

A Century of Service

(Part Three of a Series)

On September 16, 1902, 344 dentists — almost a quarter of all the dentists in Canada at the time — met in Montreal with a vision of a national association that would bond from sea to sea the ideals, aspirations and goals of their profession.

To recognize the contributions of the countless men and women who have done so much to elevate the oral health care and well-being of Canadians over almost five centuries, the CDA is proudly publishing a series of 11 historical articles with particular emphasis on the role and influence of the Canadian Dental Association in the 20th century.

The Nationalization of the Dental Profession

Canada in the year 1900 boasted a population of almost 5.5 million people — an increase of more than 2 million in 40 years. More remarkable was the increase in the number of dentists. The 1858 *Canadian Directory* listed only 49 dentists in all of Canada, but by the turn of the century there were more than 1,300. In 40 years the ratio of dentist to population had increased from 1:64,600 to 1:4,100.

A National Dental Association

Between Confederation in 1867 and the end of the century, change in Canada was evident and rapid — in population, politics, economics and dentistry.



Political map
of Canada
in 1898

Population
in 1898:
5,371,000

Following the formation of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario on March 4, 1868, eight new dental acts followed within 25 years. Each act — in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Quebec, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories and British

Columbia — established regulations of licensure for protection of the public, but there was little or no reciprocity.

As early as 1889 Dr. George Beers, editor of the *Dominion Dental Journal*, was pointing out the weaknesses of individual provincial policies and the need for a national organization. In 1893 Dr. Frank Woodbury, secretary of the Nova Scotia Dental Association, initiated a movement for reciprocity between the provincial boards. For almost 10 years, through discussions via correspondence and personal communication, enthusiasm for a national organization grew among provincial representatives. Among the strongest voices of support were those of Drs. S.W. McInnis of Brandon, F.A. Godsoe of Saint John, Frank Woodbury of Halifax, J.S. Bagnall of Charlottetown, W.D. Cowan of Regina, R. Nash of Victoria, F.A. Stevenson of Montreal and J.B. Willmott of Toronto.



Credit for taking the initiative and first vital step belongs to the Dental Association of the Province of Quebec, whose secretary, **Dr. Eudore Dubeau** (left), mailed a letter to every dentist in Canada, which read in part:

Every dentist who can rise above mere local or provincial affairs in our country, and has thought about advantages to be gained by the nationalization of the dental profession, should unhesitatingly give the idea his support. The legal representatives of the profession in

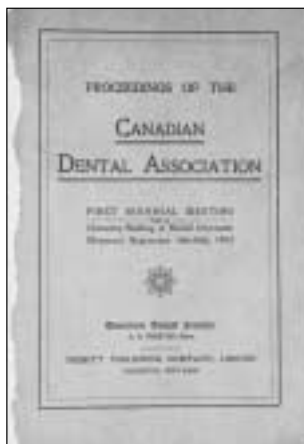
the various provinces have agreed to work toward giving dentistry a national character.

The way seems to be prepared for the first step towards the goal. The Quebec Dental Association, together with one representative from each of the provinces, have undertaken to organize a meeting in Montreal, September 16th, 1902.

CDA Founding Meeting, Montreal, September 16–18, 1902

Considering it was decades before modern air travel, fax machines, copy machines and the Internet, the organization of the first national dental meeting in Canada was a marvel in organization — and attendance. About 350 dentists — over 20% of all the dentists in the country — came to Montreal by train, ship and ferry for the three-day meeting, held in the Chemistry Building of McGill University.

The amount of work that preceded the meeting must have been monumental. As each of the 350 dentists registered they were handed a copy of a proposed constitution complete with by-laws and a proposed code of ethics for the new Canadian Dental Association (CDA). Both the constitution and the code of ethics were unanimously adopted on the first day of the meeting. It is to the great credit of the pioneering CDA Fathers that so much was accomplished in only three days.



It was only last year that through very good fortune a tattered copy of the entire proceedings of the first CDA meeting was found in a long-forgotten box of old textbooks, papers and documents.

The 145 pages provide a verbatim account of the entire business meeting and 19 clinical sessions.

