

# History of the Charles Woodward Memorial Room collection

Woodward Library  
University of British Columbia

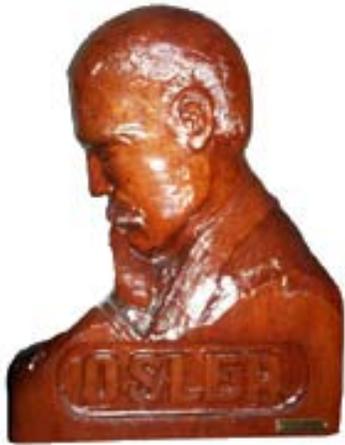


*Dr. William Gibson with the Frederick Banting bust at the Charles Woodward Memorial Room*

Expanded remarks by  
**Professor Emeritus, Wm. C. Gibson, D.Phil.(Oxon) M.D., F.R.C.P.**, September 7, 1988 at the dedication of the Historical Collection of the Woodward Library, University of British Columbia.

*The UBC Life Sciences Libraries thanks **Dr. William Gibson** for his kind permission to reproduce his comments on the Historical Collection of the Woodward Library.*





My interest in the history of medicine and science began on a farm in the mountains of Idaho where, in the summer of 1933, soon after graduating from U.B.C., I was charged with the running of a large and mixed farm of my medical uncle, Dr. Charles Franklin Magee, a McGill graduate in medicine, who practiced in the University town of Moscow. He left me the two-volume *Life of Sir William Osler* by Harvey Cushing to read by kerosene lamp after the day's work was done. After the animals had been put down for the night I made my supper and settled down to this fine piece of prose about a remarkable Canadian physician and author who had taught consecutively at McGill, Pennsylvania, Johns Hopkins and Oxford.

As a result I arrived in Montreal in the autumn of 1933 keen to see the fabled Osler Library of 7,600 rare volumes built up by Sir William over his seventy eventful years, and bequeathed to McGill on his death at Oxford at age 70 in 1919. His nephew Dr. William Willoughby Francis was the Osler Librarian and gave humorous rather than ponderous tours of the very beautiful room and its contents.

It was not long before I met Osler's devoted pupil Dr. Maude Abbott whose work at McGill had made her the world's authority on congenital heart disease, and formed the basis for the eventual surgery of the heart. Maude was almost cubical in dimension with a wonderful personality. Francis on learning that Maude had been trapped between two trams on St. Catherine Street going in opposite directions and had been spun like a top between the cars, put out word that this was proof that "Maudie" was made of rubber, not blubber. He had a sharp but benign wit. When I went off to Oxford in 1935 following a year with Dr. Wilder Penfield as a graduate research student, Dr. Francis provided many helpful introductions to the scholars who worked with him at Oxford in cataloguing the Osler collection. At that time it was said to be the greatest literary treasure ever to cross the Atlantic.

I was "the last pupil" of Sir Charles Sherrington, O.M., P.R.S., the boon companion of U.B.C.'s President Westbrook when the two studied together at Cambridge from 1892-1895. At Oxford, Sir Charles had built up, since 1913 when he became Waynflete Professor of Physiology, one of the world's most prestigious research and teaching laboratories. Not only did he win the Nobel Prize in medicine and physiology, three of his Oxford students did also - Eccles, Florey and Granit. Sherrington told me that "the last illegal thing" he had done was to appoint me to a demonstratorship in his department from which he had just retired. He was a font of information on the early history of all physiology and especially



neurophysiology. He opened many doors for me and introduced me to scholars in the history of medicine. I had already met his pupils Harvey Cushing and John Fulton at Yale University, on a month-long safari from McGill. Over tea at the Royal Society in London, or in the library of the Royal College of Surgeons, at Lincoln's Inn Fields, he was a never-ending encyclopedia of historical data.

When I returned to British Columbia in 1938 Sherrington sent with me his own copy of Laurentius Valla's *Elegant Latin Language* printed in 1476, and still in excellent condition. It was to go into the U.B.C. Library as memorial to "dear Frank Wesbrook" as C.S.S. always referred of him. It is probably the oldest volume at U.B.C. Sherrington had already sent to U.B.C. in 1915 the great copper plate volume of Bidloo's *Anatomy* printed in 1685 in Holland. It was later plagiarized by William Cowper, the British surgeon, who had to pay Bidloo one shilling's damages in a London court for his poaching. The copy sent by Sherrington had been purchased in 1693 by Nicholas Hawksmoor, the pupil of Sir Christopher Wren, and architect of several Oxford colleges. Sherrington had acquired it when he was a student at Cambridge in 1887.

