



Catherine Morana

The Honourable Dr. Charles Valance Berryman

Berryman Street is two streets south of the ODA office in Yorkville.

Recently, staff discovered that the ODA has a historical connection to the quiet leafy green lane, which is named after the first recipient of our highest award.

There's a story recounted by author Stephanie Hutcheson in her book, *Yorkville in Pictures 1853-1883*, that states there was only one way to identify a true resident of Yorkville in 1876: you had to remember the case of the rather infamous Dr. Philbrick, who divorced his wife, but allowed her visiting rights to their dog, or you weren't a true "Yorkviller."

In contrast, Hutcheson described the Yorkville physician, Dr. Charles Valance Berryman, as a "loved and respected practitioner." Among his many accolades, Dr. Berryman (the namesake of Berryman Street in the Yorkville area of Toronto) was, in 1867, also the first person to receive an ODA Honourary Membership.

Dr. Berryman never actually lived on Berryman Street. The address of his first practice is listed as the Yorkville Hotel, on William Street, now Yorkville Avenue. He obtained his licence to practise medicine in 1857 from Victoria College, in Toronto, and would eventually return to teach at the faculty as a professor of materia medica (a branch of medical science that deals with the sources, nature, properties and preparation of drugs.)

In 1867, his friend and colleague, Dr. Barnabus Day, sought Dr. Berryman's help in gaining support for a dentistry bill to regulate the practice of dentistry in Ontario. Both Drs. Day and Berryman were medical doctors who were all too aware of the problem of "quacks," in both dentistry and medicine.¹ Dentistry was taught through apprenticeships and there was no licensing body. A common standard of instruction and regulatory

oversight was considered essential for the profession and patient safety. Medicine had two different licensing boards in Ontario and eight teaching institutions, and Dr. Berryman was a strong proponent of regulating that profession.

As a member of the Ontario Medical Council, Dr. Berryman was the first to petition the Council to support the Dentistry Act. Along with reformer Dr. John Rolph, Berryman and many other physicians signed a petition urging the Ontario Parliament to pass the Dentistry Act; the Act, successfully passed in March 1868, led to the creation of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario. Dr. Berryman served on the first faculty of the new college.

In 1869, Dr. Berryman was instrumental in the creation of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO), a central examining and licensing body for physicians in the province, and served on their first executive council.² He served there until 1880.

Dr. Berryman was born in Penzance, England, in 1830. He graduated from Oxford in 1850 and later immigrated to Canada. He spent several years dispensing drugs at his brother's apothecary business; in 1857 he earned a medical degree from Victoria College and in 1862, earned a master's degree.

After practising in Chatham, Ont., he joined the faculty of Victoria College, where he taught until the college closed in 1874. Dr. Berryman also served as second Reeve for the Corporation of Yorkville and was on staff at Toronto General Hospital.

Dr. Berryman also became known for his defence of feminist Dr. Emily Stowe, at her abortion trial in 1879, successfully testifying on her behalf against charges that she poisoned her patient. City coroner Dr. Philbrick (the prickly dog-sharer) later tried to charge Dr. Stowe with illegally procuring an abortion. His case unraveled as his bias against her became so evident, that Stowe was acquitted.³ It would seem that in questioning Stowe's ability to practise, Philbrick merely confirmed it. The CPSO gave Stowe a medical licence in 1880, the last year Berryman served on the board.

Dr. Berryman's health failed him shortly thereafter. He died on May 2, 1881, at age 51. His family was listed in the city directories until 1887; it is hoped that his relatives remained in Toronto long enough to witness the dedication of his street name. ■

With thanks to Pina Felletti, Ontario Medical Association, and Julia Stabile, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

References

1. *The Canada Journal of Dental Science*, Volume 1, No.3, August 1868, pgs. 86-87
2. University of Toronto archives, Accession No. 78-0070, Toronto School of Medicine, Annual announcement
3. "The Celebrated Abortion Trial of Emily Stowe, Toronto, 1879," Constance B. Backhouse, *CBMH/BCHM* Volume 8:1991

Catherine Morana is the ODA's Research Librarian and may be contacted at cmorana@oda.ca.