

SIR WILLIAM OSLER (1849–1919): THE EARLY YEARS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS BOYHOOD DAYS IN DUNDAS, CANADA

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Sir William Osler (Figure 1), whom many consider the greatest physician since Hippocrates, was born on 12 July 1849, and died on 29 December 1919. Not only was he an outstanding physician and medical educator,^{1–3} he also excelled as a paediatrician⁴ and family doctor.⁵

Like Sir Samuel Wilks (1824–1911) of Guy's Hospital, London, England, Osler believed that 'pathology is the basis of all true instruction in practical medicine'.⁶ While at the Montreal General Hospital (1876–84), where his duties were primarily those of a physician, he personally performed 786 autopsies,⁷ and, as Professor of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania (1884–9), a further 163.⁸ His last post mortem was performed in 1919 at the age of 70 when he was Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University.⁹ Osler was a scholar and author of some 1,500 publications,¹⁰ including philosophical¹¹ and historical essays,¹² and a landmark textbook, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*,¹³ which was to convince the late John D. Rockefeller Sr (1839–1937) to bequeath money to medical science; hence the Rockefeller Institute in New York city.¹⁴ Osler was a bibliophile, amassing some 8,000 volumes¹⁵ which he left to his Alma Mater, McGill University in Montreal.¹⁶ But above all Osler was a humanist.^{17–19} Aphorisms from his bedside teachings and writings²⁰ are now part of everyday medical speech.

Since 1999 marked the 150th year of Osler's birth, it seemed that a brief review of his early life, and especially his boyhood days in Dundas, Ontario, was appropriate.

Edward Osler and Mary Paddy, the grandparents of William Osler, had six other children (Table 1). Samuel and Richard were the black sheep of the family and came between Edward and Featherstone; the order of the four daughters, Mary, Elizabeth, Emma and Henrietta, is unknown. Edward Osler (1732–86) 'died of wounds in the West Indies'. Henry Bath (1815–1902) was ordained in 1884 and emigrated to Canada where he became Canon of St Alban's Cathedral, Toronto and Rural Dean of York.

The dates of the birth and death of his wife are not known.

THE PARENTS

A short time before sailing back to England, Featherstone Lake Osler, William Osler's father, was invited to be officer-in-charge of the scientific department of a frigate, *The Beagle*, but declined on the grounds of his father's ill health. So it was that Featherstone might have come under the influence of Charles Darwin (1809–82), and not, as it turned out, the Deity. Featherstone decided, after a decade at sea, that he would enter the Church. In October 1833, he entered St Catherine's Hall, Cambridge, and graduated as an Anglican priest. Featherstone next sought a bride and on 6 February 1873, he married Ellen Free Picton (1806–1907) from Hellingdon, Kent, a few miles out of London, but who, as Cule²² had pointed out, had a respectable Welsh name. The couple were married in

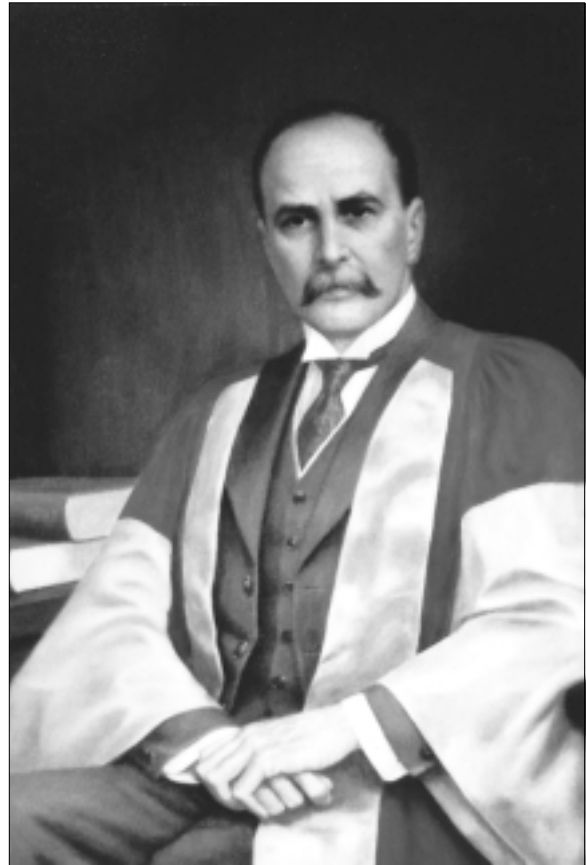


FIGURE 1

Portrait of Sir William Osler by the late Kenneth M.J. Tryon (1911–93), citizen of Dundas. The portrait was painted in 1983.

