

MEDICAL MILESTONES

\$5

# Quebec Heritage

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JULY-AUGUST 2006  
News



## **James Douglas Jr.**

Anatomy of an eclectic mind

## **Immortal Melody**

A tribute to Dr. James Robert Adams

## **Beating the Barriers**

Canadian cardiology pioneer Maude Abbott

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*Front Page Photograph: Protestant Insane Asylum, Douglas Hospital, Verdun (about 1890). Photograph courtesy of the McCord Museum Archives.*

*Correction: In the May-June issue, the images used in Joseph Graham's article, "The Levines of Trout Lake" were not credited. The images were provided by Patty Brown from her private collection.*

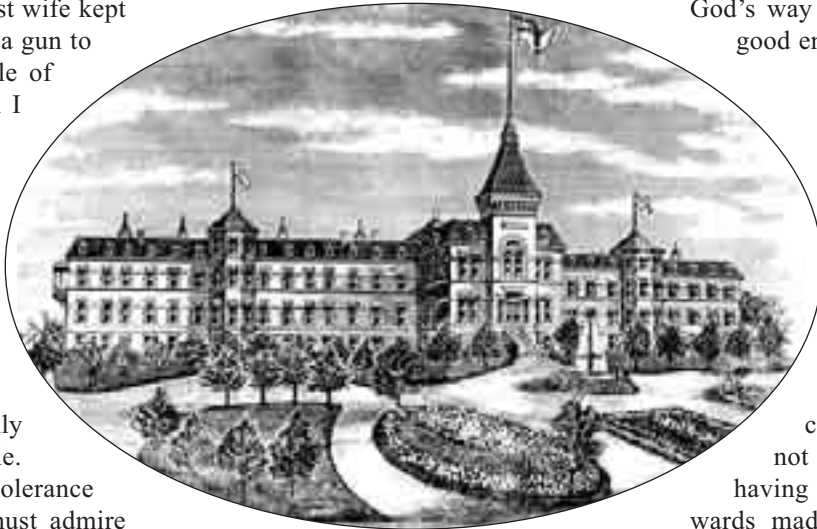
## Leaving Bedlam by Rod MacLeod

Protestants are especially bad at dealing with mental illness. Convinced that the fault lies not in our stars but in ourselves, we are taught to be stoic and regard insanity as a kind of personal failing. As evidence I need look no further than to my own family: to my mother, who would not sully her lips with the word “depressed” until it was too late to do much about it; to a cousin who was so convinced he was a failure in everybody’s eyes (it did not help that his devoutly Baptist wife kept telling him this) that he put a gun to his head; even to the couple of times in my own life when I have looked back over a difficult period and asked myself why on earth I hadn’t “gone to see someone.” I know why I didn’t, of course: we are all sure that it’s just a question of effort and we will be around that corner and right as rain. Certainly no call to go alarming people.

Given this historical intolerance of mental problems, one must admire the men who set about creating Montreal’s Protestant Hospital for the Insane in the 1870s. By that time, the city’s Protestant community had created all kinds of institutions, including schools, an orphanage, a cemetery, and a hospital. These were intended to be public alternatives to the ones run by religious orders, although in most cases the religious orders were not aware they were being exclusive and the Grey Nuns even called theirs “l’Hopital général”—though never “The General.” Protestants tended to see their institutions as modern and scientific, at least so far as Victorians understood these terms. A hospital had to be a departure from the old Asylum where so-

ciety’s down-and-outs were housed with minimal care. One can read “modern and scientific” as an answer to a problem of staffing: in Protestant culture people, especially women, did not take on the task of caring for down-and-outs as a vocation, and so one had to cut corners. At any rate, there emerged the notion of a hospital where one went to be cured of what ailed one (at least insofar as medical practice would allow—which wasn’t far at all,

nounced, adding with significant emphasis “when cure is possible.” Not a storage facility, but a place where those “suffering from the saddest kind of affliction” could get help, even treatment. The key word here is “affliction”—truly a startling notion: patients were to be seen as victims rather than culprits, objects of pity rather than of scorn. More than simply applying science to the care of the sick, the founders had overturned centuries of conviction that mental illness was God’s way of saying you just weren’t good enough.



until they tumbled onto hygiene) rather than simply wait it out under the care of dedicated nuns. The new approach required professionalization, and thus emerged increasingly specialized doctors and nurses.

But how to deal with the insane? For people who had passed beyond the pale of sanity there had to be something better than the equivalent of Bedlam or, in the case of wealthy families, shutting someone up in a tower à la Rochester’s first wife. The founders of Montreal’s new Protestant Hospital clearly had an agenda: “The institution will not be a mere asylum, but a hospital for the cure of Patients,” they an-

Equally innovative was the new hospital’s willingness to accommodate people from all social classes. By this I mean the rich as well as the poor, not the other way round: hospitals traditionally catered to those who could not afford to die at home. Yes,

having private as well as public wards made for a two-tiered system with all its implicit unfairness: private patients had their own bedrooms and dining spaces, and ate bacon and eggs for Sunday breakfast as well as jam instead of syrup with their tea. But the presence of the rich proved that hospital care had ceased to be an act of charity and become a public responsibility. The care received, the program of stimulating activities, and the healthy environment were clearly more conducive to wellness than any home, no matter how comfortable.

Naturally it was important to find a suitable site. In addition to a quiet atmosphere with fresh air the founders wanted the hospital supplied with vegetables and dairy products, which

meant looking to the farmland beyond the limits of the town. Having acquired a 110-acre farm fronting on the St. Lawrence and the Lower Lachine Road the founders began the task of raising funds for construction. Even in these parts they met with resistant neighbours, who feared the new hospital would be a public nuisance, spread disease, and decrease property values. Despite the protest, the hospital was completed in 1890, only nine years after the founders were incorporated, and 140 patients were admitted by the end of that year. An east wing had to be added two years later to provide special quarters for female patients, and soon after a west wing was built for patients with less severe problems, leaving the main pavilion for staff quarters, kitchen and dining, and surgery. After 1910 violent cases were accommodated in Northwest House. Over the following years additional buildings were added, including separate quarters for the staff and a special pavilion for the important business of recreation.

It is in this last structure that the QAHN board of directors will meet this coming September. Douglas Hall,

named after the doctor who was one of the hospital's founders, was designed by the firm of Edward and William S Maxwell. Recently it was restored to its original glory; in 2001 the project was awarded the Orange prize by the heritage group, *Save Montreal*. Having served for decades as a social area for patients, the hall has become an outreach and learning centre—hence an ideal venue for QAHN.

More than a collection of historic buildings, more than a vital community institution, the Douglas stands for an attitude. Mental health is not about being sane or insane, but about wellness, and degrees thereof. Which is why QAHN is proud to present the Douglas this year with a special award for 125 years of innovation.

Any of us might find ourselves “afflicted,” and all of us should spend far more time than we do listening to our bodies and taking whatever action seems most appropriate, from an hour's rest or a brisk walk or a change of diet or scenery to getting professional help. The alternative is to go the way of my mother or my cousin or, well, God forbid.

### Protestant Insane Asylum “probable causes of insanity” (1890 - 1910)

	Men	Women
Abuse of opium	26	11
Abuse of tobacco	2	0
Brain tumor	2	5
Cerebral hemorrhage	12	8
Change of life	0	53
Disappointed affection	19	23
Domestic trouble	55	136
Epilepsy	70	42
Excessive study	19	18
Fright	13	140
Heredity	120	4
Insomnia	8	11
Intemperance in drink	195	12
Isolated life	3	5
Flu	18	2
Masturbation	56	14
Meningitis	3	122
Mental anxiety	143	8
Monotonous work	3	17
Financial difficulty	78	23
Religious excitement	19	2
Senility	75	6
Syphilis	86	6
Vicious indulgences	20	5

## Letters

### Right on

I have been enjoying reading Quebec Heritage News for some time now and want to congratulate you on its excellence. The May-June issue was exceptionally interesting to me, especially Sandra Stock's article ["Farming among the Rocks"]. It was clear, concise, informative and interesting. She got it exactly right, the history, the geography and how the people really lived. I have never seen it summarized like this before. It is a welcome addition to our local history, both for seniors like myself and others who are interested.

I would also like to commend Joe Graham for his writing and his extensive research and knowledge of the area.

*Shirley Captain  
Milles Isles, QC*

### A breed apart

I have enjoyed a first reading of the very interesting May-June issue of Quebec Heritage News that just arrived, particularly the article about the origins of Canadian Horse breeding in New France ["The Quiet Canadian..."]. I have a friend named Kelly who owned a Canadian Horse, a huge stallion, as black as can be. Kelly was more of a horse trader than a lover of horses, however, so he does not own it any more. I intend to send him a copy of the article. I hope that the breed will be featured in some way in 2008 when Quebec City celebrates its 400th anniversary.

Congratulations on a fine journal.

*Marianna O'Gallagher  
Quebec City, QC*

### New look for the News

Regular readers will have noticed that this edition of the *Quebec Heritage News* has a completely new look. We made this change so the magazine will be easier and more pleasant to read. This metamorphosis was mainly due to the work of QAHN executive director Dwane Wilkin, who got the urge and then the money to hire summer intern and whiz kid Dan Pinese, who performed the operation. We hope that you enjoy it. I know we do.

*Charles Bury  
Editor, Quebec Heritage News*

# Here's to history's schoolmarms

## *Keeping the stories of one-room Townships' schoolhouses alive*

by Dan Pinese

Members of an Eastern Townships women's club are helping to preserve an important chapter in the history of rural English education in Quebec by collecting first-hand accounts from retired teachers in the region who launched their careers in one-room schoolhouses.

"If these stories were told to today's generation, they wouldn't be believable," said Beverly Taber Smith, a member and former president of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) Sherbrooke and District Club who is spearheading the

the basis of a collection of tapes, transcripts and other relevant material kept at the Eastern Townships Research Centre at Bishop's University in Lennoxville.

The project was revived in January 2006 when it was discovered that Mary Jean Woodard Bean, a new lifetime member of the club, began her teaching career as a one-room schoolmistress near Mansonville during World War II.

"It was certainly a much different experience than you get today," said Bean, whose stories were recorded during the most recent phase of the oral history project.

During wartime, many children in the Townships had to choose between learning at school and going to work on the family farm, a harsh fact of rural life that forever marked Bean's recollections of the period. "I think my story gives a side-effect of the war that you won't get from a textbook," she said.

Some of the women's accounts seem extraordinary in hindsight, and preserving them is one of the principal goals of the project. All are based on first-hand, often personal and very moving experiences.

"I was taking the names of the children down for the morning's attendance, when a little girl from the back came up and told me that [another pupil] probably wouldn't be in class today because his father hung himself the night before," recalled Bean, who believes that

her participation in the CFUW project will help to convey a broader knowledge of the past to future historians.

The one-room schoolhouse oral history project is run entirely by CFUW volunteers, who recently acquired a grant through Bishop's University to transcribe the tape recordings. All the research material will be added to the existing collection at the Eastern Townships Research Centre.

*The Canadian Federation of University Women Sherbrooke and District Club wants to continue its oral history project and is looking for teachers who taught students in one-room schools in the Eastern Townships. If you know anyone who would like to be part of this project, please call Beverly Smith at (819) 826-3939 or e-mail at bev2000@primus.ca.*



group's oral history project.

One-room schoolhouses played an important role in the lives of Quebec farming communities from the early 1800s onward and were still serving children in many regions of the province as late as the 1950s. Most of these women's stories were never written down and will probably be lost forever unless they are collected and transcribed soon. "Some of these teachers are in their eighties and nineties now," Smith noted.

The goal is to have completed fifty interviews with former teachers and students by September, 2006.

The club's interest in one-room schoolhouses and the stories of women who ran them isn't new. Members of the CFUW first began interviewing former Townships teachers back in mid-1990s, forming

# Memory lapses

*Canadian museums make their pitch for stable federal funding*

by Dan Pinese

A long hoped-for enquiry into the declining health of Canada's museums could clear the way for a new public funding policy when Parliament resumes sitting in September, offering a glimmer of hope to struggling non-profit heritage institutions across the country.

