

# McGill's Heroic Past

## 1821—Centenary—1921



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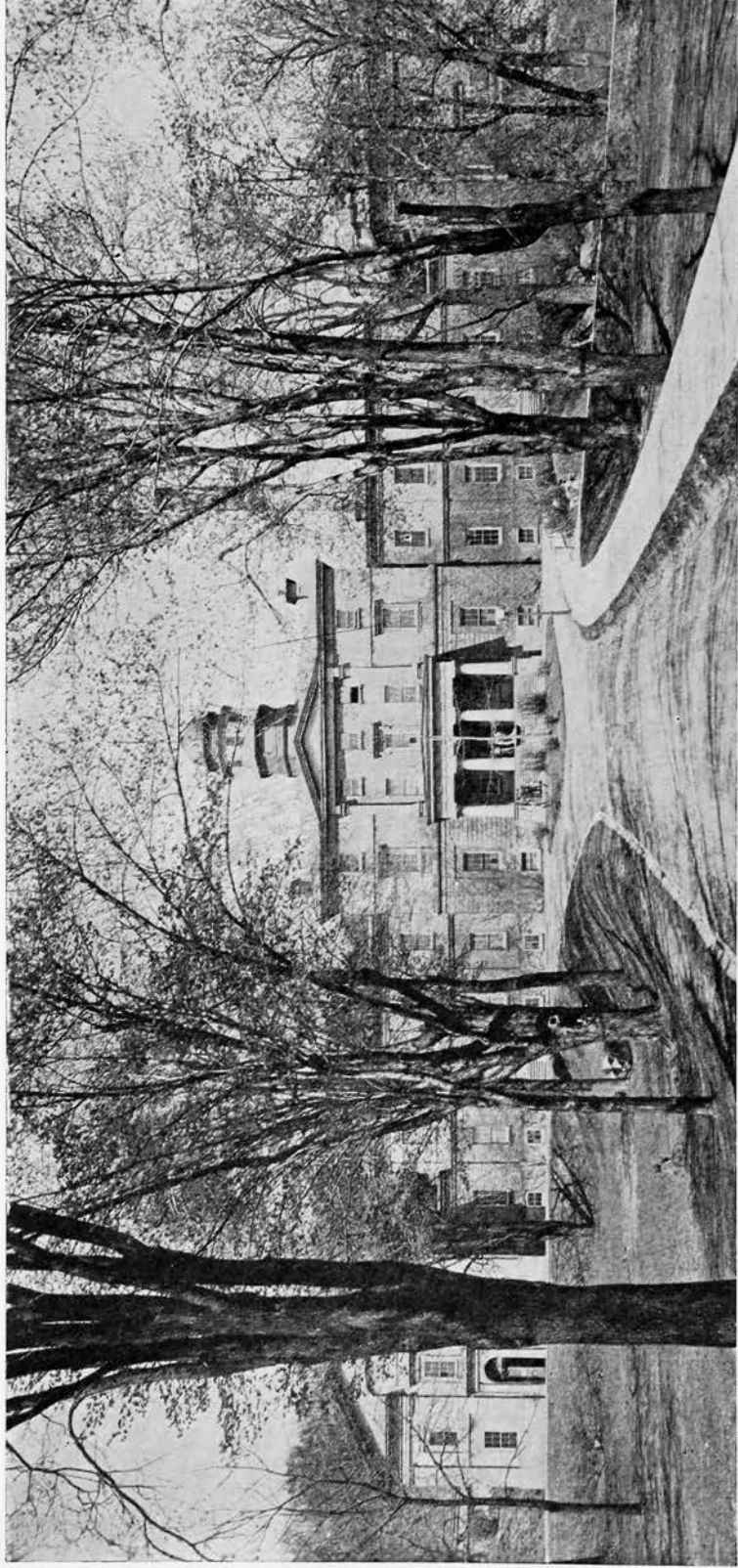
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—ARTS BUILDING— JEWING MOLSON HALL AT LEFT —

# McGill's Heroic Past

## 1821-1921

*An Historic Outline of the University  
from its Origin to the Present Time*

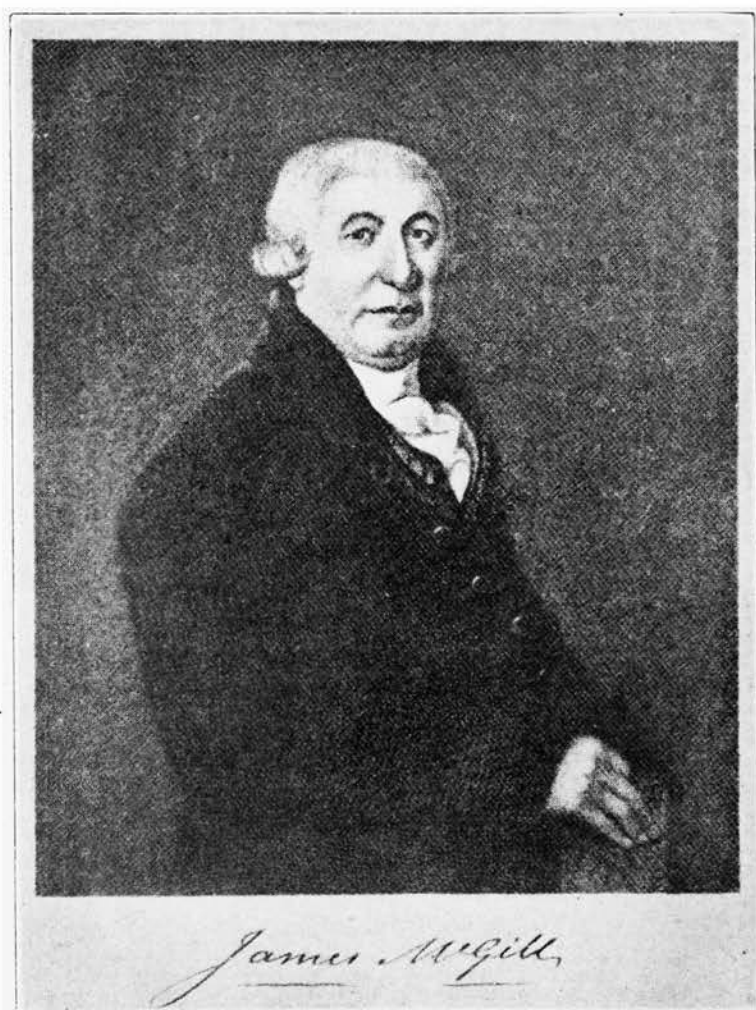
BY  
MAUDE E. SEYMOUR ABBOTT, B.A., M.D.

*Thirteen Illustrations*

*McGill University, Montreal,  
October 12th, 1921*

Entered under the Copyright Act, May 20th, 1921

***T**O the memory of those Great  
and True Men, through  
whose earnest labours in the serv-  
ice of Science and Humanity,  
and personal sacrifice to the same  
ends, the University of James  
McGill has been established, se-  
cured, developed and anointed,—  
this manuscript is affectionately  
and reverently dedicated.*



Founder of McGill College  
Born October 6th, 1744. Died December 19th, 1813.



# McGILL'S HEROIC PAST\*

1821 - 1921

*An Historic Outline of the University from its Origin to the Present Time*

by

MAUDE E. S. ABBOTT, B.A., M.D.

**J**UST one hundred years ago, on the 21st of March, 1821, McGill University received her Charter, and came into existence as an institution qualified to organize higher educational courses, elect professional bodies, and confer degrees. Conceived in the keen brain, and through the farsighted vision of a public-spirited Scottish citizen and educated man of affairs, nurtured into birth by the vigilance and fidelity of the trustees of James McGill's will and those of the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning, piloted through the early fallow years by the devoted labours and scientific acumen of her pioneer Medical Faculty, McGill came into her own, when, in the year 1855, under the Principalship of the late Sir William Dawson, she inaugurated the policy of a great University. To-day we are again on the threshold of a new and, let us hope, an even greater era. The faces of ten thousand graduates are turned towards their *Alma Mater*, who stands to greet them arrayed in the lustre of her young maturity and wearing the laurels of her victorious campaign; and many hearts beat high in anticipation of crossing again her beloved porta's. At the present time a backward glance is fitting tribute and brings sure guerdon, for her noble tradition is the best and brightest asset of the School.

