

# ROBERT CAMPBELL BOOKSELLER

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Telephone (514) 739-6487  
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## APPRAISAL OF FIVE LETTERS RELATING TO SIR WILLIAM OSLER

To: Christopher Lyons  
Head Librarian  
Osler Library of the History of Medicine  
3655 Promenade Sir-William-Osler  
Montréal QC H3G 1Y6

Dear Mr. Lyons,

In March 2016, you engaged me to evaluate five letters relating to William Osler, the property of Lawton Osler, P.O. Box 172, Windermere ON P0B 1P0, which I subsequently examined at the Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University. The letters included in my evaluation are described on the attached list with my individual evaluations indicated.

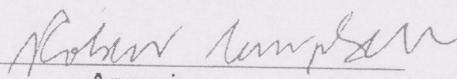
The five letters belonging to Mr. Lawton, a descendent of William Osler, have significant provenance and provide important insight into Osler family relations and particularly into the effect of the First World War on the family.

After examination and in consideration of the importance of their provenance, content, condition, and current market values for comparable material, I have appraised the letters listed on the attached at a total fair market value of \$7,450 Canadian.

By fair market value is meant "the highest price, expressed in terms of money, that the property would bring in an open and unrestricted market between a willing buyer and a willing seller who are both knowledgeable, informed, and prudent, and who are acting independently of each other" and as further amplified in the decision of Mr. Justice Cattanach in *Henderson Estate, Bank of New York v. M.N.R.*, (1973) C.T.C. 636 at p. 644.

In addition, we attest that we have no financial or commercial interest in the property appraised and that our fee for appraising the property is not contingent on the value of the property appraised.

In making this appraisal, we do not agree to purchase or replace any of the appraised items. Furthermore, the foregoing appraisal is made with the understanding that we assume no liability with respect to any action that may be taken on the basis of this appraisal.

  
Appraiser

March 21, 2016

Date

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The valuations of the five letters in this donation reflect their association to William Osler and his importance in the history of medicine and the esteem in which he is held. They all provide insight into the extended Osler family while three are very significant records of the experience of the Oslers during the First World War.

1. Holograph letter signed from Britton to "Dearest Clare" dated June 13, [18]94 from 35 Avenue Street, Toronto. Single sheet, 20 x 25 cm folded to 20 x 12½ cm, [4]pp. rectos and versos. Re: weather; dancing; a major local fire; etc. In poor condition.

\$150

Britton is Featherstone Britton Osler (1874-1943), son of Featherstone Osler and William Osler's nephew. Clare is unidentified. In the letter Britton discusses dances and a large fire that he witnessed. Unsurprisingly, since Britton was 19 at the time of writing, it is very much a young man's letter.

Although written by Osler's nephew, this letter is of minor importance but does allow some insight into the culture and activities of members of Osler's extended family. Unfortunately, the letter is in poor condition. There are two very large chips from the fold edge of the letter with some loss of text. The value of the letter has been discounted accordingly.

2. Typed letter signed from Osler to Featherstone Osler: "Dear Fen" and signed "Wm Osler" on embossed Professor of Medicine, Oxford letterhead, dated May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1907. 10¾ x 17¾ cm, recto only. The letter has been folded to fit the envelope described below. Re: the death of their brother, "Ned"; location of a relative and hopes that Featherstone will visit. Very good condition.

[with]

Holograph envelope addressed to Judge Osler, 125 College St., Toronto, Ontario Canada not in Osler's hand. 9¾ x 11¾ cm, postmarked on recto Oxford, May 30 [19]07 and countermarked on verso Toronto, June 8, 1917. Very good condition. The two items

\$2,300

A very important letter for the insight into Osler's relationship with his older brother, Edward Lake Picton Osler. Edward or "Ned" was the third son of Osler's parents. He was the underachieving Osler, the "gray sheep" as Bliss describes him<sup>1</sup> and this may account for the offhanded way in which Osler describes his passing: "poor Ned's death was not unexpected. It was

<sup>1</sup> Bliss, Michael. *William Osler: A life in medicine*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. p. 31

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surprising, indeed, that he lasted so long." This suggests a certain coldness and distance which seems otherwise uncharacteristic of Osler.

The following three letters relate to Charles Campbell Gwyn (1884-1917), the son of Osler's sister Charlotte and Herbert Gwyn. Campbell Gwyn was a Captain with the 18<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and acting Major at the time of his death. He was killed on the first day of the battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9, 1917.

3. Holograph letter dated April 7/17 from Charles Campbell Gwyn to Grace Revere Osler: to "Dear Aunt Grace" and signed "Campbell Gwyn". On two leaves of graph paper (likely removed from an officer's field notebook), 20 x 14 cm, rectos only. Re: thanking Grace for letter and parcel; out of the line but still in the "mud and wet"; German artillery barrage but he is away at H.Q.; humour consoling two elderly colonels on a "Cook's tour" during the artillery attack; visits and possible visits from friends and family; action is coming and possibility of being wounded; inquires after Revere; speculates that Revere is "having a very strenuous time of it." Very good condition.