Much will depend on whether the Conservative party's minority government in Ottawa intends to heed the advice of Parliament's all-party Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and its own election vow to develop a new vision for Canada's museums.

In a brief presented to the Standing Committee last June, the Canadian Museums Association (CMA), a national organization representing 2,500 institutions across the country, argued that

*“Museums are highly creative—they are real scroungers when it comes to funding—but these other programs are not designed for museums”*

— Canadian Museum Association

“the federal government has a legitimate role in supporting museums in the national interest, and in preserving Canada's heritage assets,” but noted that very few of its members receive any significant support from either federal or provincial governments.

Many volunteer-run heritage museums, including some of Quebec's oldest, don't get any stable support

from the federal government, at all.

Heather Darch, curator of the Missisquoi Museum, a historical society founded in 1899 that later became a museum in 1964, states that though it is possible for smaller museums to receive federal funding, there are often restrictions that prevent local museums like Missisquoi from benefiting from federal assistant programs.

“Sometimes federal grants only cover some funding and we have to match what we receive with our own money, so we don't always apply because we don't have that extra cash,” said Darch.

In June, the Standing Committee adopted a resolution urging the government to implement policy proposals put forth by the previous Liberal government based largely on consultations with the CMA, which has dismissed Ottawa's current museum policy as a relic of the early

1970s that's “completely out of date and incapable of meeting the needs of museums today.”

In particular, museums are warning of dire consequences for many Canadian heritage collections because the financial cost of properly caring for artifacts continues to dwarf museum operating revenues. It's estimated that more than \$100 million worth of artifacts are donated to Canadian museums each year. However, museums contend that they must maintain and preserve these items without a cent of federal funds. “As a result, the donations are actually a costly operating liability,” according to the CMA.

All federal political parties have publicly acknowledged the crisis facing Canada's museum community including the Conservatives, who during the federal election campaign last winter deplored the precarious state of funding promised to address the crisis in Canadian museums.

Any forthcoming parliamentary debate over Ottawa's role in the upkeep of museums is certain to raise questions surrounding the fate of the Museums Assistance Program (MAP), a crucial source of public funds dispersed to museums and other heritage institutions through the Department of Canadian Heritage. The annual MAP budget of \$9 million hasn't budged since 1972 while increasingly narrow eligibility criteria and onerous reporting requirements effectively discourage or prohibit museums from seeking federal support, according to museum administrators. And the program's emphasis on short-term project funding leaves museums scrambling to meet cash shortfalls by seeking support through a patchwork of other programs.

“Museums are highly creative—they are real scroungers when it comes to funding—but these other programs are not designed for museums,” according to the CMA.

The Missisquoi Museum, for example, receives less than half its operating revenue from

*“Sometimes federal grants only cover some funding and we have to match what we receive with our own money, so we don't always apply because we don't have that extra cash.”*

— Heather Darch, curator, Missisquoi Museum

the provincial government, a grant that has not increased in the past 20 years. The museum relies on volunteer-run fund-raising efforts like apple-pie sales, craft-sales, silent auctions and the sale of memberships and books to cover its operating short-falls.

What the CMA's 2,500 members want is broad-ranging, multi-year support for ailing museums "in order to reposition these institutions, stabilize them, better preserve their collections, and engage more Canadians in their activities." The museum association is recommending a six-fold increase in annual federal spending on museums, from \$9 million to \$75 million.

Because MAP funding has not increased, applying for other federal subsidies intended to preserve the nation's heritage, such as the Moveable Cultural Property Program and similar incentive programs to encourage museum donations, is simply regarded as a burden by many of the CMA's members.

**I**n June, 2006, Bloc Québécois MP, Maka Kotto, put forth a motion calling on the federal government to implement of a new Canadian museum policy. The motion passed by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage urged the government to implement as soon as possible the new museum policy discussed in 2005 and to respect the work and consultations previously undertaken by the Department. It also strongly recommended that any new policy be reviewed by the standing committee before its introduction in the House.

The passage of the motion has been the result of multiple actions of the part of the Canadian Museum Association (CMA), calling for an examination of the state of Canada's museums, which the CMA says are under-funded and lacking a comprehensive policy from which to obtain government assistance.

In addition to the problems associated with low federal funding, the CMA also cites problems with administrative procedures, lengthy federal reporting systems, and assistance criteria that often exclude most museums from federal dollars.

Though standing committees only have the power to study and report on items relating to the mandate, management and operation of their respective government departments, the CMA has reacted positively to the political support it is receiving from Heritage committee members. In a press release, the CMA indicated that the passage of the June motion showed that there is interest among politicians in the plight and problems facing Canadian museums.

The CMA remains optimistic about the fall

session of Parliament. Of course museums will be competing against other government priorities, and in light of recent expenditures on National Defence, this competition is sure to be fierce.

## Bridging the gap

*From an interview with Elizabeth May that appeared in the spring 2006 edition of Heritage Magazine, a publication of the Heritage Canada Foundation. May, a recipient of the Order of Canada, was for many years the national voice for the international environmental group, Sierra Club. She resigned earlier this year to run for the leadership of the federal Green Party.*

**L**et me tell you a story that shows how this country doesn't get heritage. My family's business for many years was a restaurant and museum on a schooner moored at Margaree Harbour on Cape Breton Island. It was a fishing schooner, the Marion Elizabeth, built in 1918 by Smith and Rhuland of Lunenburg, the same firm that built the Bluenose. In fact, it was the last surviving Bluenose schooner of that era. Even the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic in Lunenburg doesn't have a real schooner — it has the Theresa E. Connor (1938), which was built with an engine. Our schooner had been converted into a restaurant in the late 1950s and was sitting in a concrete cradle in the Margaree River. It was a big tourist attraction with a dining room on the deck and the Schooner Museum in the hull. Next to it was Farley Mowat's famous boat, the Happy Adventure, the boat he wrote about in *The Boat That Wouldn't Float*. Because of all this, we called our place "Schooner Village."

Around 2002, the Government of Nova Scotia decided it wanted to build a new bridge to replace the old one that went right by our schooner. The shorter distance to bridge the gap to Belle Cote was to go where the schooner was and they proceeded to expropriate it. My mother and I tried negotiating with them to ensure that the schooner would either be moved or kept in place. But they expropriated and before we could do anything they had demolished the Happy Adventure and the Marion Elizabeth and hauled them to the local dump.

In the period leading up to this we had written people like Sheila Copps, then Minister of Canadian Heritage, asking whether they could designate the boat or intervene. They all said they had no budget to help. The Nova Scotia government couldn't have cared less. It was so frustrating. I couldn't understand how a country could so completely misunderstand its heritage. This country is so disconnected from its culture.

# It stood the test of time and memory

*Revisiting the Celtic cross of Grosse-Île*

by Marianna O’Gallagher



**I**t is very likely that the Celtic memorial cross on Grosse-Île is the tallest Celtic cross in the world. It stands on Telegraph Hill, the highest part of that small island and was unveiled there on August 15, 1909, hence it will celebrate its 100th anniversary next year.

Hewn from Irish stone and sitting on a base of Stanstead granite the monument came into existence in 1897 when the Ancient Order of Hibernians of Quebec seemed to suddenly wake up and realize that it was 50 years since the worst year of the so-called potato famine in Ireland, a famine that had driven thousands of their kin, and perhaps even themselves, out of that lush green land. The story of the quarantine station at Grosse-Île was known to many Irish Quebecers, and indeed to French-Canadians too. Several of the executive members of the AOH went down river to visit the place which had been the principal hospital island in 1847. They were appalled to realize that the graveyard was completely overgrown with the wild brush and they were abashed to see that the monument raised by the quarantine station supervisor Dr. George Mellis Douglas, honoured his medical

colleagues but mentioned almost as an afterthought that 5,424 persons fleeing from pestilence and famine in Ireland had found in North America but a grave.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians was a society of Irishmen who had a broad mandate of helping fellow immigrants in both Canada and the United States. Their activities included economic and monetary help offered to immigrants in distress, as well as insurance policies to the wider immigrant population. In Quebec City towards the end of the 1890s, the association offered Gaelic language courses, and history lessons, sponsored a marching band, and a colourful regiment, the Hibernian Knights, who, much like the Papal Zouaves, could be seen in their proud uniforms on festive occasions. There were units in Quebec and Montreal, and in the other provinces, as well as in the United States.

The Ancient Order in Quebec set to work immediately to find the money to “raise a suitable monument,” as the correspondence of the day indicates. The society was well established, and had a magazine with a wide circulation. The Quebec



Branch then organized a contest for the monument's design and levied a tax of ten cents on all members in the United States and Canada.

The results of the contest showed that there was general inclination towards a Celtic cross as the proper form in which to honour their fellow Celts. The then secretary of the Order in Quebec City was Jeremiah Gallagher from Macroom in County Cork, Ireland, who had received his Canadian education at the classical college of Ste. Anne de-la-Pocatière. He was licensed as a Dominion land surveyor and civil engineer. Because of the latter training—and no doubt because of his ardent love of his heritage—Jeremiah was given the task of putting the idea into practical form. He drew a general design of the cross on the wall in the kitchen of his home at 13 Conroy Street in Quebec City.

Gallagher's son Dermot, my father, recounted that as more and more money came into Quebec, the drawing on the wall got bigger and bigger. In the end the cross was 40 feet high.

The dimensions of the huge stone blocks having been set out, and the design established, these were published in the Order's magazine and bids requested: and bids indeed came in from several quarries. The Fallon Brothers of Cornwall, Ontario were assigned the job of cutting the stone, which was later assembled on the island. The fact that one of the brothers was a priest probably helped in the choice of that company. The Order had already received a permit from the federal government to

raise the cross on the height of land known as Telegraph Hill, a hundred feet above the river.

The Celtic cross is still visible from afar as one approaches Grosse-Île by boat or plane. There are four panels on the plinth: one gives the date of the unveiling; two honour the clergy who looked after the sick, the dying and the orphan who were victims of the tragedy of 1847. The fourth, in the ancient Irish script, records the sentiment of the Irish of the time that their people had been driven out of Ireland by an artificial famine. The inscription ends: "The Gaels in America raise this monument in their name and to their honour. God save Ireland."

The monument has withstood the embattling elements for almost a hundred years. It took a stroke of lightning to knock out part of the halo during the 1940s, but that was repaired in 1952. During World War II when the St. Lawrence River endured the stealthy presence of an occasional German U-Boat, there were actually some Canadian officials who planned on dismantling the cross lest it be used as a landmark or a beacon for those submarines.

Irish visitors to the island of Grosse-Île today shudder at the thought.

*Grosse-Île with its huge and imposing monument is open to visitors all summer long. Parks Canada manages this National Historic Park. Visitors are welcomed by guides who tell the story of the island's varied history and point out all the monuments, old and new (Tel: 1-888-Grosse Ile).*

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## Ste. Agathe, Saranac Lake rekindle twin tradition

*Resort towns have shared common health vocation for 98 years*

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by Joseph Graham

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**O**n July 27, Ste. Agathe received a delegation from Saranac Lake. Laurent Paquette, the mayor, as well as Ms. Carol St. Jean, the vice president of the Chamber of Commerce, Terry Turcot, president of the Heritage Committee and others were present to greet Thomas Michaels, the mayor of Saranac Lake, who came with Edward Long, the president of their sister cities committee and Sylvie Nelson, the director of their Chamber of Commerce as well as several others. The two towns have shared interests since 1908 when a Montrealer who was cured of tuberculosis in Saranac Lake invited the whole Ste. Agathe municipal council to visit Saranac Lake for a week at his expense. Lorne McGibbon, who was surprised that a Montrealer would have to go to another country to benefit from the rest cure for tuberculosis, was determined to invite this American expertise back home, and in the process, he and his committed associates hired the architects Scopes and Feust-

mann, who had built the chest hospital in Saranac Lake.

