

The Schreiber Wood Project: Late 19th and Early 20th century Dental Hygiene Practices in Ontario

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We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home of many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Introduction

- In the late 19th century, a British-Canadian Family, the Schreibers, built three houses, Iverholme, Lislehurst, and Mount Woodham, on what is now the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) campus.
- For the past 10 years UTM's archaeological field school has been examining artifacts under the umbrella of the Schreiber Wood Project. Through this project, undergraduate students have been collecting and documenting artifacts from two sites, AjGw-534 and AjGw-535 (Iverholme), including dental hygiene products from the late 19th and early 20th century.
- This poster examines changes in dental hygiene from the late 19th to early 20th century and a shift towards the manufacture and use of Canadian-made products by settlers in Southern Ontario.

The Dental Hygiene Products

- Toothbrushes:** One complete and several fragments of bone toothbrushes. None of the toothbrushes have any bristles. Most of the fragments are the head of the brushes. Stock (head) of the brushes are of different shapes and sizes but some similarities can be noticed among brushes from the same site (Figure 4).
- Toothpaste:** One metal toothpaste tube.

Table 1: Dental Hygiene Products

	Complete	Fragments	Total
Toothbrushes	1	9	10
Toothpaste tube		1	1



Figure 1: Dental hygiene artifacts

Sourcing the Schreiber Wood Dental Products

Dental hygiene product manufacturers have been branding their products since the 1840s (Mattick, 2010). Various products from the Schreiber Wood collection had imprints on them indicating slogans, manufacturer, and location of manufacture:

- “Extra Fine,” Paris** – Slogan indicating the quality of the bristles. Brush manufactured in Paris, France.
- Kent, England** – Kent is a brush manufacturing company based in England established in 1777. They have been manufacturing toothbrushes since the 1800s. “KENT ENGLAND” is imprinted on a fragmented toothbrush with parts of the neck and handle indicating import of dental hygiene products from England.
- Hutax** – Produced by the Canadian Oral Prophylaxis Association. “HUTAX” is engraved on the handle of the complete toothbrush.
- Colgate** – Colgate was one of the first commercial manufacturers of toothpaste tubes in the early 1900s. Before being packaged in tubes Colgate tooth paste and powders were sold in glass jars. The shape at the top of the tube cap and the date of the site indicates that it was tube of Colgate ribbon dental cream.



Figure 2: Slogans and Manufacturers: Colgate toothpaste tube (Top Left); toothbrush handle with “Extra Fine Paris” engraved (Top Right); Hutax toothbrush (Bottom Left); Kent toothbrush neck (Bottom Right)

HUTAX

- Hutax was a brand created by The Canadian Oral Prophylactic Association in 1906.
- Toothbrushes and toothpastes were designed and produced by the association under the brand – Hutax (a term coined from two Greek words meaning health and mouth).
- A Toronto based dentist Harold Clark presented a paper to the Ontario Dental Society about the composition of dentifrices on the market which were affecting the patient's dental health (Gullett, 1971).
- Andrew J. McDonagh, who had already been investigating dentifrices and the shape of toothbrushes available in the market created The Canadian Oral Prophylactic Association in response to Clark's presentation (Gullett, 1971).
- The primary objective of the organization was to produce toothbrushes and toothpaste that would improve patients' dental health and which dentists could recommend.
- Initially the Hutax brushes were manufactured in England, but Lyman Brothers & Co. Limited, drug manufacturers based in Ontario, manufactured Hutax dentifrices.
- Hutax brushes were sold by Hargreave Brothers in Toronto (The Canadian Oral Prophylactic Association, 1912).
- Proceeds from Hutax products went to development and research of dental hygiene in Canada.

