

General Hospital was established in 1819, at a time when the population of Toronto was less than 1,200. The outstanding figure among them, who for thirty-five years was chairman of the Medical Board and the recognized leader of the profession, was Dr. Christopher Widmer. Resigning his commission in the service and undertaking civil practice in York in 1815, at a time when the medical needs of the population could no longer be properly cared for by the surgeons attached to the garrison, for many years he had practically a monopoly of the practice of the town, and until his death in 1858 his name appears in connection with every movement for advancing the welfare of the profession. When Dr. Widmer began practice there were only about forty regularly qualified doctors in the province. He was one of the founders and first President of the Medico-Chirurgical Society of Upper Canada, established in 1833. A perusal of the minutes of the Medical Board during his thirty-five years as President indicates his broad grasp of medical politics, and illustrates with what constancy, courage and military precision he directed its proceedings. In speaking of him, Dr. Osler says: "One picture on the canvas of those early days lingers in the memory, illustrating all the most attractive features of a race which has done much to make this country what it is to-day. Widmer was the type of the dignified old army surgeon, scrupulously punctilious, and in every detail regardful of the proprieties of life." Dr. Christopher Widmer has therefore justly been called the Father of Medicine in Ontario. He and his associates on the Medical Board were early and vigorous advocates of the necessity for providing for the medical education of those desiring to enter the profession in the province, and they were largely instrumental in securing the establishment of a medical department in King's College when that institution began operations in 1844. Tories by instinct and association, they had an antipathy to everything American, born, no doubt, of the Revolutionary War, perpetuated by the influence of the United Empire Loyalists on the politics of Upper Canada, and intensified by the experiences and memories of the War of 1812. This ever-present fear of American influence was one of the chief reasons continually urged on the Government of the importance of establishing a medical school in Upper Canada, so that our students might be educated at home, without their loyalty being exposed to the possibly too democratic atmosphere of New York and Philadelphia.

Between 1830 and 1840, however, with the gradually