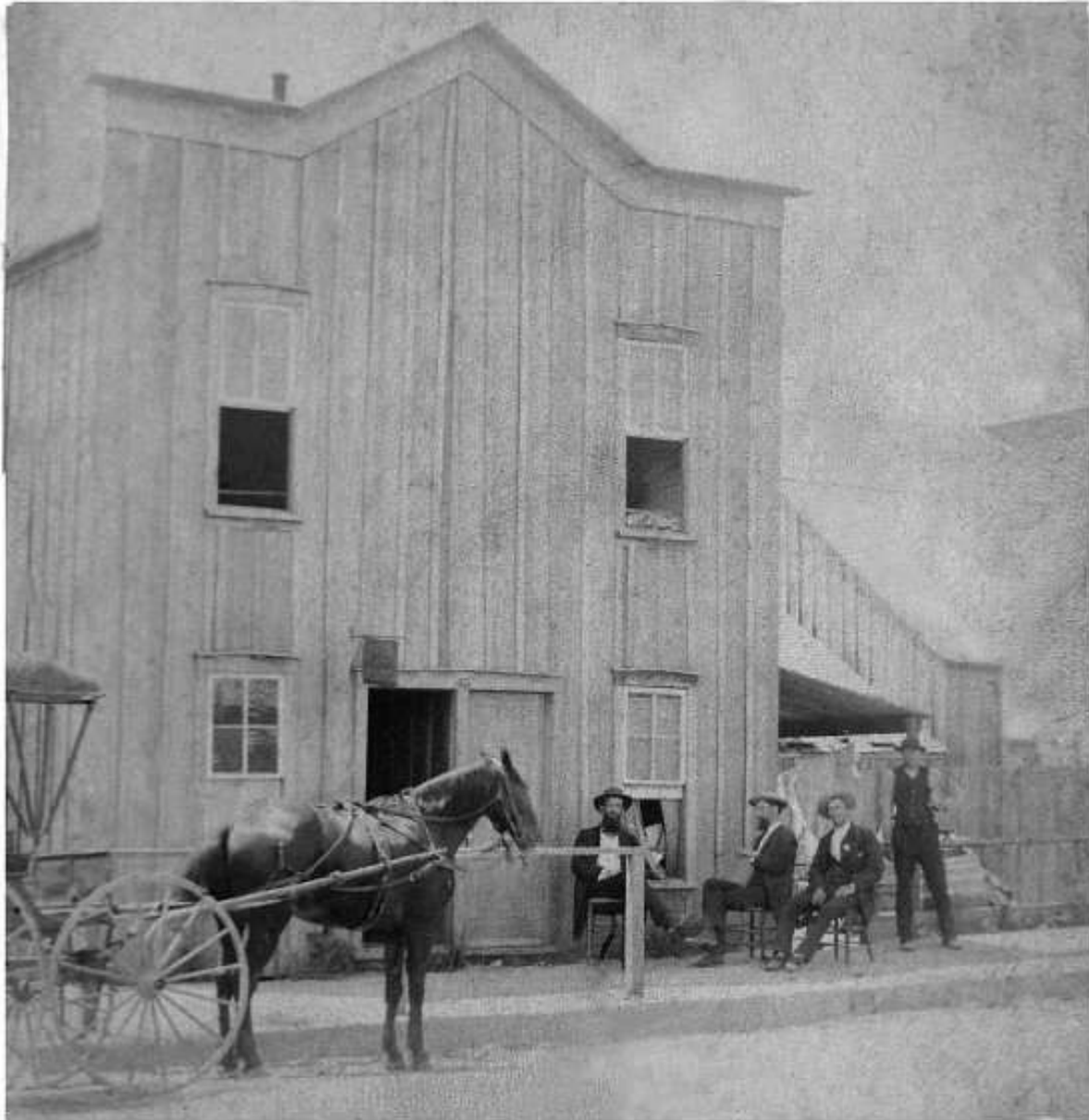


## **Life & Medical Practice In Fort Worth, Texas**

Shortly after graduation in February 1883, Isaac, Annie, and little Frank Darter made the long trip of more than 900 miles back to Fort Worth to begin their life's work in medicine. One can only imagine them entering Fort Worth and the rousing welcome given to them by their parents and many family members. Isaac would have been very busy setting up his medical office and Annie their home. Annie would be extremely busy over the next 10 years of her life with Isaac serving as a nurse with her husband, giving birth to two more boys, and an extraordinary amount of volunteer work for the poor and needy.

