

Friends of the Archives Newsletter

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The Asylum at the CNE

Here with the "Asylum" section of the exhibit are the two key organizers – Linda Cobon, CNE Archives Manager, and Alicia Cherayil, Museum Studies Intern.

A reproduction of the Thomson watercolour painting of the Asylum hangs on the wall to their right, with other Queen Street historic images and interpretive text alongside.
Photo, August 2009: CAMH Archives.

Not far from the midway's colour and noise, this year's Canadian National Exhibition drew visitors into the *Remember When* Pavilion in the Heritage Court to see ***CNE After Dark and Other Haunting Tales from the Garrison Reserve***. Established in 1793 and extending over 1000 acres, the Garrison (Military) Reserve was where Fort York was founded to defend the tiny settlement of York. Over the years parcels of the Reserve were sold for institutional buildings and the succession of exhibition halls that became the CNE. Organized as a series of thematic bays, this display explains how some of the structures provided refuge while others imposed interment, even incarceration. It was the site of horrific fires and of military preparations for two world wars as well as the temporary interment of prisoners of war. Small wonder that there is a "dark history" here to explore.

In the section that includes the Asylum, the "haunting" alludes to sorrow and suffering, and to public attitudes to the institutions. There are photographic views of the Andrew Mercer Reformatory for Women, closed in 1969 as a result of public outrage over the treatment of prisoners. There are views of the Central Prison that functioned from 1873 to 1915. A photograph of the Immigration Depot suggests abandonment of home. Further along images of Toronto's Ireland Park commemorate the influx of Irish immigrants from the famine of 1847.

William James Thomson's arresting 1890 watercolour of the Asylum dominates the last bay. An aerial view, it shows the wide, central expanse of the complex, opened in 1850 to the design of John Howard, with the wings that were added in 1868 by Kivas Tully. Spacious gardens, walkways and fountains helped make the Asylum seem a place where "moral therapy" was likely to succeed. Next come photographic views of the exterior from the 1860s, the Superintendent's residence as converted for nurses in training (1910), and an unusual photo of the spiral staircase that wound up through the dome suspended above the water reservoir.

Sadly, the Asylum was soon over-crowded and was consistently denied adequate upkeep resources. Its imposing architecture, darkened from the city's coal and wood fire smoke, came to seem oppressive and forbidding. Clients needing help were often "shadowed" (haunted) by the persistent stigma of mental illness.

The main caption ends in outlining how, through building on the past and joining with the community, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has embarked on a Site Redevelopment program. With beneficial change, it is resolved that clients will be able to seek treatment without fear or shame. – *Shirley Morriss*

This is a synopsis of one paper from the project for which Matt McGeachy was awarded a Hewton Bursary.

“Therafields” by Matt McGeachy

From 1966 to 1981 nearly 800 people in Toronto’s Annex neighbourhood participated in Therafields, a psychotherapeutic commune – though I prefer ‘community’ – led by the charismatic Welsh-born lay analyst, Lea Hindley-Smith. Driven by a sense of self-discovery and immersed in 1960s anti-psychiatric sentiment, people flocked to Lea for her unique brand of psychoanalytically oriented therapy and the radical experiment in communal living based on good mental health. At its most prosperous, Therafields owned 27 houses in the Annex, two office buildings, a farm near Mono Mills, just east of Orangeville, Ontario, and two vacation properties in Florida. By the late 1970s, a disturbing hierarchy had emerged with Lea and her family at the apex. Ultimately Therafields would self-destruct, in many ways a victim of its own success.

Based primarily on oral history, my paper reconstructs Therafields from a variety of perspectives to offer the first scholarly account of the organization, placing it within the anti-psychiatry movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Of the 20 people I interviewed, 13 consented to be recorded; the others remained on ‘background’. The chronological history of the group and its development is presented, as well as analysis of the varied therapies employed (e.g. abreaction ‘primal’ therapy, marathon group therapy, work therapy, etc.).

The conflict between personal growth in therapy and the demands of living in a psychotherapeutic community emerges as a central theme leading to Therafields’ demise. The divergent perspective of the senior therapists, the members of Lea Hindley-Smith’s family, and the regular members offers a unique opportunity to analyze this fascinating group that still shapes the therapeutic landscape in Toronto.

The opportunity to work with Professor Edward Shorter at the University of Toronto was invaluable and inspiring. The bursary funding was extremely helpful in covering much of the transcription cost, and access to archives where John Court’s expertise and wide knowledge of the psychiatric and anti-psychiatric landscape in Toronto was equally invaluable in my research.

I am beginning my PhD in the history of medicine at the University of Minnesota this fall, and plan to continue focusing on psychiatric history. The Therafields story is not yet – nor will it ever be – complete; each person’s experience will always be unique. The paper I wrote, and every subsequent version that I revise and review over the next years, will be only a partial history of this fantastic human story, and that seems to me to be the best gift an historian could hope for.

