

local medical societies to collate drug information, set appropriate standards, and prepare an extensive American pharmacopeia of the drugs in use at that time. In 1808, the Massachusetts Medical Society published a 272-page pharmacopeia containing information or monographs on 536 drugs and pharmaceutical preparations. Included were monographs on many drugs indigenous to America, which were not described in the European pharmacopeias of the day.

On January 6, 1817, Lyman Spalding, a physician from New York City, submitted a plan to the Medical Society of the County of New York for the creation of a national pharmacopeia. Spalding's efforts were later to result in his being recognized as the Father of the *United States Pharmacopeia*. He proposed dividing the United States as then known into four geographic districts—northern, middle, southern, and western. The plan provided for a convention in each of these districts, to be composed of delegates from all medical societies and medical schools within them. Where there was as yet no incorporated medical society or medical school, voluntary associations of physicians and surgeons were invited to assist in the undertaking. Each district's convention was to draft a pharmacopeia and appoint delegates to a general convention to be held later in Washington, DC. At the general convention, the four district pharmacopeias were to be compiled into a single national pharmacopeia.

Draft pharmacopeias were submitted to the convention by only the northern and middle districts. These were reviewed, consolidated, and adopted by the first United States Pharmacopeial Convention assembled in Washington, DC, on January 1, 1820 (Fig. 1.2). The first USP was published on December 15, 1820, in English and Latin, then the international language of medicine, to render the book more intelligible to physicians and pharmacists of any nationality. Within its 272 pages were listed 217 drugs considered worthy of recognition; many of them were taken from the *Massachusetts Pharmacopeia*, which is considered by some to be the precursor to



FIGURE 1.2 The first United States Pharmacopeial Convention, held on January 1, 1820 in Washington, DC. (Reprinted with permission from the United States Pharmacopeial Convention.)

the USP. The objective of the first USP was stated in its preface and remains important. It reads in part

It is the object of a Pharmacopeia to select from among substances which possess medicinal power, those, the utility of which is most fully established and best understood; and to form from them preparations and compositions, in which their powers may be exerted to the greatest advantage. It should likewise distinguish those articles by convenient and definite names, such as may prevent trouble or uncertainty in the intercourse of physicians and apothecaries (1).

Before adjourning, the convention adopted a constitution and bylaws, with provisions for subsequent meetings of the convention leading to a revised USP every 10 years. As many new drugs entered use, the need for more frequent issuance of standards became increasingly apparent. In 1900, the Pharmacopeial Convention granted authority to issue supplements to the USP whenever necessary to maintain satisfactory standards. At the 1940 meeting of the convention, it was decided to revise the USP every 5 years while maintaining the use of periodic supplements.

The first United States Pharmacopeial Convention was composed exclusively of physicians. In 1830 and again in 1840, prominent pharmacists were invited to assist in the revision, and in recognition of their contributions pharmacists were awarded full membership in the convention of 1850 and have