

## ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY

In 1910, AUB introduced dental education to Lebanon by founding the first dental school in the Near East region. When the school started, Dr. Arthur Dray was its only professor and Dr. Amin Haddad his only assistant. It had no building nor proper equipment. At the memorial service for Dr. Dray on October 12, 1926, Dr. Iskandar Nasif stated: "At present, it has a fine building, an up-to-date equipment, and a well chosen faculty." AUB's President Dodge announced "for the first time the good news of the recognition of our Dental degree by the Board of Regents of the State of New York, and that the school is a "Class 'A' school ranked on the same level with any class 'A' schools in the United States of America." (Source: K. G. Tabourian, *Al Kulliyyah* 13 (1), Nov. 1926).

## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF MODERN DENTISTRY AT BEIRUT

By Dr. Bayard Dodge, MA, LLD, DD

President of the American University of Beirut

In the University museum there is the lower jaw of an unknown man, who was probably a wealthy citizen of Sidon, before the time of Alexander the Great. He was so afflicted with Pyorrhea that a goldsmith of Phoenicia bound the six anterior teeth of his jaw with gold wire, to keep them from falling out. Gaillardot discovered a similar specimen in a tomb near Sidon and placed it in the Louvre. These examples of retentive prosthesis bear eloquent testimony to the fact that the dental art was practised along the Phoenician Coast, before the tribes of Northern Europe were civilized.

The records of the Arab and Ottoman periods tell us little about the art of dentistry. Seventy years ago, when the University was founded there were few good doctors and no true dentists in Syria. The town barbers extracted teeth with clumsy tools and a few mechanics tried to fill cavities.

The first concern of the members of the Beirut faculty was to improve the profession of medicine, but Dr. George E. Post became interested in the teeth and introduced a few methods of modern dentistry.

As the College was slowly growing in importance, the art of dentistry was making tremendous progress in the United States. It was natural for the members of the faculty to feel that they could not adequately improve the health conditions of the Near East, unless they could train some dentists to supplement the work of the doctors.

Finally in 1910, the Board of trustees invited Dr. Arthur Ryton Dray to organise a school of dentistry. He had been brought up at Beirut, where his father had been a mechanical dentist of the

pioneer type. He obtained the MD and DDS degrees at Philadelphia, which was the leading centre of dental education in those days. He was well qualified to undertake the task assigned to him.

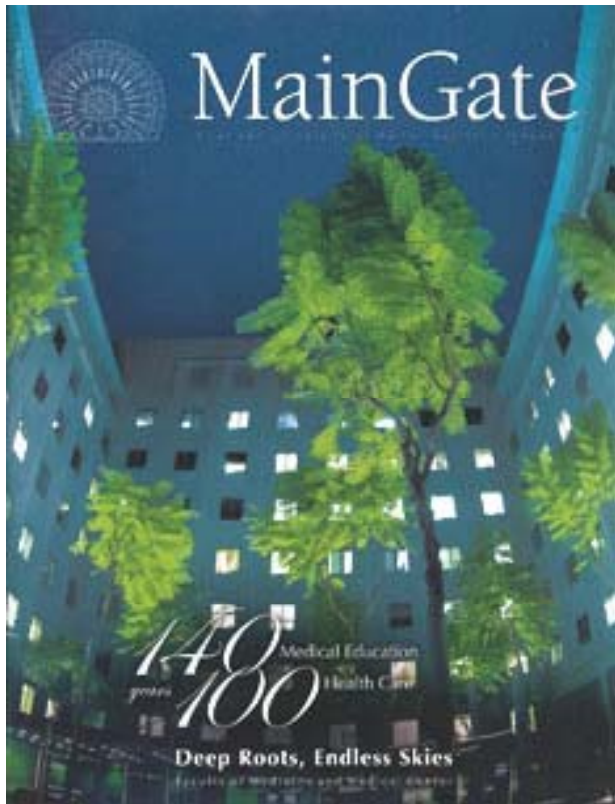
With the loyal help of Dr. Amin Haddad of Abeh, Dr. Dray opened up his work. When Dr. George E. Post died the embryonic school moved into his residence and the new enterprise started out in an auspicious way. Then came the great war and it seemed as though the school would be wrecked after only four years of existence.

Because of Dr. Dray's magnetic personality and an urgent need for dental work in the Turkish army, the School was not closed by the war. In fact it gained in prestige.

In 1925 Dr. Dray reorganised the School, so as to bring its academic standards up to the advanced requirement of the Regents of the University of the State of New York. The following year his life came to a tragic end, but the work of the School went on.

As we look back upon the work of Dr. Dray and the first quarter century of the life of the School of Dentistry, we are able to realize how much has been accomplished. There are one or two first class dentists in almost every town of the country. Skillful graduates of the School are practising in places as far away as Istanbul, Athens, Cairo, and Baghdad. Several graduates are professors in the dental school of the Syrian University at Damascus.

**As we look forward to another period of work, we realize that the task of the School is to give the people of the land an appreciation of the importance of scientific dentistry, so that standards will be raised, second rate dentists weeded out, and the profession elevated to a level in keeping with the progress of the modern world.**



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## In 1910 AUB founded the first dental school in the Middle East.

AUB's Division of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics was established in 2001, 61 years after the closing of the School of Dentistry, and included the first postgraduate training program in orthodontics in the Faculty of Medicine, an orthodontic residency. On May 31, 2007 the Karekin G. Tabourian Dentofacial Clinic, equipped with seven dental chair units and facilities providing for orthodontics and a range of other dental and maxillofacial disciplines, was officially named and inaugurated.