An executive committee *pro tem* for the first CDA meeting met on the morning of the opening day, September 16, and the members' names are no surprise to today's dental historians: Drs. F.A. Stevenson, A.E. Webster, J.B. Willmott, W.D. Cowan, E. Dubeau, F. Woodbury, S.W. McInnis and F.A. Godsoe. For years before and years after CDA's founding meeting, these individuals devoted their lives to the well-being of the profession.

Dr. F.A. Stevenson: First CDA President

Dr. Francis A. Stevenson presided as chairman and served as the first president at the founding meeting of the new association. His opening address outlined the task before the delegates:

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this convention. We have, perhaps, rather more work before us than is usual on occasions of this kind, because this is the first meeting called of all the dentists of the Dominion... the chief reason for calling this meeting is that we may discuss the raising of our profession from a provincial to a national position.

Dr. Stevenson (right) graduated from the Harvard University Dental School in 1888 and practised in Montreal until his death in 1934. In his lifetime he held practically every possible position in his profession. He was president of the Dental Association of the Province of Quebec at the time of CDA's founding and, with the unanimous support of that Association, he and Secretary Dr. Eudore Dubeau were principally responsible for organizing CDA's founding meeting.



A Common Standard of Dental Proficiency

In his opening address on September 16, 1902, President Stevenson made dental proficiency and licensure a priority:

One of the chief reasons for calling this meeting is that we may discuss the feasibility of forming a Dominion Dental Council, and establishing a common standard of proficiency for the whole Dominion. We are fortunate in having with us Dr. McInnis, of Brandon, to whom the profession is largely indebted for bringing this idea prominently before us. I trust that because our present system of licensing is good, it will not prevent us from seeing that a common standard for the whole country is the best.

If the unanimous adoption of the constitution and code of ethics occupied only a portion of CDA's first day of deliberations, the matter of national licensure, proficiency and portability was to take another day and a half and even then would not pass with unanimity. One hundred years later the topic is still a frequently debated item on many an association agenda.

A more capable person could not have been selected to lead the debate on proficiency and portability than

Dr. Stanley W. McInnis (right) from Brandon, Manitoba. A 1888 graduate of the Pennsylvania College of Dental Surgery, he was the first college-educated dentist to practise in Manitoba. As a member of the legislative assembly, he was the first dentist in Canada to serve as a cabinet minister in a provincial legislature. Dr. McInnis was elected president of the CDA in 1906, and his death from appendicitis in 1907 marked the passing of the only CDA president to die in office in 100 years.



The Dominion Dental Council

Dr. McInnis set the scene for the debate by relating how nationalization is difficult when legislation is local:

The word “nationalization” means making national in character instead of local, and as used in the title of this paper implies the local character of the profession of dentistry in Canada today. Let us see for a moment what that local character means. We have in the Dominion seven provinces, and some territories, in all nine districts each endowed with legislative power, sufficient to enable it to pass laws to regulate the practice of the profession in that district. Each legislative district has its own law to regulate the practice of dentistry, and no two districts have the same law.

He then went on to outline how diverse registration and licensure was across Canada — all the way from two and a half years of apprenticeship to three years in college, with some provinces demanding examination and others requiring only credentials. Dr. McInnis, in his reference to portability, indicated a premise debated to this very day:

Certain protection to the profession is simply an unavoidable concomitant; but on the other hand it is apparent to any reasonable man that a dentist who is fit to practise under license in one part of Canada, is, morally speaking, fit to practise in any part of Canada.

The debate continued throughout the day with input from nine provinces and the territories. The chairman and president, Dr. Stevenson, summarized the debate before putting the question to the floor:

1. That the dental associations should amend, if necessary, their respective acts, so as to give them the power to grant a provincial license to those holding a Dominion diploma.
2. That the Dominion Dental Council be composed of one representative from each Provincial Examining Board or College.

3. That the examinations for the Dominion diploma shall be held simultaneously throughout the Dominion at such time and place as the council may decide; the examinations to be held in the presence of the local member of the council, and at least two of the Provincial Examining Boards.
4. The course of study to consist of four sessions of nine months each.
5. The matriculation to be the degree of BA from any British or Canadian university; candidates being cautioned that only men of mechanical skill should enter upon the course.
6. A minimum number of practical operations to be certified to by the college authorities before a candidate may enter the final examinations.
7. The practical examinations to be equal to the written in value.
8. An average of 75% on the whole examination, and not less than 50% in any one subject to be necessary to pass.

