

## The McGill Raymond Klibansky Collection Research Grant – Report

The grant enabled me to spend summer 2018 working on several materials in the Blacker-Wood library relating to Casey A. Wood. I was helped enormously in identifying the relevant materials by Sarah Adams, Lauren Williams, and other library staff.

Casey Wood was an ophthalmologist trained at McGill who founded the Wood library dedicated to his wife Emma Shearer Wood and who also helped secure the endowment of the Blacker library. He made large collections of books and museum objects, many of which he donated to McGill.

I had previously written about the collection of Sri Lankan medical objects that Casey Wood made for the Redpath Museum. This is a rare collection of Asian medical objects from the early modern period that Wood acquired during his visits to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in the 1920s and 30s. I presented a paper on this subject at the symposium, *The eyes have it: An appreciation of Casey Wood's contribution to ophthalmology, ornithology & the McGill Library*, held at the Blacker-Wood library in April 2018. Following on from this project, I was interested in finding out more about Casey Wood's travels and methods of collection.

Using Wood's autobiographical and collected materials in the Blacker-Wood Library I was able to trace how he had developed his combination of interests in ophthalmology, ornithology, and the history of medicine during his travels in Asia and the Pacific between 1920 and 1934. Wood funded artists to paint the birds of both Fiji and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and himself produced a series of articles on endemic birds in these islands.

Wood stressed the importance of correctly observing the colouring of birds and therefore required his artists to draw from live whenever possible. The results were a series of very lively and vivid paintings, many of which remain in the Blacker-Wood library. While *the Coloured Plates of the Birds of Ceylon*, by George Henry Morrison Reid, was published by the Ceylon Government, the *Birds of Fiji* series remains mainly unpublished.

I was also able to find out more about Wood's collecting practices during his time in Ceylon and in particular his relationship with staff members at the Colombo Museum. The materials allowed me to identify two Sri Lankan scholars who had gone unmentioned in Wood's published writings but who had been important in providing descriptions for Wood's collection of birds.

Investigating Wood's travels revealed some interesting information about social relations in the late colonial period and on evolving policies regarding conservation, traditional medicine, and the preservation of antiquities. Wood crossed paths with some more famous travellers, from President Roosevelt visiting Egypt to Rabindranath Tagore visiting Ceylon. He attended a garden party held by the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. Wood had friendly relations with the colonial governors and elites in both Ceylon and Fiji and served as an informal consultant on matters of ornithology in both islands.

As a result of the research I will produce a chapter for the proposed edited book on Casey Wood's life and collections to be published by McGill-Queen's University Press.

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