

Dr. James Oliver Jenkins & The Jenkins Hospital

Newport, Kentucky

by Kyle Randall



James Oliver Jenkins was born in Cincinnati on August 8th, 1851 to William & Lemarian Jenkins. James went to the public schools in Cincinnati before briefly pursuing a career in electro-plating. He soon after began work as an assistant librarian at the Public Library of Cincinnati. During his time at the library, he began taking an interest in medical studies. By the Fall of 1873, Jenkins had enrolled in the Ohio Medical College. He graduated with honors in 1882, and immediately moved across the river to Newport to begin his practice. His first Newport residence was 170 Isabella St. and his office was at 119 Isabella St. – both of these locations would be under the earthen levee today.

The following year, in 1883, Dr. Jenkins married Mary Ann Clark (b. 11/19/1851, d. 7/18/1923). The couple had one son (Robert) and three daughters (Ruth, Grace, and Helen - who died of pneumonia in 1886).

By 1892, Dr. Jenkins had established himself as a notable figure in Campbell County. He contributed to leading medical journals (eschewing the common treatment of blood-letting) and was reputed to be one of the finest general practitioners in Northern Kentucky. When the Campbell County Health Center opened that year, Dr. Jenkins was an obvious choice to serve on the board and in 1893, he was also elected President of the Board of Education in Newport.

Prior to the opening of the Phythian Hospital at 810 Washington Ave in the early 1890s, there were no civilian hospitals in Campbell County. Urgent medical needs had to be treated at the military hospital at the Newport Barracks (this is the site of Gen. James Taylor Park now). Dr. J. L. Phythian died in 1896, so it's possible that he was no longer able to operate his hospital by 1895 or earlier.



Phythian Hospital – 810 Washington Ave.



Speers Memorial Hospital in Dayton, KY operated from 1897 to 1973.

Because of the need for another civilian hospital in Newport, Dr. Jenkins founded the Jenkins Hospital in 1895 with Dr. E. B. Bayliss at the NE corner of 7th & Isabella. The hospital had an operating unit on the first floor and a ward of five or six beds on the second floor. At the time, hospitals did not admit people with contagious diseases – State law mandated that people with contagious diseases be quarantined at what were called pesthouses. The Campbell County pesthouse was located in Cold Springs near where the Lakeside Place nursing home stands now.



Jenkins Hospital at 625 Isabella St.
The building later served as apartments.



The same corner today:
All of the buildings have been demolished and ranch style houses were erected in their place in 1986.

Jenkins Hospital closed after 2 years, coinciding with the opening of Speers Hospital in Dayton, KY, of which Dr. Jenkins was a charter member. Jenkins went on to become the President of the Speers Hospital Training School for Nurses. The old Jenkins Hospital building served as Dr. Jenkins' office, where he kept regular office hours of 1-3 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. until 1912 when he opened a new office at 29 W. 8th St.



Dr. Jenkins lived at 818 Isabella St. from 1895 to 1907.



Dr. Jenkins lived at 839 Washington Ave.
(next to St. Stephens Catholic Church) from 1908 to 1924.

By September of 1910, many Newport residents had grown weary of the long, rough road to Dayton's Speers Hospital for treatment and Dr. Jenkins was plotting the next incarnation of the Jenkins Hospital. He enlisted architect Louis H. Wilson to build a 2-story brick hospital. This new hospital was to contain 9 rooms, a large consultation room, an operating room, two bathrooms, and a private office.

It's not clear why, but the second Jenkins Hospital was never built. The hospital was to be located on 8th St, between York and Columbia. By 1910, the only plots not accounted for were 15 and 17 W. 8th St, behind the present day York St. Cafe to the corner at Putnam St.



Planned site of the second Jenkins Hospital –15 & 17 W. 8th St.
15 W. 8th St (covered in ivy) was later built in 1915. 17 W. 8th St. (at corner) was built in 1916.

On July 18th 1923, Dr. Jenkins' first wife, Mary Clark died. He remarried nearly two years later on July 1st 1925 to Caroline (Carrie) Orr and they moved into his office at 29 W. 8th St., where Dr. Jenkins would continue to keep regular hours of 8-9 a.m., 1-3 p.m., and 7-8 p.m.

Newport lost their most distinguished physician and a respected community leader on January 23rd, 1927 when Doctor James Oliver Jenkins passed away at his residence. He was 75.



29 W. 8th St. – Final office and residence of Dr. Jenkins