



# THE OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 101 · 2004

*Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University, Montréal (Québec) Canada*

## IN THIS ISSUE

IN 1905, OSLER RECEIVED THE offer of the Regius Chair of Medicine at Oxford. He claimed that he accepted the post because he was ready to retire, and the Chair seemed almost a sinecure. As we know, Osler's retirement years were some of the busiest in his life. This phenomenon of "pseudo-retirement" seems to affect many people connected with the Osler Library, particularly the author of our lead article for this number, David Crawford, Emeritus Librarian. For many years, David was Health Sciences Librarian at McGill, and exercised oversight of the Osler Library within the University's library system. Though he allegedly retired as Librarian two years ago, being out of harness seems only to have released more of his already legendary energy. We are delighted that some of that zeal has resulted in this review of an amazing housekeeping find in the Osler Library: 1100 Edinburgh medical theses from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, many with intriguing Canadian connections. As McGill's Medical Faculty is a descendent (so to speak) of Edinburgh's, this discovery is something of an institutional heirloom. ❁

## EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL THESES AT THE OSLER LIBRARY

In her recent report to the Friends of the Osler Library, (1) Pamela Miller noted that during the preparations for the library renovations we unearthed a collection of theses from the University of Edinburgh that had been less than helpfully catalogued. In fact, the catalogue entry simply read "Edinburgh theses – 68 volumes 1793?-1824?" and the contents were described as a "Collection of early Latin theses from the University of Edinburgh, Faculty of Medicine".

These volumes, and a couple of others that had been more completely catalogued, had been transferred to the Osler from the Health Sciences Library in the late 1960s and have the ownership markings of the Faculty of Medicine Library, McGill College – a designation that changed to McGill University in 1885. It is not clear when the volumes arrived at McGill (they are not listed in the Medical Library's 1845 catalogue) but it is tempting to think that early faculty

