

JAMES E. WHITAKER

J. E. Whitaker, the landowner of Parcel C-99, never lived on the parcel. According to Wesley Thomas, Whitaker had a land manager who lived on the property and oversaw the farming of his land; in addition, he rented part of it to the Thomas family. Whitaker is an example of one of the many landowners who owned the pre-arsenal land but did not live on it. Local authors Goldsmith and Fulton present a sketch of this man.

Source: *Medicine Bags and Bumpy Roads* by Jewell S. Goldsmith and Helen D. Fulton. The Valley Publishing Company, Huntsville, AL, 1985, pp. 277-278.

James Ezekiel Whitaker was born September 24, 1889 in New Hope, Alabama. He left there to attend Berea College in Kentucky. Apparently he was not born to wealth, as he worked his way through college by waiting tables. He studied to be a teacher and earned his diploma in 1914. He taught in Oklahoma for six years before returning to Marshall County, Alabama to teach.

In a school play he was cast as “Dr. Cure-All.” Perhaps the part inspired him, because he again became a student. In 1922, he received his Doctor of Medicine Degree from Tulane University; he served his internship at the Charity Hospital in New Orleans. Today the Charity Hospital in New Orleans is known to be crowded and serve many people—apparently this has been true during the many decades of its operation. Goldsmith and Fulton state that after Whitaker finished his internship there, he remarked that it was the only hospital he had ever seen where two patients were often placed in the same bed because of lack of space.



Dr. James E. Whitaker

The year Whitaker graduated from Tulane he married Cora Buford who was from his hometown, New Hope, Alabama. They had only one child, who died at birth. Whitaker practiced medicine (general practice and surgery) in New Hope from 1922 to 1926 and then moved to Huntsville.

In 1937, he was president of the Madison County Medical Society. While he was known to be a fine surgeon, he had an intense interest in the treatment of cancer, which led him to do special training at Michael Reese Hospital. Afterward, he returned to Huntsville and opened an office in the Times Building.