

# OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

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## THE BUSTS OF SIR WILLIAM OSLER\*

Earl F. Nation

**I**n spite of the voluminous nature of the Osleriana literature, it contains few references to busts of Sir William Osler. Indeed, as recently as 1977, Dr. R. Carmichael Tilghman, a distinguished member of the American Osler Society, stated that to his knowledge there was only one bust of Osler.<sup>1</sup> It is apparently the only bust made during Osler's lifetime but, as this account will show, several others have been made posthumously. One of these has been featured in a previous *Osler Library Newsletter*.<sup>2</sup>

The best known bust of Osler, done in marble in 1905 by Hans Schuler, after a plaster cast made the preceding year, long stood in the entrance to Gilman Hall at Johns Hopkins. (Figure 1) This was the bust referred to by Dr. Tilghman, mentioned at the outset. It was commissioned and presented to Johns Hopkins University by twenty-two of Osler's Baltimore friends on his retirement to accept the Regius Professorship in the University of Oxford.

At some point, as time dimmed memories, the bust "disappeared". Inquiries as to its whereabouts in later years were in vain. Few present generation Johns Hopkins faculty members and administrators knew of its existence. Finally, in 1966, the interest of someone who remembered it vividly was aroused. This was Dr. R. Carmichael Tilghman. As he told it<sup>3</sup>, in 1966 Mr. David Everhart, Johns Hopkins Hospital Administrator, received an inquiry from Dr. Russell Barton, of Colchester, England about the bust. He was interested in having it copied for the library at Severalls Hospital in Colchester. Knowing nothing of such a bust Mr. Everhart directed the inquiry to the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland. They, in turn, referred it to Dr. Tilghman who, through undisclosed details of sleuthing, discovered the marble bust at the Homewood Campus in the Tudor and Stuart Club Room. This is the student literary club endowed by Sir William and Lady Osler in the name of their only son, Revere, who was killed in World War I.

The American Osler Society, meeting in Baltimore in 1976, stimulated further

research by Dr. Tilghman and Mrs. Rancie Crosby, Director of Art as Applied to Medicine at Johns Hopkins, in preparation of an exhibit which they were getting together for the occasion.

They were both acquainted with Mr. Hans Schuler, Jr., son of the sculptor who had done the original Osler bust. He is also a Baltimore sculptor. They sought further information from him.

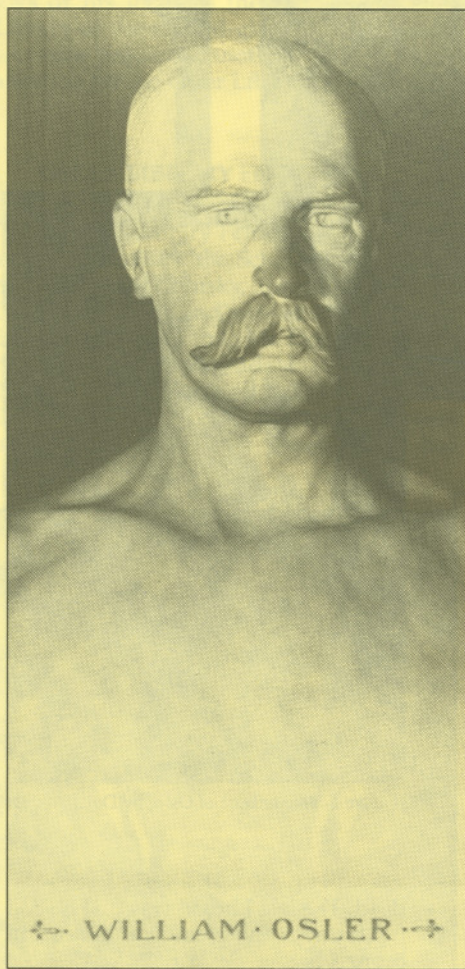


Figure 1. Marble bust of William Osler cut by Mr. Hans Schuler in 1905.

Meantime, I had been researching this matter independently through a good friend, Mr. William P. Didusch, a distinguished medical artist, one of Max Brodel's first students. He lived in Baltimore and was acquainted with the Schulers.