Before the great volume left Oxford, Sir Charles had some friends who visited his laboratory sign their names on the end papers. They included Wesbrook's friend Sir William Osler, as well as John McCrae, the soldier poet and pathologist who wrote *In Flanders Fields*, and Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins of vitamin discovery fame.

Actually, the first volume in the field of medical history was sent to U.B.C. by Sir William Osler early on. It contained facsimiles of William Harvey's anatomical lectures read before the Royal College of Physicians of London in 1616, in which he adumbrated his discovery that the blood moves in a circle.



One afternoon about 1960 I had a telephone call from Dr. Turvey who said, with some urgency in his voice that Mr. P.A. Woodward was in the office which was shared with Dr. Robert E. McKechnie, nephew of a former Chancellor of the University of British Columbia. Turvey whispered into the phone, "You need a medical library, don't you?" I said that we needed one very badly, as we had been relegated to a dark hole in the windowless central core of U.B.C.'s Library building. He agreed and hung up.

Then things began to happen. Dr. McKechnie persuaded Percival Archibald Woodward, known as "Puggy" because of his childhood exploits, to visit the "black hole" where the lights were dim and the place stank of musty papers. I happened upon them by arrangement and outlined to an amazed business leader with an interest in medicine just

how hopeless our situation was. He said tersely, "You've got land to burn out here but few real buildings. Let's get to work."

So with daily support from Dr. McKechnie and the skillful stage management of Dr. Turvey, abetted by yours truly and President Norman Mackenzie, one of the trustees of Mr. and Mrs. P.A. Woodward's Foundation, plans were drawn quickly. A sod turning ceremony brought together sympathetic university faculty and deans, presided over by Dr. Phyllis Ross, the Chancellor. The long-time Chairman of the University's Senate Library Committee, Dr. Ian McTaggart Cowan, warmly supported the idea of combining the Life Sciences holdings with those of the Health Sciences which were being built up by the Professor of Anatomy, Dr. Sydney Friedman, a dedicated bibliophile and author from McGill.

Mr. Woodward told the University Architects that he wanted a modular building, with a steel and concrete pillar every 20 feet in either direction, so that any part could be moved to any new location within 20 minutes! His long and successful retail business career was an excellent guide in developing the new Biomedical Library as it was to be styled. As the building progressed we had a cornerstone laying ceremony on a bitterly cold day. With his hat off I thought he would get pneumonia. There was one remedy for all ailments, a glass of milk generously charged with brandy - at 5:30 every day at his home on Marine Crescent. The nurses who cared for Mrs. Woodward - a severe diabetic with several small strokes - wondered why Puggy and I shouted at each other in his panelled library at home.



There he would become enthusiastic about some possible acquisition for his new creation. When I told him that my old friend from Texas days, Dr. Chauncey Leake, would sell us his rare book collection, including a first edition of Vesalius' *Fabric of the Human Body* for \$25,000 he jumped up and down. By the second glass of milk he was shouting "I don't want to build a book cemetery. I want the milestones of science - the first time any new discovery was published. I want the students to see these, and to appreciate that U.B.C. has them. I want them displayed in glass cases, day and night."



And so evolved our method of teaching the history of medicine and related sciences by displays of the great books, done by small groups of students and exhibited in flat, locking glass cases which nearly filled the foyer of the Woodward Library. Dr. Noel Poynter, the Head of the Wellcome Library of the History of Medicine in London was our constant advisor in all of this. He obtained books for us at bargain prices, from around the world. Sir Henry Dale, O.M., P.R.S. as Chairman of the Wellcome Trust gave us 5,000 pounds a year for five years to get started.

The Woodward Library opened in 1964, under the presidency of Dr. John B. MacDonald, who - coming from the headship of Harvard's dental research institute - gave us every support. The new library was the first "branch" permitted of the Main U.B.C. library, and under the direction of Douglas McInnes, it prospered beyond our wildest dreams. When he moved to the University Library, Anna Leith succeeded him and brought her hospital experience and interest in laboratory medicine to bear on a rapidly expanding journal literature. For periodical subscriptions today, the Woodward Library is second only to UCLA in North America. Thanks to Dr. McKechnie, Dr. Turvey, and the Woodward Trustees the telephone link with the National Library of Medicine in Washington, D.C. was one of the first established anywhere.

In so many ways Mr. Woodward was far ahead of his time in realizing the universal usefulness of medical and scientific knowledge, and the necessity of codifying it, if it were ever to be made available to all. He loved to read medical biography and re-read many times William Macmichael's *The Gold-Headed Cane* - the story of the walking cane which was handed down from that princely benefactor of Oxford, Sir John Radcliffe to succeeding luminaries in the medical profession.

