

The earliest Prairie college of physicians: The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba

JB Morison MD

Former Registrar, The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba.

The early days of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba can be divided into the following four periods:

- The Manitoba Medical Board established by the first Manitoba Medical Act in 1871.
- The first five years of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba established under the second Manitoba Medical Act in 1877.
- The second five years under the above act commencing in 1882.
- The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba and its 'Council' established under the third Manitoba Medical Act in 1886.

1871

When Manitoba became a province in 1870 it had a population of only 25,000. There had been doctors here for many years but it is not certain how many were here in 1870. However, they were influential.

Dr John Christian Schultz, age 31, was born in Ontario and first came to Manitoba in 1860. He may not have actually graduated in medicine. The facts are cloudy and it is not even clear that he ever practised medicine. He was a trader and ran a drug store. He opposed the provisional government set up by Louis Riel in 1869 and refused to

give up the government supplies stored in his warehouse. He was forced to surrender and was taken prisoner on December 7, 1869. Schultz escaped in January 1870 and made his way to Toronto, where he urged the government to send troops to the Red River. This resulted in the dispatch of the Wolseley Expedition. Schultz was elected Member of Parliament for the Lisgar Constituency in 1871. He later became a Senator, and then Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba.

John Harrison O'Donnell, age 33, was born in Ontario and arrived just in time for the Riel uprising. He joined Schultz in the defence of his warehouse and was taken prisoner, but was later released. As a justice of the Peace he made out the warrant for Riel's arrest upon the arrival of the Wolseley expedition. He was a member of the Upper House, or Legislative Council, of Manitoba, which existed from March 1871 to January 1876.

Curtis James Bird, age 33, was born in Red River and was the son of a Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company. He received his training in Guy's Hospital, London, England. O'Donnell described him as -a man of culture and refinement, and a clever diagnostician, was [of] a retiring disposition, but his general reading had been broad, and his judgment always for the best". He was a member of the legislature and was for a time speaker of the House.

Henry Septimus Beddome, age 42, came to Rupert's Land in 1852 after graduating from Guy's Hospital, London. He practised first as Hudson's Bay Company surgeon at York Factory and then in the Red River Settlement. At 42 he was the senior member of the original Provincial Medical Board.

Dr David H Harrison, 28, arrived from Ontario in 1869 in time to side with Schultz in the defence of the Schultz warehouse and was taken prisoner by the Riel forces. He became a member of the legislature and eventually Premier for 23 days. He worked as a banker and did not register until April 30, 1890.

James Spencer Lynch, age 30, graduated in Toronto in 1864 and came to Manitoba in 1868. He ran for Parliament in 1871 but was not elected. He did not register until October 1876.

William Cowan was another doctor who was a Hudson's Bay Chief Factor, and was acting head of Upper Fort Garry at the time of the Riel uprising.

These men were certainly involved in the development of medical licensing, which began with the passage of The Manitoba Medical Act in the first session of the new Manitoba Legislature. The Act was proclaimed on May 3, 1871. It established 'The Provincial Medical Board of Manitoba', rather than a college, and also named the first five members of a 'Board of Governors' as well as the President, Secretary and Treasurer, who were to hold office for five years. Registration with the board became compulsory for all practitioners; the penalty was \$20 for each day of practice without a license.

Any person possessing a medical degree or diploma from any university or college in Her Majesty's dominions was entitled to registration. All others were to be examined by the Medical Board.

The original office holders named in the Act, with their ages, are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Original office holders named in The Manitoba Medical Act, proclaimed May 3, 1871

Name	Age	Position
John Harrison O'Donnell	33	President
Curtis J. Bird	33	Secretary
John Christian Schultz	31	Treasurer
Henry Septimus Beddome	42	
JB Campbell		

I could find little about the fifth member, Dr JB Campbell, not even his given names. Dr Ross Mitchell states that he remained only a few years in the colony.

There is little trace of the activities of this original Medical Board. There are no minutes or correspondence surviving.

In the archives there is a typewritten list of doctors in Manitoba up to December 1899 prepared by my predecessor, Dr Max Macfarland. It lists 390 physicians, 29 before the first Medical Act, and 361 licensed between May 3, 1871 and December 12, 1899. The five original members named in the Act are listed as registering on May 3, 1871. Only three others were registered in that year: Drs Roy, Paré and Turver are listed as registered in 1871. There was one registered in each of 1872 and 1873, none in 1874, four in 1875 and one in 1876, a total of 15 during the five years of The Manitoba Medical Board. The Henderson city directory states that the population of Winnipeg in 1876 was 4000.

1877

A second Medical Act was passed and assented to on February 28, 1877. This Act changed the name to 'The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba'. It continued the Medical Board of Manitoba as the body to carry on the affairs of the College. The Medical Board was to consist of one member from every medical college in the province (in 1877 there were none), and five members to be elected by the duly registered members of the profession. The election was to take place on the second Tuesday in June for a term of five years.

The first correspondence on record is dated October 16, 1877 and is signed by Dr JS Lynch as Registrar. Letters of November 19, 1877 addressed to Drs William Cowan, Alfred Codd, David Young and JH O'Donnell call a meeting of 'The Medical Board' to be held in Dr Lynch's office on November 30 at 11:00 Am. Presumably these, along with Dr Lynch, were the five elected under the new Act. Only O'Donnell was a holdover from the appointed board of 1871.

The archives contain a bound volume of a few letters handwritten by Dr Lynch, but other than this little remains of the activities of this board.

1882

In 1882 the second five-year Medical Board was elected under the 1877 Act. At this time Dr Lynch was elected President, David Young Vice President, A Codd Treasurer and AH Ferguson Registrar.

