

Elsie Dee Grant – School Nurse

Billie DeLancey
Parish House Museum Director

At the time of her death in May 1956, Elsie Dee Grant had served as Johnstown's first and only school nurse for the previous 27 years, also surpassing all of the school teachers' tenure up to that time.

Miss Grant first came to Johnstown during the Diphtheria epidemic in the spring of 1927 and assisted for six weeks. That same year she received her RN degree in nursing from St Luke's hospital in Denver where she was employed.

In 1928 she returned to Johnstown and worked with Dr. Glenn A Jones, with whom she was always closely associated in her work, and who, according to her, guided her over some rough going in those early years. Dr. Jones had come to Johnstown in 1920, when the infant mortality rate was high. Contagious diseases were then taking a toll of young lives, and an immunization program was needed. Through the work of Dr. Jones over those previous eight years, a change could be seen, and the community saw a need for and welcomed the addition of a school nurse to Johnstown's School District 48.

One of Miss Grant's first projects was to work with the Colorado Condensed Milk Co. to create a school milk program during the Great Depression. She also instituted an immunization program in the schools, saw that routine checkups were given to each child regularly, and in the years before clubs and organizations came to her assistance, her own funds went for clothing or medical care for some needy child. She sought aid for children with personality problems, taking them to Denver for consultation, and she established a clothing repository in town in an attempt to see that no ill-clothed child would suffer from the cold.

She maintained a complete health record card on every Johnstown student from first through twelfth grade. Nearly every home in Johnstown knew her through her visits as she called to check on an ill child or a report that a newborn infant was without a layette. She taught health classes to the elementary and junior high grades and assisted the high school home economics classes in child care fundamentals. She also organized the Junior Red Cross program in Johnstown schools.

Although her lifetime of nursing was devoted primarily to the school children she loved, she engaged in endless community service among the adults. She organized mass TB testing in the years before the Estrilleta Club took it over. During WWII she taught adult Red Cross classes, including to firemen and the bus drivers.

Through her, school visitation and pre-school medical checkups for incoming first graders took place. She devoted endless time to the unique challenges of the Spanish-speaking residents in the community. As a member of the First United Methodist Church, she served as vice president of the Methodist-sponsored summer youth camp, Pine Crest, at Palmer Lake.

The Johnstown community and former residents, prompted by their deep affection for Miss Grant and by their sense of loss when illness caused her absence early in the 1955-56 school year, had through voluntary contributions raised money for a new car to be presented to her as a "get well" gift, and as a symbol of their love and appreciation for her outstanding and selfless services to the community. However, the money was applied toward her hospital care, rather than for a car.

Although her malignant illness had plagued her the past two years, Miss Grant continued to be at her office at Letford Elementary School until January 1956 when she was forced to give up her work. She was hospitalized on January 18th and passed away on May 7, 1956, three weeks after her 65th birthday.

Excerpted, in part, from The Johnstown Breeze front page, May 10, 1956.



The Historic Parish House and Museum

701 Charlotte Street
Johnstown, Colorado 80534

970-587-0278
www.JHSCO.org

Open Wednesdays and the first Saturdays of the month
9:00 A.M. – Noon, and by appointment