An historic outline falls naturally into four parts:

## I

### JAMES MCGILL AND THE ROYAL INSTITUTION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING

In front of the old Central Arts Building, erected in 1843, there stands to-day a low monument, surmounted by an old-fashioned urn, and half overgrown with vines. Probably few realize that beneath it repose the remains of the Founder, transferred there, with the stone, from the old Protestant cemetery on Dufferin Square, Dorchester Street, on June 23rd, 1875, "In Grateful Remembrance." The words of Sir William Dawson, spoken at the inauguration of Molson Hall in 1862, should be inscribed also, where all may read:

*"We must not forget that the father, not only of this University, but of university education in Canada, was James McGill, a citizen of Montreal. His endowment in 1811 was the first practical step toward the erection of our first Canadian University.*

\*Reprinted with additions, from the "McGill News" June and October, 1921.

James McGill was born in Glasgow on October 6th, 1744, and settled in Montreal, then a little town of some nine thousand inhabitants, a few years before the American Revolution. A successful merchant and a member of the North-west Fur Company and the great Beaver Club, he took a prominent part in social and civic affairs, represented the West Ward of the city in the Provincial Legislature for many years, was a Captain in the Militia and a Brigadier-General in the War of 1812, and a leading member of the Committee appointed in 1803 to build the original Christ Church Cathedral on Notre Dame Street. He was President of the old volunteer Montreal Fire Brigade, a club organized in 1786 by a group of prominent citizens, each member being supplied with his own bucket; and we find his name in many records of the festive board, such as that supplied by the traveller Mr. John Maude<sup>1</sup>. He was the proprietor of a substantial city house, situate next to the Chateau de Ramezay, originally built by the Baron of Bécancourt, and then occupied by the Commissariat of the *Compagnie des Indes*, and which passed into his hands about 1800 and was long known as "the old McGill House", and he was the owner of the estate and the country residence of Burnside, which then lay on the mountainside, at a location that possesses for us a double historical interest in that it was not only the home of the Founder, but was also the site of the old Indian town of Hochelaga, and the point where Jacques Cartier was first met by a deputation of the Aborigines.

Further witness is borne to the position of Mr. McGill in the community as a man of property and standing, by a curious document in the Archives of the City Hall, which presents also a striking revelation of the customs of the time. This is a "*Deed of Sale*" dated at Montreal, Sept. 23rd, 1788, from one "*Jean Cavalhe to James McGill Esq., for the person of a negro slave woman,*" in which Cavilhe "of the St. Lawrence Suburbs, Merchant," declared that "for . . . . . the sum of Fifty Six Pounds lawful money of the Province aforesaid to him in hand paid by *James McGill* of said Montreal, Esquire, . . . . . to have bargained, sold, released and confirmed unto the said *James McGill* a negro woman named '*Sarah*' about the age of 25 years. To Have and To Hold the said Negro Woman named '*Sarah*' unto the said *James McGill*, his Executors, Administrators, and Assigns forever."

From the vantage ground of this position of wealth, prosperity and influence, the Hon. James McGill was quick to follow the course dictated by public spirit and the necessities of the young Protestant community; he associated himself actively with the few men of culture and literary attainments of the time, especially in the efforts they were making to obtain satisfactory legislation for schools and higher education in Lower Canada: and he ultimately took the step which eventually bridged the almost unsurmountable difficulties of the situation.

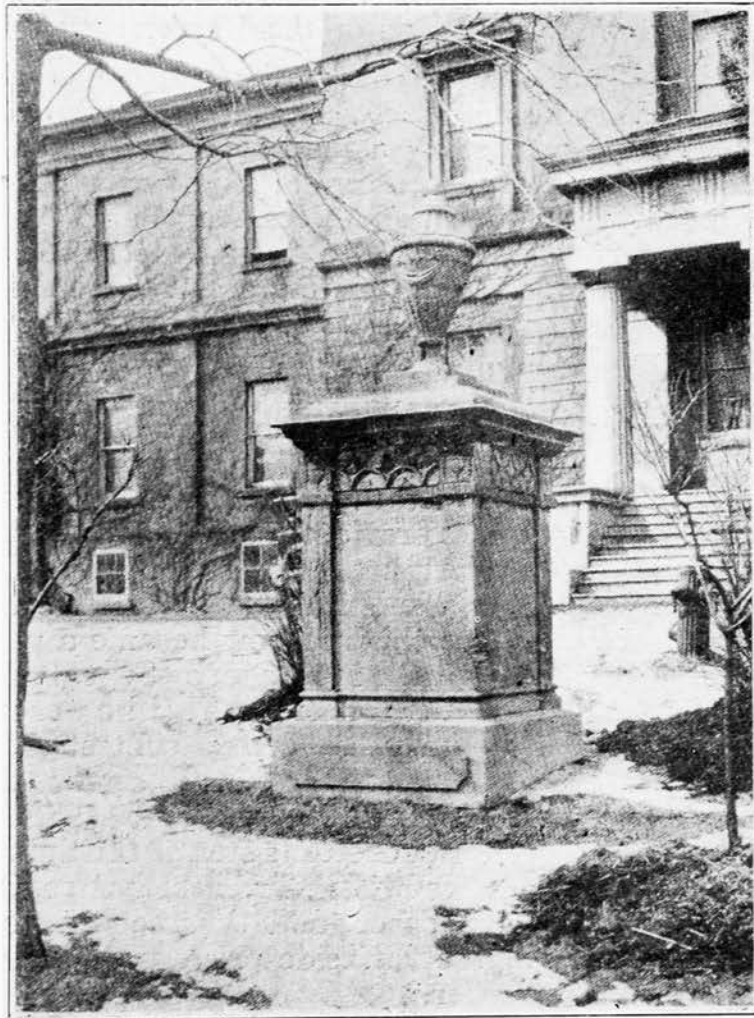
By his Will, drawn up in 1811, two years before his death in December, 1813, he left his dwelling house and buildings, called "Burnside," situate at the corner of the present McGill College Avenue and the street now known as Burnside Place, together with forty six acres of land, in trust to the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning, upon the shrewd

1. Montreal in 1800.

By the late John Maude, of Moor House, West Riding, York. Illustrated. Nichols & Wakefield, 4to. 350 pp.

2. History of Montreal.

By W. H. Atherton, Ph D., Vol. I, p. 16.



**THE RESTING PLACE OF JAMES MCGILL**  
Showing the Arts Building in the background

condition that there be erected on this land (which is the tract lying between Prince Arthur and Dorchester Streets), within ten years of his decease, a University or College "with a competent number of Professors for the purposes of education and learning in the Province," which should itself, or one of its Colleges, "be named and perpetually distinguished by the appellation of McGill College." The will provided further that his wife and her son, Francois Desrivieres, should "occupy and enjoy the revenue of the house and lands until such college be erected," a condition which led to a protracted litigation with the residuary heirs, before the bequest came finally into the hands of the University.

