Herbert Miller was born in Ontario, Canada in 1864. He was only five years old when he crossed the Canadian border with his parents, two sisters and one brother to live in St. Louis, Missouri. After completing his early education, he attended the Missouri Dental College in St. Louis. But before finishing his degree program at MDC, he decided to study at the medical school of Washington University. In 1885, he earned his degree in dentistry and also graduated with an M.D. from the same school in 1887.

Dr. Miller came to Portland in 1891 and set up an office at SW 13th Avenue and Morrison Street in The Oregonian Building, where he practiced for fifteen years. He later moved to the new Marquam Building between 6th and 7th Avenues and Morrison Street. Purportedly, Miller was the building’s first occupant. Fortunately he quit his practice after just one year and moved out of the building. In the early morning hours of November 21, 1912, a portion of the building began to collapse due to shoddy materials and workmanship. The
rest of the building was demolished before its certain demise. After sixteen years in private practice, Dr. Miller turned his ambition and efforts to education.

Originally, dental education in the Pacific Northwest was provided by only one dental school, the Tacoma College of Dental Surgery founded in Tacoma, Washington in 1893. The school moved to Portland in 1899. Right on their heels, the Oregon College of Dentistry incorporated that same year. Both schools admitted students simultaneously and after a tumultuous first year, the two schools merged in 1900. The University of Oregon Dental School originated from the merger of these two rival schools.

In 1897, before coming to Portland, the Tacoma College was housed in a decent building, had graduated a modest 17 dentists and had been admitted in 1897 as a member of the National Association of Dental Faculties. However, like the Medical Department of Salem’s Willamette University, the school moved to Portland to offer more clinical opportunities to its students. An unfortunate turn of events for the Willamette school turned out to be providential for the Portland newcomer.

The Willamette University Medical Department, established in Salem in 1867, was a pioneer in medical education in the Pacific Northwest. It made a valiant effort to found a branch medical school in Portland in 1878. In hopes that the larger city would provide greater educational opportunities for students than the smaller town of Salem could afford, they built a large and ornate Victorian facility on Northwest 15th and Couch in 1886. But due to unforeseen circumstances, the school was unsuccessful and moved back to Salem in 1895.

Willamette vacated its building in Northwest Portland and the Tacoma school moved in; they changed their name to the North Pacific Dental College and soon after opened their doors. That first year, the college offered a three year series of courses and was authorized to confer the degree of Doctor of Dental Education is no small achievement... His name will always stand out in the history of dentistry in Oregon.”

As to the school, historian and dentist, Claude Adams wrote in 1956, 

"... the future dental college of Oregon carried the blood and substance of the two pioneer colleges, incorporating the best of both in its make-up... With rivalry now eliminated and with an eye single to one objective, the School took on new life and vigor which was soon evidenced by an increase in enrollment and in the number of students graduated." [5]
Surgery. In 1900, the first class of five graduated. All of the graduates had entered North Pacific after completing their first two years in Tacoma. The Oregon College of Dentistry, incorporated in 1898, was founded by a group of Oregon dentists, including Dr. Herbert C. Miller, D.D.S., M.D. The school opened with a noteworthy number of faculty and matriculates on October 3, 1899. The opening was well publicized in the local newspapers. Dr. Miller was named Dean and Professor of Oral Surgery and Orthodontia. Oregon could now boast two schools of dentistry: the Oregon College of Dentistry and the North Pacific Dental College were both in operation at the same time for one year.

However, the Oregon College had not yet been recognized by the National Association of Dental Faculties. During the school's first year, the faculty was aware that a membership in the NADF was necessary to their future success. When they were visited by a committee from the Association, they put on their best face, courting and entertaining them with the finest lodging and food and drink that Portland could afford, including a sightseeing tour of the city in a livery rig pulled by a team of horses. Not surprisingly, membership was unconditionally granted.

Competition between the schools was palpable. Both privately owned schools wanted the sponsorship and recognition of the University of Oregon. Dean Miller and a representative for Dean Norris R. Cox, D.D.S., of North Pacific, Dr. George Chance, stood before the Regents of the University to plead their case. Consequently, the University chose not to recognize either school. During this time, the relationship between the schools was characterized as nothing short of animosity. This feeling was carried by students and faculty alike. The ill-will became a public matter, and local newspapers readily picked up the story.

Two years later, Dr. Miller suddenly passed away. He had won numerous awards and held significant positions in dental associations. An editorial written in the *Journal of Oregon State Dental Association* in 1945 at his retirement reads: "Dr. Miller had been the pilot which has guided the ship through stormy seas as well as in fair weather. To have been successful for forty-four years and to have finished with an institution acceptable to the State System of Higher Education."
"Quarrel over a College: Local Dentists have a Monkey and Parrot Time!" The American tale goes something like this: The owner of a monkey and a parrot returned home to find his monkey decked out in green and red feathers. Soon the parrot showed up with nothing but one tail feather left. With all of the dignity he could muster the parrot said, "Oh, we have had a hell of a time." It seemed obvious that there would be one clear winner arise from the dispute.

This hostility turned into violence among the students. As reported in the Oregonian, one such student, Walter Derby, left the Oregon College to attend the North Pacific College. He made repeated visits to OCD and began to brag about the superiority of NPC, which greatly annoyed both students and faculty. Derby claimed that he was there to visit only because he wished to return. Angered, seven students threw him into a coffin and painted his face with asphaltum. In court the students asserted that they had laid him on a dissecting table and carefully covered him with a towel as to not soil his clothes. Derby maintained that they stripped him and painted his entire body, as well. As rumor had it, faculty tried to intervene; the police arrived, resulting in the arrest of demonstrator Dr. Henry Meyers, along with the seven students involved. Derby held that it was Meyers who had called for the paint and brush. Some accounts report that Derby was actually thrown into a vat of formaldehyde floating with cadavers. Thirty-eight of Derby’s classmates made to march on the OCD but were intercepted by the police before they could do further damage. [4]

For the next year, enmity continued until the schools merged in 1900. The schools were in agreement on at least one matter: The population of the city of Portland could not sustain two dental schools. A merger was planned: Dr. Miller, it was reported said that the Oregon School absorbed North Pacific, however, other accounts document that the colleges simply merged, giving credit to no one in particular.

Dr. Cox, current dean of NPC, was named the first dean of the newly formed North Pacific Dental College. The two schools combined their efforts in the building on 15th and Couch, where modern equipment was installed and clinics, offices, lecture halls and laboratories were created. In 1901 the articles of incorporation were confirmed by unanimous vote of all stakeholders and this same year Dr. Miller became second dean.

Peace reigned at last. Over the years the name of the school changed and passed into the public trust; it grew in stature and in size requiring new buildings and governance. In 1945 the school was incorporated into the Oregon State System of Higher Education. From this date, the school became known as the Dental School of the University of Oregon. This had long been the desire of Herbert Miller. After 47 years of guidance as dean, service as the president of the Boards of Directors and Trustees, and leading the arduous task of transferring the school to the State, his dream was finally realized. He could retire knowing that he was leaving the school in good hands.