Buddock Church, Falmouth. Shortly after, Featherstone was asked to go to Canada where there was a need of spiritual aid in the form of young clergymen. The couple sailed from Falmouth on 6 April 1837, and arrived at their destination of Bond Head (Figure 2), some 40 miles north of Toronto, on 20 July, the day 18-year-old Victoria (1819–1901) became Queen.

BOND HEAD

The little village of Bond Head was on the edge of the Canadian wilderness, surrounded by forest, where bears and wolves roamed. Most of the inhabitants were native North Americans, mostly Ojibways (Chippewas), the Hurons having by then disappeared. Bond Head was in the district of Tecumseh, named after a Shawnee warrior of that name (?1768–1813) who was an ally of the British, and who was killed in the War of 1812 at the Battle of Moraviantown in 1813. The house the young couple were given was no more than a hut, which Ellen described as 'a shed . . . a clearing in the woods, one room upstairs and one down, in which the cattle had been want to

TABLE 1
The Osler family tree.



shelter . . .²¹ Featherstone commented, ‘I believe we both feel heartily sick of our present abode . . . It is scarcely possible to move a step without being shod in dung and dirt.’²¹

Featherstone certainly had his work to do: ‘In this country there are thousands who have never heard of a Saviour, even by name, and the Sabbath is known for being the day chiefly devoted to sporting.’²¹ His flock were reluctant to give up their blasphemy and whisky, and even their belief in witches.²¹ Life was extremely hard for the settlers, and many starved to death during the winter. Featherstone commented:

People at home have . . . a very mistaken idea of Canada. They think there is nothing to do but sow the seed and soon gather in the crops, whereas those who would thrive here must labour . . . and for some years be content to endure many privations.²¹

During the winter the young couple had to survive in their hut, with the floor at times covered with snow which had blown through chinks in the walls. The chinks were:

. . . filled with snow hardened from the inside, which though a large fire was constantly burning within a short distance, continued unmelted . . . the milk kept in a cupboard within a yard of the fire was frozen so hard as to require a knife to cut it out . . . The hut was swarming with vermin.²¹

Other storms, of a political kind, were also blowing fiercely in Upper Canada (Ontario) the year the Oslers arrived. The village of Bond Head was named after Sir Francis Bond Head (1793–1875) who had been surprised when he was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada in 1836. The post was perhaps intended for Sir Edmund Walker Head (1805–68), later Governor General of Canada, an error being made in the names. As it was, Sir Francis was the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was faced by a fiery Scottish Presbyterian

from Dundee, William Lyon Mackenzie (1795–1861), who came to Canada in 1820 and who was the first mayor of Toronto, giving it its motto, and who led the Reform Party²³ against what was known as *The Family Compact*.²⁴ Mackenzie lost the election to the Tory Party in December of 1837, the latter having given free drinks to those who would vote for them.²⁵ This provoked a full-scale rebellion, which was quickly crushed.^{26, 27} Mackenzie escaped to the US, but was pardoned and allowed back into Canada in 1849. His grandson was William Lyon Mackenzie King (1874–1950), who had none of his grandfather’s *praeferendum ingenium*, but was to become the longest serving Prime Minister of Canada.

Featherstone, as a former naval officer and member of the Established Church, was totally opposed to Mackenzie and his Reformers, although later they were vindicated by the report of Lord John George Lambton Durham (1792–1840),²⁸ and as a result a proper democracy was established in the Colony. William Lyon Mackenzie suffered a chronic Berserker rage or *riastral*, which made him unpopular with Canadians who still considered him a ‘rebel’. In *The Struggle for Democracy* he is not even mentioned, despite one of the authors being a Canadian.²⁹

The Reverend Featherstone had a low opinion of both Methodists and Presbyterians:

My people have shown themselves to be peaceful and loyal and it has annoyed and grieved me to find the Presbyterian Minister and ladies among the Methodists are doing all in their power to cause discontent and excite seditious feelings.²¹

Of course, the Methodists as well as the Presbyterians opposed *The Family Compact* and had supported William Lyon Mackenzie. The Methodists Featherstone singled out as Satan, especially as they had circulated the works of Tom Paine (1737–1809). Featherstone and his wife Ellen were staunchly Protestant, and no more tolerant of Catholics. When Ellen wrote to her husband that a certain Mr Mann ‘had been killed by a wagon going over him’, but ‘was a Papist’, the adherence to Rome appeared to diminish the

tragedy! The Reverend Featherstone suffered a tenuity of imagination, failing to rise above the dogma of his church. He lacked humour and was somewhat thrawn. Noteworthy is the fact that he failed to see eye to eye with the Aberdeen-born Anglican Bishop of Toronto, John Strachan (1778–1867). This appears to have been partly due to his opposition to the Oxford Movement in the Anglican Church,³⁰ which was favoured by Bishop Strachan, but considered by evangelicals, like the Reverend Featherstone, to be no more than a popish plot. In other ways, Featherstone Osler appears to have been an admirable man, being a devoted husband and indulgent father in an era of patriarchs. Having been an officer in the Royal Navy, it is not surprising that the Reverend Featherstone was British through and through. In 1839 he commented, ‘The hordes of ruffians from the United States who threatened to overwhelm us . . . have learned by dear bought experience that the conquest of Canada is not quite as easy as they imagined.’²¹

