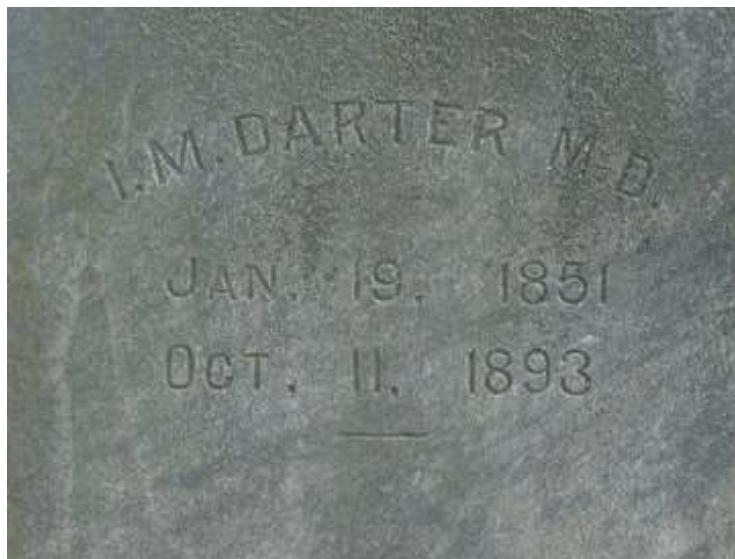


A Brief History of
Isaac Michael Darter, MD
& Annie Mary Gorden Darter
of Fort Worth, Texas



That in his death the community has lost a good citizen; the poor, a friend in time of need; the medical profession, a studious and honorable member; his family, a faithful and loving husband, a kind and affectionate father.

But perhaps the field of usefulness in which the best efforts of her life were given outside of her own home was in her ministrations to the sick, the poor, the needy and those in distress. In this capacity she was a veritable angel of mercy, and she has been permitted in the Master's name to thus care for the needy and the neglected.

Foreword

My grandfather, Isaac Michael Darter, MD, has always fascinated me and the same goes for my grandmother, Annie M. Darter. Although I was born many years after they died (my father was over 60 when I was born), I fortunately got to “know” them through the many stories told to me by my father, Francis “Frank” M. Darter, as I was growing up. Especially the one about my dad being caught smoking by his father. When asked what he had in his mouth, and could only say “a cigarette Daddy,” he was told: “No son, it’s a headlight to a fool.” Now I heard that story 1000+ times when growing up! But it worked, and to this day I have never smoked for which I am grateful to my grandfather.

In addition, my uncle William “Bill” A. Darter told me other interesting stories. He had a very emotional belief that he, my father, and their younger brother Michael were responsible for their father’s early death, which haunted my uncle throughout his long 99-year life, but as the facts show, is very unlikely.

Many of the stories I was told were about how difficult it was for Isaac, growing up on the rough Texas frontier, to obtain the money, the preparatory education, the admission, and not the least of all the courage to travel a long distance to the east to pursue his dream at a prestigious medical school. Then his medical practice where he was able to perform different kinds of surgeries and even became the City Physician of the city of Fort Worth, Texas. The recent discovery of a special medical device invented by Dr. Darter that could save a persons life has increased my awe and respect for him. This young man was not only a studious self made man, but while living on the then Texas frontier also had culture and learned to play the violin very well, often playing for his family and friends.

Stories of my grandmother Annie Darter were also told including meeting and falling in love and marrying a young man from Texas with an impossible dream of becoming a doctor, the difficult road to achieve an education, and serving as nurse with her husband to administer to many sick persons and those who could not pay. In addition, she gave birth to four boys and suffered the painful loss of her first born after only two years. Then came her extremely difficult struggle to carry on after the early death of her beloved husband, Isaac, and a rapid second marriage to a man who could not handle either the boys or earning a living. Next she was caught in the monster hurricane that hit Galveston, Texas in September 1900 where the family was saved but they lost nearly everything they owned. Over 6,000 people lost their lives in the most deadly natural disaster to ever hit the U.S. Shortly after this disaster, her second husband died and eventually she entered into a third marriage that gave her happiness, but her life was cut short when only two years later cancer claimed her life.

Sources of Information

The sources of information are summarized in the bibliography and include first and foremost the first hand accounts from their two sons: my father Francis “Frank” M. Darter and my uncle William “Bill” A. Darter, who lived very long and prosperous lives. They wrote down some of the important things about their father’s and mother’s lives, even though they were only 10 and 12 years old when he died and 10 years later that she died. Only a few precious pictures survived the Galveston hurricane and flood and they are all included.

Other sources include the Darter-Tarter-Daughters Family book written by my uncle Bill Darter and my mother Bertha Darter. Fort Worth newspaper articles, Isaac’s will and marriage license recorded at the Tarrant County courthouse, a new book on the history of Fort Worth doctors, records from Pioneers Rest Cemetery in Fort Worth (information on various web sites), and miscellaneous documents in the Fort Worth Public Library are included. I graciously thank the librarians for their very helpful assistance.

United States Census was also extremely valuable in locating Annie’s family in Missouri in 1870, Isaac’s family in 1870 in Fort Worth, Isaac and Annie and their young son Joseph in Ft. Worth in 1880, Annie and her sons William and Michael in Galveston, TX in 1900, and Annie’s mother, Amanda Gorden in 1900 in Waco, TX. This information resulted in a rewrite of portions of the family history.

Amazingly, a professional article written by Dr. Darter on a medical device he invented called a Laryngeal Catheter was found in the Texas Courier-Record of Medicine, Volume 10:41, October 1892 (Illustrated). This rare volume was located in The University of Texas Medical Branch, Academic Resources/Moody Medical Library at Galveston.

Then, there is Dr. Darter’s large original diploma from the University of Louisville Medical School dated February 27, 1883. Finally, two very old Darter family bibles were also available: the Isaac M. Darter family bible (1870) and the bible of his father, Francis Darter (1830). There is no doubt that other sources of information (such as his medical studies and work in St. Louis) will be located as family researchers continue this work of documenting the lives of the Darter family. Many thanks goes to Myra Echenberger (great granddaughter of Isaac M. Darter) for editing and assisting with this story.

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1 August 2007