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George Washington probably had more dental care than any other Ameri-

can of his day. Because of these dental services, and because he was constantly motivated by chronic and problems that grew much time and attention to his teeth, he undoubtedly acquired more dental information than any other patient of his time—so much so that he kept his own dental instrument kit to make his own dental adjustments when necessary for him to do so. 

It seemed that he also was the first of a dental consumer’s approach, even in these days. When a French dental asked permission to visit him, Washington had a military friend check out the dentist’s skills and integrity.

The report was good, and Jean Pierre de La Moye became one of Wash-

ington’s dentists. Our cover shows four of his many dentists: Charles Wilson, Pepsodent, the portrait painter and "amateur dentist); James Gorter, John Greenwood, and E. H. Mayeux. Others include John Baker, Benjamin Franklin, Charles D. Wood Whittick, and Andrew Spencer.

Ours COVER


In a recent article in the New York Times with the heading, “A Youngster’s Visit To The Dentist Needn’t Be So Terrifying,” the reporter opened with the following: "When an adult stretches out on a dentist’s chair, likely as not, the heart begins to pound and the palms go moist.

“These days, however, there is a small but growing group of dentists trained to work with children—they are called pedodon-

ists—whose avowed purpose is to somehow avoid turning out an-

other generation of dental-terror victims.

Great, so far. It is good to see a prominent newspaper publish a feature story about one of the profession’s most serious concerns. It can reach so many parents with this important message. But further reading bringing appointment, for the body of the article continued with suggestions to the dentist that he has heard over and over: Have toys in the waiting room. Don’t wear a white uniform because it frightens some children. Be friendly and smile all the time. Be considerate and reassuring, etc.

Are there gimmicks which skirt the main issue: what happens when the child is seated in the dentist chair and the dentist is ready to start treatment?

Let’s get back to the article and see. The end is a black-buster.

Evidently, in preparing his material, the reporter communicated with a prominent pedodontist.

In response to a question about the need to keep the parent with the child during treatment, the pedodontist is quoted as saying: “I find that the average, normal child over three is quite responsive without the parent in the room.”

The reporter then asked, “What if a four-year-old boy, for in-
The child was stunned and, although tears streamed free of dental fear. The main objective is not the explain that the only link with security for a young are polite, considerate and, above all, sympathetic. Actually complete his treatment with some children. Gives him enough security to try to fight the down his cheeks, he sat through the rest of the treatment seriously, you answer all questions honestly, you want my cavity filled. Some dentists hate to treat children. They find it unproductive and irritating not to complete a given piece of work in the time allotted. The frustration that comes from trying to push treatment on an un-receptive youngster is too wearing to face too often. Therefore, these dentists should avoid treating children. No child patient should be forced to do anything. After all, we are trying to build a good adult patient. It takes a certain kind of courage for the dentist to say to a parent, "He does not want to be treated today. Let's try it at another time." Some mothers don't help the situation. They, too, can be irritated, particularly if a baby sitter is being paid to sit with a younger child at home. Many dentists do not even charge a fee if no work is done. So everyone loses but the child, a small aim to pay to help the youngster become a good adult patient. The question frequently arises, "What happens to the child during a visit if he is uncomfortable?" Obviously, the decay will continue. A dentist who practices in the manner described will tell the mother that the child may experience pain, and, in that event, she should suggest to the child that they see the dentist since he is the only one who can help. Pain can be a powerful inducement for the child to consent to treatment.

A Responsibility and on Opportunity. Here is a golden opportunity for the dentist to exhibit his sympathetic manner and to build the child's confidence. Because of the neglect, chances are the pulp is exposed. Careful hand excavation is in order, just enough to remove debris and lose decayed dentine—all very carefully done without pressure. Then could be secured at an inn for 5 cents. Typical wages were 70 cents a day for a carpenter and 42 cents for a tailor. But surprisingly enough, it still took 10 cents to mail a letter then, and that was only for a radius of 100 miles. Any mail going farther cost 25 cents. Saw a bumper sticker that said, "Our God Is Not Dead—Sorry About Yours." Trends in Dental Education. An ADA survey predicts a leveling off of dental school enrollment in the years ahead despite the steady increase of students during the last quarter century. The cost of educating a dental student has almost doubled during the last seven years, from $7,500 to $14,500. Perhaps the most marked change has been in the increased number of minority groups and women in dental schools. During the last five years, for example, there has been an increase of 120 percent in minority group enrollment, from 825 to 1,921. Female students in the same period have increased from 231 to 1,361—a 489 percent jump! Today, women make up 11 percent of the total first year enrollment.

