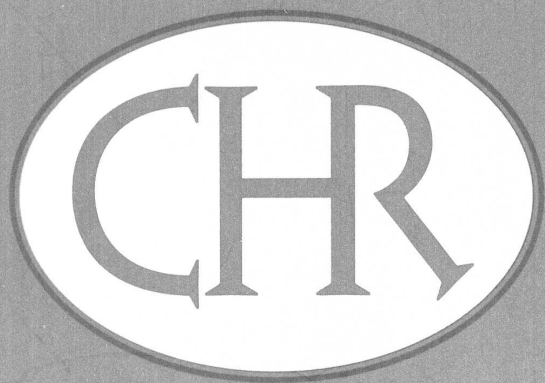


# The Canadian



# Historical Review

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# The Canadian Historical Review

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who will be relative unknowns to most readers. Women such as Edna Breithaupt, a painter and arts promoter, or Edna Haviland, an industrial chemist, or Margaret Millar, a mystery writer, offer readers an interesting look at the variety of fields in which women have distinguished themselves in Waterloo county. Additionally, the editor included two thematic essays on women's quilting and women in sports that address the county's accomplishments and explore the ways in which women's culture and sporting pursuits were an integral part of community life.

Despite the fact that *Women of Waterloo County* is a book to be dipped into leisurely rather than read from cover to cover in one sitting, readers will find it an engrossing read. The editor speaks of tough choices in narrowing the selection down to thirty-three and of the decision, with two exceptions, to focus on the deceased. Given the plethora of candidates, a second volume might be in order to offer interested readers biographies of some of the individuals who did not make this list. Quite simply, *Women of Waterloo County* offers interested readers the best of popular, community histories, in that it manages to combine in-depth research, interesting subject matter, and analysis in an engaging format. If such a book existed for western Canada, I would recommend it to my former student because an important recurrent theme runs throughout many of the biographies. That theme is, that in the vast majority of these exceptional women's backgrounds, there were pivotal moments when they had to choose between acquiescence to the conventions of the day or resistance in favour of the pursuit of their own goals and interests. Through their agency, their resistance, and sometimes their charming naivety about what was 'appropriate' for women, in combination with the advantages afforded by their middle-class or affluent family backgrounds, they were able to achieve remarkable feats. In the end, few of those women profiled would have considered themselves anything other than 'average women,' and therein lies the charm of their stories.

VALERIE J. KORINEK *University of Saskatchewan*

*The Provincial Asylum in Toronto: Reflections on Social and Architectural History.* Edited by EDNA HUDSON. Toronto: Toronto Region Architectural Conservancy 2000. Pp. 280, illus. \$30.00

*Doing Good: The Life of Toronto's General Hospital.* J.T.H. CONNOR. Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2000. Pp. xvi, 342, illus. \$60.00

Despite institutional closures, complex mergers, and massive demolition, there are few urban hospital districts as coherent as Toronto's. Within blocks of the city's oldest hospital in its third location, the

Toronto (formerly York) General Hospital, are the Princess Margaret, the Hospital for Sick Children, Mount Sinai, and Women's College hospitals, in addition to a handful of related institutions. This high density of medical institutions is fortuitous, given that the Toronto General Hospital amalgamated with the Toronto Western and the Princess Margaret and absorbed Doctors Hospital in 1998, becoming one huge superhospital: the University Health Network.

Illustrating an institutional 'disappearance' of another sort is the Provincial Asylum, about 6 kilometres southwest of this future hospital district when it was constructed in 1846. Unlike the high-density context of the area just described, the asylum (later called the Ontario Hospital, Toronto) was surrounded by a generous agricultural and recreational landscape. Its U-shaped, neoclassical form was designed by John George Howard, with additions by Kivas Tully in 1866. In 1976 the entire Howard-Tully complex was demolished, despite a superb plan by Toronto architect Jack Diamond to preserve and renovate the historic hospital.

