

OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

McGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA
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Dr. Casey Albert Wood and the McGill Medical Libraries



There are over 400 letters on file in the McGill Medical Library from Dr. Casey Wood, covering the 36 years between 1905 and 1941. They were first received while Dr. Wood was practising in Chicago, and were addressed to Miss Margaret Charlton, Librarian, McGill Medical Library. In his first letter he speaks of the early volumes of the *Ophthalmic Record* which were then out of print and quite difficult to obtain. "I have recently succeeded in putting my hands on the first seven volumes necessary to complete your set, and I intend to bring these, and a number of other ophthalmic works and periodicals with me on my way to Europe the first of June next. I would like to present these (to be bound at my expense) to your library; I presume I might say our library, if the amalgamation between McGill and Bishop's takes place." (24 April 1905).

Dr. Wood had graduated from the University of Bishop's College in 1877, with the conjoint degree of Master of Surgery and Doctor of Medicine. Since Bishop's Medical School was located in Montreal and near to McGill, he was able to attend Dr. William Osler's lectures and, for a time, served as his first clinical clerk. During the next few years he practised general medicine in Montreal and was also Professor of Pathology and Chemistry at Bishop's. By 1886 he had chosen his specialty - ophthalmology. He trained in New York, he visited and trained in Berlin, Vienna, Paris and London, and by 1890 he had returned to the United States to live and practise in Chicago.

In his first letter to Miss Charlton, (1905) he speaks of leaving for Europe on June 6th. His second letter is dated January 3, 1906 and he had just returned from this trip. ". . . during my travels [I] have not forgotten your excellent library. . . I crossed in the CARONIA with Dr. Osler, and was able to have a good long talk with him on the library question. He agreed that your library was among the best in the country. Surely that is high praise from a man in Dr. Osler's standing."

On April 7, 1911 Dr. Wood wrote Miss Charlton that he was sending 13 boxes of books to McGill via the Grand Trunk Railway. "1000 books, almost all of them on the eye and its diseases, valued at (that is they cost me) over \$5,000. Practically, with the exception of periodicals, they

furnish a complete account (in all the European languages) of ophthalmic literature from 1489 to 1890, and are intended to form a reference basis for more recent ophthalmic literature. If it can be arranged - but it is merely a suggestion - I would like this collection kept separate from the general library if for no other reason than that it will facilitate literary research and the looking up of references on some particular ophthalmic subject." The shipment was supposedly sent in April and the following June Dr. Wood visited Montreal. "Let me say once more what a pleasant and satisfactory time I had in Montreal. I believe I enjoyed most looking through your magnificent library. From a number of talks I had with members of the Faculty I am quite sure that they all have a high appreciation of your labors and devotion in this connection." (16 June 1911). When Mrs. Wood visited the Library in July of 1911, Dr. Wood wrote to Miss Charlton, "My wife was greatly pleased to meet you and especially to see the library. She spoke very enthusiastically of her treatment by Dean Shepherd and yourself." (8 August 1911).

On October 23, 1913 Miss Charlton wrote to Dr. Wood with the good news that "After two years I have at last succeeded in obtaining the room I wanted for your books." Finding the appropriate room for this special collection must have been at the expense of doing some of the routine library work, particularly the cataloguing. In the previous March Dr. H. S. Birkett, as Chairman of the Library Committee, had started an investigation into the efficiency of the Library. Dr. Wood, however, was evidently not aware of any trouble because he continued to write to Miss Charlton, even though Miss Jean Cameron had joined the library staff as Assistant Librarian on May 21, 1913. Not until a year later did Dr. Wood write to Dr. Birkett: "It is not necessary for me to say that I am dreadfully sorry to read the contents of your letter. There were some things that made me suspect that in the rush and hurry of the work a portion of it had been neglected, but I had no reason to think that it was as bad as you state. As I share with you the desire to make the McGill Library one of the best in the country, I am more than pleased that you are at the helm, because I know that the work will be thoroughly done." (20 May 1914).

As previously mentioned, Dr. Wood was intrigued with the idea of a separate room for his library. However, space was probably at a premium and Dr. Birkett circumvented this problem nicely by suggesting "a separate room for the old, rare and valuable works illustrating the history and progress of medicine." (20 May 1914). Dr. Wood agreed with this, saying "it would be the *show place* of the library

and would prove to graduates and others that we have something on hand to which they might sooner or later contribute, either in cash or otherwise. The next time I see you we must have a long talk on this subject near to both our hearts." (20 May 1914).

