

The Angle collection

By David L. Turpin, DDS, MSD

memorabilia: Things or events worthy of remembrance and record. . .

Funk & Wagnall

Preservation of the past is near and dear to most orthodontists, especially when it has anything to do with Edward H. Angle, regarded by many to be the "father" of our specialty. Following Dr. Angle's death in 1930, memorabilia from his life have surfaced in a variety of locations to become what is now known as the "Angle collection." Two questions come to mind in this regard: is there anything of real value in this collection and if so, where should it be housed?

The present collection is stored informally in at least three different locations as well as in the homes of private individuals. It includes a number of priceless documents, such as the 100-letter correspondence with Dr. Brodie during Angle's last five years of life. Also included are 75 photographs, two motion pictures and detailed notes on the proceedings of Angle meetings since 1922. It is well-known that Dr. Angle's original office is already in the Smithsonian Institute.

As the individuals touched by Dr. Angle and his students become older, the impetus to centralize the collection of memorabilia grows. Responding to this movement, the Board of Directors of the Edward H. Angle Society appointed a committee to explore all available options. Their directive was to locate a facility where all materials would be maintained under accepted archival storage conditions. . . that they be preserved

in perpetuity and always be available to scholars for research and study.

Not to be overlooked in this effort, the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) passed a resolution in May of 1991 to "diligently pursue obtaining the archive records of the Edward H. Angle Society by providing appropriate assurance to the Society that these same records will be available to all orthodontists and maintained in a secure manner." In support of this stand, AAO President Robert Johnson states, "With

**"History is the witness that
testifies to the passing of time;
it illumines reality, vitalizes
memory and provides guidance
in daily life."**

—Cicero 106-43 B.C.

the purchase of a new building, the AAO central office will have additional space and the ability to properly manage and display these valuable archives."

The Edward H. Angle Society recently completed its one-year study and to the surprise of nearly everyone, found that the ideal facility already exists in the form of the National Library of Medicine, owned and operated by the United States Government. With this discovery, Drs. John Kloehn and Sheldon Peck visited the Nation-

al Library in Washington, D.C. and met with Peter Hirtle, Curator of Historic Documents.

According to Hirtle, the Library already has a large collection of historical materials relating to dentistry. In the orthodontic section they have eleven volumes of bound books by Angle in both English and German. They also have a large number of original articles by Dr. Angle. As resources were unveiled, the advantages of using the National Library of Medicine (NLM) as a repository for the Angle archival material became clear:

- The NLM stands second to none in its expertise in the collection, preservation and use of historical medical and dental documents and films. They have trained curators, the space, the time and the money to do a good job and are most willing to accept the Angle collection.
- The NLM is the largest center for historical research in the fields of medicine and dentistry in this country. Their inventories are the most widely catalogued in other libraries and research institutions throughout the country and because of this, material in the Library of Medicine is more likely to be used than it would be if it were placed in a smaller regional library.
- Because the NLM has such a large collection of historical materials in all fields of dentistry there is a great deal of overlap in historical research work which makes the entire collection more valuable.

The only disadvantage to selecting the National Library of Medicine as a repository for the memorabilia is that it is a general medical-dental library and not a specialty library. In actuality, this may not be a disadvantage at all.

With realization that the orthodontic specialty does not have to purchase special photocopy equipment and develop ways of storing letters and documents in acid free boxes, a decision by the Edward H. Angle Society was made easier. In its selection of the National Library of Medicine as the best facility for the Angle collection, the Board of Directors voted to produce copies of two films of Dr. Angle for display in the central office of the AAO. Of course, duplicates of most of the other materials will always be available for use in any way the American Association of Orthodontists desires. Hopefully, this decision will be honored for years to come.

Why haven't you written lately?

This page is supposed to be for you ...for your letters and comments, your compliments and complaints. It's your chance to respond publicly to the articles we print. As you sit down and read through this issue, I encourage you to take a few extra minutes to write down your response to one of the articles. If you agree with something an author says, let us know. If you disagree with something an author says, let us know why!

Send your letters to: Dr. David L. Turpin, Editor; *The Angle Orthodontist*; 1268 East Main Street; Auburn, WA 98002.

I look forward to hearing from you.

—Editor