Two new books explore the architectural, social, and medical histories of these disappearing Toronto healthcare institutions. *The Provincial Asylum in Toronto: Reflections on Social and Architectural History*, edited by Edna Hudson, is a collection of eleven essays published by the Toronto Region Architectural Conservancy. *Doing Good: The Life of Toronto's General Hospital* is a nearly 400-page tome by J.T.H. Connor, the former executive director of the Hannah Institute for the History of Medicine and now the assistant director for collections of the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Washington, DC. While architecture is the main focus of Hudson's book, it is but one of several topics explored by Connor.

Like many publications produced by preservation agencies, *The Provincial Asylum in Toronto* laments the unnecessary loss of its namesake. The claims made for the significance of the institution in the book are substantial. It was, we learn, the largest public non-military building in Canada, with the third largest patient population in North America. It established a framework for all doctors working in Canadian asylums, and had a superintendent (Joseph Workman) who invented the now standard system of medical interning. Unfortunately, the book suffers from a serious lack of editing, making for an uneven and, in general, disappointingly amateurish publication. For example, the order of the essays seems all wrong – we don't get a description of the building until page 96 or know that the commission was won by competition until ten pages later. Not until chapter 10 are we out-of-towners told whether the building is still standing today. Lots of information and even some

illustrations are repeated throughout the book, while crucial material (textual and visual) is sadly missing. And the absence of a bibliography and an index will make the book difficult to use in courses.

Had the strongest essays in the collection, by Stephen Bell (comparing Howard's and Tully's hospitals) and Pleasance Kaufman Crawford (on the asylum's landscape), come first, readers may have had an easier time. Similarly, Douglas Richardson's tour of Toronto in 1858 is an innovative window on the asylum's urban context, but makes no sense before the introduction of the hospital itself. By this time readers are ready for the main course. Furthermore, Shirley Morriss's account of John George Howard only hints at the unique story of the building's architect, especially given that his work-a-day life is recorded in an extraordinary collection of journals. Hudson's chapter on other asylum layouts is surprisingly lacking in Canadian examples, while other irrelevant information, such as a general description of perspective drawing, is included. Reading the book from beginning to end is more like listening to a group of unpractised oral reports than a finished publication.

Connor's book, in contrast, is an even-handed, authoritative, and more conservative hospital history. The author presents the last two centuries of the Toronto General Hospital in three phases, using dates that roughly correspond to a widely accepted historical framework for hospitals: 1797–1856 was the era of the charitable hospital; 1856–1903, the model hospital; and 1904–2000, the academic institution. Like historians of medicine Charles Rosenberg, Guenter Risse, and others, Connor believes that the hospital achieved its modern state about the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, one of the central points of *Doing Good* is that the processes Rosenberg has shown to have shaped the American hospital between 1800 and 1920 – that society became hospitalized and that the hospital became medicalized – happened here too.

The book will appeal both to readers hungry for historical information particular to the institution – its evolution, the role of particular individuals, and its numerous medical achievements – and those with a general interest in Canadian history. Indeed, the strength of *Doing Good* is the masterful way that Connor pitches the hospital as a social and political barometer for ideas outside itself. Too often authors of hospital histories as a genre are forced to focus only on the stories of the institutions' own 'great men,' but Connor maintains an impressively critical stance throughout the book. Part One, for example, 'Providing for the Sick Poor, 1797–1856,' ends with a detailed look at the institution's *annus horribilis*, 1855, when professional rivalries resulted in patients being treated more as illustrations for medical training than as sick people



deserving of charity. Connor also reveals numerous anti-Semitic incidents in the hospital's past. These are the kind of dark chapters that are often omitted in commissioned hospital histories.