Mr. Schuler's recollection of his father's account of the making of the bust, as told by Dr. Tilghman, is of interest. "Dr. Osler was far too busy to go to Mr. Schuler's studio, and as a consequence Mr. Schuler went to

Dr. Osler's office. This was difficult as the lighting was bad. Dr. Osler was always busy and restless, would sit briefly at his desk, fiddle with papers, or get up and move about the room. With relatively few sittings, and with the aid of several photographs a clay model was finally completed and from this a plaster cast was made. A final bronze casting was not made at that time, however. In 1905, the year after the initial sculpture, Mr. Schuler cut the marble bust from it which now resides in the Tudor and Stuart Club at Homewood."

Dr. Emil Seletz, about whom more will be said later, says that Hans Schuler told him that Mrs. Osler objected to his showing her husband's bare chest but that he persisted because he believed this to be the way a bust should be made.<sup>3</sup>

Through the Johns Hopkins Medical and Surgical Association of which Dr. Tilghman was then president a bronze casting was finally made by the Roman Bronze Works, Inc. on Long Island, with the cooperation and help of Mr. Hans Schuler, Jr. This was presented to the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in 1977.

In 1923 the first of the posthumous busts, a clay model was made, from photographs, by F.W. Doyle Jones of the Wentworth Studios on Manessa Road, Chelsea, London. (Figure 2)

A committee had been formed to decide on a memorial for Osler at Oxford. The sculptor hoped to provide a bust for the purpose. W.W. Francis (Osler Librarian) had to inform him that the committee had decided on scholarships and a large copy of Vernon's plague as a memorial and that they were not interested in his bust. Dr. Francis added, in his letter to Doyle Jones, the sculptor: "When I was at your studio last year with Mrs. Osborne we were both very pleased with the profile view of the bust but were disappointed with the full-face and, judging from the photo, what seemed to me then to be imperfections in the likeness have not been remedied. I don't know that I can put them into words but there is a sort of Bismarckian sternness about the face which gives it a quite unfamiliar appearance.

"I must confess that I have never seen a portrait, except the plaque, or a photograph of him which satisfies me and I fancy it must be extremely difficult to make a bust so life-like that it would satisfy a man's friends."<sup>4</sup>

In 1945 W.W. Francis wrote Dr. Esther Rosenkrantz in connection with a photograph of this bust which he sent her. "Intended for Osler it turned out to be Bismarck! A full-face view (still worse!) is still in the Osler Library. I think the sculptor is

\*Based on a presentation at the annual meeting of the American Osler Society, May 3, 1988 by Earl F. Nation, 112 North Madison Avenue, Pasadena, California 91101, a Charter and now an Emeritus Member of the Society.