Washing Dirty Laundry in Public. It's many years since the old "amalgam wars" in dentistry, when the battle lines were drawn between those who consider the combination of mercury and silver alloy poisonous to the system and those who disagreed. Here is where the trouble starts. Others feel that it is a credit to the profession to debate issues so as to protect the public's health. What do you think? Should our "dirty laundry be washed in public?"

The Dentist's Image. What does the blue collar worker think about the dentist? In a recent survey of blue collar workers, their opinion of the truth, competence, and altruism of 20 different professional groups was asked. As far as dentists were concerned, the answers were most gratifying. In truthfulness, the dentist ranked 2nd under the clergymen. They were followed by physicians, college professors, judges, high school teachers, psychiatrists, and psychologists. On the bottom were trade car salesmen followed by politicians. As to competence, dentists were second, after physicians, and followed by clergymen, college professors, lawyers, psychologists, and judges. Again at the bottom of the list were the used car salesmen and the politicians. In altruism, the dentists were third under the clergymen and physicians, followed by psychologists, college professors, and high school teachers. At the bottom— you guessed it.
With the crime rate rising its upward surge, dentists, like businessmen, more than ever must bear the onerous burden of burglary, theft, robbery, pilferage, and vandalism. Dental practices of all sizes, in all sections of the country, are finding it necessary to strengthen security measures.

The basic objective of any security system is to deter the would-be criminal from entering your premises in the first place. At the very least, the process of intrusion should be time-consuming and as visible as possible. Additional deterrents should protect highly sensitive property, making burglary or theft difficult if not impossible for the criminal who does get inside.

How Secure Are Your Doors and Windows?

Locks—on windows and skylights as well as doors—are still the first line of defense against intruders. But a lock is only as secure as the door or window that it guards. Doors with unreinforced glass or thin panels or weak frames, doors that do not fit their frames very tightly and doors whose exterior hinge pins are removable are not worth the added cost of a good lock.

Locks are one of the cheapest forms of protection. The latest in "pick-resistant" lock cylinders cost only about $20 each, with another $10 for installation. "Double-cylinder" locks are recommended for front doors. These are locks that require keys to open from the inside. They are effective against intruders who enter through small windows, skylights or by cutting a hole in the roof, then try to leave through the front door with merchandise or office machines.

Brand names of the newer lock cylinders to keep in mind are Proof Lock, Sargent "Keso" and Modeco. Cylinders that accept tubular keys are also hard to pick. However, an investment in a pick-resistant lock makes no sense if other means of access are provided to the intruder. This means bars over windows and skylights.

If appearance is a consideration, consider the new break-resistant glasses, which crack under but do not give way to repeated blows with a sledge hammer. Designed to protect showcases and show windows of jewelry shops, this laminated glass costs three to five times as much as ordinary plate glass.

Cinderblock wall construction is another concern. Without making too much noise, a criminal with a crowbar can knock out one cinderblock, then pry enough others loose to enter a building. Old-fashioned brick walls are an effective deterrent.

Folding gates over doors and windows are gaining in popularity—and earn insurance discounts in some localities. To protect unobserved access points, these metal gates should slide in strong frames. For windows facing a busy street, a simple, unframed accordion gate can be sufficient.

If your facilties are centrally airconditioned, make sure that the grill over the outside duct is locked. Provide an expanded-metal or iron-bar barrier close to the outside grill. If you have an alarm, tie the barrier to it. Burglars have been known to back trucks up to an airconditioning duct and enter the building undetected through the ductwork.

How to Safeguard Your Dental Practice

In many areas of the country, dental offices of all sizes are facing an ever-increasing problem—burglary and theft. Thefts have been reported in every state. Thefts are making significant inroads on the money and equipment needed just to keep your practice running smoothly.

The good news is that over the last 10 years the crime rate has remained relatively stable. The bad news is that the amount of money stolen has increased substantially. The average theft for 1974 was $800. A 10-year study of some dental practices revealed the average theft was $100.

Most thefts are not the result of a well-planned heist. Often, they are the result of carelessness. A small amount of money is often converted to cash and used to purchase personal items or jewelry. However, even small losses can add up to sizable sums over a period of time.

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Central-Station Alarms

Central alarms are still rated the most reliable of all alarms—and earn the highest discounts on insurance—but in some high-crime areas no burglary insurance protection is available without installation of a central-station alarm.