The action in defence of the Will was instituted in the year 1820 by the Royal Institution against Francois DesRivieres, who after the death of his mother had taken possession of the premises and estate of Burnside and refused to surrender them. A copy of the Appendix to the Respondent's case in the Privy Council, Desrivieres, Appellant, against the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning, Respondent, is in the Sulpician Library and contains valuable information. The conduct of Francois DesRivieres in thus forcing a contest of the Will assumes a graver aspect in view of the obligations under which he, with the other members of his mother's family by her first marriage, stood to Mr. McGill. The latter married, on December 2nd, 1776, Charlotte Guillemin, daughter of the Sieur Guillaume Guillemin, Councillor of the King of France and Lt.-General of the Admiralty of Quebec, and the widow of M. Amable Trottier DesRivieres, who had died five years previously at the age of 37 years, leaving her with a family of at least four little children, Francois, born in 1746, Marie Joseph, born in 1766, Marie Elizabeth, born in 1767, and Thomas Hippolyte, born in 1769. These children now became a part of Mr. McGill's home and family circle. At the marriage, on Sept. 19th, of the oldest of them, "Francois Amable Trottier DesRivieres" (who was made residuary legatee under the Will, and who subsequently contested it), to "Marg. Trottier DesRivieres Beaubien," James McGill signed the register as "*beau-pere*", so also at the marriage, on Nov. 16th, 1795, of his youngest stepson, Hippolyte, to Therese Bouchette (sister of the Surveyor); and the son of this latter union was James McGill Tr. DesRivieres, who married on Jan. 18th, 1820, Catherine Frobisher, and thus came into possession of the land lying North-east of the Burnside property, between it and that belonging to the heirs Durocher.\*

In a letter dated 24th May, 1820, to the Rev. Dr. Strachan (who was then Bishop of Toronto and first Principal of that University, but who at the time of the drawing up of the Will was Rector of Cornwall and one of James McGill's closest friends, and who was one of the Trustees appointed by the Will), the two remaining living executors John Richardson and James Reid said: "We are sorry to say that a general belief prevails and we fear is too well founded that Mr. DesRivieres, the residuary legatee, means to contest this bequest of his venerable benefactor."

To this letter Dr. Strachan replied: "I should hope that Mr. DesRivieres will have a greater respect for the memory of his *greatest benefactor*

\*The above information on the DesRivieres family has been kindly supplied for the purpose of this narrative by M. A. Fauteux, the Sulpician Librarian from information drawn by him from the registers and elsewhere.

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than to contest a legacy which goes to establish an institution which he had so much at heart."

The Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning was framed by Act of Parliament in 1801 for the care of Protestant schools of Royal Foundation and higher educational institutions in this Province, and the care and management of their funds, but was not incorporated until December 19th, 1819, when a Board of Trustees was appointed by Letters Patent. To understand its formation and the long delay that ensued, as well as the terms of Mr. McGill's will, it is necessary to realize something of educational conditions as they existed in Canada in general and Montreal in particular in the last years of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

At this time, less than half a century after the English conquest of French Canada, the institutions of the old French Régime retained, under the British policy of strict non-interference, all their old vigour, and continued in receipt of extensive financial support both in grants of money and in the revenue from the large Government landgrants, which remained under the complete control of the Sulpicians and other religious orders, whose teaching maintained, in all particulars, the Roman Catholic faith. The attitude of the British Government to the relatively small minority of English Protestants in this Province was paternal, but, so to speak, timid, and its actual support of Protestant educational institutions, was correspondingly weak. The original intention of the Government was undoubtedly to accord at least the same support to Protestant education in this province as was given in Ontario. Thus Free Grammar Schools of Royal Foundation were established at Cornwall, Ont., under the Very Rev. Dr. Strachan, and at Montreal under the celebrated Dr. Alexander Skakel; and there is no question but that the institution in this Province of a Protestant or non-sectarian college or university for the higher education of the English section of the people was contemplated by the authorities in the years immediately preceding James McGill's death and at the time of promulgation of the Act of 1801 framing the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning, and that the will itself was drawn up by Mr. McGill in the expectation that his would be only one of many colleges under an endowed Government University; at the same time he, the astute man of affairs, realized only too clearly the possibility of his being the only "college" that might be erected, and also the necessity of coupling with his request a time-limit that might restrict the inevitable delay. There is evidence also to show that James McGill, himself a member of the Anglican Church, was one of a circle of intelligent and educated men of advanced views who felt the absolute necessity of provision for the education of the English population, and assisted in obtaining the legislation for the promulgation of the Act.

That the delay in obtaining the Charter, and the defeat that met the several attempts made after Mr. McGill's death to obtain funds from the Jesuit Estates and elsewhere for the establishment of his university, was due to political opposition as much as to the inaction of the harrassed Government is evident from numerous documents. The endeavor on the part of the trustees to meet the difficulties of the situation is well shown in

the following letter from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec, declining an invitation from the Royal Institution to a seat on its Corporation, on the ground that according to the intention expressed in the Will of the Founder, this College should be essentially Protestant:

"Sir John:

*Il est de mon devoir de remercier Votre Excellence de la Communication qu'Elle a daigné me faire d'une dépêche du Très Honorable Lord Bathurst tendant à m'accorder une place dans La Corporation qui doit présider Le Collège projeté à Montréal. Comme ce Collège fd'après L'intention Exprimée dans le Testament du Fondateur doit être essentiellement Protestant; J'espère que Votre Excellence trouvera bon et voudra bien faire agréer aux Ministres de sa Majesté qu'un Evêque Catholique soit dispensé de prendre aucune part.*

*J'ai l'honneur d'être avec le plus grand respect.*

*de Votre Excellence,*

*Le très humble et très Obéissant Serviteur,  
J. O. Ev. Cath. de Québec.*

Québec, 19 Octobre, 1816.

His Excellency  
Sir John Coape Sherbrooke."

Public Archives,  
Series Q.

But the terms of the will determined its fulfilment. In January, 1820, being the month following the appointment of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Institution, the initial steps were taken to obtain the bequest from Mr. McGill's estate, and the first draft of the Charter was submitted to the then Governor-General Lord Bathurst. The University was incorporated in March, 1821, and two years later, in order to fulfil the further condition of the will, a nominal appointment of five professors was made, who did no teaching, and some of whom, as Dr. Thomas Fargues, of Quebec, the Professor of Medicine, were not even resident in the city.

These conditions continued until the year 1829, when litigation over the estate of Burnside was decided in favour of the University. The matter of the £10,000, however, was not settled until a number of years later and the college was still entirely without funds. Yet it was now absolutely necessary, in order to fulfil the conditions of the will, that actual teaching be done in the University, and the purely nominal appointments of 1823 be replaced or supplemented.

At this time the eyes of the Royal Institution and of the friends of education were turned upon the Montreal Medical Institution, an active teaching body of established reputation, which had been organized, as is recounted below, by the Medical Officers of the Montreal General Hospital in 1823-24, and it was decided to bridge the difficulty by making this body the Medical Faculty of the University. Accordingly at the first meeting of the Governors, called at Burnside House on June 29th, 1829, for the promulgation of the Charter and the inauguration of the University, the members of the Montreal Medical Institution, in the presence of "representative citizens of all classes" were formally "engrafted upon" the University of McGill College as its Medical Faculty. The account of this historic event is appended in the Governors' Minute Book, to the report of the meeting, as follows:

## BURNSIDE UNIVERSITY OF MCGILL COLLEGE.

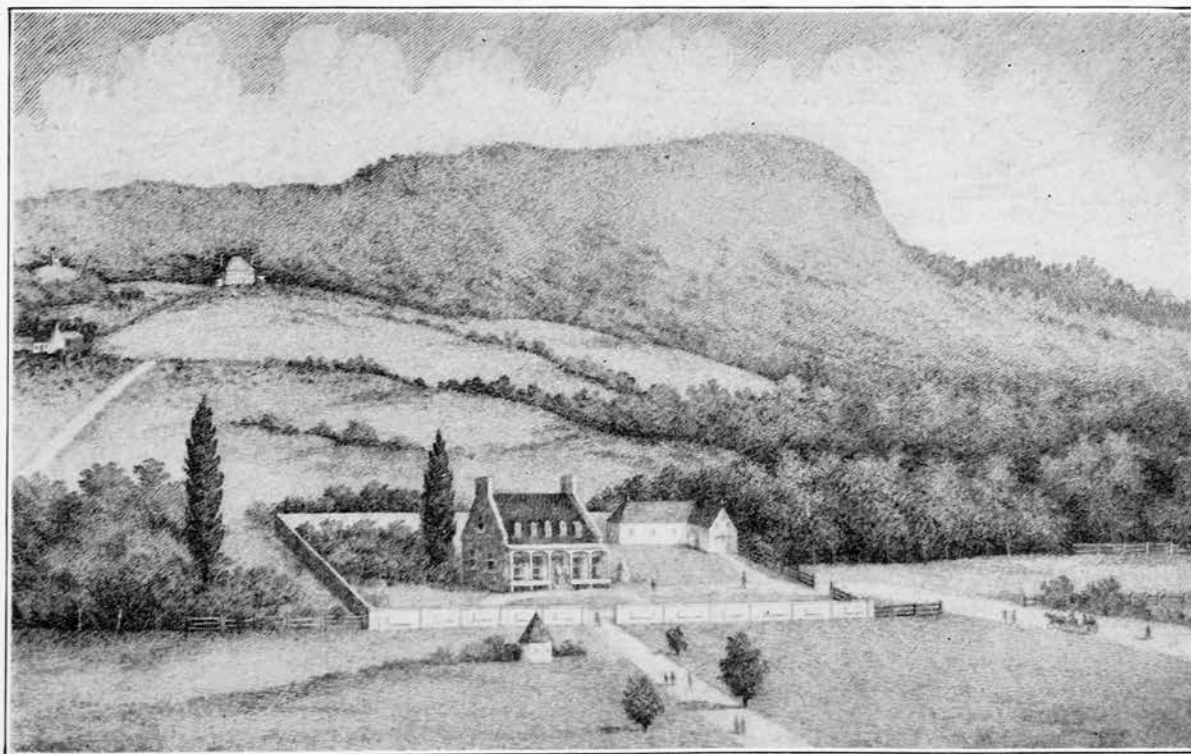
"At a meeting of the Governors of McGill, Montreal, 29th June, 1829, there were present: The Lord Bishop of Quebec, the Hon. Chief-Justice Reid and the Venerable Archdeacon Mountain.