THE OSLER FAMILY

All of the nine children of the Reverend Featherstone and Ellen Osler were born in Canada (Table 2), with the single exception of their third child, Ellen Mary, who was born in Falmouth (1841). Their first-born, Featherston, was born in Newmarket, near Bond Head (Figure 2), while the others were born in the parsonage in Bond Head

TABLE 2
Family of Featherstone Lake Osler and Ellen Picton.

- Featherston, born 4 January 1838*
- Britton Bath, born 19 June 1839
- Ellen Mary, born 1841
- Edward Lake, born 1842
- Edmund Boyd, born 1845
- Francis Levwellyn (‘Frank’) and Charlotte Elizabeth (‘Chattie’), born 1847
- William, born 1849
- Emma Henrietta, born 1851†

* Featherston dropped the ‘e’ in his name in his teens to differentiate himself from his father

† Emma Henrietta died in 1853

(Figure 3). Britton Bath Osler (1839–1901) became a famous Canadian criminal lawyer, and was the crown attorney at the trial of Louis Riel (1844–5).³¹ Edmund Boyd Osler (1845–1924) became an important figure in Canadian finance, as well as President of the Dominion Bank of Canada and Director of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It was Sir Edmund who gave \$1,000 to his younger brother William in order that he could have a *Wanderjahr* of medical studies in England and Europe from 1872–4.¹



FIGURE 2

Map showing towns mentioned in the text, and relation of Coote's Paradise and Desjardins Canal to the towns of Dundas and Hamilton.

William Osler was the last of six sons and the eighth of the nine children of the Reverend Featherstone and Ellen Osler. He was born on 12 July and it was the intention of his parents to christen him Walter Farquar. However, it was the custom on that date for the Orangemen of the district to commemorate the defeat of King James II (1633–1701) at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. The procession, all decked out in their orange sashes and headed by their leader on a white horse, marched up to the steps of the parsonage (Figure 3). When the Reverend Featherstone came out to greet them holding the new born baby in his arms the crowd cried ‘William’, after the Prince of Orange (1650–1702) and the name stuck. On subsequent birthdays little William was paraded dressed in his orange sash to meet the procession. It was many years later before he and his brothers and sisters realised the parade was not entirely in his honour! At the age of five, William chopped off the top of his older sister Charlotte’s finger, while cutting wood with an axe. Charlotte, however, was to blame as she kept teasing her young brother by putting her hand on the wood. It is reported that William warned her, ‘I’ll count three. If you don’t take it off, I’ll chop it off.’ And chop if off he did. Noteworthy is the fact that the Reverend Featherstone, for all his narrow-mindedness, never resorted to corporal punishment for his children, although otherwise a strict disciplinarian.

TRANSFER TO DUNDAS

In 1854, the Reverend Featherstone wrote to Bishop John Strachan requesting a transfer to a parish which could provide more adequate education for his children than Bond Head. Three years later the request was granted and the Osler family moved to Dundas, then a small town of

some 6–7,000 inhabitants, lying midway between Toronto and Niagara Falls, and four miles from the centre of the city of Hamilton (Figure 2). The Reverend Featherstone was provided with a rectory (Figure 4) and 400 acres of land, and in addition to being in charge of the St James Anglican Church (Figure 5) was also to serve the neighbouring parish of Ancaster. Dundas had a grammar school which William was to attend (Figure 6). The town was connected to Lake Ontario by the Desjardins Canal (Figure 2) but the natural harbour of Hamilton soon overtook Dundas as head of navigation. The family were made welcome by the citizens of Dundas, although the children were referred to as ‘Tecumseh’s cabbages’ and there was gossip that the mother, Ellen, may have been native North American, on account of her dark colouring. Of the children, only William appears to have inherited his mother’s looks.