Finances. — Funds would be derived from fees charged for both primary and final examinations, and from a diploma fee. Should the funds derived from these sources be insufficient, the Provincial Associations represented on the Dominion Dental Council shall be assessed equally.

Microscope used by Dr. F.A. Stevenson, first CDA President, as a student at Harvard University Dental School in 1888.

(Dentistry Canada Museum)



Following a day-long debate, the question was given to the Committee on Legal Registration for study. Its report was received the next morning and a motion was accepted to proceed expeditiously to have the provinces study it in detail and be ready to enact the Dominion Dental Council at the next CDA meeting, scheduled for Toronto in 1904.

A national examination and licensing program was unable to receive full ratification from all provinces in 1904 or at any time in the next half century. The Dominion Dental Council (later named the Dental Council of Canada) did hold examinations and issue certificates but these were recognized in only seven of the nine provinces, with Quebec and British Columbia opting out.

It took until 1952, when the federally enacted National Dental Examination Board was formed, before all provinces found unanimity,

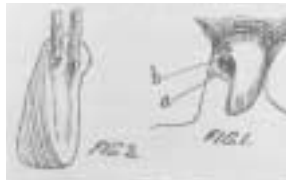
To establish qualifying conditions for a single standard national dental certificate of qualification, which may be recognized by the dental profession as the highest in Canada.

1902 Clinical Program

Any dentist believing that continuing dental education is a “modern” adaptation would do well to peruse the CDA Clinical Program of 100 years ago. Included were four specific clinic papers followed by lengthy discussions from the audience:

- **Filling Teeth with Gold:** C.N. Johnson, Chicago
- **Preservation of Such Roots as Are Usually Consigned to the Forceps:** J.E. Wilkinson, Toronto
- **Should Children’s Permanent Teeth Be Filled with Gold?:** R. Ottolengui, New York
- **Selection of Filling Materials:** A.E.B. Giles, Montreal

Nineteen separate clinics dealing with a wide variety of current topics were presented throughout the meeting. The following two were typical:



Porcelain Filling in the Mesial Angle of a Superior Lateral Incisor

Chas. E. Pearson, Toronto

Oral Fluoroscope

W.E. Willmott, DDS, Toronto

“The fluoroscope is inserted into the patient’s mouth, and the operator can see the reflection from the X-ray, through the eye-piece, on the mirror. He can see at once an unerupted tooth, or the direction of the root of a malposed tooth without waiting to expose and develop film.”



The Canadian Dental Association: 1902-2002 — A Century of Service is a Centenary project of the Canadian Dental Association in collaboration with the Dentistry Canada Fund, the charitable foundation for the dental profession in Canada. Written by Dr. Ralph Crawford, Historian and Past President of CDA, with sincere appreciation to the pioneers and innovators who have contributed so much to the dental profession. Particular thanks are given to Dr. Anne Dale at the University of Toronto and to Dr. Jack Abra, of Winnipeg, CDA President 1973–1974, who passed away August 27, 2001. Both have contributed so much to the chronicling and preservation of our rich dental history.



(All statements of opinion or supposed fact are published on the authority of the author and do not necessarily express the views of the CDA or the DCF.)



Special thanks to Mr. Hans J. “Hyo” Maier, Aurum Ceramic Dental Laboratories and the entire Aurum Group for their continuing support to Canadian dentistry not only through the most technologically advanced restorative materials and techniques available but also through research, education and program assistance. This long-term support was recognized in 1996 when the Special Friend of Canadian Dentistry Award was bestowed on Mr. Maier by the CDA and in 2001 by the awarding of an Honorary Membership in the Alberta Dental Association.

Founded in Calgary, Alberta, in 1961, the laboratory was purchased by Mr. Maier in 1971 and since that time has grown to include nine locations serving Canadian dentists from coast to coast. In 1996, Aurum Ceramic established its U.S. laboratory in Spokane, Washington.

**Grateful thanks to ALL sponsors of the series,
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