by  
David  
Crawford

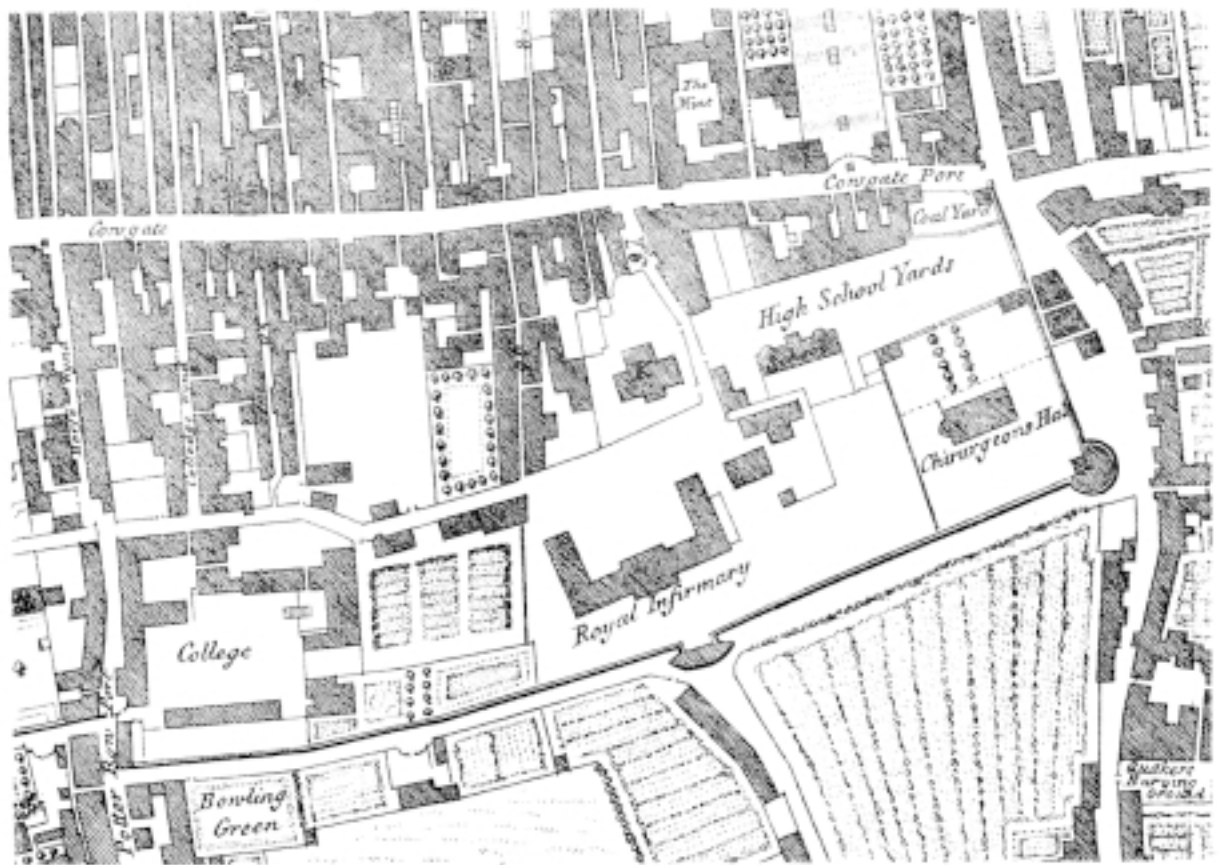


Photo by

[Mr. E. C. Inglis, Edinburgh]

The Old Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (the north front facing Infirmary Street) shortly before its demolition about 1884.

...ours is a substantial collection and undoubtedly one of the largest outside Edinburgh.



Section of William Edgar's Plan of Edinburgh, 1742.  
96. Robertson's Close. 97. High School Wynd. K. Lady Yester's Church.

Medical students at the University of Edinburgh would have been very familiar with this neighbourhood.

...the Osler Library's Edinburgh University thesis collection is strongest in the years 1790-1821.



members, many of whom had graduated from or attended the University of Edinburgh, collected and presented them. The cataloguing project mentioned by Mrs. Miller is now complete and it turns out that the Osler Library owns just over 1100 medical theses from the University of Edinburgh. The Wellcome Library lists "only" 725, Chetham's Library in Manchester has about 500 and the U.S. National Library of Medicine about 1200 so ours is a substantial collection and undoubtedly one of the largest outside Edinburgh. Edinburgh University medical theses were printed from 1726-1835 and a total of 4104 MD theses were presented at Edinburgh during this period; it is unclear how many copies of each were printed but the print-runs were undoubtedly small. The Osler collection is now individually catalogued in McGill University's

online catalogue, MUSE, (<http://muse.mcgill.ca>) and can also be surveyed *en bloc* by searching "Edinburgh theses" as a Series.

As noted above, the Osler Library's collection of Edinburgh theses is far from complete. The first (on pain, *dolore*) was presented by John Monteith, described as "Scoto-Brit," in 1726. Though the first medical thesis at Edinburgh was written in 1726, the earliest in our collection is a contemporary reprint of James Grainger's thesis on syphilis published in 1753. This is actually not part of this newly catalogued collection as it is a *Bibliotheca Osleriana* item (Osler 2811). The earliest thesis in the newly catalogued collection dates from 1789 and the Osler Library's Edinburgh University thesis collection is strongest in the years 1790-1821. Even in this period the

theses submitted in some years are virtually lacking; only two out of 49 in 1804 and none of 60 in 1805. The years 1807 and 1808 are complete while some of the later years lack whole letters of the alphabet – the theses have been bound, normally alphabetically, by year with about 20 theses of between 20 and 50 pages each in a volume. The library has a few individual theses published after this newly catalogued collection ends in 1827. Notable among these is one by Henry Parkin on cholera, written in English in 1834. The University abandoned teaching and examining in Latin only in 1833 (2) and after that date theses could be written in English. The printed directory of Edinburgh graduates lists the first English theses as being published in 1834 and the last ones in Latin in 1835 (6). As noted above, the requirement to have MD theses