The town of Dundas was received to charter by act of Parliament in 1847, two years before the birth of Sir William Osler. The sesquicentennial was marked by an issue of silver coins showing the bust of the first Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, John Graves Simcoe (1752–1806). Simcoe had fought in the army of Charles Cornwallis, 1st Marquess (1738–1805) in the American Revolutionary War in command of the Queen’s Rangers. Simcoe was an energetic Lieutenant-Governor and was responsible for establishing a network of roads in Ontario, the first being from Dundas to Woodstock, just east of London and known to this day as The Governor’s Road. The roads served a dual purpose: to link up the various scattered townships and as *Autobahn* to quickly convey troops to repulse any American invasion. John Graves Simcoe was a friend of Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville (1742–1811), whom



FIGURE 3

Etching of the parsonage at Bond Head where Sir William Osler was born. The etching was done from a sketch by M. E. Hill in 1897. The parsonage was destroyed by fire in 1913.



FIGURE 4
The Osler home in Dundas.

the town is named after. Henry Dundas was born in the little village of Comrie in Perthshire, commemorated by a monument. Some four miles to the west is the old Pictish fort, Dundurn,³² which is the name of the 'castle' in Hamilton, the home of Sir Allan Napier MacNab (1798–1862), Premier of the Canadas (1854–6). It would seem 'the wheel has come full circle', for the owner of Dundurn

House outside the village of Comrie is the direct descendent of Lord Cornwallis!

Dundas has grown since the days when Sir William Osler was a boy, but remains picturesque, surrounded by natural beauty and sheltered from winter storms in the valley below the Niagara escarpment.³³ A vast marsh occupies the lower part of the valley (Figure 2) which was



FIGURE 5

St James Anglican Church, Dundas, where Reverend Featherstone Lake Osler was minister. The original church was replaced with this new building.



FIGURE 6

Central Park Public Dundas School where Sir William Osler attended. The grammar school was situated on the second floor.

noted for its waterfowl and fish. The marsh carries the name of an elderly Captain Coote of the Eighth King's Regiment, who was an enthusiastic duck shooter of the eighteenth century.³⁴ Many of the landmarks in Dundas remain from Osler's days, including: Webster Falls and creek (Figure 7),³⁵ Collins Hotel in the Main Street (Figure 8),

the Town Hall, the huge old elm tree (Figure 9), claimed to be the largest in the world, the school (Figure 6) from which he was expelled and the nearby tuck shop which he frequented. His mother's house, known as Ellen Osler's home, still stands in Dundas, and is now used by the Salvation Army as a hostel. Sir William Osler could not



FIGURE 7

Webster's creek. With the spring rains this becomes a torrential river.



FIGURE 8

Collins Hotel, King Street West, Dundas. Constructed in 1841, it is the oldest continuously operating hotel in Ontario.



FIGURE 9

Elm tree in Dundas which was claimed the largest and perhaps oldest in the world. The tree has now succumbed to elm disease.

have guessed Dundas could become famous as a major cactus centre, nor would he have guessed that close to Coote's Paradise, McMaster University and medical school³⁶ would have been built (Figure 10). Osler would probably have been aware that when William Lyon Mackenzie first came to Canada in 1820 he lived in Dundas, where he carried out business as a pharmacist and lending librarian. If he was, he appears at no time to have mentioned the fact, nor did he ever comment that this 'rebel' hid in a cave below the escarpment while on his run to the American border after the 1837 rebellion. Sir William Osler would have strongly approved of the library, funded by Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919), and opened by his grandson William Lyon Mackenzie King in 1885. The building where he did a locum tenens no longer stands.

ILLNESSES AND SCHOOLING

Ellen Osler decided to join her husband and older members of the family in Dundas with the twins, Frank and Charlotte, and William, intending to travel by rail from Toronto on 12 March 1857. Young William developed

croup, so the journey was postponed until the following day. This was fortunate, as the train they would have travelled in crashed through the bridge into the icy waters of the Desjardins Canal. Young Britton, who was already in Dundas, recorded the grisly details with boyish delight:

I suppose you have heard of the awful accident that happened last night . . . up to the present time they have 81 dead bodies . . . and when they get the cars out of the water they will get 40 or 50 more . . . Mr Zimmerman of Niagara was among the first to be taken out, with his head completely off.

Since there were only 59 passengers, Britton exaggerated the number who died. Mr Samuel Zimmerman (1815–57) born in Pennsylvania, was the railway contractor and was to blame for the accident; faulty work to increase his profits was undertaken at the expense of passenger safety. So it was rare example of retributive justice. Had it not been for young William developing croup, medicine may not have had the benefit of one of its greatest exponents.



FIGURE 10

McMaster University Faculty of Health Sciences and Hospital. If the educational system Osler might have found intriguing, the architecture he would have deplored, and he certainly would have criticised the hospital being termed a Corporation!