During the war years Dr. Wood continued his correspondence with Jean Cameron, Miss Charlton having left for Toronto by the end of 1914. It was difficult keeping an Honorary Librarian at McGill. First Dr. H. S. Birkett, then Dr. Philip Burnett, and finally Dr. W. W. Francis all left for overseas with No. 3 General Hospital. Dr. Wood was very active as a major, first at Camp Sherman in Chillicothe, Ohio, and later in Washington, D.C. He was delighted that his colleague Dr. W. G. M. Byers was appointed Acting Honorary Librarian in April 1915. One wonders what Dr. Byers' reaction was if he chanced to read Dr. Wood's letter to Miss Cameron dated May 14, 1919: "One of the fathers of ophthalmology in England, Mr. John Couper, whose student I was over thirty years ago, left me in his will a historic ophthalmoscope of which he was the well known inventor. This is the personal instrument which he used for a quarter of a century in his work. It has just arrived and I intend to have it mounted in a suitable case and give it to you for the library. If you see Dr. Byers and Dr. Stirling please speak to them about this matter, for they will quite understand the value and historic importance of this ophthalmoscope."

There were times when Dr. Wood was angry and impatient with the librarians at McGill, and understandably so. In a note to Dr. Byers in 1920 he wrote: "A card has arrived . . . notifying me that the Medical Library had never claimed the box of books sent by me some two months ago! and that the Customs people would shortly put them on the Sale list for storage! Will you kindly have *somebody* claim the said parcel. . ." (28 June 1920). On the back of an envelope addressed to Dr. Lomer, University Librarian, Dr. Wood noted: "How is it that I can get no reply from the Med. Librarian? I wrote January 25th, 1927 for a report on Chinese medical books sent from Hong Kong last summer (1926) — a valuable and rare lot. Got no report then — though I asked for it — and now no reply to urgent letter to ask if they were received. Do *you* know whether they ever reached the Med. Fac.? Screw loose somewhere — not much encouragement to send anything more there." (1 March 1927). However, Dr. Wood continued to send photographs, autographs, medical instruments, water colours, prints, and, of course, books and journals for 14 more years. What he neglected to realize many times was that the information he asked for "by return mail" took many hours to compile. For instance, he would request a complete list of holdings of ophthalmological journals at McGill, or ask that 45 marked items in a book dealer's catalogue be checked for both the Osler Library and the Medical Library. His reason for the request was clear: "My purpose in securing a complete list of *all* the eye journals in the library with a note of the missing volumes and numbers is that it is my ambition to have a *complete collection* — no small job, requiring photostats of many of them now out of print, inaccessible and not on the market." (14 July 1937).

Dr. Wood had fine connections with dealers all over the world. For that reason he kept asking the Medical Library for their "wants" list many times a year. Early in 1934 in a letter to Dr. C. F. Wyld he wrote: "Gustav Fock of Leipzig continues to waste time hunting for the last periodical on

your ophthalmic list. I suppose it is best to let him hunt a little while longer as the completed roster will furnish you with ophthalmical magazines and periodicals that (combined with those you have) will place the library in a position to compare favourably (ophthalmologically) with any of those represented by the Fanatics that will be sure to look you over next June when the American Library Association (of which I trust you are a member) meets in Montreal. . . I hope the Medical Library will not hide its light but show the visiting folks some of the treasures you already possess. Do not allow W. W. F. (full name furnished on application) to carry off all the kudos! Confidentially, what members of the Faculty take a living interest in your library — Birkett, Byers et al?" (29 March 1934).

