

Quality Healthcare Marks Early City History

On Dec. 1, 1922, Sugar Land residents' medical care improved with the addition of a local hospital. The town contained 400 residences when Samuel Gayle Deatherage first opened his medical practice above the drug store in 1917. Three years later, W.T. Eldridge and I.H. Kempner invested \$15,000 toward a hospital and housing for single nurses across Lakeview Street from Sugar Land School.

Dr. W.G.L. Blackwell and Registered Nurse Nema Sheppard joined Deatherage's medical practice at Laura Eldridge Memorial Hospital.

The first baby born in Laura Eldridge Hospital was James Byron Fowler, Jr., son of J.B. and Sybil Fowler. His mother was the first patient admitted to the new facility. Belle McShay, the supervising nurse, is holding the baby in front of the hospital on the day he left to go home. Also pictured is Sybil feeding her baby in the back yard of their house on Guenther Street in The Flats.

By 1926, Sugar Land's population swelled to over 1,500 residents and a third physician, Carlos Slaughter, joined the staff. The ominous names of physicians Deatherage, Blackwell and Slaughter became a local irony since most residents considered the quality of their care equal to that found in Houston.

The hospital required larger quarters in 1956 and was relocated to the east side of Eldridge Road. Despite its essential role, the hospital operated at a chronic deficit requiring regular infusions of company cash. Unable to sustain itself, the hospital became an economic fatality after Sugar Land's 1959 incorporation.

Healthcare continues to be an important part of Sugar Land, which is home to some of the most progressive healthcare facilities in the Fort Bend County area. Now a regional medical hub, hospitals such as St. Luke's, Sugar Land Rehabilitation Hospital, Sugar Land Cancer Center, Methodist, Memorial Hermann, Kelsey Seybold and Triumph Extended Stay have state of the art facilities in Sugar Land.

Money Magazine and CNNmoney.com rank Sugar Land as one of America's Best Places to Live.
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