



# NEWSLETTER



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Friends of the CAMH Archives

A not-for-profit charitable corporation of hospital volunteers

## Exploring a Personal Connection to Ontario's First Asylums

by Victoria Fenner – Hewton Bursary Recipient, 2013

One day, I decided to search the Internet to see if I could find some clues about the only branch of my family which I didn't know much about. I knew that the earliest Fenners came from Germany and settled in the tiny village of Ruscomb in southwestern Ontario, about half an hour's drive from Windsor – two of whose historic buildings are shown here.



What came up in my search was the URL [www.ontariogenealogy.com](http://www.ontariogenealogy.com), where I found two entries for a woman from Essex County named Mary Fenner. That did not surprise me, until I scrolled to the top of the page and saw that the entry was from a page for the Toronto Insane Asylum. Her name also came up on the London Asylum page.

At first I thought this might be a distant relative. However, further research showed that there were no other Fenners in Essex County at the time. After following the trail through records at the Provincial Archives, I discovered that she wasn't a distant relative, but that she was my great great grandmother.

Writers often say that they don't find stories, but that stories find them. That is true in this case. Something about this story captured my imagination, and I couldn't let it go. Part of it was the surprise. At first it didn't seem consistent with what I had ever

heard about my family. Also, there was my own discomfort to deal with. Doesn't everyone want a hero in their family, not someone who was, in the terminology of the records, "of unsound mind"?

Two years later, with the assistance of the Hewton Bursary awarded by the Friends of the Archives, I have been able to follow the paper trail back to these institutions. Though it was a long time ago, a lot of pieces exist which, put together, tell a clear story. I am planning to turn the story into a video documentary. What has emerged is not just the story of a single woman, but also a picture of Ontario's mental health system in its earliest days.

Great-Great-Grandma Maria Elizabeth Dietrich, married to Adam Fenner, was a patient in not just two, but THREE institutions. Admitted first at Toronto (Upper Canada's first institution) in 1858, she was then moved to Malden in Amherstburg, where the original Fort Malden had been converted into a temporary asylum when it was no longer needed to fight the Americans. When the London Asylum was opened in 1870, she was sent there for the rest of



## Exploring a Personal Connection to Ontario's First Asylums (continued)

her life, until her death in 1901.

She was hospitalized from 1858 until her death in 1901, except for five years when she lived back at the farm in Ruscomb. During these five years, she had four babies. One of these was my great grandfather, Adam Fenner.

The elements which I am exploring in this documentary are the early history of Ontario's mental health care system, and some of the larger than life personalities who were reformers and who greatly influenced mental health care not just in Canada, but also on the world stage. I will also examine the social conditions related to the treatment of mentally ill people in Victorian Canada.

I am looking for answers to questions like: how did a rural farm woman living a day's stagecoach ride from the nearest city, Windsor, come to the attention of the authorities? Was it a neighbour who had her arrested? How would they have transported her through the bush to these institutions?

I will need to acknowledge to viewers how much of the story is speculation and how much of it is fact. But in the end, all history is a combination of these two elements. The part of the story which is pivotal to the narrative is this subjective element -- why is this a story that I need to tell? I believe that the most compelling documentaries incorporate a point of view perspective which interpret the facts and draw conclusions which can help us relate to our lives in our own place and time. The personal part of the narrative is about trying to understand the difficulties of a family dealing with a severe mental illness. The time period is different, the ways of dealing with a mentally ill family member are different. The similarity between then and now is the heartbreak of having a family member with a mental illness. That has not changed.

*Victoria Fenner is a producer and journalist living in Hamilton, Ontario.*

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## Hewton and Griffin Bursaries – Award Synopses for 2014

### (1) Sheila Gibbons – Ph.D. Candidate, History, York University, Toronto

Working Title: *“Only the Best and Wisest Parents Will Do”: Constructing “Good Citizens” in Canada, 1925 – 1975*

My doctoral dissertation looks beyond the institutional and medical framework of contemporary studies of eugenics to include agrarian feminist thought and public health programs in an attempt to explain the connections between eugenics and the Western Canadian identity. For agrarian socialists, nation-building was directly linked to proper child-rearing and hygienic practices in the home. Through the promotion of good health, welfare, and breeding, the agrarian political organizations across the prairies sought to ensure that the “harvest of manhood and womanhood” would include a nobler, stronger, and more “intelligent” Canadian nation.

