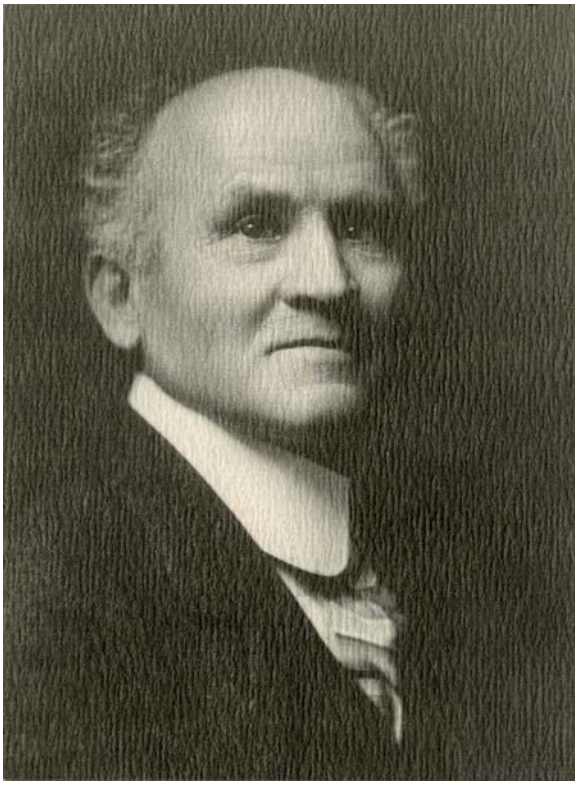
ISSN 1186-6195

Wellington County History



Dr. Abraham Groves: Businessman and Entrepreneur
The Political Adventures of Dr. Abraham Groves
The Medical Life of Dr. Abraham Groves of Fergus
The Exciting Literary Life of Dr. Abraham Groves
"For Love and Laurels": The Two Wives of Dr. Abraham Groves:
The Controversial Dr. Groves
Tamblyn's: Prescription for Success

Volume 16 • 2003

PATRONS

The late Jean F. (Mrs. Thos. J.) Hutchinson, Fergus
Estate of Lillian Rae Benson, London
Estate of Grace C. Black, Fergus
Royden McCoag, Palmerston
Marjorie Durnford, Guelph
John Carter, Fergus
Janet Hassan, Guelph
Bill Rousom Fergus
Mary MacNamara, Fergus
James Gow, Fergus
Elaine Barry, Guelph
Dr. B.R. Christie, Stratford, PEI
Elsie Pettit, Guelph

Highland Pines Campground Ltd, Belwood
Since 1966

The Ostic Group, Fergus
Your partner in financial security since 1926

Husky Farm Equipment, Alma

John Sutherland and Sons Limited, Guelph
Providing personal service since 1870

The Sleeman Brewing and Malting Co. Ltd., Guelph
Established 1834

Fergus-Elora News Express
A part of your community since 1852

and the

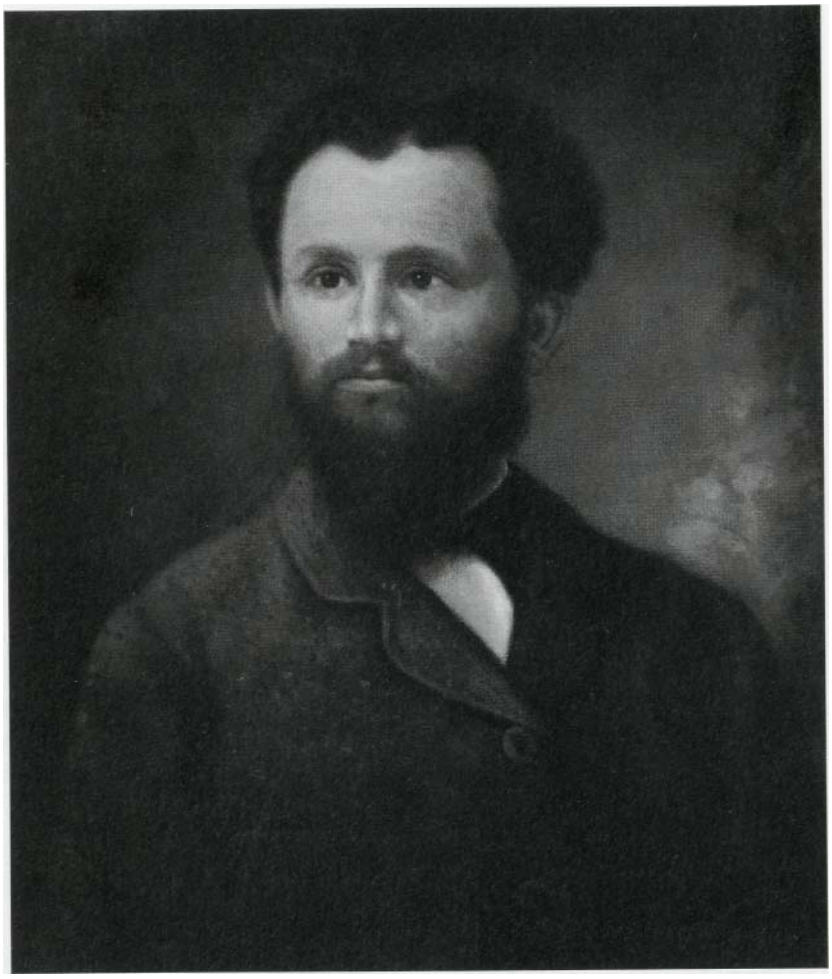
CORPORATION OF THE COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Wellington County History, ISSN 1186-6195

Founding Editor: Steve Thorning

Published by the Wellington County Historical Society
Box 5, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W7

The assistance of the County of Wellington
is gratefully acknowledged. The Groves Lecture Series would not have
been possible without the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation,
an agency of the Ministry of Culture



Portrait of Dr. Abraham Groves as a young man, ca.1880. Oil painting on canvas, artist unknown.

Wellington County Museum and Archives, AC 1978.92.6 Art 118.

Dr. Abraham Groves: Businessman and Entrepreneur

by Steve Thorning

Introductory Comments:
A couple of hundred doctors practiced medicine in Wellington County in the 19th and early 20th century. Most are forgotten. A few are remembered by historians, mostly for their activities outside medicine. But one name stands far above the rest, and is recognized by everyone: Abraham Groves. Why does he still intrigue us, 131 years after he opened his medical practice and 67 years after he died?

The hospital with his name on it is, of course, a major factor. But he was a complex man, more than just a country doctor. Tales and legends about Dr. Groves have become part of local folklore. He has his unquestioning admirers, and his vehement critics, often descendants of people who had unpleasant encounters with him.

For the bulk of his career, Abraham Groves possessed an unrelenting ambition. He sought both public recognition and material rewards. He could be altruistic and generous, and at other times grasping and mean-spirited. He possessed a brilliant mind, great abilities as a surgeon, and a fascination with new technology that made him a pioneer in his field. He was also a narrow-minded bigot, and a man who had to be in total control at all times.

Abraham Groves is also a difficult man to study. For a man so active for so many years, he left virtually nothing in the way of papers, not surprising for a man who was so secretive in life about his own affairs. Very late in life he published a memoir, "All in a Day's Work," that covers the achievements of his medical career.

Over the years I have come to the conclusion that autobiography is the most suspect of literary forms. By definition it is self serving. Groves' memoir, though, can play no role in the parts of his life that most interest me-his business career, and his political activities. He wrote nothing about either, and seemed to wish posterity to forget about them. This morning I will try to reconstruct the outline of the first of these-his activities as a businessman and entrepreneur. The task has been a lengthy one, as over the

years I have collected scraps of evidence from the public records whenever I have stumbled across them.

Doctors in Business

It is not common today to find doctors involved as entrepreneurs and active managers in business enterprises, or in politics. They tend to play roles as silent partners or investors. In the 19th century quite the reverse was true. Many doctors - in Wellington County and elsewhere - ran businesses alongside their medical practices. Their names show up as proprietors of stores, and particularly drug stores, as operators of factories and mills, and as owners of private banks. Most found real estate particularly attractive.

Two of these may have inspired Abraham Groves' plunge into outside activities: Dr. William Clarke of Guelph and Dr. George T. Orton of Fergus. Dr. Clarke was a dominant business figure in Guelph between 1850 and 1870, and his shadow fell across the politics of the county during this same period. Dr. Clarke sat as reeve of Guelph, warden of Wellington County, and as MP for North Wellington. His business interests included a flour mill, control of the road companies into Guelph, and St. George's Square. Dr. Clarke's name would have been well known to young Abe when he was growing up on the family farm in West Garafraxa.

William Clarke's career was in rapid decline when Abraham Groves hung up his shingle in 1871, but the same is not true for Dr. George T. Orton, whose house and office sat only a block north of Abe Groves' quarters on St. David Street. Dr. Orton dabbled in real estate and farm property, and was the majority owner of the Fergus Brewery that backed onto his property on St. Patrick Street. Orton's career took him through municipal politics to the House of Commons. He revelled in publicity-good or bad-that made his name recognizable well beyond Wellington County.

Both Clarke and Orton possessed powerful and unique personalities, to the point of eccentricity. As well, they successfully combined their medical practices with success in business and politics. To a young and ambitious man like Abe Groves, they offered the example of how to rise above the farm in West Garafraxa.

The Business Career of Abraham Groves

After completing his medical courses at the University of Toronto, Abraham Groves began his medical practice as a junior partner of Dr. John Munro in Fergus. The arrangement was a typical one for the period: Groves received a percentage of the profits of the practice, and boarded on the premises. Early in 1873 he left this partnership to strike out on his own. He later claimed that during the 22 months of his partnership with Dr. Munro he earned less than $300.

Groves in 1873 certainly had no nest egg with which to begin a business career. Nevertheless, he soon plunged in, certain of the greater returns that

would be his with an independent practice. In the summer of 1873, shortly after setting up on his own, he purchased, at an auction, the property at the southeast corner of St. David and St. Andrew Streets. A fire had recently destroyed the building on the site. Groves financed the purchase with a mortgage of $800 to the previous owner.

The fire had reduced the building to a burned-out stone ruin, but Dr. Groves rebuilt it as a combined office and residence for himself and his new wife. He had to borrow more money for the work, through a $1,000 mortgage to Alexander Barnet, and a smaller mortgage to his father.

Abraham Groves quickly moved to the top of his profession, as his reputation spread beyond the boundaries of Fergus. The frequent absences of Dr. Orton, fulfilling his duties as MP, also aided Dr. Groves' practice. With a steadily rising income, he was able to retire the debt on the property by the end of the decade.

Early in 1880, Dr. Groves decided to replace his building with something more modern and impressive. It would not be just a house with office space, but a full-sized commercial block. The Imperial Bank had opened a Fergus office in 1878, and were amply satisfied with the volume of business they had built up. Their officials sought larger and more satisfactory premises. After discussions with Dr. Groves, they agreed to a 10-year lease in the building on the condition that Dr. Groves would build to suit their requirements.

With a solid long-term tenant to anchor the property, Dr. Groves quickly proceeded. Alexander Barnet loaned $2,200 to Groves for the project. The rest, it seems, came from his own savings. Groves never revealed the cost of the building, but comparable structures cost in the range of $8,000 to $10,000 in the 1880 era.

The design of the building set a new trend for Fergus. It was the first Fergus structure in the Second Empire style, featuring a mansard roof and dormers for the third storey rooms. The material specified was a reddish sandstone from one of the quarries in the Caledon area. The opening of the Credit Valley Railway at the beginning of the year made transportation of the stone feasible. The sandstone contrasted with greyish limestone detailing.

Unfortunately, the name of the architect is not known. A likely candidate is John Hall of Guelph. He was the only architect working in the city between 1878 and 1882, and was responsible for many of the Second Empire buildings on Wyndham Street. A difficulty is that Hall tended to favour Italianate detailing on his buildings. The Groves building contained a wealth of decorative detailing, fancier than Hall's normal style, and which depart significantly from Second Empire conventions, particularly on the upper portion of the building. The dormer windows were Gothic Revival in design, with elaborately detailed decorative trim, and small iron spires on top of each. The corner door was angled at 45° to the intersection, and was topped with a tower that resembled a church spire. A second spire was on the rear portion of the building.

Dr. Groves tendered for the construction, and local firms won the major contracts: George Jackson and Co. for the masonry work, and J. &. A. Moffat for the carpentry. Groves spared no expense: an elevator connected the basement of the bank portion, where the kitchen was located, with the second floor. A pattern of two shades of slate covered the mansard roof. Central hot- air heat and a ventilation system put the structure far ahead of anything else in downtown Fergus.

Before construction began, Groves had another tenant: Neil Munro and his partners agreed to take the ground floor of the southerly portion on St. David Street. Dr. Groves subsequently revised the design, adding a wing along St. Andrew Street for his office and residence above. For a time, the Fergus Mechanics Institute had its library and reading room here as well.

Work on the building was well under way by June of 1880, but it dragged on into 1881. Thomas Watson, proprietor of the tannery along the river at the rear of the building sued Dr. Groves in the spring of 1881 because construction material and debris littered the street. Watson filed three separate objections. The magistrate dismissed them all, convinced by Dr. Groves' dramatic performance in court as the aggrieved party.

Abraham Groves enjoyed a last laugh. When Watson declared bankruptcy at the end of 1881, Dr. Groves bought the tannery property from the mortgage holders, the Western Canadian Mortgage Co., taking over the existing mortgage of $1,800.

Groves had no immediate plans for the tannery property, other than exacting his revenge against a troublesome neighbour. For two years he tried to lease the property for commercial or industrial tenants. In the fall of 1884 he took a different approach. He decided to go into the flour milling business.

Most Ontario flour mills had converted, at great cost, from stone grinding wheels to steel rollers between 1878 and 1883. Dwindling margins in the flour business meant that few could meet the financing charges on their equipment. More than half the Ontario flour mills declared bankruptcy in the early 1880s. The result was a glut of second-hand milling equipment.

Backed with a $1,800 mortgage from the Western Canada Mortgage Co., Dr. Groves went shopping, securing some barely used milling equipment and a second-hand boiler and steam engine.

As he grew older, Dr. Groves became increasingly difficult in his business negotiations. Arrangements with contractors to install the equipment and renovate the building dragged completion of the project through most of 1885. As a result, his mill was not in operation in time for the 1885 wheat crop. Luck took Groves by the hand, a year later, as it often did during both his medical career and his business ventures. Monkland Mills, the principle local milling business, was destroyed by fire on Oct. 15, 1886. Groves' Mill was able to capture a sizeable portion of the 1886 wheat crop before Monkland Mills could be rebuilt and refitted. Naturally, Groves objected to

the municipal aid given to James Wilson to put back in operation what was then the largest business in Fergus.

Dr. Groves took an active roll in the management of the milling business, though he did install his brother Charles as the nominal manager. For a time it operated as Groves Brothers, but Abraham did not enjoy sharing the billing with anyone. The name soon reverted to "A. Groves Roller Mills."

The grudging, penny-pinching approach to investment characterized Dr. Groves for the rest of his life. His spending on his Commercial block seems profligate by comparison. The Imperial Bank may have insisted on high-quality work as a condition for a long-term lease.

Virtually nothing regarding the details of Groves' flour mill have survived. In later years he claimed it operated "only a couple of years," but he was advertising his flour as late as 1902, and by then he had added a chopping mill to produce feed for farmers. There were long periods when the mill sat idle. It would appear that he only operated when he could clearly see a profit in doing so. He had purchased the milling equipment for perhaps 20% of the cost of new milling equipment. And this gave him a competitive advantage over other small millers.

In his medical practice, Dr. Groves seems to have discouraged general practice work. Already in 1880 he maintained office hours only two days per week, while his colleagues opened their offices every day. By 1885, he was advertising that he "would be home as much as possible" on Thursdays and Saturdays from 12 to 3, for the convenience of patients from a distance. By then, he had gained a reputation for his surgical skills, and seems to have spent much of his time travelling north and west to perform operations.

It is unclear when Dr. Groves decided to enter the electrical business, or precisely when he generated his first power. In the 1930s, he claimed that he had installed a small dynamo in the flour mill to support lighting in his own office and the bank, but there is no contemporary evidence to support this.

In the summer of 1890 Dr. Groves decided to make better use of the steam engine in his flour mill. The milling business was exceptionally bad that year, and Groves wanted sufficient income from the property to at least service the mortgage and pay the taxes.

His first idea was a private water system, for fire protection, in the downtown area. He could come to no agreement with either the merchants or with Fergus council, and soon abandoned the plan. A chief sticking point was that the merchants wanted water available 24 hours per day, and Groves was unprepared to keep steam up on a standby basis at all times.

He then came upon the idea of an electrical system for street and store lighting. Though this involved considerably more investment than the water system, it would allow him to use the power through the day for milling, and then switch to electricity at night. During August of 1890 Dr. Groves secured commitments from a handful of St. Andrew Street merchants to take his power.

On Sept. 1, 1890, Dr. Groves showed up at Fergus council, with a proposal for 10 arc lights at a total cost to the municipality of about $600 per year, or $60 per streetlight. This was double what the council was prepared to pay.

By 1890 Dr. Groves had a history of dealings with council. He found his best approach was to combine pleading and tantrums at meetings with buttonholing of councillors on the main street. Soon Reeve Robert Steele had enough: he called a public meeting for Sept. 15 to consider the whole issue of electric streetlights, and invited two other firms to present proposals along with Dr. Groves.

At the meeting, Dr. Groves and his contractor, the Reliance Electric Co. of Watford, offered the most attractive proposal, and got the nod from council to proceed. By this time, Dr. Groves had already pitched a streetlight proposal to Elora council, and had received an expression of interest but no signed contract.

Work on the installation of generating equipment began immediately. The poles and wires started to go up during the latter part of October 1890. Dr. Groves threw the main switch for the first time on Nov. 29. At the outset, the system consisted of seven arc and three incandescent streetlights, and single arc lamps in each of 32 businesses, powered by direct current. It was a Saturday night, and the sputtering but brilliant arc illumination dazzled the farmers in town for their weekly shopping.

Even before the start of service, Fergus council considered additional streetlights on the system. As well, Dr. Groves received requests for domestic service. He decided to proceed with this service, and to provide it on a separate system at a lower voltage.

Groves had to borrow heavily for his electrical system, chiefly through a mortgage of $5,000 to the Western Canada Mortgage Co. In 1892 he borrowed an additional $2,000 from members of his family, and $650 from the family of his deceased wife.

Though downtown Fergus attracted much business with its bright main street, Elora council still held out for a better deal. Dr. Groves had already put up the transmission line to Elora, but nothing was connected to it. To nudge Elora along, Groves put up an arc streetlight on Elora's downtown square as a demonstration. Aided by public pressure, Dr. Groves secured an Elora contract for four streetlights in January 1891.

The Fergus Methodist Church was the first customer outside the downtown core in Fergus, with two arc lights and incandescent bulbs in the basement in service beginning in March 1891. Domestic customers signed on very slowly. The cost of the power, which ranged between 10 and 12 cents per kilowatt-hour-equal to the hourly wage of many working men-restricted electric light to the affluent.

Dr. Groves signed contracts with most of the Fergus and Elora churches

during 1892. Elora's Commercial Hotel ranked as the biggest customer on the system, with sixty-five incandescent bulbs in service in July 1892.

The Fergus Electric Light and Power Co., as Dr. Groves styled the business, did not turn the streetlights on at the time of the full moon, unless the sky was overcast. Though periodically he promised all-night power, the entire system shut down at midnight as long as he operated it. In the dark winter months he would turn the power on again at 5am for two hours. During the day, he would have steam power available for his milling and chopping equipment. He had no intention of providing power all night, which would mean the hiring of an additional fireman and the use of additional fuel for a slight increase in income. Eventually, Groves began using a moral argument for the lack of night power, claiming that no decent people were up after midnight.

Increasing demand forced periodic upgrades to the system. First was a back-up boiler and steam engine, added soon after the system commenced. In September 1900 the system shut down for a couple of days for installation of a new 7,100-pound dynamo, and for repairs to a leaky boiler. The generating equipment moved to a specially constructed metal-clad building in 1902, and a year later a new main engine went into service.

Despite an ever increasing demand for electricity through the 1890s, the plant did not provide the profits Groves had anticipated. Expansion and replacement of equipment claimed all the surplus produced by the system. To ease the situation, Groves might have taken in other investors, but he was not a man to share control with anyone. His habit was to spend as little as possible, often scouting for second-hand equipment. Sometimes a good deal could turn sour. Dr. Groves ordered his equipment for the domestic system from William Cone, who set up a manufacturing plant in me Beatty factory, diagonally across the river from his power station. Cone and Groves struck a good deal-Cone wanted a local demonstration for his products. But Cone's Dominion Electric Co. soon failed, leaving the equipment an orphan.

Through the 1890s, According to the Dun and Bradstreet listings, Dr. Groves never rose above 20th in terms of financial strength in Fergus. He had to be content with modest reductions in his various mortgages. Adding to his troubles was his 1880 commercial building. The doctor proved to be a difficult landlord. Neil Munro and his partners fled to other premises in the mid 1880s, and the Imperial Bank did not renew its 10-year lease, moving instead diagonally across the street to the Marshall Block. Through the 1890s a succession of tenants passed through the building. Groves himself took the corner apartment, formerly occupied by the bank manager, and he set up his office in whatever part of the building he could not rent.

Not many people think of a hospital as a business investment, but that is what Dr. Groves had in mind, at least in part, when he began to consider a hospital for Fergus in late in 1900. He realized that surgery was rapidly

advancing, and the makeshift operating rooms on kitchen tables would no longer do. He needed properly equipped facilities.

As well, he had a long-standing grudge with the Guelph hospitals, neither of which would permit him to see patients or operate there. He believed that both were operated inefficiently, and that he could provide good patient care for far less than they charged and still make a profit.

In later years Dr. Groves made much out of the fact that he had built and equipped the hospital without any aid from outside sources. This is somewhat misleading. At the beginning he tried to line up all the support he could find, but municipal councils had difficulty in supporting an institution that would be under the control of a single private individual.

In May 1901 Dr. Groves approached Fergus council for assistance. He wanted a piece of land owned by the municipality on the west side of Breadalbane Street. He asked the council to allow him to build on the land, charge no taxes, and provide him with free water from a municipal well. He said that if they charged him for taxes and water, it "would be a fine against me for looking after the sick."

Groves stalked the council members until they relented, granting him use of the land and free water. He then went to county council for a financial grant, arguing that the county had spent great sums in grants to the Guelph General Hospital, but that his hospital would be more convenient for the majority of county residents, would be close to the House of Industry, and would be open to patients of any doctor. He told councillors that his charge would be less than the $6.33 per week charged by Guelph General.

Groves, and all of Fergus, were surprised when the county refused to grant a cent. The decision made him more determined than ever to push on. He had already hired W. Frye Colwill, the Guelph architect, to design the building. It would be one storey, in the shape of a "T," 150 feet by 90 feet at the extremes, and 6,000 square feet in size. The wings would allow the segregation of male and female patients, with a ward and six private rooms in each wing. The central portion would contain the reception area, dispensary, kitchen, and operating room with glass walls and a floor of plate glass. The exterior was to be red brick with stone trimmings. Dr. Groves advertised for tenders for this structure on June 13, 1901.

A large crowd assembled on Aug. 13, 1901 to see JJ. Craig, the reeve of Fergus, turn the first sod. Taylor Bros, of Guelph, who had the contract for the $12,000 project, started excavation the next day.

No sooner was the work started than Dr. Groves had to call it off. He was unable to borrow sufficient money to complete the project. Still undeterred, he quickly made alternate plans. He was able to pick up the Cowrie Street mansion known as Myrtlebank, the former home of merchant Henry Michie, for $3,200. The house had been constructed in 1876, using portions of a house that was originally the home of James Webster, the co-founder of Fergus.

Backed with a mortgage for $4,000 with Canada Permanent, Groves had Frye Colwill draw up plans for a three-storey addition at the rear of the house, plus other renovations.

The rebuff from County Council generated much sympathy and support for Groves. Various organizations and individuals lined up to make donations to the project: some furnished rooms, while others gave linen or small sums of money. The renovations included electric lighting in every room, a freight elevator, and an x-ray room, the very latest in medical technology and something few hospitals anywhere owned in 1901.

In the fall of 1901 Dr. Groves began a publicity campaign for his hospital, stressing that his would be clean and healthy, and that modern medicine required such facilities. He sought Royal patronage for the hospital, and received it in November 1901 from Queen Alexandra, wife of Edward VII, who had recently ascended to the throne. Dr. Groves boasted that his was the first hospital in the Empire to be so recognized, and that the name would be the Royal Alexandra Hospital.

Work on the building was completed in the first week of the new year, and Dr. Groves scheduled a gala opening ceremony for Jan. 12, 1902. The Fergus Brass Band and Perry's Orchestra, supplemented by various vocalists, provided continuous music through the afternoon and evening, and visitors enjoyed a buffet lunch after touring the building. Some 500 people signed the register, but the crowd was so large that several hundred could not get near the book.

The ceremony received wide publicity, both through the press and by word of mouth. The hospital opened for patients two days later, and five student nurses began their training.

For the first few months patients were scarce, and Dr. Groves faced high operating costs. To increase usage he began to advertise the hospital in April, and during the next two years ran advertisements in papers as far away as Durham and Walkerton. He stressed that the hospital was open to anyone, and any doctor could come in to attend a patient.

The patient load eventually increased, and in 1905 overcrowding prompted Dr. Groves to add a full third floor to the hospital, along with glassed-in verandas on the second and third floor. Cleanliness and sterilization had always been fetishes of the Doctor, and he also believed in good nutrition and fresh air to restore health. As well, Dr. Groves was a pioneer in using the x-ray, not only for diagnosis, but also for treatment. He believed the invisible and mysterious rays could cure a wide range of ailments, and stressed this in his advertising.

Dr. Groves boasted that his x-ray machine was the most powerful in Canada. He used it continually. In April 1902 he sent a story to the Toronto papers describing his cure of a terminal cancer case with a month of daily exposures. So great was the demand for the machine that he added a second

unit in October 1902. Dr. Groves believed X-rays killed germs, and he clung to this idea for the rest of his career. In his memoirs, published in 1934, he states that X-rays help cure pneumonia.

No information seems to have survived on the financial details of the hospital. It is unlikely that it was a profitable business for Dr. Groves. He had to remortgage the venture in 1908 for $6,000, and it was not debt-free until 1913. Still, it is unusual to see so many donations going to a private business venture, as they continued to do long after the opening.

Meanwhile, there were developments with Dr. Groves' other investments. In October 1905 the Traders Bank leased the bank premises in his commercial building, largely vacant since 1901. At the same time, the Imperial Bank across the way totally renovated their office in the Marshall Block. He chortled when they hired his electrical company to install a new lighting system there.

Repairs and breakdowns inflated the maintenance costs at the electrical plant. In March 1905 Dr. Groves bit the bullet and decided to install a complete, up-to-date, alternating current system. It required much new wiring and the addition of distribution transformers. The work put the system out of service for three weeks. There was another promise of all-night service with the new equipment, but the public waited in vain.

A new larger boiler in 1910 proved to be the last major addition to the Groves system. With it came yet another promise of all-night service. As the system began its 20th year, the restricted hours of operation increasingly frustrated businessmen and caused embarrassment to Fergus council.

The years either side of 1910 saw Dr. Groves reach his peak in financial strength. Aided by the inflation of the previous decade, he eliminated most of his mortgage debt. He had solid tenants in his building, the hospital generated a profit, and the electrical system, after a huge investment, was finally generating real income. But trouble was on the horizon for his power plant. Several proposals to bring in electricity from outside sources alarmed him in 1910 and 1911. But his real nemesis would be Adam Beck.

As early as 1895, the Elora Carpet Company installed its own generating and lighting system when Dr. Groves refused to provide all-night power for a second shift in the plant. The J. C. Mundell furniture factory and Monkland Mills in Fergus later had to buy their own generators for the same reason.