Minutes from June 1882 onward remain. The Registrar, Dr Ferguson, had registered on May 13, 1882. One wonders whether his hand was responsible for the great increase in activity or recording of activity.

Up to 1882 there had been very few registrations, usually fewer than 10 per year and sometimes only one or two. In 1882 there were 44 registrations, a level never again achieved in the 19th century. As there was no great population burst in those years this must have included a vigorous sweep by the new broom.

During the period from 1882 to 1886 six separate examinations were set up for graduates of United States schools, including one in September 1882 for the first woman registrant, Lilian Yeomans, aged 21, a graduate of Michigan. It appears that the five members of the board formed the examining committee and were paid \$25 each for each examination. All six of the candidates passed, although two had a supplemental examination a few days after the first before passing.

A resolution of the board on December 13, 1883 recognized the proposed Medical School as a private enterprise, but stated that the Board's responsibility was to "guard carefully the curriculum of studies to be taught by it".

1886

The third Medical Act passed in 1886. This replaced the Medical Board with a council to be composed of:

- three members chosen by the Manitoba Medical College (this was to lead to a problem in 1892);
- three members chosen by the licensed practitioners in Winnipeg;

- three members from the federal electoral district of Selkirk;
- three members from the federal electoral district of Marquette;
- one member from the federal electoral district of Provencher,
- one member from the federal electoral district of Lisgar.

Elections were for two-year terms. Dr Lynch, who was the only holdover from the previous Medical Board, became the first president under this new Act.

Dr JS Gray, age 37, was one of the Medical College representatives on Council and became registrar, a post he was to hold for 30 years. Dr Gray taught gynecology at the Medical College and also operated a private women's hospital just south of the present YmHA building on Hargrave Street, Winnipeg. He was one of the original members of the Medical Council of Canada in 1912.

The 1886 Act also established the University of Manitoba as the sole examining body in medicine in the Province of Manitoba.

A major activity during this period seemed to be tracing down doctors to register, sometimes involving several letters. Between 1887 and 1894, 66 individuals were written one or more threatening letters for practising without a licence. Forty-six were eventually registered and 20 were never registered. Most who registered did so within a month or two, but one registered over three years later. Some of these went on to become prominent members of our early medical community, including Dr EW Montgomery, who registered in February 1893 after three letters, the first in April 1892. He later became a professor of medicine and in 1928 the first Minister of Health in the province.

Another who had not registered was Henry Byers of Selkirk. He had immigrated to Selkirk and married there. He had studied medicine in England but had not completed his degree. In 1883 he went to Lethbridge, where he became the 'first physician' between November 1883 and November 1885. After Lethbridge he returned to Selkirk and in 1887 charges of practising without a licence were dropped when he agreed to leave town. He was again practising in Selkirk without a licence in October 1888. Byers went back to school and graduated from the Manitoba Medical College in 1890; he practised for over 40 years in Melita.

There was considerable resistance to registering Dr McTavish of Morris, a graduate of The New York Homeopathic College. Dr McTavish was able to have a private member's bill passed through the legislature in May 1888. Even so, he was not registered until November 1888.

One of the men who was never licensed carried on extensive correspondence with Dr Gray. He claimed his father in Scotland was holding his diploma as security for a loan, which he could not afford to pay back until he got into practice.

Dr Vanstone of Wawanesa wrote to Dr Gray complaining of a Dr Whyte who had set up practice in opposition. Dr Gray replied to the effect that Dr Whyte had the same right to practise as Vanstone, which was no right at all. Dr Vanstone registered 16 days later. Dr Whyte registered six months later.

There were also actions against advertising and quacks.

As noted above under the 1886 Act, three members on the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba were appointed by the Medical College. Under the University of Manitoba Act the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons regularly passed a resolution naming these three councillors to the Council of the University as well as, in a separate resolution, five of its councillors from outside the faculty. Thus, there were at least eight doctors on the Council of the University.

In the fall of 1892 Dr JW Good questioned the election of Dr James Patterson as one of the Medical College representatives to the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba. Dr Good, then Dean of Medicine and former Medical College representative on the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba since 1888, questioned the election of Dr James Patterson from the faculty in his place. Dr Good claimed that he had been reelected. There is considerable correspondence between the University Council, the

Registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba and Dr AH Ferguson of the Medical College. The University Council had appointed a committee of Canon Matheson, JA Aikens Esq, Reverend Father Drummond, Isaac Pitblado Esq and Dr Laird to inquire into the matter. The Executive Committee of the College tried to get Dr AH Ferguson to appear before it bringing all minutes and proceedings of any meeting pertaining to the election of the representatives of the Faculty to the College Council. Ferguson, who had once been Registrar of the Medical Board, refused to attend. He said that the Executive Committee had no authority to hold an inquiry, that the Medical Act gave only the Council this authority. There is no indication of how the matter was resolved.

Acknowledgements: My primary sources were the papers deposited by the College with the Manitoba Archives. These consist of handwritten minutes and correspondence of the earlier days and subsequent typed documents. The handwritten documents are at times difficult to read, because the writing is illegible and some parts are faded. The earliest copies of outgoing letters are reproduced on thin paper by a process known as letter press.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manitoba Library Association. *Pioneers and Early Citizens of Manitoba*. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1971.

Mitchell R. *Medicine in Manitoba*, 1954.

O'Donnell, JH. *Manitoba As I Saw It, From 1869 to Date*. Winnipeg: Clark Brothers, 1909.

Provincial Archives of Manitoba. *Selected minutes and correspondence from the files of The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba 1871-1892*.

This article was published in the "Prairie Medical Journal" Volume 65 Number 3 Fall 1995