STAR VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
HISTORICAL BOOKS INVENTORY DETAILS

1. Overview

Title of Book: Biography of Dr. G. W. West

Author: Unknown (Part 1), Janet S. Osmun (Part 2)

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2. Evaluation

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3. Synopsis:

George Washington West was born in Missouri in 1872. After he became a doctor, he moved west eventually settling in Star Valley, Wyoming, where he spent the rest of his life. He played a critical role as a physician. In addition, he was active in community affairs, operated his own ranch, and was an avid sportsman. After serving Star Valley for more than 40 years, he passed away December 5, 1956. The narrative covers his experiences as a doctor, as a family man, and as a public-minded citizen.

4. Other:

*Included in this history are two accounts of the life of Dr. West. The first does not give an author’s name. The second was written by Janet S. Osmun. It is entitled "Star Valley's Pioneer Doctor--the Saga of George West" It was first published in the Star Valley Independent.
George W. West was born Nov. 16, 1872 at Meta, Mo., the son of Thomas W. West and Anna Burd West. His boyhood and youth was uneventful, going to school as others do, but judging by the early age he graduated, he was something of a 'boy prodigy', or more ambitious than the average, for he graduated from college at 18 years of age. He taught children how to sprout their intellectual wings for four years when he decided to become a doctor. He selected as his Alma Mater, Barnes Medical School affiliated with St. Louis University. He completed his studies and internship at the same institution, graduating in 1903.

In 1904 he went west with his brother, Wafren, also a doctor, settling in Bear Lake Valley, Idaho. Shortly thereafter he brought his wife and two sons to Star Valley and has lived here until his death.

The valley welcomed him as a general practitioner and his services were always available when and where he was needed. Sometimes he didn't even send bills to patients when he knew they could not pay. For many years the standard charge for a maternity case was a flat $10, whether in Afton or Alpine. He delivered over 4,000 babies before his retirement. Much of the time he took in livestock or farm produce in payment for medical services for the convenience of his patients. In one month, one hundred babies made their advent in what he recalls as the most prolific era.

His home was used for a hospital, and there were nearly always patients in it. Sometimes it was filled to overflowing. The kitchen was his operating room. It was scrubbed from top to bottom by his wife and daughters everytime it was used. Mrs. West opened her home to his patients, endured the inconveniences, the extra work, the multiple tasks attending such a service, and always we shall hold her gracious kindness in grateful remembrance.

Dr. West was County Health Officer for many years and held this position at the time of his death. He weathered several epidemics, including the flu epidemic of 1918 and smallpox epidemic some years later. Star Valley would have been in a bad way without his services during these and other trying times.

He made house calls everywhere in the valley. He was a familiar sight in winter with his team and cutter going out on a call with his buffalo robe, fur cap, pinto coat and his faithful dog lying on his feet to keep them warm. When traveling a long ways he would stop at a farm along the way and change horses. Many times his moustache was covered with icicles on his return home on a cold day or night.

Dr. West chuckled as he recalled being called to McCoy Creek, 45 miles distant, for an appointment with the stork. Leaving Afton in a buggy, changing at Charles Stoker's in Thayne to a sleigh and fresh horses, leaving his conveyance on the bank of the spring swollen creek, he rowed a boat across and with fresh horses and sleigh, concluded his trip with no time to spare.

In addition to carrying all or much of the valley's medical load for years, Dr. West found time to be active in community and civic affairs, engaging in ranching, and was an enthusiastic sportsman. He loved Star Valley, and whenever he went out of the valley, he did not even remain away overnight if he could help it.

He bought a ranch below Grover in the early 1920's and operated it with the help of his sons. He later bought property at Auburn, Tygee, Alpine and Willow Creek, and owned three homes in Afton. He took pride in raising fine cattle and sheep. He was a member of the Wyoming Stockgrowers Assn., and ran cattle on Greys river with the Little Greys River Cattle Assn, from the time it was organized in the twenties. He nearly always helped with the roundups in the fall, even just before his death at age 84.