William was sent to the grammar school (Figure 6) where he proved to be a hellion. The grammar school was situated upstairs, with the common school below. On one occasion he locked a gaggle of geese in the common school. Another time he unscrewed the benches and desks from the grammar school classroom and hoisted them up into a loft above. On another occasion he found the teacher using a Latin crib and shouted jeers through the keyhole. It is not certain which of these pranks, or whether it was an accumulation of misdeeds, that caused his expulsion. William was unperturbed by being expelled and greeted his sister Charlotte with a joyful shout 'I've got the sack.' His parents did not appear to have been greatly upset and merely sent him off to the Barrie Grammar School some 40 miles north of Toronto (Figure 2). Here William proved to be just as rowdy, and belonged to a group known as Barrie's Bad Boys. On one occasion when he and his colleagues had been 'gated' (confined to school) for robbing a neighbour's melon patch, William retaliated by covering over the school chimney with a board and watched with glee as the local fire brigade came to extinguish the non-existent fire. On another occasion he and a friend dressed up as girls in response to an advertisement by a farmer in search of a wife. William was brunette and his friend a blonde. They met the farmer at the Barrie Railway station. The farmer chose the blonde and promised to write the following week to set a date for the wedding. No letter, however, came: either the farmer saw through the ruse, or was not sufficiently interested in the blonde!

Young William left the Barrie Grammar School in 1866 when he was 16 years old to go to a new school at Westin, now a suburb of Toronto (Figure 2), which had been established by the Reverend William Arthur Johnson (1816–80). Father Johnson, as he was commonly called, was a strong supporter of the Oxford Movement³⁰ but was a thorn in the flesh of the all-influential Bishop Strachan, who considered his views to be too extreme. The new

school at Westin was modelled on the lines of the English Public School, the boys wearing top hats and garbed in Eton attire. The school was renamed Trinity College School and was designed to offer preparation for theological studies.³⁷ But Father Johnson had another God, namely biology, which was to influence the young Osler. A friend of Father Johnson, a physician from the Barbadoes, Dr James Bovell (1817–80), who had studied medicine at Guy's Hospital in London, England, and who had come to Toronto in 1848, was also intensely interested in biology, and would finally convince the young Osler to study medicine. Noteworthy is the fact that both these gentlemen were included in Osler's dedication of his famous textbook of medicine.¹³ Father Johnson was ahead of his times in terms of education, since he did not believe in cramming facts into students, but providing ideas. How much of this was to influence Osler in education of medical students cannot be determined, but certainly it could not have escaped his notice.

Osler continued his pranks at Trinity College School in Westin. In order to obtain a holiday from school, he broke quarantine to visit a classmate with chicken pox. A more serious caper involved the school housekeeper, who was despised and hated by the boys. When she spilt a pail of slops on the stairs, soaking one of the boys, Osler decided to take revenge. He and his friends barricaded her in her room, then made a paste of molasses, mustard and pepper and put it in a stove below so the fumes rose into her room. When the unfortunate woman was released she demanded legal action, with the result that the nine boys, including William, were sent to the Toronto jail. In court, they were defended by William's oldest brother, Featherston, who managed to get them off with a fine of a dollar and costs.

Sir William was a good athlete, winning several firsts at the school's sports.¹ He played rugby; according to Harvey Cushing (1869–1939), his biographer, Osler sustained an injury in 1866 to his shin which developed into severe osteomyelitis, but recovered with rest. His half-cousin,

W.W. Francis (1878–1959), whom he wrote letters to when a child as his ‘little doctor’ and ‘Willum’, later commented, ‘...apropos of surface markings, I expect you have gone swimming with him and seen the hole in one of his shins from periostitis following a football injury when he was a boy’.

After he had qualified in medicine at McGill University in Montreal, and completed his study abroad in England and Europe, Osler returned to Canada in 1875 to take charge of the small pox wards at the Montreal General Hospital. There he contracted small pox, which was a ‘... wonderfully light one the pustules numbering sixteen all told’.¹

Osler suffered from two attacks of renal colic at the John Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore, Maryland, US in 1904.³⁸ In 1902 he first began to suffer from angina pectoris,³⁸ and in 1917 he dreamt he saw his own post mortem after death from a severe anginal attack.³⁹

Osler died in 1919 of *H. influenzae* bronchopneumonia with multiple abscess formation and empyema, and not of carcinoma of the lung as many have supposed.^{40, 41} Urate deposits were present in the cortex of the left kidney,³⁸ raising the possibility that the renal colic may have been due to the passage of urate calculi.

OSLER’S EARLY PUBLICATIONS

Sir William Osler’s first publication when he was 19 resulted from a Christmas holiday spent in Dundas from 19 December 1868 to 9 January 1869. He obtained a sample of water from a spring either in the Desjardins Canal or in Coote’s Paradise.⁴² Using his microscope he studied the living ‘things’ that were present and published his findings in 1870 in a now extinct popular English science journal, *Hardwicke’s Science-Gossip*, London.⁴³ Commenting later in his *Bibliotheca Osleriana* he records:

My first appearance in print was in connection with the findings of diatoms, etc. in a frozen spring in the road between Hamilton and Dundas; and it is amusing to note, even at the very start of my ink pot career, a fondness for tags of quotations, this one from Horace, in those days a familiar friend.⁴⁴

The quotation is from the poem by Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus)(65–8 BC).⁴⁵

In the same volume of the journal under ‘notes and queries’ there are brief questions initialled W.O. which may also have been from Osler.