The only part of the Library exempted from the modular dictate was the Memorial Room, beautifully designed by Zoltan Kiss for rare books. Puggy wanted to memorialize his father Charles, the founder of the family's department stores. Study cubicles in the gallery were named for our early collaborators, not to say conspirators: Spaulding (Dr. Hildegard), Poynter (Dr. Noel) and O'Malley (Professor Donald of UCLA). It is alleged that father and son had little to say to each other, but as Puggy aged he ruminated continually on what he owed his father. A widower who was left to raise a large family, Charles Woodward was the most respected man on the West Coast. What he did for up-country settlers has never been told, but Puggy used to say that no steamship from the North ever returned there without some supplies for the isolated nuns or clerics ministering in isolated areas. H.R. MacMillan often told me of watching Charles Woodward in the backyard of his rambling house near Main and Keefer Streets, doing the laundry for his large family on Sundays. "H.R." considered his friendly rival Puggy to be the best businessman raised in the province.

Sometime after the Woodward Library was opened, Puggy asked me if the building was what we needed. He had given it unusual (for him) praise on the opening day when he

said it was the only project he ever engaged in which was up to his expectations. He could find no fault in it. This had been high praise! But on his infrequent visits to "his office" which we had set aside for him in the northeast corner of the main floor, he remarked on the torrent of students that came pouring through the turnstiles. He asked, "Is this building doing its job?", to which I replied that it certainly was but was too small to meet the demand.

That did it. He said "Well, let's double it," plus a few expletives. So the roof was ripped off and a further floor was added, and the entire building was extended on all floors, out to the property line on the west, which doubled our capacity, provided for the Sherrington Seminar Room, rare book storage above it, and brought the number of seats for readers up to one thousand. It was little wonder that much use was made of these seats in the evenings by commerce, philosophy and engineering students. On the windowed north wall of the rare book storage area studies were furnished and named for members of the Department of the History of Medicine and Science: Dr. S.E.C. (Ward) Turvey, Dr. S.W.A. Gunn, Dr. Iser Steiman and Dr. E.L. Margetts.

One day when I was attending Defence Research Board meetings in Ottawa I was having a bath at the Chateau Laurier, having just flown in from Vancouver. The telephone rang and, covered in soap bubbles I answered it. Here was the University Librarian, Basil Stuart-Stubbs, out of breath, saying that H.R. MacMillan was just finishing a lunch meeting with him at the Faculty Club at U.B.C. "Baz" was reporting to his bibliophilic ally on a recent visit to Europe, (financed by H.R.), in search of great collections for sale. The usual question was put: "What is the best thing you saw overseas?" Baz blurted out the fact that it was Dr. Hugh Sinclair's private library at Oxford, which was too expensive to consider. "Did Bill Gibson tell you to go there? If so it will be expensive. How much does Sinclair want for all 7,000 volumes?" Baz replied sheepishly "Ninety thousand pounds sterling". "Get Bill on the phone and ask him if it is worth it". So I told Baz that it was worth every penny of it, but more importantly the University of Texas was after it. Since it was American Thanksgiving that day it was our only chance to move, as all Texans' minds were on turkey, not books. That message was all that Mr. MacMillan needed and the Sinclair collection was bought by cable.

Baz was implicated in another windfall. The occasion was a strike of employees in airlines in the United States. A book dealer from Boston had the fallacious notion that he could circumvent the problem by flying across Canada and slipping down the west coast to the University of California with some rare materials for sale. He arrived in Vancouver late in the evening to find that there was no way of proceeding to the United States, and moreover, every hotel in Vancouver was jammed with travellers awaiting passage to American destinations.

The only person the bookman had ever heard of in Vancouver was Basil Stuart-Stubbs; so just short of midnight he telephoned Baz asking if he knew where he could find a

room. Baz assured him that there was a room at the Faculty Club, and advised him to take a taxi to the campus at once. In helping the poor fellow by carrying his bags into the club Baz remarked on the weight of two large suitcases, "Oh," said the Bostonian, "They are filled with Florence Nightingale letters I hope to sell in California."

In a flash Baz was on the telephone to my house down Marine Drive from the campus, pleading, "Have you got any Scotch in the house?" I admitted that there just happened to be, and in a trice, the pair were trundling two large suitcases into the living room, where my wife had lit the fire. Suffice it to say that by 3 a.m. we had acquired all the contents of the suitcases, which we kept in our house overnight, and sent Baz's newly acquired but exuberant friend off to bed at the Faculty Club. We told him not to bother, in the future, going to California but to bring his wares directly to U.B.C.