In its critical stance and its depth of inquiry, *Doing Good* resembles other excellent Canadian hospital histories, such as David Gagan's *'A Necessity among Us': The Owen Sound General and Marine Hospital, 1891-1985* (University of Toronto Press 1990), Colin Howell's *History of the Victoria General Hospital in Halifax, 1887-1987* (Victoria General Hospital 1988), and François Rousseau's *La croix et le scalpel: Histoire des Augustines et de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec, 1639-1989* (Septentrion 1989). Connor himself made a call for a more comprehensive history of hospitals in Canada in 1990 when he claimed in a review essay, 'there is a tremendous need in Canada to produce more synthetic studies of a collective nature.' Commenting on the contradictory nature of hospital histories in this country, he was frustrated by what he perceived as a conflict between the titles of hospital histories and their use of images: 'On the one hand, the titles promise an examination of care and caring (presumably of patients), while on the other the jacket illustrations suggest that the works are more concerned with buildings and other non-patient matters.'<sup>1</sup>

Not surprising given the critical position he articulated over a decade ago, buildings figure quite prominently in Connor's book. Although his chronological divisions correspond with typological changes in the institution, rather than its changing physical environment, the three buildings occupied by the Toronto General Hospital get considerable attention in both the text and the illustrations. The two-storey brick building that housed the institution from 1829 to 1856 looked remarkably like a big house. In 1856 a grand, E-shaped hospital designed by noted architect William Hay opened for patients. Much criticized for its proximity to the Don River and its distance from central Toronto, the Toronto General Hospital moved back downtown in 1913. Darling and Pearson, designers of the Home for Incurables, the Hospital for Sick Children, the new university medical building, and 'Holwood,' the luxurious home of longtime hospital board chairman Joseph W. Flavelle, were the architects of this new edifice. Sadly, the Hay building was demolished in 1922.

One criticism of *Doing Good* stemming from this question of how words and images of hospitals should best relate is that the illustrations

1 J.T.H. Connor, 'Review Essay: Hospital History in Canada and the United States,' *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 7, 1 (1990): 93-104

in the book are in two groups, rather than integrated with the text. This division seems especially unfortunate, given Connor's earlier call for a hospital history more fully engaging of architectural and visual evidence.

The timing of *Doing Good*, however, could not be better. The University Health Network has grand plans for the twenty-first century, which unfortunately do not include the careful preservation of its architectural heritage. Doctors Hospital was demolished soon after its government-mandated takeover. As recently as the summer of 2001 the 1930 T.J. Bell Wing (also by Darling & Pearson) at the Toronto General Hospital, one of the earliest and most important private patients' pavilions in Canada, was demolished brick by brick, to make way for a new, state-of-the-art Clinical Services Building. And the prospect of tearing down the main building of 1913 has also been raised. Unfortunately, fine books like *Doing Good* cannot be produced as rapidly as the material record of Canadian medicine is disappearing.

ANNMARIE ADAMS *McGill University*

*Labouring the Canadian Millennium: Writings on Work and Workers, History and Historiography.* Edited by BRYAN D. PALMER. St John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History 2000. Pp. 483, illus. \$20.00

Taking stock and self-reflection are the twin habits of Canadian labour historians. Ever since the so-called new labour history emerged in the mid-1970s, essays delineating advances and achievements or outlining the tasks ahead have appeared on a regular basis. In part this accounting stems from the fact that historians who study the world of work and workers are conscious of the engaged nature of their efforts: they are not impartial observers of a 'dead' past but active participants in an ongoing struggle. As Desmond Morton writes in this latest volume of essays, 'What is the point of history research that is largely out of touch with the contemporary reality of working-class life and crises?'

Belying its somewhat misleading title, *Labouring the Millennium* is in fact a broad and frequently penetrating look at 'themes of importance in understanding labour's significance and history over the course of the last century.' The relevance of the religious-cultural milestone to the everyday lives of working men and women is never actually discussed, though most of the authors do make some passing reference to the occasion. More pertinent, perhaps, is the quarter-century anniversary of *Labour/Le Travail*, founded in 1976, under whose auspices this collection originally appeared. According to Bryan Palmer, editor of both *Labour/Le Travail* and *Labouring the Millennium*, the journal was conceived 'in the