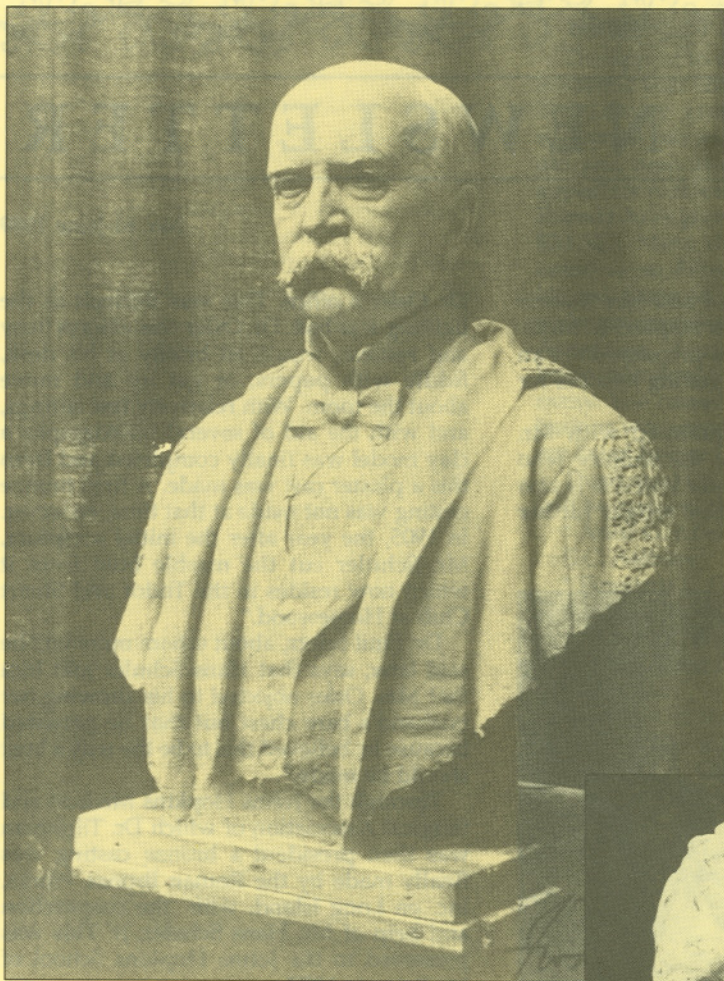


Figure 2. Bust of Osler done in clay by F.W. Doyle Jones of London in 1923.

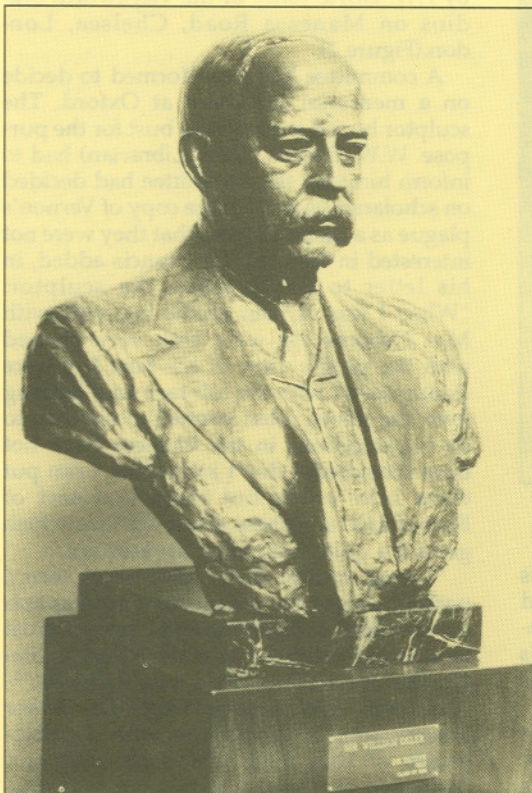


Figure 3. Bronze bust of Osler by Dr. Emile Seletz of Los Angeles, presented to Temple University in 1971.

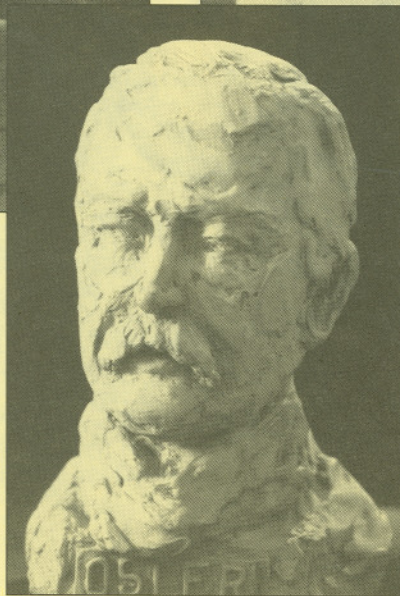


Figure 4. Bronze bust of Osler by Doris Appel.

dead. The last I heard was that he had not found a buyer and had not cast in bronze. Signed, W.W.F. 19:XI:45."<sup>5</sup>

In 1948, Dr. John Meyers, a physician of Worcester, Massachusetts, an amateur sculptor, did a bust of Osler. So far as is known it was never cast in bronze and its present location is unknown.

Dr. Emil Seletz, a Los Angeles neurosurgeon and noted amateur sculptor, did a bust of Osler based on several photographs supplied to him by Dr. Elmer Belt. This was cast in bronze and presented to his alma mater, Temple University, in 1971.<sup>6</sup> (Figure 3)