The two towns have much in common today, having both benefited from the urbanisation that came with their health-treatment facilities and the railroad, and having grown into important recreational and service centres. Both live in the shadow of neighbouring tourist destinations, Lake Placid being a similar distance from Saranac Lake as Mont Tremblant is from Ste. Agathe, and both having remarkably similar histories, similar architecture, almost identical elevations and similar climates. Both are also twinned independently with different towns in France, Ste. Agathe with Langy-sur-Marne and Saranac Lake with Entrains-sur-Nohain. An added bonus to the visit was that Kenneth and Noella Weissberg of Entrains-sur-Nohain accompanied the delegation from Saranac Lake.

A local delegation returned the visit on August 17 to celebrate an arts festival with their hosts in Saranac Lake, New York.

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# ANATOMY OF AN ECLECTIC MIND

## *The life and times of James Douglas Jr.*

by Patrick Donovan

James Douglas Jr. (1837-1918) grew up in a home full of semi-dissected corpses on Quebec City's Côte de la Montagne. His father had earned the reputation of being the fastest surgeon in town, capable of performing an amputation in less than one minute. Douglas senior ran a medical school in the basement of his home where students reported that "men's, women's and children's heads galore-were ranged on shelves." Douglas had previously worked as a ship surgeon and had bled natives in a failed colony on the Honduran coast. His last stop before Quebec was the United States, where he had worked as a medical teacher. before fleeing from authorities after illegally unearthing the corpse of a prominent citizen for one of his anatomy classes. Despite this inauspicious start, Dr. Douglas went on to settle in Quebec City and to found the Beauport Lunatic Asylum, a pioneering institute of mental health that has grown into the Centre Hospitalier Robert Giffard.

Douglas senior transmitted his thirst for adventure to his son, taking him on numerous expeditions to Egypt and the Holy Land in the mid-19th century. He brought back several mummies from these journeys, selling them to museums in North America. One of these, sold in Niagara Falls, was recently discovered to be the corpse of Ramesses I.

James Douglas, Jr. initially chose a different career than his father, studying to become a minister in the Presbyterian Church. He studied at Queen's College, Kingston and later went to Edin-

burgh. By the end of his studies, however, Douglas had second thoughts: "When therefore I was licensed to teach," he wrote, "my faith in Christ was stronger, but my faith in denominational Christianity was so weak that I could not sign the Confession of Faith and therefore was never ordained." Douglas junior was granted a license to preach but never became a full minister. This secularism remained with Douglas all his life. He was primarily responsible for making Queen's into a non-denominational University when he served as Chancellor in 1912.

In the 1860s, Douglas junior helped his father at the Beauport Asylum while studying toward a career in medicine. He worked as a librarian at the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, and later became the youngest president in the history of the Society. There, he presented numerous lectures to the Society's members, the first on Egyptian hieroglyphics and mummies, and later ones on mining and geological issues.

When his interest in mining and geology eventually supplanted his interest in medicine, Douglas embarked on a third career. He describes his education in this field with characteristic humour:

The ten years 1865-1875 was a decade of acute anxiety . . . I started on my industrial career with a general education, a license to preach, a considerable knowledge of medicine and surgery, and an acquaintance from childhood with the crazy side of humanity.

In 1869, Douglas's scientific experiments



Above: James Douglas, Jr (1863). Image courtesy of the McCord Museum Archives.

with the assistance of Dr. T. Sterry Hunt at Laval University led him to a scientific discovery that was to change his life. Together, they elaborated a patent for the "Hunt and Douglas" process of extracting copper from its ore. Although Douglas had no formal education in chemistry, he was considered competent enough to fill the Chair of Chemistry at Morrin College from 1871 to 1874 and his evening lectures were among the most popular in the history of the College.

**D**ouglas's patents attracted attention in the United States, and he began working for a Pennsylvanian copper company in 1875. In 1881, he was recruited by the trading company Phelps Dodge and helped transform it into the Fortune 500 company it is today. Phelps Dodge was founded in the mid-19th century to trade American cotton for British copper, tin, and other metals. The company used this copper to produce thousands of miles of wire, including the wire used for the first transcontinental telegraph line. Eventually, Phelps Dodge became interested in mining its own copper. The company sent James Douglas to Arizona to investigate mining opportunities in 1881. This eventually led to the creation of the Copper Queen Mine, which became one of the top copper-producing mines in the world. James Douglas also founded the copper smelting Mexican border town of Douglas, Arizona, where approximately 15,000 people live today. He eventually became president of Phelps Dodge.

Throughout this time, Douglas maintained an interest in Canadian history and heritage. He wrote several books on the subject in his lifetime, namely *Canadian Independence*, *Old France in the New World*, and *New England and New France—Contrasts and Parallels in Colonial History*. In addition to bailing Queen's University out of a financial crisis with approximately a million dollars from his own pocket, Douglas also established the first chair in Canadian and Colonial History there in 1910. A man of comical disposition, he accompanied the gift with a throne-like chair carved with Canadian symbols. He also financed many libraries, such as the library of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, where interest from his donations are still used to purchase over 30 books per month.

Douglas also donated to several medical causes, most notably the Douglas Hospital in Montreal. This institution pursued the cause which had been taken up by his father, a pioneer in the treatment of mental health in Quebec. Douglas' donations helped keep the hospital alive in the institution's early years. Originally called the Protestant Hospital for the Insane, the institution took on the name of Douglas Hospital in 1965 as a tribute to James Douglas, Jr. and his father.

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## Douglas mummy no ordinary stiff

**O**n his trip to Egypt in 1860, James Douglas bought a half dozen mummies. But he never knew their real story, which was only told in 2003. That September, a most unusual shipment from Atlanta Georgia arrived in Egypt. A king was coming home. Three thousand years after his death, and a century and a half since he was taken from his native land to sojourn at Niagara Falls, Ramesses I landed at Cairo airport.

Ramesses I was the founder of the 19th Dynasty of Egypt, father of Seti I, and grandfather of Ramesses II, often called Ramesses the Great. After ruling only two years, around 1291 BC, Ramesses I died and was buried in his unfinished tomb in the Valley of the Kings. Within four hundred years of the burial, his body had been moved from his sarcophagus to a replacement coffin, and taken for safety (and other reasons), from the royal necropolis. Though the complete itinerary cannot be traced, his mummy certainly rested in temporary locations before priests and officials in the reign of Sheshonk II of the Twenty-Second Dynasty found what they hoped would be an eternal resting place for him. By 890 BC, they had sealed the replacement coffin into a tomb high in the cliffs above Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el Bahri.

In 1817, Giovanni Baptista Belzoni opened Ramesses I's original tomb, known today as KV 16. Wooden guardian figures and strange images of underworld deities greeted the explorer, and beautiful paintings from the Book of Gates decorated the walls of the burial chamber, but the king's mummy was not there. His fate was completely unknown until 1881, when Emile Brugsch, acting head of the Antiquities Service, entered the tomb in the cliffs, DB 320. An amazing array of royal mummies, including Seti I and Ramesses II lay in replacement coffins, crowded into a long undecorated corridor, stripped of their gold. Fragments of Ramesses I's replacement coffin were found, but where was his body?

There are many chapters in the story of the

life and afterlife of Ramesses I. One is the tale of a family of local guides on the West Bank who had found the cache of royal mummies sometime between 1860 and 1871. After the Abd el Rassul family had explored the tomb, they began selling the contents.

To avert government intervention, the family were careful to sell only a few artifacts at a time. Their agent was Mustapha Aga Ayat. Mustafa was a wise and hospitable man worthy of his own book. As well as serving as Vice-Consular Agent at Luxor for Britain, Belgium and Russia for over forty years, he and his son dealt in antiquities. Around 1860 they sold a mummy and coffins to James Douglas Jr. Douglas was buying Egyptian antiquities for his friend Sidney Barnett. Barnett and his father, Thomas, owned and operated a Museum in Niagara Falls. They wanted to add an Egyptian component to their attraction. When DB 320 was finally located and cleared by the French *Service des Antiquites* in 1881, only the damaged replacement coffin containing some loose bandages remained of the burial of Ramesses I. The mummy had probably been moved into a set of more durable, attractive, and saleable coffins. Any identifying documentation which had survived from Ancient times was lost. Neither Mustafa nor Douglas would have had any way of identifying the mummy, nor even of suspecting that it was royal.

For the next 120 years or so, the royal mummy became part of the story of the Niagara Falls Museum. This privately owned museum was a real cabinet of curiosities, filled with treasures and trifles from a dozen cultures. Along with eight other Ancient Egyptians, mastodon and whale skeletons, two-headed calves and collections of minerals and weapons from all over the world, Ramesses crossed the Niagara River from Canada to New York State, and then back again as the creation of national parks appropriated the Museum's prime locations. The mummies were sometimes displayed inside their coffins and sometimes beside them.

During the collection's relocations, some of the bodies and coffins got mixed up. The final stop was a former corset factory on the Canadian side, with a wonderful view of the American Falls. While the mummies were in Niagara Falls, many enthusiasts and scholars looked at the handsome mummy with the Ramesside profile and wondered if he might be one of the missing kings of Egypt. Finally, in 1999, the whole Egyptian collection was purchased by the Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University, Atlanta. There it was determined that the mummy had a royal past, and Emory University decided to send it back where it belongs. ♦

## Cholera was a career for Grosse-Île boss Douglas:

*Adapted from a historic profile by Gaspé of Yesterday author Ken Annett, first published in The Spec newspaper in the early 1980s.*

Fleeing from authorities in New York state after rousing public indignation over the dissection of cadavers, the young Scottish-born doctor James Douglas arranged to come to Quebec City in 1826 where his younger brother George Mellis Douglas soon joined him as apprentice. Not long after petitioning and receiving his medical license from Governor Dalhousie in 1827, however, it seems the younger Douglas, also a graduate of the University of Edinburgh's school of medicine, moved to New Carlisle on the Gaspé coast, where he not only practised medicine, but also served as a justice of the peace. In 1833 he set up a partnership with another Gaspé doctor, Robert Fitton.

These were the years of mass migration from Europe to the New World and outbreaks of disease, aggravated by long trans-ocean voyages and primitive shipboard conditions, frequently appeared in Gaspé ports. The historical record shows that English medical practitioners were serving the district at least as early as 1784, when Loyalists first began to settle on the Bay of Chaleur, but professionally trained doctors remained very scarce during early years of settlement.

One observer, Dr. Anthony von Iffland, who came to the Gaspé to vaccinate against smallpox, has left an account of the ship, Royal Edward, which landed at the Port of Gaspé in 1818 with a number of her immigrant passengers suffering from a contagious fever. (Major Hugh O'Hara, one of the sons of the Gaspé pioneer Felix O'Hara, spared no effort to care for the sick, but he caught the fever himself and died within a month.)

In 1832 the dreaded cholera began an epidemic of new, monumental and tragic proportions to Lower Canada, one which would shape the destinies of many families. Moving to meet this major public health threat the Government of Quebec established a Provincial Health Bureau and established quarantine stations for in-bound ships at Gaspé and at Grosse-Île in the St. Lawrence just east of Quebec City. A whole new medical calling for George Douglas began with his appointment as superintendent of the Gaspé quarantine station—a posting that likely brought an end to his short-lived New Carlisle medical practice. It however, did not end his interest and concern for the

many friends he had made there. These apparently included several of the most prominent and powerful Gaspesian families of the time.

In 1836 Dr. Poole, superintendent of the infamous Grosse-Île quarantine station, resigned from his post, leaving George Douglas to take his place. Here the young Douglas doctor from Edinburgh would serve for the next twenty-eight years.

The tragic story of the cholera epidemics and the history of the Grosse-Île quarantine station where George Douglas served has been recorded in great detail in books and scholarly articles and continues to interest contemporary historians. Somewhat overlooked is the toll it took on the doctor's own health. On June 1, 1864, Douglas travelled to his country home on Île-aux-Reaux and there the following day he ended his own life. His remains rest near those of his elder brother James in the Mount Hermon Cemetery at Sillery.

It seems appropriate to add some brief, personal notes regarding Dr. Douglas. His first wife, Charlotte Saxton Campbell, daughter of a prominent Quebec City notary, bore five children before her early death in 1852 at the age of 32 years. He subsequently remarried in England with Susan Cleghorn but she died in 1860 leaving a son only two weeks old.

