

Friends of the Archives Newsletter

Volume 18, no. 2, October 2010

RECOVERING and CELEBRATING OUR PAST



Geoffrey Reaume – Chair, PSAT

Visitors to the evolving Queen Street site now have the opportunity to learn more about some of the people who once lived and worked there. The remaining sections of the 1850 Provincial Asylum's patient-built brick walls have been given new life through installation of nine **Memorial Wall Plaques Dedicated to Patient Labourers** (two examples follow – see 2nd and 3rd pages). They highlight the contributions of often exceptionally skilled 19th and early 20th century patients whose unpaid labour was crucial for the operation of the institution.

The Psychiatric Survivor Archives of Toronto (PSAT) took the lead in this collaborative effort with support from CAMH and the Friends of the Archives. Marie Becker-Pos, one of the many donors to the project, made a gift through the Friends in memory of her late husband and former FOA board member, Dr. Robbie Pos.

The September 25th unveiling ceremony began with a stirring bagpipe medley at the

prominent Queen and Shaw Streets section of the 1888-89 brick wall. In welcoming everyone, PSAT Chair Geoffrey Reaume observed that this installation marks the 150th anniversary of the oldest portion of the boundary wall (1860). He paid tribute to the many who had contributed to the project's success. Susan Pigott, Vice President of Communications & Community Relations for CAMH, outlined the importance of such tangible examples of patient experiences. Mel Starkman of PSAT testified to the importance of publicly acknowledging the vibrant meaning of their lives.

Geoffrey Reaume then led the gathering on a tour from plaque to plaque, adding details about the walls and lives of many individual patients, emphasizing that in the Asylum era, credit, let alone payment, for their work had rarely been forthcoming.

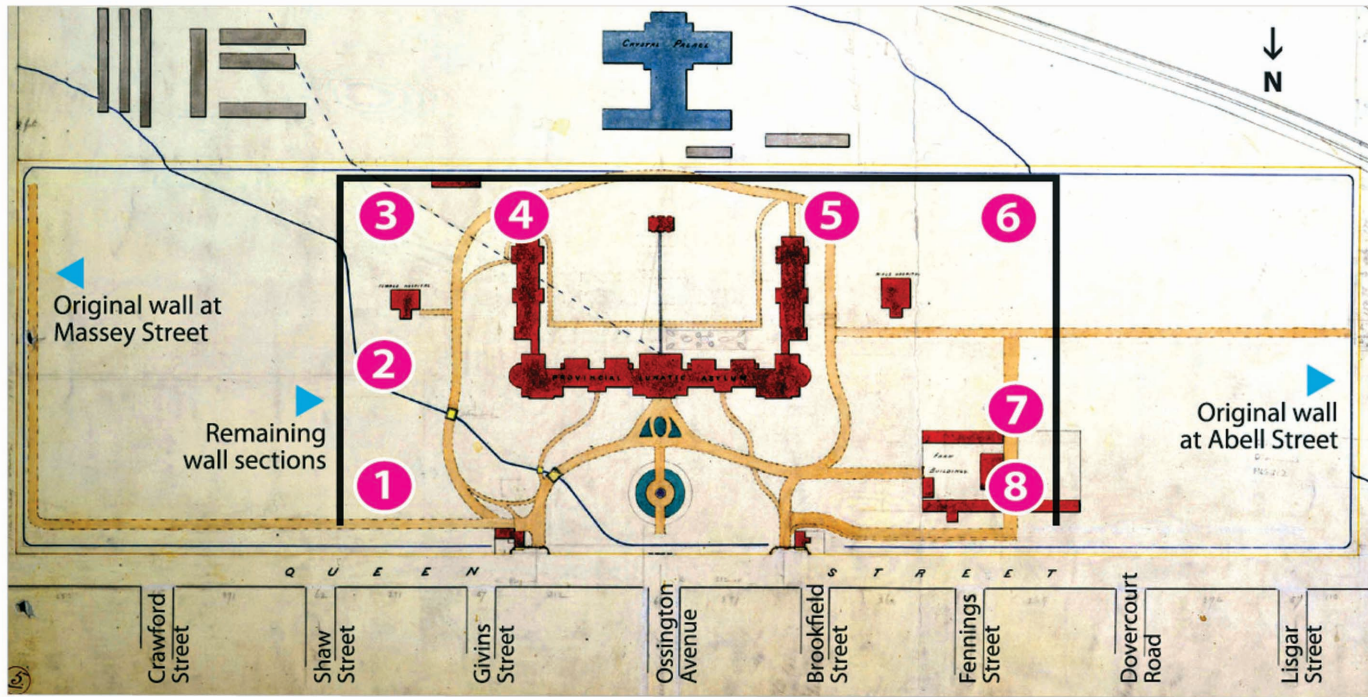
Now, friends of Friends: take the self-guided Plaques Tour; dial up for the audio tour.

