

Fred W. Fitch's Message to the Associated Master Barbers of America, November 1925

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Every good barber shop today caters to the ladies trade. They are the chief source of income of thousands of shops. They are bringing dollars into the barber shops where formerly the quarters straggled in. Barbers who have not taken advantage of the tremendous possibilities in the ladies trade must wake up or fall by the wayside. The most prosperous shops in America are those that cater to the ladies and the back numbers are those that consider the barber shop a place for men only--as if a dollar is any less dollar because you receive it from a woman!

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... Whether the barbers like it or not, whether the beauty operators like it or not, the barber shops and the beauty parlors are merging into one profession and nothing in the world can stop it. Those of you who have the vision and the foresight to see this development and align yourselves with it, will be the pioneers of the new profession and will reap the greatest harvest...

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... You are confronted with the choice of becoming skin specialists and professional men or remaining barbers and ordinary laborers. If you cling to the razor and the shears, you will become public servants and one of the lower classes. If you rise to the opportunity now ahead of you, you will become professional men and one of the higher classes.

New Name Needed

It seems to me that one of the principal obstacles in the way of the merging of the barbers and beauty operators into one profession and becoming skin specialists, is the lack of a suitable name to describe the new profession and to apply equally well to barbers and beauty operators. What is needed is a name that will weld together those who now practice under the conflicting titles of barber, hairdresser, chirotonsor, beauty culturist, tonsorial artist, etc. These names are all inadequate. They build up a wall between the various divisions instead of welding them together. They confuse the public. The name barber is in disrepute. It suggests the Police Gazette and the unsanitary shop. The name chirotonsor is awkward and meaningless and so is the name tonsorial artist. The name beauty operator and the name hairdresser are too limited in their meaning...

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... Thus I have taken a lesson from the history of the barber profession and applied it to the barbers of today. The lesson is that you must specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of skin

and scalp troubles if you are to become professional men. This is your particular field and in following this field you will achieve success...

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The great lesson to be learned from the history of the barber profession is the lesson of specialization. The barbers who attempted to be surgeons and dentists as well as barbers, became lowly laborers. Now, an opportunity is at hand for the barbers of America to become professional men by joining with the beauty operators and becoming skin and scalp specialists. The lesson of specialization applies with even greater force at the present time to the barber supply dealers. The unadvertised and questionable preparations being foisted on the profession by manufacturing barber supply dealers, constitute the biggest menace and obstacle in the path of progress.

However, the final responsibility rests with you. You master barbers of America have your future in your own hands. Take heed of the past in building for the future.

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This completes the message I have brought to this Convention. Whatever wisdom I have gathered in thirty-five years of association with the barber profession has entered into the preparation of this message. If what I have said will in some small way help to steer the course of the barber profession into higher channels, I will feel amply repaid.

My best wishes to every one of you.

Fraternally yours,
Fred W. Fitch