The careers of the Douglas off-spring took quite different paths. The eldest son, Campbell Mellis Douglas, graduated as a doctor, joined the medical staff of the British Army and was posted to the Far East where he won the Victoria Cross for singular bravery in an action in the Andaman Islands. He rose to be Lieut. Colonel in the Medical Service and on retirement practised medicine in Canada. The Riel Rebellion brought him out of retirement and he served again with the Army until 1902 with the rank of Brigadier Surgeon.

Another son, Archibald, chose a naval career, rising to become Admiral Sir Archibald Douglas of the British Navy. His brother, Charles, chose mechanical engineering as his career.

George Prescott Douglas, son of Dr. Douglas's second marriage, was brought up in England by his mother's family and later emigrated to South Africa, where he died in 1903.

Justyn Douglas followed his father's profession as a doctor but practised in England. Daughter Agnes, married and lived in England.

The Douglas family name continues to be perpetuated in Quebec: the Douglas Hospital in Verdun, of course, bears the name of this prominent family as does Douglas Hall at McGill University in Montreal and the Douglas Fund of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec. ♦



Above: George Mellis Douglas (1861). Image courtesy of the McCord Museum archives.

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# DR. E.D. WORTHINGTON

## *An early Quebec anaesthetist*

by A.J. Holland

**A**lthough it is impossible to say with any certainty who gave the first ether anaesthetic in Lower Canada (Quebec), it is well documented that Dr. James Douglas in Quebec city, Dr. Horace Nelson of Montreal, and Dr. E.D. Worthington of Sherbrooke had all independently and more or less simultaneously reported the successful administration of ether anaesthesia.

Worthington's life reads like a *Boy's Own Annual* adventure tale. Luckily he, unlike so many of his contemporaries, was a prolific writer and some of his essays were collected after his death into a small book entitled "Reminiscences of Student Life and Practice." He was born in Ireland, in Ballinahill, on December 1, 1820, and at the age of two came with his parents to Quebec City. There were no medical schools in Canada so in 1834 the young Worthington was indentured for 7 years with Dr. James Douglas. At that time the apprentices lived in the house of their mentor and anatomical dissections were done in the house. Dr. Worthington later describes his participation in grave digging to obtain specimens. His apprenticeship was eventually reduced to five years in order that he could accept an appointment as assistant surgeon to H.M. 56th Foot, and subsequently to H.M. 68th Light Infantry. His interest and involvement with the army began in 1837 when he served as a private in the Quebec regiment of Volunteer Light Infantry. He also saw active service in a professional

capacity in both Fenian raids. In 1842 Worthington temporarily resigned his army commission, and went to Scotland, where he received a doctorate in medicine from St. An-



drew's and licentiates from Glasgow and finally from the University of Edinburgh, which was initially reluctant to give him a licentiate because of his poor knowledge of Latin. He returned to Canada in 1843 and received the license of the Montreal Medical Board.

Almost immediately Worthington located in Sherbrooke and prac-

tised there for over half a century. He received an M. A. from the University of Bishop's College and, in 1868, the C.M.M.D. from McGill University. For some years he was one of the Governors of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Lower Canada and helped instigate the organization of the Canadian Medical Association.

He thought that he had performed the first capital operations under ether (March 14, 1847) and chloroform (January 24, 1848) in Canada and it seems from his descriptions that he was both surgeon and anaesthetist. The descriptions of his anaesthetics are clear and succinct. They are also remarkable because they show Worthington's appreciation of the need for a valve system to prevent re-breathing, and for his awareness of the side-effects of the drugs he was using. It is interesting that he did not always produce unconsciousness in his patients, but rather a "twilight" state with insensibility to pain combined with a retained ability to respond to commands. He gave a (literally) hair-raising description of an ether conflagration during the course of an anaesthetic—probably one of the earliest recorded descriptions of this complication.

**W**orthington was the first to use chloroform in Canada. On January 24, 1848 he anaesthetized a lady for the reduction of a dislocated hip. This anaesthetic was only partially successful, but on the following day he anaesthetized a child, with

complete success, for removal of a tumour from the hand. Nor was his medicine all practised in an urban environment. Many times he travelled 30 miles on horseback, to operate in a log cabin. From the outset, Dr. Worthington appreciated the value of anaesthesia. His popularity and reputation for humaneness were due not only to his personal qualities but also to his use of anaesthesia for surgical procedures.

Although a surgeon by training and inclination, E.D. Worthington could also truly be called a pioneer anaesthetist. At his death on February 25, 1895 *The Medical Age* wrote: "His whole life was intimately interwoven with the medical history of Canada, and was an integral part of the history of the province of Quebec. It is the lot of few men to be so noble, so distinguished, so loved, and so missed."

Source: A.J. Holland, MB FFARCS, Winnipeg, Canadian Journal of Anaesthesia, March 1990

## Pass the bottle

Dr. E.D. Worthington wrote the following lines only six days after his pioneering operation in the Eastern Townships.

### Case of the Amputation of a Leg

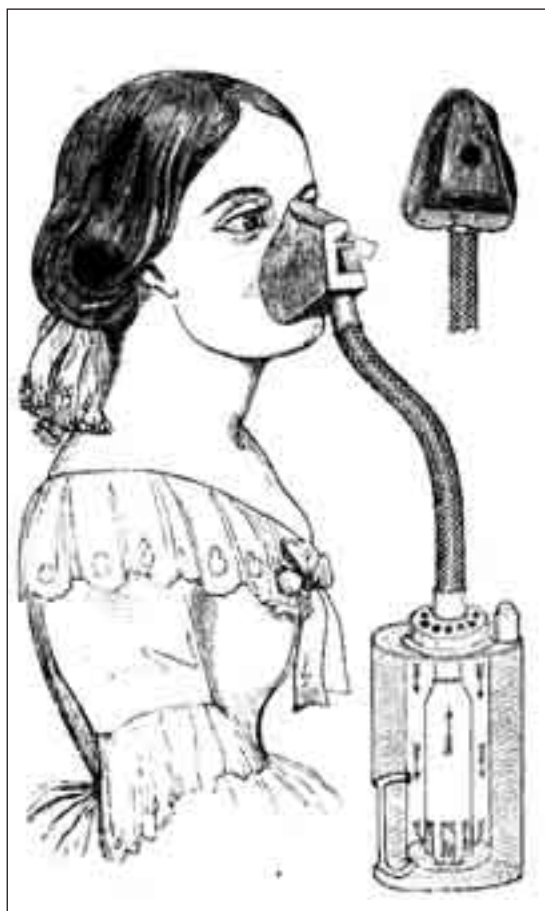
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#### Patient Under the Influence of Sulphuric Ether Vapour

As experiments are being daily made to test the efficiency of the inhalation of the vapour of ether, as a means of preventing pain in surgical operations, will you allow me to contribute one to the list of successful cases.

On Thursday, the 11th (March 1847 - ed.), I performed amputation below the knee, assisted by Drs. Andrews and Rogers, of Eaton. The

case was one of extensive disease of the ankle joint, involving the lower bones of the foot, and lower end of the shaft of the tibia and fibula, the result of an accident received seven



or eight years ago. The patient, a man aged 30, was quite willing, indeed anxious, upon a fair representation of the facts, to try any means that promised to lessen the dreadful pain of an operation. A large ox bladder, with a stop cock attached, a mouth-piece, made of thick leather, covered with black silk and well padded around the edges, with a connecting long brass tube that had done service as an umbrella handle in many a shower, formed an apparatus that, though rude looking, and bearing marks of having been got up in haste, presented withal a very businesslike, and, for the country, tolerably professional appearance. A couple of ounces of ether were poured into the bladder, which was then filled with air from a bellows. Not having time or ingenuity sufficient to construct a double

valve, the objection to inhaling carbonic gas again into the lungs was done away with, by simply allowing the patient, after a full inspiration from the bag, to expire through the nose, for three or four times, when the nostrils were kept closed, and the beating confined to the bladder. From this time about six full inspirations sufficed to produce a complete effect; the eyes turned up under the upper lid and became fixed; his wrist was pinched, and he was asked if he felt pain; he laughed, and said, "Oh no, I just feel—no pain at all." The operation was then commenced, and terminated without his evincing, in any way, that he was at all conscious of the least feeling of pain. He retained his consciousness, talked rationally, and made some very witty remarks in answer to questions put to him, converting the scene from one of a most painful to one of an excessively ludicrous character. Both during the operation, and afterwards, he expressed himself as knowing perfectly well what he was doing, and the different stages of the proceeding, but at no time did he feel pain. Indeed, after it was over he kindly volunteered to have half a dozen legs taken off, always provided he was plentifully supplied with the gas. Alternate inhalations of gas with atmospheric air sufficed to keep up the effect, except at one time when he had a presentiment of pain, and gave the word to "pass the bottle", which he afterwards seemed to cherish as a bosom friend. The effect terminated as the dressings were completed, leaving no visible arguments against the use of ether, and many quieting ones of its advantage. As far as this case goes, it is most convincing, and I offer it as one tending to show that, notwithstanding particular idiosyncrasies, in its general application the discovery is one that cannot fail to be of infinite advantage in the hands of the surgeon, and if to the surgeon, why not to the physician and the accoucheur?

—Sherbrooke, March 20, 1847 ♦

## IMMORTAL MELODY

*Jazzman James Robert Adams found the cure for aging in music and science*  
by Joseph Graham

*“Dr. Adams, I have known you for some time, and I know that your title is doctor, but I know little about your career.”*

I was driving the car, and I had just pointed it south on the Laurentian Autoroute, headed to a rendezvous in Montreal, an hour away. I had worked for Dr. Adams for a few years, looking after some of his real estate, and while I had enjoyed many interesting discussions on all manner of subjects, I did not know what he had done as a doctor. He owned and flew a float-plane, played the piano and the bass, had a sound studio in his house, was a very good cartoonist and was elderly and not in good health. He owned large tracts of valuable land, married late in life and had a daughter who was in Japan.

“Do you want the story of my life?” he asked.

“I would be very interested.”

“Would you like the short version or the long one?”

“We have a long road ahead of us. Would you have time to tell me the long one?”

“Alright,” he began. “When I was a young man, I thought that aging may not be inevitable, but could be a disease, and I determined to find the cure. I studied really hard and worked for many years, but one day I noticed that I was aging, so I quit.”

I drove on in silence for a moment before I realized that he had finished telling me the long version of his career. We had not covered two kilometres.

James Robert Adams was a big man, and when I knew him, he had a snowy head of hair, wore black-framed, strong glasses and always had a

ready smile and a provocative question. He lived in a large home that had been built by his great-uncle Horsley Townsend, and he called the place “Uncle Horsley’s.” It took me years to discover that Uncle Horsley was more than just the name of a sound studio, because Dr. Adams never volunteered any information that he did not see as pertinent to the conversation, and most of the time, any conversation was held like a meeting with him as chairman. I often joined him for lunch, and the pattern never varied. I waited as he went through an agenda that seemed quite clear to him, and I always knew that I would be expected to report as the department head of several different departments, including information on the market and news of my children. In fairness to him, there was always a category for ‘*varia*,’ during which I could bring up anything that I wished. Should I do so, however, I had better be ready to have it scrutinized,



challenged and dismissed if I could not explain myself. One topic that generally heated our blood was economics, because here we were very far apart. Rob was as close to an American Republican as a Canadian could be, and could argue his positions skilfully, even if he failed to convince me to change mine. The one thing we agreed upon was the coming crash, which we are happily still awaiting.

The large house, an old and seedy mansion finished outside in pink stucco, was as intriguing as its occupant. Never sure which door to use, I entered by a door in the very centre of the large front façade, leading to an unimposing, narrow corridor graced by a large string bass. To the right was the door to the inner sanctum, the sound studio, always closed, and to the left was a living room. Dr.



Adams was usually in the living room, and Seabee, his tiny white bichon frisé, a poodle-like ball of energy, wasted no time in announcing my presence and often did not stop until the aroma of food filled the room. As the years went by, and his health failed, Dr. Adams lay on his long sofa with reading beside him and a portable computer in easy reach. Prior to my arrival, the St. Hubert chicken delivery car would have dropped off our lunch, unless I could convince him to let me pick something up from the Chinese restaurant where he had played his last gig.