After a fitful sleep my wife was up early, sitting on the floor reading these priceless letters. She was mystified over twelve letters, in a different hand, and tied with a ribbon in a separate package. After months of research she was able to show that these had been written from the Crimea, not by Florence Nightingale, but by a Canadian nurse, born in Kingston, Ontario, where her father, Admiral Barrie, presided over the British forces charged with keeping the American troops at bay, following the war of 1812-1814. His daughter joined the Bermondsey nuns in London as Sister Mary Gonzaga. After her service with them in Crimea she returned to London where she founded the Hospital of St. John and Ste. Elizabeth. Some of the notes in another special package turned out to be part of the original text of a book written by another nurse returning to Britain from Scutari. This solved a mystery with which Dr. Noel Poynter at the Wellcome Library in London had been occupied for years. He used to chide his friends there by saying, "If you want a mystery solved ask Barbara Gibson at the Woodward Library in Vancouver."

With the extension of the building it was possible to construct the Sherrington Seminar Room, connected discretely to the beautiful Memorial Room. Sir Charles died in 1952 at the age of ninety-five, in Eastbourne. I had the good fortune to visit him in 1951 en route home from the International Congress on Polio-Myelitis in Copenhagen where Jonas Salk and others were featured. Sir Charles had the gasfire in his room in the Esperance nursing home turned up full, though it was only September. He was very arthritic in body but not in mind. He said, "Now Gibson, how many doctors did you say were at Copenhagen?" "Six hundred, Sir Charles." "Did any good ever come of 600 doctors getting together?" Little did we know that within a year a vaccine against polio would change the world.

Sir Charles was still writing poetry, and as always, asked if "dear Frank Westbrook's memory was still green in Vancouver?" I assured him prematurely it was, for the biography which I was to write *Westbrook and His University*, was still only a dream. Sherrington received in his long and distinguished career ninety honorary degrees and fellowships. He had the longest entry in *Who's Who*, and was one of the 24 scholars and

servants of the public to achieve the Order of Merit from the Crown. He had been President of the Royal Society of London and of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Twice the Prime Ministers of Great Britain had named him a Trustee of the British Museum--second time at age 80.

Neither before nor after his death did Oxford, his professional home, make any move to memorialize him, so his son Carr, one of Eisenhower's British advisors, on learning of our Sherrington Room plans, sent out to us all of his father's honorary degrees and fellowship parchments, his portrait painted by Eves for the Royal Society, his Nobel Prize citation, his Order of Merit medal, his Royal Society regalia consisting of a velvet suit, cocked hat and ceremonial sword, and finally his dining room chairs. They had been shunted around Britain during the "blackout" and were in need of refurbishing when they arrived. To each we affixed a small brass plate, giving the names of the colleagues who used to gather, over the years, to enjoy the Sherringtons' hospitality. They represent the cream of the scientists of the century in which he lived. The table around which they are now arranged was found for us by Chancellor Phyllis Ross. It was produced in Ipswich, Suffolk, where Sir Charles was born. (In 1985 Professor Colin Blakemore of the University Laboratory of Physiology at Oxford after much discussion with me and other pupils of C.S.S. decided to go for an addition to his building in order to develop a Sherrington Room worthy of the name. As a result, we shared some of the most colorful diplomas and certificates with them, and there was a grand opening in 1986 to which Sherrington's two extant Nobelist pupils, Eccles and Granit, came, along with Sinclair, Whitteridge, Phillips, and the "lab boys" Giles and Marsland.) Every time we said at the Woodward Library, "That's enough; lets get these treasures properly catalogued", some further treasures would descend upon us. One day a lawyer walked in with a tattered looking object in his hand. He apologized for the state of this Latin volume but had found it in the attic of his recently deceased father, Dr. G.S. Purvis, who had been President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of B.C. in the 1930's. The donor had no idea what the book was about. He was soon assured that it was a first edition of Agricola's *De Re Metallica* or *The Art of Mining*, 1556, published in Basel. This was, as Osler has said "for long the standard work on mining and metallurgy". It was finally translated in 1912 by the future President of the United States, Herbert Hoover with the help of his wife.