The theoretical and conceptual framework for my analysis will be based on a socio-cultural approach to the history of medicine. Expanding Foucault's medical gaze, this study will analyze the ways in which everyday practices of agrarian feminists, public health officials, and agrarian political figures impacted the development of mental and physical health care practices and standards of ideal health in Western Canada.

This funding will be utilized to support the extensive travel required for this research. The research will culminate in my doctoral dissertation, but sections of my study will contribute to various public online exhibitions and archives with which I am working as a research assistant – including the Living Archives in Eugenics in Western Canada project; History of Madness in Canada online archive; and the After the Asylum project.

**(2) Gregory Klages – Sessional Instructor,  
University of Guelph - Humber, Toronto,  
and at the Ontario College of Art & Design  
(OCAD) University, Toronto**

Working Title – *We rest uneasy, we unknown:  
Undoing Historical Marginalization of Buried  
Psychiatric Patients*

Between the 1890s and 1960s, over 1,000 Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital in-patients were buried without grave markers in an institutional cemetery that is situated within an industrial neighbourhood in Etobicoke, Ontario.

Intending to widen knowledge regarding the persons buried on the site, this project will use documents such as death registrations (currently publicly available to the 1930s) to develop a database listing each interred person's name, gender, date of birth and death, cause of death, presiding doctor, religion, ethnicity, and pre-hospital residence.

The information gained in the project's first stage will be supplemented with information drawn from publicly-available census records, as well as patient casebooks created by the hospital.



This study may offer insights into factors that contributed to patient deaths during the first decades of the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital. At its heart, however, the primary interest motivating this study is to redress the marginalization of persons who died while psychiatric hospital patients.

**(3) Ali Shahbaz – first-year Medical student,  
University of Ottawa, Ontario**

Working Title: *The Historical Mental Health  
of Immigrants in Canada*

I plan to study and investigate the historical mental health of immigrants in Canada, specifically from the continent of Asia – as many immigrant channels have stemmed from there. By definition, refugees have suffered trauma and persecution, experiences that jeopardize mental health. On top of that, coming to Canada entails challenges – cultural disruption, separation from family and community, and the need to learn a new language and new ways of doing things – all of which may de-stabilize well-being.

Since all refugees suffer these psychological risks, the rate of mental disorder among refugees could potentially be very high. Most refugees, however, never become mental health casualties. Despite all of the pre- and post-migration challenges they face, most refugees manage to attain some degree of inner peace, to work, and to find a way to integrate into Canadian society.

In other words, risk does not necessarily translate into damage to mental health. Human resilience helps to convert risk into challenges, most of which refugees apparently manage to overcome. Finding ways to support the personal and social resources that promote resilience is at least as important as identifying pre- and post-migration miseries.

Isolating this issue should push forward our understanding of the complex dynamics involved in promoting the mental wellbeing of diverse groups of immigrants in Canada. I hope this will add to our knowledge of the social, economic, cultural, and multi-systems context of immigrant mental health. I also hope this research will contribute to the momentum in mental health promotion while opening up opportunities for collaborative and cross-sectoral work in mental health practice, public policy, pedagogy and research among those working with, and for immigrant and refugee populations in Canada.

**(4) Julia Skelly – Sessional instructor,  
Department of Art, University of Calgary**

Working title: *Aboriginal Peoples and  
Addiction in Canada*

My primary area of study is addiction and visual culture. I have published several articles in peer-reviewed journals on this topic, and my book, *Wasted Looks: Addiction and British Visual Culture, 1751-1919* will be published in 2014.

In the past two years I have turned my focus to Canadian art and visual culture. This Hewton Bursary will assist me to undertake archival research for a chapter in a collection of essays that I will soon edit entitled *Relentless Seeking: Contemporary Art, Visual Culture and Addiction*.