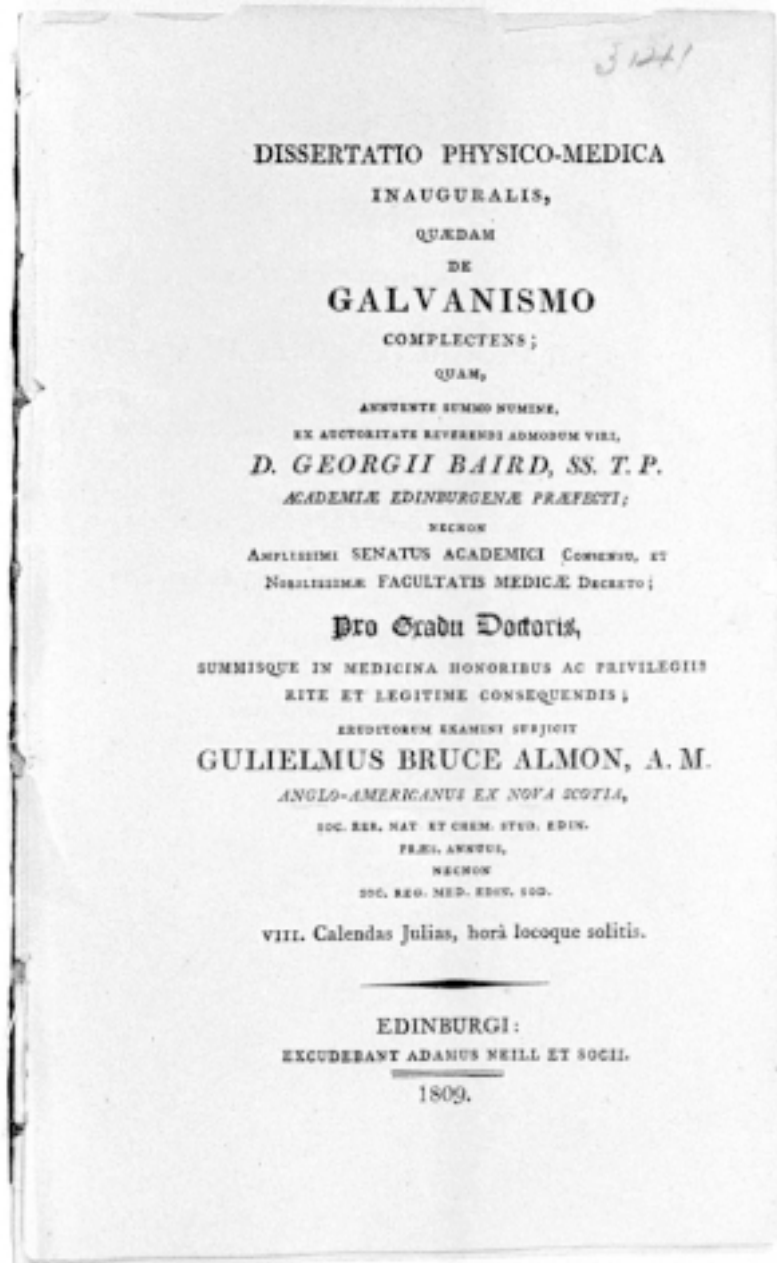
printed was also changed at Edinburgh, in 1835 (3) – those available in print after that date are normally commercial editions.

The Osler Library's Edinburgh thesis collection is not complete and which theses are there and which are not appears to be arbitrary – were whole volumes lost, or never acquired? However, the collection does contain a wealth of interesting theses. A few examples:

In 1793 Jean de Carro (Joannes de Carro) a native of Geneva graduated from Edinburgh with a thesis on acute hydrocephalus. De Carro went on to collaborate with Edward Jenner and introduced vaccination to many parts of continental Europe. He was instrumental in sending vaccine into Italy, Germany, Poland and Turkey. In 1801 he worked with Lord Elgin (of the Marbles) who was British Ambassador at Constantinople and they sent vaccine overland to Basra and thence to India where many thousands were vaccinated during the next few years. (4) De Carro was also interested in balneology and was "the most outstanding personality of 19<sup>th</sup> century Carlsbad" (5) where he was active in its scientific, cultural and social life. To judge by the number of hotels still named after him in many European spas, he is still remembered for his balneological efforts!