Elora council looked seriously at constructing its own generating plant in 1908, but balked at the estimated cost of more than $20,000. A year later, Elora industrialist T.E. Bissell considered bringing in power from the Ontario Hydro Electric Power Commission at his own expense, but elected to build a new dam and power plant instead. Bissell's plan established contact between Elora reeve AJ. Kerr and Adam Beck, the Ontario Hydro czar, that would bear fruit three years later.

The Fergus council of 1913 followed Elora's lead in discussions with Ontario Hydro, asking for quotations and an engineering study for the town in January of that year. An initial report, received in April 1913, estimated that Ontario Hydro power would cost roughly half the rates charged by the Groves system.

Adam Beck addressed back-to-back ratepayers meetings on Aug. 28, 1913 in Fergus and Elora. Following Beck's enthusiastic reception by the public, and the absence of any visible opposition, both councils agreed to join the Ontario Hydro system. They scheduled plebiscites for the necessary debenture issue on Nov. 3.

The public support overwhelmed the councils. Fergus voted 181 to 9 in favour, and Elora 198 to 6. Elora registered the largest turnout ever for a debenture vote. Dr. Groves flew into a rage at the results and the seeming rebuff of his enterprise by his home town. His agitated state continued into 1914, and carried through a series of meetings with Fergus council and Power Commission officials. At times he would shout and gesture; at other times he was reduced to tears.

Dr. Groves took particular offense at the assessment of most of his system as useless. They would give him $2,900 for the distribution system, and nothing whatever for the generating equipment.

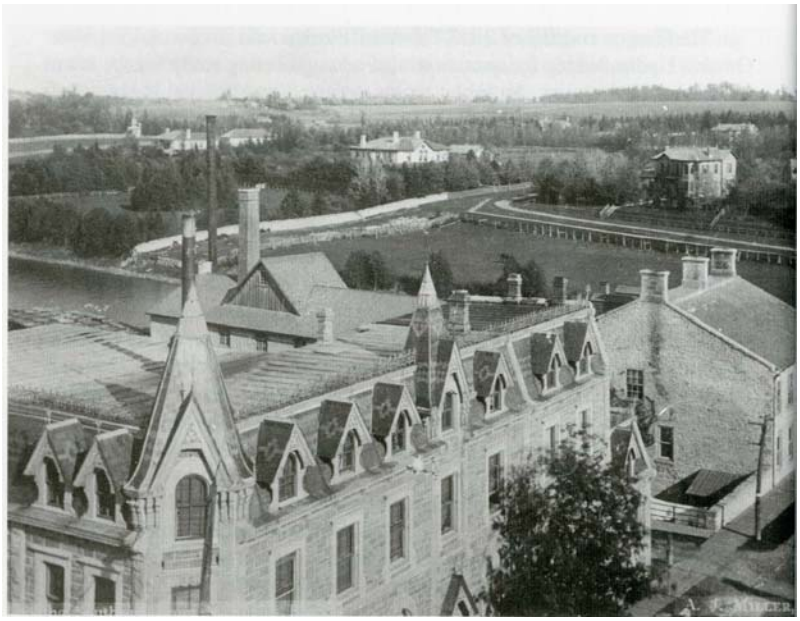
He claimed that he had invested more than $40,000 in the system since 1890.

Groves blustered, then threatened legal action over a right-of-way across his property used by the Fergus fire Department. Eventually, at the beginning of March, he could see he had no alternative but to sign the agreement.

The Doctor's mental state seemed to deteriorate further after he received payment for the distribution system. In April he disappeared, and no one knew where he was. He returned to Fergus about a month later, at the end of May, clean shaven for the first time in his adult life. He claimed he had an illness, and was recuperating with his brother Oliver in Rochester.

By fall Dr. Groves had recovered his old personality. On Sept. 16, 1914 he was at council, asking the municipality to install and pay for a concrete sidewalk in front of his Queen Street house. Council refused. A month later, he turned up at the opening ceremony for Ontario Hydro power on Oct. 19. He took the stage and delivered a speech pointing out the defects in the management of the Hydro Electric Power Commission, and went into an account of the great financial loss he had sustained after building his system up to a high level of service. He suggested that a referendum be included with the coming municipal elections to provide him with additional compensation.

Everyone in this room is undoubtedly familiar with Dr. Groves' decision to transfer the hospital to the ownership of Fergus in 1932. After World War I he realized that the institution would generate a modest profit, if any at all.



Fergus, looking southeast from the Marshall Block. Photo by A.J. Miller, 1893-1895. In the left foreground, the Groves Block, built in 1880, demolished in the 1970s. Built by Alexander Gow, it was occupied for years by the Royal Bank. Dr. Groves' office was in the smaller, two-story section, in this view, partially obscured by a tree. In the centre background, across the river, is the Italianate stone house of James Webster, bought and modified by J. Michie in the 1850s. Dr. Groves converted it into the Royal Alexandra Hospital. It was demolished to make way for Groves Memorial Hospital.

Wellington County Museum and Archives, ph 2821.

Increasingly, he saw it as a community resource, and one which made him an admired and esteemed member of the community. In 1921, only seven years after his encounter with Fergus council over the takeover of his power plant, the town staged a testimonial dinner for him on the 50th anniversary of his practice. For the remaining 14 years of his life he found his satisfaction in his growing reputation, though he retained a life-long hatred of Adam Beck, and in his 80s would still berate anyone who had publicly championed Ontario Hydro in 1913.

Was he a success as a businessman? He would rate a bare passing grade at best. All too often, personal feelings and sentiment determined his business decisions. For example, he was determined to charge lower rates

than the Guelph hospitals even when at the risk of operating at a loss. His goal was to make money, but he seemed incapable of formulating long term plans, or working with others. Strictly as businesses, none of his ventures proved to be sustained successes other than the Groves Block, and it didn't reach this state until the arrival of the Traders Bank in 1905.

His business legacy? The Groves commercial block survived intact until 1971, when the Royal Bank, successor to the Traders Bank that had occupied the corner since 1905, decided the quarters were hopeless for their purposes. One portion, the part that originally housed Neil Munro's law office, survives. The Groves Block was the first and the fanciest of the Second Empire buildings in Fergus, and it established a style, using limestone and red sandstone, that was repeated in three other business blocks on St. Andrew Street, all of which survive, and give the street a character unique to Fergus.

The Groves electrical system would rank in the middle of such systems in Ontario. It had problems with reliability, reduced hours of availability, and high prices. Virtually all of it disappeared during 1914, but Dr. Groves did have the satisfaction of providing electricity a quarter century before it was available in many communities.

The hospital, of course, is his real legacy, and precisely for the non-business reasons he had for starting it. He wanted an institution that was open to all patients, regardless of ability to pay, and to any doctor the patient chose to have. And he wanted a management that was free from the control of cliques, and geared to the actual needs of the community: "a hospital should be allowed to develop in such a way as would best meet the requirements of its own environment," he wrote in his memoir. The notion may not be good business, but it is good a one for the health of the greater community.

In old age, Dr. Groves realized that the recognition and the renown he achieved gave him much more satisfaction that any of his business enterprises could have done. But during the early and middle part of his career, his striving for entrepreneurial success drove his actions. This is a facet of the man that we must acknowledge to understand and appreciate his life.

The Political Adventures of Dr. Abraham Groves

by Steve Thorning

Last week I spent an hour or so looking at the major business activities of Abraham Groves. The talk dealt in large part with dollars and dates. Virtually nothing remains of Dr. Groves' financial papers and accounts, other than what can be found in public records. These show nothing of his goals and motivations.

Today I would like to look at another side of Wellington County's most famous doctor - his political activities. This will bring us a little closer to the man by examining his beliefs, his actions in the public sphere, and his relations with others in the political arena.

As I noted last week, I believe that Abraham Groves, in some measure, followed in the footsteps of two other doctors with his business and political activities. Dr. William Clarke of Guelph hit his full stride just as young Abe Groves was entering his teenage years. Perhaps the best stump speaker ever to have worked the political vineyards of Wellington, he most certainly left an impression on the young farm boy from Garafraxa.

George Orton was closer to home, and closer in age to Abe Groves. He began his practice in 1860, and by 1870 was the senior medical man in Fergus. He showed an early interest in politics, serving as reeve of Fergus. A few months after Dr. Groves earned his medical degree, George Orton secured the federal Conservative nomination in Centre Wellington. Orton lost to the incumbent, James Ross, by less than 200 votes. Nevertheless, he had made a strong impression on both his riding association and the electorate. There was nothing dull about an Orton campaign. Dr. George Orton would be the standard-bearer five more times in Centre Wellington.

The Pacific Scandal soon brought down the Macdonald government late in 1873, resulting in another election in January 1874. Orton's opponent this time was Robert McKim, a farmer and sawmill operator from Parker in Peel Township. Orton carried the riding by 49 votes. His great strength came from the eastern portion of the riding: Fergus, East and West Garafraxa and Orangeville. The Orange order was strongest in this portion of the county,

and like Dr. Clarke before him, Dr. Orton successfully and skillfully played the religious card.

Orton had used the other political techniques of the day as well - bribery, intimidation, multiple voting - to secure the victory. The matter went to court, and Orton was unseated in November 1874. He ran again in the by-election on New Year's Eve, and took the riding by 129, more than double his majority of 11 months before. He retained the seat in 1878, though by a margin of only two votes.

Dr. Groves watched all this from the sidelines, though he was a member of the Conservative riding association. He undoubtedly admired Orton's skill at talking his way out of sticky situations, and turning the tables to paint himself as the aggrieved party. There were also aspects of Orton's behaviour that young Dr. Groves found repugnant. The election irregularities offended his sense of fair play. As well, it was becoming clear that George Orton, like Dr. Clarke, was an alcoholic, and that his drinking was affecting his health and impairing his success in business and politics.

Over the next five years, Abraham Groves' picture of George Orton changed from that of a role model, to mild contempt, to rival, and finally to bitter enemy. The two men shared several qualities: extreme pride, confidence in their medical skills, relentless ambition, and extreme competitiveness. It was inevitable that in the small town the size of Fergus these two men would cross swords.

Orton's duties in Ottawa required his absence from Fergus for a total of only three or four months a year, but this was sufficient to affect his medical practice. Even though Orton had a partner, Dr. Griffith, for some of the time, sick patients would consult Dr. Groves, and many would stay with him. Groves' reputation grew rapidly during the 1870s.

Dr. Orton, partially because he was the senior doctor in the area, and partially through his political allies on county council, secured the appointment as medical superintendent of the new House of Industry when it opened in December 1877, even though he was not in town for several months each year. Most of the doctors in the area applied for the position, including Abraham Groves. Orton passed a comment on Groves' cheekiness in trying to land the position, seen as a desirable one, though initially it paid only $150 per year.

It is not clear who attended to the House of Industry during the absence of Dr. Orton, but it is probable that Dr. Groves was called there from time to time. In any case, relations between Orton and Groves deteriorated rapidly during 1878 and 1879, coming to a head in the fall of the latter year.

On Nov. 6, 1879, the *Fergus News-Record* published a seemingly innocuous obituary:

> In West Garafraxa, on the 3rd inst, of rheumatic fever William Alexander jr., aged 23 years, 10 months and 17 days.

The story began two months before, and had, at the death of Alexander, become the subject of rumour and gossip in the Fergus area. In August of 1879, Alexander's parents had brought him to Dr. Groves. At that time he had a high fever, and painful swelling in his joints. Groves diagnosed the case as rheumatic fever, and told the patient that it would soon go into remission on its own. He gave the young man some salicylic acid (a chemical similar to aspirin in its effects), to ease the swelling and fever. The family had previously consulted Dr. Tamblyn in Belwood, and were unsatisfied with his treatment.

A few weeks later the patient was worse. The Alexanders again shopped around for different medical opinions. On Sept. 18., young Alexander showed up in Orton's office. His diagnosis was typhoid fever, and he gave the patient some medicine for it.

Groves and his partner, Dr. Thomas Chisholm, subsequently saw the patient a couple more times, unaware of the consultation with Orton. Both stuck by their diagnosis of rheumatic fever, with complications to the heart. This opinion was sustained by yet another doctor, Arthur Paget of Elora.

In mid October, according to Groves, Dr. Orton appeared one afternoon in his office, "much the worse of liquor, stormed, threatened, and used profane language, making a great uproar." This occurred in front of three of Groves' patients, who quickly put the incident into circulation.

During October, the patient remained under the care of Dr. Orton. According to Orton's version of the story, Groves had boasted that he was willing to spend $100 to prove that Orton was wrong in his diagnosis. Groves arranged for a Dr. Graham from Toronto to visit the patient, but due to a tangle of circumstances Graham did not examine the patient.

Orton became furious at Dr. Groves' continuing interest in the case. James Donigan of Fergus later stated that he had overheard a bar room conversation in which Orton boasted, "with your help and Dr. Tamblyn's I'll drive Dr. Groves out of Garafraxa."

The Alexanders grew increasingly concerned over the condition of their son, and less confident in the care of Dr. Orton. The young man died on Nov. 3, 1879.

There ensued a newspaper war that carried on weekly in the *News-Record* until the end of January 1880. Orton fired the first shot, when he asked three of his friends, Doctors J.C. Thom, T.J. Tamblyn, and William Savage of Elora, to write letters of correction to the obituary, stating the cause of death was not rheumatic fever, but "remittent fever of a typhoid type."

A week later came a reply from the dead man's father, William Alexander Sr. He stated that Dr. Zimmerman of Toronto General Hospital, and professor of pathology at the university, examined the body, and supported Groves' original diagnosis, concluding by saying, "I am perfectly satisfied that Dr. Groves was correct in every particular as to the nature of the disease."

From then on, Groves and Orton alternated week by week, submitting lengthy tomes in their defence, and ridiculing the other. Orton claimed that Groves started the entire controversy by submitting the original obituary notice to the paper, and he took particular offence over the post mortem conducted by Dr. Zimmerman, which was done without Orton's presence or knowledge. Groves caught Orton in some obvious lies and misrepresentations, which he termed "Ortonisms."

In the end, Dr. Groves challenged his rival to put up $500, that he would do the same, and that a panel of three impartial experts review the evidence. The one who was correct in his diagnoses would take the $1,000.

Orton denounced this wager as highly unprofessional, but agreed to a review by a panel of experts. Nothing more happened. After Dr. Groves' long diatribe in the issue of Jan. 22, 1880, the Craigs, editors of the *Fergus News-Record*, called off the war:

> By the above the issue is narrowed down to a question of veracity, and consequently we do not see any necessity for anything further being published, because nothing can be gained by repeating over and over again what has been said before. Dr. Groves in this letter has not broken any fresh ground, but simply denies certain statements made in Dr. Orton's last letter....[We] leave our readers to side with which ever one they consider right.

It would appear that the readers, at least those with illnesses, sided with Dr. Groves. Orton continued his practice, but devoted more and more time to committee work in Ottawa. He also acquired some real estate in Winnipeg, and spent some time in 1881 in the west. Shortly before the new year, he announced his plans to move there. Dr. Orton sold his practice to Dr. O'Reilly, sold his household furniture in Jan. 1882, and moved to Winnipeg, though he was back four months later for the general election of 1882. County council gave Abraham Groves the appointment as medical superintendent of the House of Industry following Orton's resignation.

Within days of Orton's announcement that he was leaving Fergus, Dr. Groves stated that he would seek a seat at the Fergus council table for 1882. Fergus council had been a tempestuous forum ever since Dr. Orton's term as reeve, but the campaign in December 1881 was a quiet one. Five men ran for the four seats. Abraham Groves placed fourth, edging out contractor John Moffat by 14 votes.

The 1882 council managed to hold the mill rate steady during a difficult period. Groves' conduct was untypically accommodating during his first term. Perhaps mindful of the rambunctious behaviour that hurt Orton's reputation, and aware of the slim margin of his victory, Groves did or said nothing controversial during his first year at the table.

The campaign for the 1883 council was a dull one. The old council

might have been returned, were it not for Matthew Anderson's late decision to stand again, rather than retire as originally announced. This time he did not campaign at all, and lost to James Argo. In the council race, six men stood, and Dr. Groves led the poll by a good margin.

Controversy erupted during the following summer. The Agricultural Society, supported by some merchants, brought forward a proposal to purchase the private race track (land that is now Victoria Park) and erect suitable structures as a home for the Centre Wellington Fall Fair. The project required borrowing, and all debenture issues had to be approved by the ratepayers. Two of the councillors favoured the idea; Dr. Groves and A.D. Ferrier were opposed. When the bylaw was introduced, Reeve Argo broke the tie and sent it down to defeat.

This action created a furor among the supporters of the permanent fair grounds-they believed it was up to the ratepayers, not council, to make the decision. At the nomination meeting for the 1884 council, Groves delivered the longest speech of the night, beginning, "I voted against the bylaw, and would do so again...." He then outlined his reasoning, stated that he was not opposed to a permanent home for the fair, he simply wanted a better deal for the ratepayers.

Reeve Argo, who vacillated in his statements over the fair ground issue, barely hung onto his seat. Abraham Groves led the poll by a huge margin in the eight-man race for council, proving that plain speaking by a candidate can favourably impress the electorate. The voters sent in a new man, Matthew Beatty, another opponent of the race track deal, and also returned Ferrier. The fair grounds plan was dead.

With growing confidence, Groves dominated the council table in 1884. At the first meeting he introduced fire protection as a major issue, claiming that the fire engine owned by the village was useless. He did have a private motive. As owner of a major downtown business block, and the recent purchaser of the old Watson tannery property adjoining, he had a personal interest in better fire protection.

The other councillors named him to head a committee, and he reported to council on Mar. 3, 1884. The Northey Co. of Hamilton, for $6,500, would provide a mile of 6-inch iron pipe, a dozen frost-proof hydrants, 500 feet of leather hose, and an engine that could throw three streams of water. He said the cost could be reduced 25% by scaling it down.

Privately, Dr. Groves canvassed some downtown merchants, with the idea of supplying the water himself through a private system operated by a pump in the Watson factory. He found little interest, though, at the time of the first public meeting on the subject on Apr. 4.

He and Matthew Beatty had been looking into alternatives. One was to use the turbine at Semple's flour mill to run the pump. The other was an offer by Beatty to run the pump with a drive shaft or cable from the power plant

in his factory to a pump house on the north side of the river.

Though both schemes offered cost savings, Reeve Argo pointed out that neither would satisfy the insurance companies, because Beatty did not have power available 24 hours a day, and Semple's mill was subject to problems with low water levels.

On Apr. 7, Fergus council decided to send the original Northey proposal to the ratepayers, to be financed by a $6,000 debenture. There was not a great deal of interest in the campaign, but solid opposition appeared in the form of James Wilson of Monkland Mills. He complained that he was the largest ratepayer in town, and that the debenture would add to his cost without any benefit, since he would receive no protection. Unstated, but understood by everyone, was his resentment at paying for fire protection to be enjoyed by his chief local milling competitor, Andrew Semple.

The vote produced a small turnout, but the debenture issue got turned down solidly, 83 to 47. Most of those favouring it had downtown property and stores. Their saving in fire insurance would more than offset the increases in their taxes. In the end, Dr. Groves had to be content with some minor work on the town's old engine, and the purchase of 300 feet of new hose.

Despite the rejection of his waterworks initiative, Dr. Groves decided it was time to move up. James Argo had decided not to stand again as reeve, and veteran councillor A.D. Ferrier, long touted as a successor, was off to Scotland in early 1885. Groves began his campaign in November, lining up supporters and seeking commitments from voters.

For a while it seemed he would gain the office by acclamation, but other factors quickly rose to the top. Temperance agitators started a campaign for county-wide prohibition under the Scott Act. They would need sufficient support at county council to authorize a vote. Abraham Groves, though shrinking from some of the strongest temperance rhetoric, supported the measure. He believed that excessive alcohol consumption was a factor in a wide range of illnesses and diseases.

This brought out the opposition in Fergus. They persuaded a reluctant Matthew Anderson to return to the reeve's chair, and they pushed two anti-Scott Act candidates into the race for council.

The nomination meeting was a noisy one. Anderson's supporters challenged the legality of Groves in seeking the office. As reeve he would be a county councillor. He also held a county contract as the physician at the House of Industry, and was therefore disqualified. Groves insisted that the restriction did not apply to him, and that, if he won, was prepared to defend his position in court. His opponents filed legal papers against him the day after the nomination meeting.

The Scott Act and Groves' eligibility were the only two issues. Thoroughly aroused, as he always was by any challenge to his competence of character, Dr. Groves strode into the campaign in peak form, delivering several stirring

speeches. His campaign literature included the statement, "The cry of being ineligible is merely an electioneering trick." Anderson tacked up posters all over town claiming the doctor was disqualified.

Groves won the election by a vote of 163 to 138, and Robert Steele was the only councillor elected who opposed the Scott Act. In the aftermath of the election, Fergus lawyers James Muir and J.C. Donaldson claimed Groves was disqualified. Their opinion was sustained by Donald Guthrie, the county solicitor.

With a dark cloud over his head, Abraham Groves took the chair for the first council meeting of 1885, on Jan. 19. Eight days later he received an opinion from a Toronto legal firm he had consulted. They agreed with Donald Guthrie. He decided at once to tender his resignation, which he did to county council that same afternoon. He took a curious position: though he resigned the seat, he did not relinquish his claim to it. Obviously, this was a manouevre to prevent Anderson from taking the seat at once. County council would vote at the next session on a Scott Act plebiscite, and Groves did not want to allow another negative vote. And Groves already had made some enemies at county council. Shortly after he resigned, they considered a motion to have him removed as physician at the House of Industry. Interestingly, Groves never sought a legal opinion before or during the campaign, and he never expressed a willingness to resign as physician, even though the position paid him only $150 per year.

After the inaugural Fergus council meeting of 1885, Groves chaired three special sessions, on the 23rd, 26th, and 27th, dealing with Credit Valley Railway bonds. He resigned as reeve at the last of these.

With Groves still claiming he had a right to the office, Anderson and his supporters took the matter to court. The ruling, on Feb. 7, was that the office of Reeve of Fergus was vacant. Editor John Craig of the *News-Record* arranged a public meeting three days later. It was a noisy one. Groves took a defiant position, blaming his enemies for the whole mess. He then nominated Andrew Semple as his successor. Others nominated Anderson. Craig called for a division in the room, and the ratepayers overwhelmingly showed their preference for Anderson.

Though there was much opposition to another election, Dr. Groves persuaded James Argo to stand. The Scott Act committee, including Abraham Groves, worked hard on Argo's behalf. On election day, Mar. 13, Anderson prevailed by 160 to 148.

Even without Groves' vote, county council approved a Scott Act plebiscite, scheduled for Apr. 2. The result was a majority in favour of prohibition in Wellington County. Even with an intense campaign, Fergus supported the Scott Act by a slim majority: 139 to 117. In the county, only Arthur Township and the villages of Arthur and Elora opposed prohibition.

Though no longer reeve, Groves had the satisfaction of seeing the Scott Act approved in Wellington. It came into force on May 1, 1886.

This did not end the civic involvement of Dr. Groves. He sat on the High School Board for many years. He was not a very active member: only rarely did Groves have much to say, and his attendance record at meetings was not good.

At the federal level, Dr. Orton continued to sit for Centre Wellington, though his permanent residence was Winnipeg. In 1882 he scored the largest victory of his career, defeating the parachuted Liberal candidate, Sir Richard Cartwright, by 150 votes. His luck ran out in 1887, when Andrew Semple captured Centre Wellington for the Liberals. During the mid-1880s, Dr. Orton returned to Wellington County, arranging a tour of medical consultations in the areas where Dr. Groves was building his reputation. Orton's wounds healed very slowly after his battle with Groves in 1879.

Following his eight-day term as reeve in 1885, Abraham Groves involved himself only on the periphery of politics. His medical practice, and particularly his skill as a surgeon, meant that he frequently travelled from Fergus. Personal tragedy hit a year later, when his wife died of tuberculosis, leaving him with the sole responsibility for two young children. He also had his business investments: the flour mill from 1886, and the electrical plant from 1890.

Groves did continue to participate in the Oddfellows Lodge and the Masonic Lodge, which he had joined in the mid-1870s, and to fill duties at St. James Anglican as a churchwarden. Though he supported the temperance movement and served on the Scott Act committee, he was not an active member of any of the societies. He rejected the overblown statements of many prohibitionists. Pro-liquor forces arranged for a second county-wide vote in 1889. Dr. Groves seems to have played no part at all in this campaign. The Scott Act went down to resounding defeat after a three-year experiment.

After George Orton's defeat in 1887, Abraham Groves renewed his participation in the Conservative party. His name was mentioned as a possible candidate in the 1891 election, but the nomination went to W.H. Hunter, a farmer from East Garafraxa. He lost to Andrew Semple.

Sir John A. Macdonald died shortly after the 1891 election, and the Conservative Party soon degenerated into squabbling factions. Both the established parties had problems retaining the support of farmers in the early 1890s, as depressed markets forced prices down. Radical leaders formed their own party, the Patrons of Industry. The Patrons had done well in the Ontario election of 1894, and expected more in the federal election of 1896.

Religious issues had declined since the 1850s, when anti-Catholic feeling was at a peak. The trend reversed in the 1890s over the issue of separate schools in Manitoba. A few firebrands did their best to stir up trouble over this issue and what they characterized as an increasing "Roman influence" in Canada. They too formed a party, the Protestant Protective Association (PPA), under the leadership of a former Conservative, Dalton McCarthy.

An election had been expected for almost a year when the call came for June 23, 1896.

Late in 1895 the Patrons nominated W.L. Gordon of Pilkington, a thoughtful, well-read and opinionated farmer. He had been involved in the Grange movement in the 1870s, and would still be active in the United Farmers of Ontario in the 1920s.

The Protestant Protective Association was the next in the field, holding their nomination meeting in Orangeville in early April, almost a month before the vote was called. The organizers expected that their vote would be strongest there, but the nomination went to a man who had already been canvassing and building up personal support: The man was Dr. Abraham Groves of Fergus.

The sitting member for Centre Wellington, Andrew Semple, had held the seat since defeating Dr. Orton in 1887. He owned a flour mill in downtown Fergus and a farm in West Garafraxa. It was obvious from the beginning that Semple had by far the best organization.

The campaign was roughly seven weeks long. Semple planned to spend two weeks travelling around the riding and meeting known supporters and influential men, who would help his campaign in their neighbourhoods. This was to be followed by a series of about 30 meetings, at least one per day, around the riding.

Dr Groves, meanwhile, was campaigning furiously. He virtually abandoned his medical practice and his businesses for the duration of the campaign. The Doctor held a few public meetings, but spent most of his time going house to house and farm to farm. Groves was well known, and in the early weeks of the campaign everyone expected that he stood a good chance of winning, particularly since it appeared the Conservatives would not field a candidate.

The local Conservatives eventually did get organized, with a nomination meeting on May 7, two weeks into the campaign. Two candidates appeared: Dr. Lewis of Orangeville and "Honest" John McGowan of Peel. McGowan was well known and personally popular in the western part of the riding, and also ambitious. He astonished his friends when he announced that he would be more interested in running as a Patron than a Conservative. This left the field to Dr. Lewis.

This should have been good news for Andrew Semple, but he had his own problems with the Patrons of Industry, who threatened to do well in his strongholds, Pilkington and Peel.

Although they had a candidate, the Conservatives did little campaigning through most of May. It was widely believed that Dr. Lewis did not want to voice opinions on the divisive issues of the day for fear of alienating support. Dr. Groves, it appeared, was effectively the Conservative candidate.

By early May, Groves became alarmed at some of the more outrageous statements made by the PPA leaders. The movement, sustained by radical elements of the Orange Lodge, took a nativist, anti-Catholic and racist stance

on the issues of the day. Groves feared being bound too closely with them. He started to tone down his anti-Roman pronouncements

On May 9 he told an audience in Pilkington that "I am pledged to no party or leader and am responsible myself, and myself only, for the views I am trying to advance."

"I am a believer in British connection and would so weld this country and the old land that the bonds of union could not be severed," he proclaimed.

Some of Dr. Groves' suggestions for government reform sound surprisingly contemporary. He wished to limit the power of members of parliament, and would outlaw any government appointments to former members for a period of five years after they left the house. He wanted an elected senate, or to abolish it completely. He affirmed that he believed strongly in temperance "to save the youths of our country from the destroying monster drink."