I recently presented a short version of the chapter at the Meeting Places International Canadian Studies conference. This paper, “Critical Cartography: Mapping Colonial Addictions in Landon Mackenzie’s *Tracking Athabasca* (1999) and Rebecca Belmore’s *Vigil* (2002),” examines the work of two contemporary Canadian artists who employ visual strategies related to place, space and mapping in order to illuminate the relationship between addiction and colonial violence towards Indigenous peoples. In order to turn this conference paper into a strong contribution to the field, I must undertake extensive archival research on the issue of Aboriginal peoples and addiction in Canada.

The document “Aboriginal Peoples’ Mental Health & Substance Misuse: Selected Bibliography,” prepared by Reference Services at the CAMH Library, will be an extremely important source for this research. The archival research undertaken at CAMH sites will also contribute to the Introduction that I will write for *Relentless Seeking*. A book proposal, including the Introduction, will be submitted to Routledge before the end of 2014.

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## Notice of Annual General Meeting

to be held on Wednesday, May 21, 2014

NOTICE is hereby given that the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the CAMH Archives will be held on Wednesday, May 21, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. in the Training Room, Paul Christie Community Centre, at CAMH’s Queen Street site. All interested are cordially invited to attend. Light refreshments will be available.

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## President’s Report for 2013

– Vivienne Gibbs



There is a hint of spring in the air as I write this. Exceedingly cold days and stormy evenings prevented the Board from meeting in person several times over the winter, but the weather did not prevent our subcommittee on bursaries from meeting and evaluating excellent proposals. You can read a summary of the four successful proposals on this page and the preceding pages.

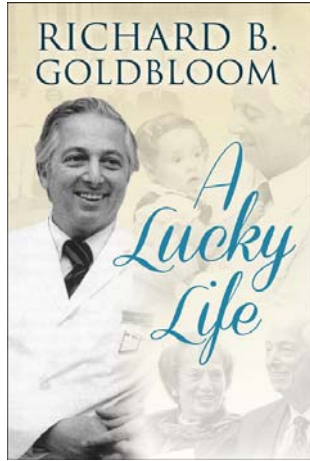
The Friends’ financial position continues to be healthy; however, I encourage readers to consider making a donation (tax-deductible) to the Griffin Bursary Fund so that, together with the Hewton Bursary Fund, it can continue to support archival research long into the future. Please indicate “Griffin Fund” on the Membership & Donation tear-off slip at the end of this newsletter. I hope to see some of you at our Annual General Meeting on May 21, and I wish you all a happy and healthy summer.

– Vivienne Gibbs

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## Readers' Corner

**Richard B. Goldbloom, OC, MD,**  
*A LUCKY LIFE*  
 (Halifax: Formac Publishing Co., 2013)



In this autobiography by one of Canada's most influential paediatricians, Richard Goldbloom shares his lifetime of memories. From growing up in a Montreal medical family to his years in Halifax as Physician-in-Chief at IWK Children's Hospital, this memoir captures the compelling career of one physician's lively understanding that healing is an art as much as a science.

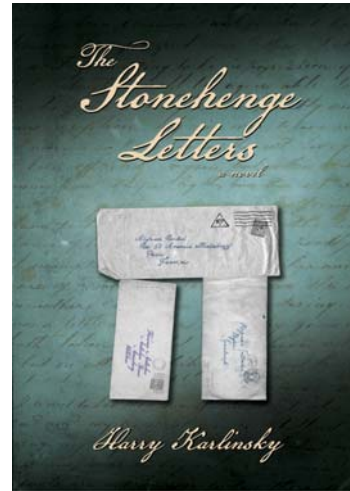
Of interest to historians of psychiatry, Dr. Goldbloom writes about the psychiatrist and family therapy pioneer, Dr. Nathan Epstein (also Dr. David Goldbloom's father-in-law), as well as the eminent Dr. Heinz Lehmann with whom he collaborated at East House, in Montreal. Richard's father, Dr. Alton Goldbloom, was one of Canada's first paediatricians, and the Paediatrics Chair of McGill who established the first department of child psychiatry in a children's hospital.

