"The Lost Years" Revisited

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"The Lost Years" had just been published when additional material, sufficiently important to the story to share with readers, was made available.

The Davenport Democrat of 27 December 1903 published that B.J. Palmer had been called from Davenport to Grafton, West Virginia by Mr Moats, a prominent resident whose wife had been afflicted with a severe growth in her throat, making it impossible for her to eat any solid foods. In fact, all she had consumed for the past 7 months was milk. After 2 days of adjustments, she was well enough to travel to Davenport for further care and was able to eat more. The family physician said he was glad to have Dr Palmer rescue the case if possible. While in Grafton, B.J. also examined 78 patients who had gathered in the hotel lobby, sometimes working as late as 11 p.m.

It seems reasonable to assume that B.J. had spent Christmas in Davenport, probably with his future bride and parents-in-law of Milan, Illinois, before returning to West Virginia, where posters had been printed in Junior, Barbour County, stating that B.J. was coming to West Virginia for a few weeks to examine cases. Unfortunately data giving terms, dates and times have not yet been made available.

It appears that while B.J. was trying to keep the school viable by practising in West Virginia, D.D. Palmer was in Chicago, where he had placed an advertisement of an office location of Dr D.D. Palmer, Dr Oakley G. Smith and Dr Minora Paxson at 3210 Indiana Avenue, Chicago.

On 25 January 1904 an arrest warrant was issued for B.J. Palmer in the City of Phillipi, Barbour County, West Virginia, for practising without a licence. On the following day, 26 January 1904, B.J. paid a tax of $50 imposed by the Assessor of the Eastern District to the sheriff of Barbour County, entitling B.J. to practise as an "Itinerant Physician" in Barbour County from 26 January 1904 to 26 February 1904. This would have entitled B.J. to practise anywhere in Barbour County, including Phillipi, the county seat, as well as Belington, some 13 miles southeast, and also Junior, another six miles further south.

When the 1904 Annual Announcement of the Palmer School and Infirmary of Chiropractic stated, "Dr B. J. Palmer, secretary of the Palmer School of Chiropractic, Davenport, Iowa, without doubt, has the distinction of being the first chiropractor to legally receive a license, which he has in his possession, dated Jan. 26, 1904, granting him the privilege to practice chiropractic upon an equal basis with the M.D.'s," it was technically correct, as any itinerant practitioner, be it medical, osteopathic or chiropractic had to pay a tax within the jurisdiction of their intended temporary practice.

Moving east across the county line into Randolph County, West Virginia, B.J. applied to the Council of the City of Elkins for:

"...a license to practice his profession in the Hotel Randolph in said City from the 16 day of Feby 1904 till the 16 day of Mch, 1904. It appearing to the Council that he is a suitable person to conduct said business it is ordered that permission be granted him to procure a State License therefore."

This permission was granted on 25 February 1904, with payment of a licence fee of $50.00 and an Assessor's fee of $0.50, and properly receipted by the Assessor. The sheriff of Randolph County, F.C. Marshall, also granted a licence to B.J. Palmer:

"...as an itinerant physician, for practising his profession from the 16th day of Feb 1904 to the 16th day of Mar. 1904, upon payment of a license tax of $50 as required by Sec. 14, Chap. 150 of the Code of 1899."

This gave B.J. permission to practise not only in Elkins, the county seat, but also in Kerens, some 10 miles north-northeast, at the edge of the Monongahela National Forest, and at other locations within the county. He appears to have spent most of his time in Elkins, where he gave a public address at
State of West Virginia,

Randolph County, City of Elkins, ss:

At a meeting of the Council of said City of Elkins, held at the Council Chamber thereof on the ______ day of ______, 1904.

Upon the application of, for a License to Practice the Profession

in the State. Building on ______ in said City from the ______ day of ______, 1904 till the ______ day of ______, 1904. It appearing to the Council that he is a suitable person to conduct said business it is ordered that permission be granted him to procure a State License therefor.

Given under my hand this ______ day of ______, 1904.

License

Chalk's Fee

Assessor's Fee

Total

Received payment.

Receipt for licence tax in Elkins County. Courtesy Palmer College Archive.

Posten’s Opera House on 3 March 1904. Various questions had been raised in the Elkins press, and he proposed to answer them at this meeting, to which he had invited the local medical fraternity.

It would be interesting to know what charges were made by B.J. for his examinations and adjustments, and how this related to his expenditure of at least $150.00 in licence taxes, plus room and board for the seven weeks from 26 January to 16 March as covered by his licences, so that today’s practitioners could gain an appreciation of conditions of that era, now almost 100 years ago.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Glenda Wiese, archivist, Palmer College Special Collections, for making available items from the Index to the B.J. Palmer Papers, and hope that funds will be made available for the scanning or microfilming of these papers, as they are currently not available to researchers due to their delicate state.

REFERENCES