On a bright summer's day Noel Poynter telephoned from London to say he had seen in a shop in the Rue de la Paix in Paris a large tapestry which could nicely fill the high oak-panelled wall in the Memorial Room. A colored photograph followed, and while there was some mystery about the provenance of this modern piece, Dr. McKechnie said we should go ahead, with funds from the ever helpful Woodward Foundation. When Puggy heard of this he said "Phone them to send it by airmail. I don't trust the dealers in Paris. Get it here tomorrow". The beautiful post-war tapestry, entitled "[Masters of Science](#)" arrived in a large wooden box in a twinkling, and we all took a hand in unfolding it and displaying it to an astonished crowd. The work had been done by the young Gobelin tapissier Roland to the design of Guillonet. They had been commissioned by the

outstanding patron of "new art" M. Antoine Behna. He lived on a large "farm", more like a hunting preserve, in the province of Cher, south of Orleans. (Whenever I visited him he made it clear to me that his farm was many times larger than that of President L.B. Johnson in Texas.).



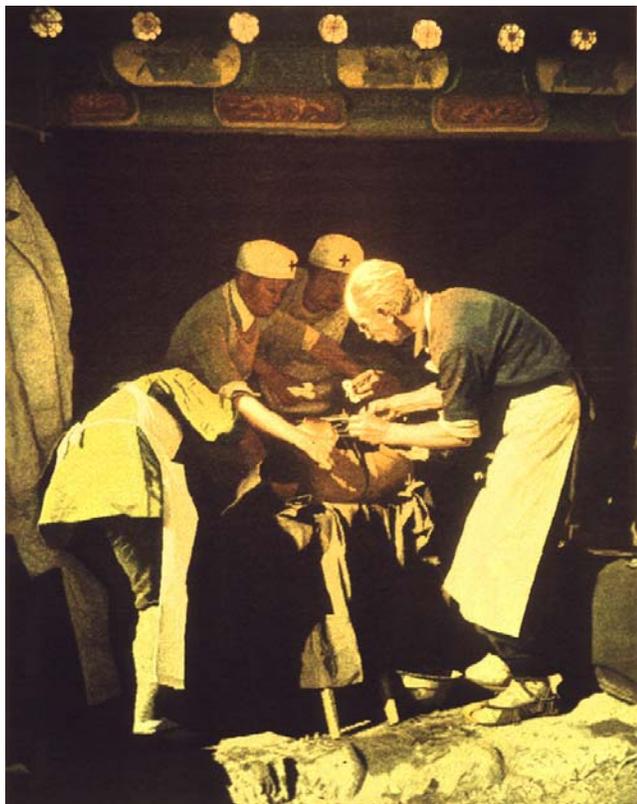
The mystery of this tapestry persisted until I visited M and Mme Behna at their home in France. They lived in the house which the architect of the Vichy gardens had originally built for himself. The Seigneur recollected that he had a copy of "Masters of Science" made for his niece in Paris, and this clearly had been sold to us, to his surprise, if not chagrin. The only tapestries which he had allowed out of France were gifts to the Pope and President

Truman. Nonetheless he showed me several others stored in his extensive barns. One of those caught my eye. It was entitled "[Masters of the Spirit](#)"--parallel to the one we had, but in this case the characters portrayed were great philosophers and writers of the past. He would not part with it however, for one of his oldest tapissiers, while working on this massive 16 x 11 feet beauty suffered a cerebral haemorrhage, at 68 years of age when he was only half finished the project. The disastrous stroke affected the man's perception so that the right half is a shambles compared with the left half which preceded it. M Behna would not allow it to be sold lest people viewing it would make fun of his unfortunate weaver. I explained that I was a neurologist with scientific interest in this amazing result, and that my colleagues in far-off Vancouver had the same interest. Finally he agreed that in those circumstances we could buy it. I must say we paid rather handsomely for our "interest". The tapestry arrived eventually on a great roller, and was hung above the "[Masters of Science](#)". Many physicians and psychologists have come to see it since.



A third, very modern tapestry graces the west wall of the Sherrington Room. On coming home from World Health Organization meetings in Geneva I was asked the standard question by H.R. MacMillan: "What was the best thing you saw over there?" I replied that it was a tapestry showing [Dr. Norman Bethune](#), the Canadian surgeon operating in China when he served with the famous Eighth Route Army, which, crossing the Yangtse gorges ahead of Chang Kai-Shek's troops, joined the guerillas in the northwest and

finally expelled Japan from the mainland of China. H.R. said quietly "Get it and send me the bill".