Vehement in his desire to separate church and state, he opposed government aid of any kind to any church, and claimed meddling bishops had made the Manitoba separate school issue a divisive one nationally. He also condemned a grant of $400,000 that he claimed the federal government had given the Jesuit order in Quebec. He favoured "one school, one language, every sect equal and no special grants to any denomination."

The initial weeks of the campaign did not arouse much public interest, but things began to heat up in the third week of May as the June 23 election day approached. The old-line party insiders were terrified that the new parties would capture a large percentage of the vote, and they began to intensify their campaign. Both Gordon and Groves had been campaigning hard for more than a month, but neither possessed an experienced campaign team, or any effective organization behind them..

The Patrons of Industry had attracted much support from former Liberals, but they had many problems. Patrons could not agree on major issues, such as the Manitoba school question, free trade, and temperance. Many of them believed that it was a mistake to campaign directly for office, and that the movement could do better as a pressure group. The Patrons had an anti-urban reputation, which made it difficult to attract support in villages and towns.

On the other side, Dr. Groves had his own problems. He soon found that the anti-Catholic line was not selling well in most of the riding. Several provincial leaders of the Protestant Protective Association had made outrageously bigoted statements that discredited the movement and led many to conclude that it was a collection of crackpots and lunatics.

Alarmed at the course of events and the declining fortunes of his campaign, Dr. Groves severed his party ties part way through the campaign. He began calling himself an Independent. Groves abandoned the religious issues completely, and concentrated his campaign on four points: abolition

of the Senate, prohibition, strengthening the British connection, and monetary reform to eliminate the debt.

Many PPA supporters, like Dr. Groves, were also pillars of the temperance movement. It is likely that in 1896 the electorate was close to evenly split on this issue. Only Dr. Groves came out as an unequivocal foe of liquor. The other three candidates skated around the issue.

Both Gordon and Groves completed the campaign the way they began: canvasing voters all day; attending meetings at night. Often they would show up at each other's meetings. This was a tradition dating from the 1850s, where candidates would give opponents a few minutes at the end of their meetings to respond.

The Conservatives were almost invisible-some thought this a deliberate policy to avoid offending anyone. Dr. Lewis was not well known in the western part of the riding, but had strong support in East Garafraxa and his home town of Orangeville. There was no visible conservative campaign until early June, with voting day less than three weeks away.

In 1896 the official nomination day was only a week before the election, and it took the form of a public meeting. It also served as an all-candidates meeting, offering the candidates their last major pitch to the voters. Groves' only mention of religious issues was his assertion that the Manitoba school issue should be decided by the people of Manitoba. W.L. Gordon sought an explanation for Dr. Groves' shifting stance-he had been nominated by a McCarmyite convention, now proclaimed himself an Independent, and spoke like a Patron. To much laughter, another Patron supporter said that "this is an agricultural district and therefore should be represented by a farmer. Medical men are better qualified to take money out of farmers' pockets than to make laws for them."

After the panic of the first few weeks, Semple became confident of victory, and the results bore him out. He received 1,917 votes compared to 1,295 for Dr. Lewis. The new parties had peaked too early: Dr. Groves attracted 752 votes, and Gordon 599. Overall, Groves secured 16% of the votes.

Dr. Groves received his strongest support in West Garafraxa (33% of the vote) and Fergus ((30%), but lagged badly elsewhere: 14% in Nichol, 7% in Elora, and 5% in Pilkington. Years before, both Dr. Orton and Dr. Clarke had managed to use the sectarian issue to their advantage. Dr. Groves miscalculated badly, and was unable to follow their example. As well, the course of his campaign raises questions about the strength of his nativist opinions. He grew up in the local centre of Orangeism, and may simply have assumed unquestioningly that everyone held similar opinions.

The new party movements quickly died out, and most voters returned to their old folds. "Honest" John McGowan secured the nomination in 1900, and to the surprise of everyone, including perhaps himself, he unseated Andrew Semple in an election that reelected Liberals in most neighbouring ridings.

Abraham Groves was back in the Conservative tent, serving on the riding executive. He organized a victory celebration for McGowan in early December 1900. The celebrants assembled in the former bank premises in his building at St. David and St. Andrew, then marched to the town hall in a torchlight parade, lighting fireworks along the way. The evening took the form of a "smoker," everyone present lit pipes, cigars or cigarettes and settled in for an evening of speeches and entertainment.

Dr. Groves subsequently took a minor role in public events. He spoke occasionally at patriotic events, but his most frequent activity involved regular appearances at council, pleading for some concession from council or for a reduction in the assessment on one of his properties.

Last week I made mention of his attempts to secure municipal aid for the building of the hospital in 1901, and the battle with council over the electrical issue in late 1913.

Dr. Groves' final political confrontation happened in 1927, over the selection of the high school site. The school board and Fergus council had agreed in 1926 that a site at the western extremity of town was the best, and were proceeding with design work. At the first meeting of the 1927 board on Feb. 2, a very agitated Dr. Abraham Groves appeared as a delegation, arguing vehemently in favour of a site at Tower and Belsyde, known as the McTavish site. The board, stuck to its guns, and confirmed the original choice.

The board's next meeting, on Feb. 25, turned into a circus. More than 200 people crowded into and outside the meeting. Chairman James Dick barely managed to keep order. Dr. Groves, then 80 years of age, was in full form, nearly coming to blows with Harvey Ham. Groves and J.C. Templin told the meeting that the McTavish site was free, though the board had received no communication of any kind from the owner. One again, the board affirmed its decision in favour of the original site, by an 8-to-5 recorded vote.

Dr. Groves, it appears, went home that night to study his municipal law books. With glee in his eye, he stumbled on some loopholes. Newly elected trustees were required to take an oath of office within 20 days of the election. This had not happened. Trustee George Maude had missed three consecutive meetings in 1926, which automatically removed him from the board. And trustee Michael Bergin was also a member of the Separate School Board. According to law, no one could sit on two boards. If valid, the charges meant that eight of the 13 board members were disqualified. The board met in emergency session on Mar. 1 to consider the dilemma. They did nothing, but news of the crisis stirred up by Dr. Groves hit all four Toronto dailies the next day. Fergus council argued the matter at length on Mar. 17. They tried to refer the issue to the county judge, but discovered the next day that they did not have the power to do so. On the advice of the cautious J.A. Wilson, the lawyer who served both as board secretary and Fergus solicitor, council

eventually decided to call a nomination meeting for Apr. 4, and new elections for Apr. 11 for the six seats controlled by Fergus.

The nomination meeting lasted four hours. Milton Beatty, of Beatty Bros., launched into an extended diatribe against Dr. Groves, J.C. Templin, and the other opponents of the chosen site. His brother, W.G. Beatty, was so disgusted over the turn of events that he decided not to run again. By the end of the evening, nine names were in nomination, six of whom pledged themselves to vote for the McTavish site. When the returning officer tallied the ballots a week later, all six pro-McTavish trustees were elected. It was a final political victory for old Doc Groves.

Why did Abraham Groves take such a strong stand in the school site issue? There are plenty of theories, but no real evidence. Some believed that he owned land adjoining the site, but this is not the case. Perhaps he was anxious to help the McTavish family sell some land. He may have been anxious to put the Beatty Brothers in their place.

Though Abraham Groves dabbled in politics for much of his life, his political career can not be considered a successful one. Groves had difficulty working in groups: he frequently felt uncomfortable in the Conservative Party, he defied and criticized the leadership of the PPA, whose cause he initially espoused in 1896. He did not fit in well with any temperance organizations. Though he shared their goals, he differed with them in his reasoning and his tactics. Also working against his political success was his single-mindedness and his blunt style of expression, which offended many voters. Finally, he continually nursed grudges and personal slights, often allowing these to determine his thinking.

I have spent a lot of time over the past few weeks sifting through the records and piecing together Dr. Groves' business activities and political career. I also had to consider stories and anecdotes I have heard over the years. I now have far more questions about him than I had at the beginning of the exercise.

Last Friday I stumbled on a few paragraphs by Hugh Templin of the *Fergus News-Record.* He wrote them 67 years ago, a few weeks after Dr. Groves died, but I might have written them myself today. They will serve as well as any as a conclusion to my contribution to this series.

> Dr. Abraham Groves did so many important things and came in contact with so many people that it is no wonder that there is so much discussion and comment about his life since he passed away. We notice it in many of the newspapers we read each week. And as time goes on, it appears there will be as many stories told about him as about Sir John A. Macdonald or Abraham Lincoln. The time is coming when it will be very hard for the historian or biographer to pick out what is true and what is tradition.

The Medical Life of Dr. Abraham Groves of Fergus

by Charles G. Roland

My assignment today is to discuss the medical practice, experiences, and exploits of Dr. Abraham Groves. As you well know, Groves practiced medicine here from 1871 until the 1930s, a period that encompassed remarkable changes in the practice of medicine and on medicine's capacity to be genuinely helpful in preventing or alleviating illness. Groves came to Fergus directly after graduating from medical school in Toronto. During his professional lifetime, he published at least fourteen articles in medical journals, plus a sort of autobiographical medical memoir late in his life: *All in the Day's Work.* In these publications he made several claims to priority, and it is to these that I plan to pay special attention.

These claims included the first appendectomy, a new method of wound closure, and an innovative way of preventing the infection of wounds. Another aspect of his practice was his remarkable capacity for spontaneous improvisations, often in medical situations of great stress.

But first, I must begin by setting Dr. Groves' medical world here in Fergus in context. To do so, I wish to tell you something about life and medicine in Ontario in the 1860s and 1870s, feeling confident that no one in this audience will have any direct experience with these times.

The differences from today are, of course, profound. The discovery of individual bacteria and viruses as specific disease-causing entities was still a few years in the future, and thus there could not have been antibiotics. Medical specialization was in its beginning stages in Europe and North America but certainly did not affect towns and villages such as Fergus, Flora, or even Hamilton. Thus general practitioners were exactly that - men who did whatever needed to be done (there were almost no women physicians at the time). Thus a typical day might include setting a fractured arm (Johnny fell out of an apple tree), helping a woman deliver her baby (Mrs Wilson's eleventh, poor woman), lancing some boils, looking in on a family with seven children, all wracked with measles or whooping cough (much more dangerous diseases then than now), and trying to decide what to

do about an elderly demented man who was frightening the life out of his family.

Childbirth would have been an active part of Groves' practice. Today, some small hazard remains in childbirth, both to mother and infant. A century and a half ago, the hazard was far greater. Pregnancy did not always end with happy results. The risk of various disorders was high; though records are scanty, our knowledge of disaster often comes from cemeteries, where tombstones can be mutely eloquent. In one modern study of a small group of early Upper Canadian cemeteries, 41 percent of all female deaths occurred in the age group 15-45 years, whereas only 29 percent of males died during these years; the inference is that the results reflect the fact that these are the child-bearing years for women.[1]

Puerperal fever occurred (a deadly disease that we know now is the result of streptococcal invasion of the uterus), though the incidence seems to have been low in Canada. Deaths during or immediately after childbirth were common in all parts of the world at that time, and Ontario was not exempt.

The causes of maternal death would have included not only puerperal fever but also arrested labour (which may have a number of causes), and disproportion, where the child's head is too large, relative to the mother's pelvis. This last, commonly is seen in women who have had rickets when children; this vitamin-deficiency disease causes deformity of bones, including those of the pelvis. The general state of nutrition was poorer then than now. Vitamins were not discovered till the 20th century. Major rickets was common enough, and minor rickets, that nevertheless produced distortion of the pelvis, probably occurred much more often than it was diagnosed.

But it would be wrong to assume that all childbirth was difficult, even though danger may have hovered very close at all times. Most deliveries would have been routine and thus have escaped comment.

Although we know much about the risks of the birthing process, we know much less about women's perception of the state of being pregnant at that time. At least amongst those with education (from whom, largely, the written record derives) this was considered an indelicate topic to be treated via circumlocutions, if it must be mentioned at all. But we sometimes find the blinds parted a little, and see all too well what pregnancy meant to at least some women of the day. Here is one of those infrequent insights:

> ...I don't know how soon I may be confined; don't you pity me, is it not dreadful; what but the highest love for your husband can make it tolerable, nor nothing in my opinion but a return of love from him, can compensate for what we suffer; I know the generality of them only laugh at this, but that is miserable comfort to us, who experience the hardship of having children - Good God how I pity some women, who I know heartily hate their husbands, and I am certain are as sincerely despised by them, and yet breed as fast as rabbits, what lives of misery must they have....[2]

Not surprisingly, men tended to be somewhat more casual on the subject. In New Brunswick, Edward Winslow referred jocularly to the fact that: "...My two annual comforts a child and a fit of the Gout return invariably. They came together this heat and...made me as happy as if the Devil had me. The Boy is a fine fellow (of course) and makes up the number nine now living. My old friend Mrs. Hazen about the same time produced her nineteenth...."[3]

When the event occurred - blessed or otherwise - whatever aid was nearby would be summoned. More often than not, local women served as midwives, usually without benefit of formal training or education other than having survived the experience themselves, though some midwives acquired a considerable and deserved local reputation nonetheless. A doctor would be called in only if labour was prolonged or unusually difficult.

Today, of every 100 babies bom in Ontario, at least 99 live to blow out the candles on the cake at their 5th birthday party. No one here finds that statement astounding or even surprising. But if I were able to address a similar group of Ontarians in, say, 1870, and made the same statement, they would think I was daft. And that, of course, is the point. In 1870, only about 50 newborn babes out of 100 could expect to reach the age of 5 years. Dr. Groves' own family proves the point, several of his siblings having died young. Our current highly favorable odds are largely, though not entirely, a 20th century phenomenon.

Why did children die with such frequency 150 years ago? Indeed, why did people of all ages die so young? The average life expectancy in these times was about 40-45 years, about half today's figure. Some of the reasons are obvious. Our present life situation owes much to improved basic diet and sanitation,[4] and to the discoveries of effective methods of immunization and, more recently, antibiosis. This short life span explains the low incidence of diseases that now are common and statistically important killers - cancer and disorders of the vessels of the heart and the brain. These diseases existed in 1870 but they were not common. If most people die before 40 or 45, diseases that usually manifest themselves in persons in their 60s and 70s will not occur often enough to be seen as major menaces.

Before the 20th century, feeding a baby presented serious difficulties if breast milk was unobtainable. When not able to nurse at the breast, babies attempted to survive on what was essentially adult food; there were no effective alternatives. Raw (and often contaminated) milk from cows, goats, and other sources was used as a substitute. All too often, these inadequate substitutes resulted in infant death. For these and many other reasons, childhood carried an extremely high mortality rate.

What diseases did afflict our ancestors? Not surprisingly, perhaps, many of them are familiar disorders, or at least have familiar names. We read about measles, and gout, and dysentery, and smallpox. There were also diseases that

had different names then, but that we can translate into modern terms (with some qualifications), diseases such as "fever and ague," which was often malaria - incidentally, a very common disease in early 19th century Ontario - and "consumption," a term that encompassed several diseases but which was most often tuberculosis, about which I shall say more later.

Effective therapy for serious disease was possible only infrequently in the 19th century in Ontario, as elsewhere. In general, medical theory was based upon beliefs that were becoming increasingly difficult to uphold, beliefs in an ancient system known as the humoral theory, which would be shown to be largely erroneous during the 19th Century.

Whether treatment was provided by a family member, a quack, or a medical practitioner, it was chiefly empirical. Perhaps the chief specific agent was Peruvian bark, a substance from which quinine ultimately was extracted. Bark was unquestionably effective in controlling attacks of malaria.[2] A few other agents were useful too: opium was known for its pain-killing power as a medicine as well as for the temporary delights it could bring to the healthy; the common English foxglove had been found, in the 1770s, to have great effectiveness in certain kinds of dropsy or edema -an action that we now know derives from the plant's content of digitalis. Ointments containing sulphur or mercury were effective against a number of skin diseases, and both systemic mercury and arsenic could cure syphilis (though the dose required was perilously close to the toxic level and therapy had to be continued over many months or even years). With these few exceptions, most drug therapy fell somewhere in the spectrum between inert and dangerous. This was the situation for Groves as he began practice, and had not changed very significantly when he ceased practice.

For patient and practitioner the various components of therapy rarely were used separately. Treatment commonly was a combination of physical measures and drugs, often several drugs (where the word "drug" encompasses all substances taken, whether solid or liquid, in the express hope of improving the recipient's health). To illustrate this point, here is a letter written by an army surgeon to a private patient of his, laying out a course of therapy based upon the practitioner's perceptions of the disorder complained of:

> I am extremely sorry to find you are like to have a relapse of your former disease - From the symptoms you now describe & what formerly took place during my attendance, I have no doubt in saying it is owing to a fullness of the vessels of the Brain, & which will be removed by bloodletting & Cathartics applied immediately. However, in order to prevent a recurrence of the disease I would advise you to have a Seton put into your neck & continued for some months, upon healing of which it will be necessary to get your head shaved & in future wear a wig. This last to you, who value your hair, will seem hard, but I hope you regard health the greatest of blessings more than appearance. -As it will be necessary for you to apply to one of the Medical men to put in practice the remedies I

> have mentioned, if their opinion does not coincide with mine, I shall be happy to hear from them & will explain to them more fully than I can to you, my opinion of the seat of the disease - in order to prevent a relapse I would advise you to use a good deal of exercise, leave off reading in bed & indeed anything that obliges you for any long period to have your head lye on your neck as in writing - your stove, have it removed from so near your Desk. - As I know you can always pass your evenings in Society, pleasantly, I should advise you to cultivate it, & to enter into every amusement you possibly can....[3]

Here is exemplified the complete 19th century prescription. The drugs are unspecified cathartics; physical means include bloodletting, application of a seton, and even shaving the head and the wearing of a wig; the advice is broad-ranging and includes admonitions to improve the life style in several ways. The physician, an experienced practitioner, is careful in appearing to offer advice to the practitioner on the scene; and he tries to keep his patient's spirits raised. Often, that was all a practitioner had to offer.

But back to the 1870s. There was no hospital in Fergus; Toronto, where young Abraham had gone to school, and Hamilton, were perhaps the nearest. And the hospital in these times was a vastly different institution, largely seen as the place where one went to die. Abraham's training in Toronto would have been largely lectures, often read out of a textbook by an unenthusiastic teacher. Groves entered the school in 1867; the great William Osier became a student the following year. They must have been acquainted though there is no evidence of any particular friendship. But an event took place while they were students that shows eloquently, I think, how differently hospitals were viewed then.

In the late 1860s, the Toronto General Hospital had sustained a debt of about $5,000. So the powers that were, closed the hospital. For a year. And the citizens of Toronto seemed to take this as a matter of course. The consequence for Groves was that for an entire year he had no access to hospitalized patients, from whom he should have been acquiring information and experience. Osier's reaction was to leave Toronto and finish his last two years of medicine at McGill.

Groves once wrote that he had never seen the abdomen opened while he was a student. How could he have, with the hospital closed? But this lack in his education has much deeper roots than the hospital closure. Groves' most noteworthy practice experiences - the real reason we are all here today - were surgical. So I must describe briefly the two major changes in surgical practice that took place in the 19th century - anesthesia and antisepsis.

Prior to these discoveries, surgery was avoided whenever possible, for fairly obvious reasons. First, without anesthesia, patients had to be operated upon while awake, often held down by several strong men. Secondly, without antisepsis, operations inside the abdomen, chest, or head generally resulted in the patient's death - as we now know, usually from infection.

But permit me to introduce you to one exceptional patient who had the fortitude to ignore the pain connected with doing surgery without anesthesia. This man was a British soldier, Shadrack Byfield, wounded in Upper Canada during the War of 1812. His arm was severely damaged and needed to be amputated. He recorded, with some understandable pride: "They prepared to bind me, and had men to hold me, but I told them that there was no need for that. The operation was tedious and painful, but I was enabled to bear it pretty well. I had it dressed and went to bed. They brought me some mulled wine and I drank it...."

Not many patients were capable of such stoicism. I would remind you that the everyday phrase, "Bite the bullet" is a product of the pre-anesthetic era of surgery. Round or cylindrical soft lead balls were the common bullets used in warfare, and a wounded soldier often was given one of these to bite down on while the surgeon wielded his knife; many of these balls or bullets have been found near former battlefield hospitals, often with deep teeth-marks.

In a curious sense, surgical anesthesia grew out of play. Ether and nitrous oxide first had to be discovered by chemists, and in the 18th century they were. But folks soon found that among the effects of inhaling these gasses was behaviour quite peculiar; nitrous oxide isn't known as "laughing gas" for nothing. People inhaling the gasses behaved very oddly, and eventually, human nature being what it is, someone realized that these silly antics could be entertaining to others. So "ether frolics" were organized, where one or more persons inhaled ether and others laughed at their behaviour. Happily, though, a few members of the audiences noticed an unfunny but very interesting phenomenon: persons under the influence of either ether or nitrous oxide often crashed into tables or benches and cut or bruised themselves - yet didn't notice the injury until the effects of the gas had worn off. Essentially, anesthesia was discovered in this way. In 1846, in Boston, eminent surgeons used ether and successfully anesthetized a patient, who thus had painless surgery.

Chloroform was discovered in Scotland in 1847, just a year after the first recognized use of anesthesia in surgery under ether. And chloroform became Abraham Groves' anesthetic agent of choice. Note that Groves frequently referred to the use of chloroform, rather than ether. Though some practitioners thought that chloroform was dangerous, Groves noted that "...I have used it practically exclusively for more than sixty years without a death or accident of any kind."[5] Chloroform was easier to transport, non-flammable, and easy to administer, among other qualities.

The Medical Practice of Abraham Groves

Now it is time to look as critically as we can at the medical practice of Dr. Abraham Groves. What do we know about what he did, and how do we know it? How reliable is our information from the viewpoint of an historian?

There are four main sources that I am aware of.

1. There exists a small collection of handwritten notes, most written apparently in the 20th century, by a person or persons unknown (for learning of their existence I owe thanks to Mr. Mel Muir of Elora).
2. There is the book by Groves entitled *All in a Day's Work: Leaves from a Doctor's Casebook*, published in 1934, not long before Groves died.
3. There is a small series of papers published by Groves in various medical journals, mostly in Canada. With one or perhaps two exceptions, these fourteen or so papers are short case reports of a type very commonly published a century ago, though rarely seen now. These articles were published between 1874 and 1924.
4. Two significant articles have been written about Groves and his medical career. These provide useful background information but indicate little that is new. The papers are by Charles W. Harris, "Abraham Groves of Fergus,"[6] and by the late Bill Spaulding, "Abraham Groves (1847-1935): A pioneer Ontario surgeon, sufficient unto himself."[7]

Beyond these documentary sources, one can, of course, make inferences based on what other practitioners were doing at the same time, though doing so is fraught with danger.

The question then is, what weight can we give to the three kinds of information? How much reliance should we put on them as contributing to our insight into Groves' medical practice? I have listed the sources in terms of increasing reliability. The handwritten anonymous notes certainly can be, and will be cited; but it must be kept in mind that we know nothing about who wrote them, when they were written, for what purpose, or with what accuracy.

As for *All in the Day's Work*, we are on easier ground. There is no reason to suppose that anyone but Groves wrote this book, and he refers to events about most of which only he could know. The caveat here is that they were written late in the doctor's life. They seem clearly self-congratulatory - nothing wrong with that but it must be kept in mind. But the various chapters were written as long as 60 years after the events described. And memory certainly does become suspect in all of us over such long periods. So facts alluded to in the book are more reliable than those in the notes, but there are dangers.

Most reliable are the medical-journal papers, for the straightforward reason that they were written when events were fresh in the author's mind, and probably quite innocent, especially in the earliest papers, of any concern with the overall judgement of posterity.

While looking at Groves' career, I have kept this hierarchy firmly in mind.

Now, at long last, let us look first at the various claims made by Groves,

all of which come from *All in the Day's Work.* The first has to do with the manner in which abdominal incisions were closed at the end of an operation.

He said, with respect to an abdominal operation carried out in 1874: "So far as I know this was the first case where the principle of anatomical apposition of wounds was recognized and applied."[8] In this instance Groves is, I believe, quite wrong. Let me describe briefly what he refers to. As some of you will know, an incision into the abdomen penetrates skin, fascia, muscle, and the peritoneum or inner lining of the abdomen. Until some time in the 19th century, a surgeon closing such an incision would place his sutures entirely through all of these layers together. What Groves did on his way out of the abdomen was to first suture the peritoneal edges together, then the muscular layer separately, next the fascial layer, and finally the skin. That is the way incisions are closed today. But this process was carried out by surgeons well before Groves claimed to have done it for the first time. Consequently I will not discuss this assertion further, except to say that Groves himself was not consistent in the way he closed wounds. Writing this same year, 1874, about a different patient, he stated: "The wound was brought together by eleven silver-plated steel needles, made to pass through the whole thickness of the abdominal parietes including the peritoneum. Over the needles a thread was wound in the form of a figure of eight. No other sutures were used...."[9] This quotation is from Dr. Groves' first published medical article. In 1878 he continued to use this same method.[10]

A much more interesting claim referred to an operation done on 10 May 1883: "So far as I am aware this was the first time that an appendix had ever been removed."[11] On a technicality at least, this was certainly not the case. The disease we know as appendicitis was generally identified before 1886 as perityphlitis or idiopathic peritonitis (I am sure you know that 'idiopathic' is doctorspeak for 'we have no idea what the cause is'). In 1886, Dr. Reginald Fitz described the disease and applied the current name. But many patients who suffered from perityphlitis had surgery, before 1883, and the appendix, inflamed or not, must have been removed - at least incidentally - at that time.

And in fact, examining the medical literature shows that Groves was far off the mark. For example, in 1848 a British surgeon, Henry Hancock, published an article entitled "Disease of the appendix caeci cured by operation."[12]

In fairness to Groves, what he may have intended to say was that his operation, in 1883, was the first time an appendix had been removed as a deliberate procedure, that is, after planning to do just that, once the abdomen was opened. His description of how he came to believe that it was disease of the appendix that caused so-called idiopathic peritonitis is logical and appealing. But here we run head on into the problem of historical proof: Groves did not publish a medical article on this topic - everything we know about it is derived from his book, written 51 years after the presumed event.

Please let me emphasize here that I do not contend that Abraham Groves

did not take out this lad's appendix in 1883. I simply must, as an historian, tell you that the evidence may - I emphasize 'may' - be flawed. But assuming his recollection to be absolutely accurate, what we can safely say is that Abraham Groves almost certainly did the first elective appendectomy in Canada.

Antisepsis

Now let us move on to Groves on antiseptic practices. He wrote: "At the time of my graduation, as practically nothing was known of germs except that something which could cause typhoid might be present in apparently pure water, it was not the custom to sterilize instruments or anything else before an operation."[13] And he next describes how he boiled all his instruments and washed his hands at length before carrying out an operation to remove an ovarian tumor, in May 1874. This undoubtedly was a safeguard to this and later surgical patients. What is intriguing about this practice is that it was more or less new, even though Groves exaggerates in saying that "practically nothing" was known about germs. Joseph Lister had published his revolutionary papers on antisepsis beginning seven years before and he stated unequivocally that he based his work on Pasteur's success in destroying germs in milk, beer, and wine.. And Lister's methods had been widely reported in medical journals around the world, including those published in Canada.

However. Lister's early techniques depended not on boiling instruments but rather on killing or blocking germs using carbolic acid-impregnated bandages and other means. Boiling instruments (and, later, steam disinfection) came much later.

Does this mean that Groves was a true innovator? Not necessarily. One question has to do with timing. Groves' claim appears prominently in his 1934 book - that is, at a time long after heat-sterilization had become routine. So one might legitimately ask: was Groves mis-remembering the date of his first "boiling"?; did he invent the account to the benefit of his place in history?; or was it all accurate and he deserves credit?