"A large room in the house, which has been for some time existing on the estate, having been fitted up, it was soon after 10 o'clock filled by the numerous and respectable individuals who had assembled to witness the ceremony. Among the company was noticed several officers of the Government, the principal members of the Bar, the lecturers at the Montreal Medical Institution and several gentlemen more or less connected with the proposed college.

"The Right Reverend, the Lord Bishop of the Diocese, attended by the Reverend G. J. Mountain, D.D., the Reverend J. L. Mills, D.D., the Rev. B. B. Stevens, A.M., the Rev. A. M. Morrison and the Rev. A. F. Atkinson of Montreal; the Rev. James Reid of St. Armand; the Rev. W. Abbott of St. Andrews; the Rev. J. Abbott of Yamaska; the Rev. J. Braithwaite, A.B., of Chambly; and the Rev. H. Esson and E. Black of the Kirk of Scotland in Montreal, having entered the hall, the business of the day was soon after proceeded upon.

*"The public business having been closed, the Governors of the Corporation held an interview with the members of the Montreal Medical Institution, who had been requested to attend the meeting for that purpose. During this interview it was resolved by the Governors of the Corporation that the members of the Montreal Medical Institution (Dr. Caldwell, Dr. Stephenson, Dr. Robertson, Dr. Holmes), be engrafted upon the College as its Medical Faculty, it being understood and agreed upon by and between the said contracting parties that, until the powers of the Charter would be altered, one of their number only should be University professor and the others lecturers: that they should immediately enter upon the duties of their offices. All of which arrangements were agreed to."*

29th June, 1829.



Burnside, the country residence of the Honourable James McGill, and the place where the first meeting of the Governors of McGill University was held. It stood at the corner of the present Burnside Place and McGill College Avenue.

From a Water Color Sketch by W. B. Lambe, Esq., in 1842.

## II

THE RISE OF THE MEDICAL FACULTY (1824-1829) AND  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY (1829-1846)

In the history of any institution it is often the day of small things that most compels our interest, for in it lies the motive force that has made the present what it is, and that may happily become the inspiration of posterity. These things are true of the Medical School of McGill University. It was organized in a time of social distress and to meet a pressing educational demand, by medical men of high professional status, pioneers in their departure. And it was carried on, in the early years of its existence, both before and after it became an integral part of the University, through great difficulties, at the cost of much personal labour and sacrifice. The character of its really heroic past lends lustre to the relative prosperity of to-day; and the history of the four strong men, who, in the energy and ability of their youth, laid on a secure basis the foundations of a great achievement, is a sacred inheritance that belongs to every graduate of McGill.

The story goes back to the year 1819. Montreal was then a thriving little city of some 20,000 inhabitants, with a rapidly increasing Protestant immigrant population, but with hospitals and educational establishments only adapted to the needs of the French population and dating from the old French Régime. In that year the "House of Recovery," a small four-roomed cottage, which had been opened in the previous year, 1818, for the care of the Protestant indigent immigrant sick by the "Female Benevolent Society," and which constituted the first attempt at a Protestant hospital, was replaced by a larger building on Craig Street, containing 24 beds, to which the name *Montreal General Hospital* was given. It was provided with a code of regulations and an attending medical staff, and one *Dr. John Stephenson* was installed as *House-Surgeon*, "to visit the hospital every day in case of accidents."

Public opinion was strong and from now on events moved quickly. The site of the present Montreal General Hospital was bought by private generosity in August, 1820; the Government was memorialized for support and incorporation, and on June 6th, 1821, the corner-stone was laid, and on May 1st, 1822, the first part of the present building was thrown open to patients. The Charter was granted in 1823, with an attending medical staff of Drs. William Caldwell, William Robertson, Andrew Holmes and John Stephenson, founders of the Medical School, and Dr. H. P. Loedel, who resigned shortly thereafter. Drs. Robertson and Caldwell were British military surgeons of established reputation and experience; Drs. Holmes and Stephenson young Canadians, graduates of Edinburgh University, and further qualified by foreign study.

The need for medical training was acute, for quackery abounded, and opportunities of medical education, for which the new hospital presented facilities, did not exist in Canada. The initiative in teaching was taken by Dr. Stephenson, whose name appears in the hospital minute book on August 6th, 1822, as receiving permission to advertise lectures at the Montreal General Hospital during the ensuing winter, on anatomy,



practical anatomy, surgery and physiology, which were duly announced in the *Gazette* for August 9th, 1822, and were preceded by an introductory lecture, delivered by him at the Montreal General Hospital, October 7th, 1822. Dr. Holmes followed with a course of experimental lectures on chemistry at Dr. Skakel's house, beginning December 14th, 1822.

The next step came on October 26th, 1822, when the Medical Officers of the hospital appointed Drs. Holmes and Stephenson a committee to draw up a statement setting forth the difficulties of the students of Canada, and the "imperious necessity of establishing after a permanent manner a Seminary of Medical Learning," together with an outline of the proposed Medical Institution and the suggestion that this be established and duly incorporated. This memorial, signed by all the five members of the Board, was forwarded to Lord Dalhousie together with a letter from Dr. William Robertson asking that the staff of the Montreal General Hospital be added to the Board of Medical Examiners of the District of Montreal.

A reply was received to the effect that "every support" would be given to a Medical School, and that the Board of Examiners of the Province would be remodelled to include the hospital staff, and permission was granted to publish the Annual Prospectus under the patronage of the Governor-in-Chief. The first session of the now fully organized Montreal Medical Institution was opened at No. 20 St. James Street, on November 10th, 1824. The first announcement read: Principles and Practice of Medicine, Dr. Caldwell; Surgery Anatomy and Physics, Dr. Stephenson; Midwifery and Diseases of Children, Dr. Robertson; Chemistry, Pharmacy and Materia Medica, Dr. Holmes.

The question of the incorporation of the Montreal Medical Institution was dealt with subsequently. In the summer of 1826, at the instance of Lord Dalhousie, a form of proposed Charter was drawn up and submitted through him to the Solicitor-General for an opinion. The reply, received in 1828, after eighteen months' delay was unfavourable, objections to the Charter being raised on the ground that the school was not associated with any Seminary of Learning, and that it had no foundation or endowment. The officers of the institution then memorialized the administration of Sir James Kemp, and suggested, as a means of obviating these difficulties, "the appointment of the members of the said Institution as Professors of the University to be established at Burnside, near that city, one of the Colleges of which is established by Royal Charter, bearing date March 21st, 1821, and called the McGill College." The favourable consideration of this suggestion led to correspondence between the two bodies in question, which resulted in that memorable first meeting of Governors on June 29th, when the officers of the Montreal Medical Institution were constituted the Medical Faculty of McGill.

