

Dr. William C. Harkey House (1902) 224 East Main Street – Gardner *Register of Historic Kansas Places*

The Queen Anne cottage that stands at 224 East Main Street in Gardner was built for the family of one of Johnson County's much-beloved country doctors.



The William Harkey House, located at 224 East Main Street in Gardner, is an example of the Queen Anne style of architecture. The house was added to the Register of Historic Kansas Places in 1986. *Johnson County Museum Collection.*

Dr. William C. Harkey was born on a farm south of Gardner in 1872. Although his first career was in teaching, in 1897 he began his pursuit of a degree in medicine at the University Medical College in Kansas City. Upon

graduation, the newly minted doctor returned to his hometown, where he set up practice and married his childhood sweetheart, Marie Elizabeth Meng. Construction on the William Harkey House began in 1902. The home was built by the prolific Johnson County firm of J.M. Cramer and C.H. Eyerly for \$2000. Besides providing living quarters for the growing family, the house also accommodated a waiting room, an observation room, and Dr. Harkey's office, and had a 21-foot hand dug well built into the west foundation wall.

Although Harkey, like many country doctors, was known to accept poultry as payment for his services, he was not one to put all of his eggs in one basket. Farming was a second passion in his life, and he developed a reputation as an able veterinarian. He also served as the township treasurer, the president of the Gardner State Bank, and received the most votes for city councilman in his election to that post in 1902.

Despite his popularity in Gardner, in 1909 Dr. Harkey moved his family to New Orleans to pursue post-graduate study at Tulane University. In 1910, Dr. Harkey was offered the post of head of pediatrics at Kansas City's Bell Memorial Hospital, and the Harkey family returned to Johnson County. Dr. Harkey purchased acreage near the present-day junction of I-435 and Metcalf Avenue where he was able to farm and raise livestock; his patients often found him working in his fields. Their reminiscences of him paint a picture of a compassionate and dedicated physician who went out of his way to tend to his

patients, even advertising that his services were free of charge to underprivileged children. Dr. Harkey passed away in 1935.

The William Harkey House, which was listed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places in 1986, has remained relatively unchanged over the years. It even served as the residence and office of a second physician, Dr. O.T. Leftwich, in later years. In the 1980s, the house was restored to its original appearance. Current owners Marlin and Betty Chanay use the home as the office for their real estate business.

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