

**WINONAH LEAH
MONRONEY
SANGER
1874-1957**



**PHYSICIAN
AND BIRTH
CONTROL
ADVOCATE**

Dr. Winnie Sanger was Oklahoma City's first woman physician. She said that being a doctor was not her idea at all, but her father and husband, both doctors, encouraged her to study. She was also the aunt of Mike Monroney, a U. S. Representative (1939-1951) and U. S. Senator (1951-1969).

Winonah "Winnie" Leah Monroney was born in February 1871 in Carmi, Illinois. After graduating from Carmi Schools in 1890, she taught there from 1891 to 1894. She then came to Oklahoma City, where she taught math and science in Oklahoma City Public Schools from 1894 to 1897, and was secretary of the Territorial Teachers' Association.

She married Dr. Fenton Mercer Sanger in April 1897 and had one son. She received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Scarritt College in Neosho, Missouri in 1898. In 1901 Fenton, who was Yukon Schools superintendent, and Winnie founded Yukon High School. Winnie received her medical degree from Washburn College (now University of Kansas) in Topeka, Kansas in 1904. She passed Missouri and Oklahoma medical board examinations that year and began her medical career in Oklahoma City.

In fall 1918, the Spanish influenza ravaged Oklahoma City, population 103,000, while the men were fighting in World War I and women were sewing socks and wrapping bandages for the soldiers passing through the local train stations. A fever of 100-104 degrees lasting three to four days was common, as was a heavy cough. Soon the Red Cross, led by Felicia Daugherty, would take charge of the crisis.

On September 26th, Dr. Winnie Sanger reported to the Oklahoma County Health Department that a resident of the Maywood neighborhood, had symptoms very similar to what had been seen on the East Coast. Officials dismissed it as strong hay fever but Dr. Sanger knew this was the start of an epidemic. By Tuesday, October 1st, over 5,000 people had the flu. Most people died when, while on the mend, they went back to work and relapsed. Victims often fell sick at work in the morning and died by nightfall.

On October 9th, every school, theater, and church was closed. Public gatherings were banned. The flu was so widespread that one-third of the city's streetcar operators were sick, making it impossible to get to work. Communications were crippled when nearly all of the Pioneer Telephone operators were sick. The Provident Association washed laundry for the whole city, free of charge, and opened a childcare center to care for sick parents' healthy children. Oklahoma City would record 7,500 deaths.

In 1918 Winnie became the Oklahoma City Public Schools medical inspector and in 1923 women's medical advisor for Oklahoma University Health Service. An advocate for family planning and birth control, she shared a practice with her husband Dr. Fenton Sanger and son Dr. Fenton Almer Sanger.

In May 1926 she helped launch "The Oklahoma Woman" monthly magazine. During the late 1920s, Sanger contributed articles related to women's health issues. The magazine folded in 1928.

Sanger served as president of the Oklahoma State Federation of Women's Clubs and was life member of the Oklahoma State Medical Society. She also participated in the Oklahoma Medical Women's Auxiliary, National League of American Pen Women, Oklahoma Writer's Club, Order of the Eastern Star, Chi Omega Epsilon, and Daughters of the American Revolution.

She was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1935. The Sanger House at the University of Oklahoma was named for her in 1949. She was the last living person for whom a dormitory at the University of Oklahoma had been named. She died in February 1957 in Oklahoma City at age 86.