Thus, at a time of plain living and high thinking, and while finances were still entirely lacking, did the current of these three unselfish and public spirited educational undertakings, namely, the provision for a College made by James McGill, the activities of the Royal Institution, and the labours of the Montreal Medical Institution, unite in a concerted action for mutual convenience and preservation, that resulted in the establishment of a great University. With this consummation the morning of higher education in Canada dawned!

During the next twenty-five years, practically all the active work done in the University was carried on by the Medical Faculty and it took a large part also in the general conduct of affairs. In this connection it was directly concerned in the recovery of the money of the bequest. The chief instrument appears to have been, as usual, its devoted secretary, Dr. John Stephenson, who was described by a contemporary (the Honourable Peter McGill), as "the man above all others to whom we owe McGill College," and who is said to have started the agitation which resulted in wresting from the heirs of Mr. McGill's estate the bequest of that gentleman towards a college. To this end on July 29th, 1833, the Governors passed a resolution "that the Medical Faculty be authorized to use all the means necessary to forward the suit now pending touching the ten thousand pounds bequeathed by the Honourable James McGill," and appointed Dr. Stephenson University Registrar.

The Medical Faculty was also necessarily the active agent in obtaining the further legislation required for the conferring of the first degrees. Its first session was held in 1829-30, with a good enrolment of students. On October 29th, 1831, the following Memorial was presented to the Provincial Legislature:

*The Right Honourable Mathew Lord Aylmer, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Military Order of the Bath Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, etc, &c, &c.:*

*The Memorial of the Medical Faculty of McGill College,*

*Respectfully Sheweth:*

*THAT your Memorialists did for several years deliver Public Lectures on the different branches of the Medical Profession as a voluntary association under the name of the Montreal Medical Institution;*

*THAT in 1829 they were attached as Medical Faculty to McGill College of the University to be established at Burnside near this city, and have since that time conducted the Medical Department of said College.*

*THAT your Memorialists conceive it to be of the greatest importance to the permanent respectability of the Medical Profession in the Province that the Medical Students be enabled to obtain at home those Medical Honours which are necessary to constitute them Members of the Profession, and which they are now compelled to seek in other countries. They therefore respectfully suggest the propriety of taking into your favorable consideration such measures as may give effect to the authority granted by Royal Charter to the Governors of the aforesaid College, of conferring Degrees and Diplomas on candidates applying after a regular course of academic studies and a successful examination before the Medical Faculty of said College.*

*THAT your Memorialists consider that His Majesty's subjects studying Medicine in this Province are placed in a situation calling loudly for the assistance of the constituted authorities of the country.*

*THAT to obtain Medical Honours necessary as aforesaid, they are now forced to go to*

*Europe, an expense too great for many, or to the United States, where they are in danger of imbibing principles inimical to our Government and our Institutions.*

(Signed)

“

“

“

Montreal,  
29th October, 1831.

The advice of the Solicitor-General was again sought, and it was learned that under the Charter the University Statutes must first receive the Royal Sanction. Two days later, on the 9th of November, 1831, a copy of the "*Statutes, Rules and Ordinances of the Medical Faculty of McGill University*," consisting of forty-five regulations upon arrangements for lectures, qualifications for the degree, conduct of the medical library, and duties of the secretary, was drawn up and approved by Bishop (then Archdeacon) Mountain, Principal of the University, presented personally at Quebec by Dr. Stephenson, and duly forwarded to London. The following reply was received at Quebec on July 23rd, 1832:

“Downing Street, 22nd May, 1832.

My Lord:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's dispatch of the 8th March last, inclosing for approval a copy of the Statutes, Rules and Ordinances for the Government of the Medical Faculty of McGill College at Montreal, agreed upon by the Governor of the said College.

In reply I have to convey to Your Lordship His Majesty's approbation of the Statutes, Rules and Ordinances agreed upon in February last, and also of the gentlemen recommended for professorships, viz.: William Caldwell, M.D., John Stephenson, M.D., Andrew F. Holmes, M.D., William Robertson, without specifying at present the precise nature of each professorship.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient humble servant,

GODERICH.

Civil Government

No. 105.

London, 22nd May, 1832.

Lord Goderich."

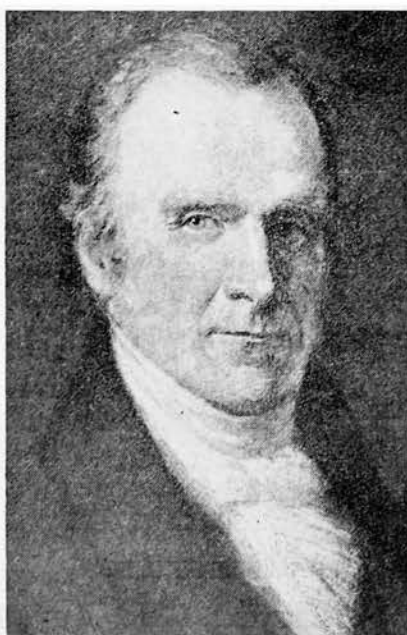
Public Archives, Series G., Vol. 24, 1 p. 389.



**JOHN STEPHENSON, M.D.**  
Registrar, 1829-1842.



**ANDREW F. HOLMES, M.D., LL.D.**  
1789-1860



**WILLIAM ROBERTSON**  
1784-1844



**WILLIAM CALDWELL, M.D.**  
1782-1833

In the following year, on May 24th, 1833, the first University degree was accordingly granted, in Medicine, to Mr. W. Logie.

The splendid beginning made at the Inaugural Meeting of 1829, for various reasons, received little support except from its one executive Faculty and the few public-spirited members of its corporation mentioned below, until the middle of the century. The causes were chiefly the numerical weakness of the Protestant population, the cumbrous character of the Charter, personal differences. Conditions had changed greatly in the decades that had elapsed since the framing of the Royal Institution in 1801 and the incorporation of the University twenty years later. The difficulties which the struggling college had to face were no longer so much from without, from the opposition of rival and older populations with rights which they feared to lose, but from within, in disputation among the members of what might not unfittingly be called an ecclesiastical body-politic, and in the peculiar constitution of the Royal Institution, which had its seat at Quebec and was composed largely of Trustees who were resident in that city and who were appointed on official grounds and without close association with, nor intimate knowledge of, the affairs of the college, but who yet had control of its funds, while the Principal and the Governors resident in Montreal, of necessity formed a Directorate which conducted whatever activities were carried on in the University life here, and came in time to actually constitute a second governing body acting independently of the first and which finally reached the point of requesting that funds destined for the University be paid through the Receiver-General without the intervention of the Royal Institution. The situation became acute when at last an actual difference of opinion on a question of policy arose, the controversy centering around the Anglican or non-sectarian constitution of the University Governing Body. The latter view prevailed in the year 1846, and from that date what may be termed the clerical period in the history of McGill ended. Viewed in retrospect today, the controversy itself was of less moment than the interesting sidelight which it throws upon the important part taken in the early development of the University by the Anglican Church, which stood for authority and Government support here as representative of the Established Church of the Mother Country. The story of these difficult years is well outlined in its true values by Dr. C. W. Colby<sup>3</sup> in two delightful character sketches in the University Magazine upon the Rev. Principal G. J. Mountain, who was First Principal of the University from 1829 to 1835, and who was from the year 1836 Bishop of Montreal; and the Rev. John Bethune, Dean of Montreal, who succeeded Bishop Mountain as Acting-Principal of the University in 1835 and held this office for eleven years under an appointment made by the then *ex-officio* Governors, His Excellency Sir Charles Gosford, the Rev. Charles Stewart, Bishop of Quebec, and Mr. Chief Justice Reid, of Montreal. Further information upon these two early Principals is contained in the Life of Bishop Mountain,<sup>4</sup> by his son, and in an appreciative biographical sketch<sup>5</sup> upon "The Very Rev. John Bethune, D.D.," by Mr. Fennings

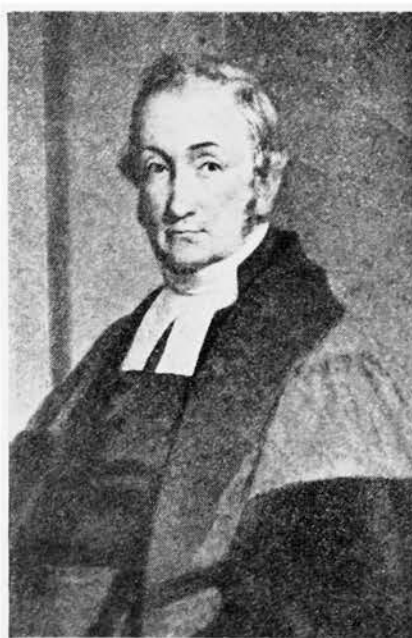
3. Rev. Principal G. J. Mountain, by C. W. Colby. The McGill University Magazine, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1902, page 21; The Rev. John Bethune, D.D. Ibid. No. 2, Page 23.

