

A Historical Review of Study Club Development In The Pacific Northwest:

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Every person has two educations—that which is given to them, and the other, that which one gives to themselves. Of the two kinds, the latter is by far the most valuable. Indeed, all that is most worthy in a person, they must work out and conquer for themselves. It is that that constitutes our real and best nourishment. What we are merely taught seldom nourishes the mind like that which we teach ourselves.

— Jean Paul Richter (German Novelist) 1763

The Origins of The Pacific Northwest Study Clubs

The Study Club concept and movement began with the iconic and world-renowned father of modern dentistry, Dr. G. V. Black. Dr. Black actually had little formal education, yet he aspired to and became one of the most influential scholars in modern dentistry. At the age of seventeen he decided to study medicine at his brother's office, Thomas G. Black who was a practicing physician at Clayton, Illinois. After 4 years of study (1853-56) gaining knowledge in anatomy and medicine from his brother, he began to study dentistry under J. C. Speer who was a practicing dentist at Mt. Sterling, Illinois. The young Black assisted Dr. Speer in his work for only a few months and with the little formal education and the knowledge of basic sciences that he accumulated, he set up his own dental practice at Jacksonville, Illinois in 1856. Dr. Black, however, was an irrepressible seeker of knowledge and his inquisitive mind gave rise to an incessant barrage of inventiveness and ideas. He would go on to become one of the most prolific researchers and teachers of the dental profession. In 1908, Black's monumental work, *Operative Dentistry*, appeared in two volumes, which was the magnificent culmination of his long and fruitful labours. From 1864 to 1915 he had produced more than 1300 papers and addresses on scientific and professional subjects and in 1915 he produced his third volume of *Operative Dentistry*. Being a natural born teacher, he analyzed the problems of education and teaching and devised curriculums to improve the dissemination of knowledge. In 1897, he became Dean of Northwestern University Dental School where he served in this capacity for seventeen years. Dr. Black ultimately became the foremost leader in dental education and helped build one of the leading Dental schools in the world.

In 1898 in St. Paul, a group of Minnesota dentists inspired by Dr. Black, prevailed on him to travel to Minneapolis to share his knowledge and his ideas and with them. Dr. Black agreed and so began the mentorship of a small group of leading individuals

which would become the first known dental study club in North America. This study club was oriented to fostering a collaborative effort for the improvement of clinical dentistry and personal development. The Black study club was both innovative and stimulating, giving conceptualization to the idea of organized and personalized continuing education. The Black Study Group stimulated a novel and fresh inspiration to practitioners of dentistry to seek out refinement and excellence in their profession.

Word of the Black study club began to spread and in Seattle the desire to develop a study group based on the G. V Black's program took root. In 1907, on the 26th of October, a very small group of enthusiastic dentists gathered together to organize the "Odontological Study Club Of Seattle". Their objective was to follow the G.V. Black model of study club activity. Eventually, the group was reorganized and renamed the "Seattle Dental Study Club". After struggling for considerable time without a definitive leader, Waldon Ferrier, who was a star member of the Seattle Study Club was appointed in 1923, to be their "Master of Clinics". Dr. Ferrier was influenced and greatly impressed with the philosophy and techniques of Dr. G. V. Black as well as with F. K. Wiedelstaedt. While thoroughly believing in the philosophy of Dr. Black, he came to believe that Dr. Black was too radical in applying his principles of "extension for prevention" and that he unnecessarily destroyed a great deal of tooth structure. Doctor Ferrier spent much time searching for a more conservative application of the principles of Dr. Black. In this pursuit, he was highly successful, developing new instruments, clamps, spreaders, as well as more conservative concepts of tooth preparations based on his preferred restorative medium, gold foil.

Dr. Ferrier and his Study Club became renowned, in large part because of the high discipline he imposed on himself and on his followers. Ferrier would appoint himself or one of his handpicked instructors to teach. He would lay down strict obligations for membership. These obligations were clear, well defined and enthusiastically enforced. Regular attendance at meetings would be a member's first priority as would be the willingness to operate and submit one's clinical work to criticism from both the mentor and the membership. As time went on he continued his study club work, helping personally to organize many more clubs in Seattle, Portland, and in Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia. Each Study Club would have twelve members only, (considering the way Dr. Ferrier presided over his groups his students were sometimes referred to as "disciples"). He personally supervised the training of approximately 200 clinicians during his career. Most of those who came under his influence adopted his values of idealism, dedication and devotion. Dr. Ferrier's approaches to operative dentistry were now receiving national and international recognition and more and more dentists wished to become associated with his concept of personalized instruction and self-improvement. Each group, as it came into being, would be an exclusive group, committed to the highest standards, and very aware that they had been admitted to a new ensemble of twelve operators where membership was a distinct privilege.