These alarms depend on a direct leased telephone line from your premises to the nearest station of the company providing the service. In some localities the charges for the leased line are the same to all, but usually the charges increase with distance. Average charges for the leased lines are $8 to $15 per month.

Reliability of central-station alarms should be high because the companies providing them claim to test them regularly and because a warning signal is received if the line fails or is cut deliberately. They are supposed to be "fail-safe." Unfortunately, central-station alarms have the reputation for generating a high proportion of false alarms. The Los Angeles Police Department made a study of all alarms received via central stations during a one-week period and found that the false ones totaled 95%.

An analysis, however, showed that a good third of the false alarms were caused by failure of the employees of the establishment using the service to lock all doors and windows properly and follow other procedures. Loosely fitting windows and doors are a frequent cause of false alarms, and the police have come to expect many false alarms whenever there is a wind storm.

Because installation charges are high, selection of a central-station alarm service calls for care. If you decide to drop the service—or you move to other quarters—the installation charge is not recoverable.

The Pros and Cons of Local Alarms

Many businesses that cannot afford central-station alarms or which do not require that degree of security install "local" alarms mounted outside. These alarms are purchased rather than rented for monthly or other terms. They are installed and maintained by the suppliers, unless you are required to keep up the installation yourself.

Nevertheless, a local alarm—when it works—can be expected to score off intruders, and it does earn limited discounts from some underwriters. If you choose a local alarm, make sure it can only be de-activated from inside the premises and that it includes enough delay to allow designated employees to enter the premises and shut it off by key before it goes off to annoy your neighbors. Local alarms require the cooperation of neighbors for their effectiveness.

The latest in local alarms are very powerful electronic sirens, with no moving parts, that can be heard as far as one mile away. They are designed for facilities remote from neighbors. Costing about $100 each, they go by the brand names of Curvul and Ear-Splitter and are locally available.

"Wireless" Interconnections Cuts Installation Costs

To speed up installation and also eliminate all unsightly wires, at least a half-dozen companies have now developed "wireless" techniques for sending signals from detectors to the control electronics. They supply local installers with their components.

Two approaches are used. In one, tiny transmitters are attached to the detectors (in several such battery-operated transmitters the fixed half of a magnetic switch is actually incorporated in the transmitter). In another approach, the high-frequency signal is imposed on the 60-cycle power lines through a power outlet. The control electronics, which receives its power from the same lines, also receives the signals through the lines.

Most of the wireless systems have ranges of about 500 feet. However, greater ranges of up to 1,000 feet and even higher can be ordered. This means that remote buildings, such as garages, storage spaces or tool sheds, can be protected without stringing wires, which is both unsightly and expensive, and subject to storm damage.

Installation of a security system is much quicker by the wireless approach. Despite the inherently higher cost of the parts of the system to cover the cost of the tiny transmitters, the total cost may be less because of low installation charges. For example, many installers will charge about $80 per "opening" (i.e., per window or door) for a wired detector. However, by wireless methods, the charge per opening can be as low as $30, and will most likely drop as more and more manufacturers offer wireless systems.

Lighting: A Low-Cost Deterrent

Lighting is one of the cheapest deterrents. It serves approach, staff training, buying supplies more economically, and so forth.

Many "24-hour" services do not have any arbitrary dead line, but do need to be done in a set period of time should be observed. Timely reminders well ahead can enhance patient cooperation. You may plan on redacting your office and a reminder to look over color and materials to choose for this well ahead of time will help to get satisfaction results.

A reminder to be cordial hotel accommodations and make important dates with individuals in advance of a trip will also be helpful.

Personal

Anniversary dates of special importance or sentimental value of a personal nature have a place here. These are such dates as birthdays, wedding anniversaries and similar events. If it is important to have some time to obtain a gift, then a note can be made ahead of the date it will be given.

Suggestions for Making Entries

Most entries should be made at or near the time they occur, else they may be forgotten. Others may be entered at the time the reminder book is purchased. These latter ones can be fixed dates of great importance, such as government agency payment deadlines for tax payments and other obligations, insurance premium due dates, both business and personal, and other obligations of a like nature. If a lease is obtained, payment dates can be entered. So can time payment dates, both for the practice and personal accounts. If cash discounts are taken, a reminder of the time of discount deadline can help to consistently observe this money-saving practice.

Spare or Lose Time?

