

## *Nashville Dental Society*

Nashville was a fountainhead of organized dentistry in Tennessee, and in other parts of the South. Three dental schools started there, as far back as 1878, and their coming followed strong efforts by the Nashville Dental Society which had been founded on Oct. 10, 1865, largely through the efforts of Dr. John Fouche, later of Knoxville.

The first president of the Nashville Dental Society, Dr. William Henry Morgan, became the first president of the Tennessee State Dental

Association in 1867, and the society's first secretary, Dr. James C. Ross, then of Lawrenceburg and later of Nashville, was TSDA's first secretary. Dr. Morgan was one of the founders of the Vanderbilt University College of Dentistry and was founder of the Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry.

Regular meetings were held through 1872, but activity apparently lapsed until 1879, after which there is an unfortunate 52-year gap in recorded history.

In 1931, the organization was called the Sixth District Dental Society, in keeping with the organization of societies according to congressional districts, but after two subsequent changes in district numbers, the matter of a name became confusing. Finally, the members went back to the organization's original name, the Nashville Dental Society, in 1955. The society includes members in 14 counties.

For a while in the 1930's, the society met twice a month; then monthly. Among a wide variety of subjects included in papers of that depression decade, prosthetic dentistry seems to have been discussed most often, for whatever reason. Money was scarce: dues were dropped in 1933 from \$5 to \$2 a year for members living in Davidson County, from \$3 to \$1 for those practicing in other counties. Those who already had paid the higher dues got no refunds; the treasury didn't have that much left. But everything was inexpensive in those pre-inflation times: the dinner at meetings cost 50 cents.

*Some Highlights of the 1930's:* An educational program on radio and in newspapers was turned down for reasons of ethics . . . Funds were voted set aside for the indigent in accordance with the ADA program . . . A sick and accident insurance program was accepted . . . The legislature was persuaded not to eliminate the dental section of the state health department . . . A finance company for dentists and physicians was endorsed . . . The Community Chest was supported . . . The society was urged to work in the National Dental Survey . . . Socialized dentistry was fought . . . A liability insurance program was endorsed . . . Concern was voiced about children fracturing anterior teeth on water fountains . . . Dental health was organized into school programs . . . The L. G. Noel Fund was instituted locally, later to become a state enterprise . . .

Since the 1930's, the Nashville Dental Society has built on the foundations erected during that significant period. Programs during the 1940's seemed to present a broader concept of dentistry,

with more emphasis on dental image, practice management and dental economics—but there were many scientific topics. World War II—and the nearby military installations—influenced the society's activities strongly. Military dentistry was topical, and many clinicians were university professors, physicians and leading dental educators. Obviously, the need for dental manpower in national defense overshadowed many other things.

*Some Highlights of Later Years:* The first woman president, Dr. Celia Rich, was installed in 1944 . . . Radio broadcasts were started for telling the public of the value of good dental health . . . Congress was memorialized in 1949 not to enact legislation containing the principle of compulsory health insurance . . . The society endorsed in 1950 the auxiliary's project for mobile dental health units to be used in the care of indigent children . . . Later in 1950, fluoridation of the Nashville-Davidson County water supply was endorsed, along with the topical application of sodium fluoride to the teeth. This program succeeded, and continues today . . . A bank plan for financing dental patients was accepted in 1952 . . . A program to give certification to local dental assistants was endorsed . . . A public-relations man was introduced in 1960 . . . The Clarksville Dental Society was recognized as a branch of the Nashville Society . . . Davidson County opened a dental clinic for indigent adults . . . Dr. W. H. Allen, dean of the school of dentistry of Meharry Medical College, became the first Negro member of the society on March 8, 1966 . . . The constitution and bylaws were revised in January, 1967 . . .

Perhaps a better way can be found for recording and preserving minutes and reports in the future. It might ease the task of preparing a history for the 200th anniversary.

Counties in the Nashville Dental Society: Cheatham, Davidson, Dickson, Hickman, Houston, Humphreys, Macon, Montgomery, Robertson, Stewart, Sumner, Trousdale, Wilson, and Williamson.