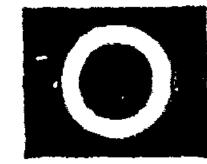


## Dr. Gardner's Call Book



N FEB. 3, 1832, Dr. Johnson Gardner, a young physician practicing in North Providence, made the following entry in his call book: "This morning or about 12

o'clock noon Mrs. Gardner was delivered of a fine little girl. . . . Women present, Mrs. Buffington, Mrs. Wilkinson, Mrs. Lyons and Mrs. Baker. Also Mother Sisson. All went on well."

BY ROBERT L. WHEELER

It shows the cost

formed in the evening, Doctors Main and Webb assisting, he got \$5. The Deacon got out of the whole thing for \$8.50 and the trepanning was a successful job, too, for later entries record other visits, for which a lower fee is charged.

In some cases, Doctor Gardner instituted something in the nature of a "physician's service," with payment by the year. In 1831 occurs the notation, "Agreed. with the Rev. Benjamin Fessenden to attend his family and furnish medicine which I prescribe for the same one year from date, 4th April, 1831, for the sum of \$15." The agreement could not have been continued from year to year, for there is a later entry, "Rev. B. Fessenden, medicine and medical advice, \$2.50." He made a similar agreement with Samuel Bourne, but only billed him \$10 for a year's attendance. Apparently he believed in charging the clergy more than the laity. Or possibly the doctor charged according to the patient's ability to pay. The call book records an attempt made in Pawtucket in 1832 to regulate fees "signed by all the physicians in the place who have agreed to strictly abide by the same." The scale of fees is not given. The doctor was a man of varied interests. In the back of the book are a couple of pages devoted to a "Record of Judicial Proceedings, 1843," set down while Doctor Gardner was a justice of the peace in Seekonk. In one case Arnold L. Malburg of Seekonk is charged with selling rum, wine and brandy without a license and also with being a "common Sabbath

Having written which, Doctor Gardner took his quill and scratched a check mark on the margin of the page to indicate that he and his wife considered themselves paid for their joint obstetrical labors. Similar check marks all through the book show that the doctor invariably collected for his services. In this instance he got what was even better than cash on the barrelhead—a baby daughter.

His usual charge for a delivery was \$6. If the stork beat him to the bedside he cut the fee to \$2. Thus in July, 1831, a Mr. Crocker of Valley Falls became a parent for two dollars and a quarter, the 25 cents being for Drops and Pills.

Doctor Gardner's call book, a substantial ledger with a dilapidated leather binding, is owned by his great-grandson, Charles C. Gardner, 10 Park Ave., Matunuck. It reposes on the table of the front room; on the wall hangs a portrait of Doctor Gardner taken sometime prior to the Civil War, during which he examined recruits for the Union Army at an office on Benefit Street, Providence. He was born in Rehoboth in 1799 and died in Pawtucket in 1869.

The call book covers only three years (1830-1833) breaker and profaner of the Lord's Day." He was conwas 25 cents, as noted in the case of the sister of of a practice which extended from 1826 until a few victed on the first count and fined \$10, but the charge Gideon L. Spencer, who had her aching molar yanked of Sabbath breaking was not proved. years before Doctor Gardner's death. He studied for that modest sum. medicine with Drs. Usher Parsons and Levi Wheaton Even when he had to perform a serious operation, On Dec. 16, 1843, there appeared before Doctor Doctor Gardner's fee was nothing to give you ulcers, of Providence and graduated from the medical de-Gardner ("at a justice court holden in my office") partment of Brown University in 1824. He commenced which had not then been invented. In 1831 the doctor one Joseph B. Fitts charged with that he did, on the did a trepanning on the son of Deacon David Brown 8th day of December, contrary to the statute made practice in Providence two years later. During the 1830's he was considered one of the most successful and provided, "presume to travel on the public road of Attleboro. It being a serious case, he charged \$2.50 physicians in the town. In 1842 he moved to Seekonk. with a sleigh or sled drawn by a horse without bells for the afternoon visit, plus 50 cents for "sundry medicines." For the actual operation, which was perattached to same." Three dollars and costs. A Democrat in politics, Doctor Gardner was suc-

## of medical care in R.I. in the 1830's

cessively a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and a state senator. In the 1850's he was one of the three commissioners appointed by Governor Boutwell to settle the boundary line between Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In 1853 he retired to Pawtucket and died there, leaving behind him a reputation for geniality, courtesy and fair dealing. The doctor's meticulous will bequeathed one son his outhouse, the other his well. He was in every way a sterling character.