While a medical student at the Toronto School of Medicine, Osler published an article on Canadian *Diatomaceae Bacillariophyceae* in 1870.⁴³ In all, he published some 30 original papers on natural science and comparative pathology.^{10, 47} These were recognised for their clarity and fluency,⁴⁸ although he tended to overwrite in his early papers.⁴⁹ It is little wonder that in 1872 Osler was offered the Chair of Botany at McGill University, although he considered it a strange offer as he ‘... knew nothing of Botany ...’ and ‘... would only make a fool of myself in accepting such a position’.¹ It is of interest, however, that the last honorary post he accepted was the Presidency of the Botanical Society of the British Isles.¹

Osler contributed a number of papers on veterinary medicine.¹⁰ He discovered the parasite responsible for verminous bronchitis in dogs named *Strongylus canis*

bronchialis,⁵⁰ which was renamed *Filaria osleri* and *Oslerus osleri* in his honour (however, Osler’s eponym is no longer used for this canine nematode.)^{10, 51} Osler also recorded various parasites in a variety of species,^{52–59} as well as comparative pathological studies in different animals.^{60–71} Osler’s studies were not only descriptive, but included several that were of an experimental^{58, 66} and investigative nature.^{55, 66, 72} He was particularly interested in the relation of animal disease to man⁷³ and comparative pathology,⁷⁴ and urged the need for legislative action⁷⁵ and further research.⁷⁶ Although most of Osler’s early work was based on infectious disease, he did report the pathological findings in a horse dying of toxic haemoglobinuria.⁷⁷

Much of Osler’s early work was based on microscopic studies. In this regard it is worth noting that his graduation thesis at McGill University in 1872 was based on microscopic studies and other preparations of morbid anatomy.⁷⁸ While at University College Hospital, London, England studying under Sir John Scott Burdon-Sanderson (1828–1905), Osler made original observations on blood platelets, noticing that white thrombi were almost entirely composed of them,⁷⁹ though he was not the first to discover platelets; this done in 1842 by Alexandre Donné (1801–78).⁸⁰ Osler, however, gave not only a more full description of platelets, but also described their function. He was subsequently to publish other papers on ‘The third corpuscle of the blood’,⁸¹ and would also deliver the Cartwright Lectures ‘On certain problems in the physiology of the blood corpuscles’ to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, on 23, 27 and 30 March 1886.⁸²

MEDICAL CONNECTIONS IN HAMILTON

Osler’s first case as a practicing physician was in his boyhood hometown of Dundas in the summer of 1874 when he removed ‘a speck in the cornea’ for which he charged 50 cents.¹ The building where he practised as a locum tenens in Dundas was demolished in 1990. For a further month he assisted Hamilton’s city physician, Charles O’Reilly (1846–1920) at the Hamilton City Hospital. Dr O’Reilly later became Hamilton’s first Minister of Health (1873). During his brief sojourn in Hamilton and Dundas, he made ties with other local doctors, particularly John Alexander Mullen (1835–99) (Figure 11). It was Dr Mullen whom Osler credited with first pointing out to him the cutaneous nodes (i.e. Osler’s nodes) in sub-acute bacterial endocarditis.⁸³ As Osler said, ‘Never hide the work of others under your own name.’²⁰ Osler was also friends with Archibald Edward Malloch (1844–1919) (Figure 12) who had studied at Glasgow University where he graduated MB in 1867, and who had been house surgeon with Joseph Lister (1827–1912) at the Royal Infirmary, Glasgow.⁸⁴ Malloch as a medical student⁸⁵ may have been present in August 1865 when Lister first used carbolic acid, both as a spray and application to wounds, on an 11-year-old boy, James Greenlees, who had been admitted to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary with a compound fracture of the tibia.⁸⁶ The fracture healed with no infection or gangrene, an injury which previously would have resulted in amputation and almost certain death.⁸⁷ When he returned home to Canada in 1869 Malloch brought with him a practical knowledge of the principle of antiseptic surgery that made him one of its early pioneers in North America.⁸⁸ He performed the first drainage of an abscess using carbolic acid in the Hamilton City Hospital shortly after his return