Many dentists are no doubt already hard pressed for time in their practices. They may feel a reminder book will be just one more chore that keeps them from more important tasks. They may be generally impressed with paper work and regard it as being non-productive. Many government forms and other like paper work tasks are burdensome and produce no earnings, but they cannot be ignored, for, too often paper work that is for a dentist's own benefit is passed up.

For the initial outlay of time to get a reminder book started, you should be able to see in a very short period of time that you are actually saving time with this habit.

In just a glance, you can review all dates and deadlines of immediate importance for your practice and personal life. You will have all the information necessary to organize your time to best advantage.

When major financial obligations are due, especially those carrying severe late-payment penalties, a reminder well ahead of due date can give you adequate time to raise the funds without borrowing or depleting operating capital for your practice. If you avoid paying just one small penalty for forgetting an important payment deadline, this may well more than compensate for the time spent in making reminders.

Other benefits will be all on the profit side and will be helpful.

You will be aware of fleeting opportunities for profit or personal satisfaction of a social nature, when forgetting could cause a loss.

You will have more peace of mind because you will be at all times informed of how your time must be allocated to get the most benefit from it, both financially and personally.

Many dentists may prefer to plan the activities for the following day late in the preceding day and would consult a reminder book at that time. Certainly it is most useful if it is consulted daily, preferably at the earliest opportunity after starting work, if this has not been done in the preceding day.

What Type of Book?

A memoranda book is a more permanent type of reminder than the calendar pad, and generally will have more space for notations. It is more easily retained than a calendar, and it is useful in starting a new book at the beginning of another year. Recurring events can be entered and a review of the events of last year may be helpful.

Start your reminder book habit now, doctor. It will help you to do the right thing at the right time.

P.O. Box 7116
Riverside, California 92503
How to Do the Right Thing at the Right Time

By Harold J. Ashe

It is standard practice for dentists to reinforce their memory concerning patient appointments. They are carefully recorded on a large calendar which is constantly kept up-to-date by his receptionist. Usually, dentists will also make a note on a calendar of the time of luncheon and like dates, rather than to entirely trust them to memory.

Besides these current dates, there are innumerable other professional and personal deadlines that must be met. If they are not, a dentist is usually penalized in some manner. Some of these dates may be trusted to memory. Others may be in practice records that require more time to consult than a dentist may ordinarily want to take—if he even remembers to do so in time. There may be fleeting opportunities that occur from time to time, but are passed up for lack of a reminder that action must be taken in a certain amount of time, or on a certain date. Personal dates of sentimental value or pleasure potential may be forgotten if they are not brought to his attention during professional hours.

All of these important deadlines will usually not fit easily into a desk calendar pad. Yet, if they are not, a dentist is usually penalized in some manner. Some of these dates may be trusted to memory. Others may be in practice records that require more time to consult than a dentist may ordinarily want to take—if he even remembers to do so in time. There may be fleeting opportunities that occur from time to time, but are passed up for lack of a reminder that action must be taken in a certain amount of time, or on a certain date. Personal dates of sentimental value or pleasure potential may be forgotten if they are not brought to his attention during professional hours.

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One-Time Dates

One-time dates or opportunities could slip by without being noticed if a reminder is not made and consulted. An example could be a meeting of the city council, the zoning commission or other agency or group scheduled to take up a matter of importance to a dentist. There may be an auction scheduled where some assets he wishes to acquire may be put up for bid. There may be another public relations activity that he wishes to attend.

Reminder to Avoid Penalties

Payment and other deadlines for obligations to federal, state and local governments cannot be safely ignored. When deadline dates for these are forgotten, assessment of heavy penalties will reduce take-home earnings from the practice. Each year, there can be as many as 50 or 60 or more of these important reminders to enter into a book. The deadlines for these are a must. These can include payment dates for remittance of employee withholdings, quarterly income tax estimate payments, unemployment insurance payments, property tax, and others of a like nature.

Nail Down Productive Ideas

Too often, a good idea for practice management is not followed up to produce tangible results. If the idea is noted in a reminder book at or near the time it occurs, there is a much better chance of follow-up. It may be effective to make a note for a time you expect to have free for more extensive investigation of its possibilities. These ideas could apply to any aspect of the practice, such as a new public relations in two ways: it exposes the intruder to those inside and to passers-by. The new high-intensity light sources mean that only a few lights are needed to illuminate the entire perimeter of a building, denying an intruder the cover he may need to work his way through a door or window. Exterior lighting should be matched by all-night lighting of interiors, particularly ground-level spaces that can be viewed from the exterior. Retailers are urged to leave their cash registers open (empty, of course) and bathed in light. Safes should also be exposed by light.