\$1,500

4. Holograph letter dated "Easter Sunday" (April 8, 1917) from Campbell Gwyn to Grace Revere Osler: to "Dear Aunt Grace" and signed "Campbell". Single sheet, 21¼ x 17 cm, recto only. Re: he is "well and fit"; into battle the next day; by the time Grace receives the letter she will know if all went well; thanks her for her kindness.

[with]

Holograph envelope addressed to Lady Osler, 13 Norham Gardens, Oxford, England in Campbell Gwyn's hand. Ink notations "O.A.S." at top and "C.C. Gwyn" at bottom. Field post mark and Oxford postal countermark stamps on envelope. Very good condition.

The two items

\$1,300

This and the previous letter are very important not only for the fact that they were written by the nephew of William Osler, are addressed to Lady Osler and reference Osler family matters, valuable associations in themselves, but for the view they provide of life at the front and for their timing. Both letters were written within days of the beginning of the battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1917, by a senior Canadian officer killed on the first day of fighting.

The battle of Vimy Ridge is considered a defining moment in the development of Canada as a nation and these letters and their sad timing have significance and poignancy beyond their Osler family connection.

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Campbell Gwyn was very close to the Oslers having stayed at Norham Gardens after being wounded in 1915. Revere Osler notes in his letter below "... Muz [Grace Revere] and Dad, I know, felt as if he were one of their very own."

Not only did Osler and Lady Osler grieve at the news of Campbell's death but they dreaded the loss of Revere which was to happen three months later at the battle of Passchendaele. In a letter to his sister, Charlotte, Campbell Gwyn's mother, Osler wrote "but to give up a dear fellow like Campbell is heart breaking", and later in the same letter, "We are stealing our hearts against the possible blow to us, as Revere's Battery is in the thick of this fight."<sup>2</sup>

Bliss writes that after the news of Campbell's death, "Grace never expected to see Revere again. 'I have almost *stopped praying*,' she wrote on hearing of Campbell Gwyn's death. 'It seems so useless.'<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted that the reaction of Osler to the death of Campbell Gwyn stands in sharp contrast to his reaction to the passing of his brother as evidenced by the rather perfunctory comments on his brother's death in his letter to Featherstone above.

5. Holograph letter from Revere Osler to Nona Gwyn Stuart dated May 12<sup>th</sup> '16 [sic, should be 1917] on 13 Norham Gardens letterhead: to "Dear Nona" and signed "Revere". Two sheets, 15 x 11½ cm, 3 pages in Revere's hand. Small pencil note in a later hand correcting the date and identifying Nona as Nona Stuart. Re: death of Campbell Gwyn; how he misses Campbell; Campbell like another son to the Oslers; death of others; on leave; beauty of the area; fishing; mother looks older; Osler looks tired and worried; how he detests the war; looks forward to seeing her and her parents soon. Very good condition.

\$2,200

In this lengthy letter Revere Osler, the son of William and Lady Osler, is writing to his cousin, Nona Gwyn Stuart while on leave at Norham Gardens. In it he mourns the death of his cousin and her brother and how he misses his "sweet homely presence."

Revere goes on to describe how delightful is his leave in the countryside and how he is able to indulge his great passions, fishing and reading, but then that he returns to duty on the following Saturday.

<sup>2</sup> Cushing, Harvey. *The life of William Osler*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940. p. 1252

<sup>3</sup> Bliss. p. 415

\* 2,200

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He describes his father as looking "tired & worried" and then goes on to write that he detests the war "and everything to do with it" suggesting that it is the War that he thinks is responsible.

Letters from Revere Osler are extremely uncommon on the market and this is a particularly important example. It reflects his state of mind, the effect of the loss of his cousin, his concern for his parents and his mature attitude to the War and the contrasting pleasure and respite he finds in the countryside and fishing.

Additionally, given Revere's death three months later at Passchendaele, his letter and the Campbell Gwyn letters are very significant evidence of the terrible impact of the War on the Osler family.

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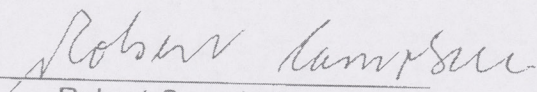
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### CERTIFICATE OF APPRAISER

I, Robert Campbell located at 5920 Clanranald, Montreal QC, H3X 2T1 hereby certify:

1. That I am accredited in the field of the evaluation of medical books and manuscripts.
2. That I am knowledgeable about the elements of a properly prepared and credible valuation report.
3. That I am independent from Lawton Osler and not associated in any way with McGill University.

Signed at Montreal, Quebec, on this 21<sup>st</sup> day of March 2016.



Robert Campbell