As a matter of fact, I can answer these questions. For in a very short case report in a journal called *The Canada Lancet,* published in 1874, Groves wrote: "...I had all the water used during the operation boiled and allowed to cool, and then slightly disinfected. By taking these precautions all risk of introducing the seeds of after trouble by means of the water necessarily used, is avoided."[14] One suspects, from his use of the word "disinfected" that Groves was acquainted with Lister's work. This is made clear in his final paragraph, when he comments that boiling instruments "appears to me to be worthy of at least as much consideration as the disinfection of sponges, ligatures, etc...." But the words Groves added - "slightly disinfected" - mean not only that he followed some aspects at least of Lister's theory, they also erase much of his claim to priority. An Hungarian physician and obstetrician,

Ignaz Semmelwies, was saving the lives of pregnant women in the birthing hospital in Vienna in the 1840s; he washed his hands and instruments in disinfected water, and made his students do the same.

Before leaving this topic, it might be of interest to mention an area physician who was an early Listerian - perhaps the first in Canada - Dr. Archibald Malloch.

Archibald Edward Malloch (1844-1919) is poorly remembered and deserving of a better fate. After a life of service to the Hamilton area, he died and was more or less forgotten. To some degree, this was of his doing, for he was a man who did not seek the spotlight, who published little, and was apparently content to live his days in useful anonymity.

Malloch was born in Brockville, and attended Queen's University. He studied medicine for one year at Queen's,[15] and then, for reasons unknown, decided to complete his medical training in Glasgow. Whatever the basis for this move, it had the fortuitous result of exposing an apt pupil to a teacher - Joseph Lister - in the midst of making one of the major breakthroughs in medical history. In 1869, Malloch returned to Canada, setting up his practice in Hamilton, and became one of the pioneers in introducing antiseptic surgery into this country. One of his early cases is relevant to our interests here today. He operated on his own father, George Malloch, age 72, surely with some trepidation. Here are a few paragraphs from his medical diary:

> May 16th. [1869] Papa came up yesterday to have his cheek operated on for the Disease which reappeared in the shape of an ulcer about fi inch long & 2/8 broad with hard base, in the seat of the old Cicatrice left by the operation performed in Glasgow in the month of Nov/67 by Prof. Lister. About October/68 he noticed a small sore about the size of a pin head which has increased since to the size mentioned above. This ulcer is situated on the right cheek on level of prominence of Malar bone & midway between it & the nose.... At 1 P.M. today after the part was frozen with Rhisoline [?] I removed with the knife a portion of the skin & subcutaneous tissues, including all the indurated portion & the ulcers, which measured fully an inch in length & 1/2 inch in breadth....
>
> He experienced during the latter part of the operation considerable amount of pain - the first incision was painless, as also when two bleeding vessels one of considerable size were twisted.... The sore was then washed with 1 to 40 Aq Sol. of Ca[rbolic] & the wound covered with oiled silk which had been dipped in 1 to 4 oily Sol.... 10 P.M. The oozing bloody serum which was pretty free at first as that on the bandages is quite dry: had a good sleep & has taken some food.... No oozing. That which did occur chiefly appeared at side of nose near eye & not below as was expected.
>
> All the dressings removed were quite sweet. [That is, they were not saturated with pus.]

June 8th [three weeks later]. Ulcer quite healed: the centre of cicatrix is rather elevated. G. Health Excellent. [Note triumphant capitals!]

This was the first operation performed under antiseptic methods by Archibald Malloch, and thus one of the earliest - probably the first - anywhere in Canada.

Blood Transfusion

Now let me turn to Groves and the transfusion of blood. Here his improvisational skills are emphasized rather than any claim of priority. Writing about an event taking place on 19 June 1871, he wrote: "...I saw with the late Dr. Thorn of Belwood, a woman who appeared to be in an almost hopeless condition, as a result of a haemorrhage, following miscarriage. She was almost pulseless and in imminent danger of death. I suggested a transfusion of blood. Her physician approved, but pointed out that we had no instruments with which to do that operation and neither of us had ever seen anything of the kind done. In those days every physician carried in his vest pocket a thumb lancet for the purpose of bleeding his patients, as that was a very common practice at that time. In addition to a thumb lancet I had a hard rubber piston syringe which fortunately had never been used, and therefore was comparatively free from pathogenic germs."[16] Groves then bled the husband, collecting the blood in a bowl; next he filled the syringe with this blood, made a cut into the patient's vein, and injected the blood. He concludes: "The improvement in the patient's condition was immediate and she went on to complete recovery."[17]

Here, we need to look at both the widespread use of bleeding as therapy, and the somewhat contradictory concept of blood transfusion, in the 1870s. This particular patient, I must remind you, was one of Groves' earliest, just a few weeks since he began his practice. To some degree that fact adds another dimension to the events: had the patient died, what might have been Groves' long-term acceptance within the small community of Fergus and area?

Let us now look at the history of bleeding and of blood transfusion. First, perhaps, should be bleeding, that messy panacea from the 16th into the early 19th centuries, about which so much has been written, including these words of Dr. Abraham Groves: "In those days [this was 1871] every physician carried in his vest pocket a thumb lancet for the purpose of bleeding his patients, as that was a very common practice at that time." For some centuries, bleeding - the removal of substantial volumes of blood from the body by one of several techniques - was a common method of treating many diseases.

Let me give a well-known example of bleeding, a case history of just over 200 years ago. George Washington died at Mt. Vernon on Dec. 14, 1799. He had become ill the day before with what was probably acute epiglottitis - that is, a sudden severe inflammation of the tissues of the opening to the larynx, accompanied by pronounced swelling and fever. The

former United States President died within 22 hours despite the attention of several eminent physicians.

In the course of his final illness, Washington was bled repeatedly. An estimate of the amount of blood removed by his medical attendants is that it exceeded 80 ounces (the total amount in the average adult human body is 190 ounces). So Washington was deprived of more than 40% of his entire blood supply, in less than 24 hours, in the midst of a very severe illness.

Yet it is unquestionably true that the treatment Washington received was technically correct given the state of medical science of the day. He was not mistreated. He did not fall into the hands of quacks or charlatans.

The principle behind this treatment was straightforward, if - we know now - largely wrong. It was believed that in most diseases, some humour or combination of humours existed in too great a quantity in the body and that this excess must be removed for the patient to be restored to health. According to the ancient Greeks, the humours were blood, phlegm, bile, and black bile.

If the seat of disease was thought to be in the stomach, pukes (the common term of the time and not merely an indelicacy on my part) might be used alone; if the disease was thought limited to the lower bowel, then purges might be used. But in many disorders the two methods were used simultaneously, frequently leaving the unfortunate patient not only ill but also in a severe dilemma with respect to evacuative priorities, as the agents administered usually worked vigorously and frequently.

If the disease being treated was thought to be caused by too much blood in the body, the solution was obvious: bleeding.

But I have strayed from the main point of Groves' actions in the case of the hemorrhaging woman - the transfusion of blood. Groves, it should be noted, claims no priority for this practice, and rightly so. The first recorded blood transfusion was given in 1665, when an English physician did experiments transfusing blood between dogs, and then between animals and humans. The first known transfusion of blood between humans took place in Philadelphia in 1795. And in 1818 a British obstetrician carried out exactly the procedure used by Groves, with a good result.

Nevertheless, good results such as these were strictly fortuitous. The blood types were not discovered until the early 20th century, when physicians began to understand the many previous bad results that had occurred while transfusing human blood. Groves was simply lucky that the blood types of his patient and the donor-husband were not incompatible, or his patient might have died from the reaction.

Contrast this with earlier efforts in Ontario to resuscitate patients, not necessarily with the infusion of blood. Here is an account of one such effort, which took place in Toronto when Abraham Groves was just a lad:

Drs. Bovell and Hodder transfused milk from cows into cholera patients

at the cholera sheds, in Toronto, in 1852.[18] Dr. Hodder wrote:

> Previously to the last advent of cholera, twelve or fourteen years ago, I suggested to my friend and colleague, Dr. James Bovell, the propriety and probable success of transfusion of blood. He at once met me with the objection, that the supply would most likely fail, inasmuch as few persons would like to part with their blood during an epidemic of the kind, and if they did we could not be sure that the blood itself was not diseased. This appeared to knock my scheme on the head at once, but I began to reflect, and to ask myself, What is the nearest analogue of the blood? and milk came to my mind. The next question to be decided was, whether milk had ever been injected into the veins of man or animals, and what was the result? I found that Donne had injected it into the veins of dogs, rabbits, and birds, and that it did not kill them, but, on the contrary, he...[was] of the opinion that the white corpuscles of the milk were capable of being transformed into red blood-corpuscles. I then decided on the transfusion of milk into the human veins, should cholera pay us another visit.
>
> I immediately got everything ready, and then sent a message requesting consultation with any of the medical officers who might be in the hospital, when four gentlemen came, and I asked them the following questions: - "Do you consider this a genuine case of epidemic Asiatic cholera?" - Certainly, and a very marked one." "Do you think anything can be done to save him?" - "Nothing; he is dying." "Would any medical treatment be likely to be of any use?" - "None." "Then he must die." - "Yes." "Then, gentlemen," I said, "I am about to try the experiment of transfusing milk into his veins." - "If you do, you will kill him," was the reply. Thereupon I invited them to be present at the operation, but three out of the four left the building; the fourth remained, but would not assist. Everything being ready, I ordered a cow to be driven up to the shed; and, while she was being milked into a bowl (the temperature of which was raised to about 100 [degrees] Fahr.) through gauze, I opened a vein in the arm and inserted a tube, and then filled my syringe (also previously warmed) and injected slowly therewith. No perceptible change, either for better or for worse, took place; so, after waiting two or three minutes, I again filled the syringe, and injected seven ounces more. The effect was magical: in a few minutes the patient expressed himself as feeling better; the vomiting and purging ceased, the pulse returned at the wrist, the surface of the body became warm; - in fact, the man rallied, and speedily recovered without a bad symptom.

I think that Doctor Hodder and Doctor Groves would have understood each other. Certainly both excelled at improvisation.

Tuberculosis

I might digress here briefly to say something about tuberculosis. I do so because it was TB that killed Abraham Groves' first wife. Obviously, despite

his many medical skills, Groves was unable to save his own wife. But I mention the disease also because tuberculosis was an extremely serious disease - in the late 19th century one in every ten deaths in Ontario were the result of this disease. In Hamilton, for example, in 1900, 43% of all deaths for the age group of 15 to 29 years, occurred as a result of tuberculosis.

Tuberculosis has existed for millenia. Usually referred to as consumption until about 150 years ago, it was at least as serious a problem as smallpox, though it never created the aura of panic that enveloped the latter disease. The difference is explained by the chronic and gradual nature of tuberculosis compared to the sudden malevolence of smallpox. But the impact of tuberculosis on 19th century Ontario was greater.

Although TB can affect almost all organs of the body, it is pulmonary tuberculosis - TB of the lungs - that is the characteristic form. The disease typically produced chronic coughing, gradual onset of weakness and weight loss, and the coughing up of blood from the diseased lungs. Often the patient was bed-ridden, or at least house-ridden, for years, by which time he or she often had conveyed the disease, quite unwittingly, to others. In fatal cases, which were all too common, death occurred when there was too little functioning lung tissue left to deliver sufficient oxygen to the tissues of the body.

The French physician, Rene Theophile Hyacinthe Laennec, invented the stethoscope in 1819, and it came into general use for the diagnosis of diseases of the chest about 20 years after that. This tool helped make diagnosis much more accurate, especially after the discovery of x-rays by Roentgen in 1895 and their immediate clinical use.

"Consumption" was a term used as a literal description of the physical state of the patient. Consumptive patients were those whose flesh was consumed from within, who lost weight drastically so as to appear emaciated. As this was the chief sign of the "disease," it will be evident that consumption, in the days before autopsies were performed commonly, might well include not only tuberculosis but also a variety of diseases such as internal cancer of several kinds, diabetes, and many others. When the bodily wasting was accompanied by bloody sputum and the illness was prolonged, however, the diagnosis of tuberculosis becomes much more likely.

Whether it visited individuals or families, consumption was common, though statistics are lacking for the first half of the century and unevenly reliable for the last half. But the disease was one of great impact, more commonly affecting older children and young adults than the very young. Because of its protracted nature, illness with consumption disrupted family life, often profoundly; it was, moreover, a disease frequently conveyed from the patient to several other members of the family, children and adults, thus producing pockets of the disease that sometimes maintained their tragic infective strength for generations. Apparently the Groves family was at least spared this problem.

Groves' Practice

What else can be said about how Abraham Groves practiced medicine? I have concentrated on his surgical exploits, both because he obviously relished this challenge, and also because that area is what he has written about. But some additional information can be derived from the mysterious anonymous notes I mentioned earlier.

For example, we find that he charged 25 cents to extract a tooth, and the same amount to lance a boil. For his first 22 months in Fergus, Groves worked as assistant to another practitioner, earning in that time an estimated $222.

Typical of the rural physician before cars existed, we read of him riding 25 miles to Amaranth Township to care for a child with convulsions - the child survived and, it is said, was treated by Groves for pneumonia almost 60 years later. On another occasion, Groves was taken to see a man choking and on the verge of dying, from food caught in his throat. Groves, ever the resourceful surgeon, took a knife, opened the man's neck, and dislodged the chunk of meat. The man survived unscathed. The Heimlich manoeuver had not been invented then.

He did his first Caesarean section in 1888, in a log shanty lit only by a stable lantern. Twenty-five years later, the "baby" visited him. As can be seen, while Groves apparently saw to all the various ills of mankind, as did all general practitioners of the time, surgery was his great love and his great talent.

And with regard to surgery he was decisive and strongly opinionated. For example, writing about operating for bladder stones, in 1881, he stated: "It will be found that the text-books are, as a rule, far from giving proper instructions as to the method of operating. This is perhaps easily accounted for, when it is remembered that few, if any, of our best surgical authors have ever performed the operation."[19] This is confidence and, perhaps, arrogance in a rural general practitioner!

Similarly, writing about a radical cure of hernia, we find this unequivocal condemnation of the use of a truss: "I know that as a rule when a case of hernia presents itself, a truss is the first and only thing recommended, when it should be the last thing thought of. Except in certain special cases a truss is usually an evidence of incompetence and always a proof of failure."[20]

Groves himself, however, could be wrong, as in his article on the action of x-rays of diseased structures in 1903. He recommended heavy doses of radiation for a wide variety of diseases. He advocated longer sittings under radiation than some other physicians. And he concluded by stating that a case of eczema "...of more than thirty years standing, and which had resisted every means of treatment adopted by many physicians, was entirely cured in three weeks by the Roentgen ray." [21] Today, this kind of intensive treatment

of a skin disorder would likely be cause for legal action against the doctor. But we have learned a great deal about radiation in the past century. One thing we learned, just about the time Groves was advocating this type of therapy, was that it could cause leukemia, a sad lesson that cost many lives. But Groves is not merely dogmatic and, sometimes, overbearing. His deep and genuine concern for his sick patients shines through. He genuinely cared, as I think this quotation from his article on vaginal hysterectomy shows: "It must be admitted that vaginal hysterectomy is a serious and difficult operation, not lightly to be undertaken: but one who has, and w[h]o has not, witnessed, the terrible ravages of uterine cancer, will agree that any operation, however difficult, is worthy of consideration when the only alternative is death in one of its most miserable and loathsome forms." [22]

Conclusions

What, then, can we conclude from all this? First, and I imagine most important, it is safe to say that Dr. Abraham Groves was a tireless and devoted general practitioner over a career of about six decades - though, as you have learned from the previous two talks, he did take time out for a variety of business and political activities. He was a talented innovator capable of improvising effective techniques and equipment under difficult circumstances. He was a skillful, daring, largely self-taught surgeon. If some of his autobiographical claims seem a bit shaky, others are sound and accurate, and no one can be blamed for inaccuracies of memory over a long lifetime, nor, perhaps, at 80 years of age, if some exaggeration occurred.

Nor can he be blamed for doing less than he might have. Let me close by making a completely hypothetical contrast between Abraham Groves and a surgeon of similar talent and ingenuity, practicing at about the same time in south-central Minnesota. William J. Mayo practiced in Rochester, Minnesota, making similar improvisations, doing equally daring surgery, and serving his then tiny community with devotion. But out of that setting came the world-famous Mayo Clinic. No one can blame Groves for not being Mayo, but think for a minute what this setting might have been today, could a Groves Clinic only have risen here to similar fame and accomplishment.

But that is day-dreaming indeed. Abraham Groves was a highly accomplished physician. This fact was recognized far beyond Fergus, and had his death not prevented it, Groves was to receive "...a high honour in the Birthday Honours List" of 3 June 1935. In a letter to Groves' widow, The Right Honourable R.B. Bennett wrote: "I was grieved indeed to think that one who has rendered such outstanding service and whose name and fame extended far beyond the community in which he lived and practiced his profession should have passed on before he knew that his services had received some measure of recognition by the State...."[23]

This, perhaps, can be eulogy enough.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

(All papers listed have Abraham Groves as the sole author):

"Case of ovariotomy," *Canada Lancet* 6: 345-347, 1874.

"Case of ovariotomy," *Canada Lancet* 7: 192-193, 1874-1875.

"Double ovariotomy," *Canada Lancet* 10: 195-196, 1878.

"Supra-pubic lithotomy," *Canadian Journal of Medical Science* 6: 354-355, 1881.

"Removal of a firmly adherent, solid tumour of the ovary," *Canadian Practitioner* 8: 323-324, 1883.

"Vaginal hysterectomy with abdominal ovariotomy," *Canada Lancet* 22: 6-7, 1889.

"The action of x-rays on diseased structures," *Canada Lancet* 36: 463-464, 1903.

"Notes from Royal Alexandra Hospital, Fergus: operation for traumatic epilepsy; intestine ruptured by kick of a horse," *Dominion Medical Monthly* 20: 200-201, 1903.

"The radical cure of hernia," *Canadian Practitioner & Review* 29: 68-71, 1904.

"Case of acute uraemia in which decapsulation of the kidneys was performed," *Canada Lancet* 39: 609-610, 1905-06.

"Notes from the Royal Alexandra Hospital, Fergus: thyroidectomy," *Canada Lancet* 41: 524-526, 1907-08.

"The evolution of surgery as I have seen it in my own practice," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 12: 527-531, 1922.

"Rupture of the bladder," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 13: 319-320, 1923.

"Fracture of the clavicle, acromion process and surgical neck of the scapula," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 14: 318-319, 1924.

ENDNOTES:

1. See Osborne, 1974, pp. 53-54.
2. Toronto, Metropolitan Toronto Public Library (hereafter MTPL), D. W. Smith Papers S126, Folder A10-4. Letter, Eliz. Matthews to Mrs. D. W. Smith, 24 Sept. 1764.
3. Edward Winslow to Gregory Townsend, 17 January 1793. (See Raymond, 1901, p. 399.)
4. Thomas McKeown is the most prominent member of a group of demographers and historians who believe that these first two factors are the most pertinent ones in explaining the dramatic increase in world population over the past 150 years. See, for example, Thomas McKeown, *The Modern Rise of Population* (London, Edward Arnold, 1976), 153: "The most acceptable explanation of the large reduction of mortality and growth of population which preceded advances

in hygiene is an improvement in nutrition due to greater food supplies....From the second half of the nineteenth century a substantial reduction of mortality from intestinal infections followed the introduction of hygienic measures - purification of water, efficient sewage disposal and improved food hygiene...."

5. Abraham Groves, *All in the Day s Work: Leaves from a Doctor's Case-Book* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1934), p. 124
6. Charles W. Harris, "Abraham Groves of Fergus: The First Elective Appendectomy?" *Canadian Journal of Surgery* 4: 405-410, 1961.
7. William B. Spaulding, "Abraham Groves (1847-1935): a pioneer Ontario surgeon, sufficient unto himself," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 8: 249-262, 1991.
8. Abraham Groves, *AH in the Day s Work: Leaves from a Doctor s Case-Book* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1934), p. 9.
9. Abraham Groves, "Case of ovariotomy," *Canada Lancet 6:* 345-347, 1874.
10. Abraham Groves, "Double ovariotomy," *Canada Lancet* 10: 195-196, 1878.
11. Abraham Groves, *AH in the Day s Work: Leaves from a Doctor s Case-Book* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1934), p. 21.
12. Henry Hancock, "Disease of the appendix caeci cured by operation," *London Medical Gazette* 7: 547, 1848.
13. Abraham Groves, *All in the Day s Work: Leaves from a Doctor s Case-Book* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1934), p. 13.
14. Abraham Groves, "Case of ovariotomy," *The Canada Lancet* 6: 345-347, 1874.
15. Information extracted from the Registrar's records and submitted to the author in a personal communication, 30 May 1983, from the Assistant Archivist, Mrs. Shirley C. Spragge.
16. Abraham Groves, *All in the Day's Work: Leaves from a Doctor s Case-Book* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1934), p. 12.
17. Abraham Groves, *All in the Day s Work: Leaves from a Doctor s Case-Book* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1934), p. 12.
18. E.M. Hodder, "Transfusion of milk in cholera," *Practitioner* 10: 14-16, 1873.
19. Abraham Groves, "Supra-pubic lithotomy," *Canadian Journal of Medical Science* 6: 354-355, 1881.
20. Abraham Groves, "The radical cure of hernia," *Canadian Practitioner & Review* 29: 68-71, 1904.
21. Abraham Groves, "The action of x-rays on diseased structures," *Canada Lancet* 36: 463-464, 1903
22. Abraham Groves, "Vaginal hysterectomy with abdominal ovariotomy," *Canada Lancet* 22: 6-7, 1889.
23. Copy of a letter, R.B. Bennet to Mrs Groves, Personal and Confidential, 29 June 1935.1 am grateful to Mel Muir for providing me with a copy of this letter.

The Exciting Literary Life of Dr. Abraham Groves

by lian goodall

Doctor Abraham Groves of Fergus, Ontario explored a wide number of interests during his lifetime. Before he died in 1935, Groves had a career in medicine, and explored business, politics and publishing. [1] Medical journals printed his articles and he was a member of the Canadian Authors Association! [2] When he was over eighty years of age, Groves managed to do something that many of us have perhaps romantically pondered beginning - he published his life experiences, in poetic and prose form. When he was eighty-three, in 1930 the *Fergus News-Record* printed Groves' *Stray Thoughts,* a book of poems. In 1934, six months before his death, Macmillan Company brought out *All in the Day's Work: Leaves from a Doctor's Case-book,* Groves' 181 page book of remembrances about his medical work. The fact that Groves penned, completed and published these two works is thrilling. It takes courage to ignore excuses of lack of talent or time and see a work to published fruition!

But who was this man on the literary scene? He was perhaps not its brightest star. By comparing his work to that of other Canadian doctors who worked with both the scalpel and the plume and other literati of local, national and international note, we come to a better understanding of Groves' place. This paper begins by skipping through Groves' poetry and then turns to his prose.

After viewing a spanking new edition of *Stray Thoughts,* Groves' book of poetry, I visited the National Library to view the original edition. I happily discovered that the 2002 version has been admirably reproduced — with a handsome dark cover and inside the poems published on sturdy manilla paper, with decorations in eye-catching red ink. Groves had *Stray Thoughts* published at the *Fergus News-Record* and gave copies inscribed "With Kind Remembrance, A. Groves," to his friends as Christmas tokens.[3] It has been reprinted to celebrate the centenary of Groves Memorial Community Hospital.

Inside this nifty slim, trim volume the eleven poems range in theme from babies to birds. The poems are simply constructed, with very basic rhyme scheme and little manipulation of imagery, alliteration or other devices. The

doctor may not have considered himself a literary great, but an enthusiastic dabbler who occasionally sent poems to newsletters for publication. In an age when the novel was just struggling to its feet, poetry was a very popular form of art and entertainment. Many people penned rhymes, imitating the great poets whose works they memorized by the score in school.

In Groves' verses, the outstanding feature - the message - seems to have been most important to their creator. Themes fall into several categories - 1) great questions on the ride home 2) inspirational thoughts 3) love poems and 4) other (or 'surprise').[4]

Great questions on the ride home

The travelling doctor noted that "the long journeys made by the aid of horses had their advantages as they gave time for thought and reflection."[5] Later in his career Groves had a chauffeur drive him in one of the first cars in Fergus. In the horse-and-buggy days Groves was at the mercy of the elements as he 'thought and reflected.' The November night in 1885 when Groves first used rubber gloves to perform an operation, was remembered by one observer as " a very dark night and it was raining heavily... ."[6]

The stormy sky on such a night might have prompted Groves to pen his poem "God is Everywhere."

God is Everywhere

In the rolling thunder,
In the earth-born clod,
I heard the voice—
I saw the form
Of God.

The rolling thunder called
The softly-falling rain;
Earth heard His voice,
And hearing smiled
Again.

The clod was dark and rough,
But, in its heart, he chose
To plant a seed.
It blushed and bloomed
A rose.

This poem exemplifies the prevalent features of Groves' poetry. He was influenced by his environment - the storm; he inserts his Christian beliefs - God is everywhere; and tempers them with a redemptive message - the storm produces rain which, after an awkwardly penned poetic passage, nurtures a rose.

The events which preceded the ride home might have concerned life or

death questions, whose answers were influenced by the skill found in the doctor's hands. The great questions of our human existence probably churned in Dr. Groves' mind, especially when death ended the contract between patient and practitioner. Groves does not seem discouraged, but comforted by the Christian's promised life after death. "There Is No Night" explains:

> There is no night in God's eternal scheme:
> Night's but a shadow where men sleep and dream;
> When, like a scroll, this earth has passed away,
> No cloud shall mar the endless, perfect day.
>
> For erring man there is not endless pain.
> The Galilean did not did not die in vain;
> For every sinner, he has paid the price;
> With Him, we shall meet in Paradise.[7]

One subject near the doctor's hopeful heart, was the anti-thesis of dying - birth. Groves emphasized not the biological, but the religious aspects of the process, giving importance to what he sees as a holy link to God, the creator of life in the Christian faith. Groves' "To A Sleeping Baby" reads:

> Oh! Baby, smiling on your Mother's breast, So lately come from God's creative hand; Hast thou some message from that far-off shore, Some glint of glory from the shining Throne? Some strain of music from celestial choirs, Too low and tenuous for our earthly ears? Is it some memory of that blest abode, Some faintly-fleeting vision of the past, That brings the smile upon your sleeping face?

Groves was not the only doctor/poet to turn his mind to the matters of life and death. One of his contemporaries was William Joseph Fischer, a surgeon in London and Waterloo. Born in 1879 he wrote fiction, non-fiction and poetry until his death in 1912 [8]. His book of poetry, *The Toiler and Other Poems,* was published in 1907, several decades before Groves' *Stray Thoughts.* Although Fischer's *Toiler* has one hundred and one more poems than Groves' little book, a number are quite similar.

Fischer has several poems about newborns. As many Christian believers, he portrayed lesus as the innocent infant son of God and the Virgin Mary. "The Happy Mother" begins:

> Two small bright eyes, two little hands, two feet,
> A voice that croons so lustily -
> These were the gifts, flung from God's pure white hand,
> That made her crown of mother hood complete.[9]

Using their poetic voice, both doctors' works speak of birth as a miracle from heaven.

Inspirational thoughts

A religious tone permeates several of Groves' verses, those which I call his *inspirational poems.* These poems about Christian teachings seem designed to inspire others to follow the path Groves trod. They were also his most popular poems. After *Stray Thoughts* came out, "Great Things" was printed on the cover of a Rotarian newsletter with a note saying that the message of helping friends "seems to us to be particularly fitting today ."[10] The poem is also found in the front of the cookbook, *50 Years of Love* and *Service and Still Cooking,* created in 1983 on the occasion of Groves Community Hospital's fiftieth anniversary and Fergus' sesquicentennial. The Fund-raising Committee of the Auxiliary also found "Great Things," "a fitting addition" to their book. [n]

Great Things

To help some sinner when he's sad;
To ease some bitter pain;
Bring solace to some breaking heart,
And give it peace again;
To wipe away the blinding tears
From Sorrow's weeping eyes;
To reach the ready, helping hand
To one who, sinking, cries;
To give to all a word of cheer
To help them on their way-
These are the greatest things of life.

Groves' inspirational poetry preaches love towards all humans. His poem "Inconsistency" compares the ridiculousness of purporting to believe in "God's law" "Thou shalt not kill" while permitting capital punishment.