Retired psychiatrist and FOA member, Dr. Mary McKim recalls that she has known Dr. Richard Goldbloom since 1952, describing his book as "funny and well written."

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**Harry Karlinsky, MD, MSc, FRCPC,**  
*THE STONEHENGE LETTERS*  
 (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2014)

Dr. Harry Karlinsky is a clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of British Columbia. His first novel, *The Evolution of Inanimate Objects*, researched with FOA support via a Hewton Bursary, was long-listed for the Wellcome Trust Book Prize.



In his latest novel, while digging through the Nobel Archives in Stockholm, trying to figure out why his hero, Sigmund Freud, never received a Nobel Prize, a psychiatrist makes an unusual discovery. Among the unsolicited self-nominations in the museum's 'Crackpot' file, there are six letters addressed to Alfred Nobel's executor.

Remarkably, all but one is crafted by a different Nobel laureate – including Rudyard Kipling, Ivan Pavlov, Teddy Roosevelt and Marie Curie – and each is an explanation of why and how Stonehenge was constructed. Diligent research eventually uncovers that Alfred Nobel, intrigued by a young woman's obsession with the mysterious landmark, added a secret codicil to his will: 'a prize – reserved exclusively for Nobel laureates – was to be awarded to the person who solves the mystery of Stonehenge.'

But is this fact or is this fiction? *The Stonehenge Letters* acts as a wryly documented archive of a fascinating secret competition, complete with strange but illuminating submissions and a contentious prize-awarding process.

## Gendering the Boarded

### A Report from Tobin LeBlanc Haley – Griffin Bursary Recipient, 2012



*York graduate student of Political Science,  
Tobin LeBlanc Haley, in the  
CAMH Archives' Reading Room*

There appears to be renewed government focus on psychiatric disability in Canada (e.g. *Out of the Shadows at Last; Navigating the Journey to Wellness; Open Minds, Healthy Minds: Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy; and Changing Directions, Changing Lives: The Mental Health Strategy for Canada*). Despite this increase in attention, substantial gender analysis is absent from these reports and from broader discussions of psychiatric disability and welfare reform. My doctoral research seeks to address this gap through an examination of high-support homes for people with psychiatric disabilities in the Toronto area (GTA), in the context of transinstitutionalization.

Transinstitutionalization is a term developed by critical disability and madness scholars to describe the operation of the loosely coordinated network of services involved in the organizing and managing of people with psychiatric diagnoses during the era following general de-institutionalization.

My work contributes to a more complete understanding of transinstitutionalization and its gendered dynamics by examining women's access to, and experiences living within high-support homes that are run as non-profit

organizations and work in partnership with the municipal and provincial governments. Tenants primarily pay rent through Ontario's income support programs and access social supports through government and community-based services. These homes operate at the intersection of governmental and non-governmental social services for people with psychiatric diagnoses and are, therefore, microcosms of transinstitutionalization.

My research seeks to answer the following questions: How did the policies and programs associated with high-support homes develop in the wake of de-institutionalization to the present? What is the relationship between transinstitutionalization and the neoliberal reordering of Canada's welfare policies? What gender dynamics are evident in institutions, policies, programs and practices of trans-institutionalization, operating through high-support homes? What does this reveal about the gender dynamics of transinstitutionalization? To answer these questions I analyze policies and programs at multiple levels of government, such as federal-provincial cost-sharing arrangements for social assistance defined by Canada Social Transfer, provincial income support policies, and municipal standards for social housing.

My work is guided by critical disability studies, Canadian public policy, political economy and feminist political economy, and employs archival policy, documentary analysis and qualitative analysis of 21 interviews with tenants and 15 interviews with service providers in two high-support homes. I place particular emphasis on the voices of tenants, a group often excluded from research.