He loved fishing and hunting and took his family on many outdoor trips. He liked to shoot and always joined the rifle clubs which were organized. He had shooting "duels" (using targets) with his brother in Idaho on many occasions at rendezvous while the families picnicked. He was proud of a shooting medal he won in a contest at one time.
HE WAS ONE OF FOUR persons who originally met to organize the Afton State Bank June 28, 1907. He was named as a director of the bank organizing by the organizers and after stock was sold, was elected a director by the stockholders. He was chairman of the group representing the Afton State Bank when it was decided to consolidate it and the Freedom State Bank to become the Star Valley State Bank Oct. 26, 1926. Since the bank was organized here he has served continuously as a director until the time of his death.

Dr. West was a Farm Bureau leader, a member and president of the local school board for a number of years, was active in the Star Valley Wool Pool, served as city judge for the town of Afton, another position he held when he died, and extremely interested in politics and was an avid worker for the Democratic party.

He married Lulu Abrams at Steelville, Mo., before coming west. She died in 1910 after giving birth to five children, Warren, Homer, Lucille (deceased), Anna and George (deceased). On July 2, 1912, he married Alvina Tueller of Paris, Idaho. She died May 30, 1947. Born to this couple were four children, Lulu, Jack, Mark and Max.

On Nov. 16, 1946, Dr. West was honored at a special birthday party at the stake house sponsored by the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, commemorating his 74th birthday and his 43rd year of service to the people of Star Valley. The building was filled with people from all towns of the valley, and the event was a highlight in his life. A wonderful tribute to him was written and published by Mrs. Martha Kennington.

Another honor which came to him was when Washington University sent him a lifetime membership to the alumni association on the 50th anniversary of his graduation for his service in the medical field. Dr. West died in 1956.
Part I

Star Valley's Pioneer Doctor—the Saga of George West

[Previously Published in The Star Valley Independent]

Janet S. Osmun

"In a vine-covered shack in the mountains,--Bravely fighting the battle of time,--Is a dear one who's weathered life's sorrows. 'Tis that silver-haired daddy of mine...."

Ernest Turner's eyes swept across the chapel as he sang, moving from the blur of flowers and the metal casket, to the sea of sober faces lining the pews of Afton's 2nd/3rd Ward church. Elbow to elbow, leathered farmers, businessmen, ladies clutching winter wraps--all paying last respects to an extraordinary man.

"If I could recall all the heartaches,--Dear old daddy, I've caused you to bear.--If I could erase those lines from your face and bring back the gold to your hair.--If God would but grant me the power--just to turn back the pages of time,--I'd give all I own if I could but atone to that silver-haired daddy of mine."

With speakers and prayers and soft music, the funeral ended and the pallbearers carried the body to the coach. A stream of cars crawled through the cold
December afternoon to the graveyard east of town. The family flanked the coffin, standing in a foot of new snow while Bp. Frank Gardner dedicated the grave of the doctor who’d served Star Valley for 43 years of pandemic flu, smallpox, appendicitis and thousands of babies—it was the grave of Dr. George Washington West.

G. W. West was 84 when he passed away December 5, 1956, and though he was not a native son, his skills as a doctor, not to mention his potpourri of business ventures, had acquainted him with probably every family in Star Valley. To the community’s youth he was the legendary old gentleman in the woolen suit, dark business hat and Wellington boots—a familiar sight on the streets of Afton. But to the older generation, George West was the talented young doctor from Missouri who’d nursed decimated families through Spanish influenza back in 1918-19, who’d traveled through the Valley by team and bobsled in subzero weather to deliver babies and treat illness, who’d served his community on the school board, farm bureau, bank board of directors, fair board, as county health officer, and as city judge.