We teach the law: 'Thou shalt not kill;'
Then hire the hangman. Hush! Be still.
What frauds are we.

His poem "Retaliation" explains:

I will not strike my fellow man,
Whatever he may do. If he strikes
me, the crime is one; If I strike
him, it's two.

These poems evidence a message of peace and harmony which was thrust to the forefront in global writing through the events of World War One.

Another of the area's doctor-poets came to international prominence through the poem he wrote at the front after the death of a close friend. Doctors such as Colonel John McCrae, could not escape being influenced in their poetry by their war-time medical work. McCrae, born in Guelph in 1872, worked at several Montreal hospitals before going overseas in 1914 where he served as a medical officer until he died from pneumonia in 1918. [12] McCrae's "In Flanders Fields" and other works were published in magazines before being gathered into the book *In Flanders Fields and Other Poems.*

A note of urgency and despair appears in McCrae's work, which is absent from Groves'. In his poem "Anarchy" McCrae writes of a city "where men, like wolves, slunk." [13] Groves, writing several decades after the war *and* from the safety of his study, has a more positive view of people and their ability to change. Lines in Groves' poem "My Light" speak of the possibility of renewal: "Light of the dawning that ushers the day, / Courage renewer that girds for the fray... ."[14]

By contrast, McCrae's writing is gloomy, but it's lugubrious imagery is beautiful. Keep in mind Groves' poem about the dark and stormy night, which produces a rose bush, in reading McCrae's 1913 poem "The Night Cometh."

> Cometh the night. The wind falls low,
> The trees swing slowly to and fro:
> Around the church the headstones grey
> Cluster, like the children strayed away
> But found again, and folded so.
>
> No chiding look doth she bestow:
> if she is glad, they cannot know;
> If ill or well they spend their day,
> Cometh the night.
>
> Singing or sad, intent they go;
> They do not see the shadows grow;
> "There yet is time," they lightly say,
> "Before our work aside we lay;"
> Their task is but half-done; and lo!
> Cometh the night! [15]

McCrae undoubtedly is the more powerful poet, although his work is often grim. Groves is perpetually a more hopeful post-war poet. He mourns men's faults while believing in their redemption.

Love poems

In turning to Groves' *love poems,* the comparison to the great sonnet by poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, is irresistible. The famous poem reads:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints- I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! - and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.[16]

It is a compelling fourteen-line sonnet. Groves' "Love's Measure" does not have the sonnet's line form or rhyme scheme, but the same theme of measuring the immeasurable:

Love's Measure

You ask how much I love you:
But that no man can measure;
For I love you more than miser
Ever loved his golden treasure;
More than mariners the ocean;
More than sailors love the sea;
More than mothers love their first-born,
Is the love I have for thee.
As the flowers love the sunshine,
Or the parching earth, the rain,
So my soul is reaching for you
With a love akin to pain.
Deep as ever plummet sounded;
High as ever eagle flew;
Height was low and depth was shallow,
Measured by my love for you.
How can I or[sic] weigh or measure,
Count or calculate aright.
Love for you has no limit,
Love for you that's infinite?

Not to doubt the quality of the doctor's feelings, but like most of Groves' poems, "Love's Measure" does not offer anything poetically new; contain stirring emotions; or hint at unbridled passion, as much as it suggests an exercise in writing a pleasant poem.

His more touching love poem is "My Heart's Beloved." To whom could

Groves have addressed his love poems? The second Mrs. Groves, Ethel Burke Groves, outlived the doctor and died in 1964. It is unlikely, that she is the subject of the poem "My Heart's Beloved."[17] The first Mrs. Groves, Jennie Gibson, born in 1847, predeceased her husband in 1886. "My Heart's Beloved," was written to her memory:[18]

My Heart's Beloved

My heart's beloved! Could my heart
But seek thee wheresoe'er thou art; By
day and night, o'er land and sea,
Through all the world, I'd follow thee;
But once to meet, in bliss or pain, My
heart's beloved once again.

My heart's beloved! Yea! My soul Can
find thee at the farthest pole. Above
the earth, above the air, Above the
dream, the cry, the prayer, Past life,
past death, I come to thee: My soul's
beloved, wait for me.

Real grief gives the poem its emotional currency. Groves was, like many writers, at his best when he wrote about what he knew.

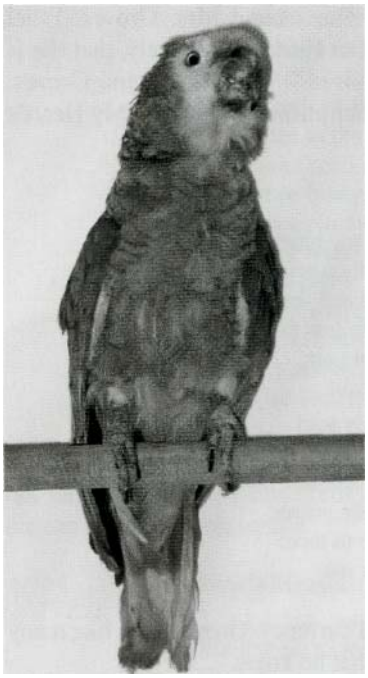
The surprise

He reserved his most sincerity for a poem about his very best friend. My favourite poem, the 'surprise,' is Groves' poem about his parrot, Polly.

Polly was a replacement pet, given to Groves by a patient when his other pet appeared lost.[19] The first pet was an alligator which the doctor obtained as a baby from Florida. He named him Alpheus, after his friend, osteopath A.E. Byerly. According to historian Pat Mestern, the doctor thought the reptile was "as ugly" as his friend! When Alpheus the alligator became lost there was some concern that the animal had slithered into the Grand River where it might supplement its diet with unsuspecting children.[20] Many years later, however, the alligator's skeleton was found under the floor of the barn - wrecking what could have been a great line for parents - "Don't go near that river or Dr. Groves' alligator will get you!"

Groves was perhaps happier with his next pet, which sat on Groves' shoulder munching cornflakes delighting children and other patients while the doctor did his rounds.[21] Polly called out greetings and seemingly picked up new sayings easily.[22] The parrot accompanied Mrs. Groves out in the backyard where she would ask neighbours about their ill father. Polly, soon enough, on its own, would ask "How's your father?"[23]

Archie Anderson, Groves' chauffeur, admired the bird too, but she caused him some grief. The doctor would caution Archie to drive at the



"Polly" the parrot (1921-1976), pet of Dr. Abraham Groves. Polly enjoyed car rides and often exclaimed "I wanna go to Guelph". Taxidermy was undertaken by friends of Dr. Groves.
Wellington County Museum and Archives, 1980.15.1.

speed limit and then take a nap in the backseat. Polly, however, would squawk and wake the doctor up if Archie drove too slowly![24] Polly lived longer than the Groves and came to stay with Archie, who painted her picture.[25] When Polly died in 1976, members of the community, Peggy Dickie and her husband, Dr. William Dickie, learnt that Anderson had reverently wrapped the dead bird in newspaper. They put the corpse in their freezer and after thinking about what to do with "Dr. Groves' parrot" for about a year, they took Polly to a taxidermist. Today Polly roosts at the Wellington County Museum on view as part of the Groves Community Hospital exhibit.

Before reading Polly's cheery poem, consider another short poem with a bird theme. Eighteenth century poet, Alexander Pope's "The Coxcomb Bird" reads: [26]

The coxcomb bird, so talkative and grave,
That from his cage cries Cuckold, Whore, and Knave,
Though many a passenger he rightly call,
You hold him no Philosopher at all.

Groves' poem about his parrot was not about his pet's ability to speak or discern character. Rather, it comes from his appreciation of her apparent fidelity:

To my Parrot

Pretty little Polly,
With almost human sense;
Whence comes, beloved bird,
Your strange intelligence?

Your happy greeting call -
The flutter of your wings -
Show me you know your friend,
And tell me many things.

You have no changing heart;
You're steadfast to the end.
Whoever may forget
You always are my friend.

Pretty little Polly,
I only wish you knew
How much you are to me:
How much I care for you.

The difference with Pope's poem lies with Groves' touching emotional rather than an intellectual approach. In general Groves' work is not without charm. It spoke to his contemporaries and speaks to people today. In a *Fergus-Flora News Express* article, poet/writer Sheila O'Hearn said Groves' poetry is "haunting in its simplicity of language and refreshing for its clarity of thought."[27] For today's reader, it serves to make Abraham Groves less of a two-dimensional character and more of a compassionate being.

Groves, in his poetry, may have come across as a Christian who loved his fellow humans (and parrots). In his book of memoirs a different part of his character emerges. Historian, Steve Thorning, when discussing the Groves research resources concluded "that autobiography is the most suspect of literary forms. By definition it is self serving."[28] This is *wonderfully true.* In an autobiography one presents the person one wants the world to behold. Groves' image was important to him. He had begun developing it in newspaper interviews and articles, so that by the time he printed his autobiography he had a good idea of how he wanted to be presented to the public. Apparently, the author was 'pestered' by others to record his reminiscences. In November 1934 Macmillan and Company brought out 500 copies of the book *All in the Day's Work: Leaves From a Doctor's Case-book.* Correspondence between the company, Groves and Groves' son-in-law, reveals that Macmillan published this as an "author's book." Groves, working through his son-in-law, Reverend Hiltz in Toronto, arranged and *paid for* the publication of the book. Macmillan printed, distributed, and agreed to take the book to trade shows, etc., but the cost was absorbed by the author.[29]

Why did Groves do this? Did he hope to make money? Groves may have covered his costs but had other motivation.[30] Groves, as an old man, wanted to be remembered as an important figure in the world of surgery through his presentation of Groves as a young man. In fact, the working title for his book before publication was "Pioneering in Surgery."

Groves' book has three parts to it: "Accounts of my early operations... . The second part contains a number of articles setting forth my ideas concerning certain subjects. ... The third part consists of a small number of miscellaneous articles on various subjects."[31] It sets out to "preserve records of some of the earliest operations, particularly in abdominal surgery, and also to

set forth what I believe to be important theories....." This is a book about medicine, most importantly for the author to record, his personal and national medical firsts. It is not the purpose of this paper to decide if Groves was the first person to perform an appendectomy in North America and so on. Historical truth is not the focus of this look at Groves' literary life. Rather, this paper considers how, in the first part of Groves book, the style and content of the author's engaging adventure story serve to capture the readers' ears. Thus engaged, they are more willing to believe in the greatness of the wonderful and thrilling character he created, "the hero," the young Dr. Abraham Groves.[32]

In the beginning, the author gives the reader the impression that young Abraham was a student at the University of Toronto in the very dark days of medicine. However, he cites several inspirational examples of persons who lit his light.[33] His mentor, lecturer James Bovell, "saw visions and dreamed dreams" and prophesied "[t]he time is coming, and is not far distant, when the abdomen will be opened as a matter of routine for diagnostic purposes."[34] At the time of graduation in 1871, young Groves was also aware that Lister was "struggling to impress upon the surgical world the *great truths* of asepsis and antisepsis."[35] Groves would take up the torch of medical and surgical advancement when he returned to the area in which he grew up and began his practice. The Table of Contents to *Day's Work* is an impressive list of firsts from 1871 to 1885, among them: My First Blood Transfusion, Sterilization of Instruments, Ovariotomy, Vaginal Hysterectomy, Appendectomy and Use of Rubber Gloves.[36]

Some of these procedures, he tells readers he performed without having seen them done before. Others, he avows to never having heard of being performed. His first major operation - the removal of an ovarian tumour in May, 1874 - was considered a very daring one. As other doctors had tried to "dissuade" him from operating, he was "extremely anxious" about the outcome.[37]

However, not even his anxiety could diminish the power of the doctor's gifts: his surgical talent; his incredible ability to accurately improvise; and his extreme visionary fearlessness. Groves minimized infection by boiling "instruments and everything that came in contact with the wound... . As far as I know this was the first time that instruments and dressings were boiled before an operation."[38] The patient lived.

This is just one of the chapters of *Day's Work*, adventures that, by comparison, make episodes of medical shows on television today seem laughable. In terse language *Day's Work* recounts time and time again how: after a long journey, the doctor arrives on the scene, miles from any hospital where he might find assistants (had they been willing to help) or tools (had they been invented yet). He describes the home of the patient in a few scant sentences as a log shanty, poorly lit by only a lantern and harbouring, the reader is sure, the foulest of infection-causing bacteria. Conditions are abysmal at best and the hero is relatively unaided by others. The patient

provides the doctor with absolutely no support and nurses or assistants have very minor roles. The case might be very grave, the medical world's existing knowledge about the matter limited, and other doctors may have given up hope. Despite these difficulties, Dr. Groves accomplishes courageous pioneering feats. *His* cunning mind, daring, and skill are responsible for his astonishing successes.

He battles numerous enemies: dirt, disease and death, but ignorance seems to be chief among his foes. Not only are people adverse to change, the young doctor is even dramatically threatened. The father of the lad on whom Groves claims to have successfully performed the first appendectomy in North America should have, the reader feels, been grateful. However, the author writes that the boy's "father was very much dissatisfied. A neighbour, suffering apparently from the same disease, had been treated by poulticing and had recovered. The father told me that if I had known how to treat the case properly no operation would have been necessary, and that if the boy did not recover, it would not be well for me. Fortunately the patient recovered."[39]

Readers might understand how lay people would have been upset at Groves' new methods. However, the reader shares the author's seeming outrage at Groves' confession - here, and in other instances - that the doctor's learned colleagues did not appreciate his pioneering work. Groves reports that "[a]t a meeting of medical men a short time later, I referred to the above operation and to this method of treating such cases, but found no supporters. In fact, one doctor went so far as to say that if such treatment became wide-spread the death rate would be appalling. In spite of this I continued the treatment."[40]

Undeterred in the face of scepticism, Groves went on cutting swathes through the wilderness of medical ignorance. He speaks of patients whose conditions had been misdiagnosed, or whose doctors had given them up for lost. "My First Operation of Stone in the Bladder" recounts how "a man of 63, weighing over three hundred pounds, and a hard drinker..." came into his care. "Surgeons," Groves attests,

> of the highest standing had refused to operate, thinking only of the perineal route.
>
> When he came under my care I decided on a supra-pubic lithotomy, which I did April 20th, 1878, removing six calculi, and the patient promptly recovered. This operation was done in the bedroom of an old hotel, Guelph, with two students as assistants. There was no hospital nearer than Toronto, and medical men were adverse to countenancing unorthodox surgery.[41]

The reader suspects that Groves' colleagues were hampered by fear of change.

A photo is included in the book of the removed stones. The doctor paid the publisher extra for the inclusion of photos, and these are a lovely addition to the book for people who enjoy visual stimulation.[42] They are also a very important element of *Day's Work-proof.* The author, in establishing that his character was a pioneer surgeon, needed to provide "real" evidence such as photographs. Another example was Groves' claim that he still had "in my possession" the quill which served as an improvised canula to drain the fluid from the chest of a gravely ill woman.[43] She lived far from his home and the surgeon had no instruments, so Groves took a feather from a goose or turkey-wing whisk.

In other cases, Groves employs a very useful device - the testimonial letter. A quill or other inanimate object as proof of a daring deed is impressive, but might not have the same believability or appeal of a human witness. The testimonies from patients and people in the medical profession tend to be rather flattering. Their dates indicate that the doctor collected them just before publication. Undoubtedly many people *had* tremendous things to say. And who could respond unkindly to the request of an elderly gentleman and community pillar? A testimonial letter is printed in the chapter "My First Use of Rubber Gloves." Groves' hands had been in an abdominal cavity where there was "a considerable amount of pus" and he was worried about spreading infection. However, the ingenious doctor anticipates the problem. He had driven his buggy wearing "pure rubber gloves" which he boils and puts on. "This was the first time I had ever used," Groves says, "or heard of rubber gloves being used for operative purposes." [44]

As validation of his claim, Groves includes "the following extract"[45] of a glowing letter written by Dr. Flath on March 30, 1933. Flath remarks how Groves used his "typical resourcefulness."

> You put on the gloves and wore them throughout the operation, and I shall always remember how dexterously you worked with those big clumsy gloves.[46]

By whom did Groves want to be remembered ? Written in a style suited for any reader, the first part of the book sets out Groves' importance for both a general and medical public. The second section, "Theories and Methods," is Groves' how-to explanation for medical practitioners." Local newspaper man, Hugh Templin, in his review of the time thought this part was the "real dynamite of the book, and may provoke controversy among the medical doctors," as it suggested Groves' still unorthodox methods were the best to follow.[47] Groves addressed this possibility in the preceding section of the book. If readers believed in the surgical superiority of the character created in "Pioneering Surgery," they would be likely to believe in the correctness of the methods he presented in the next section. It follows that, if the great man says this is how it should be done, then this is how a rupture of the bladder or

fracture of the clavicle, and so on, should be treated by doctors everywhere.

The final section of the book, "Miscellaneous," is Groves' jottings on diverse subjects from high heels (he was against them) to treatment of the "aged and the infirm" (more sunlight and access to good hospital care). [48] Again, having himself considered the grand old man of medicine lends more authority to his opinions. Indeed, at the time of his death Groves had aspirations to publish another work about his ideas of running the world. Hugh Templin, in Groves' obituary, writes that the doctor had a book in the works with his own "philosophy of life;" "his solutions of many of the world's problems;" his "ideas about laws and punishment, about labor[sic] and labor unions, about war and peace;" referring to "Christ's teaching as his authority." [49] Though it was never completed, Templin thought it was probably too radical to have been published.

To understand the curiousness of Groves' autobiography, it is useful to briefly consider another autobiography by a doctor in a nearby county. Charles Roland, who tackled "The Medical Life of Dr. Abraham Groves of Fergus" on November 4, 2002, thoughtfully suggested that I look at the autobiography of Dr. Victor Johnston. Johnston practiced medicine in the Lucknow area for thirty years, slightly behind Groves, from 1924 on. A believer of continuing education, later in his career Johnston played an instrumental role in the establishment of the College of Family Physicians. His book *Before the Age of Miracles: Memoirs of a Country Doctor* gives us a gently modest *contre-pointe* to Groves' razzamatazz.

Johnston too, set out to write a book about medicine with his autobiography. Yet, he included much more about other people. He sketches his home life and path into medicine. Johnston pens a passage about the history of the Lucknow area and its people, believing that understanding the whole environment was important to practicing medicine.[50] Johnston also gratefully notes that he is helped in his work by his wife, patients, nurses and other assistants. With gentle laughter he describes patients such as the likable "Dirty Alex." When treating a sore on "Dirty Alex's" leg, Johnston "found my first task was to wash his leg to find the ulcer. It was a new experience to see how dirty a leg could be and how high it could smell."

Other times Johnston seems quite humbled by his patients and stresses what he learns from them. One young woman, who sadly, died, challenged his preconceived ideas about people who commit suicide. In another suicide case, Johnstone exposes his own flaws, feeling that he had "failed this man and his family badly; he should have been watched more carefully."[51]

Dr. Groves writes an entirely different book. The information which might have informed the reader more about his family life and the factors that influenced his decision to study medicine is totally absent.[52] Except to give a tiny bit of background *Day's Work* does not describe the people he worked with, those who helped him, or acknowledge their influence. Thus

it suggests that the great pioneer worked alone.

Ambrose Lome Lockwood of the Lockwood Clinic, wrote the foreword to the book.[53] He speaks flatteringly of Groves' "daring and foresight which he displayed in taking surgical measure far in advance of his time."[54] Rather than "world acclaim," Lockwood says Groves' radical actions "marked him for abuse and disdain ... ."[55] Lockwood, of course, was echoing the whole pioneering thrust of Groves' work. This theme was picked up on by most doctors writing to Groves to congratulate him. As Groves and his publisher sent complimentary copies far and wide, letters came from medical men all over Canada, the United States and even overseas.[56] However, there were those who thought that Groves was a loudly crowing rooster of a pretty small roost. Here are two contrasting views. "The Lancet" marvelled "how a man with such exploits to his credit failed to obtain a university chair in surgery, ... is curious, but there is nothing to show that he was other than satisfied to remain the centre of surgical activity in a modest district."[57] *A* letter from Harvard professor, Dr. Elliott Cutler, spoke of Groves' "great courage and intelligence." It goes on to suppose "it was easier for the man on the fringe [of civilization] to go ahead boldly when he had sufficient education than for the man in a university chair, because his mistakes, should they occur, were not likely to engender the same bitter criticism by his associates."[58]

How did Groves feel about the term "country doctor?" Groves was apparently accepting of the subtitle on the cover "Reminiscences of a Country Doctor" and even said to "embrace" this role.[59] But he certainly felt that Groves the "country surgeon" was an important person. The thrilling character he created to deliver this message to readers everywhere was effective. It has influenced the opinions of readers and writers about Groves ever since. This source has greatly coloured anything written about Groves since his death, and thus also influenced generations of audiences.

Groves' stature on a world-wide basis matters less if we use what I personally believe to be a valuable tool, a measuring stick of community involvement. Groves measures well. He was involved in his community on business and political levels, not to forget or minimize his important deeds in the medical world for which many were and are *grateful.*

As a literary contribution, Groves has left the aforementioned book of poems and a truly thrilling read which I recommend to you.[60] Although I have read it many times, I can not forget the first time I found *All in the Day's Work* while doing some research at the University of Guelph Library. I did not wait to read it at home. I did not even return to my seat. Once I opened the book, I had a hard time closing it and I stood between the shelves reading it.... until the pressing fingers of time brought me back to the real world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

In addition to acknowledging the assistance of those cited in the article and Sources Consulted, the author would like to thank: Paul Mosher; Dr. John Stickney; Ron Goodall, Helen Goodall; Ian Easterbrook for fostering the lecture series; the Ontario Trillium Foundation; and the Wellington County Historical Society.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Barrett Browning, Elizabeth, "How Do I Love Thee?" Williams, Oscar, ed. *Immortal Poems of the English Language* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952).

Cockerill, Sheri. Groves Lecture Outline, 2002 (unpublished) and e-mail correspondence.

Dr. Abraham Groves, Correspondence, Clippings, 1921-1935. A2002.109, Wellington County Archives.

Dr. Abraham Groves, File A1996.129, Wellington County Archives.

Fischer, William J. *The Toiler and Other Poems* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907).

Fund-raising Committee of the Auxiliary to Groves Memorial Community Hospital, *50 Years of Love and Service and Still Cooking*, (Fergus: Select Office Systems, 1983).

goodall, lian, Telephone conversation with Dr. John Stickney, chair of the Groves Memorial Historical Committee, November 10, 2002.

goodall, lian. Interview with Lorna Hall, November 5, 2002 (unpublished),

goodall, lian. Interview with Peggy Dickie, November 4, 2002 (unpublished).

Groves, Abraham. *All in the Day s Work: Leaves From a Doctor's Case-book* (First edition, Macmillan: Toronto, 1934. Reprint, 2002).

"Groves Abraham, *All in the Day s WorK*\ Author Correspondence Griffen-Gz Box 103 Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., McMaster University Archives.

Groves, Abraham. *Stray Thoughts* (Fergus: *Fergus News-Record*, 1930).

Fergus, Medical, Groves Hospital - clipping file. Wellington County Archives.

"Groves Community Hospital" Exhibit Labels, Groves Community Hospital Exhibit, viewed November 14, 2002, Wellington County Museum.

Groves, Fergus, (Family File) A1994.307, Wellington County Archives.

Hutchinson, Jean F. *The History of Wellington County* (Grand Valley: Landsborough Printing).

Johnston, Victor, *Before the Age of Miracles: Memoirs of a Country Doctor* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1972).

McCrae, John, "The Night Cometh," http://www.clwilliamson.net/poems/night_cometh.html.

McCrae, John, *In Flanders Fields and Other Poems.* "Foreword," Sir Andrew Macphail (Toronto: Briggs, 1919).

Mestern, Pat. "Abraham Groves: The man behind the vision," Groves Memorial Community Hospital: Special Section, *Fergus-Elora News Express,* Wednesday, June 26, 2002.

Noonan, Gerald, ed. *Guide to the Literary Heritage of Waterloo and Wellington Counties: From 1830 to the Mid-20th Century* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1985).

O'Hearn, Sheila. "Book written by Dr. Abraham Groves a treasure of pioneering medical know-how," Groves Memorial Community Hospital: Special Section, *Fergus-Elora News Express,* Wednesday, June 26, 2002.

Roland, Charles, "The Medical Life of Dr. Abraham Groves of Fergus," unpublished draft version of lecture given November 4, 2002, Victoria Senior's Centre, Fergus.

Thorning, Steve, "Dr. Abraham Groves - Businessman and Entrepreneur," unpublished draft version of a lecture given October 10, 2002, Victoria Senior's Centre, Fergus.

Templin, Hugh, "Recent Books of Local Interest," *Fergus News-Record, Nov. 22, 1934.*

Williams, Jennifer, "Abraham Groves: Unknown Giant of Early Canadian Surgery," *The Beaver,* April-May 1998, p. 33.

NOTES:

1. Groves was born in 1847.

2. *All in the Day's Work* claims to contain reprints from: *Canadian Medical Association Journal,* May 1923; *Canadian Practitioner and Review,* February, 1904; *Canadian Medical Association Journal,* April 1924; *Canada Lancet,* March, 1903; *Women's Century,* July, 1920. *All in the Day's Work: Leaves from a Doctor's Casebook* (Macmillan: Toronto, 1934)(Reprint edition, Guelph: Ampersand Press, 2002). Charles Roland calculates at least fourteen articles were published in medical journals. Roland, Charles, "The Medical Life of Dr. Abraham Groves of Fergus," unpublished version of lecture given November 4, 2002, Victoria Seniors' Centre, Fergus. Re Canadian Authors Association see, Jennifer Williams, "Abraham Groves: Unknown Giant of Early Canadian Surgery," *The Beaver,* April-May 1998, p. 33.

3. Pat Mestern. "Abraham Groves: The man behind the vision," Groves Memorial Community Hospital: Special Section, *Fergus-Elora News Express,* Wednesday, June 26, 2002, p. 10.

4. Groves would have undoubtedly been familiar with the work of popular area poets, Alexander McLachlan and David Boyle. Both of Scottish origin, they made their literary reputation writing in 'Scots speak.' McLachlan was living in Erin from 1850 to 1877 and then in Dufferin County; he had six books to his credit and was known as the 'Robert Burns of Canada.' David Boyle was a blacksmith, then Elora educator, before beginning a career as a pioneer in Ontario archaeology. His humorous pieces, sometimes signed McSpurtle, were enjoyed by readers of the *Scottish American.* Groves was born near Peterborough of Irish parents. His poetry does not imitate the popular style of writing 'with an immigrant accent.'

5. Groves, *All in the Day's Work,* (Guelph: Ampersand, 2002) p. 5. All quotes are from the 2002 reprint.

6. Groves quoting E. Flath, *All in the Day s Work* (hereafter referred to as *Day s Work),* p. 23.

7. Groves, Abraham. *Stray Thoughts* (Fergus: *Fergus New-Record,* 1930) p. 15.

8. Noonan, Gerald, ed. *Guide to the Literary Heritage of Waterloo and Wellington Counties: From 1830 to the Mid-20th Century* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1985), p. 46.

9. William J. Fischer, *The Toiler and Other Poems* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907).

10. *Rotary Sunbeam,* St. Petersburg, Florida, Jan 16, 1931, Vol.9, No. 3. Dr. Abraham Groves, correspondence clippings, 1921-1935 A2002.109.

11. Groves Committee Hospital Auxiliary, *50 Years of Love and Service and Still Cooking,* (Fergus: Select Office Systems, 1983), n.p.

12. Gerald Noonan, ed. *Guide to the Literary Heritage of Waterloo and Wellington Counties: From 1830 to the Mid-20th Century* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1985), p. 5.

13. John McCrae, *In Flanders Fields and Other Poems,* p. 28.

14. Groves, *Stray Thoughts,* p. 9.

15. John McCrae, "Cometh the Night, http://www.clwilliamson.net/poems/night_cometh.htm.

16. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "How Do I Love Thee?" Williams, Oscar, ed. *Immortal Poems of the English Language* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), p. 349.