I analyze the everyday experiences of high-support tenants and service providers within the context of larger trends in political economy, contemporary gender relations and dominant discourses in psychiatry to provide a more complete understanding of the operation of transinstitutionalization. Preliminary findings suggest a real need to rethink how gender relations impact the structure of, and access to high-support housing for people with psychiatric

diagnoses in a time when responsibility for mental health care spans numerous portfolios at

all levels of government, community organizations, non- and for-profit organizations, families and individuals.

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### Wilfred Morison

**A report by Meredith Andrew –  
Hewton Bursary Recipient, 2012**



*Photo portrait of Wilfred Morison, ca.1905,  
by F.W. Micklethwaite*

My great uncle, Wilfred Morison, was a renowned boy soloist who toured much of the world in the early 1900s. After being drafted into the army at the end of WWI, while still based at the training barracks he came down with influenza in the great pandemic of 1917-18, only recovering after the war had ended. He raced motorcycles in High Park and sold them from a garage in Cabbagetown. He married a pianist and had two children, both of whom died as infants.

Sometime during this period, he contracted syphilis. The disease ran its course, affecting his brain, and consequently his personality and

behaviour. He became violent and abusive, and eventually, “unmanageable”. In 1930, he was committed by his wife and mother to the Ontario Hospital – Toronto at 999 Queen Street West, where he remained (with a brief stay at Whitby) until his death in 1957.

During the first year of Wilfred’s committal, he was clinically infected to induce fever, initially with malaria and then with typhus, and spent much of his time immersed in hot baths — “pyrotherapy.” This protocol was first used by Julius Wagner-Jauregg, an Austrian physician (and zealous anti-Semite) as a treatment for “general paresis [paralysis] of the insane,” a result of syphilis that affected the sufferer’s brain and nervous system. Wagner-Jauregg won the Nobel Prize for his work in 1927. The theory behind it was that if the patient’s body temperature was raised by inducing a fever, the fever would effectively “burn up” the syphilitic agents, leaving behind a disease that could be treated – in the case of malaria, with quinine.

In my uncle’s case, the treatment did not work. By the time that penicillin became available, it was too late. He died of general paresis of the insane in 1957. As his body went unclaimed by my family, he was buried, along with two others in the same plot, in the “Adult Singles” section of the Park Lawn Cemetery in Etobicoke, now part of Toronto. You may find his grave there, among many others, marked by a small concrete slab bearing the number 7479.

*– Meredith Andrew is a writer working on a novel based on the life of Wilfred Morison.*

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## Hewton and Griffin Bursaries for Archival Research in 2015

The Friends of the Archives at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), dedicated to the history of Canadian psychiatry, mental health and addiction, 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 addiction in Canada. The FOA board at its discretion may approve bursaries to a maximum of \$2,500 each.

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, 2014. 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 2015 by the November 30th, 2014 deadline to:

Vivienne Gibbs – President, Friends of the Archives  
CAMH, 1001 Queen Street West  
Toronto, Ontario M6J 1H4

Or by e-mail: [John.Court@camh.ca](mailto:John.Court@camh.ca)

## Friends of the Archives

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
1001 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6J 1H4  
Tel. 416-535-8501 x.32159  
[Friends.Archives@camh.ca](mailto:Friends.Archives@camh.ca)

### Board Members :

Vivienne Gibbs (President & Treasurer), Carol Hopp, Edward Janiszewski (Recording Secretary), Syd Jones (Vice President, Co-editor), Shirley Morriss (Co-editor), Aden Roberts, Thelma Wheatley (Co-editor).

**Friends' Support People:** Yves Boissel, John McClellan, Marshall Swadron

**CAMH Liaison:** John Court

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This lithograph reproduction (detail) of a 1958 painting by Robert A. Thom depicts the Greek-Roman physician, Galen (130-201 CE) applying "cupping." From a series of 64 mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century lithographs on themes for the history of medicine and psychiatry, generously donated this year by Dr. Manohar Keesari, retired psychiatrist of Toronto.

## Membership Renewal Notice for 2014

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Prefix: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

\* **Membership:** \$ **20.00** (valid through December 31, 2014)

\* **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