George Washington West was born November 16, 1872, at Meta, Missouri, to Thomas W. and Annah Burd West, farmers. With an older sister, Nara, and an older brother, Warren, George West spent his boyhood in a world of horses, hounds, and hunting. After high school he attended a "normal teachers county course" at Steelville, Missouri, and married classmate Lulu Abrams. They both graduated June 8, 1894, and George began teaching in Missouri’s country schools. After four years he grew weary of trying to "educate" pupils who were often older, not to mention bigger, than their teacher.

So George West entered Barnes School of Medicine (affiliated with Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri). He graduated in 1902 and completed his intern-
ship there in 1903. Tuberculosis was common in Missouri's damp climate, and though he had never contracted t.b., George West was frail. His brother, Warren, was already a medical doctor (graduated from Barnes Medical School, 1897) with a practice in Paris, Idaho. Lured by Warren's letters praising the hunting and the drier, healthier climate of the Rocky Mountain region, George packed his medical books and boarded a westbound train with wife Lulu and young sons Warren and Homer ("Tobe").

During the summer of 1903, G. W. West practiced medicine with his brother in Bear Lake Valley. The talk of "the Star of all Valleys" to the northeast, of the need for a permanent doctor there, intrigued George West. He visited Star Valley, and by November, 1903, had applied for and been granted a license to practice medicine in the state of Wyoming.

By early 1904 Dr. West had moved his family into a log home on 6th Street in Afton. He bought a 2-1/2-acre lot located 1/4 block east of Main Street on 5th Street (now owned by the telephone company) and hired carpenters to build a two-story frame home and an adjacent two-room office building. The house was completed in time for the arrival of daughter, Anna, on January 30, 1906.

By 1904 both Upper and Lower Star Valley had telephone service, but transportation was horsedrawn and hazardous in winter. Dr. West made housecalls in a buggy or bobsled and borrowed fresh horses at ranches along his route. In frigid weather the doctor wrapped up in a buffalo robe and often called on a patient with icicles hanging from his mustache. George West had renewed his boyhood love for hunting dogs and owned several greyhounds. A favorite dog "Copper" often traveled with him, stretched across the doctor's feet to warm them.
Dr. West removed appendix and tonsils on kitchen tables by the light of coal-oil lamps. Household pots and pans were used to sterilize instruments and bandages. Chloroform or ether dripped onto a face mask of wire and gauze was used as an anesthetic. Appendicitis was common and many died when an inflamed appendix ruptured and contaminated the abdominal cavity (peritonitis) before it could be removed.

In his 43-year career Dr. G. W. West delivered over 4,000 babies; many were born in the bedrooms of their own homes. George West's jovial bedside manner was not only comforting, but entertaining. When Newel and Blanche Gardner's baby was born Dr. West told Newel he was the father of a red-headed boy. It was three days before Gardner learned that his child was not only blonde, but a girl.

Times were hard and Dr. West accepted livestock, produce, hay, cords of wood, anything he could use, in payment. In 1906 the doctor's maternity fee was $10. A tonsilectomy cost $5. Some say he never mailed anyone a bill.

Common medications known to doctors then included quinine, Denver mud and pneumonia jackets, oil of eucalyptus, mustard plasters, and black cherry cough syrup. Most households in Star Valley had "tried and true" medicinal concoctions of their own, such as sulfur in rendered lard, a salve for seven-year-itch (impetigo); turpentine in rendered lard for chest colds; or a bag of putrid asafetida tied around the neck for pinworms in the bowels. Herbal recipes (often acquired from the Indians) were common. Yarrow weed was steeped as a tea for yellow jaundice; gravelweed tea was a kidney medication; catnip tea was good for colic and put a fussy baby to sleep.