The cost of leaving lights on all night is modest. If arranged carefully, lights can make a building look like a showplace to passers-by.

Secondary Deterrents in Office Buildings

Once burglars or vandals have penetrated a large office building, they are often free to roam about stealing one office after another. To deny them access from one floor to another, one-way door openers are easily installed on all fire-exit doors, forcing any intruders to go down to the ground level, or up to the roof, if they enter a fire staircase. Better still, equip each door with an alarm that sounds if it is opened. Such alarms cost about $100 per door installed.

These deterrents must be coupled with special measures to control movement of elevators. At the end of the working day, self-service elevators should be set so that they can only return to the ground level and not open their doors at intermediate floors. Or they can be set so that they require an operator, the night watchman or guard. DAY-TIME burglaries and even robberies of one-man or one-woman branch offices are becoming more common in large cities. The obvious deterrent is keeping the door locked at all times, and providing a peephole.

New Low-Security Alarm Systems

Even though you may be satisfied with your present alarm system, it's a good idea to consider the new ones that are constantly being developed. Some may be worth considering if too high a police in your locality begin to downgrade their level of response to present alarm systems.

The effect of new alarm devices range in price from $50 to $1,000 and more, plus installation. At the low end of the cost scale is a variety of self-contained alarms that fit right on the door they protect. One of the most attractive is the electronic "Lock-Alarm" offered by the 3M Company. Designed for protection of apartments, it could be used effectively in small branch offices, particularly those in office buildings. The Lock-Alarm is mounted in place of the lock now on the door. It is unusual in that it sounds a piercing alarm if an intruder merely attempts to break in. Picking, forcing or jimmying will set it off. However, it does depend on four penlite batteries, which should be replaced (at a cost of about $1.00) every year. Cost begins at $65, plus about $20 for installation.

Safes Still Make Sense

There is no need for a long exposition on one of the most familiar of the traditional security products, the safe. A well-built safe provides very good deterrence against the amateur burglar and substantial deterrence against the professional. At too much added cost, safes also protect valuable documents against fire.

However, a safe provides no deterrence if it is not completely locked.

Retailers and others who collect considerable cash during the working day should know about one of the newer developments in safes. The "drop depository safe" is in effect a one-way safe which has a slot over the door. More sophisticated models have a cylinder in the top into which one places the cash. Spinning the cylinder drops the cash into the compartment. Manufacturers provide decals that keep all robbers know that these present can open the safe.

The Acme Safe Company makes a sophisticated version of the drop depository safe for retail establishments with many cash registers. Called the Electronic Depository Safe, it permits frequent and rapid depositing of cash by clerks, which eliminates the necessity of hold-ups or mysterious disappearances of cash from stuffed cash drawers. These safes cost $2,000.

Protecting Office Equipment

Portable office machines and equipment are one interference.
of the prime targets of the petty thief, even if they bring but a mere fraction of their value. The best way to deter these petty thieves is to keep them out of your offices in the first place. But anti-intrusion systems don’t stop all petty thieves, who may be your own employees.

Begin by locking down all euppeters and machines that do not have to be moved about the office when in use. For calculators that are used intermittently by several employees, try bolting the machine to a rolling stand. Another anti-theft device for calculators is the $35 Cordo Porta-Lok, which holds the machine at the end of a high-strength aircraft cable.

To discourage the thief even more, use the various kinds of devices that secure the machines to desks or tables. One of the most difficult to circumvent is the Bolten lock, which has a free spinning steel collar that defies the heaviest of wrenches. The Maston locking device offers a unique feature: free insurance coverage against loss by theft. These locking devices are available in office-supply houses at prices ranging up to $15 apiece. However, the unit price drops sharply if you buy several locking devices at a time, which you are likely to do if you buy any at all.

The new electronic calculators are now available in sizes no larger than a book. Trouble is, these fit neatly under a thief’s coat or in a large purse. To prevent their theft, they should be locked up at night in a file cabinet or safe. The best deterrent is not to buy such compact machines unless you have a real need for them.

