnville and Warren County.

He died in 1964 at the age of 62.

### DR. JOHN T. MASON

He earned his medical license after attending Vanderbilt University from 1926-33. In 1939, he sold his interest in the hospital to Clark, and established an office on Morford Street in 1940. He later became affiliated with the Tennessee State Health Department before returning to McMinnville to practice medicine once again.

He was one of the first elders at Westwood Church of Christ in 1954, and helped organize and establish WBMC Radio Station. He passed away May 1, 1999 at the age of 90.

Dr. Mason's daughter Elizabeth Rone and her husband Dr. Norman Rone have located his optometric practice in the office building.

She said, "I have always been proud that my father, Dr. John T. Mason, was a co-partner with Dr. Clark in building the original Medical Clinic. My husband and I are pleased to have played a part in the renovation of this historic building as members of the First Presbyterian Church."

### DR. BETHEL CAMPBELL SMOOT

He practiced medicine from 1937 until his retirement in 1976. He was known as a community doctor, often making house calls. It is estimated he delivered 6,000 babies during his career. If he felt his patients could not afford the

cost of a physician visit, he would never send a bill. He seemed like a rough and tough person, but was really a generous and kind man.

Dr. Smoot loved to fish, fishing from Cuba to the Arctic Ocean. He was honored with a Dr. Smoot Day in August 1967, and by the VFW as Citizen of the Year. Gov. Buford Ellington joined residents in paying tribute to Smoot by appointing him a colonel on his staff and presented him with a certificate.

He passed in 2000 at the age of 86 at River Park Hospital, the facility he co-founded in 1972.

Katie Kemesis is Dr. Smoot's granddaughter, saying, "My grandfather treated countless people in this clinic, and I know he would be proud of the work done to give this building a new lease on life. I'm humbled by the exhibit and memory walk honoring the nurses and doctors."

### DAVID FOSTER RAY

Ray was born in Alabama, but came to McMinnville in 1939 to work with Clark and Smoot at the Medical Clinic. He dedicated much of his life to the medical field, working in the lab, X-ray department and administration. He was the father of Warren County's Medal of Honor winner, David R. (Bobby) Ray, who was killed in Vietnam in 1969 while saving the life of a fellow Marine.

He died at the age of 80 in June of 1998.

Ray's daughter Mary Don Bixby said this about her father and his legacy, "Since moving back to McMinnville, I frequently hear from so many people who knew and loved my father. He might have X-rayed them, given them a shot, or helped them pay their hospital bills, but they all seemed to remember him. He loved his work, and I know that it was because he cared so much about the patients."

With the purpose of preserving the history and integrity of the building, church committee members have a memory walkway in an effort to keep the important McMinnville alive. The Memorial Walkway runs from the front door of the Clinic at 205 West Main Street. Memory bricks for the doctors and nurses are arranged in a cross to honor them, with the bricks of the people they served are surrounded around them. Bricks currently number 180, with additions in the future.

Anyone wishing to place a brick in honor or memory of someone, contact the church office in the Clinic Building Monday - Thursday from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., or call 931-473-2690 to get a brochure. Other contacts include Mary Mason at 931-474-3100, email mwmason.tn@gmail.com; or contact Rachel Killebrew at 931-473-8616, email rkillebrew@blomand.net. For office space rental, make these same contacts.



Touring the renovated Medical Clinic are descendants of some of the doctors, from left, Elizabeth Rone, daughter of Dr. John Mason; Anne Clark Foster, daughter of Dr. Charles Clark; and Katie Kemesis, granddaughter of Dr. B.C. Smoot.



David Ray's daughter Mary Don Ray Bixby admires a photo of her father that hangs on a historical wall inside The Clinic Office Building, which was the former Medical Clinic.