


stetrics and Gynecology in the School of Medicine. Webster held this position for a year and a half, nine months of which were spent in the hospitals and pathological laboratories of Berlin.

First Assistant to Edinburgh Professor

In 1880, Professor Alexander Simpson, who had succeeded to the chair of Midwifery and Diseases of Women on the death of his uncle, Sir James Y. Simpson, offered Webster the post of first assistant with teaching privileges. These obligations were very heavy but Webster also assisted Dr. Simpson in his practice and kept up his research work. In the spring of 1894 he had a severe attack of influenza with bronchitis and laryngitis. This recurred in the following winters and he was advised to leave Edinburgh and live in a dry climate. He gave up his work with much regret and returned to Canada in the summer of 1896.

While in Edinburgh he made many acquaintances and friends, including the mother and the nurse, Cummy, of his hero Robert Louis Stevenson. These experiences he embodied in his "Edinburgh Memories" privately printed in 1944.

Practice in Montreal

He returned to Shediac and while there was induced by Principal Peterson of McGill to start practice in Montreal with the hope of becoming assistant gynecologist at the Royal Victoria Hospital. The position fell vacant in the spring of 1897 and he secured the appointment under Dr. William Gardner. He met with almost instant success but an attack of sepsis caused him to lose four months' work in 1898. A result was that he introduced the practice of wearing rubber gloves. In this he was a pioneer in Montreal and also later in the Presbyterian Hospital in Chicago.

The Chicago Period

In the spring of 1889 Webster received an invitation to become Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology in Rush Medical College in affiliation with the University of Chicago. This position carried with it the headship of the same departments in the Presbyterian Hospital and the Central Free Dispensary. John D. Rockefeller, Sr. had poured millions of dollars into the creation of the University of Chicago and Webster rose to the challenge of the new University.

Shortly before leaving Montreal he married Alice Lusk, daughter of Dr. William Thompson Lusk, chief of obstetrics at Bellevue Hospital, New York, and half sister of Dr. Graham Lusk, the nutritionist. The young couple spent a week in Chicago before going to Europe where he purchased equipment for his new department from a considerable sum given to him for that purpose.

Work in Chicago began in the autumn of 1889. From the first he was very busy with teaching, operating and administration. A departmental museum was necessary and with the aid of his artistic wife he made many plaster casts and watercolour drawings. He pursued original research and published several textbooks and many scientific papers, one of which "The Human Placenta" was translated into German, the second to be so honoured. Prenatal report of his first work, "Fetal Production and Ectopic Gestation", published in 1892 with numerous original drawings, is the most surprising work. This work led to the inclusion of his name by Fielding Garrison in his "History of Medicine" among those who have contributed to our knowledge of this subject.

Dr. Fred O. Priest of Chicago gives a vivid sketch of Webster, the surgeon, in the operating-room of the Presbyterian Hospital. Webster was a perfectionist who drove his assistants almost as hard as he drove himself, and in consequence more interns left his department than any other. From fear of respiratory infection, he had the habit of draping himself in a blanket between operations and this earned for him the title of "Chief Standing Bull". One day the Chief’s caustic comments caused a red-haired Scottish resident to pick up a weighted speculum with obvious intent, only to be checked by Webster with, "Come, come, my boy, no damned fool in the O.R. is enough." On another occasion a gowned anaesthetist exclaimed: "Dr. Webster, if you’ll attend to your end of the patient I’ll attend to mine." It is only fair to add that when this young man went into private practice, Webster turned over many obstetrical patients to him. Once freed from the pressure of the operating-room, the Professor became his courteous self again.

With his colleague, Dr. Baldy, he devised his operation, known by its joint names, for correcting uterine retroversion. Among his residents were N. Sproat Heaney, Carl H. Davis and Edgar Allen, whose names are known to all gynaecologists and who continued to be on affectionate terms with him.

The stress of professional work left little time for social life. He and his wife were attracted by the beauty of Oriental art and through the years they acquired a notable collection of Japanese prints and paintings, a small part of which is now in the Provincial Museum at Saint John. A larger part is in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Most of this collection however was later sold. Mrs. Webster’s New York relatives and friends were very generous in supporting her efforts to build up the collections of applied art in the New Brunswick Museum. Dr. N. Sproat Heaney in his obituary of Dr. Webster writes that he was an authority on Japanese prints and that when he left Chicago his collection was excelled only by the one in the Metropolitan Museum.