Wherever the Woods travelled the doctor lost no opportunity to search for material for McGill. It could be Kandy, Ceylon; Rome; Georgetown, British Guiana; New York City; or Cairo, Egypt. In the last-named the Woods spent the month of February 1935. While there, contact was made with Dr. Max Meyerhof. Dr. Wood writes of it this way "I have had several talks with Dr. Max Meyerhof, who as you know has the finest Oriental library in the Near East. He is a German Hebrew who served his country during the war and — poor fellow — lost all his rather large fortune in that barbarian conflict. When the British allowed him to resume practice in Cairo, he is and was by far the best known ophthalmologist in these parts. He soon regained his position as Court Surgeon. He still intended to will his famous library to a German University — until his country went crazy and began their stupid pogrom that affected so many of his scientific friends and relatives. *Now* his plans are changed to this extent: he has promised to sell me the large majority of the books and MSS. on my list of desiderata . . . a great opportunity for us!" (7 February 1935). This resulted in the acquisition of some 371 rare

Dr. Casey Albert Wood (1856-1942), ophthalmologist, teacher, scholar, and great benefactor to McGill, received his M.D. from Bishop's Medical School and did post-graduate work in Europe before settling in Chicago in 1890. One of Osler's earliest pupils and a clinical clerk under him at the Montreal General Hospital, Dr. Wood remained his lifelong friend. He was a prolific writer in his own specialty and, through extensive travels in South America, Australia and parts of Asia, became a distinguished ornithologist and naturalist. He spent much of the last years of his life in Rome engaged in medieval and Arabic studies.

In addition to his large and rich ophthalmological collection which he gave to the Medical Library, Dr. Wood was largely responsible for establishing and building the Blacker Library of Zoology and the Wood Library of Ornithology. The Blacker-Wood Library, one of McGill's treasures, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

Dr. Wood also established the Wood Gold Medal for the McGill medical student obtaining the highest marks in clinical subjects in his final year.

ophthalmological works coming to McGill as gifts from Dr. Wood.

Of the thousands of items given by Dr. Wood, mention may be made of these gems:

Peckham, John, *De Oculo Morali*. [Augsburg, not after 1476].

Avicenna [Canon]. A Latin version of the general and ophthalmic writings of the Arabian surgeon. [Venice, 1489-90].

Bartisch, Georg, [Ophthalmodouleia], *das ist, Augendienst*. Dresden, 1583.

Helmholtz, H. L. F. von, *Beschreibung eines Augen-Spiegels*. . . Berlin, 1851.

Dr. Wood placed the greatest importance on journals, complete from volume one, and in as many languages as it was possible to obtain. "If we are to maintain our reputation for the best research library on ophthalmology in America we must have a *full house* of periodicals in easy order for study." (3 April 1941). One can imagine how pleased Dr. Wood was when Dr. Wylde forwarded this letter to him: "I should like very much to visit Montreal in the immediate future for the purpose of becoming acquainted with the Casey Wood collection of ophthalmological literature. The Howe Library of Ophthalmology has a fine collection of periodicals and current literature, but lacks

many of the older works of historical importance for which your library is noted." (Dr. Harry K. Messenger, Howe Laboratory of Ophthalmology, Harvard Medical School, Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Boston, Mass., July 9, 1937.)

Whenever Dr. Wood wrote to the Medical Librarian about some rare book or obscure journal he had found, usually after years of searching, he never failed to request that Dr. Francis be told. He believed the journals should be in the Medical Library, but books and other items, if it was felt they formed part of the history of medicine, should be kept in the Osler Library. As he said: "I am very glad . . . to know that you intend to place the titles mentioned on an indefinite loan to the Osler Library. I have several other rarities that I believe might be deposited in the same way." (8 October 1929).

There were five speakers at the reception and banquet in honour of Dr. Casey Albert Wood given by the Chicago Ophthalmological Society on January 19, 1920. Their subjects were: "The Ophthalmologist," "The Writer and Editor," "The Professor of Ophthalmology," "The Military Surgeon," and "The Ornithologist and Comparative Anatomist." Had McGill given the banquet, a sixth subject would have been "Benefactor Par Excellence."

Mrs. Martha Benjamin,
Montreal

Mrs. Martha Benjamin is the librarian at Canadian Marconi Company and voluntary archivist of the Medical Library.

Sale of Duplicates by Auction House

Some 200 titles of duplicates belonging to either the Osler Library or the Medical Library are to be auctioned off early in February by Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., New York. Needless to say, none of these titles belong to the original Osler collection, nor do any of them have any particular association with the Osler Library. Items relating to Osler or to the history of medicine in Canada are also excluded, since these will be made available to our readers through the *Newsletter*. (See below.)