4. A Memoir George Jehospat Mountain, D.D., D.C.L., late Bishop of Quebec, compiled by Armine W. Mountain, M.A., Montreal. Lovell & Sons, 1866, 488 pp.

5. "Portraits of British Americans." Vol. II., 19807, pp. 51-60.

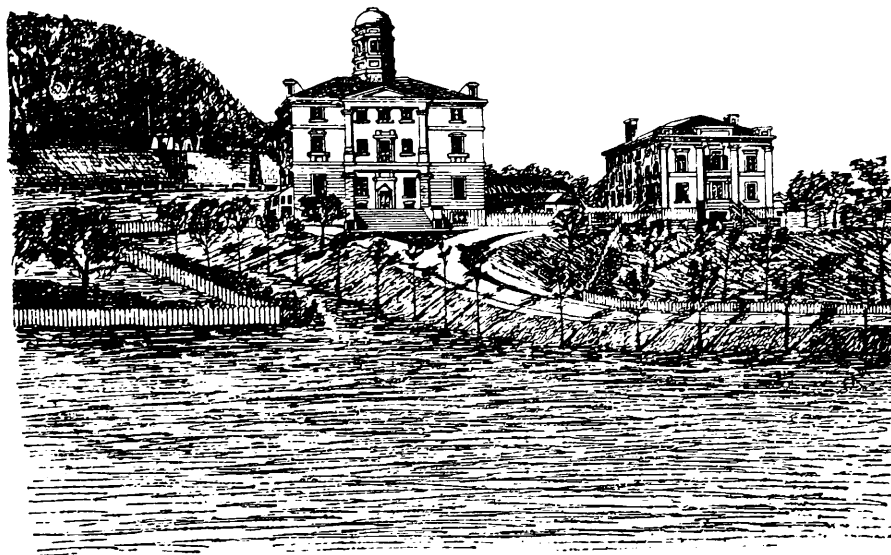


**REV. GEORGE JEHOSEPHAT MOUNTAIN**  
1789-1863  
First Principal of McGill University, 1829-1835



**REV. JOHN BETHUNE**  
Acting Principal of McGill University, 1835-1846.

Taylor in 1867, and also in the account given in his Inaugural Address by Dr. C. L. Day, at the opening of the William Molson Hall in 1862.



MCGILL COLLEGE, 1845

The controversy was also the subject of a large correspondence now in the Archives. From these sources and in the light of the lapse of time the services rendered to the University by these two great Churchmen are seen in their true perspective. Bishop Mountain, the gentle and poetic prelate and indefatigable pioneer missionary of this Province, was during his six years' tenure of the Principalship a non-resident and merely nominal head of a college that was yet to be; yet his was the intellect and his the guidance that brought the Faculty of Arts into existence, and supported the Medical Faculty in obtaining the legislature they required for conferring degrees; and his were the vision and the ideals that foreshadowed the future broad outlines of the University.

Dean Bethune, whose life as Rector of Christ Church Cathedral was, in the words of his biographer,<sup>6</sup> "lovingly and intimately blended" with that of his Parish and with the development of all the public institutions of Protestant philanthropy of the city for over fifty years, whose frank but unsuccessful policy<sup>7</sup> of bringing the University under the control of Church on the grounds "that there must be some religious discipline, that James McGill was a member of the Church of England, and that there was no college bound by acknowledged ties to this Church in Canada," is to be recognized, as Dr. Colby points out, as a part of the history of McGill—was also the man to whose exertions are to be ascribed the increased efforts

6. Mr. Fennings Taylor.

7. In connection with this attempt, the History of King's College, which later became the University of Toronto, is most illuminating. There, an identical policy was carried through by the brilliant educationalist Dr. Strachan, who was the preceptor and who later became the father-in-law of Dr. Bethune. Under the Charter of King's College, dated 1827, and drawn up by Dr. Strachan, the Principal must be Anglican, and all members of the Council must have subscribed to the thirty-nine articles. This Charter was revoked a dozen years later.

made immediately on his accession to the Principalship towards the establishment of a Faculty of Arts, which resulted in the formal opening of this Faculty in 1843 in the Central Arts Building, erected for the purpose at the time and which was completed in 1845, during his office Dean Bethune was also a constant and able presiding officer at the sessions of the Medical Faculty, which except for an intermission of two years during the disturbances of 1837, went steadily forward. A document signed by several of the most important of his colleagues on the Board of Governors reads that through these years he "performed the duties of his office of Principal of this Institution with a zeal, ability and moderation which was only equalled by his patient and enduring perseverance under circumstances of great and harrassing difficulty, and that the opening and establishing of the college, and consequently its very existence, are mainly to be ascribed, as we verily believe, to his active and indefatigable exertions."

### III

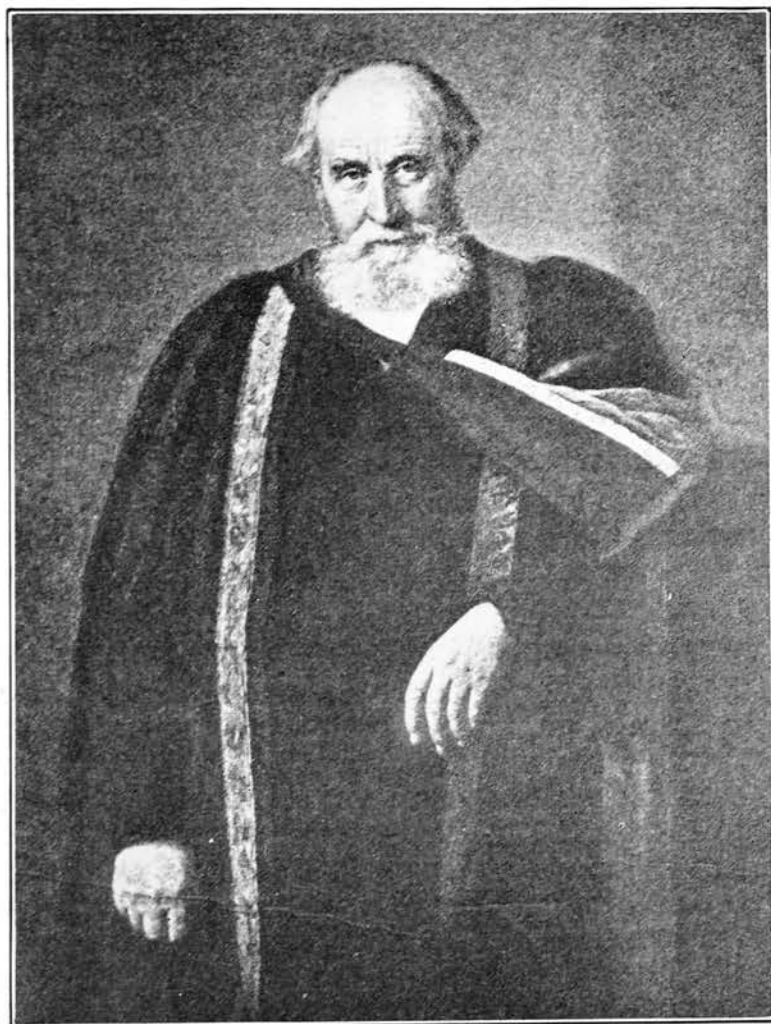
#### MCGILL UNIVERSITY UNDER ITS AMENDED CHARTER (1846-1852) AND THE PRINCIPALSHIP OF SIR WILLIAM DAWSON (1855-1893)

Dr. Bethune retired in 1846, and was succeeded in the Principalship by Mr. Edmund Meredith, LL.D., a scholarly man and distinguished lawyer who held various state offices and is said to have had an important part in obtaining the legislation necessary to the new Charter, which it now became abundantly apparent must be immediately obtained, for the period now entered upon from 1846 to 1850 was the darkest in the history of the University. Funds there were practically none, and public support was entirely lacking, and the student body in Arts had sunk to six in number. Mr. Meredith's office was entirely honorary, but his services were duly recognized in later years by the University in the conferring of an honorary degree. Further acknowledgement was made by Mr. Thomas Workman, in the form of a bequest of \$3,000 made on the occasion of his endowment of the Science Workshops given with the words "Inasmuch as I have long been convinced of the services rendered to the University by Mr. Edmund Meredith during a very critical period of its history<sup>8</sup>."