By Shirley Morriss



Mel Starkman – Archivist, PSAT
(Photos: Ed Janiszewski – FOA)

Memorial Wall Plaques Dedicated to Patient Labourers



Provincial Lunatic Asylum plan of the grounds, 1863. Original site plan courtesy of the Archives of Ontario

These patient-built walls are a testament to the abilities of the people whose unpaid labour was central to the operation of asylums in the Province of Ontario during the 19th and 20th centuries. The asylum on Queen Street first opened in 1850 and was overcrowded within a few years. The initial idea of work as therapy gave way to the reality of work intended to save the provincial government money through unpaid patient labour. Men worked outdoors on construction, maintenance and farm work, including building and repairing many of the structures behind which they were confined, including the still existing boundary walls on the south side of this property, built in 1860, and the east and west boundary walls built in 1888-89. Women worked primarily inside, doing the

sewing, knitting and laundry for the asylum, while also working as domestic servants in both the nurses' and doctors' residences not far from this spot. Both men and women also worked in their own sex-segregated wards doing domestic chores such as cleaning, washing and scrubbing floors. Patients also worked in the male (west side) and female (east side) infirmaries, where they helped to care for those of their fellow patients who were sick and dying. Seen by many as the physical representation of prejudiced attitudes towards people with a psychiatric diagnosis, the walls which still stand today are historical monuments to the exploited labour of all psychiatric patients who lived, worked and died on these grounds since 1850.

**Presented by
the Psychiatric Survivor Archives of Toronto, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Friends of the CAMH Archives, and many other donors.
Dedicated September 2010**

Learn more on a self-guided tour of eight more plaques, as indicated on the map, with an audio description at **416-535-8501, ext. 1530**.



▲ Jim P. (detail, 1927)
courtesy of the
Archives of Ontario

▲ Photo (1972) courtesy of CAMH Archives

PLAQUE 5

This plaque is mounted near one of two workshops constructed in 1889 by unpaid male patients. In the 1920s, Jim P., a patient from 1898 until he died in 1941, worked in the tin shop and mattress shop. Nearby, the 1970s

structures replaced the 19th-century Asylum buildings, amidst spirited debate over preserving the 1850 Howard Wing, as ideas changed concerning the optimal design and scale of treatment facilities.

To explore this chapter of the history of the Queen Street site,
call the audio tour at **416-535-8501, ext 1530.**

The Emergence of Psychiatry in Nineteenth-Century Ontario

**Hewton Memorial Bursary Report for
2009 by Danielle Terbenche**
Ph.D. Candidate, University of Waterloo



Dr. William Rees, 1862
(Photo: LAC, MIKAN, no. 13212)

Over the previous two years, 2008-09, my doctoral work benefited significantly from the Hewton Memorial Bursary provided by the Friends of the Archives. My Ph.D. thesis focuses on the development of alienism (psychiatry) as a medical specialty in nineteenth-century Ontario. In 2009 I completed two chapters examining the Toronto Asylum between 1840 and 1855. I presented some of this material at the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association at Carlton University in May 2009. A full biographical examination of Dr. William Rees, the Asylum's first medical superintendent, the paper was subsequently accepted for publication in *Histoire Sociale/ Social History*, May 2010.

The Hewton Bursary proved especially important when I had to replace my

computer in September 2009. Most of my thesis data had been obtained via internet databases, making computer access necessary for all aspects of my research and writing. Thus, when I was faced with computer malfunction, my momentary panic was allayed by the knowledge that I had funds to assist me. The bursary also helped offset driving expenses for archival research in Toronto.

The connection with John Court and the CAMH Archives was beneficial beyond the financial support. In 2008 John introduced me to Dr. Roy Merrens who had been pursuing a general interest in Dr. Rees' work. Roy was very supportive and encouraging of my research and article preparation, and communicating with him certainly added an element of fun to the project, knowing that I was not the doctor's only fan! We consulted each other during the summer of 2009 at the time of the opening ceremony for the City of Toronto's Rees St. Wavedeck waterfront project, when it became apparent that the ceremony organizers had no plans to identify the doctor anywhere in the schedule.



