

Oregon Chiropractic History

Chapter I

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It is unfortunate that earlier efforts to write a History of Chiropractic in the State of Oregon were not made. As we take up the task at this late date (1960), it will be apparent that many interesting events and sidelights will necessarily be omitted, for so many of those pioneers have past from the scene.

As far as can be determined at this time, the first appearance of Chiropractic in Oregon was in the fall of 1903. To Drs. John and Eva Marsh goes the credit for opening the first Chiropractic office. It was located at 266 Hall Street on the corner of S.W. 5th Street, in Portland. The Drs. Marsh took their training at the Dr. Lyncher School, known at the time as the "Brainard College" of Minneapolis, Minnesota. This college is said to have been founded by a well known engineer, who was a brother-in-law of Eva Marsh; and John and Eva were said to be graduates of the first class. Fresh from school and beaming with enthusiasm, they not only opened an office, but also a school. This school was, apparently a branch or extension of the Dr. Lyncher school, "The Brainard College."

Among the early students attracted to this new school and method of treatment was William Oscar Powell and his wife, Anna. They had just returned from New York and while taking an evening stroll were attracted by a sign, which probably said, "Chiropractic School and Cure." Dr. Marsh used that inscription across his letter heads about that time. Being interested in natural methods of healing, they decided to investigate. Dr. Powell was invited to have a treatment, which he accepted and the results of the procedure were very impressive. Being captivated by this new philosophy and art, the Powells both enrolled for the course of study. After Dr. Powell had mastered the work, he opened an office in McMinnville. This was in 1905. While Dr. Anna Powell also graduated and was later licensed by the first chiropractic board, she apparently never engaged in general practice. Probably the responsibility of family and home limited her professional activities.

The success of the early practitioners soon attracted the attention of the medical profession, with the result that they appeared before the State Legislature with the demand that all types of practise and healing come under the requirements of the medical practise Act. Fred Culver, a friend of Dr. Powell, was visiting the Legislature when this matter was brought up. He immediately advised Dr. Powell what was brewing. Dr. Powell at once called Dr. Marsh and together they contacted Representatives, Hubert Banards and a Dentist, Dr. Wright. An exemption clause to the Medical Act was hastily drawn, exempting chiropractors from its provisions. This exemption clause was approved by the Legislature and stood as the only basis for the protection of chiropractic practise in Oregon until the Licensing and Examing Board was founded in 1915.

A State Chiropractic Association was organized, apparently, some time in 1906. Details are lacking. In 1908 a group of some fifteen chiropractors pooled their funds and invited B.J. Palmer and his wife, Mable, to come to Portland and put on a special course of instruction. This probably was an activity of State association. Equipt with slides and illustrations, the Palmers spentten days of intensive instruction, to the gratification of all present. Dr. Anna Powell has the group picture of this class, including Dr. B.J. and Mable Palmer, taken July 24, 1908 by Davis of Portland.

In the Fall of 1908 the Pacific College of Chiropractic was founded. Dr. John E. Marsh united with several others to make up the new organization. Others participating in the founding of this new school were Dr. A.N. Briggs, Dr. N.J. Baxter, D.D.S., and Mrs. N.J. Baxter. In the Spring of 1909 Dr. W.O. Powell joined the organization and the following September was installed as its President. Mrs. N.J. Baxter held the office of Dean. The controlling financial interests were held by Dr. and Mrs. Baxter. Its is said that later some differences arose between Dr. Marsh and Mrs. Baxter, which resulted in Dr. Marsh withdrawing from the organization.

Dr. C. Sterling Cooley, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Past President of the N.C.A., is the source of some historical sidelights that fit into the picture at this point. Quoting Dr. Cooler: "Daniel David Palmer's experiences with chiropractic in Iowa are familar with all of you. I need not dwell on the details of the prosecution which finally brought about his imprisonment on a charge of practising medicine and surgery without a license. It is enough to say that, by the time he left prison, he had lost all his worldly possessions- his school, his library, his oestological specimens and most of his money."