Soon afterward, on 27 October 1883, their third son William Alexander Darter was born in Ft. Worth (he will be called Bill herein as he was during his lifetime). Three years later, their last son, Isaac Michael Darter (obviously named after his father), was born on 11 June 1886 in Ft. worth. The last of the children to be delivered by their father.

Dr. Darter and Annie his wife were very busy parents with three young boys and taking care of so many patients. He had a large practice (his office in 1886 was located at 109 11<sup>th</sup> Street in Ft. Worth near the current site of the Fort Worth Convention Center) with some paying patients in the daytime and Mrs. Darter served as his nurse. At night, they often went out, administered to the poor and the sick, and never sent them a bill. Sometimes they would send the doctor some eggs or a chicken or whatever they thought his service was worth. Annie Mary was a good cook and many loaves of bread were taken to the needy families. She was also a good singer and entertained at church or prison or wherever she could do some good, and she would take her three boys along.



x Office  
o Drugstore

Dr. Isaac Michael  
Darter M.D.  
Ft. Worth Texas 1885

Dr. Darter's early medical office in Fort Worth, Texas is shown above. Note his horse and buggy in front ready to travel to help a patient. Dr. Darter with full beard is on the far left sitting. His office is the upper right window and drugstore is the lower left window, many doctors made their own pills and various drugs.

Ann Arnold recently wrote an excellent book on the Ft. Worth medical history. It is titled A History of the Fort Worth Medical Community and includes bibliographical references, index, and photos (Ref 15). Dr. I. M. Darter is not referenced, probably due to his death at an early age just as he was becoming well known and had begun to invent medical instruments. A revealing account of conditions in the City of Fort Worth in these days comes from Sam Smith, born in 1895, as quoted by Max Williams (Ref 15, 17):

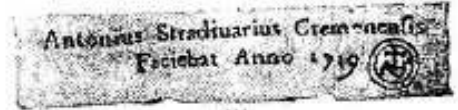
I can remember seeing on lower Main Street, in front of a meat market, rabbits, squirrels and prairie chickens hanging out on the sidewalks and flies swarming like bees. Hardly anything was sanitary then, with no refrigeration and no screens on the houses and places of business... No water system existed then, as water was carried from the Trinity River.

What a challenge for a doctor under these conditions! He was also a very good surgeon and according to his son Frank, he could perform any operation. Once, when he was in his Dad's office, a man came in screaming with pain—his arm was out of the socket. Dr. Darter told Frank to get out of the way and told the man to get into the corner of the room and hold out his arm and in one second, he pushed the man against the wall and his arm back into the socket. It happened so quickly, and hurt the man so much, that he told the doctor he could have hit him in the face, but he was thankful to have it done so quickly. (Ref 13)

When he operated on anyone, he would put his long beard in a silk sack and place silk sack on the inside of his operating clothes. (Ref 4)

Frank related that he and his brothers Bill and Mike would often play under the house and make pills and put them in bottles for sick people. They definitely carefully observed their father and he had a large effect on their lives.

Their home life seemed to have been a happy one. Frank relates that his father Isaac could play the violin beautifully and in the evening, the neighbors often would come in and listen to his playing. Annie Mary was a very good singer and she often sang to her boys, her favorite song was "Nearer my God to Thee." She was also an excellent cook and baked the best bread and many a loaf was taken to patients and friends in the evening. She made the best gingerbread boys and when she would go singing at meetings or prison she would take the boys with her, and they were kept quiet by eating and playing with the gingerbread boys. They must have been kind and loving parents to their three boys and she was good, understanding wife to her husband and often helped him as nurse with his patients. He played Santa Claus every Christmas for the Church. (Ref 4)



Dr. Darters violin that he played very well and often at night with family & friends. (The label inside the violin is similar to the above label, except that the date in this violin is 1721. This is not a "Stradivarius" violin, but most likely made by manufacturers of violins in Germany). This violin survived the 1900 Galveston hurricane plus the entire next century.