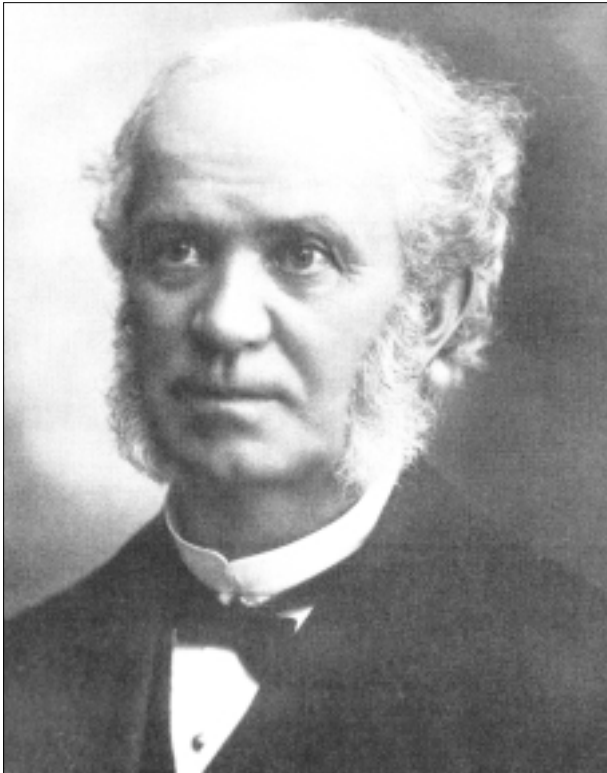


FIGURE 11

John Alexander Mullen (1835–99) whom Osler credited with first observing the cutaneous nodes, now known as Osler's nodes in subacute bacterial endocarditis. He apparently demonstrated them to Osler in the Hamilton City Hospital.

from Glasgow,⁸⁹ and late in 1880 reported a successful ovariectomy using Listerian antiseptics.⁹⁰ Unfortunately he was not a prolific writer, which would have done more to promote the antiseptic principles he so strongly believed in.⁸⁴ Lister had a high opinion of Malloch,⁹¹ whom he continued to correspond with after the latter had returned to Canada.⁹² While a medical student at Glasgow, Malloch became the Scottish ice-skating champion, which is hardly surprising for a Canadian! Both Archibald Malloch and John Mullin made several trips in the 1880s to visit their friend William Osler when he was in Philadelphia and Baltimore.⁸⁸ Osler addressed the Hamilton Medical Society in December 1906 when he spoke about the importance of local medical organisations. His remarks were not recorded,⁸⁸ but presumably were similar to those in his address 'On the educational value of the medical society' delivered to the New Haven Medical Association on 6 January 1903.⁹³

One interesting medical worthy Osler commented upon in a visit to Hamilton in 1894 was the vegetarian and teetotal recluse William Ira Allen Case (1804–99) (Figure 13). Osler gave a charming account of him as an 'old man with white hair and beard wrapped in a heavy shawl, sitting at his window', and congratulated him for being everything Osler was not: stable, unambitious and totally untouched by technological innovation.⁸⁸ Dr Case had no sign at his house; Osler noted, 'Happy is the man whose reputation is such or whose local habitation is so well known that he needs no sign!'⁹⁴

In 1925 the Hamilton Medical Society considered a memorial to Sir William Osler, and organised an Osler

Society.⁸⁸ Many of the doctors, however, were sceptical, and it was not until 1927 that a cairn was erected (Figure 14) by the Hamilton Academy of Medicine in Dundas, carrying the Osler quote, 'The master word is work.' The Dundas Historical Museum has in its children's corner a rocking horse which all the Osler children played with. There is an Osler Street (Figure 15) and Court in Dundas. In 1983, a commemorative service was held in the St James Anglican Church.⁹⁵ At the ceremony Dr Michael C. Brain of McMaster University wore Osler's robes from when he was Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, England. The robes had been given to him by his father, Sir Walter Russell Brain, 1st Baron Brain (1895–1966). Later, Dr Brain returned them to Oxford.⁹⁶

The Dundas schools make an annual award for the best essay on Sir William Osler; the town also has an Osler Achievement Cup, and the Dundas Valley Golf Club has an Osler trophy awarded annually (which the author has yet to win!). Sir William would have approved of these awards, and also of the school in Bond Head and the Health Institute in Hamilton which carry his name (Figure 16). The late pipe major of the Dundas Pipe Band, George Sherriff, was inspired to compose a 6/8 march entitled 'Tribute to Sir William Osler of Dundas', for that most perfect of musical instruments, the Great Highland Bagpipe. But it was the late Kenneth M.J. Tryon (1911–93), a citizen of Dundas, who created the greatest memorial of all: Osler's portrait (Figure 1).

The least that can be said is that Sir William Osler will be remembered in the next century in his boyhood home of Dundas.