**R**ob, as I came to call him once our relationship had relaxed, was a lifelong victim of alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, an illness that is the result of a genetic defect. While it relates to a deficiency of a protein in the liver, its manifestations are emphysema-like symptoms in the lungs, and in more serious cases, cirrhosis of the liver. Coupled with indications of tuberculosis, his young life was a struggle. While he was very active between bouts of illness, he spent a good deal of time in bed, and in another time, he may not have survived childhood. Even as an older man, anyone who knew him also knew that if you had a cold, or even thought you might, you were not to visit. For many years, Rob filled the role of piano player at a hotel or a restaurant, and it is a wonder, in those days of notorious Quebec smoking, that he could spend any time at all in that environment.



It is hard for me to imagine Rob seeking a life in commerce, and perhaps when he was 18 and enrolled in McGill to study commerce in 1942, he was obliging his father or simply trying to find his way. The economics courses must have had an impact because he had very strongly held views on self-reliance and the need to reduce the size of government. There was a war on, though, and he soon quit the university and enlisted in the RCAF, in part because he wanted to fly. With his poor eyesight, he was limited to working on the planes as a mechanic, but he made the best of his time, and according to his daughter Alexandra, his epiphany came during this period. Like other members of the staff, they rotated through the kitchen, and when he drew KP duty, he had time

to let his mind wander, peeling spuds. He wondered why different animals lived for different lengths of time. Hamsters lived for only three years, dogs for 12, and humans for 80 years. He determined to find what controlled this process and see if therein lay the key to longevity. When the war ended, he returned to McGill and enrolled in medicine.

While Rob was a fully qualified medical doctor, he declined to practice and dedicated himself instead to research. Graduating in 1954, he interned at the Royal Victoria Hospital, returning afterward to his lab, where he refurbished the McGill animal cages, insisting that the animals



kept for experiments be treated humanely. He worked at McGill and in the United States, studying aging at the United States National Institutes of Health in Baltimore. His area of research, histology, the study of organic tissue, earned him a doctorate on a topic relating to thyroid function in 1972, and throughout this period, he kept up a career in music and indulged his passion for flying.

Rob played piano with some of Montreal's jazz greats and formed a sextet in 1950 with Gerry Macdonald (clarinet), Bud Hayward (accordion), Mimi Catudahl (lead vocals) Johnny Asselin (bass and vocals) and Phil Parizeau (guitar). He was a part of many trios during that decade, including one with Phil Parizeau and Gordie Fleming and another with Claire and Art Roberts. He did a stint with Gordie Fleming in Cannes as well as working with him in a duo in Montreal and the Laurentians. He even played bass on a Karen Young recording of a song he composed called You Got Your Nerve. Along with his own music he captured the sounds of groups such as the Quartones, with Gerry Macdonald and Gordie Fleming in his studio for Choice Records, and though a lot of the work may have been informal, it is likely that Justin Time and other labels credit Rob Adams as sound engineer.

**A**s I came to know Rob at his house for discussion and debate, I was impressed that this man, then in his early seventies and quite financially independent, had taken on a gig at a local hotel. This turned to surprise when I learned that some of his old friends had dropped in to see him there after hours, and they had jammed through the night, forcing management to terminate his contract. It did not stop Rob from finding another gig in short order.

Rob wanted me to buy a half-share in his Cessna in the early 1990s, and while I was taken with his stories and took flying lessons, the responsibility and cost involved fell to other obligations. Still, we did fly together, leaving from his private dock on the lake, and I could have mistakenly assumed that flying was his first passion. While he remembered fondly his Seabee, a small flying boat, his interests were so wide-ranging that it did not surprise me one day when he gave me a manuscript for a book he had written. It was titled *Surviving Death* and it dealt with his theories on how indi-

vidual human memory may survive the death of the body. It led to many stimulating debates and friendly disagreements, and was published by Stirling House in 1998. A second book soon followed, called *Prospects for Immortality* (Baywood Publishing 2002). Rob was invited to do an author's tour to promote the book, but his health would not permit it. In the book, he describes his saved consciousness hypothesis, which suggests that it could be possible that this aspect of our essence survives in a quantum world. For a man who had given up the fight to cure a disease he called aging to expe-



rience the process itself, this was the next logical step.

Rob Adams's mission to solve the enigma of aging may not have saved his body, but he learned how to keep his spirit young and happily shared his knowledge. In spite of his status as a medical doctor, his doctorate in histology, his Seabee flying boat, his Cessna 150, his art and cartoons, commercial jingles, the sound studio, real estate management and books, Rob's primary interest was his music. Still, when it came his turn to die, his scientific curiosity never wavered, and as the disease that had plagued him since childhood attacked his liver, he declined to resort to pain-killing medication that might dull his awareness of the transition that he was facing. He passed away in his home in the Laurentians in the autumn of 2005. He was 81 years old.

*References include the personal records of Dr. James Robert Adams. Special thanks to his daughter, Alexandra Adams for additional information and for the use of her father's illustrations and the family photos from the Adams family archives. ♦*

## BEATING THE BARRIERS

*Heart specialist Maude Abbott paved the way for Canada's women doctors*  
by Dan Pinese

**B**orn Maude Elizabeth Seymour Babin, the early life of Maude Abbott, was difficult. Shortly after her birth on March 18, 1869, she was abandoned by her father and lost her mother to pulmonary tuberculosis seven months later.

Orphaned before her first birthday, Maude and her sister, Alice, were taken to live with her maternal grandmother in St. Andrews, Quebec. There, Maude and her sister were legally adopted and given the surname Abbott.

In St. Andrews, Abbott attended school and won the only female scholarship offered to McGill. At McGill, she completed an Arts degree in 1890, winning the Lord Stanley Gold Medal and becoming the class valedictorian for her efforts.

However, despite all these academic acclaims and awards, Abbott was denied acceptance to McGill's male-only medical program. She petitioned and even raised money for the university to offer medical courses to women but all this effort was for no reward.

Resilient, despite the sexist barriers of her time, Abbott was the only woman in her class when she enrolled at Bishop's Medical College in 1890. Though she continued attempts to apply to McGill, even in her third year of studies, Abbott prospered intellectually at Bishop's, earning many accolades, including the Practical Anatomy Prize in 1892, graduated with honours and was awarded the Chancellor's Prize in 1894.

The following autumn, Abbot opened a practice in Montreal, where she treated women and children. In

Montreal, she also worked at the Royal Victoria Hospital, exploring the field of pathology, which eventually produced a paper on her studies of heart murmurs. This paper, which had to be read by a male doctor in front of the Medico-



Chirurgical Society in Montreal, was so well received it caused the society to rethink its policy and admit Abbott as its first female member. She was also the first woman to have her work presented before a medical society in Britain and published in the *Journal of Pathology and Bacteriology*.

In her lifetime, Dr. Abbott produced over 140 papers and books—including 48 articles on cardiovascular disease—and was the focus of countless lectures.

In 1910, McGill granted her an *Honoris Causa* medical degree, hired her as a lecturer of Pathology in 1912, and in 1923 appointed her to the position of Assistant Professor of Medical Research, a position she held until her retirement in 1936. That same year, McGill granted her with a second degree, this time an honorary doctorate. In 1938, the Federation of Medical Women, which she co-founded in 1924, established the Maude Abbott Memorial Scholarship Fund.

On September 2, 1940 at the age of 71, Dr. Abbott died of a cerebral hemorrhage, leaving behind invaluable contributions to the medical fields of pathology and cardiology. The great Mexican painter, Diego Rivera paid tribute to her achievements in 1943, placing a portrait of her in a mural at the National Institute of Cardiology of Mexico City, where she is regarded as one of the 50 most important heart specialists in world history.

Abbott has been heralded as one of Canada's greatest female role models. In her career she managed to join at least eighteen formerly male-only organizations, and was honoured posthumously by the Canadian Medical Hall of

Fame for her ground-breaking work.

Many of the improvements in the life expectancy of so-called "blue babies" and infants with similar disorders are based directly on Dr. Maude Abbott's research into congenital heart disease.

*Information for this article was gathered from Elizabeth Hearn Milner's book, Bishop's Medical Faculty (1871-1905) and the Library and Archives of Canada. ♦*

# THE UNSUNG GENIUS

*Reginald Fessenden*

by Terry Skeats



The year 2006 marks the 100th anniversary of three significant events in the history of wireless communication, none of which would have taken place without the efforts of the Eastern Townships-born inventor and scientist Reginald Aubrey Fessenden.

On January 2, 1906, Fessenden and his crew were the first to successfully transmit Morse messages two-way across the Atlantic between Brant Rock, Massachusetts and Machrihanish, Scotland. In November of the same year, Fessenden succeeded in transmitting the human voice across the Atlantic for the first time, and on Christmas Eve, 1906 made the first radio broadcasts ever. The rest, as the cliché says, is history.

If the name Reginald Aubrey Fessenden isn't familiar it should be, much as the names Marconi, Edison and Bell are for many. The list of Fessenden's achievements in the early development of wireless communications, and his contributions to improving safety at sea, long ago earned him a place in the first ranks of inventors. But in spite of his efforts in these fields, he remains largely unknown in his native country and province.

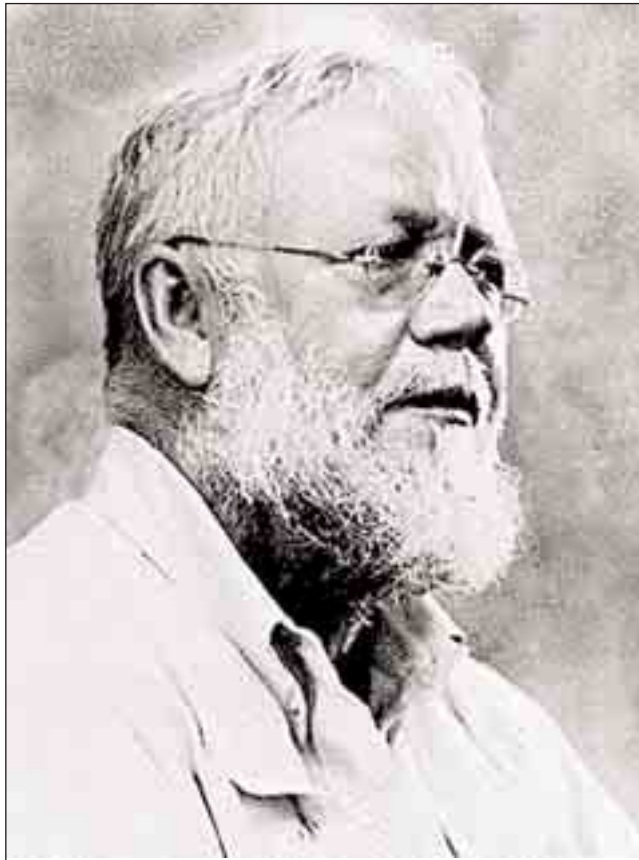
In his unfinished autobiography, Fessenden defined an inventor as "one who can see the applicability of means in supplying demand five years before it is obvious to those skilled in the art." His own fertile imagination, unbounded curiosity, and capacity for knowledge gave the

world the wireless telephone, the heterodyne radio receiver, an echoing device for the detection of submarines, a turboelectric drive for ships, the first television set in North

phremagog in the Eastern Townships, Lower Canada on October 6 1866. His mother and father, though not well-off by any means, instilled in the young boy a lively desire for knowledge which lasted him all his life. That desire led him into both conflict and collaboration with some of the foremost minds of the day: Lord Kelvin, Thomas Edison, Marconi, and others. But an inability to handle the business arrangements for his many inventions, and a stubborn insistence on the correctness (often justified) of his view of how things should be done embroiled Fessenden in a series of corporate and patent disputes, ordeals which cost him time, money and ultimately his health.

In 1871 the family moved first to Fergus, Ontario and then to Chippewa, near Niagara Falls. Scholastic ability won Fessenden an astonishing array of awards at DeVeaux Military College near Buffalo, and at Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ontario. But it was not until he was offered a mathematical scholarship at his father's

old school, Bishop's College (now Bishop's University) in Lennoxville, Quebec that his interests turned to science, and in particular to electricity: it was at Bishop's that he claimed to have made his first invention. Unfortunately, his work at Bishop's presented few challenges to his facile mind, and at the end of nine months at the school, in 1885, he moved on to accept the position of principal at the Whitney Institute in Bermuda.