The printed directory of Edinburgh University medical theses (6) lists the place of origin of the graduates and the earliest theses by Canadians appear to be two from 1809. One, by Robert Bayard, is on opium; the second is by William Bruce Almon, who wrote on electrotherapeutics. Both listings give their origin as 'Anglo-Americanus ex Nova Scotia'.

The Bayard family had been prominent in New York before the War of Independence but they were Loyalists and Robert's father, Samuel Vetch Bayard, moved the family to Nova Scotia, where Robert was born in 1788. After his graduation in 1809, Bayard was appointed professor of obstetrics at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the State

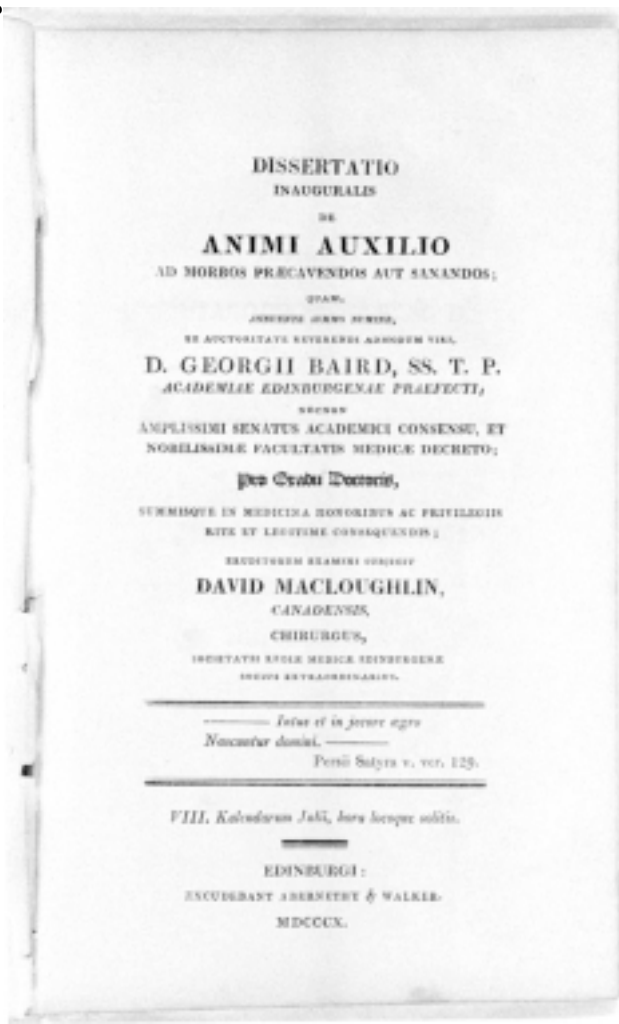


Apart from demonstrating medical interest in the use of electricity, this title page evokes the life of a famous Nova Scotian Loyalist family. William Bruce Almon promoted public health, held office and involved himself in politics.

of New York. During the War of 1812 he chose not to take the oath of allegiance and returned to Canada. He settled in Kentville, Nova Scotia, where he practised until 1823 before moving to Saint John in New Brunswick where he practised with his son. (7) The Almon family too had moved to Halifax as Loyalists and William Bruce Almon's father, William James Almon, was appointed surgeon to the Board of Ordnance and the Royal Artillery in Halifax.



The first graduates specifically identified as "Canad." are from 1810, ... All four of these early Canadian theses are in the Osler Library's collection.



The first graduates specifically identified as "Canad." are from 1810, David MacLoughlin, with a thesis, on *animi auxilio* ("support for life") and Thomas Fargues, from Lower Canada (Québec), whose thesis is on chorea (St. Vitus' Dance). All four of these early Canadian theses are in the Osler Library's collection.