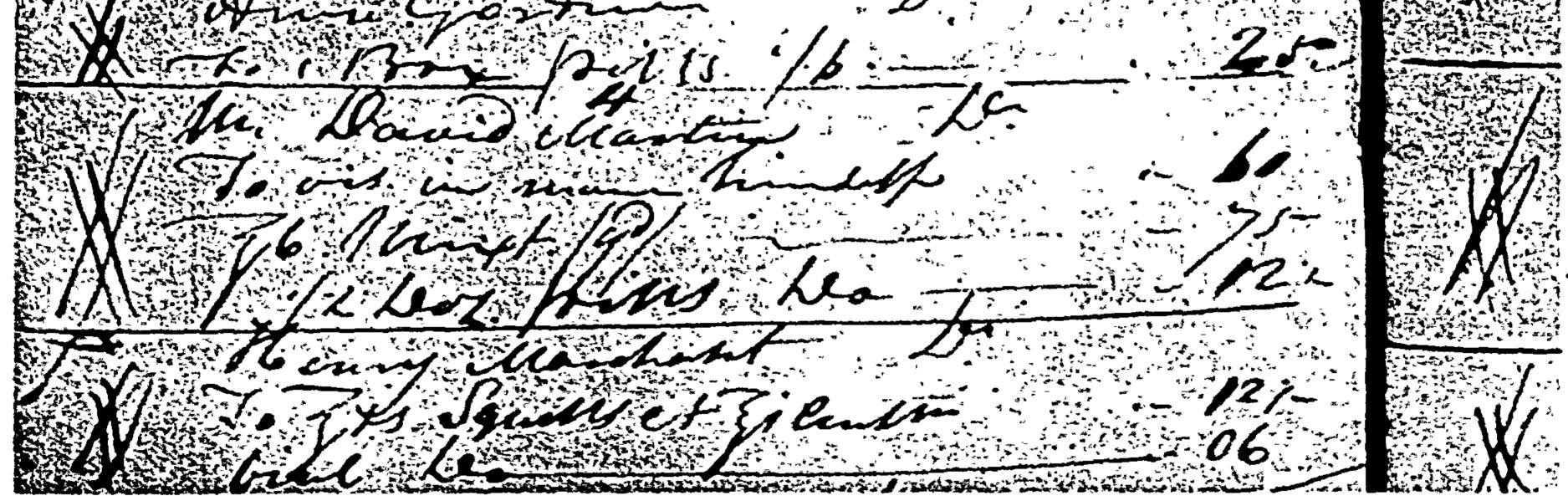
His great-grandson's wife, Mrs. Margaret Gardner, is a former student nurse at Memorial Hospital, Pawtucket. Poring over the doctor's call book with a nurse's seeing eye, she points out items showing how times have changed in the medical profession, particularly in the matter of fees.

His ordinary charge for a visit was from 50 cents to a dollar and medicines ran anywhere from 12 cents to \$3. Bleeding was a dollar and a tooth extraction

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autuchet Augus David Martine 101-Could at 6 Halls Adund in Diene Mancy Martine : 104 Jo out & Midiens out 6.4 Mill Huiches Dor So oil in mane, & ado be Uniold attleborough in So visit fail Daught Hound 1 M Goodwing 10 ors in class Working dant paid is Boy-Octano, y Jacob 212 No Jail Lath Brush Cht. S. 1/5 - 25 Him fendlet 1 our afternoon - SD. W A The blance - Db The Sulph and Dilut he - 12h An I Darton attallyac Di Aleris his Wife + ado the 1.50. Tom 1 Box bill this mong. - 50. Stolat Dotal Lo Villa Wen Anold Jours no Culliborigh - 110



FIRST ENTRIES in ancient call book show visits to David Martin, Nancy Martin, Ann Jenckeş, William Arnold, Colonel Goodwin. Sold to one young patient: a toothbrush.

Pictures by H. Raymond Ball



## GREAT-GRANDSON, Charles C. Gardner of Matunuck, and his wife, Mrs. Margaret Gardner, glance over record of the doctor's calls. Good doctor — good collector, too!