America, the radio compass, and a reusable aluminum teabag; in all, more than 500 patents and inventions. He was the first to transmit human speech without wires, the first to make a successful transatlantic voice transmission, and the first to broadcast Morse code two-way between Europe and North America.

Fessenden was born in the rectory of his father's church in the village of East Bolton, near Lake Mem-

There he met Helen Trott, the woman who six years later became his wife and closest confidante for 42 years.

Bermuda also proved to be too tranquil for Fessenden, and in 1886 he left his teaching post for New York and the Edison Laboratories. After pestering Edison with notes and letters for several weeks, he eventually won a job as assistant tester to the inventor, locating underground faults in electrical mains laid as part of Edison's great electrification project in the city. His work proved so satisfactory that just before Christmas 1886, he was offered a position to assist Edison himself at the Llewellyn Park Laboratories. For the 20-year old Fessenden, it was a perfect opportunity, and the following year he was appointed Edison's chief chemist, a post he held until 1889.

Fessenden's dispute with Lord Kelvin was indicative of the inventor's refusal to give in when he felt himself to be right. The problem under investigation was to explain the reason for the elasticity of rubber. Kelvin and others believed that the phenomenon was gravitational, Fessenden that it was electrical. Fessenden's research ultimately proved correct, much to Lord Kelvin's consternation and annoyance; in addition the research forecast the discovery of a new element, later called beryllium.



In 1892, after a two-year stint as an electrical engineer at the Westinghouse works in Newark, New Jersey, Fessenden returned to teaching, first at Purdue University in Indiana, and then at the Western University of Pennsylvania (now the University of Pittsburgh). While at the latter in 1899, he learned that there was a vacancy in the electrical engineering department at McGill University in Montreal. Fessenden wanted to return to Canada and continue his work, and in June 1899 applied for the position. Two months later, the reply came: a Professor

Owens of the University of Nebraska had been given the post, and where could the university return Fessenden's application? It was not the last time that Canada was to lose the benefit of Fessenden's genius.

For years, Fessenden had been intrigued by Alexander Graham Bell's success in long-distance communication by wire (Fessenden's father had taken him to a demonstration of the new telephone by Bell in Brantford, Ontario when Fessenden was ten years old). But Fessenden wondered if there might not be a way



to eliminate the wires and transmit voice directly between stations. With a contract from the U.S. Weather Bureau in his pocket, he built a wireless station on Cobb Island in the Potomac River and began beaming weather reports in Morse code to Washington, 60 miles to the north. The success of these experiments led, on December 23, 1900, to the first transmission of the human voice by wireless, a distance of one mile between two radio towers located on the island. The text of the conversation was prosaic, to say the least: Fessenden asked his assistant Abraham Thiessen, if it were snowing at Thiessen's location. It was.

While these experiments were going on, Fessenden was engaged in an inventor's race with another radio pioneer. In September of the previous year, Marconi had equipped two U.S. ships to send wireless reports of the America's Cup races to the New York newspapers. The success of the venture created worldwide interest in

wireless, and led to the formation of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America to promote the system. What few know is that it was Fessenden who had suggested the idea of reporting the races to the New York Herald newspaper, but declined to undertake the project himself, recommending Marconi instead!

In December 1901, Marconi transmitted the letter S in Morse from Poldhu, Cornwall to Signal Hill near St. John's, Newfoundland, and the Atlantic was at last bridged by radio. Needing funds to continue his work, Fessenden formed the National Electric Signaling Company (NESCO) in 1902 with the aid of two Pittsburgh millionaires, Hay Walker and Thomas Given. Yet of the more than \$1,000,000 spent during the company's lifetime to develop and promote Fessenden's wireless system, not one cent was ever paid to Fessenden for his patents, which in fact constituted the company's sole assets.

With financial backing secured through NESCO, Fessenden built two new stations, one at Brant Rock, south of Boston near Plymouth, Massachusetts, the other at Machrihanish on the west coast of Scotland. On the night of January 2 1906, he bettered Marconi by completing the first two-way transatlantic Morse code transmissions.

But if Morse could be sent, then why not voice? Throughout the fall of 1906, using the Brant Rock and Machrihanish stations, Fessenden tried unsuccessfully to establish a voice link with the Scottish station. Finally in November, he received a private communiqué from one of the Scottish operators telling him that a few nights earlier, the operator had heard the voice of Adam Stein, the Brant Rock-Plymouth operator. Further investigation confirmed the date and the text of the transmission. The first transatlantic broadcast of the human voice was history, and it had been an accident!

Before more tests could be done, however, the Machrihanish tower crashed to the ground in a violent

Above: Fessenden's busy lab at Brant Rock, Massachusetts. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

storm when several of the supporting cables pulled loose from their bases (the two towers were over four hundred feet high, hollow, and about three feet in diameter like a giant stovepipe). Not one to surrender in the face of adversity, Fessenden chose Christmas and New Year's Eves to conduct the world's first commercial radio broadcasts. Outfitting ships of the U.S. Navy and the United Fruit Company with his receiving units, he entertained the crews with a program which included Handel's Largo (played on an old phonograph, the invention of his former employer Edison), a violin solo by Fessenden, and the Biblical text "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will."

The broadcasts were a success, and the commercial possibilities seemed far-reaching, but Marconi, a much shrewder businessman than Fessenden, had already obtained exclusive rights to wireless transmission within the British Empire, in effect shutting out NESCO completely. Worse still, in 1911 Fessenden disputed with his backers over the establishment of a Canadian-British subsidiary of NESCO (The Fessenden Wireless Telegraph Company of Canada), to be controlled solely by Fessenden and his British and Canadian associates, to the exclusion of Given and Walker. Fessenden was fired as NESCO's general manager, and in a suit for damages the following year, won a judgement of over \$400,000. The company couldn't pay, and swiftly went into receivership. Unfortunately, the real benefactor was Marconi's company; with NESCO gone, it had no real competitor in the field.

World War I brought Fessenden's inventing energies to the fore once again. The sinking of the White Star liner Titanic on April 15 1912 had set him on the trail of a device to protect ships from obstacles such as icebergs and reefs. He persuaded the

Submarine Signal Company of Boston to hire him as a consulting engineer, and in early 1914 he was off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland testing the Fessenden Oscillator, an echo device for detecting unseen objects. By the end of the war, an improved version of the Oscillator was standard equipment for submarine hunting, and today's sonar can count the Oscillator as its direct ancestor.

With the war over, a number of his legal disputes were resolved in 1928 when Fessenden accepted a settlement of almost \$1,000,000 from the Radio Trust of America (a monopoly which numbered amongst its members RCA and Westinghouse) for his patent rights. Though costly in time and money, the disputes did not deter him from applying himself to new and more complex problems.



In 1919 he designed the first television set in North America, in 1921 the Fathometer (a depth-gauging device based on the principle of the wartime Oscillator), in 1922 and 1923 the amplified violin and piano, and his reusable aluminum tea bag. The 1920s also brought honours: the Medal of Honour of the Institute of Radio Engineers, the John Scott Medal from the City of Philadelphia, and the Scientific American Medal for improving the safety of ships at sea.

By 1930, the years of hard work and the constant battles to protect his patents had taken their toll; failing

health necessitated more time in Bermuda. He died at Wistowe his home there, on July 22 1932, and is buried in the cemetery at St. Ann's Church nearby. On the stone, in Egyptian hieroglyphics, are the words "I am yesterday, and I know tomorrow." His epitaph, on the same stone, is peculiarly fitting: "By his genius distant lands converse, and men sail unafraid upon the deep."



After Fessenden's death, his wife ensured that his work and memory would not quickly be forgotten. In 1937, she gave the sum of \$500, to be repeated annually for four years, to Reg's alma mater Bishop's College, the amount to be used for bursaries for students who excelled in mathematics.

In 1940, Mrs. Fessenden published her account of Fessenden's life, *Fessenden—Builder of Tomorrows*. One reviewer called it "a loving testimony to a great personality", but also a book in which the "human equation frequently disappears from the discussion, and we see (Fessenden) only as a magnificent and benevolent mind, intent upon breaking down the barriers between men,

opening up new avenues of wealth and resources." Another reviewer noted that Mrs. Fessenden "brought to her (writing) task an extremely intelligent appreciation of the scientific work that her husband did as well as of his personality and character." Helen Fessenden died in Bermuda on April 17 1941 of a heart attack; she was 75 years old. Surviving were her son, Lieutenant-Colonel Reginald Kennelly Fessenden, her brother W.J.H. Trott, and a sister. She was buried in Bermuda near her husband.

In March 1943, the United States government honoured Fessenden's contributions to the development of

radio and to safety at sea when it christened the destroyer-escort USS Fessenden in Texas.

In June 1945, tragedy struck the family when the Fessendens' only child, Reginald Kennelly, was drowned. On the afternoon of June 22, he had put out to sea from his home in Bermuda in a 26-foot yawl with only ten gallons of fuel. The seas became rough due to strong winds, and when he did not return, it was assumed that the boat had either struck a reef and sunk, or had capsized. Two weeks later, on July 6, the yawl was discovered 65 miles offshore, but Fessenden's body was never found.

On November 19 1966, the Massachusetts Broadcasters Association and the Broadcast History Project, together with members of the Marshfield, Massachusetts Historical Commission unveiled a plaque at Blackman's Point (Brant Rock) commemorating the Christmas Eve 1906 broadcast made by Fessenden and his station crew. In 1994, the Marshfield Historical Commission managed to have the Brant Rock site listed on the state's historical record, and was attempting to get it added to the National Register of Historic Sites.



In 1979 the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada established the Fessenden-Trott Scholarships program in memory of Professor and Mrs. Fessenden. Funding for the Scholarships comes from the Fessenden-Trott Trust, established in Mrs. Fessenden's will. Four scholarships, worth \$9,000 annually, are awarded to Canadian citizens or permanent residents completing the first year of an undergraduate university program. The awards are granted on a four-year cycle by region: one year they are offered to students from Quebec, and in subsequent years to students from the Atlantic Provinces, Ontario and the West. The field of study is open, and the awards are good for three years or until a first degree is obtained, whichever is shortest. It

was won by a student at Bishop's University, Fessenden's old school, in 1999.

A \$500 cash prize is awarded to a graduate student "at a Canadian academic institution conducting research in underwater acoustics or in a branch of science closely connected to underwater acoustics." The prize, named the Fessenden Student Prize In Underwater Acoustics, was initiated by the Organizing Committee of the 12th ICA Associated Symposium On Underwater Acoustics, on the grounds that "attaching Fessenden's name to the prize is a fitting tribute to his contributions to underwater acoustics."

In 1992, the Government of Canada inducted 16 scientists into the newly opened Canadian Science and Engineering Hall of Fame in Ottawa. In addition to the likes of Sir Frederick Banting, Alexander Graham Bell, Sir Sanford Fleming, Wilder Penfield, John Polanyi and Joseph Armand Bombardier, Bishop's University numbered two former students amongst the inductees: Maude Abbott, who was refused admission to McGill University's medical school, but qualified at Bishop's and the University of Edinburgh. She joined the McGill faculty in 1899, but though there for 37 years, never became a full professor. Fessenden, the other Bishop's student, was inducted for his work in the early development of radio. Canada Post also honoured Fessenden a few years ago with his likeness and a picture of his coherer on a stamp in its Science Innovation series.

*Terry Skeats has been working on a biography of Reginald Aubrey Fessenden since 1979, using materials obtained from the National Archives in Ottawa, the State Archives in Raleigh, North Carolina, The National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., and a variety of other sources including the Thomas Edison and Wright Brothers archives. He expects it to be published later this year to commemorate the centenary of the above events. ♦*



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# ST. COLUMBAN

*An Irish settlement remembered at last*  
by Sandra Stock



**S**t. Columban is located just north of St. Jérôme above the North River and climbs up into the Laurentian foothills. It is south of Mille Isles and Lakefield but not really close to any large town. Although this municipality experienced some expansion after the building of Mirabel Airport, and now has a quickly growing population of commuters, there has been a most unusual history of settlement, growth, and extreme decline.