"Asylum," ink and charcoal drawing ca.1970, by Arnold Wood; donated to the CAMH Archives through the courtesy of Elke Schliemann, R.N. – retired member of Queen Street staff.

BOOK CORNER



by James FitzGerald:

What Disturbs Our Blood: A Son's Quest to Redeem the Past

Recently published by Random House.
(Cover photo courtesy of Random House)

Despite the outstanding achievements of his grandfather, Dr. John G. FitzGerald, founder of the famous Connaught Labs, and his father, also an eminent doctor, FitzGerald grew up with dark family shadows and secrets. In telling their stories he seeks to pull free from the suppressed torment that haunted his youthful years and reveal the anguish and sorrow that can accompany notable success.

Good News: The author is a finalist for the Writers' Trust of Canada Annual Awards, Non-fiction category.

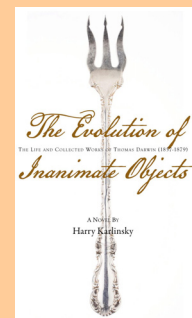
Disclaimer: We note with pride that both James FitzGerald and Harry Karlinsky (whose book notice follows) received a Hewton Bursary for support in conducting their research.

The Friends of the CAMH Archives, joining with **This Is Not A Reading Series, Workman Arts, and Rendezvous with Madness**, are pleased to present the book launch of author **Harry Karlinsky's** soon-to-be-published "factitious biography," *The Evolution of Inanimate Objects: The Life and Collected Works of Thomas Darwin (1857-1879)*.

The author will read from his novel and be joined by author **Guy Gavriel Kay** for this multimedia literary event on **Thursday, Nov. 11 at 6:30 p.m.** at 651 Dufferin St., Toronto: www.rendezvouswithmadness.com

Karlinsky's novel offers a subtle parody of Charles Darwin's theory through the tragically short life of his son, Thomas Darwin, whose eccentric application of evolutionary theory focuses on knives, forks and spoons. The reader is uncertain as to whether Thomas Darwin is the author's mischievous invention or a forgotten figure rediscovered through diligent research in the dusty archives of Ontario's 19th-century London Asylum.

Dr. Karlinsky is Clinical Professor in the UBC's Department of Psychiatry and is a founding director of the award-winning Frames of Mind Mental Health Film Series.



Cover photo courtesy of
Insomniac Press

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Friends_Archives@camh.net or John_Court@camh.net

Board of Directors: Vivienne Gibbs (President), Carol Hopp, Edward Janiszewski (Recording Secretary), Shirley Morriss (Co-editor), Aden Roberts and Thelma Wheatley (Co-editor)

Friends' Support: Yves Boissel, Dr. A.S. (Sandy) Macpherson, John McClellan and Marshall Swadron

CAMH Liaison: John Court, Syd Jones.

Hewton and Griffin Bursaries for Archival Research in 2011

The Friends of the Archives at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), devoted to the history of Canadian psychiatry, mental health and addictions, have established two endowment funds. These funds annually provide bursaries in memory of their late colleagues, Ms. E.M. (Lil) Hewton and Dr. J.D.M. (Jack) Griffin, O.C.

The main purpose of the bursaries is to provide financial assistance to students, and others not necessarily associated with an academic institution, who propose to undertake archival research on an aspect of the history of mental health or addictions in Canada. The FOA board at its discretion may approve bursaries to a maximum of \$2,500.

There is no application form. Candidates are invited to submit a letter of intent not exceeding 300 words, together with a budget and résumé, not later than November 30, 2010. These awards are conditional on the bursary holders agreeing to submit progress reports within one year, and a final report including a financial synopsis within two years of receiving the bursary.

Please submit an application for the year 2011 by the November 30th, 2010 deadline to:

Vivienne Gibbs, Pres. – Friends of the Archives
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
1001 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario M6J 1H4

Or by e-mail: John_Court@camh.net



Occupational Therapy Studio – Queen Street Administration Building, 1959

Membership Renewal Notice for 2011

Name: _____ Prefix: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

E-mail: _____

* **Membership:** \$ 20.00 (valid through December 31, 2011)

* **Donation:** \$ _____ (optional, at your discretion)

Total: \$ _____

* **An Income Tax receipt will be provided for your membership remittance plus any further donation.**
Please complete and mail this form together with a cheque, payable to “Friends of the Archives”

Please remit: Friends of the CAMH Archives, 1001 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6J 1H4