17. Ethel was born in 1877.

18. An article by a classmate of "Billy" (William), Abraham and Jennie Groves' son, confirms that the poem was written in memory of the poet's dead wife. G.D Stanley, "Dr. Abraham Groves, 1847-1935 A Great Crusader of Canadian Medicine," Physicians in Canadian History IX, Groves, Fergus, (Family File) Al 994.307.

19. "Groves Community Hospital" Exhibit Labels, Groves Community Hospital Exhibit, viewed November 14, 2002, Wellington County Museum.

20. Pat Mestern "Abraham Groves: The man behind the vision," Groves Memorial Community Hospital: Special Section, *Fergus-Elora News Express,* Wednesday, June 26, 2002, p. 10. The alligator lived in the basement of the house and was fed chickens by the maids until he was too big and moved to the barn.

21. "Groves Community Hospital" Exhibit Labels, Wellington County Museum. It should also be noted, upon seeing the bird, this author isn't sure she's a girl or a boy Polly, lian goodall, "Interview with Peggy Dickie, November 4, 2002," unpublished.

22. Chester Jackson, at age 92, disagrees with this view. He says Polly didn't learn to say too much, although he could say the names of Archie and Bertha (the maid). Local folk stories report that Polly had any number of clever sayings. Polly has lived the longest in local memory, as she died in 1976, much later than both Abraham or Ethel. Dr. Abraham Groves File Al 996.129, Wellington County Archives.

23. lian goodall, "Interview with Lorna Hall, November 5, 2002," unpublished.

24. Pat Mestern, "Abraham Groves: The man behind the vision," Groves Memorial Community Hospital: Special Section, *Fergus-Elora News Express,* Wednesday, June 26, 2002, p. 10.

25. The painting is at the Wellington County Archives, ART 123.

26. Alexander Pope, "The Coxcomb Bird," *Immortal Poems of the English Language,* ed. Oscar Williams, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), p. 164.

27. Sheila O'Hearn, "Book written by Dr. Abraham Groves a treasure of pioneering medical know-how," Groves Memorial Community Hospital: Special Section, *Fergus-Elora News Express,* Wednesday, June 26, 2002, p. 6.

28. Steve Thorning, "Dr. Abraham Groves — Businessman and Entrepreneur," (Draft Version, Lecture given 21-10-02).

29. Macmillan Company to Rev. Hiltz, Jan. 25, 1934. Three cheques were sent through Rev. Hiltz, but seemed to have come from Groves as indicated in the Monthly Statement, Jan. 31, 1935. "Groves Abraham, *All in the Day's Work,*"Author Correspondence Griffen-Gz Box 103 Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., McMaster University Archives.

30. It was possible, Macmillan felt, that Groves could cover his costs or even make money at this venture. The book was published only shortly before Groves' death in May, 1935, with eighteen copies left unsold a year after this date. There were no plans to republish it at the time, according to Hiltz, serving as Groves' executor. Macmillan to Hiltz, May 12, 1936. "Groves Abraham, *All in the Day's Work,"* Author Correspondence Griffen-Gz Box 103 Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., McMaster University Archives.

31. Groves, *Day s Work,* p. xv.

32. Letter from Macmillan Company to Dr. Hiltz, Feb. 7, 1934. "Groves Abraham, *All in the Day's Work",* Author Correspondence Griffen-Gz Box 103 Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., McMaster University Archives.

33. Groves, *Day's Work, p. 6.*

34. Groves, *Day's Work,* p. 8.

35. Emphasis added.

36. Groves, *Day's Work,* p. v.

37. Groves, *Day's Work, p.* 15.

38. Groves, *Day's Work, p.* 13.

39. Groves, *Day's Work,* p. 21.

40. Ibid., p. 21. Another time Groves' successfully performs what he believes to be the first vaginal hysterectomy in Canada "in an old log house in the country." Groves writes that his "boiling and endless scrubbing (using six different brushes for five minutes each) were by many considered useless refinements." *Day's Work, p.* 17.

41. *Day's Work,* p. 18. The hotel was known locally as the Bullfrog Inn.

42. Macmillan to Hiltz, Feb. 7 1934, Macmillan correspondence, McMaster University.

43. Ibid., p. 25..

43. Groves, *Day's Work, p.* 22.

44. Groves, *Day's Work, p.* 22.

45. E. Flath, quoted in Groves, *Day's Work, p.* 23.

46. Hugh Templin, "Recent Books of Local Interest," *Fergus News-Record,* Nov. 22, 1934.

47. Groves, *Day's Work, p.* 178.

48. Hugh Templin, "A Tribute to a Friend," Groves, Fergus, (Family File) A1994.307.

49. "General medical practice is environmental medicine. To discuss it in a meaningful way calls for consideration of such things as the character of a people and their socio-economic levels." Victor Johnstone, *Before the Age of Miracles,* p. 19.

50. Johnstone, *Before the Age of Miracles,* p. 95.

51. File Wellington County Archives. This file of handwritten notes, unauthenticated at the time of this writing, but currently attributed to Ethel Groves. The file appears to this author to contain what might have been chapters of bibliographical information which were either not included in *Day's Work* or were for a future book. The notes appear to be dictated, then corrected and rewritten. They include information about Groves' parents, his early years growing up and his first years practicing medicine.

52. Information from clippings in the Groves, Fergus, family files at the Wellington County Archives has Lockwood giving a speech in 1921 at a banquet held in honour of Groves' fifty years of service to the community. Lockwood was later a pallbearer at his funeral.

53. Ambrose Lockwood, "Foreword," Groves, *Day's Work.*, xi.

54. Lockwood, "Foreword," Groves, *Day's Work*, ix.

55. Apparently A. Lockwood suggested some places to send the books and Groves supplied others.

56. *The Lancet*, March 30, 1935, Groves Clipping File, Wellington County Archives.

57. Elliot C. Cutler, Letter to Dr. Groves, Dec. 22, 1934, Groves Clipping File, Wellington County Archives.

58. Macmillan sent the cover to Groves to view. The sub-title of the cover - Reminiscences of a Country Doctor— differs from the subtitle found inside— Leaves from a Doctor's Case-book. Miss W. Earyrs to Dr. Ambrose Lome Lockwood, Oct. 24, 1934, Macmillan Correspondence, McMaster University.

59. In the 1880s Groves Block also rented out rooms to the Fergus Mechanics Institute for their Reading Room. Although these were to be used by subscribing members only, the Reading Rooms are considered a direct forerunner to the public library.

"For Love and Laurels"

The Two Wives of Dr. Abraham Groves: Jennie Gibbon (1847-1886) and Ethel Burke (1877-1964)

by Sheri Cockerill

Introduction

Dr. Abraham Groves practiced medicine in Fergus from 1871-1931. A popular community doctor he made valuable contributions to local business development, local politics and medicine, particularly in the area of surgery. Dr. Abraham Groves also opened the first hospital in Fergus, THE ROYAL ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL, later renamed GROVES MEMORIAL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL. In 1934 he published his autobiography, entitled *All In The Days Work,* a medical journal that included a brief history of the doctor's educational background and professional life. This year, being the 100th Anniversary of Groves Memorial Community Hospital, there has been a rekindled interest in the life and work of Dr. Abraham Groves.

Today I would like to look at the history of the family life of Dr. Abraham Groves. Abraham Groves married twice and this segment of the "Groves Lecture Series" acknowledges these two women who acted behind the scenes and contributed to the quality of the life and work of the doctor. Jennie Gibbon of Elora was the doctor's first wife and his second wife was Ethel Burke of Fergus. Although both wives were from prominent local families, unfortunately Jennie Gibbon and Ethel Burke have remained a bit of a mystery. This is due to the lack of available primary sources such as personal papers, letters and diaries. Since these sources do not exist I have instead referred to secondary sources and public records. I have also consulted the history of the family members to fill the voids of information. Luckily, there are a few Fergus residents who remember Abraham Groves' second wife Ethel Burke and they have also added to this history. In an attempt to understand Dr. Abraham Grove's marriages I have consulted the social history of other Ontario doctors.

The first doctor I will compare Abraham Groves with is Dr. William Clarke, originally from West Garafraxa. In Steve Thorning's lecture on the political life of Abraham Groves, he recognized the doctor's political style was

at times similar to the tactics used years earlier by Dr. William Clarke. And he noted that Clarke may have had an influence on the early stages of Abraham Grove's life.

Dr. William Clarke was a well-known medical doctor, businessman and politician during the middle to late 1800s, who desired to belong to Guelph's elite, well-educated and well-connected faction. However, this group had no intention of letting Clarke belong; this only made him more determined. Affluence is a desire that can often lead to marriage, and a significant opportunity came when the daughter of Laura Secord became a widow. Dr. William Clarke swiftly married the widow but marital harmony would not last due to his wife's early death. Clarke was left a widower with one daughter. Before long, opportunity knocked again and Clarke married for the second time. This time he wed the widow of Judge William Dummer Powell, one of the wealthiest men in Guelph. This second marriage provided Clarke with the prestige he had yearned for. The family from then on lived very well and in 1861 they could easily afford their five servants.[1] These two marriages opened doors of opportunities for Dr. Clarke that would have otherwise remained closed.

The marriages of Dr. William Clarke are an obvious illustration of the advantages of marriage. This is not to suggest that the marriages of Abraham Groves had such monetary rewards as Clarke's or that he only married for material gain. Nevertheless, marriage has always had benefits. Many Canadian politicians, inventors, scientists and doctors of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century have been successful in part due to their choice of spouse. These women have often remained behind the scenes but contributed to their husbands' careers, through wealth, education and social skills. It is clear through the study of Abraham Groves' work and achievements that Jennie Gibbon and Ethel Burke each brought additional affluence to Abraham Groves through various means. At the same time, Abraham Groves provided both of his wives with a level of status comparable to or better than that which they had grown up with.

Jennie Gibbon

Dr. Abraham Groves' first wife was Jane Gibbon, more commonly known as Jennie. Jennie Gibbon and Dr. Abraham Groves were married in 1874. Jennie was the daughter of William Gibbon Sr. and Margaret (Elmslie) Gibbon of 'Bon Accord.'[2] William Gibbon was born on the 28th of September 1800 in Echt Parish, Aberdeen, Scotland and he was one of the original settlers of Bon Accord along with Alexander Watt and George Elmslie.[3] In 1834 Gibbon, Watt and Elmslie arrived in Canada and when they found their ideal land in Upper Nichol they immediately named the settlement 'Bon Accord,' after the motto of the Aberdeen coat of arms.[4]

Once the rest of their families arrived in Canada, the Gibbons, the Watts and the Elmslies soon all became close relatives. As many of their brothers and

sisters who followed them to Canada married within each other's families. This is how William Gibbon came to marry his friend George Elmslie's sister, Margaret. Margaret Elmslie, was a member of the third party to arrive at Bon Accord in September 1835.[5] William Gibbon and Margaret Elmslie acquired lot 11, concession 12 in Bon Accord and this is where they would raise their six children all born within the first ten years of marriage.[6]

The history of Jennie Gibbon's childhood is somewhat ambiguous. However, by taking a closer look at her family we can come to some conclusions. Jennie Gibbon grew up on the family farm in Bon Accord with one brother and four sisters. Her oldest sister was born in 1837 and named Margaret, after her mother. Unfortunately, Margaret only lived to be eleven years old, she died in October of 1849 at Hamilton. Her body was brought home and she was buried at the corner of the Gibbon family farm in Bon Accord.[7] There is nothing to indicate how she died but diseases such as typhoid, cholera and tuberculosis were common causes of fatalities at the time.

The rest of the Gibbon children in order were, Hellen, William Jr., Agnes, Jennie and another Margaret. Hellen (Ellen) Elmslie Gibbon was born in 1839. Not much is known about Helen other than she moved to Toronto for a time and then returned to the Fergus area.[8] Jennie's only brother William Gibbon Jr. was born in 1841. As a young man William Gibbon Jr., was a member of the first Elora Volunteer Rifle Company - an organization that prepared for war, but also held grand social events, such as the Rifleman's Ball, and the military picnic in 1862.[9] William Gibbon Jr. became a bookkeeper and a storekeeper. In 1870 he married Sophia Maria White of Elora and they had one child, a boy named Frederick.[10] Sophia Maria White died from inflammation on November 23,1878, she was thirty-two years old. William Gibbon Jr. remained a widower for the rest of his life.

Agnes, the fourth Gibbon child, was born in 1844, and Jennie was born in 1847. Jennie, who would later marry Dr. Groves, was the only one of the Gibbon daughters to marry. The youngest of the Gibbons was born in 1852 and she was also named Margaret.[11] It was a common practice at the time that if a child died the next child born would be given the same name.

The Gibbons always had a busy house. Aunts, uncles and cousins surrounded them on the neighbouring farms. The Gibbons also ran a hostel, which meant even more people living at the farm. The 1851 census recorded that William and Margaret Gibbon and their five children had the Lamond family, which included four young children living with them, as well as a fifteen-year old girl.[12] Ten years later, the Lamonds had moved out but the Gibbons had taken in another married couple, the Jardins.[13] All of the hostellers were from Scotland so either the Gibbons were trying to supplement their income or they were providing a charity for fellow Scots new to the country.

As a young girl, Jennie Gibbon attended school, likely at the old log school in Bon Accord where her maternal uncle, George Elmslie, was the only

teacher.[14] In 1861 when Jennie was fourteen she was still in school. Jennie Gibbon may have been in the first class of the new stone school built in 1862 on Woolwich Street in Salem.[15]

The Gibbon family was Presbyterian and attended the original Knox Presbyterian Church in Bon Accord.[16] The original Knox Presbyterian Church was on a grant of land of about five acres on the corner of lot 11 concession 11 Nichol Township. Mr. and Mrs. George Barren donated this land in 1840 and it was used as a churchyard and a burial ground until the new Presbyterian Church was built in Elora. When the congregation of the Presbyterian Church moved to Elora, the burial plots were left behind at the initial church site. The adjoining farm land changed hands a couple of times and in 1969 church members were trying to find out what happened to the old cemetery. There were many tales about the disappearance of the headstones. Stories suggest that a farmer had ploughed over the graves, used them to floor his pigpen or paved a stone path to his house. Anecdotes aside, the farmer did not want a stone cairn erected at the site of the original church. Luckily, the church had never actually sold the property and still owned the original five acres on the corner of the lot. Despite the farmer's contempt, they erected the stone cairn on the corner of the lot where the original burial plot was and there it remains with a few remnants of the old headstones leaning upon it - one of which was dedicated to the memory of Jennie Gibbon's oldest sister, eleven-year old Margaret Gibbon who died in 1849.[17]

(The First Wife) Mrs. Jennie Groves

By 1872 Abraham Groves was working as a junior partner alongside Dr. John Munro in Fergus.[18] The Gibbon family were friends of the Munro family and it was then that Dr. Groves and Jennie Gibbon first established their relationship.

Early in 1873 Groves began his own medical practice in downtown Fergus. The following year he decided he was ready to marry. On October 22nd 1874 Abraham Groves and Jennie Gibbon were married at her father's farm in Bon Accord.[19] Born in the same year they were both twenty-seven years old.[20] Witnesses on the marriage certificate were the bride's father, William Gibbon Sr. and Dr. Groves' older brother, Gideon Charles Groves, a well-known Conservative and respected Fergus councillor.[21]

Jennie Gibbon may not have foreseen the busy and ambitious future of her husband when they married in 1874. Abraham Groves was known for performing many surgeries. As well, he kept active in local affairs. In 1878 he was appointed physician and surgeon for the Grand Trunk Railroad. In 1880 he owned and operated a flour mill. By the beginning of the 1880s, Abraham Groves was also involved in local politics. In 1882 he was appointed physician for the House of Industry. From 1882-1884 he served on Fergus council.

Although few records have remained about the married life of Abraham

Groves and Jennie Gibbon, we can see from the doctor's participation in his medical work, his business ventures and politics that their life was indeed busy. They lived at the same address as Abraham Groves' medical practice at the southeast corner of St. David and St. Andrew Streets (where the Royal Bank building is now). Nurses were known to assist the doctor with patients and surgeries but there is no record of a clerical worker to help him with his appointments or medical records. Therefore, Jennie Gibbon must have filled the role of at least medical secretary.

In the meantime, Jennie Gibbon was also busy raising two young children. On March 21st, 1877 their first child, Abraham William was born and two years later on June 7th, 1879 their second child, Laura Kathleen Groves was born. The Reverend Robert Caswell at St. James Anglican Church baptized both of the children.[22]

After Jennie's marriage, her sister Agnes and her brother William remained close. Agnes lived with the Groves and taught music. William Gibbon Jr. lived on Peel Street (now Mill St. W) in Elora.[23] The business directory for 1871 named William Gibbon Jr. and James Henneberry & Company as the proprietors and grocers of a flour and flax mill store.[24] However, after William Gibbon's wife died in 1878 he decided to sell the business.[25] An auction was advertised for Tuesday the 28th of October 1879 at 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon. William Gibbon sold part of lots No. l and 2, on the south side of West Mill Street in the village of Elora, as well as a stone and frame shop, with a dwelling above, known as 'Gibbon's Stores.'[26]

Jennie Gibbons' siblings visited frequently. Her brother William Gibbon, now a widower, would often bring his son Frederick over to be cared for by Jennie and Agnes. William and Frederick Gibbon would stay and have dinner with the Groves family. Frederick Gibbon born in 1877 was the same age as William Groves, and the toddlers spent a lot of time together.[27] The Groves household was starting to resemble the busy home life that Jennie Gibbon had known from the Bon Accord farm.

Tragedy nearly struck the Groves family in April of 1880 when Jennie Gibbon had gone into Elora to visit and Abraham Groves was in Guelph on business. Jennie's sister Agnes was taking care of the children that morning when she noticed that three-year old William was suddenly missing. Agnes and her nephew Frederick frantically looked for William. When they finally found him in the cistern, Agnes put a ladder down but she still could not reach William and she could not climb in, due to her restrictive clothing. Promptly, she found a pole nearby and was able to use it to help pull the toddler out. Though by this time William was unconscious and had swallowed a lot of water. Dr. Paget was called and fearing that water had gotten into the child's lungs, he used a new medical treatment, a drug then called 'Jaborandi.' It was to bring on profuse sweating as Dr. Paget was trying everything to clear William's lungs.[28] It took until 6:00 pm before William fully regained consciousness.[29]

Laura Kathleen Groves, born in 1879, was the last child born to Jennie and Abraham Groves. But following the average family cycle at this time, of having a child every two years, Jennie Gibbon should have been due to have another child by 1881. Birth control was not an available option and both Jennie and Abraham were relatively young at thirty-two years of age. This is possibly an indication of health concerns and it may explain why in 1881 Abraham and Jennie Groves had the help of a female servant, nineteen-year old Donoven Heden. The young servant may have been with the Groves family because they could afford the extra help but it is also plausible that Jennie Groves was already having health problems in 1881. During this same time Jennie's sister Agnes Gibbon, and nineteen-year old Charles Cremer a student, also lived with the Groves family.[30]

Jennie Gibbon contracted tuberculosis and had apparently been ill for some time before her death on September 30th, 1886 at 39 years of age.[31] The funeral procession left the family residence on St. David Street, Fergus on Saturday October 2nd at 1pm for the Elora Cemetery.[32] The headstone Abraham Groves picked out to stand at the Elora Public Cemetery is quite unusual. It is sculpted in the shape of a tree trunk and inlaid underneath the inscription at the front of the stone is a small pot with one large calla lily, seemingly a symbol of the resurrection.

The Groves Family History, compiled by Dorothy Metcalfe, explains that the idea for the unusual headstone was taken from scripture. The source is The Book of Daniel 4:10-15.[33]

> **Nebuchadnezzar Acknowledges God's Dominion.**
>
> 10 Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great.
>
> 11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth:
>
> 12 The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.
>
> 13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven;
>
> 14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:
>
> 15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew from heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth:

The headstone and the Calla lily demonstrate the deep religious beliefs and the devastation the doctor felt at the loss of his wife Jennie. A further tribute to his wife was displayed in Abraham Groves' poem entitled, "My Heart's Beloved."

> My Heart's Beloved! Could my heart
> But seek the wheresoe'er thou art; By
> day and night, o'er land and sea,
> Through all the world, I'd follow thee;
> But once to meet, in bliss or pain, My
> heart's beloved once again,
>
> My heart's beloved! Yea! My soul Can
> find thee at the farthest pole. Above the
> earth, above the air, Above the dreams,
> the cry, the prayer, Past life, past death,
> I come to thee; My soul's beloved, wait
> for me.[34]

The Children of Jennie Gibbon and Abraham Groves

After Jennie Gibbon's death, her sister Agnes moved out of the Groves family home and her brother William moved to Hanover. This left Abraham Groves on his own with the two children just nine and seven years old.[35] Fortunately, his sister Catherine Groves, eleven years younger than Abraham, moved in to help.[36]

Catherine Groves, more commonly known as Kate, served in her brother's home until January 1st, 1897 when she married Robert W. Bright, a Wiarton Public school principal. This meant that Kate had been with her brother's family for close to ten years. During this time, Laura Groves had grown close to her Aunt Kate. When Kate Groves married in 1897, Laura Groves was in the wedding party and signed the register as a witness at St. James Anglican Church, Fergus.

Now that Catherine had married, the youngest of Abraham's sisters, Mary moved in with his family. Abraham Groves also tended to have boarders and in 1901 a twenty-year old male, E.M. Middleton was living with the family. By 1901 Mary Groves was thirty-five. The children did not need to be looked after anymore. William Groves was twenty-four and in university and Laura Groves was twenty-two and engaged to be married.[37] It would not be long before Mary Groves moved out of her brother's home to become an Anglican missionary in Hay River House, North West Territories. Evidence of her strong involvement with the Anglican Church still exists in the stained glass window at St. James in Fergus. It reads "To the glory of God and in memory of Mary Groves McFaden 1860-1955."[38]

Abraham Groves' younger sisters took the place of a mother for his children but it is possible that there were other people involved in the interim. As Pat Mestern wrote in the *Fergus-Flora Express,* Abraham Groves was

known to give work and a room to unwed mothers. This gave the girls a choice to going to the poor house or an establishment for unwed mothers. If the girl decided on adoption, Groves would find a good home for the baby. If the girl decided to keep the baby, Groves would find her a good position or job usually in Toronto, Windsor or the United States.[39] Perhaps these young women also worked for their keep at the Groves' residence. Donoven Heden who lived with the Groves family in 1881 may have even been one such person.

The two Groves children spent their entire childhood in Fergus and William Groves became involved in the local community through sports. He was known to be an ardent curler, golfer and lacrosse player.[40] In 1902 and 1903, William Groves was the star centre player of the Dominion Champion Thistle Lacrosse Team. In 1907 he was thirty years old, and still considered to be one of the best lacrosse players in Fergus. Even though the Thistles lost to Hespeler in June, the local paper still wrote that, "Fergus had the strongest team they have put in this season, including such veterans as Dr. W. A. Groves, Dr. Norman Kyle, Toole Gow, and the Brownridge Brothers."[41] That same year at their 20th annual meeting of the Thistle Lacrosse Club William Groves was elected as Vice-President.[42]

Even though William Groves had grown up in the busy home of his father and had seen first-hand the often hectic lifestyle of a doctor, he still decided to follow in his father's footsteps. After graduating as a medical doctor in 1903/1904 William Groves came back to Fergus where he was the house surgeon at The Royal Alexandra Hospital. The next year he took post-graduate work in London, England and when he finished about 1905, he moved back to Fergus and opened his own practice.[43] It would have made sense for the two Dr. Groves to become partners but it has been said that Dr. William Groves differed radically in opinion from his father and he often discussed these various matters publicly.[44]

William Groves married Burnie Sutherland Rathburn a graduate nurse from the Royal Alexandra Hospital. Burnie was twenty-eight when she graduated from the Nurses Training School in 1906 and she and William were married the following year.[45] For a time, William Groves and his wife lived in Leamington and then moved to Saskatchewan where their children were born. They had two. Janet Helen Sutherland Groves was born about 1909, and William Rathburn Sutherland Groves, commonly called 'Suds', was born on March 3rd, 1910.[46] The nickname was a shortened version of Sutherland. Unfortunately, the same day that Suds was born his mother died due to complications from childbirth.[47] At thirty-three William Groves found himself a widower with a son and a daughter, as his father had been just twenty-four years earlier.

On July 29th 1915, William Groves enlisted to serve overseas in WWI as a Major with the 65th Battalion.[48] After the war, he returned to Saskatchewan in connection with the Soldier's Re-Establishment Board.[49] Within the next

five years he returned to Fergus with his two children and opened his own medical practice. For three years he served as Medical Officer of Health and he later succeeded his father as physician to the Canadian Pacific Railroad for the Fergus district.[50]

William Groves' son, Suds, grew up mostly in Fergus and he was engrossed by the lacrosse legends of his father. He decided that he also wanted to play the popular Fergus sport. However, Suds had been born with a disability that left him with a stiff leg and he knew he would never play on a championship team. Nevertheless, he played goal tender for his team in the 1920s.[51] After high school Suds became the third generation to train at medical school in Toronto. On one particular day Dr. Sutherland (Suds) Groves even assisted his grandfather and his father in an operation at the Fergus hospital.[52]

After the death of Abraham Groves in May 1935 his son William Groves became depressed. On October 3rd at fifty-eight years of age he died from an uncertain suicide. One explanation for his depression was that he had been in poor health since a motor vehicle accident the month before.[53] Another explanation was that he had been distraught since his father's death just five months earlier.

The history of Abraham Groves' daughter, Laura Kathleen Groves has been rather more difficult to research. The history of men is always more telling than that of women and the fact that the Groves men were involved in sports, business, politics and medicine has made them more popular subjects. Consequently many details of the life of Jennie and Abraham Groves daughter Laura Kathleen Groves are missing.

Laura Kathleen Groves married Reverend Robert Arthur (Bert) Hiltz, on Tuesday the 10th of December 1901. Reverend Hiltz was originally from Nova Scotia and of German descent. He was ordained by the Anglican Church and became the minister at St. James Anglican Church, Fergus from 1908-1910. Reverend Hiltz and Laura Groves and their children later moved to the Rosedale District of Toronto, where he was rector of St. Paul's Anglican Church.

Abraham Groves trusted and respected his son-in-law Reverend Hiltz, who he asked to be one of the key speakers to address the graduate nurse class at Groves Hospital in 1933.[54] When Abraham Groves died two years later Rev. Hiltz was named executor of his will.[55] Laura Groves and Reverend Hiltz had three children, Margaret (Marge), Austin and Kathleen. Margaret may have been named after Laura Groves' maternal grandmother Margaret Gibbon. Margaret Hiltz had wanted to teach kindergarten but her father would not allow it. Instead, she taught High School in Fergus and later worked at the University of Toronto library. Margaret Hiltz died March 21st, 1991. The Reverend and Laura Hiltz's second child Austin Hiltz taught High School in Brantford and Oshawa. Austin Hiltz married Alberta Craig.[56] No other records exist regarding the Hiltz's third child Kathleen Hiltz. None of the Hiltz children had any descendants.[57]

William and Laura Groves, only a couple of years apart in age, grew up close in the small town of Fergus. Yet they did not remain close as adults. It has been said that William chose a lifestyle that involved drinking while Laura on the other hand did not approve of drinking and chose a religious lifestyle. Seemingly, these were the decisive factors in their relationship and they did not see much of each other after Laura Groves Hiltz moved to Toronto with her husband and children.

After William and Laura Groves had grown up and had moved out, Abraham Groves had time to make plans for his own future. At the end of 1910, he had the house on Queen Street fixed up. The nurses at the hospital were curious as to what he was doing; and, when they asked Abraham Groves, he replied, "that it was going to be a nurse's house." They had thought he meant a residence for his nurses but were mistaken.

It had been fifteen years since the death of Jennie Gibbon Groves and Abraham Groves was ready to marry again. He was fixing up the house for his new wife, Ethel Burke, who was also a nurse.