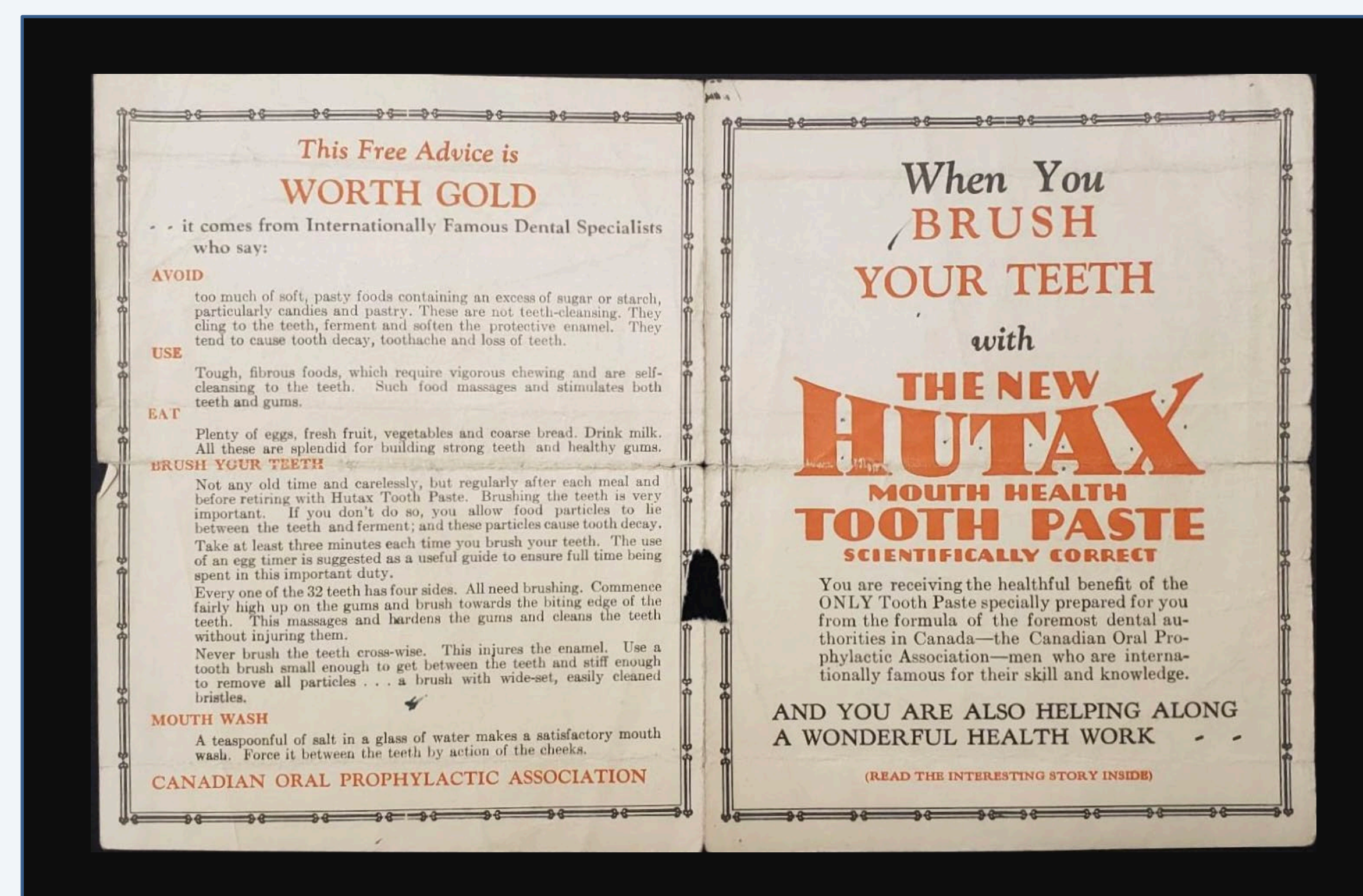


Figure 3: HUTAX brochure from the Harry R. Abbott Dentistry Library

Variation in Design

- The stock and neck of the brushes from separate sites are different (Figure 4).
- Features of toothbrushes from the same site appear more uniform.
- Toothbrushes marked ‘a’ and ‘b’ from AjGw-534 (Figure 4) appear to have similar necks and are more well defined than toothbrushes from AjGw-535 (Figure 4, c and d).
- Brushes c and d in Figure 4 have similar stock shape and are wider than any of the brushes from AjGw-534.
- The brush marked ‘a’ is a Hutax brush designed by The Canadian Oral Prophylactic Association. They also ordered toothbrushes from Kent to be made according to their design (Toothbrush b in Figure 4) to meet demand in Canada (The Canadian Oral Prophylactic Association, 1915).
- The tapered head of the stock seen in toothbrushes from AjGw-534 indicates that brushes from the site were of the prophylactic type, the first scientifically designed brush in North America (Mattick, 2010).
- Based on their shape, toothbrushes from AjGw-534 are more recent than those from site AjGw-535 (Iverholme), which was not in use for as long a period of time since it burnt down in 1913.
- Presence of The Canadian Oral Prophylactic Association products in the more recent site indicates a shift towards the use of Canadian products.



Figure 4: Similarities between toothbrushes from AjGw-534 (Left); Similarities between toothbrushes from AjGw-535 (Right)

Discussion

- By the early 20th century there was a shift towards dental hygiene products manufactured in Canada.
- The Canadian Prophylactic Association started initiatives to produce toothbrushes and toothpaste in Canada and work to increase awareness and conduct research about dental health in Canada.
- The Schreiber Wood Project is ongoing, and future finds of additional dental hygiene artifacts may further clarify our understanding of dental hygiene trends in the late 19th and early 20th century.

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