

Real Life Safety Heroes: Daniel David Palmer



To some, he was a visionary genius whose defiance of medical convention revolutionized the science of healing. To others, he was a dangerous and delusional quack.

Daniel David (D.D.) Palmer was born in what is now known as Ajax, Ontario in 1845. At age 20, he moved to Iowa and took up beekeeping and other ventures before settling into farming. But Palmer's true passion was science and natural healing. He opened a "magnetic healing practice" and got rich.

The Invention of Chiropractic Medicine

An avid reader and researcher, Palmer theorized that disease was the result of shifts in the spine that altered pressure on the nerves. Just about all diseases could be cured by manipulating the spine. The form of treatment Palmer would go on to invent would become known as "chiropractic" from the Greek words cheir, meaning "hand" and praktos – or "done."

On September 18, 1895, Palmer performed his first chiropractic procedure. He purported to restore the hearing of a janitor who had been deaf for 17 years by adjusting one of the patient's vertebra. Palmer saw chiropractic not merely as a medical but a religious undertaking. The self-described "fountain head" of chiropractic, he claimed to be like

“Christ, Muhammed, Joseph Smith, Mrs. Eddy, and others who have founded religions.”

Palmer and his theories were controversial. Palmer was prosecuted and jailed for six months in 1906 for practicing medicine without a licence. He died in 1913 but the school he founded in Davenport, Iowa in 1897, the Palmer School of Cure has survived. Today it's known as the Palmer College of Chiropractic.

The art of chiropractic has prospered and is today the most widely practiced form of alternative healing in the U.S. There are also over 9,000 licensed chiropractors in Canada. Nearly 5 million Canadians have received chiropractic services at least once.