RENDEVOUS WITH MADNESS FILM FESTIVAL

November 5-14, 2009

This year the Friends of the Archives will return as a co-sponsor of this presentation:

Sunday, November 8, 1:00 p.m. **0.9 AMPERE** which focuses on the history of ECT (Electro-Convulsive Therapy) while striving to present a balanced view of this controversial treatment.

***A panel discussion will follow. Please see the flyer insert for film festival details.

Archivist's Update – Announcing the Greenland Acquisitions Fund

by John Court

Our friend Michael Moir, head Archivist at York University (and a dedicated Pipe Major), recently spoke of the dilemmas that periodically challenge archives when vital documents are offered unexpectedly. He described the instigating forces for these surprises as “the Four Horsemen of the Archives” – *relocations* (typically from offices or residences); *retirements*; *financial planning* (generally involving tax abatement); and *death*. Although archival science now counsels a phased planning of acquisitions, integrated with records management, much of our art lies in deciding which offers of donated records to accept. Also crucial is judging which unexpected opportunities that arise periodically with a price tag should be proactively pursued.

The Friends of the Archives' (FOA) board has offered to support these rare purchase initiatives by establishing a new endowment fund, named in honour of the FOA's indefatigable co-founder and past president, Prof. Cyril Greenland. The board is launching this fund with an initial, pace-setting contribution from internal sources, transferred from the FOA's accumulated surplus.

The earnings from the fund will be poised to assist in acquiring important historical materials, consistent with our mandate, that warrant preservation but which will require funds for their purchase. Such circumstances may include sales at auctions as well as internet transactions on Amazon or e-Bay, along with dispositions by sale through a will to liquidate a deceased's cultural property assets for realizing a proportional cash distribution between heirs.

We are encouraging the participation of all members and friends in this legacy tribute to Cyril. Thank you in advance for forwarding your personal contributions, for which a charitable receipt will be issued. We appreciate your support for broadening our scope of vital archival holdings.



Time Capsule Archaeology. The Queen Street site's Administration Building cornerstone was laid in 1954, with a copper time capsule ensconced inside containing documents and artifacts. With the Admin Building now scheduled to be taken down in conjunction with the CAMH Queen Street Site Redevelopment, the capsule was temporarily excavated by an archaeological rescue team that included (l. to r.) Archivist John Court, President & CEO Paul Garfinkel, and Volunteers/ Spiritual Care Manager Michael Taylor. Photo, October 2009, by Tom Lackey.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am sure that you all remember "The Incredible Shrinking Man"? We are suffering from the "Shrinking Board". Cyril Greenland, Andrew Malleson, and Sandy Macpherson all resigned for personal reasons, though Sandy will remain on the Bursary Selection Committee. Jijian Voronka has a splendid new job with the Mental Health Commission of Canada – our congratulations. We will miss them.

The executive is now down to myself as President & Treasurer, and Edward Janiszewski as Administrative Secretary. The V-P position is vacant.

At the September board meeting it was decided to set up the Greenland Acquisitions Fund to honour Cyril Greenland's position as co-founder of the Historical Archives (see *Archivist's Update* for details). The board will open the fund with a contribution from the general revenues.

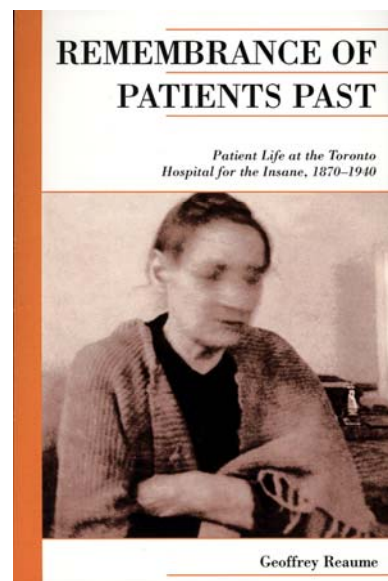
Finally, however you celebrate the Holiday season, I hope you have a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year.

Vivienne Gibbs

BOOK CORNER Good News!

Geoffrey Reaume's *Remembrance of Patients Past: Patient Life at the Toronto Hospital for the Insane, 1870–1940* has been re-released by the University of Toronto Press as part of the Canadian Social History Series (see insert for details of purchase).

Using first-person accounts, Reaume offers poignant stories about forgotten patients who endured monotonous routines and often abusive lives while working at institutional jobs within the brick walls that they themselves had constructed. Despite their tribulations, they were sometimes able to form meaningful relationships with other patients and staff. Reaume's insightful book takes the reader to a deeper understanding of the perspectives the mentally ill. (Cover photo courtesy of U. of T. Press.)



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