The hallowed ritual of a "spring tonic" was dreaded by children everywhere. With the first sign of warm weather mothers treated each child to a tablespoon of black molasses laced with sulfur powder, or perhaps syrup of mandrake bitters cut with water. The rule of thumb was, "If it tasted nasty, it was good for you."
As more families settled in the Valley, the prospects for a bank looked favorable, and on June 28, 1907, a group of men including Dr. G. W. West met and organized the tiny Afton State Bank. George West served as a director. (On October 26, 1926, Afton State Bank and Freedom State Bank consolidated assets and became Star Valley State Bank. Dr. West was named a director and served continuously until his death.)

On February 25, 1909, Dr. West delivered his third son, George, Jr., in an upstairs bedroom of the West's 5th Street home. Mrs. Lulu West recovered from her confinement with no apparent complications. Then, one evening when little George was five weeks old and the doctor away at Fairview, Mrs. West suddenly became ill. She carried her infant son upstairs and without disturbing any of the older children, died, lying across her bed, of an apparent heart attack. Dr. West found her around 10:30 p.m.

Dr. West had delivered a son born to Mr. and Mrs. Con Yeaman some weeks earlier. Mrs. Mary Yeaman had enough milk to nurse both babies, and she took the West infant into her own home. Both babies were named George, and ironically, neither would live to see 20.

Lulu Abrams West was the mother of five children: Warren, Homer, Anna, Lucille (died as an infant), and George, Jr. The doctor's beloved wife—the girl from his native Missouri—was buried in the Afton cemetery.

In 1912 Alvina F. Tueller, 28, of Paris, Idaho, visited her sister, Clair Tueller, in Afton. The girls' parents were from Switzerland and their Swiss accent flavored their adopted English tongue. Thus Alvina was "Alvena", or "Wene" for short. During her visit to Star Valley, Wene Tueller met Dr. G. W. West, 40, widower, father of four children, struggling under the cares
of his own household as well as the medical needs of the Valley. After a spring courtship, they were married July 12, 1912, at Paris, Idaho. Four children would be born to George and Wene West: Lulu, Jack, Mark and Max.
A few years after Dr. George W. West remarried, a spacious kitchen and bath-
room with indoor plumbing were added to the Fifth Street home in Afton. Rather
than being designed for culinary purposes, the kitchen was more realistically an
operating room and the bathroom a "washup facility." Everything in both rooms was
white. The cupboards housed sterilized instruments, sheets, towels, and bandages.
A six-foot steel fold-up operating table was stored in a closet, along with a
huge sterilizer kettle. To cut down on the strain of making housecalls, Dr.
West had converted his own home into a makeshift hospital.

The white frame home had three bedrooms upstairs and one downstairs, but
as often as not the West children slept on the couch or the bunk on the porch
and even the bathtub and floor because their own beds were taken by patients.
Expectant mothers often brought their other children to board at Dr. West's
while they waited for delivery and confinement. The West family jointly served
as babysitters and room service personnel.

When Dr. West did surgery in his kitchen it was necessary to move everything
cut and scrub the entire room, ceiling to floor, with disinfectant. This was
the task of Wene and daughters Anna and Lulu. Occasionally two or more operations
were scheduled in a day and the room was washed down and the instruments, table, etc., sterilized between each case. Wene, Anna and Lulu served as nurses, wiping sweat from the doctor's brow, handing him instruments, then warming an upstairs bed with hot water bottles. It was a common thing for one of the Wests to rush into the street looking for someone to help carry a patient upstairs.

In addition to her duties as a practical nurse, Wene West cooked three big meals a day for however many were living under her roof. Often the doctor met friends on the street and brought them home to dinner, and like other children, the West kids often brought friends to the table. Wene also raised a garden, canned meats, vegetables and fruits, and put out a wash (brightened with Mrs. Stewart's Liquid Bluing) every Monday.