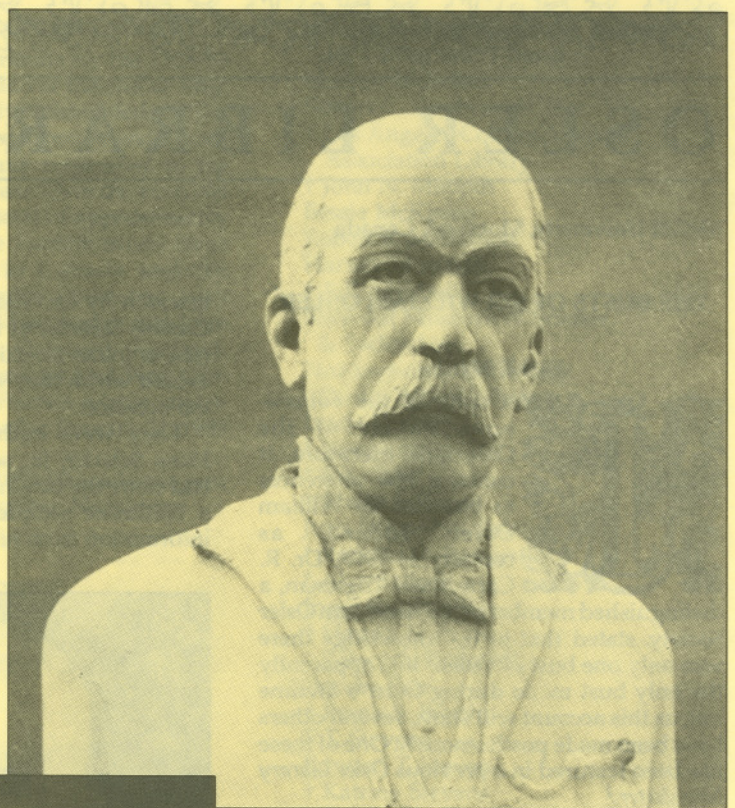


Figure 5. Bust made of cement, Osler House, Pondicherry, India.

A few years ago Dr. John P. McGovern, of Houston, Texas commissioned a bust of Osler to be done by Doris Appel, the noted Boston sculptor of medical and scientific figures. (Figure 4) One copy of her bust is now in the Osler Library of the McGovern Allergy Clinic, Houston, Texas.

Dr. Ananda Date, Professor of Pathology at the Christian Medical College and Hospital, Vellore, India, writes<sup>7</sup> that a bust of Osler stands on a pedestal in the garden of Osler House, an undergraduate student hostel of Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER) at Pondicherry, India. (Figure 5) The bust is constructed of cement. It was made by the late Mr. V. Govindaraj, an artist in the Medical Illustration Division of JIPMER. It was installed in 1966.

In April 1985 a bust of Osler was unveiled in front of the City Hospital in Niigata, Japan. This bust was made by Mr. Riki Watanabe, Professor of Sculpture at Niigata University. He based it on a photograph of Osler made in Baltimore in 1913. Dr. Tsutomu Sasagawa, of the University, in a note to the Osler Library which accompanied photographs of the bust, stated that the bust "is a symbol of the kind of patient-oriented medical care which Osler advocated and which we are trying to put into effect at our hospital."<sup>2</sup>

Thus there are several busts of Sir William Osler on display in various institutions where, it is hoped, they may convey some of the philosophy and spirit of the Beloved Physician.



## References

1. Tilghman, R. Carmichael. Sir William Osler – bronze bust. *Hopkins Medical News*, July, 1977, p.3 of Special Section: Class Notes.
2. *Osler Library Newsletter*, No. 52, June, 1986.
3. Seletz, Emil. Personal communication.
4. Francis, W.W. Letter in Osler Library, Montreal.
5. Francis, W.W. Letter in the Rosencrantz Collection of Osleriana, University of California, School of Medicine.
6. Photograph in the Rosencrantz Collection in San Francisco.
7. Personal communication. Also a photograph of the bust and a note about it in the Osler Library, Montreal.

## OSLER DAY-1989

Osler Day this year falls on Wednesday, November 1st. The Osler Lecturer will be Dr. Arnold S. Relman, Editor-in-Chief, *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

As is customary, the Osler Banquet will be held on the evening of Osler Day. Dr. Relman will be the honoured guest at the banquet and will respond to questions from the floor about his Osler Lecture delivered that afternoon.