This district began as the “Augmentation to the Seigneurie du Lac des Deux-Montagnes” and the first recorded land grant was to Hilaire Joubert in 1819. However, the first settlers to actually occupy the land and clear the

forests for farming were Irish emigrants who started arriving in 1821. They had been encouraged to come here by Father Patrick Phelan, who later became a bishop, and were mainly from the Kilkenny region of Ireland. The settlement and the parish was named St. Columban, after the famous Celtic missionary saint. The first chapel was built in 1837 and the present church in 1861. This was possibly the first organized group of Irish rural pioneers in Canada, certainly it must have been the first group in Quebec. On the Joseph Bouchette map of Montreal and Regions of 1831, we see ‘Irish Settlement’ written just under Côte St. Nicholas and also “St. Patrice” indicated just beside this. This is the location of St. Colum-

ban although that name does not appear.

Also, these settlers—the Whelans, the Murphys, the Keyes, the Mearas and others—were Roman Catholic and many of them were listed as Gaelic speaking on the first census of 1831. However, by the next census, everyone was listed as English speaking. Like the Scottish Highland settlers of the Harrington area, knowledge of the old Gaelic languages quickly faded away.

The St. Columban settlers were part of the large first wave of Irish emigrants who came to Lower Canada after the Napoleonic Wars. Most of these Irish tended to be skilled labourers and merchants who gravitated to Montreal or Quebec City, and most of these were



of Protestant denominations. So the St. Columban settlement was truly unique in many ways.

**B**y 1850 there was a population of about one thousand and most of the land was farmed. Also, there were granite quarries that were worked into the 1930s and also a lumber mill on the North River. In 1937, when St. Columban Parish celebrated its centennial, The Gazette reported there were “55 families, with a population of 250 persons... Though one hundred years old the parish has shown little advance with the passage of years. The residents are few and widely separated”



Another interesting bit from this 1937 article is, “For many years French-Canadians at this section came here to learn English.” This included Bishop Bourget of Montreal who spent two winters in St. Columban to learn English.

There had been an ongoing exodus of the descendants of these Irish settlers for many years and agriculture was beginning to die out as a way of life. The land was rocky, although not as rough as the higher Laurentians, and the growing season is short. Other kinds of more profitable work, and better access to education, drew the second and third generations of St. Columban to leave for Montreal, Ottawa and even farther away to the United States and the Canadian West.

As the population diminished and the area became no longer predominantly Irish and English speaking, the small village core with its church and school started showing signs of neglect. The former schoolhouse, built around 1860 and active until 1925, does remain and is now a restaurant, sporting a plaque commemorating its former academic function. The present residents and municipal administration

of St. Columban, have been most interested lately in promoting their local history and its Irish roots. The 1861 church is now well maintained with beautiful new stained-glass windows and many indications of its Irish history quite evident.

There have also been several other very significant developments in regard to Irish heritage. The sad state of the cemetery, where many of the tombstones of the pioneer families had been damaged and then many placed in a pile in the woods behind the church, came to the attention of a group of descendants of local settlers who have established the St. Columban Cemetery Restoration Project. They plan to create a memorial that will once again celebrate the memories of those early pioneers. This group is led by Fergus Keyes of Montreal and can be reached at [www.st-columbanirish.com](http://www.st-columbanirish.com)

Also, a local historian, Claude Bourguignon, has written an excellent book, *Saint Colomban, une époque irlandaise du piedmont des Laurentides* and can be contacted at [claudobouguignonvideotron.ca](mailto:claudobouguignonvideotron.ca).

The cemetery project, and the renewed general interest in St. Columban’s Irish history, is a fine example of heritage awareness of a small rural community with Anglophone roots and a special story to tell. Without such initiatives, St. Columban and so many other former pioneer settlements would soon pass from memory.

*Sources: Janice Kennedy, The Ottawa Citizen, The Resurrection of St. Columban, March 19, 2006; The Gazette, (author unknown); Preparing for Centennial in 1937 from www.st-columban-irish website; Municipalité de Saint-Colomban website; Fergus Keyes, St. Columban Cemetery Restoration Project. ♦*

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# RETURN TO HEAR

*Reading oral history*

by Dan Pinese

**P**ractising oral history is simple. All you need is a voice recorder and someone to interview, preferably someone who's lived a long time and who still remembers the past. You play back the recording, write down the stories, then file away the transcripts for future historians. Straightforward, right?

Wrong.

It turns out that grappling with someone's spoken recollections can be as challenging for historians as it is rewarding. That's because conventional history strives for objectivity by stressing facts such as dates, names and places, whereas oral history depends on subjective accounts and views of the past as recalled by individual storytellers.

"Oral history can alter the way we see the past or support it," according to Jean Manore, professor of history at Bishop's University in Lennoxville, where a local heritage group has been conducting interviews with elderly residents for the last four years.

Although some theoretical debate still persists in academic circles over the role of story-gathering in the practice of history, the potential for personal narrative to broaden society's historical perspective is widely accepted.

"If oral history is being used to record the history of marginal groups in our society and if people learning of that history accept it, then there is no doubt that their view of history will change as a result," Manore says.

It is precisely this individual, personalized dimension of Quebec's English-speaking history that the Lennoxville-Ascot Historical and Museum Society (LAHMS) has been seeking to develop since launching its own oral history project in 2002. The goal, says LAHMS archivist Lu Rider, is to help preserve this

historic English-speaking community's sense of identity by documenting area residents' impressions of how their life has changed.

"The area has changed so much and these conversations reflect the changes," says Rider, flipping through a thick paper folder holding more than 20 interview transcripts, each one carrying a different person's unique story.

"I think it will help future generations remember our community, our identity as a community."

Belief that compiling individual sto-



ries can somehow illustrate a community's identity is a common characteristic of oral history practitioners. Oral history has been described as a bottom-up approach to understanding the staggering and frequently disconnected flow of events from the past. Often the act of telling and recording stories proves a learning experience for everyone involved.

"Most people who live ordinary lives," says professor Manore, "will often say when approached, 'Oh, my life isn't worth recording' or isn't 'interesting.' Yet, when they offer their insights and experiences on the events of their lives or the events they experienced? say, World War II? it becomes clear that what they have to say is worthwhile and very interesting because it adds to the historical memory itself in terms of quantity and adds a human dimension to a history that

is largely derived from official documents."

For example, one of the many subjects interviewed by LAHMS was a war bride, originally from Colchester, England, who settled in Lennoxville after World War II. Though her recollections of starting a new life in her adopted country contains many surprising anecdotes and some unique historical insights, details such as the names of the other passengers who accompanied her to Canada and the exact date that her ship landed at Halifax, or precisely how her luggage was transported to the Eastern Townships, are forgotten.

"It didn't occur to me that we were living history," she remarked at one point during the interview. "Had I done as I do now, I would have kept a diary and made notes and all . . . You know, it was over sixty years ago, so I had no idea that it was ever going to be of any importance to anyone else."

Essentially, oral history must be read as a written account of the past that contradicts what is traditionally meant by the term "written history." It isn't laden with objective facts that "enshrine" the past, rather it is an attempt to make history more meaningful by embedding personal accounts in the official record. By focussing on ordinary, even 'marginal' living witnesses, oral history reveals aspects of the past we never knew existed.

*Funding for LAHMS's oral history project was provided by the Borough of Lennoxville and the Bélanger-Gardener Foundation. Researchers wishing to view the transcripts and other archived material should contact LAHMS by email at [l rider@uplands.ca](mailto:l rider@uplands.ca). A guide to conducting oral history is available on the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Website, at [www.qahn.org/oralhistory.aspx](http://www.qahn.org/oralhistory.aspx). ♦*

## BOOK REVIEWS

by Charles Bury

# The Eastern Townships

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## *The Scots of Montreal, a Pictorial Album*

Edited by Nancy Marrelli  
and Simon Dardick. Véhicule  
Press. 156 pages. \$29.95.

A couple of years ago the McCord Museum mounted an exhibit called The Scots, Died-in-the-Wool Montrealers. As a born and bred Montrealer with some of that Scottish blood, I looked forward to it, though perhaps a bit more than I should have. The exhibit was a popular success but I personally found it sparse and gloomy. Surprisingly few artifacts were on display considering the cultural wealth of the community, and those objects were extremely difficult to view in any detail under the rather gloomy lighting — a condition apparently favoured these days by many exhibit designers. But now comes this great little book to make up for it. Produced by many of the same people who put together the McCord show, it picks up where the exhibit left off.

*The Scots of Montreal* is a picture book full of rarely-seen sketches, paintings and photos in both colour and black and white. The pictures and their captions tell the stories of some of the Scots of all backgrounds who flocked to the former New France in the century following the Seven Years War. Quebec was in need of an enterprising merchant class, something that Scotland had in profusion. French and Gaelic minds came together, forming a complex love-

hate relationship that continues to this day. Along with the traders and businessmen the highly educated Scots brought Quebec City and Montreal their new elites, including doctors, lawyers, teachers, preachers and the rest.

As the history of war is told mainly by the winners, so the history of immigrants is inevitably told by and about those who climbed the ladder highest. So what we have here are mainly the photographic and artistic souvenirs of the rich and their favourite endeavours. Devoted as they were to taking care of business, the Scots were also community minded, supplying their new cities with public institutions of the highest order. *The Scots of Montreal* tells the story of this unique bourgeoisie. It is a joy to look through, if only for its glimpses of the lavish self-glory the newly-wealthy Scots bestowed on themselves, from their fabulous mansions in the Square Mile to their ships and factories, their churches, their hospitals and their gold plated children. Sadly missing is any indication of the large majority of Scottish immigrants who lived ordinary lives but couldn't afford to pose for the painters and photographers. Perhaps that is another exhibit, and another book.



*America:  
The Lewis and Clark Expedition and the Dawn of a New Power*

By Denis Vaugeois. Translated by Jane Brierley. Véhicule Press. 275 pages. \$28.

When Meriwether Lewis and William Clark made their pioneering journey from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean through what is now the western United States in 1804-06, it is a little-known fact that most of those involved were not Americans. In this volume Quebec historian Denis Vaugeois explains the key role of the many French-Canadians who were the expedition's paddlers, navigators, guides, interpreters, negotiators, hunters and more. Lewis and Clark's 'canayens' were children of the voyageur culture, which had spread west from Montreal to explore and exploit so much of North America in the quest for furs. Including many métis, they acted as key go-betweens in the explorers' relations with the many aboriginal nations through

whose land they were travelling. Vaugeois gives the literature a thorough going over, but the records are brief and vague and he ends up being repetitive to make his point, and spending more space that really needed on the study of Lewis and Clark rather than their story. The editors have also used a somewhat bizarre system of sidebars and footnotes which make the book hard to follow. While disappointing in this respect, *America* is important reading for anyone interested in the French-Canadian diaspora.

Speaking of the French-Canadian diaspora, *From Migrant to Acadian, A North American Border People 1604-1755* (N.E.S. Griffiths, McGill Queens University Press and the Canadian Institute for Research on Public Policy and Public Administration, Université de

Moncton, 633 pages, \$49.95) describes perhaps the longest-running drama in North American history, and a tragedy to boot: the story of Acadia and Acadians. It's important to separate the two tales, because most Acadians never lived in Acadia, and don't today. This book is a serious, detailed academic examination of those Acadians who did live there, from the first French settlements at Sainte Croix Island and Port Royal until their supposedly-final expulsion a century and a half later. It includes about 150 pages of footnotes, a fairly good index and a couple of maps, but not a single illustration. Surprisingly, the text suffers from more burps and typos than a book by McGill Queens University Press should contain. From Migrant to Acadian is an important book but I doubt I'll ever finish it.