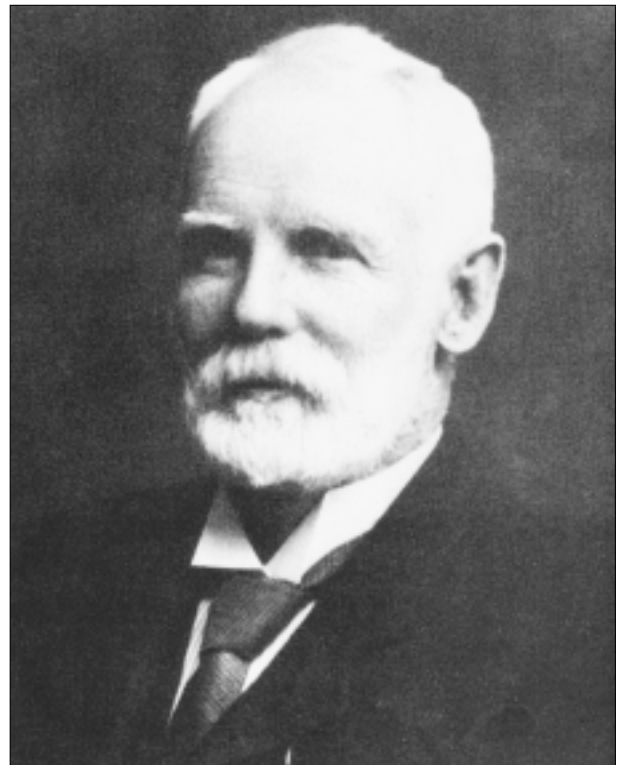


FIGURE 12

Archibald Edward Malloch (1844–1919) was a pupil and house surgeon of Lord Lister in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. He was the first surgeon to treat an abscess using antiseptic principles in North America.

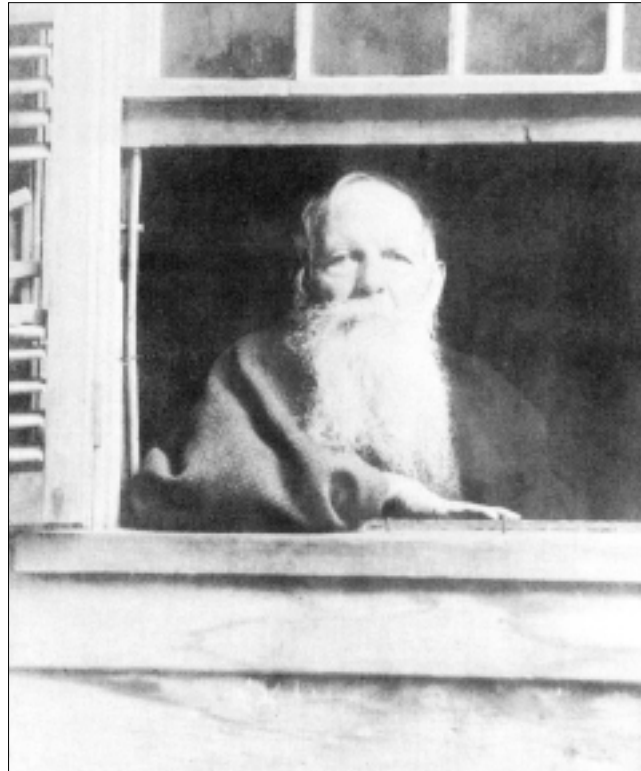


FIGURE 13

Dr William Ira Allen Case (1804–99) sitting at the window of his home, now demolished, in Dundas.



FIGURE 14

The cairn erected in Dundas in 1927 by members of the Hamilton Academy of Medicine.



FIGURE 15
The street in Dundas named after its most famous citizen.



FIGURE 16
Sir William Osler Health Institute, Hamilton, was opened in 1990.

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 - ²⁴ *The Family Compact* was a disparaging epithet applied to a small group who dominated the governing of Upper Canada (Ontario). *The Compact*, centered in York (now Toronto), was linked by family, patronage, political (Tory), and religious (Anglican) beliefs. Members were staunchly loyalist and hostile to the United States, and were, as an aristocratic ruling elite, deeply resented by Mackenzie's Reformers.
 - ²⁵ This is the reason why it is illegal to sell alcoholic beverages during an election today in Ontario.
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 - ³² This is believed in Canada to mean the fort on the waters. The name, however, is a compound of dŕn (masc), a fort, and the genitive of dorn (masc), a fist, i.e. dŕrn. The name Dundas is probably Dŕndeas, ie. south fort.
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You see how Soracte (modern Monte Soratte) stands gleaming white in deep snow and the straining woods no longer support their burden and the streams are stayed by sharp ice.
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