In 1905, an abbreviated little man, Dr. L. C. Proctor, arrived in Afton to establish a dental practice. Something of a kinship developed between George West and Lewis Proctor; they hunted and played cards together, and Proctor was anesthesiologist for West. It is told that Dr. Proctor occasionally found it necessary to sit on a patient's lap to remove a tooth, and in fact, sometimes enlisted the patient's assistance in prying out a molar. Around 1916 Dr. West and Proctor entered a partnership as the first Ford dealers in Star Valley. The Model T Ford sold for around $460, held 10 gallons of gasoline and averaged 25 mpg. Dr. West was his own mechanic and dug a grease pit in his garage. In 1917 Dr. and Mrs. West took a vacation to Yellowstone via automobile. World War I was in progress and they were stopped at the South Entrance by soldiers who escorted them through the Park.

Two stories are told about Dr. West and his automobiles. On one occasion the doctor chained the wheel of his Model T to framework in the garage to prevent
his son Warren and friend LaVere Gardner from taking an unauthorized joy ride. The boys jacked up the car, replaced the tethered wheel with a spare, and zipped away. The doctor was waiting when they returned. "Well, boys, I see you've won," he said. On another occasion the doctor drove his car to the rear of the old Consolidated Wagon Company on the west side of Main Street. He parked and entered the store from the rear, purchased his goods, then left by the front door and walked home. Later that day he discovered his automobile missing from the garage and accused son Jack of stealing the car.

Perhaps one of the saddest cases Dr. George West was ever called to attend was that of 11-year-old Grace Lancaster. The girl was running behind a buggy carrying children home from Osmond's elementary school in the fall of 1913. Grace jumped on the axle to climb into the buggy, and caught her foot in the wheel. The girl's leg was nearly torn off before the team stopped.

Dr. West rushed to the Willard Lancaster home, quickly controlled the bleeding, and had the girl moved to the Afton hospital (then located on the site of the Lazy B Motel). He amputated the leg with the assistance of Dr. Ellis. A Salt Lake City company fitted the girl with an artificial limb, and little Grace, possessing a wealth of courage, lived an otherwise normal life.

World War I was raging in Europe when flu characterized by fever, sore throat, headache and muscular pain, broke out in San Sebastian, Spain, in February, 1918. In March, the same symptoms appeared among US soldiers at Ft. Riley, Kansas, affecting some 1,100 men. Though highly contagious, this first wave of so-called "Spanish" influenza was relatively mild and drew little attention as it spread.

around the continents—the headlines belonged to the War. The World's population stood at two billion in 1918. War had plagued Europe for five years and shortages of food, medical supplies, and clothing had become a way of life.

And then, in July, 1918, Spanish flu turned killer, and the second deadly wave attacked Chungking, China. The lethal virus reached Iran in early August, then spread to France to kill an estimated 166,000. Allied and Central Powers forces alike suffered in Europe. In the 120 days between October 19, 1918, and late February, 1919, the "Spanish Lady" gripped the entire globe. The Germans called her Blitz Katarrh, the English, Flanders Grippe, and the Japanese, wrestler's fever. Over 21 million died, twice as many as the tell of World War I. Some 12-1/2 million died in India alone.

The U.S. had entered the war in April, 1917. Out of 140,000 US doctors, 40,000 were enlisted. Ships of friendly foreign banners involved in the war effort docked at US ports at will. Troop trains transversed the country. Virtually no legislation existed to enforce quarantines. On August 12, 1918, a Norwegian liner docked at New York. Sailors wandered through the city, then one of them collapsed and died within hours—the Spanish Lady's second deadly wave had arrived in America. Cases broke out in New York City, then Boston, then all along the Atlantic Seaboard. Chicago was stricken, then San Francisco. Then the Spanish Lady was literally everywhere, obscuring the savor of the Allied victory in November. Some 540,000 Americans died, a mortality rate of 527 per 100,000 people.

This author could locate no statistics on the number of deaths in Star Valley attributable to Spanish influenza. Some say that at least eight died in

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the town of Freedom alone. The dead were often "just carried outside" or buried without a service. Roadblocks were set up in the Narrows and on the old Snake River Bridge, but the flu could not be contained.