Dr. Darter worked hard in the daytime for the patients, who could afford a fee, but at night he would go around the poor, who were not able to pay, and did much charity work. His patients loved him and although he never sent a bill, they were told to pay him whatever it was worth to them. Sometimes a chicken, some eggs, or other farm products, were given to him according to son Bill. He also remembers his good father giving him and Frank a lesson in "driving nails in hard pine lumber and clinching them, so that they would not split the boards." He must have been a wise father, who loved to teach his boys to do things right.

One time, Frank recalls hiding under the house and trying to smoke "cedar bark." His Dad must have smelled it and came after him, and when he saw him said: "Frank, what is that you have in your mouth"? Frank was scared, of course, but stumbled: "A cigarette, daddy." "No, Frank that is a headlight to a fool, a headlight to a fool son." Frank never forgot these words, and remembered them to his dying day and never smoked in his life. In fact, he told his son, Michael I. Darter, this story so many times during his youth, that even he remembers it to this day and never smoked either. Where did Dr. Darter get this knowledge of the disastrous effects of smoking?

Isaac worked very hard and studiously applied himself to his profession to the extent that he impressed the powers to be and was elected the City Physician of Ft. Worth by the City Council on April 13, 1887, as reported in the Fort Worth Gazette:

Swearing in Ceremony of Officials. Dr. I. M. Darter was declared duly elected City Physician. ‘On motion, the City Council proceeded to ballot for a City Physician. The first vote stood 4 for Mullins, the incumbent, and 4 for Darter. The second count showed 5 to 3 in favor of Darter, and Dr. I. M. Darter was declared duly elected City Physician.’

Dr. I. M. Darter, City Physician, is an old resident of Ft. Worth, a brother of the alderman of the same name (W. A. Darter). He is a self made man, and has built himself up in the profession by strict devotion to his work.”

The last sentence is one of the most rewarding things that could be said about a person who has devoted his life to helping mankind and speaks mountains about Isaac M. Darter. His mother, Mary Boyd Darter, must have been very proud of Isaac. She lived to be 72, gave birth to 10 children being 55 when the last one was born), and then died a few months after Isaac became City Physician on February 21, 1888. She was buried in Pioneer Rest Cemetery.

Dr. Darter was very devoted to this work and in 1892 developed a “Laryngeal Catheter” as reported in an article in the Texas Courier-Record of Medicine, Volume 10:41, October 1892 (Illustrated). This document is shown below and states the following. (Ref 10)

This instrument is intended to be used in diphtheria and croup, and all other kinds of obstruction of respiration.

A few of the advantages claimed for this instrument over all other procedures, are as follows:

It makes no wound as in tracheotomy and in addition to that, permission can be obtained to use it before it is too late to do any good. It is much cheaper than intubation instruments. Every physician can have it. Every physician can introduce it and withdraw it, which is not the case in intubation which requires skill. It can be introduced as far into the trachea as desired, and if it gets stopped up it can be unstopped while in situ by suction force applied to the mouth end. And the beauty of all of it is it enables the physician to apply medicinal agents to the whole respiratory track by simply filling up the catheter before withdrawing it. (Ref 10)

ligated and the sutures are tied, the wound cleansed with bichloride solution 1-2000. It should be dressed with iodoform sprinkled over the wound, then Lister protective next; bichloride gauze should be put eight or ten thicknesses, bichloride cotton, then gutta serena tissue, then well bandaged. After all operations the instruments ought to be boiled with soda water and put in antiseptic cloth so they will be ready for any case that may come up.

(Discussions on this subject will be found in Society Notes.)

LARYNGEAL CATHETER.

