

Don't try straightening your teeth at home...

Primitive Orthodontics...

by Dr. Brad Edgren

Did you know that Marie Antoinette had braces? Well, not actually braces but she did have an early form of orthodontic treatment that was part of a whole body makeover to morph her into a more desirable bride to the family of the Dauphin of France, Louis XVI.



A pastel of the young Maria Antonia sent to the Dauphin ahead of their marriage.

Along with her unfashionably high forehead, scattered with patches of missing hair at the hairline, her smile was far from being beautiful. The future queen of France had extremely crooked teeth and the Bourbon Court was said to have been horrified at the sight of her smile.

Consequently, in 1768, a French dentist, Pierre Laveran, was summoned to Vienna to straighten the archduchess' dental mess. Pierre Laveran used a crude orthodontic appliance, by today's standards, labeled the Fauchard's Bandeau. Pierre Fauchard was an 18th century pioneer on modern dentistry.

Fauchard wrote a treatise titled "Le Chirurgien Dentiste" (The Surgeon Dentist) in 1728. At the time, it was considered the "enchiridion" on dentistry.

Fauchard's Bandeau appliance was a horseshoe shaped piece of a precious metal, often gold, with perforations along the "U" shaped arch form that was placed within the mouth. Gold wires were strung through the perforations and tied to the teeth. The wires would have to be tightened every few days to continue to move the teeth towards the gold horseshoe. Marie may have also required filing or slenderization between the teeth (called Interproximal reduction today) to create additional space to unravel the crowding. After several months of treatment her smile was deemed acceptable. The Bandeau was likely a very bulky and uncomfortable device compared to today's orthodontic brackets and appliances.

Born Maria Antonia Josepha Johanna on November 2, 1775, she was an Archduchess of Austria and the youngest daughter to Empress Maria Theresa. In an effort to end hostilities between Austria and France an arranged marriage was made between Empress Maria Theresa and King Louis XV of France for Maria Antonia to marry the eldest grandson Louis-Auguste, heir to the throne of France. On April 19, 1770 Maria was

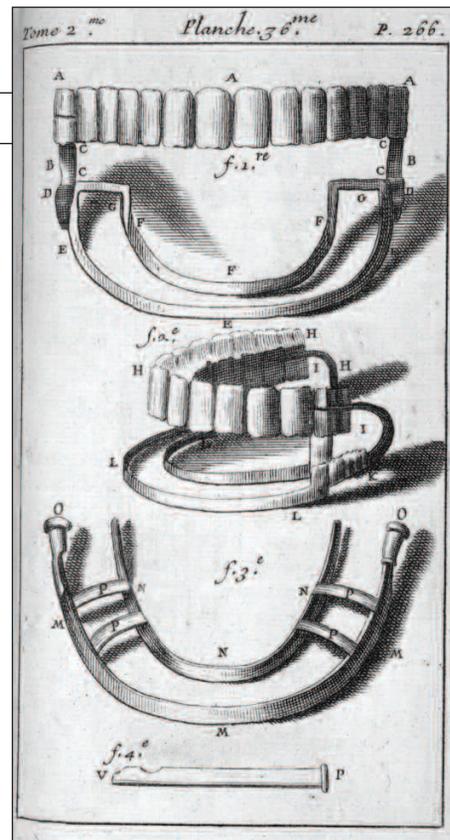


Diagram of dentures from Pierre Fauchard's *Le chirurgien dentiste ou traité des dent*.

married by proxy to Louis-Auguste. Her name changed to Marie Antoinette when she arrived in France on May 14, 1770. On October 16, 1793, as a result of the French Revolution, she was tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal and executed by guillotine.

After reading this article, one might think that Marie Antoinette had one of the earliest forms of orthodontic treatment. However, Egyptian mummies have been discovered with metal bands around their teeth. It is believed that the Egyptians attached catgut (dried twisted intestines of horses or sheep, not cats) to the bands to orthodontically move teeth to close gaps over 2000 years ago. So, even over 2000 years ago, straight teeth were deemed important. **G**

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