The newest way to protect portable office equipment is also the least expensive. More than 50 cities now have computerized identification systems (CIS) or Operation Identification programs. In both, valuable portable property is engraved with the owner-driver’s license number. Decals are then pasted on both front and rear doors (these programs are also for residences) indicating that all valuable property has been engraved for computerized identification in the case of CIS or for “rapid identification by law-enforcement agencies” under an Operation Identification program. Where CIS is in force, businessmen and home owners file a card with the police that carries their driver’s license number, address and business and home phone numbers. Under Operation Identification, the police can identify property within a few days by requesting from the state motor vehicle bureau the name and address associated with a license number.

How to Buy Protective Devices and Systems

Selecting the best or most protective devices for your premises is no easy job. Here are some handy guidelines which can simplify the selection process:

• Start with your insurance underwriter. Obvi­ously, you will want to know which devices earn discounts on burglary and other forms of crime insurance.

• Your local police should be able to help. Larger cities can afford specialists who have detailed knowledge. Take advantage of free official “Premises Protection Surveys” or unofficial suggestions, if such are available. In particular, check to see whether the municipality has banned or is seriously considering banning phone alarms.

• Limit your survey to equipment that is locally available. No matter what suppliers claim about their products, such as “solid-state,” “maintenance free,” or “easily installed,” every protective product requires careful installation and regular testing at the very least, plus varying degrees of maintenance and repair. Transistors and other solid-state components, although inherently longer-lived than the vacuum tube, do “age.” Also, they are far more liable to catastrophic destruction than vacuum tubes. Therefore, you should deal with a supplier who provides local installation and service—and perhaps at odd hours.

• Check the quality of the installation and mainten­ance service provided by those suppliers in whose products you are interested. Visit present installations and check with users. Find out if they honor maintenance contracts.

• Try to obtain the advice of an experienced in­dustrial security executive if you don’t employ one. Most large companies employ a specialist in security. You should have little trouble reaching one in your own locality—or arrange to talk with one employed by a supplier or customer. These professionals are usually quite willing to help others.

• Check all products for an Underwriters’ Labora­tories rating. This is a sure sign of acceptance and quality manufacture. Without the “UL” mark, underwriters will refuse discounts on burglary insurance.

• Ask for competitive bids from at least three sup­pliers. Don’t choose the lowest bid. Check what each is offering as part of his bid.

• Make it a firm rule of yours to check the record of any supplier or installer of security devices with your local Better Business Bureau and Dun & Brad­street.

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TOOTH EXTRACTOR
The first patent granted a dentist in this country was awarded to Thomas Bull, Sr. in 1792.

DENTAL KIT
A dental kit that integrates Colonial practitioners, both medical and dental, used.

(Courtesy, Army Medical Museum, Washington)

... and the kinds of instruments they used

[Image of historical dental instruments]

B R A D W A T E R K I N G, S R . A D E N T I S T
During the War of 1812, while in the U.S. Navy, Flagg was captured by the British. Transported to England, he gained his parole and practiced dentistry in London. After regaining entrance to the States, he visited Charleston to improve his health, but instead, contracted yellow fever after a few days and later died. In commemoration of him the South Carolina State Dental Society erected a monument which reads: “In this churchyard is buried Josiah Flagg, 1763-1816, first native-born American to make den­tistry his life’s work, and the first to carry to any foreign land evidence of American dental progress. Soldier in the American Revolution, Sailor in the War of 1812. Died in Charleston September 30, 1816.”

Editor’s Note: These biographies, copyrighted by the Medical Heritage Society, are from the Medallion History of Dentistry, the official series of commemorative medals sponsored by the Society. Subscription rolls for the series are closed. Waiting list information may be obtained from the Society at 20 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60606.
John Greenwood (1760-1819)
Josiah Flagg (1763-1816)

Two Early American Dentists...

John Greenwood, a man of many skills, was descirbed as the first practical dentist in Boston. There was little in his background to forestall his career: his great-grandfather, Nathaniel, was a shipbuilder; his grandfather, Isaac, was the first professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at Harvard and, later, pastor of the famous Old North Church of Boston; his father, Isaac Jr., was a part-time dentist, but also a mathematical instrument maker and ivory and wood turner, as well as an umbrella maker.

John was born on May 17, 1760, in Boston. At age 13, he was apprenticed to his uncle, a cabinet maker. However, the Revolutionary War began, and John broke his apprenticeship to enlist as a fifer in a colonial company at $8 a month. Young Greenwood's mathematical instrument maker and ivory and wood turner, as well as an umbrella maker.