Ferrier's influences fostered a whole subset of Study Clubs, in turn mentored by dedicated and talented clinicians. Vancouver, Canada was one place fortunate to have a pioneer Ferrier Gold Foil Study Club. It was initiated by Dr. Ferrier and assigned to be mentored by Dr. Ellsperman, one of Ferrier's original twelve Study Club members. Owing to failing health, Doctor Ferrier retired from practice in 1950 after which he divided his time between his followers in British Columbia, Seattle, Washington and Southern California. He died on November 11, 1965.

Although his star shone brightest, Dr. Ferrier was not the only leader in the region. There were also other existing great operators and teachers in the Pacific Northwest who influenced Ferrier, such as Weidlestaedt, Hollenbach, Searle and others. The Pacific Northwest at that time was becoming a breeding hotbed of talent that was moving into a second generation. It was Dr. Gerald Stibbs who rose to the top of that talent pool.

Dr. Stibbs became renowned in his own right. He helped to establish and then served as the first Chairman of University of Washington's Operative Dentistry Department. He chaired there from 1948 to 1970. It was Dr. Ferrier who was influential in posting Dr. Stibbs into U. of W. During his tenure, Dr. Stibbs was a popular leader who managed his department with great effectiveness. Among his personal mentor influences were Dr. Ferrier, Dr. Hollenbach and Dr. Weidlestaedt. Dr. Stibbs actually was a Canadian, born in Schrieber, Ontario. After graduating in Dentistry in 1939 he set up a mobile dental clinic in British Columbia before beginning his academic career in Washington State. He also assumed the mentorship of the Vancouver Ferrier Gold Foil Study Club from Dr. Ellsperman and became involved with others.

Until his death in 1993 at the age of 82, Dr. Stibbs continued to be a mentor to three principal dental study groups, two in Vancouver, Canada, one of them being the original Vancouver Ferrier Study Club, originally mentored by Dr. Ellsperman, the Walter K. Sproule Study Club and also the George Ellsperman Gold Foil Seminar group in Seattle. Each of these Study Clubs comprised the traditional twelve-member structure model of Dr. Ferrier. The protocols remained the same: attendance, discipline and the performance of operations with welcome critique of and by each other. Dr. Stibbs's influence garnered widespread support, fostering many other famous clinicians inside and outside of Seattle.

So it continues to present day with Dr. Richard Tucker, from Ferndale Washington, a protégé of Dr. Ellsperman and Dr. Stibbs, who has carried on the legacy, organizing the Study Club model of twelve members as initiated by Dr. Ferrier and following the same standards of excellence and commitment and self-exposure to critique. Dr. Tucker assumed the mentorship of the original Vancouver Ferrier Gold Foil Study Club from Dr. Stibbs, as well as many other Ferrier Affiliated groups.

Presently, Dr. Tucker's influence outreaches even beyond what Ferrier and Stibbs could accomplish with their impressive Study Club movements. Amazingly, over

seventy Richard Tucker Study Clubs exist today and which are actively thriving worldwide. His students carry on the enthusiasm and message developed by the path of those dedicated mentors before him.

The pedigree of mentorship is well embedded in the dental history of the Pacific Northwest, and perhaps nowhere else is it established quite as well. Today there are scores of hands-on mentoring programs in Washington, Oregon and in British Columbia. The objectives are a continuum; the sharing of knowledge and the inspiration to become better through constructive criticism.

While continuing education is readily available and Study Clubs abound, for the most part they are based on the lecture model, some of which can host hundreds of audience members. It is however, unique and special to have the personalized one-on-one, mentor-to-student and student-to-student interaction that was structured so successfully by Dr. Black and Dr. Ferrier. Personalized mentorship stands out as a different kind of dedication in today's complexity of broad-spectrum conference technology and Web broadcast continuing education.

References:

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