The collection also contains theses by students who were active in founding medical schools elsewhere. James Lawson Drummond graduated from Edinburgh in 1814 – his thesis was on ophthalmology. In 1818 he was appointed the first professor of anatomy at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution and when a separate medical school, the Belfast Medical School, opened in 1835 he was appointed to be its first Professor of Anatomy and President. The Belfast Medical School was the short-



David MacLoughlin's dedications include several prominent Canadians. His brother John was licensed to practise medicine at the age of 19. He decided, however, to become a fur-trader, and had an adventurous career in the west, including founding Oregon City. John financed his brother's studies and is thanked along with the distinguished Dr. James Fisher (to whom he was likely apprenticed) Dr. Simon Fraser, their uncle, Malcolm Fraser, soldier and seigneur, and Alexander Fraser, seigneur, for their financial and moral support of his studies.

lived (1835-1849) predecessor of the Queen's University medical school. (8)

McGill University's medical school had four founders, William Caldwell, Andrew Fernando Holmes, William Robertson and John Stephenson. All of them received some of their education at the University of Edinburgh. Both Caldwell and Robertson received their medical training at Edinburgh but not their MD degrees; Caldwell's degree was acquired, by attestation, from Marischal College in Aberdeen and Robertson received an MD *honoris causa* from the University of Vermont in 1832. Two of them (Holmes and Stephenson) did however graduate from Edinburgh. Both of their theses are in the collection.

Andrew Fernando Holmes was born in Cadiz, Spain in 1797 because the ship on which his parents were travelling from Britain to Canada had been captured during the Napoleonic Wars by a French frigate. He graduated in 1819 with a thesis on tetanus. John Stephenson, who was born in Montreal, graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 1820 with a thesis on repair of the cleft palate (*de velosynthesi*). Stephenson himself had a cleft palate and his thesis was a description of the pioneering operation by Philibert-Joseph Roux (1780-1854) to repair this painful condition. Roux himself described the operation only in 1825. (9) Stephenson's thesis was translated by W.W. Francis shortly before his death, and published in 1963, and reprinted in 1971. (10)

It should be noted that Carl Ferdinand von Graefe (1787-1840), protested that he was the first to perform this operation and it seems clear that he had in fact preceded Roux and had first operated in 1816 ("to be precise, on December 27<sup>th</sup>."). In his first publication on the operation (11) von Graefe adds an Addendum in which he states that Roux's claim of precedence "could hardly come from a physician, who is well read in the literature." Roux eventually accepted von Graefe's claim and put his error down to being unable to read German. Despite the

fact that von Graefe had developed the procedure, it was Roux's publication that brought it into current surgical use and Stephenson's thesis must be one of the first occasions of a patient being the first to document a surgical procedure and, in fact, make some suggestions as to how it could be improved. (12)

Another interesting Canadian thesis is that on rabies, by Jean-Baptiste Curtius Trestler written in 1821. Trestler was the son of Jean-Joseph Trestler who had come to Canada as a mercenary and military surgeon and who "built up an impressive medical library of some 130 volumes, most of them in German". (7) The Trestler family "became fully integrated into the French-speaking and Catholic community of Lower Canada" and Jean Baptiste Trestler appears to be the first francophone Canadian to receive an MD degree from Edinburgh. Trestler became professor of surgery in the École de médecine et de chirurgie de Montréal, founded in 1843. No details have yet been found on Benjamin Berthelet, also identified as "Canadensis", who graduated in 1821 though he may be the francophone doctor Louis-Benjamin Bertholet (1796-1847) about whom little information has been found. The earliest thesis by an American appears to be one written by Charles Moore in 1752.

The newly catalogued collection has several Osler connections; John Revere wrote one of the theses from 1811 (on insanity). Revere was the youngest child of Paul Revere and the uncle of Lady Osler. He became a founding physician (1841) of the New York University School of Medicine.