Drs. Byron and Lafayette Reese and C. W. West plus many volunteers worked day after day without rest. In the remembered words of Dr. West, "People were dying like flies." In many families, no one was strong enough to care for the others. Volunteers cooked and kept fire for the sick, fed livestock, and sometimes buried the dead. Dr. Lafayette Reese died of influenza. Dr. West never contracted the flu, and it is remembered that, before he entered a stricken home, he sipped whiskey, partly for protection, partly to dull the agony of his exhaustion.

Some people in Star Valley might recall the fear of the pandemic, the sense of helplessness. After a one-to-two-day incubation period a victim's temperature rose to 103° - 105°, followed by loss of appetite, weakness, sore throat, sensitivity to light, vomiting and mental confusion. After one to five days a deep cough developed and breathing became labored. Mucus and blood were expectorated from the lungs. Blueness of the lips and tongue spelled lack of oxygen in the blood stream. Often a victim would hemorrhage from the nose in some quantity. Such "bloodletting" drained the toxins from the body and possibly saved the victim's life. Many who survived the virus suffered with lingering cardiac disorders, pneumonia, and deafness from middle ear infection.¹

Antibiotics were not developed until World War II. Thus doctors could only treat flu symptoms. Quinine and strychnine were used for fever and body ache. Aspirin was relatively new and unrefined and only seemed to weaken the victim's heart. Alcohol seemed to have its merits and became available on prescription in "dry" states. In Louisiana, Scotch whiskey sold for $20 a quart. Doctors prescribed a syrup with sodium benzoate for bronchial congestion. Digitalis was given to strengthen the heart. For an inflamed thorax, a wet towel sprinkled with mustard plaster was applied. Housewives experimented with garlic and onion concoctions. Many tried castor oil spiked with beer.\(^1\)

To fumigate stricken homes, walls were stripped of paper and cheesecloth and sulfur candles were burned or formaldehyde in water sprinkled around. Medicated face masks made of thicknesses of gauze were worn world-wide to control spread by cough and sneeze. The only place in the entire world which escaped the pandemic was the tiny island of Tristan da Cunha in the South Atlantic.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Collier, Richard: The Plague of the Spanish Lady (Atheneum, New York, 1974).
Part III

The Saga of George West (Cont.)--Good Times and Goodbyes

Janet S. Osmun

Despite the demands of his medical profession, Dr. George W. West found time to indulge in a myriad of interests. The two and a half acres behind his house contained a barn, two garages, a chicken coop, a woodshed, a dog run, and at times, mink pens and bee hives. Over the years Dr. West sent away for a pure-bred Jersey cow, Angus calves, and Texas longhorns. He was a member of the Wyoming Stockgrowers Association. He was involved in an experimental beaver farm in Turnerville. He raised chickens and geese, trapped coyotes and beaver, kept milk cows named after his patients, and religiously sent to his native state for Missouri corn to make hominy.

During the 1920's, George West (inspired by county agent Archie Egbert) bought honey bees and kept the hives behind his house. A cylindrical contraption for extracting honey from the comb was kept in the back room of his two-room office. Some of the honey was sold to the Allred and Hub hotels on Main Street.

Dr. West was fascinated by the advanced society of the honey bees, and sent back East for queens to upgrade his hives. When a new queen hatched, the old queen would take half of the workers and swarm. After hovering for some 30 minutes, the bees clustered on a bush or tree in the neighborhood. Skeptical neighbors would call the doctor to come get his mavericks, and Beekeeper West would arrive, clad in a protective hood, jacket and thick gloves, carrying an empty hive.
and smoke bellows. After stunning the bees with smoke until they dropped to the ground, the doctor located the queen, placed her in the hive, and walked home, trailed by the loyal workers. The bees were eventually sold to Archie Hale.