Continuing Dr. Cooley's quotations:

"It is not at all to his discredit that he wished to leave the scene of his misfortune. He followed his brother (Thomas J. Palmer) into Oklahoma Territory, arriving May 29, 1906. According to the brother's autobiography, he and his wife were on their way to the Pacific Coast. Dr. Palmer did not proceed immediately to the Pacific Coast. He took advantage of the booming condition to rebuild his shattered fortune, in the grocery business in Medford, Oklahoma. With the road of fortune lying ahead straight and smooth, he elected to take the winding, rugged by-path of therapeutic pioneering. He perfected some of his theories and skill while still a merchant in Medford."

" I believe it was the latter part of 1907 that he sold his store in Medford and moved to Oklahoma City where, with another able chiropractor, Dr. Alva A. Gregory, opened a chiropractic school. In spite of the success of the school, Dr. Palmer was determined to carry the banner of chiropractic to the Pacific Coast. About 1909 he moved to Portland, Oregon., where he began the publication of a monthly magazine, "The Chiropractic Adjuster." It was in 1906 that the Portland Printing House Company published his book, " The Art, Science and Philosophy of Chiropractic."

During the early days of chiropractic practise in Oregon Drs. John E. and Eva Marsh took turns in visiting some of the smaller towns where they carried on a practise for some two or three months at a time. Early in the year 1910 Dr. Marsh came to Prineville, Oregon for a three month's stay. It was at that time that the writer met Dr. Marsh and received special instruction in osteology and the art of adjusting. Having previously enrolled in an extension course from the National College of Chicago, in Mechano-Therapy, Dr. Marsh's course of instruction and encouragement to persue further study, led to enrollment in the Pacific College of Chiropractic in September 1910.

After registering at the Pacific College of Chiropractic, the writer called at the school operated by Dr. D. D. Palmer in a building just off S. W. Washington Street toward the Multnomah Athletic Field. It was a small school on the second floor which he, apparently, operated with little help. It is believed that he operated this school until sometime in 1912.

Dr. John E. La'Valley reports that he graduated from the D.D. Palmer College of Chiropractic October 5, 1909. Dr. La'Valley together with Wm. G. Hoffman and Daniel Brown, founded the Peerless College of Chiropractic, in Portland, in June or July 1910. After graduating a class of seven in 1912 the Peerless College was merged with the Pacific College and the name was changed to the Pacific Chiropractic College. Dr. W. O. Powell continuing as President with Dr. J. E. La'Valley on the faculty. According to Dr. Anna Powell, the 1912 class referred to above, included such names as: Dr. Augusta Wehoffer, Dr. Daniel T. Brown and Dr. and Mrs. Wm. G. (Hazel) Hoffman. Dr. Hoffman is now deceased while Dr. La'Valley in this year 1960 is eighty eight years of age and resides at 5840 N.E. 16th Ave., Portland. While Dr. La'Valley has referred to the Peerless College as a continuation of the D.D. Palmer College of Chiropractic, it is not quite clear what he meant. Perhaps what he meant was that it was a continuation of the type of chiropractic instruction he received from the Old Master.

There were 29 in the old P.C.C. Class of 1910 and 1911 and little is known about their status at this time. There was a Helen Long in the class who may or may not be alive. Dr. W. H. McMahon, Dr. Frank Mapes and Dr. Mable Bacon are known to be deceased. Dr. Sadie E. Wolf, now deceased, may have been a member of this class.

Dr. Eva Marsh passed away in 1912 or 1913., and Dr. John E. Marsh in 1938. Dr. Marsh had offices in the Fliedner Bldg., for many years and left a widow from a second marriage, Bessie, who lives at 3554 S.E. Long Street, Portland 2, Oregon.

Of those founders of the Pacific College of Chiropractic, Dr. A. N. Briggs is deceased as is also Dr. Wm. O. Powell, who died in November 1949, age 81. Nothing is known as to the whereabouts or status of Dr. and Mrs. N. J. Baxter, who originally came from New York.

In 1915 the first Chiropractic Examining and Licensing Board was formed. Appointed upon this Board were Dr. Alonzo B. Calder, of Oregon, City; Dr. Geo. Hoye, President, of Portland and Secretary Helen Bock of Portland.

This is a very sketchy outline for the first chapter of Oregon Chiropractic History, but will have to serve as the basis for Chapter I until others may be able to fill in the missing links. June 15, 1960.