Another connection with Osler is seen through the annotation to *Bibliotheca Osleriana* Numbers 7018 and 2278. Osler 7018 reads:

Catalogue of old and rare Books in Medicine, Surgery etc. and of a series of Medical Theses by Students from America at Edinburgh University 1760-1813. On sale by George P. Johnston.



*Maison Trestler. Jean-Baptiste Curtius Trestler lived in this house in Vaudreuil-Dorion, now an historic property, open to the public for visits and cultural events.*

In his annotation concerning this (Osler 2278), Osler notes:

This Edinburgh catalogue came from Johnston one Sunday morning in 1902, while I was still in Baltimore. I cabled at once for all the American theses – 126, excluding those of West Indian students – and secured them (Johnston cabled me "Do you mean all of them?") The following summer, when in Edinburgh, I called at Johnston's and he showed me a group of cables which he had received. Mine came early Monday morning before the shop opened. Then in quick succession came others from the Surgeon-General's Library, Washington, the College of Physicians, Phila., the Acad. Of Medicine, N.Y., and from Dr. Wm. Pepper. It is a remarkable collection and came chiefly from the libraries of the Professors Hope, to whom they were presentation copies. There are theses of some of the most

*... Stephenson's thesis must be one of the first occasions of a patient being the first to document a surgical procedure and, in fact, make some suggestions as to how it could be improved.*

... libraries in general and the Osler in particular are a constant source of serendipitous discoveries.



distinguished American physicians: Bard, Archer, Almon of Nova Scotia (the father of Senator A and grandfather of my friend Tom A.), Shippen, Morgan, Kuhn, Logan of Philadelphia, Benj. Rush, Physick, Arthur Lee and others. I gave the collection to the Frick Library of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland.

The Frick Library at the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland (Maryland State Medical Society) was dispersed in 2002/03, much of it (including at least some of the Johnston sale) went to the Johns Hopkins University. Our newly catalogued collection includes 57 of the 126 theses contained in the Johnston group, and, in particular, includes those by Almon and Philip Syng Physick.

The fact that a collection of this size and interest could go virtually unnoticed and uncatalogued for many years reinforces the fact that libraries in general and the Osler in particular are a constant source of serendipitous discoveries. Perhaps some future holder of an Osler Library Research Travel Grant will discover and expose additional treasures in this collection or elsewhere in the library. ❀

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## AN INVITATION TO CELEBRATE OUR 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

7<sup>5</sup> years ago, McGill University opened this outstanding library in the Strathcona Medical Building. Since then, the Osler Library of the History of Medicine has moved, grown and expanded. New conservation measures have been established to ensure that everything is being done to enhance the collections. Thanks to the Class of Medicine '78, we are adding new display cases so that we can show off more of our outstanding material. It is time to celebrate and we hope that you will be able to join us.

We have chosen Saturday, October 16<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the Osler Library by holding a seminar on "Medical Books

Section of the Radcliffe Library from James Gibbs' Bibliotheca Radcliviana... London 1747.

and Medical Libraries in Historical Perspective." We will meet in the Martin Amphitheatre at 2 pm and our speakers will be Professor John Harley-Warner from Yale who will speak on 19<sup>th</sup> century medical education and Professor Nancy Siraisi from Hunter College who will speak on medical literature in the Renaissance. Terry Rutherford will speak on book restoration and works she has restored for the Osler Library. Finally Dr. Richard Fraser of McGill's Department of Pathology, will present a video report on some recently discovered histology slides prepared by an early student of Osler's. It is going to be an inspiring afternoon.

In addition, we are publishing a new book entitled 75 Books from the Osler Library. A few selections are found on this page. Scholars who have worked with the Osler collection have been invited to choose and comment on their favourite books. It promises to be an



"Typus Tarantiacorum Saltantium" from Athanasius Kircher's Phonurgia Nova... [Kempten] 1673.