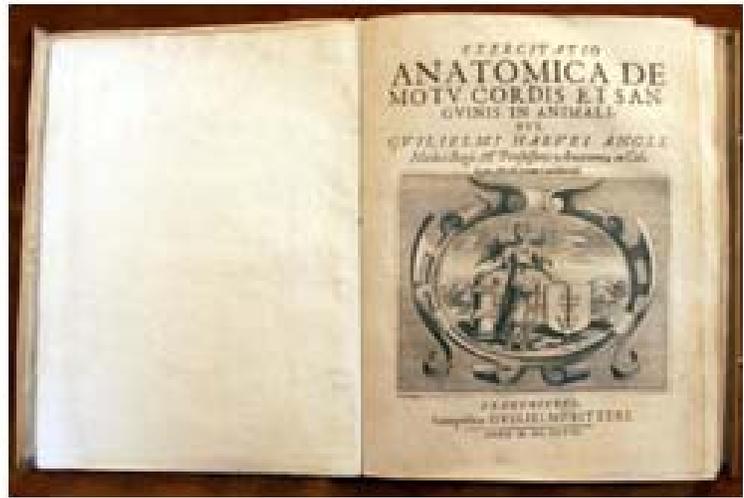


After months of enquiring overseas I gave up the hunt and reported this to H.R. He replied: "Get one made in China at my expense". I therefore sent off a hand-colored photograph of Bethune doing a chest operation in a little Buddhist temple, after H.R. approved the picture. I asked as I was leaving his comfortable study why he, the head of the Establishment, wanted Bethune thus memorialized. He replied quite testily: "I'll tell you why. He was a Canadian with guts, and there aren't many of us left." Six months later a great wooden box arrived from Shanghai filled with mothballs and the beautiful woollen tapestry, already mounted and surrounded by a broad white

frame. Years later, Dr. Wong, the anaesthetist at the operation in the tapestry, came to see it in the Sherrington Room and wept as he beheld the familiar and historic surroundings.

As time went on and fortune favoured us we acquired, while I was visiting Sir Robert MacIntosh in Oxford, his small but select collection on early anaesthesia. He was a gifted New Zealander who became the first Nuffield Professor in his field when William Morris, the automobile manufacturer, set up his four chairs at Oxford, producing in subsequent years one of the world's finest medical schools and clinical research groups. Over tea, Sir Robert and his wife listened to my description of the Sherrington Room and its contents, together with our holdings in rare books. They decided that a recent windfall should come to Vancouver. That windfall was none other than a collection of the works and notes of the pioneer British anaesthetist Joseph Thomas Clover (1825-1882), whose last living relative was a solicitor in Oxford who was insistent that Sir Robert should have everything. When the collection arrived at the Woodward Library it was catalogued here as a labor of love by the visiting British medical historian and anaesthetist Dr. K. Bryn Thomas.

The greatest satisfaction of all was the "liberation" from a physician's study in Beverly Hills, California of the portrait of William Harvey, painted in his lifetime. However, that was preceded by a related venture, the acquisition of a first edition of Harvey's contribution in 1628, *De Motu Cordis*, consisting of 72 pages in which he proved that the blood moved in a circle. This slim volume was printed by an English publisher resident in Frankfurt, the centre of the European book trade. No one knows how many were printed on rather poor paper which, in most copies, has become a tan shade, alas.



My search for one of the known fifty copies of the 1628 bombshell took me to Oxford where the Bodleian Library has three copies. They would not even consider the sale of their worst copy. Lord Herbert's library of Jesus College had one, and the Head of the college, John Habakkuk, was willing to consider a rental of it to us for a period of three years. By terms of the Herbert bequest a sale was impossible.

A few days after these investigations I found myself at medical historical meetings in Cambridge. Hanging over the bar one night was an aging but still pontificating surgeon. He asked me noisily what I was doing in England. When I explained, he roared that my search for a first edition of William Harvey was laughable. I reminded him that right there in Cambridge my friend Sir Geoffrey Keynes (brother of John Maynard) was said to have found two copies on the open shelves of a college library. Then my garrulous friend whispered into my ear that there was a rumor that a bookseller in Belfast had a first edition locked up in a bank vault for his young children.

Next morning I telephoned to Miles Blackwell at Oxford asking him to send me to Vancouver by airmail the names of the reliable book dealers in Belfast. His letter followed me home and contained the names of six such establishments. I wrote a similar letter to each and despatched it by air. Soon five replies came back, one of which said that I should not mention it to anyone but it was believed that one dealer--whom he named--was thought to have the desired book.

This was the dealer who failed to reply. Next morning I had my alarm clock wake me at 3 a.m., and I called the evasive dealer, hoping to catch him at his coffee. This is precisely what happened, and at first he feigned ignorance of any book, even of the location of British Columbia. After a little more trans-Atlantic brogue he asked how it was that the best kept secret in Europe was known to me in Vancouver. I replied that I

would not like to discuss that sensitive matter on any telephone, but perhaps he would consent to see me in Belfast. A considerable silence followed, and finally he said "You'd better come".

