



# Maude Abbott Medical Museum NEWSLETTER

Musée médical Maude-Abbott

Volume 5 No 1, Fall 2020

## Message from the Director

Our medical museum experience this past year has been characterized by a number of highs and one big low. Like other McGill units and departments, we have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 lockdown. The museum has been closed to visitors since mid-March and we have had to cancel a number of events and delay several projects. Fortunately, all Museum staff, including volunteer and work study students, have stayed free of serious health issues. One of the year's highs was cohosting the May 2019 Annual Meeting of the American Osler Society with the Osler Library and the MNI. Visits to the Museum were included as part of the program and were attended by a number of Oslerians. Other groups having special visits to the Museum included the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network in February (following a lecture about Maude Abbott) and an evening reception for the Canadian Pediatric Cardiology Society in September.

In addition to these groups, the Museum welcomed over 1,000 individual visitors since May 2019; the website had over 24,000 page views. And, our newly instituted Instagram post, developed and fed by student volunteer Aliyah Zaman, has accumulated

over 1,250 followers. In February, we received a generous grant from McGill's Office of Sustainability to renovate our main storage room and to mount a number of special exhibits in the Strathcona building. Unfortunately, the completion and development of these projects has been put on hold due to the COVID-19 lockdown; however, we hope to be able to start work again on them in the fall. With McGill's Information Technology Services, we have developed a new database providing increased security and archival efficiency (see next page).

Finally, we received two anonymous donations which will permit us to renovate the front entrance of the Museum. This will involve freeing up space currently used for storage as well as the addition of new display cabinets and tables. The design of the area and cabinets began in January but also had to be postponed because of the lockdown. Once completed, we anticipate that the new area will greatly improve the look of the museum entry as well as provide an exceptional display area. Despite the significant problems presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are eagerly anticipating the future when we can complete these and other projects and look forward to seeing you all again when we are able to reopen.

Rick Fraser, Director

**Left:** A group from the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) visit after a lecture on the life of Maude Abbott.

**Right:** Physicians from the Canadian Pediatric Cardiology Society examine the Holmes heart.



---

# New Virtual Exhibit: Greetings from Montreal

---

Our inability to access the Museum because of the COVID-19 lockdown meant that working with specimens became impossible. In order to continue exhibit development, we decided to identify something that could be worked on outside of the Museum and displayed virtually on its website – the MAMM collection of postcards fit the bill perfectly!

Postcards were once one of the most popular means of communication by mail. The earliest ones, known as “postals”, included space for the

recipient’s address on the back and a message on the front. Cards with small images on their front began to appear in the 1880s and increased markedly in number thereafter. Eventually, the image came to occupy the entire front, with a divided space on the back for an address and a message to the recipient. This arrangement increased their appeal and led to what has been called the “Golden Age” of postcards. The increased use was remarkable - it has been estimated that as many as seven billion cards were mailed worldwide in 1905!

So-called “linen” cards were developed in the 1930s; these had a high rag content, enabling quicker production and giving a brighter appearance to the dyes. These cards were in turn supplanted by chromochrome-style cards, which included pictures similar to those used for camera color images. Although still in production, use of traditional printed postcards has declined since the development of digital technology and the introduction of ecards.

The MAMM collection includes cards that date from 1900 to 1960 and depict 35 Montreal hospitals, hospices and asylums. The histories of these institutions and their buildings are often complicated, with the addition of new wings, mergers, and changes in mission and affiliation. The postcards provide interesting “snapshot” views of these histories which, together with illustrative maps and photographs, are briefly documented in the exhibit. In addition to providing information about the appearance and architecture of the city’s hospitals, the postcards give a view of Montreal through the eyes of those who sent news to friends and family through the postal system before the age of mobile telephones and email. We hope to mount a physical exhibit that shows the entire collection sometime in the future. The virtual exhibit is available for viewing on the Museum website.

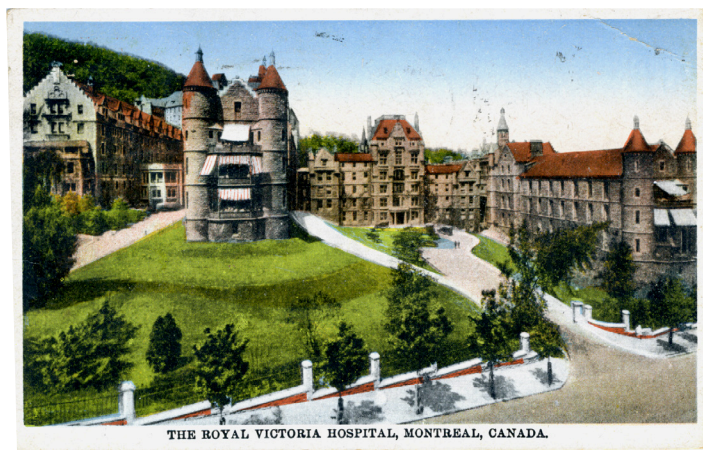
<https://www.mcgill.ca/medicalmuseum/exhibits>