One afternoon when Dr. West was building frames for new hives he ran a splinter deep into the index finger of his right hand. As the doctor was performing an autopsy a few days later, he tore his right surgical glove and the splinter wound was contaminated. Dr. West was taken to an Idaho Falls hospital and his brother, Dr. Warren West, arrived to consult on the case. George West recovered from the blood poisoning, but the finger was permanently stiff. The doctor learned to write with a pen lodged between his middle finger and thumb.

Over the years George West acquired land in Auburn, Tygee, Grover, Willow Creek and Alpine. The doctor and his sons ran cattle on Greys River and sheep on Caribou National Forest. On one occasion two expectant mothers were staying at the West home. The doctor needed to get supplies to his sheep herder so he loaded the ladies into his Ford and they all bounced over the washboard roads to the sheep camp on Caribou. One of the women delivered the next morning.

Dr. West's sheepherder was a fellow named Bert Johnson. Johnson was an educated man. He'd been a mortician back in Indiana, but his profession had undermined his confidence and driven him to drink. He wandered into Afton odd-jobbing as a painter. Dr. West grew weary of "drying out" Johnson and hired him to herd sheep, thinking the isolation would be therapeutic. It was, as long as Johnson couldn't find a ride to town.

To George West, Greys River was the earth's answer to heaven. The doctor pitched his tent beside the river, often at Cabin Creek, to rest from the rigors of his profession. Coffee or beans and fried fish were offered to everyone who
visited his camp. A favorite prank of Dr. West was to shoot a bear and cut
steaks which he gave to friends as "choice elk" or "good mutton." Elk season
was an all important time, and the doctor, an excellent marksman, often hunted
with Lewis Proctor.

In 1928 tragedy again visited the home of Dr. West. George West, Jr. was
staying on the Stoffer Ranch in Cokeville when he stepped in a badger hole, bend-
ing back the toes of one foot and tearing the ligaments in the leg. Despite
the efforts of his father, young George, 19, died of gangrene in an upstairs
bedroom of the 5th Street home. "I feel worthless," the doctor told friends and
family. But he had done everything medical science could suggest. (Six years
earlier, Mr. and Mrs. Con Yeaman had lost their son, George, 12, to influenza.)

Smallpox spread through Star Valley in the late Twenties. Schools were
closed and Dr. West set up vaccination centers in each community's school house.
In 1796 English medical student Edward Jenner had discovered that innoculating
people with matter from a cowpox lesion gave humans immunity to smallpox. The
people of Star Valley paid $1 each for an innoculation. Daughter Lulu recorded
the dates and names while Dr. West injected the vaccine. He laughed at the young
girls who wanted their shots on the leg and not the arm.

As surely as the sun rose each morning, G. W. West was a democrat. And all
of his hopes and aspirations for his country were embodied in one man--Franklin
Delano Roosevelt. In June, 1932, the democrats met in Chicago to select a
presidential candidate. George West was glued to his living room chair with the
radio blasting minute by minute convention coverage. The West home was packed
with patients--the couch, the bathtub, and choice spots on the floor were all
taken. "George, won't you turn that radio down?" Wene pleaded. But FDR was
nominated on the fourth ballot and flew to Chicago for an acceptance speech which
George West was not about to miss. The hoopla lasted until morning. In the fall
election Roosevelt carried 42 states and claimed 472 electoral votes to Hoover's 59.

In 1935 the doctor opened a store on Alpine Flats, near the Snake River Bridge
(now covered by Palisades Lake). The store was operated by the doctor's daughter,
Lulu. There were gasoline pumps out front to service the coal truckers hauling
from the Blind Bull mine on Big Grey's River to Idaho Falls. Gasoline was 23¢
a gallon. Texaco motor oil was 25¢ a quart and Havoline sold for 30¢. There
was a cafe inside, and shelves lined with items such as pink salmon for 15¢ a can,
Sego milk for 10¢ a can, Bull Durham tobacco for 5¢ a bag, pork 'n beans, two cans
for 25¢, and Clapier Girl baking powder sold for 15¢ a box. The store closed in
1937.