This called for a brief meeting with the Adonis-like figure, Bruce Samis, the stockbroker who had succeeded to the Chairmanship of the Woodward Foundation on Puggy's death. Bruce could smell a good deal a mile away and wished me well. Soon I was descending upon the green pastures over Londonderry where my ancestors had been farmers. At Belfast I was met by a most charming husband and wife who had gone into the book business rather recently. Over lunch they told me that their first big purchase was the library of a bankrupt lord. Few attended the auction and they had bought the books en bloc.

Over the winter by their fireplace they went through the acquired books carefully, and could not believe it when they opened a thick volume, with no title, but with the date 1629 stamped on the spine. It turned out to be a series of tracts and reprints bound together-chiefly on how to take a bath, what to eat, and how to avoid the plague. In the middle of the melange they came upon the precious seventy-two pages of William Harvey's classic of 1628! Their eyes protruded at the sight of this rarity, for they knew there were only fifty copies in the world. They wisely put the bound volume in their bank safety deposit box against the future.

Clearly these good people, with three young children were apprehensive about that future, and were much relieved when I outlined a plan whereby the Woodward Library would acquire the entire volume by paying into a bank in Vancouver an annual rental for the children's accounts. At the end of twenty years a final sum of one pound sterling would be paid to settle the indebtedness. This was run past the authorities and was approved, though they had not heard before of this method of doing business. It was agreed that the Harvey could be disbound from the rest of the volume at U.B.C., and the less valuable remainder would be sent back to Belfast. We were to keep the vellum binding.

The volume was shipped by air express, insured for \$100,000 which pleased the Woodward Trustees who had paid a great deal less for it. The twenty years have passed quickly. The university binder did a wonderful job, on reducing the fine vellum cover to fit the little Harvey and stamped the title and "1628" on the spine. There was some delay, however, in getting the finished product across campus. Percy Fryer the binder, whose English needed translation, was busy combing the second-hand clothing stores downtown in search of ladies' long gloves, fawn in color, from which to cut tying thongs. He inserted these perfectly into the closing edges of the "new" book. It sits now in a bullet proof glass case in the Memorial Room, weighted down with a few hundred pounds of concrete, lest the engineering students get frisky. The whiteness of the paper suggests that the book was never opened after 1629.

These high-powered negotiations were interspersed with less exacting forays. Dr. Ballard, of dog-food fame, had known in Ontario, Sir Frederick Banting, the discoverer of insulin for the treatment of diabetics. It took a little time to interest him in acquiring a copy of the fine bronze Banting bust sculpted by Frances Loring in Toronto. She gave instant permission to have a sixth one cast at the foundry in New Jersey. The whole thing was a well kept secret, something on which the diminutive Dr. Ballard insisted. The cat almost jumped out of the bag, however, when he had a slight motor car accident as he tried to park his Rolls-Royce at the Faculty Club where, over lunch, we were to finalize the unveiling ceremony. He piloted his massive vehicle by looking through the steering wheel and unfortunately, but predictably, cut the rear end off Bert Binning's new red convertible which was parked at the club. I was deputed to carry the great veterinarian's card, along with his regrets to the owner, with the request to get in touch with his company's lawyer at once, rather than the police.



When our wonderful supporter and medical researcher Dr. Mollie Kidd died she left the Memorial Room a handsome bequest of \$100,000 for the purchase of more medical milestones. Having operated the Overwaitea grocery empire of her deceased father until she was aged 40, she applied to McGill to study medicine! However reluctant the authorities may have been at the beginning they beamed when, at age 44, Mollie won the Holmes gold medal for heading her graduating class.

The ever watchful Jake Zeitlin in Los Angeles, bookseller to the world called me one day offering the 3-volume set of Leonardo da Vinci's drawings, published during the first world war in Norway! He asked \$750.00 for the set, in mint condition. I said soberly that I must make sure we did not already have these fine books in the Main Library. Within two minutes I had Noel Poynter on the line in London. He shouted: "Seven hundred and fifty dollars? They are worth that in pounds!". So back went the message to Los Angeles that we could just manage the purchase.

The retiring Dean of Pharmacy, Dr. Whit Mathews arrived with two ancient and beautiful pharmacy jars, too large for his home. They now grace the mantelpiece in the Memorial Room. Dr. Iser Steiman, my boon companion from Air Force days when we worked on his translation of the Russian aviation medicine text, brought in a second edition of Vesalius, enlarged and corrected from the first edition. Soon Iser was back with six boxes containing the finest collection ever put together of postage stamps illustrating great contributors to the health field--both doctors and nurses from every conceivable country. One of his patients, a physician, spent the last years of his life in bed with a crippling heart disease, and had occupied his time productively with his

specialized philately. His family, upon his death, could not agree on who should get what part of this set of master volumes, so Dr. Steiman prevailed upon them to put them on "indefinite loan" in the Memorial Room. They need to be more frequently exhibited in the locking glass display cases in the foyer. They are priceless, beautiful and instructive.