Books from the 16th to the 20th centuries are represented in the sale, including many items which have not appeared on the market for many years. Among the more important names are Vesalius, Harvey, Bright, Withering, Jenner and Laennec. There are also a large number of ophthalmological works.

This sale of our duplicates is being held in association with a sale of similar books from the Countway Library as part of a full day devoted to medical history. Mail bids will be accepted. Anyone interested in the details of the auction can receive a catalogue of the sale by writing to Mr. Gabriel Austin, Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., 980 Madison Avenue, New York City.

By Mail Auction

Enclosed with this *Newsletter* is a second list of duplicates from the Osler Library which we are offering for sale to our readers. All of these books are concerned with Canadian medical history or with Sir William Osler; many of the items are in multiple copies. Unlike the first lot, which appeared in our February issue, these duplicates have been priced. Instead of the highest bid, therefore, the earliest postmark will be the deciding factor. Again we ask that you send no money with your bid; invoices will be sent at the same time the books are mailed.

Thank You

Our appeal for funds to keep the *Newsletter* alive has met with tremendous success and we are both delighted and grateful. Of the 800 names on our mailing list, over 175 have responded, and the existence of the *Newsletter* is thereby assured for the next year at least. To all those who have helped — our sincere "Thanks."

Editorial Committee for the Newsletter: *Ellen B. Wells*, Editor; *Nancy Grant*, Associate Editor; *E. H. Bensley, M.L.*, Librarian; *Karl Holeczek*, Photography.

LIST OF BOOKS FOR SALE

1. Abbott, Maude E. "The Pathological Collections of the Late Sir William Osler at McGill University -- Early Academic Influences -- McGill's Heroic Past." Reprinted from the Sir William Osler Memorial Volume, International Association of Medical Museums, Bulletin no. IX, 1927. \$1.00 each.
2. Abbott, Maude E. "The Pathological Collections of the Late Sir William Osler and his Relations with the Medical Museum of McGill University." Reprinted from the Osler Memorial Number of the Canadian Medical Association Journal, July 1920. \$2.00 each.
3. Abbott, Maude E. "Osler's Pathological Collections and his Literary Output." Reprinted from the Canadian Medical Association Journal, 1940, 42: 284-288. \$1.00 each.
4. Abbott, Maude E. "The Osler Pathological Collections in the Medical Historical Museum of McGill University." Reprinted from the Journal of Technical Methods and Bulletin of the International Association of Medical Museums, 1935, 14: 21-27. \$1.00 each.
5. Blogg, Minnie Wright Bibliography of the Writings of Sir William Osler, revised and enlarged. Baltimore, 1921, 96pp. \$7.50 each.
6. Blogg, Minnie Wright "Bibliography [of the Writings of Sir William Osler]". Reprinted from the Johns Hopkins Hospital Bulletin, vol. 30, no. 341, July 1919. \$5.00 each.
7. Abbott, Maude E. "More About Osler." Reprinted from the Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 1937, 5: 765-796. \$1.00 each.
8. A Guide for the Exhibitions at the Hotel Dieu, St. Sulpice Library, McGill Medical Building, under the auspices of the Section of Historical Medicine of the Canadian Medical Association, Montreal, June 17-23, 1929 and July 8-14, 1929. \$5.00.
9. No. 3 Canadian General Hospital (McGill) in France (1915, 1916, 1917). Views Illustrating Life and Scenes in the Hospital. Middlesbrough, England. \$10.00 each.
10. Abbott, Maude, E. "Lectures on the History of Nursing." McGill University Publications, Series 8 (Medicine) No. 25. Inscribed to Dr. Martin by the author. \$5.00.
11. Ferguson, John History of the Ontario Medical Association, 1880-1930. Toronto, 1930, 142pp. \$5.00.
12. Abbott, Maude E. History of Medicine in the Province of Quebec. Montreal, McGill University Publications Series 8 (Medicine), No. 63, 1931, 95pp. \$3.50.
13. Abbott, Maude E. "Congenital Cardiac Disease." Reprinted from Osler and McCrae, Modern Medicine, Vol. IV, 1915. \$10.00.
14. The Book of the Tudor and Stuart Club of the Johns Hopkins University. [Baltimore], 1927. \$10.00.
15. Programme of Service in Memory of the Late Lieut.-Col. John McCrae, B.A., M.D., Royal Victoria College, Monday, Feb. 4, 1918 at 11 a.m. \$5.00.
16. Osler, Sir William Science and Immortality. Boston, New York, 1904. A letter from Sir William Osler to Dr. McEachran is attached to this copy. \$15.00.
17. Shepherd, F. J. Reminiscences of Student Days and the Dissecting Room. Montreal, 1919, 28pp. Inscribed by the author. \$10.00.
18. Shepherd, F. J. "Sketch of the Early History of Anatomy." Reprinted from Canada Medical and Surgical Journal, 1886, 14: 384-98; 649-60. \$5.00.