On February 11, 1939, the Interior Department granted Dr. West and Ben Nield
a coal lease on Blind Bull about 1-1/2 miles off the Greys River road. A consider-
derable amount of money was poured into the mine, a foreman, John Weir, was hired
to supervise the miners, and stock was sold in the "Greys River Coal Company."
But for all the time and expense involved, only one load of coal was ever extracted
and it was stolen. Mine inspectors (recalling the February 1938 explosion of
Vail mine on nearby Deadman Creek which claimed five lives )insisted that a costly
vertical ventilation shaft be dug. But with no profits to be reinvested and the
able-bodied off to war, Nield and West did not renew the lease and it expired
November 14, 1944.

For a well-earned vacation, George and Wene West drove their Plymouth to
San Francisco for the 1939-40 Golden Gate International Exposition on man-made
Treasure Island. The 12-mile San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge had opened to
traffic November 12, 1936, and the Golden Gate Bridge with a span of 4200 feet, had opened May 27, 1937. The sights of the Bay City thrilled George West. Friends and family were told and retold stories of "all those crazy drivers who wouldn't keep to their own side of the road."

Around 1946 Dr. West delivered his last baby. He was 73 years old and ready to retire, though he served as Lincoln County health officer until his death. Wene hadn't been in good health for some time; she was diabetic and suffered from an enlarged heart. On May 29, 1947, Wene asked daughter Lulu to take her for a ride. She wanted to see Nield String and Swift Creek and visit the cemetery. Alvina Tueller West, 63, passed away at 3 a.m. May 30, 1947. Wene was a woman of hard work and infinite patience. From her own quiet spot in the background, she made a vast contribution to the medical needs of the Valley.

On his 75th birthday George West was honored for his 43 years of service to Star Valley. Families donated their sugar ration coupons to make the doctor a large birthday cake. The tribute read at his party was also published in the Star Valley Independent. "I won't need a funeral now," he commented.

In 1952 Dr. West, Mrs. Jack West, Mrs. Max West, and Mrs. Ralph (Lulu) Meser drove back to the doctor's native Missouri. They toured George West's home town of Meta, and visited Washington University in St. Louis, his alma mater. In 1953 Washington University Alumni Association sent him a lifetime membership to commemorate his 50 years of service in the medical profession.

In the fall of 1956 the doctor rode on the Greys River roundup as usual, but failed for the first time to get his elk. Jack and Algeria West gave him a party to celebrate his 84th birthday November 16. Dr. West seemed to look forward to Thanksgiving and bought a huge turkey. The Wests planned to gather at the Max West home for the holiday dinner, but George West was not able to get out of bed on Thanksgiving morning. Dr. Orson Trelear visited him that evening. "He's suffered a light stroke," Trelear said.
The Saga of George West

The following day the elderly doctor was moved to the Star Valley Hospital and out-of-town family hurried to his bedside. "Oh, Lord," he murmured, "let it be quick and easy." During the final week of his life Dr. George West relived the Spanish influenza pandemic, his days on Grey's River, and the triumphs and tragedies of his career. December had come and still no snow had fallen. "There won't be moisture for the crops next summer," he worried. Dr. George Washington West died at 1:45 p.m. December 5, 1956. A foot of wet snow covered the ground for his funeral on December 8.

The white two-story frame home on 5th Street was torn down about three years after Dr. West's death. The land was sold to the telephone company and in the 20 some years since, the old barns, the fences, the trees—the landmarks of the West home—have all disappeared. This author interviewed members of the West family and some 14 Valley residents in compiling this article. Each family shared fond memories of the man from Missouri who so loved Star Valley and whose talents are so woven into her history.

Dr. George Washington West is survived by daughters Anna Ravsten, Spokane, Washington; and Mrs. Ralph (Lulu) Moser, Laramie; and by sons Jack, Auburn; Mark, East Alton, Ill.; and Max, Grover.