Postcard showing the Montreal General Hospital.  
Publisher: Montreal Import Co., Montreal No. 132  
Date: c1914



Postcard showing the Royal Victoria Hospital.  
Publisher: International Fine Art Co., Ltd. No. 817  
Date: 1934



---

## Spotlight on MAMM Volunteers

---

The MAMM student volunteers, including both undergraduates and graduates from a variety of University faculties, have always had an important input in the Museum, including activities such as data entry, specimen storage, exhibit installation and reception organization. After work on projects planned for 2020 came to a halt in March, they didn't miss a beat and volunteering at the MAMM soon became virtual. For example, one volunteer (who will be leaving the museum to start medical training in Fall 2020) was able to standardize the data and export over 4,000 files to a new collection management software system. Aliyah Zaman, (photo on the right) MSc student in Neuroscience, used a backlog of images she had acquired to continue posting on the Instagram account she had developed over the previous year, that now includes over 1,250 followers. [https://www.instagram.com/mcgill\\_mamm/](https://www.instagram.com/mcgill_mamm/)



---

### A New Collection Management Database

---



The MAMM collections have increased significantly since the museum's official constitution in 2012. Excel database summaries of part of the pathology and anatomy material had begun sometime before then, but were still incomplete at the time of the move to the Strathcona Building in 2015. A number of additional Excel documents had also been created to document specific "collections" such as microscopes and cardiovascular devices.

Following generous support by the Faculty of Medicine and McGill Instructional Services (MEDIT), we have been able to meld information from all these "collections" into a single database, using a collection management software system. The database created now includes over 4,300 entries.

Apart from the data security and ease in finding material that this database provides, this process has enabled us to accession items that we have received over the past 10 years.

An example of this is the collection of the late Dr. Allan L. Sherwin, Professor Emeritus of Neurology at McGill and Neurologist at the Montreal Neurological Hospital, which was donated to the MAMM in 2017. The collection consists of medical, pharmaceutical and surgical objects that Dr. Sherwin accumulated while writing his book "Bridging Two Peoples: Chief Peter E. Jones, 1843-1909".

---

### Immortalizing the Mortal

---

The fourth edition of the Immortalizing the Mortal event was held in January. Ten students from several McGill Faculties contributed artwork depicting a uterus, fallopian tube and ovary. The pathological findings and associated clinical symptoms were briefly discussed, following which the students presented and discussed their artistic interpretations.

**Right:** Bisected uterus containing three whorled leiomyomas. The ovary shows a benign cyst. Resected specimen from a 38-year old woman with pelvic pain.

**Left:** Artistic interpretation of the specimen by Alice Shen.



---

## The Pathological Collection: Lost and Found Department

---

**D**uring the 2013 move of pathological material from the Duff Medical Building to the Strathcona Building, a number of noteworthy specimens were discovered. The one shown here consists of a brain cut in half in the mid-sagittal plane. A round, well-circumscribed brown adenoma (arrow) is present in the region of the pituitary gland. Tumors of the pituitary gland can be benign (about two thirds of cases) or locally invasive; rarely, they metastasize. They cause a wide variety of signs and symptoms. Their size alone can cause headache or neurological findings such as visual disturbance by compression of adjacent tissue. Some also secrete hormones similar to those of the normal pituitary, causing such conditions as Cushing's syndrome (ACTH) or acromegaly/gigantism (growth hormone). Occasionally, they are a part of a multifocal tumor syndrome, such as multiple endocrine neoplasia (MEN1).



---

## Friends of the MAMM Project

---

**B**ecause of the COVID-19 shutdown, we have been unable to finish the project we proposed to our Friends last year, namely the digitization of the Abbott cardiovascular collection. Most of the specimens in the collection are on display in the main museum room. Once digitization has been completed, visitors will be able to view them “live” in the cabinet and virtually on an adjacent tablet along with detailed descriptions and historical/medical information. We plan to start work again on the project this fall. We thank you for your generosity in helping us complete it.

# Become a Friend

Special thanks are due to our Friends for their generous donations. Your moral and financial support will have an important impact on new exhibits and the displays we are developing during the coming year.

Maude Abbott Medical Museum



Musée médical Maude-Abbott



---

**Maude Abbott Medical Museum Newsletter**

**Volume 5, No 1, Fall 2020**

**© 2020 Maude Abbott Medical Museum**

We are always happy to hear from you.

Please send your comments to:

Joan O'Malley

Room 2/38B

Strathcona Anatomy and Dentistry Building

3640 University Street

Montreal, Quebec H3A 0C7

Email: [medicalmuseum.med@mcgill.ca](mailto:medicalmuseum.med@mcgill.ca)

URL: <https://www.mcgill.ca/medicalmuseum>

Editor: Dr. Richard Fraser

Graphic Design: Joan O'Malley

Printing: Rubiks.ca

---

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter by email, please let us know at: [medicalmuseum.med@mcgill.ca](mailto:medicalmuseum.med@mcgill.ca)