The Life of Ethel Burke

Ethel Burke was the daughter of David S. Burke and Martha Ann (Dix) Burke of Fergus. David Burke was from Eastern Ontario and his father was William Bathurst Burke, a descendent of United Empire Loyalists.[58] Ethel's mother Martha Ann Dix was from Scarborough. When Mr. and Mrs. David Burke came to Fergus about 1870 he went into the butcher business with his brother-in-law Jacob Dix.[59]

David and Martha Burke had eight children and seven of them were boys; Ethel, was the only daughter. The children in order were: William J. (1871-1900), Clarence Morley (1873-), David Ernest (1875-), Ethel May (1877-1964), Harry Victor (1879-1881), Frederick Sypher (1882-1965), George (no dates) and Victor Allen (1890-1942).[60] Each of the Burkes was known to have musical talent and they were a well-known and well-liked Fergus family.[61]

Ethel's younger brother, Frederick Sypher Burke also became a medical doctor; and, in August of 1914 at thirty-two years of age and still single, he enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force as a surgeon-lieutenant.[62] After the war Dr. Fred Burke married and moved to Ottawa.[63]

George Burke was the only member of Ethel's family to live in Fergus. In the 1950s George Burke and his wife Claire lived at 310 Thistle Street. George Burke was a musician who was known for his excellent piano playing and Claire Burke was the author of children's books.[64]

The Burkes were a large and prominent Fergus family. Ethel Burke's father, like Jennie Gibbon's father, was a Conservative and a town councillor for many years, nevertheless, little remains of their family history.[65]

Mrs. Ethel Burke Groves

Ethel Burke received her nurse's training from the New York Post Graduate School and Hospital graduating in 1906 at twenty-nine. By 1909, she had become the Superintendent of a small private surgical and gynaecological hospital at 408 Church Street West, in Knoxville, Tennessee.[66] It is not known why Ethel continued to remain in the States after her graduation; but there may have been relatives of the Burke's family residing in Knoxville.

Ethel's career appeared to be going well in 1909. Nonetheless two years later she gave up her medical career in the United States and married Dr. Abraham Groves from her hometown of Fergus. On January 26th 1911, at sixty-four years of age, Abraham Groves married the much younger thirty-four year old Ethel Burke of Fergus.[67] Abraham Groves had known Ethel Burke all her life. Ethel Burke was born in 1877 - the same year as Abraham Groves' son William Groves. Although the doctor's children may have been happy to know that their father had a companion, it must have caused them some uneasiness to know that he had married someone that they had grown up with.

However, Ethel Burke had attractions beyond her youthfulness. She is described as a small woman of about 5' 3", with reddish blonde hair and a quick wit.[68] As the only female child in the family, Ethel took on the traits of an oldest child meaning she was well organized, scholarly, and reliable. Ethel may have also been a little self-sacrificing; perhaps this is why she gave up her career to marry Abraham Groves.[69] It is difficult to look back and understand who Ethel Burke was and what her aspirations may have been. Growing up with seven brothers would certainly have shaped her personality and growing up as the only daughter may have given her a heightened sense of importance and responsibility.

To try and understand the marriages of Jennie Gibbon and Ethel Burke, biographies of other doctors of the same time period have been consulted. A contemporary of Dr. Abraham Groves while at the University of Toronto was Dr. William Osier. The author of his biography is Michael Bliss, who wrote that Osier pursued the widow of a fellow physician Dr. Samuel Goss of Philadelphia. However, the widow had refused to marry him until he finished his book, *Principles and Practices.* Finally, Dr. Osier threw a copy of the book into her lap with the remark: "There, take the damn thing: now what are you going to do with the man?"[70] Of course, she agreed to marry the promising doctor.

Osier made his expectations of the marriage clear right from the beginning. As Bliss concluded,

> If Grace Osier had forgotten the tenor of medical marriage, she was reminded on their British honeymoon when they took in the British Medical Association's meeting at Nottingham. Grace was abandoned to her own devices in a dismal provincial city while Osier went off with his friends.[71]

Osier made no secret of his opinion on what constituted a good wife. Bliss described Osier's thoughts on marriage.

> Grace Osier knew her place as a doctor's wife, which was to be a helpmate- and Osier knew she knew it, for he often told friends that widows, being broken in, made the best wives.[72]

Another example of a doctor's marriage is provided in the biography of Dr. Frederick Banting, the famous discoverer of insulin. Banting married Marion Robertson of Elora in 1924. Banting and Robertson spent their honeymoon at the Preston Springs Hotel, sixty miles west of Toronto. On the first day of marriage, Banting wrote a few paragraphs to go into a colleague's book on diabetes. He then proceeded to the United States to receive a honorary degree from Yale. One month later it appeared the newlyweds would finally have a honeymoon when they visited a tropical island; but it turned out to be just another medical convention typical of the 1920s.[73]

These examples display the overture of doctors' marriages at the time. Dr. Abraham Groves had similar expectations of marriage when he married Ethel Burke, and they also had no honeymoon. Instead, they went to Rochester to visit Abraham Groves' brother, Oliver Groves. Oliver Groves had trained with Abraham but he thought his brother was wasting his time in Fergus. After he graduated in 1888 Oliver Groves started his own medical practice in Rochester.[74]

Doctors' careers took priority over all else. *In Married To Their Careers*, a study of the lives of doctors, Lane Gerber observes the classic doctor's spouse.

> The spouse is usually described as more socially advanced than her studious husband. She is bright and interested in helping him toward his goals. Very early in their marriage she must accustom herself to adjusting herself and their plans according to his schedules, his work needs, and pressures. This can mean accepting a less than equal position early in the history of the relationship.[75]

If only Jennie Gibbon and Ethel Burke had kept journals they would have surely attested to this portrayal. An outline of the social life of the Groves demonstrates the accuracy of Lane Gerber's description. As mentioned earlier, Jennie Gibbon was married to Abraham Groves when his career was starting to take off. And although there is a lack of evidence, the history of Abraham Groves' busy life in itself proves that Jennie Groves was a foundation of support for the doctor.

Abraham Groves' second wife, Ethel Burke also provided a supportive role throughout Abraham Groves later career and advancing years. By the time of their marriage in 1911, Abraham Groves was well established and had

already opened the town hospital. Few records exist of the former Royal Alexander Hospital Nursing School but Ethel Burke may have worked there. A textbook *Kimber's Anatomy and Physiology for Nurses*, still exists at the Groves Memorial Hospital Collection. On the inside cover is the signature of E.M. Groves. Ethel Burke had already finished school by the time this book was published in 1915 and she was using her married name, so presumably, she was using this textbook to teach nursing classes at the hospital, which were held from 1902-1932.[76, 77]

Abraham and Ethel Groves home was a beautiful large red brick house across from the hospital and known to local residents as 'Grovehurst.' The gardens surrounding the house were stunning with hundreds of tulips, daffodils and lilacs all tended to by gardeners. Inside the house, several maids were kept busy doing the housework and cooking.[78] At this time there were not many labour-saving devices and household work was time-consuming. Laundry day required tubs of boiling water; ironing was with flat irons. Unlike the ready-mix products available today, baking was from scratch. As Marilyn Barber stated in her chapter "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestics For Ontario Homes, 1870-1930," the growth in affluence of the middle class that accompanied industrialization meant that more families could afford to hire domestic help.[79] Jennie Gibbon had one servant in 1881 with two children to look after. Ethel Burke however, was able to hire many servants to help her with the domestic duties.

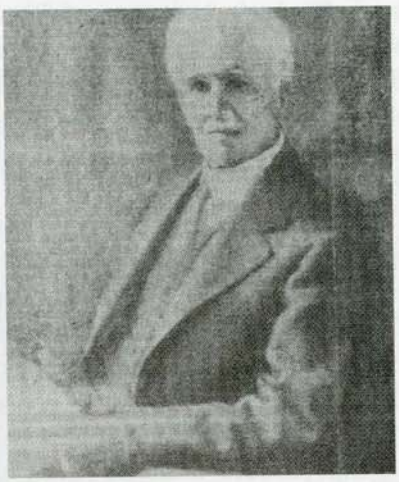
Ethel Burke's name is often recorded in newspaper accounts alongside those of Mrs. Templin and Mrs. Beatty. These were two of the most established and influential families in Fergus at the time. Both Abraham and Ethel Groves were involved in many community organizations as well as the hospital. The Groves were active church members and Abraham Groves was churchwarden for at least twelve years. As well he was a member of the Order of Foresters, the Independent Order of Oddfellows, the Masonic Lodge and the Canadian Authors Association.[80] While her husband belonged to all these groups it was Ethel Grove's responsibility to host the spontaneous meetings of any of these organizations that were held at their home.

When Ethel Groves was the host, she was known to entertain her guests with elaborate dinner parties prepared by her many servants. An avid bridge player Ethel also organized afternoon and evening bridge parties. Members were charged thirty-five cents to participate and a silver collection was taken for those coming for tea only.[81] Ethel, like the rest of the Burke family was a talented musician and she would often play the organ for guests at her Grovehurst home.[82] The Russell family lived in the house behind Ethel Groves in the 1950s and Doug Russell can remember her playing the organ for them as children while they skated on the backyard rink.[83] Nurses working at the hospital can also remember hearing the beautiful organ music coming from Grovehurst.

14 THE GUELPH DAILY MERCURY, MON., MAY 11, 1959

HAD HOSPITAL IN FERGUS NAMED AFTER THEM

MRS. A. GROVE, personality of the week in Fergus, is seen here and at the right is a portrait of her late husband who was responsible for building the first hospital in Fergus.



PERSONALITY OF WEEK

The Name Of Mrs. Groves Is Vital Part Of Hospital

FERGUS — The personality of the week this week is many-sided. It will include as a difference the hospital day which occurred Sunday, the hospital itself, Mrs. A. Groves, and posthumously, Dr. A. Groves.

Mrs. Groves, herself a registered nurse, lives just across the street from her late husband's lifelong work—the hospital. She is a lifelong resident of Fergus, with a sojourn to New York city where she received her nursing diploma. As a graduate nurse at a time when nurses were scarce she was a great help to her doctor husband in his now famous career.

The amazing part of the hospital story, is that it has a personality, most hospitals are brick and stone and do not have the personal touch that the Fergus hospital has. From the time a patient enters for treatment until they leave everything is geared for the patient's comfort and well being. The friendly atmosphere that prevails in the hospital, would have to be considered a personality, and possibly one of the most vital personalities in Fergus.

20,000 OPERATIONS

Dr. A. Groves would really be better classed as the personality of the century as far as Fergus is concerned. Ambrose Lorne Lockwood had this to say about Dr. Groves. "For 60 years he travelled day and night over country roads, on foot, in a buggy, a cutter, by train and automobile. He never refused a call. He performed more than 20,000 operations of all kinds. He was physician, obstetrician, surgeon, friend and counsellor.

"Dr. Groves in the 70's and 80's practised aseptic surgery, years before even the great Lister had expounded his theories. In 1874 he had the extraordinary foresight to boil everything, sheets, towels, gauze and instruments that were employed at the operations". Dr. Groves performed the first appendix operation on this continent and was also the first to tal... remove stones from the bladder through the abdominal route. He built the first hospital in Fergus, the Royal Alexandria, and later turned it over to the town, after which it was renamed the Groves Memorial Hospital. After more than 60 years of service Dr. Groves died on May 12 1935, a hospital day in Fergus.

The only known photo of Dr. Groves' second wife, nee Ethel Burke, in her later years. She was named "Personality of the Week" by the *Guelph Daily Mercury,* 11 May 1959. The author spent most of the article writing about her husband. The two headlines offer an interesting spin on the naming of the hospital.

Wellington County Museum and Archives, Reading Room vertical files, "Groves - Fergus".

Abraham Groves had requested a Women's Auxiliary for many years but it was not until April of 1933 that a meeting was held at Melville Hall to discuss the idea. The formation of the Women's Auxiliary at Groves Memorial Hospital was then underway. One month later, the first regular meeting was held in Carnegie Hall at Fergus Public Library. In May 1934, Mrs. Abraham Groves and Mrs. George Beatty were elected as Honorary Presidents.[84]

In its first year the group raised a total of $716.57 from an organ recital, a hockey game and an annual tea.[85] In their early years they supplied the hospital with linens, an opportunity shop, blood donor clinics, bursaries, and the candy striper program.[86] The only active involvement recorded of Ethel Groves was when, in 1937, she made and donated a needlepoint stool; when it was raffled, the tickets sold raised $69.30, a substantial amount of money for the time.[87] Although Ethel's role in the organization remained minimal, she retained the position of Honorary President for thirty years.[88]

In the collection of Dr. Groves Letters at Groves Memorial Hospital, there is just one letter, which mentions Mrs. Ethel Groves. The letter, postmarked January 6th 1931, was from Blodwen Davies, 21 Prince Arthur Avenue, Toronto. It was sent as a thank-you for a copy of the doctor's little book of poems published as *Stray Thoughts.* Blodwen Davies mentions a previous visit to the doctor and Mrs. Groves at their home in Fergus.

> I shall always remember the afternoon I spent with you in Fergus. It was a very pleasant visit indeed, after Mrs. Groves had forgiven me for not being "a nice young man."[89]

Apparently, Ethel Groves had assumed the well-known author Blodwen Davies was a man and was surprised to find out that the prolific writer and former reporter for the Fort William newspaper was actually a woman. This is the only letter that mentions Ethel Groves and it really does not provide much information. In closing Blodwen Davies wrote,

> Please remember me to Mrs. Groves and convey my wishes to her for a very bright and interesting year in 1931 [90]

Blodwen Davies had obviously found the whole gender situation humorous and had enjoyed her visit with the Groves. This letter, though, begs the question: Why was Blodwen Davies, a popular historical writer, visiting the Groves? Perhaps, Abraham Groves was looking for advice on how to write his autobiography, published just four years later - but of course, this is only speculation.

Another Ontario doctor who wrote his own autobiography was Dr. William Johnston of Lucknow. Dr. Johnston's autobiography, *Before The Age of Miracles: Memoirs of a Country Doctor,* is the history of his work from 1924 to 1965. In Johnston's book he wrote that his wife had often helped him.

For the first few years, Mrs. Johnston answered the phone and one time she even gave up their bed when a pregnant woman arrived at the office in labour. Dr. Johnston learned that nurses were invaluable and he quickly obtained their services.[91]

Dr. Abraham Groves in his autobiography does not mention either of his wives. However, it would not be much of a stretch to assume that his second wife, Ethel Burke, with her nursing background, provided him with assistance. As one history textbook states, "In the early 1900s nurses were still expected to be selfless servants of patients and to remain subordinate to doctors, much like the idealized mother of the home at the time."[92] Ethel Groves' training must have proved useful.

In a newspaper account of one particular day, Ethel Burke demonstrated her devotion to the work of her husband. The couple started the day by driving to Caledon East, where Abraham Groves performed an operation. On the way back to Fergus they made a number of house calls in the country before returning home. That same day at four in the afternoon the doctor and Mrs. Groves left Fergus for Kincardine to perform another operation. By the time they had finished it was shortly after midnight and they headed back home. With only a brief stop in Harriston, they reached Fergus by seven in the morning. Ethel had assisted the doctor during the twenty-four hour trip by acting as both "nurse" and "chauffeur."[93] Ethel Burke's training as a nurse would have proved to be a great asset to Abraham Groves both personally and professionally. It is unfortunate that he did not publicly acknowledge her help.

Ethel Burke Groves was fifty-eight when her husband Abraham Groves died in 1935. They had been married for twenty-four years. By then, most of Ethel's family was gone except for her brothers, Fred and George Burke. There is nothing to suggest that Ethel was close to her brothers or to Abraham Groves' family. Abraham Groves and Ethel Burke had no children together and it is impossible to know if she developed an association with the doctor's children from his first marriage. There are no photographs or letters to provide any evidence of such relationships.

However, Ethel Groves did have the company of "Polly," Dr. Groves' pet parrot that a patient had given him as a present. The parrot had often sat on Dr. Groves' shoulder munching corn flakes while he made his rounds.[94] Now Ethel looked after Polly, and took him with her everywhere she went. The parrot was a source of entertainment for the townspeople. Polly would ride in the car with Ethel downtown to the grocery store. The windows in the car were always left open and while Ethel was inside shopping people would gather around her car trying to get the parrot to talk to them.[95]

There are a few other anecdotes regarding the life of Ethel Groves in her later years. Stories that give us a glimpse into the personality of Ethel Groves, while also illustrating the time period she lived in.

Around 1958 Ethel Groves fell on the road between the house and the

hospital and broke her hip. A man delivering packages at the time for the Canadian National Railroad came upon her, picked her up and carried her into the hospital.[96]

A nurse who was terrified of birds remembers that one time when Mrs. Groves was a patient in the hospital she had to take in her supper tray. When she entered the room, she saw the parrot on the end of the bed. It was on the handle and the nurse had to put the bed up. She remembers that at first she was "frozen with fear!" "If that bird flutters one wing," she thought, "I'm going through the ceiling!" Luckily for both of them it didn't move![97]

Ethel Groves was lively and had a quick sense of humour. Again, in the hospital Ethel asked a nurse to make her an eggnog. The nurse didn't know how to make eggnog but didn't want to admit it. She asked Ethel "What would you like in it?" Mrs. Groves said, "you put in the eggs and the milk and I'll put in the nog." The nurse laughs and says it was known that Mrs. Groves kept a bottle beside her bed, although she never saw it.[98]

Patient care has certainly changed since the 1950s when Ethel Groves was in her late seventies and early eighties. Ethel's doctor was Tom Russell and he even had a key to her house for emergencies. The nurses remember that sometimes Ethel would call him in the middle of the night and Dr. Russell would go over to make sure she was all right.

Ethel's supper and any medication were delivered every evening at 5:00pm. One of the nurses who took over her supper remembers that Ethel was always personable and well dressed. Apparently, Grovehurst was as beautiful inside as it was outside and it was full of antiques. The nurse entered by the front door and had to walk past the parrot, "who was always talking." The nurse would talk to Ethel for a few minutes and leave the supper tray. A couple of hours later she would go back to pick up the tray and make sure that Ethel was okay for the night. By this time Ethel was quite elderly and she did not feel the need to hide the shot glass and bottle beside her bed that provided her with a nightcap.[99]

Ethel Groves remained a widow for twenty-nine years. Around 1960, she moved from Grovehurst to a small one-story house on Gowrie Street; she died on December 22nd 1964, at 87 years of age, and was buried with her husband Dr. Abraham Groves at the Fergus Public Cemetery.[100] The single headstone marking their grave is a large Celtic cross. The inscription reads "Abraham Groves M.D. born September 8, 1847 and died May 12, 1935. 'The Beloved Physician'. His beloved wife Ethel M. Burke died December 22, 1964." The headstone does not reveal Ethel Groves' age or date of birth. It also does not reveal her middle name but simply reads Ethel M. Burke.[101]

This is what Ethel Burke Groves would have wanted, for her identity, once she married Abraham Groves, was as the doctor's wife. The grave marker is a memorial to the great doctor, a man who had achieved medical firsts, and to his wife, a woman who believed in the greatness of the man.

Conclusion

Jennie Gibbon and Ethel Burke were from different generations, but they both supported the doctor's busy life through their own involvement with family and with the community. For both Jennie Gibbon and Ethel Burke, their standing in the community was measured first from the success of their fathers, both well established popular men; later it was measured by the success of their husband Dr. Abraham Groves, also a well-connected man. As women, Jennie Gibbon and Ethel Burke were confined to few options in the development of their own status. Women's access to a university education began only in the 1870s, when Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick opened. In 1875, the first woman in the British Empire, (Grace Annie Lockhart) received a university degree.[102]

This opportunity was still rare when Jennie Gibbon was alive. After all, when Jennie was twenty years old in 1867, she experienced the changes of Confederation and the installation of Canada's first Prime Minister. Jennie Gibbon died in 1886 and the country had still only seen two Prime Ministers, Sir John A. Macdonald and Alexander Mackenzie. It was a much different time. Had Jennie Gibbon Groves lived longer, the life of Dr. Abraham Groves and their children would have been different. Jennie Gibbon may have had more children, she may have raised her children differently, and she may have had an opportunity to socialize and make a difference with the influential people of Fergus. Nevertheless, the marriage was a base in the beginning of Dr. Groves' career. And the life that Jennie Gibbon and Dr. Groves shared for twelve years left an impact on the man who went on to develop the first hospital in Fergus.

Ethel Burke, in contrast to Jennie Gibbon, knew a different country and had different experiences, for she was not born until 1877. By the time Ethel Burke Groves died in 1964, she had seen the influence of about fifteen Prime Ministers with Lester Pearson then leading the country. Ethel had also lived to see many more firsts in the advancement of women than her predecessor Jennie Gibbon. In 1918 women were first allowed to vote in federal elections. In 1921 the first woman, Agnes McPhail, was elected to parliament. In 1929 women were finally considered "persons" and appointed to the Senate. It was a different world with more opportunities for women. Ethel Burke lived to enjoy old age (about 48 years longer than Jennie). Therefore, Ethel contributed to the later life of Dr. Groves and in the twenty-four years they were married she provided the doctor with a companion who was intelligent, knowledgeable of medicine and who loved to entertain.

Finally, did Dr. Groves marry for reasons other than love? Unless his personal diary is found we will never truly know. However, we do know that the wives of Dr. Groves contributed to his success in his personal and his public life. Jennie Gibbon and Ethel Burke both demonstrated many skills as they often practiced as nurses, advisors, homemakers, counsellors, and entertainers.

Both women came from popular, well-established Conservative families and they were accommodating and supportive of Abraham Groves' political life, business life, literary life and of course his medical career. The history of Jennie Gibbon and Ethel Burke has really just begun. Hopefully, personal records will surface and become available so that we will understand the experiences and motivations behind their actions.

In closing, I would like to thank the people who shared their memories and resources to contribute to this history including, Melvin Muir, Lucille Sutherland, Tillie Sargent, Doug Russell, Lorna Hall and Joy Goddard.

REFERENCES:

1 Stephen Thorning. "The Doctor: The Public Career of Dr. William Clarke," *Historic Guelph*, Vol.XXV, August 1986. p.5-6. This wife was also the daughter of Captain Henry Strange.

2 John Robert Connon. *The Early History of Elora & Vicinity*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1930). p.101.

3 W.F. Mackenzie. "County of Wellington, Township of Nichol." History taken from *The Guelph Weekly Mercury and Advertiser* 27 June 1907. p.31.

4 Jean F. Hutchinson. *The History of Wellington County*, (Grand Valley: Landsborough Printing Limited, 1998). p. 159-160.

5 John Robert Connon. *The Early History of Elora & Vicinity*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1930). p. 101.

6 Register of Deeds. # 17243. Wellington Archives.

7 *Fergus News-Record*, 16 Oct. 1849.

8 Jean F. Hutchinson. *The History of Wellington County*, *(*Grand Valley: Landsborough Printing Limited, 1998). p.162.

9 Ibid, p.138-139.

10 Jeff Stewart & Janet Langdon, *Wellington County Marriage Registers* from 1869-1872, Vol.1. (Toronto: Winfield Publishing, 2001). p.42. Sophia Maria White, daughter of George White and Sophia Assesseml[?] The marriage register had Sophia Maria as 22 years old upon marriage on 27 June 1870 but interment records show that at her death in 1878, she was 32 years old. Also, This information varies from that found in John Robert Connon's *The Early History of Elora & Vicinity*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1930). p.138-139.

11 1851 Census. Wellington Archives A1991.207. Note: The 1851 Census recorded that Jane was born in 1844 and Agnes in 1847.1 have reversed this information as Jane married Dr. Groves and her headstone states she was born 1847.

12 1851 Census. Alex Lamond 26, Mary Lamond 29, William Lamond 6, Robert Lamond 5, George Lamond 4, Jane Lamond 2, Ann Bonegoss 15.

13 1861 Census. Geo. Jardin 45, Hostler, Mrs. Mary Jardin 22

14 Jean F. Hutchinson. *The History of Wellington County,* (Grand Valley" Landsborough Printing Limited, 1998). p.200.

15 Ibid. p. 168

16 Ibid, p.202 Note: Rev. Middlemiss preached his first sermon at Chalmer's Presbyterian in 1855.

17 Chalmers Presbyterian Church, Elora Re: Knox Presbyterian Church, Elora. Letters concerning erection of stone cairn at site of original Presbyterian Church.

18 Melvin Muir Collection. Photocopy of Ethel Burke's handwritten notes. Note: Dr. A. Groves worked with Dr. Munro for 22 months starting in 1872.

19 *Lightning Express* Vol. II, No.50, 29 Oct. 1874. Wellington Archives.

20 Ibid.

21 Marriage Register of Chalmers' Church, Elora 1873, p.18-19. Knox Presbyterian Church, Elora.

22 Baptismal Records. St. James Anglican Church, Fergus, Ontario. William was baptized on the 8th of July 1877. Two years later Laura Kathleen was baptized on a Wednesday evening the 20th of August 1879.

23 Memorial Card. A 987.34 and Interment Records For Elora Cemetery. Wellington Archives.

24 1871 Elora Business Directory. Wellington Archives.

25 Note: Sophia White Gibbon was 32 yrs. old.

26 Poster advertising Auction by Richard Bayley, for Gibbon, Gaye & White, Vendor's Solicitor, London, 11 Oct. 1879. Wellington Archives.

27 Melvin Muir Collection. Photocopy of Ethel Burke's handwritten notes.

28 Medicinal Action and Uses—The crude drug is rarely used, its virtues being due to the alkaloid, Pilocarpine. It is antagonistic to atropine, stimulating the nerve-endings paralysed by that drug, and contracting the pupil of the eye. Its principal use is as a powerful and rapid diaphoretic, the quantity of sweat brought out by a single dose being as much as 9 to 15 oz. It induces also free salivation and excites most gland secretions, some regarding it as a galactagogue.

29 Melvin Muir Collection. Photocopy of Ethel Burke's handwritten notes.

30 1881 Census. Wellington Archives.

31 *Fergus News-Record* Vol. XXVIII No.39, 7 Oct. 1886 Obituary. Elora Cemetery Transcripts G14 Jennie Gibbon. Wellington Archives

32 Groves File A1994.307, *Fergus News-Record 1* Oct. 1886. Wellington Archives.

33 Dorothy Metcalfe. "The Groves Family To Canada From Ireland 1825-2000." August 2000. Addendum.

34 G.D. Stanley. *Physicians In Canadian History IX.* "Dr. Abraham Groves 1847-1935: A Great Canadian Crusader of Canadian Medicine", p.10. Groves File A1994.307

35 Melvin Muir Collection. Photocopies of Ethel Burke's handwritten notes.

36 1891 Census. Abraham Groves was forty-three years old and he lived with his two children, then fourteen and eleven, and his sister Catherine Groves, thirty-two years old. Wellington Archives.

37 1901 Census. National Archives.

38 Marriage Records. St.James Anglican Church, Fergus.

39 Pat Mestern. "Abraham Groves: The man behind the vision" Special Section. *Fergus-Elora News Express* Wednesday June 26, 2002.

40 Groves File A1994.307.

41 *Elora Express*, Wednesday June 26, 1907.

42 *Elora Express*, Wednesday April 3, 1907.

43 Melvin Muir Collection. Photocopies of Ethel Burke's handwritten notes.

44 Groves File A1994.307 Wellington Archives. Note: Suds Groves was a twin and his twin died at birth.

45 Compiled by Anderson. "Graduate Nurses of Royal Alexandra Hospital 1905-1931." Wellington Archives, A1991.200.

46 Melvin Muir Collection. Photocopies of Ethel Burke's handwritten notes.

47 Jane Robertson. Groves Genealogy, Groves File A1994.307. Wellington Archives.

48 Overseas Expeditionary Force, Officers' Declaration Paper, 29 July, 1915. National Archives of Canada.

49 Mrs. T.J. Hutchinson, Belwood, March 1974. Fergus: Groves Hospital Medical File.

50 Mount Forest Clipping Files, ca. 1920-1965.

51 Tilly Sargent. Oral History, Fergus, Ont.

52 Dorothy Metcalfe. "The Groves Family To Canada From Ireland 1825-2000," August 2000, p.33-34.

53 Groves File A1994.307. Wellington Archives, and files at Groves Hospital, Fergus.

54 "Seven Graduated From G.M. Hospital," The *Fergus News-Record*, 1 June 1933. ScrapbookA1979.70.1.

