

**SPROLES, DR. WILLIAM S. COLLECTION**  
**APP MSS # 7**  
**FINDING AID**

**INTRODUCTION:** This collection [Acc. #A70-03 and A72-01] was given by B. Mack and Ruby E. Sproles Canup. Dr. Sproles was Ruby's father. The medical instruments were used in his practice and the revolver was apparently payment for services rendered to a former member of Jesse James' gang.

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 2 Boxes

**HISTORICAL / BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:**

**“Short Life Sketch of Dr. William S. Sproles of Upper East Tennessee by Mrs. B. Mack Canup, Only Daughter” (\*Written in early 1970's)**

“Dr. W. S. Sproles was born at Benhams (Washington County) Virginia on June 7, 1868. Died of prostate cancer (thought to be caused by riding horse back) June 6, 1933. He had infantile paralysis when a child that left one leg and foot crippled. In spite of his crippled condition he did the chores and work usually performed on a farm. He completed elementary and high school and then taught school in order to earn money to go on to college and medical school.

He attended the University of Richmond and entered the medical school, but in his last year transferred to the University of Chattanooga Medical School finishing there in May, 1898. He made the transfer since he felt it best since he planned to practice in Tennessee. As was the practice then, he did his internship under Dr. White of Bonharus, Virginia.

After finishing medical college, he married Lura Galloway of Alum Wells, Virginia, and took her to Bluff City, Tennessee, where he practiced until his death. He opened a 3 room suite of offices, but since his was a country practice he was out on horse back and buggy visiting patients all over upper East Tennessee. Babies were delivered in the home – hundreds were delivered by him (at least one for the present college staff was delivered by him now over 50 years ago).

He often operated on a kitchen table while someone held the lamp. In spite of crude conditions he lost very few patients.

He kept medicines in his office and carried his saddle bags full, which he gave to his patients and seldom wrote a prescription. He usually charged \$1.00 to \$2.00 per call which included medicine. Office calls at first were 50 cents. He took all kinds of produce and farm animals as payment for his services.

Dr. Sproles was a devout Christian and did not hesitate to kneel by the bedside and ask God's help in the healing process. Many times he would linger long enough to read the Bible for his patients and others in the home. He was learned in the Bible as well as in the medical arts. He was loved y the people he served. Many testify to the fact his

prayers and reading of the Bible meant as much to them as his ministrations and medicine. Many of the older people of his area still remember him as the praying and Bible reading doctor who, regardless of weather, answered the call for his services. He died serenely knowing that his disease was terminal.”

**INCLUSIVE DATES:** 1862-1933

**SERIES DESCRIPTION:**

Artifacts

**CONTAINER LISTS:**

1. 17 medical books
2. Magneto-electric machine
3. Testing cabinet with 13 glass test tubes, etc.
4. Saddlebags with 11 bottles of medicine, etc.
5. 3 doctors bags (1 has 12 bottles, tins, etc. of medicine, etc.)
6. Blood pressure kit
7. Plastic bag of instruments
8. 4 small leather cases of medicine
9. 2 leather cases of instruments
10. 1 metal clamps
11. 1 pair of clippers
12. 2 (1 metal, 1 cardboard) boxes of syringes?
13. Griswold & Gunnison Confederate revolver (circa 1862-65)