At last, in 1850, attention was finally drawn to the prostrate condition of the University and the Provincial Government was moved to put it upon a better footing. The personnel of the Board of the Royal Institution was revised to include a number of persons interested in the cause of education, and a report was drawn up upon the action necessary to be taken. The outcome was an Amended Charter, which was executed by Her Majesty in 1852, and which contained a number of provisions, of which the most important was the making of the members of the Royal Institution *ex officio* Governors of the University. The new management went immediate-

<sup>8</sup> See "Dr. E. A. Meredith," by C. W. Colby, The McGill University Magazine, Dec. 1903, p. 19.





**SIR WILLIAM DAWSON**  
Principal of McGill University, 1855 to 1893

to work to relieve the situation by reforming the Statutes to introduce a more simple administration and by other practical measures, which were largely successful, and which culminated, in point of importance to the future of the University, in the appointment, on the personal recommendation of Sir Edmund Head, Governor-General of Canada, of the late Sir William Dawson to the Principalship. The changes that took place in the next five years, in which the University rose to its proper status with remarkable celerity, are best learned from the two addresses by him "James McGill and the Origin of His University" (*Barnard's Journal of Education*, 1859), and "Thirty-eight Years of McGill" (*Montreal Gazette*, December 1, 1893).

The Faculty of Arts which, as stated above, was organized in 1829, and established in 1843, had at the time of Sir William Dawson's arrival four Professors, a Lecturer and fifteen students; the Faculty of Law had just made a brave start with two Professors and two Lecturers; that of Medicine had ten Professors and a Demonstrator. The new Principal met in his Board of Governors "a body of able and earnest men" (among whom were Archdeacon Leach and Judge Day<sup>9</sup>), "aware of the difficulties they had to encounter and of the importance of the ends to be attained, and having sufficient culture to appreciate the best means of obtaining these," and he found in Dr. Andrew Holmes, first Dean of the Medical Faculty, a sympathetic and earnest scientific collaborator.<sup>10</sup>

The year 1857 was signalized by the institution of a Chair of Civil Engineering, marking the first small beginning of the Faculty of Science; the opening of the Normal School and the beginning of improvements to the University grounds.

Sinews of war were sought both from Government and private sources.

In the year 1858 the Legislature was memorialized for a sum of money large enough to form a permanent endowment sufficient for its maintenance on an extended scale of usefulness. The grounds for this request were fully set forth in the Petition, in a statement which began as follows:

"First: The late Mr. McGill undoubtedly made his bequest under the expectation and implied promise that a further and sufficient endowment would be made by the Provincial Government. His endowment was long anterior to the establishment of any Protestant College in the Province, and still is the only one made in it for that purpose. Since that time hundreds of thousands of pounds have been bestowed by annual grants on other educational institutions in Lower Canada; while, in Upper Canada, several universities have been founded, all of them participating more or less on the grants of public money; . . . . . Yet no permanent provision whatever has been made for McGill College, and all the moneys received by it from public sources (of which the first was in 1854) do not together amount to one-fourth of the annual revenues of the University of Toronto, or to one-tenth of the value of Mr. McGill's bequest.

The largeness of that bequest, and the munificence with which the fund has lately been increased in the sum of \$15,000 by subscription in

9. See the Sketches of "Judge Day," *University Magazine*, April 1904, and of "Venerable Archdeacon Leach, D.C.L., LL.D." *Ibid* January 1905.

10. See "Andrew F. Holmes, M.D., LL.D., 1797-1860," by Maude E. Abbott, *The McGill University Magazine*, 1905, IV., No. 2. 176-181.

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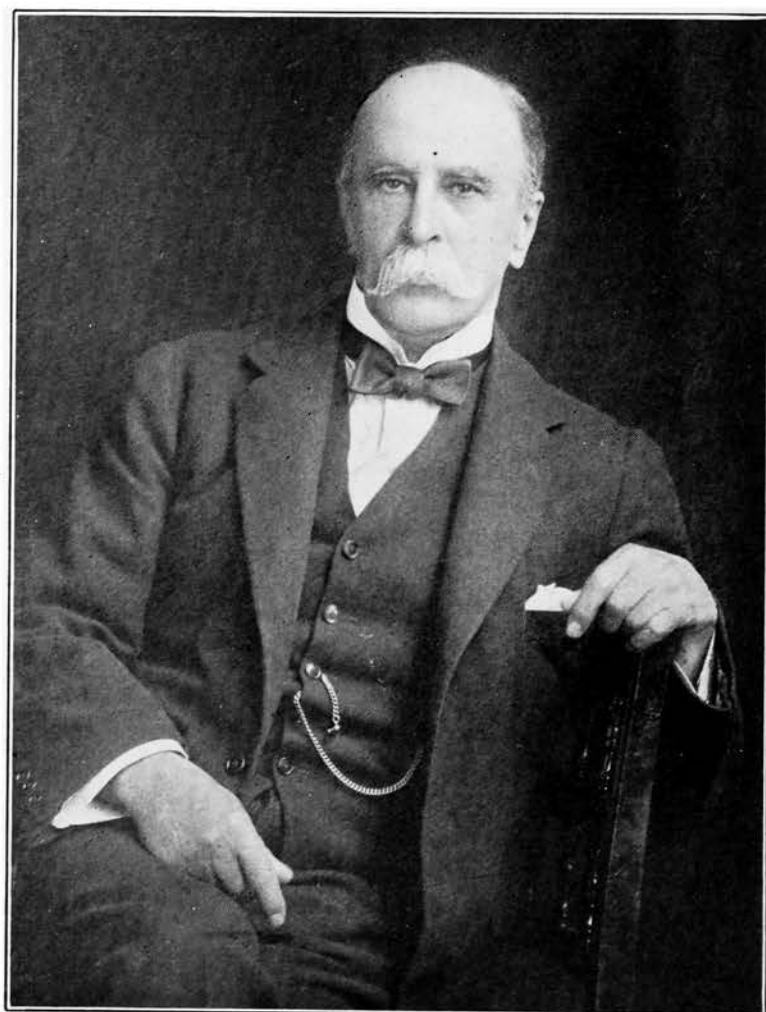
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the City of Montreal, coupled with the character of the University, justified the claim that a corresponding spirit should be manifested by the Legislature, and that after so much has been done by private beneficence, the work may be completed by granting the relief sought, and providing a permanent public endowment."

This petition was without direct result from the Legislature, but much was done independently of it, privately, by several gentlemen who then formed the Provincial Administration, the first large result being the William Molson endowment of a Chair of English Language and Literature. The year 1860 was marked further by the erection of the William Molson Hall and the formation of the Library and Museum collections, the organization of the Graduates' Society, and the affiliation of colleges in Arts (a true university policy); 1865 by the Associate in Arts Degree; and in 1870 came the first beginning of the movement for the higher education of women, which culminated in their admission to the University under the Sir Donald A. Smith endowment in 1884. Meantime, Montreal as a whole had been benefited by the diffusion of culture from an Institution that was now a real University, and which bore fruit in the organization of the Natural History Society, the visits of the larger British and American Scientific Associations, and in other, more purely social, university gatherings. In 1880-81 the University faced another financial crisis which was tided over by generous public contributions amounting to \$54,333, the endowment of the Hiram Mills and Greenshields Chairs and the W. C. Macdonald Scholarships, and that remarkable series of donations that marked the last four years of Sir William Dawson's extraordinarily powerful administration, namely the large gifts from Thomas Workman, W. C. Macdonald, Lord Strathcona (then Sir Donald A. Smith), Mr. and Mrs. J. H. R. Molson, and the Rev. Frederick Frothingham, the Philip Carpenter Fellowship, and the Peter Redpath Library, amounting in all to more than a million and a half dollars.