*Poor Mary Toft in Ignorance was bred,  
And ne'er betray'd a deep designing head,  
Never seem'd cut out for plots: Yet never did wife  
Like her, impose so grossly on Man Midwife;  
Who Scorning Reason, Common Sense, and Nature,  
Plac'd all their faith in such a Stupid Creature.*

George Steevens' A Complete collection of all the tracts, both printed and manuscript, relating to Mary Tofts, the celebrated Rabbit Woman of Godalming. London 1726-53.



*It is time to celebrate and we hope that you will be able to join us.*

Tsetse flies illustrating David Bruce's Further Report on the Tsetse Fly Disease or Nagana in Zululand. London 1897.

Plate IV from  
Bernhard  
Seigfried  
Albinus'  
Tables of the  
Skeleton and  
Muscles of the  
Human  
Body. London  
1749.



unusual publication. Finally, there will be an exhibition on the same theme, in our new display cases. We do hope that you will join in the celebration, which is open to everyone. This is your invitation! ✨

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## NOTES FROM THE OSLER LIBRARY

### Osler Studies in the History of Medicine

Dr. Richard Golden's book *A History of William Osler's The Principles and Practice of Medicine* is published and available from this Library, written by the renowned contemporary authority on Osler and Osleriana. This is a fascinating tale of the many incarnations of Osler's influential textbook of which an estimated 500,000 copies were printed and which went through 16 editions. Copies may be ordered from the Library or by our web page for \$25, or \$20 for Friends of the Osler Library. Canadian Friends should remit in Canadian currency (the price includes GST), and American and international Friends in U.S. currency. The price also includes postage.

### The American Osler Society

The 34<sup>th</sup> meeting of the American Osler Society was held in Houston, Texas in April, with an array of excellent papers. Visits were arranged to the Texas Medical Center, the largest medical centre in the world and the John P. McGovern Historical Collections and Research Center. We were bussed to Galveston for a session in honour of John P. McGovern in the Old Red Amphitheater, University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston. Following the presentations, we visited Old Red's McGovern Hall of Medical History, an Art and Medicine exhibit at the Moody Medical Library and the Truman G. Blocker, Jr. History of Medicine Collections. Enthusiastic librarians gave us a warm welcome as we toured and discussed their collections.

### Travel Grants

For administrative purposes, the Osler Library Research Fellowship Programme has been renamed the Osler Library Research Travel Grant. To celebrate our re-opening, we awarded two Fellowships in 2003, but unfortunately one of the recipients had to turn us down due to military commitments in the middle-east. As a result, this year, two Osler Library Research Travel Grants were awarded to Dr. Robert Hamilton who will be working on Maude Abbott and Dr. Karim Mukhida who will be working on Wilder Penfield.

### An Addition to the Bethune Collection

Just before her death this March at the age of 92, Irene Kon donated her family papers relating to Norman Bethune. Irene's father, Louis Kon, had a lasting influence on Bethune's political beliefs. As a very young girl, Irene recalled being invited by Bethune, to witness an operation at the Hôtel-Dieu. She spoke of his care for his patients and his concern for their often unhealthy surroundings. This material, which contains

original letters by Bethune, is a welcome addition to a much used collection.

### Another Award

Congratulations to Dr. Theodore Sourkes, chairman of the Standing Committee of the Osler Library, who has been named an Honorary Fellow of the Canadian College of Neuropsychopharmacology.

### American Association of the History of Medicine

Jacalyn Duffin, Hannah Chair of the History of Medicine, Queen's University and a member of our Board of Curators is President of the American Association of the History of Medicine.

### Palmer Howard Futcher

We are sorry to report the death of Palmer Howard Futcher, aged 93. Palmer Futcher was a great supporter of the Osler Library presenting us with a wonderful family archive including two stunning photograph albums assembled by his mother Marjorie Howard Futcher. (See *Osler Library Newsletter* no. 92) ✨

Editorial Committee for the *Newsletter*: Faith Wallis, Editor; Pamela Miller, History of Medicine Librarian and Assistant Editor; Lily Szczygiel, Editorial Assistant.

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