

MEDICAL PHILATELY-35

Tooth and Mail: Dentistry on Stamps (Part 1)

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The art of dentistry has a long and distinguished history, and today, the profession is held in high regard by the public, earning both respect and admiration. Many countries have issued stamps dedicated to dental science and oral health, commemorating dentists and significant dental milestones. These stamps honor the profession and the individuals who have devoted themselves to providing exceptional care, making a meaningful difference in people's lives.

ANCIENT HISTORY



St. Apollonia is recognized as the patron saint of dentists and those suffering from tooth ache. She was a martyr who suffered during a local uprising against the Christians. Her tooth was pulled out and she was burnt at stake. The Bolivia stamp was issued during Christmas in 2001 and the Austrian stamp was issued to commemorate World Congress of Dentists in 1882.



The **Temple of the Tooth** in Kandy, Sri Lanka is home to the most sacred relic of Buddhism—the tooth of Lord Buddha. This holy relic is kept in a golden container and is displayed in a grand procession once a year on Buddhist holidays.

THE FIRST DENTAL INNOVATORS:



Hippocrates (460 – 370 B.C.) – Greek physician, known as the Father of Medicine. He was the first physician in history to establish medicine as a science. **Andreas Vesalius**, (1514 - 64) Belgian anatomist who wrote *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* which is the most influential books on human anatomy. He described the teeth as having a pulp chamber and being made of the same substance as bones, and also noted the presence of blood vessels and nerves within the tooth. **Avicenna or Ibn Sina** (980 – 1037) – The greatest Islamic physicians who wrote 'Canon of Medicine' which chronicled all medical knowledge till then.

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Maimonides (1135–1204) Jewish scholar, and physician who wrote several medical books, including ‘Regimen of Health’ on hygiene which included tooth care. **Leonardo da Vinci** (1452–1519) was a pioneering anatomist of his time, meticulously studying and sketching the human body. He was the first to distinguish between molars and premolars. **Albucasis** (1050–1122), one of the most skilled surgeons of the medieval era, dedicated several chapters of his textbook to dental extractions, periodontal diseases and the treatment of dental arch deformities. He also designed various dental instruments and crafted artificial teeth from animal bones.



Paracelsus (1493–1541), alchemist and physician, introduced chemical pharmacology in medicine, including dentistry. He provided one of the earliest prescriptions for toothache relief. **Marcello Malpighi** (1628–1694), the founder of microanatomy, discovered capillaries and in 1675 described the structures of enamel and dentin, comparing them to the bark and crown of trees. **Dr. Johannes Purkinje** (1787–1869), a Czech physiologist, advanced microscope techniques and made significant contributions to histology, including his studies on dentinal tubules.

Anthony van Leeuwenhoek (1632–1723), the pioneer of microscopy gave a description of tooth canals. He asserted that the tooth is composed of extremely narrow, transparent tubes.



DENTAL INNOVATORS THROUGH TIME



Ambroise Paré (1510–1590), the Father of Modern Surgery, was a French barber-surgeon. For tooth extraction, he used a root exposor, a pusher, and a pelican. To fill cavities, he used materials such as lead or cork. **Johann Eisenbarth** (1661–1727) was a traveling surgeon who treated loose teeth, toothaches, and fitted artificial teeth. Tooth extractions were an integral part of his practice. **Pierre Fauchard** (1678–1761), regarded as the ‘Father of Modern Dentistry’. In 1728, he authored his landmark work **Le Chirurgien Dentiste**. He introduced orthodontic techniques for the correction of malocclusion.



Paul Revere (1735–1818), a key figure in the American Revolutionary War was a trained dentist who specialized in replacing

teeth and crafting surgical instruments. He became the first person to practice dental forensics when he identified a man by his teeth. **Charles Wilson Peale** (1741–1827) experimented with dentures carved from ivory and conducted various studies on dental techniques. He was the first person to create porcelain teeth by heating them in a kiln. He crafted dentures for George Washington, in which the upper and lower pieces were connected by steel springs.

William T. G. Morton (1819–1868) is recognized as the pioneer of anaesthesia. On September 30, 1846, he successfully performed a painless tooth extraction on Mr.



Eben Frost after administering ether, demonstrating its effectiveness as an anesthetic. **Dr. Doroteo Espiritu** (1897–?) was a dental doctor credited with inventing a type of floss holder, contributing to advancements in oral hygiene.



Dr. Egidio Lapira (1897 – 1970) is the first dental surgeon in Malta. For his work in founding the Dental Association of Malta in 1944 and in establishing the faculty at the Royal University, Egidio Lapira is considered the Father of Maltese Dentistry. **Dr. Nicasio Etchepareborda** (1857–1935) Argentinian dentist who played a key role in the establishment of the Dental Faculty in 1892. He was also the first professor at the School of Dentistry in Buenos Aires.

DENTAL INSTRUMENTS IN STAMPS



serve as a base for dental instruments and accessories.

Dental units encompass various types, including traditional, portable, compact, ergonomic, and advanced integrated units, each designed for specific purposes. The 1983 Grenada stamp issued on Commonwealth Day shows a simple unit while the Qatar stamp issued on WHO anniversary shows a more complex one.



The **dental probe and mirror**, essential diagnostic tools, have roots in ancient civilizations using rudimen-

tary reflective surfaces and evolved significantly, with the modern dental mirror appearing in the late 19th century and probes are used for periodontal disease diagnosis since the 1920s. Dental mirror was introduced by Bartholomeo Ruspini in 1800.



The Peru stamp issued in 2005 to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of Stomatology Academy of Peru shows a dentist using the mirror and probe. The stamp issued by Croatia in 2022 to commemorate the Centenary of Higher Education in Dental depicts the numeral 100, a dental inspection mirror, and a dental college.



The stamp issued by St Helena portrays a dentist adjusting a denture with the use of a hanging **motor trimmer**. Liechtenstein stamp of 2008 depicts Ivoclar **Vivadent Bluephase** which are advanced dental curing lights designed for efficient and reliable polymerization of light-curing dental materials.

(To be continued...)

END NOTE

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