House Calls

By Amy L. Metzger Hunt / Curator, Heritage Frederick



Dr. Ira Washington Beall practiced medicine in Frederick County, serving thousands of families from 1893 until shortly before his death in 1959.

This doctor's bag belonged to Dr. Ira Washington Beall, who practiced medicine from his home on Main Street in Libertytown for 66 years. During his career, the doctor (and bag) traveled on horseback, wagon and later by automobile to accident scenes, bedsides and an estimated 4,000 homes for the birth of a child.

Beall was born in Liberty in 1868, one of the eight children of Washington and Jane Beall. Washington Beall, like his father before him and like three of his sons after him, was a stone mason, but Ira decided on a different path. After completing public school, Ira spent three years teaching in Burkittsville before moving to Baltimore to attend the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Ira graduated in 1893, moved back home to Libertytown, and immediately set up his practice.

Three years later, he successfully reattached the finger of 2-year-old Ada Bohn, after another child struck her with a hatchet, according to an article in *The* (Frederick) *News*. Through his six and a half decades of service, Beall and wife Rosa Kate Lohr, whom he married in 1898, were heralded as pillars of their community, willing to help people of all stations and situations, regardless of their race, background or ability to pay.

Beall passed away in 1959, at the age of 91, having treated his final patients just days before his death. In addition to the leather doctor's bag, Beall's stethoscopes, his favorite chairs, his medical diplomas and even the shingle he hung out on the front of his Libertytown home advertising his practice were all donated to Heritage Frederick by his great-niece and her daughter. FM