In 1786 Greenwood judiciously moved his dental practice across the street from General Washington's office. At least seven dentists had treated President Washington professionally, but he apparently considered John Greenwood the most highly skilled. In 1789 Greenwood made the first of a number of dentures for the President. The base of this denture was constructed of ivory to which eight natural anterior teeth were originally fastened. A block of ivory on each side served as molar for grinding. However, as one of Washington's own teeth remained, a hole was left in the ivory for it. Gold wires were screwed through the ivory base into the artificial teeth for strength. Later, he made an upper denture for Washington which was probably the first swaged gold denture ever made in America, if not the world.

John Greenwood was proficient in all types of dentistry. His son, Isaac John Greenwood, also a dentist, later claimed his father was the first to use a foot drill which he made from an old spinning wheel belonging to his grandmother.

Greenwood died suddenly of apoplexy on November 16, 1819. In his will, he divided the famous Washington letters equally among his children. His professional skill made him an outstanding dentist in the new country. But he is best known as George Washington's dentist.

There were several men in the new United States who were as skilled as Greenwood. Physically, he was strong as a horse. But, more important than his strength, was his quickness of mind. When a man was too old to practice dentistry, he retired to New York where his brother was a general contractor. But he continued to live on his reputation.

Josiah Flagg, John's younger brother, never was skilled in dentistry. However, at the end of his trying war experiences, John travelled to New York where his brother was practicing dentistry. Although Greenwood began work for a nautical instrument maker, a nearby physician asked him to extract a tooth for one of his patients. Greenwood performed the operation so skillfully that, more and more, such referrals were made. His fame as a dentist spread so rapidly that he confined his efforts to dentistry and even employed his brother to help handle his practice.

Josiah Flagg (1763-1816)

Josiah Flagg was a dentist who practiced in New York. He was considered John Greenwood the most highly skilled. In 1789 Greenwood made the first of a number of dentures for the President. The base of this denture was constructed of ivory to which eight natural anterior teeth were originally fastened. A block of ivory on each side served as molar for grinding. However, as one of Washington's own teeth remained, a hole was left in the ivory for it. Gold wires were screwed through the ivory base into the artificial teeth for strength. Later, he made an upper denture for Washington which was probably the first swaged gold denture ever made in America, if not the world.

Josiah Flagg lived in New York where he was a dentist. He performed dental operations with skill, and his patients went to him for their dental needs. However, he is not as well known as John Greenwood. Josiah Flagg died on February 16, 1819.
**Was Dr. Webster Guilty?**

"History is little else than a picture of human crimes and misfortunes," declared Voltaire.

The French philosopher-historian may have overstated his premise a bit, but he had a modicum of truth. Acts against humanity, individually and collectively, have shaped events.

Consider the celebrated Parkman-Webster murder case that roiled mid-19th century Boston. It was only a mini-episode in the panorama of American history. Yet for 127 years it has continued to fascinate criminologists, medicolegal experts, jurists and "who-done-it" buffs. Books are still being written about it. Helen Thomas's carefully researched study, *Murder at Harvard,* published by Houghton Mifflin Co., is possibly the best on the subject.

A prominent Bostonian of the time called it "the most disgraceful event in our domestic history.* Mind you, it wasn't the most lurid murder on record but it ranks as one of the most sensational. Why? Because the victim and the accused were distinguished Harvard professors. And the homicide took place in the most unlikeliest locale: the Harvard Medical School.

For dental historians, the crime holds special interest. It involved the science of forensic dentistry. The unique evidence that helped convict the defendant was presented by the dentist who was later the founder and first dean of Harvard Dental School.

Dr. John White Webster, professor of chemistry at Harvard College and lecturer in the medical school, was a bon vivant—a connoisseur of fine wine and food who hosted lavish parties for his many friends and colleagues. He also had a macabre sense of humor. Once he invited guests to his hand- some home on the Charles River. While at dinner, Webster turned out the lights, ignited a bowl of chemicals in front of his plate and, to his guests' horror, produced a ghastly imitation of a man being hanged. It was a prophetic demonstration.

The chemistry professor's salary at Harvard ($1,200 a year) was hardly sufficient to support his kind of lifestyle. He was continually borrowing money, then unable to pay his debts when they came due. Webster was in plain words, a chronic deadbeat. One who had advanced him money was Dr. George Parkman, a much respected physician and member of the medical school faculty.

Like Webster, Parkman moved in the highest echelon of Boston society. (He was the uncle of historian Francis Parkman.) But unlike his colleague, he was independently wealthy. A beneficiary of Harvard Medical School, he donated the ground upon which the school was built and established the Parkman Chair in Anatomy and Physiology, occupied at that time by Oliver Wendell Holmes.

