

DR. HARRY PLYMIRE

By Jacquelyne Kious

As the population increased in the late 1890s the need for medical care became apparent. By 1900 the SSF had 14 industries and a population of approximately 1,000 residents. In the early days, most small towns didn't have doctors or nurses and certainly not a hospital. SSF was fortunate to have Dr. Harry Plymire settle here in 1900 after graduating from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in San Francisco. The young doctor, originally from West Virginia, began his practice in the Martin Building (later the Metropolitan Hotel). In 1905 he moved into a 2-story home at the corner of Spruce and Grand. He and his brother, also a doctor, used the first floor for their practice, calling it the Plymire Hospital, with living quarters on the second floor.

Dr. Plymire quickly gained prominence in the medical community serving as the first president of the San Mateo County Medical Society and the county's first coroner. He also served as vice president of the Bank of South San Francisco.

When Dr. Plymire died from pneumonia in 1917 at age 40, his medical practice and home were sold to Dr. Frank Dolley. Dr. Dolley had the house moved to its present location, 519 Grand Avenue, to make room for the construction of South San Francisco General Hospital, a modern 42-bed facility with three operating rooms and two nurses staffing the hospital.

Both Dr. Plymire and Dr. Dolley made health care for the town's factory workers a top priority. It was Dr. Dolley who structured a health plan that allowed local industries to contract with the hospital for *complete care* at a cost of \$1 a month per employee.

In 1925, Dr. Dolley sold his business interests to Dr. Edwin Bartlett who ran the hospital until he retired in 1946. In 1953, Kaiser Permanente purchased the hospital. The old hospital was demolished in 1984.

After Dr. Dolley sold the original Plymire house in 1925, it became a men's' club, and then a rooming house and finally a private residence when it was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Ernst Schwarz. Mrs. Schwarz willed the house to the South San Francisco Historical Society in the mid-1990s. The house has since been restored with furnishings and decor from the early 1900s when Dr. Plymire owned the house. The Plymire-Schwarz Museum is open to the public Wednesdays from 2:00-4:00PM.