DEvised BY J. M. DARTER, M. D., FORT WORTH, TEXAS.

A. A rubber catheter.

B. B. B. Stilet with stiff steel wire for body, having two holes through the point and one through the handle, for the purpose of letting air through, so that the physician will know when the trachea has been entered.

C. A hard rubber, movable tooth slide, for the purpose of protecting the catheter from the teeth.

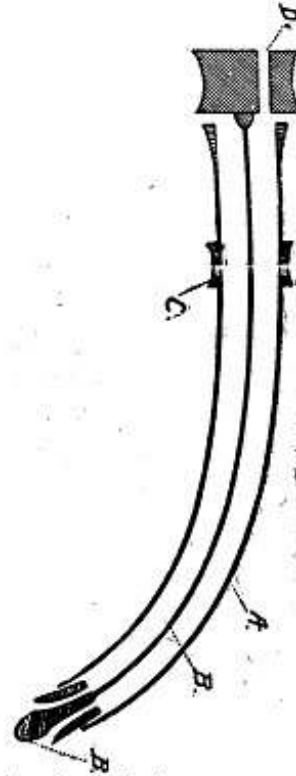
The purpose of the stilet is to facilitate introduction. After introduction into the trachea the stilet is withdrawn, leaving one end of the catheter in the trachea, and the other end projecting from the mouth.

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mouth end. And the beauty of all of it is it enables the physician to apply medicinal agents to the whole respiratory track by simply filling up the catheter before withdrawing it. (Made by Geo. Ticmans, & Co. N. Y.)

GLYCERINE IN HEPATIC COLIC.

Dr. Ferrard concludes a communication to the French Academy as follows: 1. Glycerine administered by the stomach is absorbed in its natural state by the lymphatics, especially by the vessels which lead from the stomach to the hilum of the liver, and to the gall bladder; it is even found in the suprahepatic veins. 2. It is a powerful cholagogue, and an excellent remedy for hepatic

Article written by Dr. I. M. Darter of Fort Worth, Texas in the Texas Courier-Record of Medicine, Volume 10:41, October 1892 (Illustrated) on a "Laryngeal Catheter" that he invented.

A number of notices appear in the newspapers of the day over the next few years asking for donations for the sick and the poor similar to the following:

“PUBLIC WELFARE: City Physician Darter says if any citizen has old clothes of any description he does not need, it would be a charity to send them to the city hall where he will get them and take them to the hospital. He says many of the poor patients need them badly.” The Ft. Worth Daily Gazette December 8, 1887

“City Physician Darter says if any of our citizens have cast off clothing it would be gratefully received by the inmates of the city hospital. If the clothing is left at the city hall Dr. Darter will see that it reaches the unfortunate sick ones for whom intended.” January 13, 1888.

Another notice from the Fort Worth Daily Gazette, dated February 22, 1889:  
Dr. Darter's horse and buggy were stolen last night.

His son Frank relates the following:

During his short practice, he built a beautiful home for his family (at the corner of Lipscomb and Jarvis Streets), rented out three homes to others and accumulated ¼ of a block of business property, all from donations from his patients. My mother took the place of a nurse, and helped father out a great deal. She was a faithful church worker, and a real Gospel singer. They were members of the Christian or Cambellite church. Father was a great violinist and many hours were spent in singing and playing.

Son Bill remembers his father also.

During these pioneer days, before much money was in circulation, my father received farm products and other assets for his services. I, at 9 years of age, remember my mother asking him after he came in from a service call to the country, if he had received any cash today. “No” he said, “but I brought you a couple dozen eggs and a dressed frying chicken”. I remember him well. He with my mother took us three brothers, Frank my oldest brother twelve years of age, and my youngest brother Michael seven years of age, to Sunday School and Church every Sunday. I remember him giving us three boys a lesson in driving nails into lumber without splitting the lumber.

My father had a hobby of buying little run down small houses and moving them to a small plot of land he bought in a rough part of Fort Worth, and overhauling them and renting them out to low income poor people. Up to his death he had accumulated about five of these little homes. (Ref 12)