In 1916 while at Shediac preparing to return to Chicago he was seized with a violent gallbladder infection. He was admitted to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal and was operated upon there. It was a close call but after convalescence at Shediac and the Bahamas he was able to resume work early in 1917. In that year the United States entered World War I and Webster wrote to his old friend, the Director of Medical Services, to offer his services. The Director thanked him and commended that when the time came to deliver Belgium and confine Germany he would gladly send for him. During the war years many of the young men enlisted and the scarcity of staff enabled extra strain. In the autumn of 1919 he wished to resign but was urged to take a long holiday and to
Interest in Aviation

After the first World War there was keen interest in aviation and many flying clubs were started. The eldest son, John Webster, was a skilled and enthusiastic aviator who in July 1931 went to England to compete for the King’s Cup for amateurs. In spite of the rain and fog he did very well although he did not win. On August 10, 1931, Webster received word that John had crashed while flying near Montreal. Two hours later another telephone message came that he had died after leaving the operating-room. He left a young wife. To perpetuate his memory the Websters presented the Webster Memorial Trophy to the Department of National Defence. This trophy was designed by his friend Tait McKenzie and was to be held annually by the amateur aviator who had made the greatest contribution to Canadian flying.

In July 1933, Dr. Webster was in charge of the arrangements for the reception at Shediac of the Italian Air Armada under General Balbo. On July 13, the 24 huge flying boats en route from Italy to Chicago touched down at the airport. General Balbo and his two colonels were entertained at dinner in the Webster home. Next morning the armada took off for Montreal and returned on July 25 after visiting Chicago and New York. It left Shediac the same morning. General Balbo presented a silver medal to his host.

The Railway Commission

In November 1931, Dr. Webster was appointed a member of the Royal Commission of six members, headed by Mr. Justice Lyman Duff of the Supreme Court, to investigate railway conditions in Canada. The Commission heard testimony travelled across Canada and after long discussion was able to complete a report to the Government on August 27, 1932, which rejected the proposal for unification of the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways.

The New Brunswick Museum

In the winter of 1929 Dr. Webster was one of a group who interested themselves in the erection of a historical museum in New Brunswick. The legislative assembly incorporated “The Provincial Museum” and made a grant of $150,000 towards the erection of a building. The City of Saint John gave $100,000 and a site was chosen on Douglas Avenue in that city. The Federal Government gave assistance from a National Fund set up to provide work for the unemployed during the depression. On June 27, 1931, Dr. Webster was one of the speakers at the laying of the foundation stone. Later he transferred to the completed museum his collection of 7000 items of Canadiana valued at over $1,000,000. Among the items was Barry’s painting of “The Death of Wolfe” and a portrait by Copley of Sir Brook Watson, the first Agent-General of New Brunswick. Mrs. Webster’s Department of Arts and Crafts is also stored in the Museum. Dr. Webster established a Department of Canadian History as a separate unit, and a Foundation to provide curators for the two departments.

Fort Beauséjour

Probably the museum dearest to his heart was that at Fort Beauséjour in the National Park of that name. It stands as a memorial of “old, far-off unhappy things and battles long ago”, when Acadians, English and Americans fought for control of the strategic area of Chignecto lying between the Bay of Fundy and Northumberland Strait. Largely because of Webster’s writings concerning the forts of Chignecto, a handsome stone museum was built at Fort Beauséjour in 1935 and he was appointed honorary curator. A wing was added in 1939 and in 1948 a third wing, which is named the John Clarence Webster wing.

Historical Writings

The literary and historical publications of his second career number 50. Of these, five deal with Wolfe. In 1928 he wrote “A Historical Guide to New Brunswick” which went to seven editions. Perhaps the most important of his works is No. 35, Dierville’s “Récitations du voyage du Port Royal de l’Acadie ou de la nouvelle France” translated by Alice Webster with introduction and notes by Dr. J. C. Webster and pub-
the Tyrrell Gold Medal in 1934 for historical research. From the University of Cincinnati he received the D.Sc. degree in 1920, and from Mount Allison, Dalhousie, Edinburgh and New Brunswick Universities the LL.D. degree in 1923, 1926, 1938 and 1941 respectively.