As the years pass, the value of the services rendered to McGill by her remarkable first Principal under her new Charter come always more clearly into the limelight. His was a nature devoted to an ideal that placed always first the broad interests of the educational policy which he served, and endowed with a quiet organizing ability to an extent perhaps scarcely realized by his contemporaries. The services that he rendered to McGill and to education in his thirty-eight years of office are not to be measured here. He found a wilderness with one small oasis; he left a vigorous University with seventy-four members on her teaching staff and a thousand students — the University as we know it to-day, only on a smaller scale. One can say no more than that he must ever stand linked together in our thoughts with James McGill, Holmes and Stephenson, as perhaps the greatest of them all in the making of McGill.

There are other historic names upon the roll of the University during this, its period of development, that stand high in scholarly and scientific attainment and that have left their mark on contemporary education and legislature. Among them are some, such as Sir Ernest Rutherford and Professor Wyatt Johnston, whose works bore the stamp of original genius and have been of the nature of real epoch-making achievements. Of them



SIR WILLIAM OSLER, Bart., M.D., LL.D., etc.

1849-1919

all, the outstanding and certainly the most famous figure is that of the late Sir William Osler, who at the time of his death in December, 1919, was Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University. He graduated from this University in 1872 and was on its teaching staff as Professor of the Institutes of Medicine from 1874 to 1884, and during that time also was Registrar of the Faculty and Pathologist to the Montreal General Hospital.

The years of Osler's student and early professional life here might well be termed a golden period at McGill. In Medicine, to which he came attracted by its repute, he made one of a galaxy of earnest, active, youthful spirits, whose ardent labours in their chosen field upheld the best traditions of a school that was grounded on the Edinburgh methods of the acquisition of knowledge by direct observation; while the newly-awakened University life in the Faculties of Arts, Science and Law, and the keen interest aroused in the study of Natural History and kindred subjects through the diffusion of culture from these sources, supplied that strongest of all intellectual stimuli—an enlightened and keenly intelligent society. In this atmosphere, seconding as it did, the earlier equally favourable influences that had surrounded him in his native Ontario, Osler grew to his full professional stature, and here at McGill, as he acknowledged repeatedly in his subsequent years, the foundations of his future career were definitely laid. The large Pathological Collections which he made at that time are housed in this Museum, and constitute the visible and tangible evidences of these early researches; and, as is well known, he has bequeathed to the Medical Library of this, his beloved School, his great *Bibliotheca Prima* and the ashes of his remains.

As has been said, William Osler stands alone, alike in contemporary medicine and in the past of this University. The exact niche which he will occupy in History's Temple we may not yet appraise. It is enough for us to know that to our graduate roll belongs the name, and to our University the nurture, of one who is already numbered among those Masters of human thought, whom Carlyle has rightly named the Heroes of the race, and whose appearing marks the epochs of this world's spiritual advance.

#### IV

#### THE UNIVERSITY OF TO-DAY

Space, and the limits of our subject, do not permit of more than a word upon the extension and multiplication of the University's activities under Sir William Dawson's brilliant successor, Sir William Peterson, and recapitulation is unnecessary, for recent events are within our memory, and all know of the rapid advance of the Department for the Higher Education of Women, the rise of the new Faculties of Music, Agriculture, Household Science, Commerce, Dentistry and others, the incorporation of Macdonald College, the organization of the Officers' Training Corps, and the many other events that characterized his able administration. In the Great War the University contributed promptly and continuously of her best, from the passing of the first Universities' Company under Capt. Gregor Barclay, the 7th and 10th Siege Batteries under Major W. D. Tait and Sir Stopford Lander Brunton, and the organization, by Brigadier-

General H. S. Birkett of the first University Base Hospital of the British Empire (No. 3 Canadian General Hospital, McGill) to the termination of the war. In the long roll of honour the name of John McCrae, who immortalized the Fields of Flanders, and then sanctified them anew by his own death on active service in charge of his Pneumonia Hut at No. 3 McGill Hospital at Boulogne, stands as representative of the throng whose heroic dying for a great cause has brought a deeper meaning and a higher responsibility into the life of a great University.

The great events of to-day are the result of the campaign in which the friends and graduates of McGill showed, by their warm acceptance of her appeal and the contribution of over five million dollars to her need, their actual love for their *Alma Mater*; the approach of this Centenary Festival; the high water mark just attained by the University in the recent Convocation for the graduation of her three new departments — Physical Education, Social Service and the Graduate School of Nurses, in relation to which is to be noted the interesting fact that the existence of the last-named school is definitely acknowledged to be due to the initiative and organizing ability of Miss Helen R. Y. Reid, B.A., one of the early women graduates of McGill, whose services to the University have recently been recognized by a seat on the Corporation, and to Canada by the conferring upon her of an honorary LL.D. by Queen's (now by her own) University; and last, but not least, the appointment, in General Sir Arthur Currie, of a Principal who is a born leader of men, and who stands above all selfish differences as one who meets the requirements of McGill's great Principal in his farewell address in 1893, when he said:

*"I trust those who are to succeed me in this office may be men not only of learning, ability and administrative capacity, but of unselfish disinterestedness, of large sympathies and wide views, of kindly, generous and forgiving disposition, and of that earnest piety which can alone make them safe advisers of young men and women entering on the warfare of life."*



LT.-COL. JOHN McCRAE  
 Born, 1872. Died at Boulogne, January 18th, 1918.  
 Lecturer in Medicine, McGill University.

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IN FLANDERS FIELDS.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
 Between the crosses, row on row,  
 That mark our place; and in the sky  
 The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
 Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
 We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
 Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
 In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
 To you from failing hands we throw  
 The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
 If ye break faith with us who die  
 We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
 In Flanders Fields.

(LONDON "PUNCH," 1915.)

THE ANXIOUS DEAD.

O guns, fall silent till the dead men hear  
 Above their heads the legions pressing on  
 (These fought their fight in time of bitter fear  
 And died not knowing how the day had gone).

O, flashing muzzles, pause, and let them see  
 The coming dawn that streaks the day afar:  
 Then let your mighty chorus witness be  
 To them, and Caesar, that we still make war.

Tell them, O guns, that we have heard their call,  
 That we have sworn, and will not turn aside,  
 That we will onward, till we win or fall,  
 That we will keep the faith for which they died.

Bid them be patient, and some day, anon,  
 They shall feel earth enwrapt in silence deep,  
 Shall greet, in wonderment, the quiet dawn,  
 And in content may turn them to their sleep.

(SPECTATOR," 1917.)

This Outline is based on and abstracted from an earlier research into the origin of the University and the early history of the Medical Faculty made by the author with the assistance of the late Dr. Douglas Brymner, First Dominion Archivist, and the late Mr. William McLennan, and published under the title "*An Historical Sketch of the Medical Faculty of McGill University*" (Mont. Med. Jour. 1902, pp. 569-672. Reprinted Gazette Printing Co. 112 pages.) Considerable additional information is here included, recently obtained by kind permission of Dr. Doughty from the Dominion Archives with the valuable assistance of Dr. David Parker and Miss E. Arma Smillie (McGill graduates both). The manuscript has been revised in the proof and approved by Dr. F. J. Shepherd, from whose knowledge of early Montreal and the past of the University much help has been derived, and by Dr. C. W. Colby. To all these authorities it is the author's great privilege to express here her deep indebtedness.

The writers' thanks are also due to Dr. W. W. Beattie for the charming cover design.

The poems "*In Flanders Fields*" and "*The Anxious Dead*" are reprinted under the picture of their author, Lt. Col. John McCrae, by special permission of Dr. Thomas McCrae and the Ryerson Press.

M. E. A.









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