19. Dedication of the Osler Library, May 29, 1929. Folded broadside. \$10.00.
20. Cameron, Kenneth History of No. 1 Canadian General Hospital, 1914-1919. Sackville, N. B., 1938, 667pp. \$10.00.
21. Abbott, Maude E. McGill's Heroic Past 1821-1921 McGill University Publications, Series 4 (History and Economics) No. 1, 1921. \$5.00.
22. Abbott, Maude E. Florence Nightingale, as Seen in Her Portraits. Boston, 1916, 78pp. \$5.00.
23. Preliminary Programme, British Medical Association 6th Annual Meeting, Montreal, 1897. Montreal, 1897. \$2.00.
24. Craik, Robert Papers and Addresses. Montreal, 1907, 222pp. \$7.50.
25. Clarke, Charles K. A History of the Toronto General Hospital, Toronto, Briggs, 1913, 145pp. \$10.00.
26. MacDermot, H. E. A Bibliography of Canadian Medical Periodicals with Annotations. Montreal, Renouf, 1934, 21pp. \$1.00.
27. MacDermot, H. E. History of the School for Nurses of the Montreal General Hospital. Montreal, 1940, 124pp. \$5.00.
28. MacDermot, H. E. Maude Abbott, a Memoir. Toronto, Macmillan, 1941, 264pp. \$6.00.
29. MacDermot, H. E. History of the Canadian Medical Association, 1867-1921. Toronto, Murray, 1935, 209pp. \$7.00.
30. MacDermot, H. E. A History of the Montreal General Hospital. Montreal, 1950, 134pp. \$4.00.
31. Mackenzie, J. J. No. 4 Canadian Hospital: the Letters of Prof. J. J. Mackenzie from the Salonika Front, with a Memoir by his Wife, Kathleen Cuffe Mackenzie. Toronto, Macmillan, 1933, 247pp. \$5.00.
32. Howell, W. B. F. J. Shepherd, Surgeon. His Life and Times. Toronto and Vancouver, Dent, 1934, 251pp. \$5.00.
33. Myer, J. S. Life and Letters of Dr. William Beaumont. St. Louis, C. V. Mosby, 1921, 306pp. Introduction by Sir William Osler. \$15.00.
34. Myer, J. S. Life and Letters of Dr. William Beaumont. St. Louis, C. V. Mosby, 1939, 327pp. Introduction by Sir William Osler. \$7.50.
35. Heagerty, J. J. Four Centuries of Medical History in Canada. Toronto, 1928, 2 vol., 395, 374pp. \$15.00.
36. Munroe, M. D. The Training School for Nurses, Royal Victoria Hospital, 1894-1943. Montreal, 1943, 92pp. \$4.00.
37. Thayer, W. S. Osler and Other Papers. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1931, 386pp. \$10.00.
38. Muirhead, Arnold Grace Revere Osler: A Brief Memoir. Oxford University Press, 1931, 56pp. \$15.00.
39. Reid, Edith The Great Physician: a Short Life of Sir William Osler. New York, Oxford University Press, 1931, 299pp. \$5.00.
40. Programme of Founder's Festival and Centenary of William Osler, Montreal, McGill University, 1949. \$5.00.
41. Claxton, Brooke Dr. Thomas Simpson [Montreal, 1957]. \$2.00.
42. The Montreal General Hospital, 1821-1956: a Pictorial Review. Reprinted from Montreal General Hospital Bulletin, vol. 2, no. 8, Sept. 1956. \$4.00.
43. Abbott, Maude E. Sir William Osler. Paper presented before 49th annual meeting of Alumnae Association of Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania, 1924. \$1.00