## DR. ALEX SAKULA VISITS THE OSLER LIBRARY

The Osler Library was recently honoured by the visit of Dr. Alex Sakula, President of the Section of History of Medicine of the Royal Society of Medicine, and of the Faculty of the History and Philosophy of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London. A chest specialist with a distinguished clinical and publishing record, Dr. Sakula is also a noted authority on medical history. He is the author of studies of historical aspects of tuberculosis and asthma, as well as numerous biographical notices, and an Oslerian as well, with a special interest in Osler's relationship to Rudyard Kipling. *En route* to the American Osler Society meeting in Birmingham, he paused in Montreal to tour the Osler Library in the company of Wayne LeBel, Assistant History of Medicine Librarian, and to present to the Library a copy of his latest book, *The Portraits, Painting and Sculpture in the Royal Society of Medicine*. One figure whose portrait is curiously absent from this catalogue is Sir William Osler himself, an omission which Dr. Sakula is determined to rectify, for Osler founded the Section of History of Medicine of which he is currently president.

## BEQUEST FROM THE ESTATE OF DR. C. JAMES F. PARSONS

A generous bequest has been received by the Osler Library from the estate of Dr. C. James F. Parsons, who died September 2nd, 1985. Born in Harbour Grace, Newfoundland in 1898, he attended medical school at McGill, graduating in 1923, pursued post-graduate studies at Magdalen College, Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, and settled down to practise medicine at Dobbs Ferry, New York for 50 years.

In recent years, he had been keenly interested in the installation of the stained-glass windows in the second floor of the Wellcome Camera (*Osler Library Newsletter*, no.48, February 1985). Indeed, he provided the funds which made their design and installation possible. Shortly after his death, his widow wrote me that "one of the great joys of his life was the gift to the Osler Library of the stained-glass windows." His welcome bequest is another evidence of his affection for the Osler Library.

E.H.B.

## OSLER LIBRARY FELLOWSHIPS FOR 1989

Two Osler Library Fellowships have been awarded for 1989: the Scholar's Fellowship to Dr. Mark Lubinsky, formerly of Loma Linda University and now at Albany, and a Student's Fellowship to Mr. Donald Brady, a third-year medical student at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Lubinsky has worked for a number of years in the field of pediatric genetics, and has

developed a strong interest in the history of genetics in medicine. His research at the Osler Library will focus on the way in which medical thinking handled monogenetic disorders in the nineteenth century, that is, before the rediscovery of Mendel's principles in 1900. While most recent historical studies of genetics emphasize the social contexts of this science, Dr. Lubinsky wishes to examine how the field evolved internally, by looking at what sort of observations workers felt needed to be explained, and how these explanations were reconciled with general scientific knowledge. Donald Brady came to medical school with a background in classical studies. His interests in medical history centre on Greek antiquity, and he will employ his fellowship period at the Osler Library in reading about the evolution of the Hippocratic corpus of writings. Mr. Brady's own career ambitions are oriented to medical education, and he believes that the humane values and paedagogical concerns embodied in medical texts are of perennial interest to teachers and clinicians.

The Osler Library is pleased that its Fellowship programme can further historical work of such calibre and diversity. Each year we offer a Scholar's and a Student's Fellowship of \$1,200 (Canadian) to enable researchers to journey to Montreal and use our resources. The deadline for application is December 31 of each calendar year; further details are available from the History of Medicine Librarian.

## MARION WRIGHT MEMORIAL FUND

In the June 1987 issue of the *Osler Library Newsletter*, we recorded the passing of Miss Marion Gertrude Wright, a close friend of the Osler family, and a long-time volunteer in, and supporter of, the Osler Library. Members of Miss Wright's family have generously undertaken to endow a fund for the Osler Library in her memory – a most appropriate monument to one who did so much fund-raising herself for the Library's benefit. Friends and relatives of Miss Wright, and all those who remember her presence here with gratitude and affection, are invited to participate. Further details may be obtained from the History of Medicine Librarian.



Dr. Alex Sakula (right) presenting a copy of his latest book to the Osler Library, represented by Dr. William Feindel of the Board of Curators.  
See story at left.



# FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

The appeal to the Friends for the 1988-89 academic year concluded at the end of May. The Library gratefully acknowledges the support it has received from Friends, both old and new, who have responded to the appeal for funds this year. Over the year, 346 Friends have given a total of approximately \$23,522. Most of the contributions have come from Friends in Canada and the United State of America. However, very welcome contributions have come also from Argentina, Australia, Belgium, England, Japan, Norway, Switzerland and West Germany. The names of Friends whose contributions were received after January 31, 1989 are listed below.

The appeal for the 1989-90 academic year will be made in the October *Newsletter*.

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