C. Edmund Kells Museum

Located at:
Louisiana State University
School of Dentistry,
New Orleans, LA 70119
USA

Photographs by Kavas H. Thunthy BDS, MS, MEd
Charles Edmund Kells, DDS
1865 - 1928

• It will probably never be known who actually made the first dental radiograph in USA.
• It was either one of these three:
  – C. Edmund Kells, DDS, of New Orleans
  – William Herbert Rollins, DDS, MD, of Boston
  – William James Morton, MD, of New York
C. Edmund Kells 1865 - 1928

Kells’ dental office was in the old Maison Blanche building, Canal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
Dentist -- Inventor -- Scientist

By Ida D. Jeffries

FIFTY years ago, he was hailed as a genius in the dentistry field for his contributions to the art of X-ray dentistry and the design of dental equipment which were standard equipment in modern dental offices today. Only six years later, he was the first person to receive a United States patent for his invention of an electric dental drill. His name is Edward H. H. Kelly, the great American dental inventor. His work is here.

Kelly was born in 1863 in a house on Canal Street near where the Boston Club now stands. He grew up to be an extraordinary person. His early childhood was not all bright. Living what he considered a poor existence, he grunted and struggled, using his intelligence and determination to get ahead. As a young man, he earned money by showing magic tricks. His first dental equipment was a machine he invented which he called a "Kelly's Electric Drill." This machine was so successful that it became the standard tool for dentists. It was a large, heavy piece of equipment that had to be manually operated.

In 1886, Kelly's X-ray machine was introduced. This was a revolutionary innovation that allowed dentists to see inside teeth and diagnose dental problems more accurately. However, the machine was not widely accepted at first because it was expensive and complex. Kelly's X-ray machine was an extraordinary invention that revolutionized the field of dentistry.

Kelly's work in dental training was also significant. He established the first dental training school in Canada and in the United States. He also wrote several books on dental practice, including "Kelly's Dental Drill Manual," which is still considered a classic in the field of dentistry. Kelly died in 1935, but his legacy lives on through his contributions to the field of dentistry.

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