

# Dentistry duo fixed Albion teeth

**OVERLOOKED ORLEANS:** Albion dentist patented improvement for false teeth

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**ALBION** — On Jan. 26, 1875, the first electric drill was patented by George Green of Kalamazoo, Mich.

Although the device revolutionized dentistry, it fails to negate the fact that so many of us dislike our regular visits to the dentist.

An advertisement, taken from the 1869 Orleans County Directory, shows an advertisement for Doolittle & Straight in Albion. The two dentists, located on the second floor of the Granite Block on the southwest corner of North Main and West Bank streets, operated this business during the 1860s and 1870s.

Horace Doolittle, at the time of his death, was believed to be the oldest practicing dentist in New York State at the age of 86. Born and raised in Malta, N.Y., Doolittle relocated to Rochester at the age of 18 to study dentistry in the office of Dr. Ansel Morgan for a period of two years. In 1850, he moved to Albion and opened a practice with Dr. Stanton Briggs and continued that partnership for 14 years before Briggs retired. Continuing his practice alone, Doolittle finally entered into business with Dr. John A. Straight who was clearly just as much interested in

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## Doolittle & Straight,



### DENTISTS!

OFFICE IN THE GRANITE BLOCK,  
Over Orleans County National Bank; Entrance on  
Bank Street, (First Stairs.)

**A L B I O N, N. Y.**

*All Work done in the best manner and on Reasonable Terms and fully guaranteed. Teeth Extracted without Pain, by use of Chloroform, Ether or Narcotic Spray.*

HORACE B. DOOLITTLE.

JOHN A. STRAIGHT.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

**An old advertisement seeks customers for the Doolittle & Straight dental practice in Albion.**

patenting new creations as he rubber material to hold false teeth in place. According to the patent, the rubber could be cut and trimmed to create a better fit in the patient's mouth.

On Nov. 23, 1869, Straight patented a "Plate for Artificial Teeth" which utilized a soft, ter fit in the patient's mouth.

of Albion. The advertisement, paid for by a dentist in that location, noted that this particular office was given special permission from Dr. Straight to perform dental work using this patented process.

Horace Doolittle and John Straight were pioneers in the dental profession, not only because of their early arrival in Albion, but because the majority of advancements in dentistry occurred in the 1850s and 1860s. This was an era of experimentation, when dentists attempted to use tree resin and molten metal to fill teeth while ultimately settling on gold foil. Early dental offices relied on spittoons for collecting blood and spit from procedures, which were then cleaned by hand. The first receptacle specifically designed for dental use came in 1867 with the "Whitcomb Fountain Spittoon" patent, utilizing a constant stream of running water to assist with sanitation.

In the earliest years of dentistry in the United States, dentists used animal teeth, bones, and occasionally human teeth from cadavers (although rare) to fashion false teeth for patients. The 1850s marked a period of refinement in the creation of dentures, including Straight's 1869 patent. Of course the most significant development came

with the use of anesthesia in dental procedures.

This particular advertisement calls attention to the use of chloroform, ether, and narcotic spray to alleviate tooth pain and aid with extractions. Other advertisements from dentists in the area, including Northrop & Shearer who operated out of the second floor of the Empire Block on the northeast corner of North Main and East Bank streets, mention the use of "Pure Nitrous Oxy'd Gas" to extract teeth without pain. Doolittle & Straight offered several options for patients, including the less-popular sulfuric ether which caused vomiting and left patients feeling nauseated. Other dentists relied on rhigolene spray to freeze the gums to extract teeth and relieve the pain associated with dental abscesses.

After Straight retired from the practice due to illness, he relocated to Hartford, Connecticut and eventually to Chicago, where he died on November 24, 1893. According to his obituary, he invented a type-setting machine that "made him a large fortune." Doolittle continued his practice until his son, George P. Doolittle, completed school and entered into the family business. Horace Doolittle died Oct. 20, 1915.

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