As Mrs. Thomson reconstructs, in her inimitable narrative style, the events of November 23, 1849, Parkman left his home, transacted some business and did a little shopping. Then he headed for the medical school to meet Webster and collect the long overdue $483. Webster claimed that he paid Parkman the money, and the latter left. Witnesses saw Parkman enter the medical school building. No one saw him leave.

It may have been the product of smoldering resentment. Possibly it was an act of desperation. You might even see in it the coming of a brilliant mind on the verge of insanity. Webster had arranged the meeting with Parkman on the pretense of paying his debt—and murdered his friend of 50 years.

**Corpus Delicti**

How to dispose of the corpus delicti was Webster's immediate problem. His plan was to dismember the body and incinerate it in the school's furnace. Webster managed to get the head and extremities into the furnace, but the torso proved too difficult. So he stored it in a trunk, intending to cart it off later. He never got it off the premises.

The "Mystery of the Missing Professor" came to a quick resolution when the college janitor noticed heat coming from a furnace that was supposed to be unused. A search turned up pieces of the late Dr. Parkman in Webster's quarters. Ashes from the furnace yielded teeth, fragments of a mandible and parts of a denture.

Even before the grisly discoveries were made, the finger of suspicion pointed to Webster. He was arrested, indicted and tried in rapid succession.

Few trials in the annals of American jurisprudence were as melodramatic as the Parkman-Webster murder case. The crucial testimony was provided by Parkman's dentist, Dr. Nathan Cooley Keep, the man who was to become the first dean of Harvard Dental School 17 years later. His testimony established the corpus delicti—that the skeletal remains in the furnace were Parkman's.

For the dental reader, Dr. Keep's appearance on the stand is one of this book's highlights. He was understandably overwrought by what he had to do, because he had personal commitments to both Webster and Parkman. When he first arrived in Cambridge, a penniless, friendless student, the Webster family extended him many kindnesses.

Dr. Keep testified that the first time he saw the denture found in the furnace, he immediately recognized it as the one he had made for Parkman. He explained to the court how he made it.

He contends, for example, that the janitor, who moonlighted as a body snatcher (not mentioned in the Thomson book), came up with sections of a dismembered corpse which never was proven to be Parkman's. But the dental evidence is irrefutable. And the credentials of the expert witness who interpreted it are impeccable.

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**DENTAL-TERROR VICTIMS**

A sedative dressing gently applied.

Here again, the purpose is to win the child's cooperation. And if the sedative dressing puts out the fire, as it frequently does, the young patient may begin to think that the dentist is really on his side. Why? Because the mother is there to hold the child's hand.

One dentist likes to see an exposed pulp in a child. It is regrettageable but still a small price to pay for the long range gain of building a good adult patient. The mother is advised that the filling may become dislodged and lost. In pain sets in again, she is to ask the child if he would like to see the dentist for another sedative filling. Invariably, he will say "Yes," since now he knows what to expect and remembers the last visit which relieved his pain.

Another step towards the main objective has been accomplished—perhaps the main objective itself!

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*I started as I always do by making an impression of the patient's jaw in soft wax. I use homewax. Then I oiled the wax impression and poured liquid plaster into it. The plaster hardened and if the wax impression was made properly, it gives an exact impression of the jaw. . . . Here is the cast from which I made Dr. Parkman's teeth. I poured liquid metal into this mold and made a plate. . . . The irregularity on the left side of Dr. Parkman's jaw was very great so I made the teeth in three blocks and joined them to the gold plate.*

*Keep held up the cast from which he had made Parkman's denture. From a box he took the pieces of denture found in the furnace. Slowly he slipped the pieces of denture and the loose teeth onto the model. They fit perfectly.*

*As he did this, Dr. Keep burst into tears. His sobbing resounded throughout the hushed courtroom. The Harvard professor who liked good times went to the gallows on August 30, 1850. Was Dr. Webster guilty as charged? Mrs. Thomson's meticulously documented book leaves no doubt—at least, in this reviewer's mind—that justice prevailed on that unhappy day.*

*Not everyone, however, is convinced. A concuriously published book ("The Disappearance of Dr. Parkman," by Judge Robert Sullivan, Little, Brown Co., Boston, 1971) raises doubts as to Webster's guilt. The author, a justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, claims to have uncovered startling new evidence in the case.*

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