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The wildest conspiratorial chapter began, as usual, with a telephone call from Jake Zeitlin in Los Angeles. Probably the only lifetime portrait of William Harvey, by an unknown painter had, since 1960, been in the possession of a Beverly Hills cardiologist. He had paid the heirs of the Harvey family \$6,000 for it in London. Two artful dealers exported it illegally. When this fact became known to Lord Cottesloe, chairman of the overseeing group charged with preventing the export of national treasures, the dealers were heavily fined by the British Courts. It happened that his lordship owned a "Harvey portrait", of what authenticity no one knew. As Osler says there were more fake portraits of the "circulator of the blood" than of any other man in medical history.



The genuine Harvey portrait had been found by Sir Geoffrey Keynes at the abandoned and rainsoaked seat of the family, Rolls Park in Essex, built by Harvey's brother Eliab. Sir Geoffrey Keynes was preparing his Vicary Lecture for the Royal College of Surgeons and dimly remembered seeing a photograph in *Country Life* of the Rolls Park drawing room, showing the portrait of Thomas Harvey surrounded by portraits of his seven sons. On getting the permission of the Harvey descendants Sir Geoffrey, equipped with a ladder and a candle, entered the derelict mansion and found to his delight that the portrait with "Doctor William Harvey" painted on his chest was intact, high on the wall, though in need of cleaning. All the portraits not stolen by vandals were transferred to the Royal College of Physicians in London, where they were displayed for all to see. Suddenly that of "little William" was gone, away across the sea to Beverly Hills.

Jake Zeitlin reported in 1976, in his gravel voice that the cardiologist, who kept Harvey in a closet, had been declared mentally incompetent, and his collections would have to be sold to meet large hospital care bills. Zeitlin had been engaged by the family to sell off the fine Osler collection and the Harvey portrait. The price of the painting was \$100,000 U.S. I told Jake the price would have to come down to \$75,000 or we would not discuss the matter. He achieved that readily.

On the next weekend, when I was chopping wood at Bowen Island, I suddenly thought of letting Zeitlin into the conspiracy and phoned him to ask that he throw in his commission for a good cause. He roared with laughter as he said he certainly would. Jake was never surprised at my requests. Thus armed I telephoned to Dr. John Hayes at the National Portrait Gallery, across the street from St. Martin-in-the-Fields. He could not believe the reduction in price which had been achieved, and undertook, to speak immediately to the energetic chairman of his trustees, Lord Kenyon. John phoned back to say his lordship would guarantee \$20,000. That left \$50,000 to be found. After a consultation with Bruce Samis, who was always expecting a raid, I phoned back that the Woodward Library would go for \$40,000 if Lord Kenyon would put in another \$10,000. That was done--all in less than ten days.

So we had a "farewell party" for little William at Dr. Jack Pincus' house in Los Angeles. The locals had never been able to see the portrait before. Dr. Elmer Belt, the Leonardo expert, aged 90 attended the send-off. Harvey went back to London in style. After being cleaned, and with a new oval frame he was ready for Sir Geoffrey's ninetieth birthday. Jake and Josephine Zeitlin came to the gallery, as did Sir Miles Clifford, Dr. John Hayes, Dr. Michael Perrin along with Lord Cottesloe, Lord Kenyon and their fellow trustees. Harvey can be borrowed for meetings in Vancouver and has been out to see us once already.

Putting the historical collection together with so many helping hands has been a pleasure, with ups and downs no doubt. The pleasure was partly in the pursuit of these gems, and partly in the human contacts involved. I echo Mr. Woodward's feelings that we must have a living collection accessible to those genuinely interested in the milestones of science. The collection has already brought scholars from distant lands to work with these truly rare books. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to put these holdings together today. When President Westbrook paid 21 pounds sterling for Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* (1665) he little knew that by 1988 the price would rise to 3,000 pounds sterling on the open market. The increase in the number of avid collectors has been one factor. The other has been the tying down permanently in institutional collections of the few volumes which a century ago were bought and sold on the open market.

The foresight and trust of the founders and members of the Woodward Foundation, and of Dr. H.R. MacMillan, over the years have made this all possible. I hope that university donors such as these in the health and life sciences, and Walter Koerner and David Lam in other fields will inspire still more patrons of learning to invest in libraries.

*William Gibson, M.D., September 7, 1988*