*Stepping Out:  
The Golden Age of Montreal Night Clubs, 1925-1955*

By Nancy Marrelli. Véhicule Press. 144 pages. \$27.95

What do Lili St. Cyr, Edith Piaf, Sophie Tucker, Pearl Bailey, Billie Holiday, Gratién Gélinas, Oscar Peterson, Frank Sinatra, Duke Ellington and Robert Charlebois have in common? They were all headliners in the world famous nightclubs of Montreal during one of the city's many "wide-open" eras — the one that was almost stamped out by Maurice Duplessis and Jean Drapeau.

In the heady days following World War One, Canadians began feeling the new power and freedom of the full nationhood their troops had won on the battlefields of Europe. Montreal was the cultural, economic and social heart of Canada as well as its esthetic soul. Excit-

ing times brought exciting entertainment and from the 1920s to the 50s Montreal was a night-club city to the world, with a depth and variety of live performances paralleled only in cities like Paris, New Orleans, San Francisco and Shanghai.

In those days Montreal showbiz centered on the playbills of about 40 to 50 downtown nightclubs, cabarets, lounges, dancehalls and theatres. It was a world without television and customers lined up every night outside the clubs to wait for their chance to see and hear their idols. Fortunately for future generations the club scene was thoroughly documented by the competitive Montreal press of the day, and many of the photos and stories have been preserved at Con-

cordia University. *Stepping Out*, the latest work by chief archivist Nancy Marrelli, takes full advantage of the rich Concordia collection (it began as an exhibition there) to bring us a lively, lavishly illustrated survey of the Golden Age, which indeed it was.

As TV took over the public's urge for entertainment, the never-pure night club business went into decline, aided by the puritanical public attitudes of Premier Maurice Duplessis and Mayor Jean Drapeau. But Montreal show-biz would soon rise from the ashes in another form, the multi-venue festival — jazz, comedy, lifestyle, etc. The Out Games were the most recent example. Once again, the city is wide open.

# OLD-FASHIONED DAY

photos by Jacqueline Hyman



Old-fashioned day at the Compton County Historical Museum in Eaton Corner drew visitors from all over the Townships in early August.



Rainer Lowry drives his wagon through Eaton Corner.



Audrey Lemaistre of Dunham spins homegrown wool on her spinning wheel.



Event organizer Serena Wintle stands between Mildred Lowry (left) and Alberta Everett crochets lace.

## HINDSIGHT

# A Progress of Germs

by Dwane Wilkin

*“The Most High hath created medicines out of the earth, and a wise man shall not abhor them”*

— *Ecclesiasticus*

Real struggles for progress are fought in the realm of ideas. No better proof exists than in the field of medicine, no heritage is more telling of how our forbears saw the world than the story of their healing arts.

The past abounds in bodily suffering of seeming infinite variety, so ways to ward off disease, cure ills and heal injuries are found in every human culture known to history. But the astonishingly high standard of living we enjoy in Western societies today chiefly grew out of an intellectual fight against ecclesiastical doctrine, rooted in the lingering superstitions of the Middle Ages. Sickness and health, like famine and fortune, had long been viewed as whims of the gods whose favours only priests might win. And indeed, the evidence from literature, mythology and history suggests the offices of healer and priest have not been long divided.

Medicine in Quebec arguably predates the arrival of French settlers by centuries, in the customs and practices of Native peoples. Not a few of their herbal remedies were derived from plants containing natural antibiotic, analgesic and astringent chemical compounds, and were no doubt quite effective. Salicylic acid, found in willow-tree bark, the active ingredient in aspirin, was known to Hippocrates and Native healers alike, though neither could have known how it worked. The local pharmacopeia contained well more than a 100 different plant species.

Even as flat-earth theories were being put to rest in Europe 500 years ago, concepts of disease and healing remained stubbornly primitive. A shaman’s cure familiar to 16th-century Iroquois or Algonquin villagers would not have seemed strange in the medicine chest of a French or English serf: in fact, European settlers regarded Indians as masters at treating all kinds of ailments. And their ability to diag-

nose and treat internal disorders and pain herbally bespoke an extensive botanical knowledge that today’s scientists are only just beginning to fully appreciate. So, if the history of medicine in Canada must have a starting point, let it be the year 1535, on an ice-bound ship somewhere in the St. Lawrence near present-day Montreal, where local Hurons cured Jacques Cartier’s scurvy-ridden crew with a tonic made from the twigs and bark of a fir tree—thus anticipating by more than two centuries its “discovery” and treatment by the Scottish naval surgeon James Lind.

European medicine was still in the hands of barber surgeons and apothecaries when the first French settlements appeared in Canada and their treatment methods did not far extend beyond blood-letting, purging and inducements to vomit. Little wonder disease killed three-quarters of the colony at Île-St-Croix during the winter of 1603. When Samuel de Champlain and Sieur de Monts moved their enterprise to Port-Royal the following year, their Order of Good Cheer was perhaps made a little cheerier by the presence of a Parisian druggist named Louis Hébert. It was Hébert’s interest in Native medicine that had lured him to Canada in the first place, and he eventually settled at Quebec in 1613. More interested in plants than furs, Hébert and his wife Marie Rollet earned their place in Canadian history not merely as the first habitants of New France to set down roots, but also as the first to care for the sick.

Frequently it is the gaps in medical knowledge that stand out most. When the cholera plagues came to Quebec on 19th-century immigrant ships from Europe, thousands of people were sent to their graves at Quebec City and Montreal. Doctors debated whether the disease was contagious and ordered more bleeding. Germ theory and principles of hygiene were long resisted by the medical establishment and neither public sanitation efforts nor antiseptic surgical procedures would appear in Canada till the

end of the 1800s. (My great aunt, born about the time that microscopes were first introduced to medical students at McGill in the mid-1870s, had her appendix out on the kitchen table in the family farmhouse.)

English Canada’s pre-eminent 19th-century doctor and medical teacher was William Osler, who introduced anatomy and bedside teaching to the curricula at McGill, thereby revolutionizing medical training in North America. Teaching of anatomy required a ready source of cadavers, however, and less affluent members of Quebec’s medical braintrust were frequently reduced to robbing graves to pay their tuition.

Fantastic dividends both in better public health and higher life expectancy have been the legacy of 20th-century medicine, and not a few of these were the fruit of innovation in Canada and Quebec. Wilder Penfield, an American-born brain surgeon made Canada his home in the 1930s and helped established Montreal as a leading centre for neurological research. Frederick Banting, co-discoverer of insulin and Armand Frappier, a pioneer in the field of immunology from the 1930s through the 1950s, both made enormous contributions to the general health and well-being of Quebecers, Canadians and the world. Of course, these are merely a few celebrated figures from history; volumes could easily be filled on the role of midwifery and the contributions of nursing which, incidentally, was the profession my mother proudly served for nearly three decades.

Vast improvements in nursing training over the last century have greatly elevated both the quality of hospital care and the status of women in Quebec society.

Complain as we might about long wait-times and the wasteful bungling of bureaucrats who increasingly outnumber caregivers in our modern health system, there is no such thing as good old days in the history of medicine. We may have lost house calls and doctors willing to be paid in livestock, but at least we have germs and not just miracles.

## EVENT LISTINGS

### Stanbridge East, May 28-Oct 8, 10-5 pm:

The Missisquoi Museum: The Missisquoi Main Street: Frelighsburg: The Missisquoi museum presents an exhibition in celebration of Frelighsburg's 200th anniversary. The exhibit highlights United Empire Loyalist objects and community life in the 19th and 20th centuries.  
Information: (450) 248-3153, info@missisquويمuseum.ca

### Magog, until August 26:

Galerie des Artistes du Canton, 30 Place du Commerce: "Memphré's Legend," an exhibition in homage to the late Jacques Boisvert, is open to the public until August 26. Pottton Heritage Association presents various documents and photos on the geomorphology and the fish of Lake Memphrémagog. All welcome. Admission is free.  
Information: 819-868-1881.

### Stanstead, June 8-Sept 8:

The Colby-Curtis Museum: Orson Wheeler Exhibition: This exhibition will feature 20 busts and many architectural models by Eastern Townships sculptor, Orson Wheeler.  
Information: (819) 876-7322

### Quebec City, Sept 2-3:

Morin Centre: Celtic Festival: Festivities will include whiskey tasting, music, dancing and information booths. Featuring live performances by Agincourt, Paddy Keenan, Duo Crepuscule and the 78th Fraser Highlanders.  
Information: (418) 694-9147, info@morin.org.

### Sherbrooke, Sept 9, 11 pm:

Parc du Domaine-Howard, Portland Boulevard, Jacques-Cartier borough,

Sherbrooke: "The Rendez-vous Howard, 5th edition."

The Parc du Domaine-Howard rediscovers its traditional festive side on this special day highlighting horticultural and ornithological activities. Also, craftspeople, artists, sculptors and photographers will be on site creating their works of art for all visitors to behold. The domain will open its doors for visits in the afternoon, and tea will be served, English-style. There will be entertainment for children, so the whole family is welcome.  
Information: (819) 821-1919, infotourisme@sdes.ca.

### Quebec City, Sept 17:

Morin Centre: Les Plaines d'Abraham: Marie Cantin, from the Commission des Champs Bataille Nationaux, will introduce the history of the Plains of Abraham and Patrick Donovan will discuss the creation of the park. The evening will feature music from the 78th Fraser Highlanders.  
Information: (418) 694-9147, info@morin.org.

### Quebec City, Sept 22, 8 p.m.:

Morin Centre: A Tribute to Leonard Cohen: Music from Clement-Jacques Tremblay and Randall Spear and a literary presentation from Monique Laforce will present and examine the works of Leonard Cohn. Tickets: \$6 for students and members, \$10 for non-members.  
Information: (418) 694-9147, info@morin.org

### Ottawa, Oct 12-14:

Heritage Canada Foundation: Headlines, Hotlinks and Historical Places: Heritage in an Electronic Age: A conference concerned with preserving, protecting and promoting historic places and communities. It will ex-

amine issues like preservation strategies, Historic places online and new media in heritage planning.  
Information: (613) 237-1066, www.heritagecanada.org.

### Montreal, Aug 15-Sept 9:

New Classical Theatre Festival: Montreal's New Theatre Company and Gravy Bath productions team up to launch what may be the city's most eclectic collection of original live drama this season.

The festival line-up includes:

— *Au-delà de la ville*, at Studio Hydro-Québec from August 15 to August 26

— *Gayanashagowa*, a love story written by Anthony Kokx inspired by Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, performed from August 15 to August 26

— *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*, at the Mainline Theatre, August 22 to September 2;

— *Last Call*, written by Holly O'Brien, on stage at La Balustrade, August 23 to September 2;

— *Hamlet (solo)*, starring Raoul Bhaneja and directed by Robert Ross, presented at Théâtre Ste-Catherine from August 29 to September 9 and;

— *The Cremator*, by Ladislav Fuks, on stage at the Théâtre Calixa-Lavallée, August 30 to September 9.

Information: www.newclassicaltheatrefestival.com.

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McCORD MUSEUM

## CULTURAL CALENDAR



### **The Abstract Edge**

*Recent Work by Robert Davidson*

Until October 15, 2006

Paintings and sculptures by a leading contemporary Haida artist, whose works transform our understanding of Northwest Coast Aboriginal art and cultural practice. A travelling exhibition produced by the UBC Museum of Anthropology in collaboration with the National Gallery of Canada.



### **Haida Art**

*Mapping an Ancient Language*

Until October 22, 2006

A selection of remarkable objects from the McCord's collection of historic Haida art, including carved feast bowls and painted masks, rattles and bentwood boxes. The exhibition was created with the assistance of contemporary Haida artist, Robert Davidson.



### **Nuvisavik: "The Place Where We Weave"**

*Inuit Tapestries from Arctic Canada*

November 4, 2006 to March 25, 2007

Woven tapestries and drawings demonstrate how Inuit women adapted a foreign technique – Aubusson weaving – to their own social and artistic needs. A travelling exhibition produced by the Canadian Museum of Civilization

The McCord is open from Tuesday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends, holiday weekends and Mondays during the summer months. Entrance fees (including taxes) are \$12 general admission, \$9 for seniors, \$6 for students, \$4 for children between the ages of 6 and 12, and \$22 for families. Museum admission is free of charge to Friends of the McCord and children aged five and under. The museum offers free entry to all visitors the first Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

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