

# ELLIS KACKLEY, FRONTIER DOCTOR

Ellis Kackley came to Soda Springs, Idaho, in 1898, shortly after graduating from medical school in Tennessee. A man of great generosity and social consciousness, Dr. Kackley had a tremendous effect on the lives of those around him—as both a doctor and benefactor.

Dr. Kackley's selection of Soda Springs to launch his medical career began when he responded to an ad for a doctor that had been placed in a medical journal by the town's U.S. postmaster. Even though Dr. Kackley was immediately interested in the position, his wife Ida reportedly needed much convincing to leave their Nashville home for the rough-and-tumble frontier town.

Before many of the smaller southeastern Idaho towns obtained their own resident doctors, Dr. Kackley's rounds covered more than 100 miles. In the frontier days, he introduced modern medical treatment to settlers reliant on traditional folk remedies. Although Dr. Kackley often worked in primitive and harsh conditions, his extensive knowledge and practicality saved hundreds of lives.

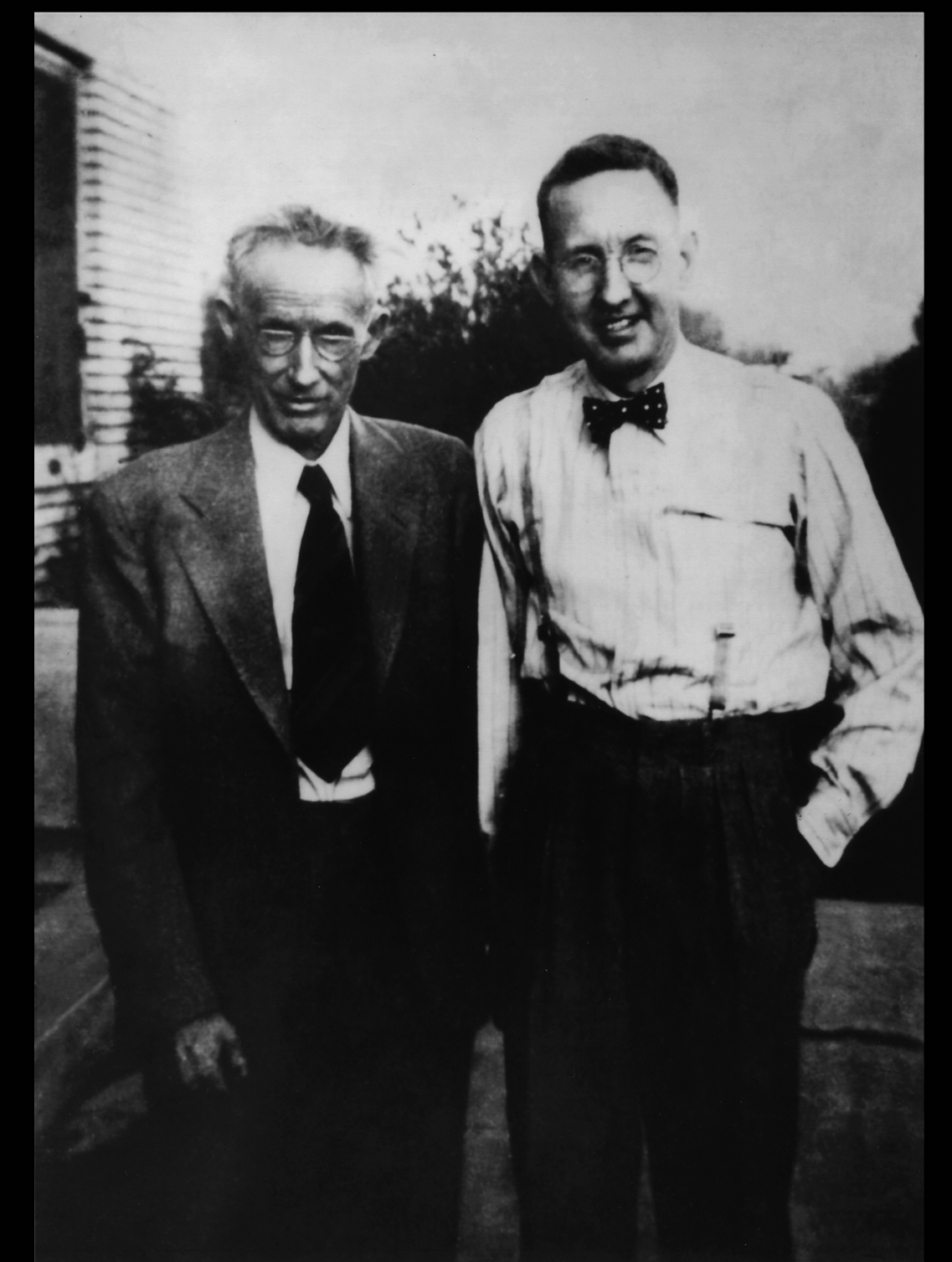
Perhaps Dr. Kackley's most interesting challenge came in 1899, however, when Butch Cassidy's infamous gang attempted to kidnap him to treat an injured outlaw. When Dr. Kackley refused to be a victim, the gang holstered their guns, and the doctor went willingly—a testament to his reputation for never refusing a call. The same was true during World War II, when Dr. Kackley served as a U.S. Army doctor in Europe.



Dr. Ellis Kackley (and friend) on his first day in Soda Springs.

Dr. Kackley was the on-call doctor for the Union Pacific Railway and Utah Power & Light Company's Grace hydroelectric plant. Although he worked for many large corporations, he remained a champion of the workers, criticizing any company he thought was exploiting its workers or ignoring its moral obligations to community and environment.

Between 1925 and 1927, Dr. Kackley and his son Evan constructed the first Soda Springs hospital. He is said to have delivered more than 4,000 babies throughout his career. When Ellis Kackley died in November 1943, more than 2,500 people attended his funeral.



Dr. Kackley and son Evan, who also became a doctor.



The doctor (and friend) enjoying some time outside the office.

The land south of this sign was once owned by Dr. Kackley. It was acquired by PacifiCorp Energy and is now held by a non-profit land trust to preserve its wildlife and recreational values in perpetuity.

Source: Carney, Ellen. 1990. *Ellis Kackley, Best Damn Doctor in the West*. Maverick Publications, Bend, Oregon.

*This sign was erected by PacifiCorp in recognition of preserving the unique history of this community and the many contributions of Dr. Ellis Kackley and his family.*