

Museum News: Dr. S. B. Hudson – A Life Well-Spent

By C. W. (Bill) Smith

One of the more important pioneers of Terrell County was Dr. Samuel Bowden Hudson. Besides founding a thriving local practice as a medical doctor, he was also appointed as the local physician and surgeon for the GH & SA Railway, offshoot of the Southern Pacific Railroad. In spite of those duties, he entered actively in the local affairs of the community, being one of those who strived to break the county away from Pecos County and served as its first county treasurer from 1905 until 1908.

Dr. Samuel Hudson was born in Florence, Alabama in 1875, the third child of Lewis Cass Hudson (1847-1909) and Mary Fanny Harrison Hudson (1850-1895.) Mr. Hudson ran a general store and was a cotton and tobacco trader. Gertrude Alice Akers Hudson was born in Batesville, Texas, to C.C. Akers and Gertrude Bates Akers. Her maternal grandfather was the founder of Batesville. Her father was Zavala County Sheriff for a time, and then worked with the Customs Service. Mrs. Hudson was born in Eagle Pass in 1883, the oldest of four children, with a sister and two brothers.



The Hudsons were married in Batesville in 1900, where their oldest child, Maxine, was born. In 1902 they lived briefly in Rockport, but moved out to Sanderson the same year. Impressed by the Hudsons' delight in Sanderson, Mrs. Hudson's youngest brother Batch (Baylor) Akers came out and worked as a call boy on the GH & SA Railroad. Tragically, he was murdered by a drunken sheepherder in the street in front of the roundhouse in 1908. The tragedy was compounded by the fact that just a few hours before, the Hudson's third child, Gladys, had passed away at an infirmary in San Antonio at the age of 20 months. They had also lost their second child, Grace, in 1906, at one year of age. Those were unhappy times for the family, but Dr. Hudson's huge practice on the railroad and in the fourth largest county in Texas kept him on the move and preoccupied. In 1909, a fourth child and their first son, Samuel, Jr., was born. The outlook for the Hudsons became brighter with the addition of the new baby boy.

Life was spent in Sanderson being constantly on call. Whenever an accident or illness occurred on the railroad, Dr. Hudson was put on the first caboose to the patient. Sometimes he was able to ride a passenger train. For rail accidents he would ride in the "Bull," the wrecker sent out to clear the damage. For his non-railroad patients, he spent his first years going to the patients in a buggy or by horseback. When automobiles began to be prevalent in Sanderson, he acquired one of the first and began to make house and ranch calls by auto.

Hudson's practice was huge, even though other doctors were in the area. Sometimes he would be gone from home for extended periods when dealing with far-flung patients. He was so trusted that in later years after the Hudsons moved to Sabinal, Sanderson patients would travel by buggy, auto or railroad to Dr. Hudson to receive his services.

But, Hudson was involved in other activities in his years at Sanderson. He built the first drug store in Sanderson, the Sanderson Drug Company at 1st and Oak, and established the first confectionary in town. He was on the first board of directors of the Sanderson State Bank in 1907 until he moved to Sabinal, and served on many committees and organizations in his time in Sanderson. The Hudsons were great supporters of Sanderson and all its activities. Some of their children started school in Sanderson and the Hudsons were avid supporters of education and the schools in the county.

By 1914, Mrs. Hudson began to have health problems. In addition, Dr. Hudson's mother was also in ill health at her home in Sabinal, so the Hudsons decided to move to Sabinal. It was a difficult decision, but it had to be done.

They moved in 1914, and he took over duties as the railroad physician there and built another huge practice with the public.

After they moved to Sabinal, two more sons were born to the family, Lewis Carroll and Frank Kerr. Because of his great friendship with Joe Kerr, Dr. Hudson named Frank after the Kerrs. In return, Joe named his third son, Edward, after Dr. Hudson.

After a long and happy life in Sabinal, Dr. S. B. Hudson developed diabetes and died of a heart attack on November 11, 1936. Mrs. Hudson continued living in Sabinal until ill health forced her to move closer to her children in San Antonio. In May of 1963, she went to Aguascalientes, Mexico to visit her daughter, Maxine. It was there that she passed away on May 6, 1963. She and her husband are buried in the cemetery at Sabinal.

The Hudsons were very important to the Terrell County community. Through their hard work and tireless effort the county of Terrell was founded in this barren West Texas wilderness. Dr. Hudson saved many lives, brought many babies into the world, helped souls pass peacefully into the next world and looked after the health of hundreds of citizens. Part of the Hippocratic Oath, sworn by all doctors, states the following: "I will remember that I remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings, those sound of mind and body as well as the infirm." Dr. Samuel B. Hudson certainly upheld his Hippocratic Oath...he was a faithful member of our society and he upheld special obligations beyond the call of medicine. He went to his eternal reward with an untarnished record and a life well-spent.