The Webster Family

Mrs. Webster took a keen interest in Canadian and especially in Maritime history. Mr. John Stevenson spoke of the library she prepared for school teachers at Moncton and the art magazines she donated to the schools of Westmorland County. Mr. L. S. Loomer, managing editor of the *Atlantic Advocate*, wrote: "she was a charming, gracious and intellectually vital person. People liked her very much". Research has been made to the eldest son John who met death in the crash of his plane. The daughter, Janet, was very musical and went to France for special training. While there she married an artist, M. Camille Boy, and they had three children. In the Second World War he was made prisoner and because of some remarks about Petain in a letter, she was put into a concentration camp and transferred from one camp to another before dying of malnutrition before the end. Her fellow prisoners said she was absolutely devoted to the musical activities and was an accomplished pianist. Under date of April 6, 1952, the late Dr. W. W. Francis wrote to Mrs. Webster of Janet's "brave and moving last letters" written to her parents. The original letters are in the possession of her brother, Dr. W. L. Webster. In sending duplicates for deposit with the McGill University, Mrs. Webster wrote that they are of general interest because "they present a vivid picture of rural life in France during the German occupation. Though claimed by the French as one who died 'pour la Patrie' she was, after all, a Canadian whose character matured as a student at the Edgar and Cramp School in Montreal".

The second son, Dr. William L. Webster, is a distinguished physicist who spent nine years, from 1923 to 1932, at Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge, under Lord Rutherford. During the war he served with the Ministry of Supply on war scientific research. In 1943 he came to Washington with the British nuclear team as administrator but not as a nuclear scientist. He now lives at Shediac.

The Close

So, "loved at home, revered abroad", Clarence Webster spent his last years in his hospitable home. When he was mortally ill, which of his two careers he found more rewarding, he always answered: "Neither. I have found as keen satisfaction in instructing students, in carrying on medical research, in the triumphs of the operating room, as in studying ancient documents, marking historic sites or developing historic museums." Some thought he was automatic but he was a perfectionist and drove himself hardest of all. Dr. D. C. Harvey, who as Provincial Archivist of Nova Scotia had long and intimate knowledge of him, said in his fine eulogy before the Royal Society: "there is a man who has remained the same modest unassuming scholar that he had ever been, ever eager to encourage colleague or student and rejoicing in the friendship of all whom he met". Mr. A. Kirk Cameron wrote: "re Dr. Clarence Webster of blessed memory". For many years when many motorizing families passed through Shediac, Mr. Webster asked them if they would like to see the Library at McCull, of which he is librarian. The Library of the Shediac Museum and the Library of the Canadian Historical Society have been most helpful, also my wife who read the manuscript and Mrs. Margaret Whiteneck who typed it.

October 1963

March 16, 1950, he had taken his regular morning walk and felt his usual self. He sat down for a rest and suddenly expired. So passed a man equally eminent in two honourable careers.

My gratitude goes out to those who have responded so willingly and have aided in this work: Professor J. Maclean, Thompson, University of Manitoba, suggested the theme and loaned the two first publications of Dr. Webster; Dr. William, two published photographs of his father; Mr. L. S. Loomer of Fredericton sent me a copy of the *Atlantic Advocate*, Mr. George McKeath of Saint John, curator of the Webster collection of Saint John, and the copy of the Atlantic Advocate, Mr. George McKeath of Saint John, curator of the Webster collection, sent copies of three lectures: Dr. D. Schalter Lewis and Mr. A. Kirk Cameron of Westmount, sent the necrology and the obituary, Mr. H. C. H. Smith, Q.C. of West Vancouver and Mr. H. C. H. Smith, Q.C. of Winnipeg, contributed reminiscences. Mlle. Cécile Désaulniers kindly sent a box of letters written in the library which are now in the Office to Dr. Webster which he sent to Dr. Webster, which is now in the Office to Dr. Webster. The Library at McCull, of which he is librarian, the Library of the Shediac Museum and the Library of the Canadian Historical Society have been most helpful, also my wife who read the manuscript and Mrs. Margaret Whiteneck who typed it.

REFERENCES

1. WEBSTER, J. C.: Those crowded years, 1863-1944; an octogenarian's record of work, Shediac, N.B. privately printed for his family, 1944.


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