55 Wills 1935. Wellington Archives.

56 Melvin Muir. Oral History. November 2002.

57 Dorothy Metcalfe. "The Groves Family To Canada From Ireland 1825-2000." August 2000.

58 Note: William Bathurst Burke was a son of Dr. Burke of Queen's County, New Brunswick, of United Empire Loyalist stock.

59 Historical Atlas Publishing Company, *Historical Atlas of the County of Wellington 1906*, (Toronto: Historical Atlas Publishing Company, 1906); David Burke's wife, Martha Dix, was the daughter of John Dix.

60 Fergus Interment Records, Wellington County Municipal Office, Elora, Ont.

61 A.E. Byerly. *Fergus or the Fergusson-Webster Settlement with an extensive history of North-East Nichol*, (Elora: Elora Express Publishers, 1932-1934. p.239.

62 Frederick Sypher Burke. Attestation Paper. For Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force, August 1914. National Archives, Canada. He was five feet eleven inches tall and had fair hair and blue eyes. Religion was listed as the Church of England.

63 Fergus Interment Records, Wellington County Municipal Office, Elora, Ont.

64 Lucille Sutherland and Connie Lovell. Oral History. October 2002.

65 Historical Atlas Publishing Company, *Historical Atlas of the County of Wellington 1906,* (Toronto: Historical Atlas Publishing Company, 1906) p. 17.

66 1909 Directory. Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, 500 West Church Street, Knoxville, Tennessee, 37902.

67 1901 Ontario Census. Wellington Archives.

68 Lucille Sutherland, Fergus. Oral History, Sept-Oct.2002.

69 Kevin Leman, *The New Birth Order Book, Why You Are The Way You Are,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 1998). p.42, 78.

70 Michael Bliss. *William Osier: A Life In Medicine,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999). p. 191.

71 Ibid. p. 198.

72 Ibid. p. 198.

73 Michael Bliss. *Banting: A biography,* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984). p. 146.

74 Melvin Muir Collection. Photocopy of Ethel Burke's han dwritten notes.

75 Lane A. Gerber. *Married To Their Careers: Career and Family Dilemmas in Doctor's Lives,* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1983). p.96.

76 *Fergus News-Record* 10 Nov. 1966 p. 11.

77 A.E. Byerly. "Fergus Doctor Long In Harness and Still Active," D.O. Scrapbook A1979.70.1, Wellington Archives, p.39.

78 Pat Mestern. "Abraham Groves: The man behind the vision" Special Section. *Fergus-Flora News Express,* Wednesday June 26, 2002.

79 Michael Piva. *A History of Ontario, Selected Readings,* chapter by Marilyn Barber, "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestics For Ontario Homes, 1870-1930." (Mississauga: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988). p.145.

80 Groves File A1994.307

81 Wellington County Historical Society, *Wellington County History,* Volume 14, 2001. "History of Groves Memorial Hospital Volunteer Association 1933-2001," by Susan Dunlop. WCA A2001.72

82 *Fergus News-Record,* 10 Nov. 1966 p. 11 and A.E. Byerly. "Fergus Doctor Long In Harness and Still Active," D.O. Scrapbook A 1979.70.1, Wellington Archives. p.39.

83 Doug Russell. Oral History, 11 October 2002. (This was in the 1950s).

84 The Minute Books of the Women's Auxiliary from its beginnings are at the Wellington County Museum and Archives, A2001.ll. The group is variously referred to as the Women's Auxiliary, the Hospital Aid Committee and Women's Hospital Aid [Committee].

85 "The Auxiliary of Groves Memorial Community Hospital." A2000.46 File 6. Wellington Archives.

86 Scrapbook ‘Auxiliary to Groves Hospital." A2000.46, File 6. Wellington Archives.

87 Wellington County Historical Society, Wellington County History Volume 14, 2001. "History of Groves Memorial Hospital Volunteer Association 1933-2001," by Susan Dunlop. WCA 2001.72.

88 Pat Mestern. "Abraham Groves: The man behind the vision," *Fergus-Elora News Express,* 26 June 2002.

89 Blodwen Davies. Personal letter to Dr. Groves January 6, 1931. Laura Secord box of letters, Groves Memorial Community Hospital, [now A2002.109 at Wellington County Archives].

90 Ibid.

91 W Victor Johnston. *Dr. William Johnston, Before The Age of Miracles: Memoirs of a Country.*

92 Alvin Finkel, Margaret Conrad. *History of the Canadian Peoples,* Vol.11, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1998. p.143-147.

93 Melvin Muir. Photocopy of handwritten notes by Ethel Burke.

94 Polly was donated by A. Anderson to the Wellington County Museum, 1980.15.1. Note: Polly died in 1976.

95 Lorna Hall RN. Oral History, Nov. 15, 2002.

96 Interview with Lorna Hall RN by lian goodall November 5, 2002.

97 Ibid.

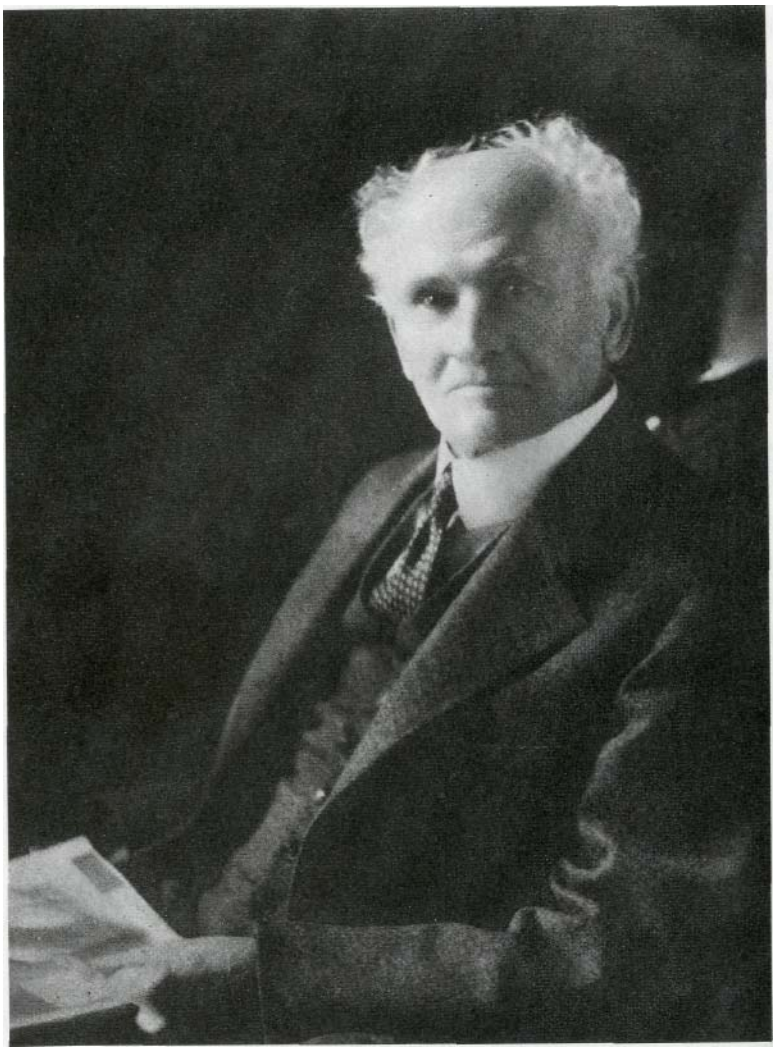
98 Ibid.

99 Joy Goddard RN. Oral History, Nov. 15, 2002.

100 Fergus Cemetery Transcripts, SIA-1-11, Ethel M. Burke.

101 Note: Ethel Burke's middle name was May. New York Graduate School Record, New York.

102 Alvin Finkel, Margaret Conrad. *History of the Canadian Peoples,* Vol.II, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1998). p.143-147.



This portrait, recognizable by many as the one which for many years hung in the lobby of Groves Memorial Community Hospital, was later engraved and printed by A. Alexander & Sons Ltd., London, England.

Wellington County Museum and Archives, ph 11729.

The Controversial Dr. Groves

by Ross D. Fair

Being the last presenter in the Groves Lecture Series might suggest to some that I will be offering some sort of conclusion to the series today. Although that's not my real purpose, in a sense my topic does provide a conclusion. Reflecting on the other papers presented in this series, it would seem that Dr. Abraham Groves never strayed very far from controversy. Steve Thorning illustrated how Groves had the ability to annoy members of the local community in his business dealings as well as in his attempts to gain public office; Charles Roland examined the controversial claims Groves made of having performed surgical firsts; lian goodall questioned Groves' place among Canada's literary stars, and Sheri Cockerill, noted, in part, that even in his personal life, Groves made a controversial choice in his second wife, a nurse thirty years his junior. Today, it is my role to offer more detail about the controversy that Dr. Groves helped make a part of his life. And I will do so by examining several seemingly controversial episodes from the first two decades of his medical practice.

The paper I present today had its origins as an undergrad paper in 1989 "Dr. Abraham Groves: The Innovative Surgeon" in which I intended to do no more than so many authors had done before me, champion his claim to having performed the first appendectomy in the world. But while reading through the reports of Wellington County Council, I came upon an incident not reported by other authors. As a result, I hinted that there might have been a dark side to the medical career described by Dr. Groves in his *All in the Day's Work*. Since that time, I've always thought about returning to the subject to dig a little deeper into Dr. Groves' early medical career, and I would like to thank Ian Easterbrook, the Wellington County Historical Society, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation for giving me the opportunity to take a second, more thorough, examination.

But enough of that. Everyone came here to today to find out what dirt I've dug up on Dr. Abraham Groves, and I can tell that you're sitting on the edge of your seat waiting for me to dish up the gossip, the innuendo, the controversy. So let's get to that straight away.

There are three recorded incidents in which Dr. Abraham Groves was implicated in controversy, either directly or by association, and all occurred within the first two decades of his practice. The first entails the discovery of a body in a field between the House of Industry and Fergus in the spring of 1879, the second centres on three different inquires during 1885 and 1886 into Dr. Groves' conduct as physician of the House of Industry, and the third surrounds the robbing of a grave in Belsyde Cemetery in the spring of 1887. Today I will present the accusations and evidence for each case, and then I'll offer some judgment on what these incidents really tell us about Groves' conduct by placing his actions within the wider context of medical education, the medical profession, poor houses, and Victorian Ontario society.

Kinnettles

On Tuesday afternoon, April 22, 1879, Charles Kay, was out looking for his sheep at Kinnettles, a property that lay between the House of Industry lands and Fergus. While near the poorhouse property, he came across the body of a woman in a fence corner, sitting in a partially upright position, with one hand extending upward and resting on the board fence. Kay left the body and immediately went to inform the coroner in Fergus. From the condition of her body, an assumption was made that she had died in the fence corner sometime during the previous winter. The coroner removed the body to a woodshed behind an unoccupied house on the Kinnettles property, and began selecting a jury for an inquest into the unknown woman's death to be held the following day.

On Wednesday morning, a jury of thirteen men assembled at the woodshed and began the inquest by examining the woman's body. There were no signs of violence and it appeared that she had frozen to death. Some pieces of clothing found a short distance from the fence corner where she had been found were identified as being similar to those used at the House of Industry, but no one from that institution had come forward to either identify the woman or acknowledge that any inmate had been missing. As no one was providing solid information on the woman's identity, the coroner adjourned the inquest until Thursday when a postmortem would be conducted on the body. By Thursday afternoon, however, what had been a growing curiosity turned into a sensational mystery for the Fergus community. The body had disappeared. Without a body and without any new information relative to its identity, the coroner had no choice but to adjourn the inquest until the following Tuesday. Hopefully, by that time, the body would be recovered and someone would come forward with information.

As word spread throughout Fergus and area about the discovery and loss of the body, people began to suggest motives behind the woman's death, and fingers were pointed at particular individuals for the theft of her body. The *Elora Lightning Express* suggested that "Suspicion pointed to no one person in particular, the majority expressing the belief that the body had been thrown into

the river in order to hide a crime." But the *Guelph Weekly Mercury* suggested a different opinion. The fact that the body had been stolen from the possession of the coroner certainly suggested foul play, a correspondent argued, and there were circumstances connected with the case which pointed "in a certain direction and to a certain person." The author did not name names, however, for he thought it "unwise to speak or publish too much hastily." Nevertheless, they too, believed that the body was now probably floating in the Grand River. By Saturday, those suspicions were apparently confirmed after two men reported that "an object with clothing on it" had been seen at the junction of the Grand and Irvine Rivers. But the witnesses did not attempt to rescue the body, nor did the coroner dispatch anyone to search for it upon hearing the news.

When the inquest resumed on Tuesday evening, April 29th, the identity of the woman began to emerge. A large crowd filled Fireman's Hall in Fergus to hear Jane Parker, Matron of the House of Industry, suggest that the woman was a Mary Wilkins, a 38-year-old inmate who had escaped from the House on the evening of December 23, 1878 after spending only three days in the institution. Other testimony from Parker's son, her husband, the Keeper of the House, Dr. Orton, the physician of the House, as well as several inmates sketched out a story that the jury eventually accepted as the identity of the deceased woman and the cause of her death. Mary Wilkins had been brought from Guelph General Hospital to the House of Industry on December 20, 1878 after being hospitalized for several months recovering from an illness. Though she had been cured, she remained unable to work and was therefore released into the care of the House of Industry. Upon her arrival, she announced several times that she had no intention of staying. Three evenings later, she claimed she was heading to the outhouse, and when she did not return after about twenty minutes, the alarm was raised. It was a very cold and stormy night, and with the few clothes she was wearing, it was doubted that she had travelled very far. A short search around the buildings was conducted, some of the neighbours were questioned, and John Parker, son of the Matron and Keeper, rode into Fergus with Dr. Orton to see if she had made it to the train station. With no luck in finding her, and apparently no one willing to make an extended search for her on such a stormy December night, it seems that Mary Wilkins was simply regarded as missing, and forgotten.

How, you may ask, does any of this attach to Dr. Abraham Groves? The answer lies in some disturbing evidence revealed during the inquest. It was testimony that exposed Dr. Groves as the "certain person" who the *Guelph Mercury* and others in Fergus had immediately suspected of having stolen Mary Wilkins' body.

On the second day of the inquest, John Thomson Jr., an undertaker in Fergus, testified that while walking down the street on the day after the body had been found, Dr. Groves had called out from his office. Thomson crossed the street and the doctor asked him which undertaker would be in charge of

burying the unidentified body, to which he replied that he expected that he would get the job. Thomson then testified that Groves had told him that he wanted a corpse and that he'd like to get the body. Thomson informed the jury that he had told Groves right there and then that if he was asked to bury a body, he would bury it. Groves had explained that he did not mean to ask Thomson to claim the body for him. He just wanted to know if there was a way that he, instead of an undertaker, could claim it. Thomson then asked Groves what he wanted the corpse for, and the doctor explained that he just wanted the bones because he was planning to have several students working for him during the coming summer. Groves had spoken openly about the subject and had not told Thomson to keep the conversation a secret. Beyond that, the undertaker assured the inquest, he knew nothing of the removal of the body during the night after his conversation with Dr. Groves. For the sake of his own business, Thomson then assured all those present that he was not in the business of delivering corpses to doctors.

When Abraham Groves took the stand, he swore that he had never seen the body dead or alive, that he did not take the body, and that he knew nothing of its theft or even knew if the body had indeed been stolen. He claimed that the suspicion pointed his direction was unfounded and unjust, but the doctor did agree that the conversation with the undertaker had occurred just as Thomson had described.

Although the inquest concluded and a verdict was delivered, Mary Wilkins' body was never found. No doubt, suspicious persons continued to wag their fingers at Dr. Groves, for the inquest had revealed that he had been the only individual who had shown any public interest in the woman's body. Not until 1933 (just two years before Abraham Groves' death) did Hugh Templin, editor of the *Fergus News-Record*, offer the doctor vindication from such suspicion. In relating the Kinnettles incident in his history of Fergus, Templin explained that it was now appropriate for details of the long-held secret to be released. Apparently, a young medical student who came from near Fergus had seized upon the opportunity to get a cadaver to further his studies and stole the body from the woodshed at Kinnettles. In doing so, he apparently had the assistance of several friends who brought the body into Fergus in the middle of the night and buried it in a manure pile behind a livery stable until the bones could be cleaned. Templin did not reveal the identity of the student, but noted that later in life he "rose to a high government office."

While this first incident of controversy in Dr. Groves' medical career involved only his interest in the corpse of a House of Industry inmate for the pursuit of medical education, the second episode of controversy centred on accusations that the doctor may have been using live House of Industry inmates to practice his surgical techniques.

The "too free use of the knife"

In 1877, Wellington County Council erected a House of Industry and Refuge for the poor, the aged, the orphaned and the mentally ill citizens of the county. When it opened its doors late in the year, it was just the fourth publicly funded county institution of its kind in the province. Among the officers required to run the institution was a legally appointed medical practitioner whose job would be to visit the institution at least once a week. He was to attend all cases of sickness as well as feigned illness that might exclude an inmate from work. The Physician was to keep a detailed record of all cases treated by him, including all births that occurred at the House and, if an inmate died, he was to record the cause of death. At the end of each year he was to submit a report to a Standing Committee of county council for the House of Industry. For his labours, the Physician was paid an annual salary of $100. Dr. George Orton was the first individual appointed to the post, although Groves had applied for the position as well. As Steve Thorning described a few weeks ago, Dr. Orton was the senior doctor in the area and he also possessed the necessary political connections with the county council to secure the post at the new institution. By 1882, however, Dr. Orton was moving to Manitoba and county council appointed Dr. Abraham Groves as his replacement in February of that year.

From the annual reports he submitted to county council, it appears that Dr. Groves was a stronger advocate for the health of the poorhouse inmates than Dr. Orton had been. But sometime between the June and the November 1885 sessions of Wellington County Council, doctors at the Guelph General Hospital had complained to council's Standing Committee of the House of Industry that Dr. Groves had been a little too eager to perform surgeries on some of the patients at the House of Industry. In one particular case, an inmate had been sent to the Guelph General Hospital who, in the opinion of a medical attendant there, would have been better off had he not undergone surgery at the House of Industry. It was this complaint that seems to have forced Wellington County Council to deal with a variety of similar accusations made by the doctors at Guelph and others on behalf of House of Industry inmates. The committee held an inquiry that focussed on the propriety of permitting Groves to perform surgery at the poorhouse in cases where there was reason to believe that the patient would require "careful postoperative nursing." The committee's emphasis on the extent of care required after Groves' surgical procedures suggest that the complaints lodged against him involved surgeries that were, at the very least, more serious than the removal of a hangnail.

In light of the complaints, the Standing Committee recommended that in future, when an inmate required surgery, the committee or the House of Industry Inspector would send the patient to Guelph General Hospital where a consultation of doctors at that institution could determine "the advisability or necessity for performing such operations." If surgery was deemed necessary, the patient could then benefit during recovery from all the equipment and

nursing available at the hospital. In submitting their report to County Council in November 1885, the Standing Committee made it clear that they believed "the Poor House was not intended to take the place of a General Hospital." As a result, council instructed Dr. Groves "to govern himself in future in accordance with the letter and the spirit of [the committee's] report."

Groves did not take the criticism well. He was livid. He denied the accusations of his "too free use of the knife" and even claimed the matter was "altogether beyond the jurisdiction of the Poor House Committee." His anger seethed into the New Year, and Dr. Groves used his annual report as the poorhouse Physician to launch a new attack on the Standing Committee and the council in late January 1886. First, he refuted what had apparently been the central accusation under investigation. He had not tried to remove a tumor from the throat of an inmate, he argued. Moreover, he had never performed or "proposed to perform" surgery on any inmate more serious than a vaccination or the extraction of a tooth. In fact, he informed council, during his four years as Physician of the House of Industry he had performed only two surgeries "of the slightest importance" on just two inmates. They did not require special care in recovery and, he commented, the operations were no different than those that had been performed by his predecessor Dr. Orton. Finally, Groves dismissed the information received by the Standing Committee about such surgeries as nothing more than "gossip," and as such it did not merit his formal denial. No doubt Groves thought he was putting his non-medical overseers into their place, but the consequence of delivering his anger through an official report to council was further investigation into his medical practices at the House of Industry. Wellington County Council took the allegations contained in the Physician's report seriously and it appointed a special committee to investigate Dr. Groves' claims.

In the spring of 1886, the special committee held two meetings in which testimony was offered by the former members of the Standing Committee of the House of Industry, Dr. Groves, the Keeper and Matron of the poorhouse, the former matron, as well as Dr. Herod of Guelph who acted as an expert witness. It considered the evidence and issued a report that confirmed the number of surgical operations that had been performed on inmates in the institution as suggested by the Standing Committee of the previous session. Furthermore, the special committee supported the recommendation of the previous committee's report that, in future, all operations were to be performed at the Guelph General Hospital. To put Dr. Groves in his place, the committee placed on the public record its conclusion that it could not understand how Dr. Groves could have even questioned the accuracy of the previous report. Groves dirty laundry had been given a second thorough airing within the space of six months, but it would take to the end of 1886 before doctors at the Guelph General and county council would cease their criticisms of Groves' conduct as the House of Industry Physician.

At the subsequent session of county council in December 1886, a second special committee was struck to deal with new charges laid against Dr. Groves and the House of Industry staff by doctors at the Guelph General Hospital. The committee held a day of hearings at Guelph, receiving testimony from three doctors representing the medical staff of the Guelph hospital and from Dr. Groves, representing the House of Industry. From the outset, the committee faced several difficulties in its attempt to get to the root of the complaints. Not all the doctors who had lodged the complaints were present, the charges concerned general medical conduct instead of specific cases, and the members of the committee, not being medical professionals, found themselves at a disadvantage in their attempt to understand the differing medical opinions on patient care. As a result, the hearings were forced to settle upon two specific cases to give some shape to the proceedings.

Apparently, two of the various complaints that had been lodged against Dr. Groves surrounded his decisions to transfer an inmate suffering from dropsy and another 87-year-old man with a broken hip to the Guelph General Hospital. Although the committee was unable to get to the bottom of the conflict between the Guelph doctors and Dr. Groves, it felt the process had been useful, for at least the hearings had clearly proved that charges of inhumanity laid against Dr. Groves in the two cases were found to have no substance. In fact, the committee sided with Groves this time, concluding that the two patients had benefited from the transfer, as they had been able to undergo operations forbidden at the House of Industry and were able to receive much better treatment from the hospital nurses.

It appears that Groves, who had entered the inquiry in the uncomfortable position of defendant, emerged from the special hearing with the renewed support of council. The committee made it clear in its report that it had been doctors at Guelph General who had lodged the complaints. Significantly, members of the hospital administration who were present at the hearings distanced themselves from the specific charges brought against Groves and raised no complaint about the procedure of sending inmates of the poorhouse to the hospital for acute care.

After more than a year of investigation, Dr. Groves had dodged the attacks on his conduct as House of Industry Physician. Although the allegations had been very serious, at no time did any of the charges generate widespread public outcry against the doctor. But Groves did not allow himself to be free from scandal for very long. In the early summer of 1887, the doctor's reputation was soon tarnished by his implicit role in a Fergus grave robbing scandal.

The Fergus Resurrectionists

By the time that the weekly *Fergus News-Record* was delivered to the community on Thursday, May 26, 1887, most of the Fergus area had already heard of the shocking discovery that had been made on Monday. When James

Stephens, the local gravedigger, had gone to Belsyde Cemetery to dig a grave for a newly deceased, he noticed that the grave of Mrs. William Gardner, who had been buried the previous Thursday, had been disturbed. Stephens reported the matter to the undertaker John Thomson and his son John Jr. who then informed Mrs. Gardner's son-in-law. All met at the grave that evening and had it opened. The coffin was found to be half-full of gravel and the body was gone. Only the coffin trimmings and the grave clothes remained. Immediately, fingers were pointed in the direction of local medical students who had likely exercised the long-standing practice of stealing a freshly buried body to dissect as part of their anatomy studies. By Tuesday morning the main suspects could have been arrested, claimed the *News-Record*, but authorities hoped that with the delay the accused would return to Fergus with the body.

How were people so certain of whom to blame for the theft? Apparently, the robbery had not been conducted with much secrecy. Three individuals had witnessed "a well-known spring waggon" being driven into the cemetery lane at midnight after the burial. The sound of digging was then heard for about an hour or more, and then the wagon and its occupants exited the cemetery. Over the course of the coming weeks, the individuals suspected of robbing the grave were named, their denials lodged, the body discovered, returned and re-interred. But all of this activity only served to uncover a more complex and disturbing story than had first been imagined.

The wagon used by the suspects was well-known because it belonged to Dr. Abraham Groves. Therefore fingers were immediately pointed at the young medical students working in his office, James Kennedy, W.H. Ware, and Groves' younger brother Oliver. In the June 2 issue of the *News-Record*, the case against the three individuals was laid out for the public to read, and to shake their heads in disbelief.

On Friday May 20 (the morning after the midnight grave robbery), Oliver Groves had driven to the Fergus train station with his brother's horse and buggy, and he had unloaded a heavy trunk, from which blood was observed oozing as he waited on the platform for the early morning CPR train to Toronto. On the following Tuesday morning at 5:30 a.m. Oliver had again been observed at the Fergus train station, this time picking up a large trunk and delivering it to James Kennedy's stable. As Oliver had recently graduated from the Toronto Medical School, and had been seen in Toronto on the previous Friday, it appeared that Oliver had taken Mrs. Gardner's body to the city to be sold to the medical school. Acting on these suspicions, Mrs. Gardner's son William, and her son-in-law Hugh Black took the early train to Toronto on Thursday May 26 in hopes of finding her body.

Upon arriving at Toronto Gardner and Black went to the Attorney General's office to obtain the services of a government detective. The detective spent the day questioning baggage handlers at Union Station, learning little more than that a trunk with "a suspiciously strong odour" had arrived on the

train that Oliver Groves had taken from Fergus the previous Friday. Late on Thursday afternoon, the detective obtained a search warrant to allow Gardner and Black to see the bodies in possession of the Toronto Medical School. Dr. H.H. Wright, who received the warrant at the college, admitted that he was pretty sure the college had the body in question. He told them to return the next morning and the body would be ready for them to take away. On Friday morning the men returned to find the body of Mrs. Gardner laid out in a new coffin, dressed in grave-clothes. Although the body was swollen and dark in colour, and had its hair cut off, Dr. Wright assured the men that the body had not been opened. Only a red dye had been inserted into the central artery. Dr. Wright refused to answer any questions about how the body came to be at the college.

The body was handed over to a Toronto undertaker who had it delivered up to Fergus on that Friday evening. Word of the body's arrival had spread throughout Fergus, and a large crowd waited at the station. The size of the crowd increased as the body was transferred from the station to Belsyde Cemetery for re-interment. At graveside, the lid of the coffin was removed in order that the crowd could see the corpse. Mrs. Gardner was then laid to rest for a second time.

In the days immediately following the grave-robbery (before it was discovered that the body had been dug up for profit) one of the accused did his best to deny that he or Oliver Groves had anything to do with the incident. Through the pages of the *Elora Express*, decried by the *Fergus News-Record* as "The Resurrectionists' Organ," James Kennedy tried his best to divert attention from himself and Oliver by pointing the finger to a medical student from Belwood. But those efforts did not have the desired effect. When Oliver Groves and James Kennedy learned that Gardner and Black had gone to Toronto to search for the body, both drove to the Guelph train station and departed for parts unknown.

In light of the public outrage against his brother and his medical students, Dr. Abraham Groves appears to have coordinated the escape of those accused. James Kennedy did return to Fergus briefly on Monday, May 30, apparently because Dr. Groves thought it might help him clear his name, but he disappeared from town by the end of the following day. It's not known where Kennedy escaped to, but the *News-Record* reported Dr. Groves' suspicious behaviour in travelling to Elora to telegraph Kennedy instead of using facilities in Fergus as was his normal practice.

It would seem that Abraham also coordinated the escape of his brother Oliver, who did not return after escaping on a train from Guelph. By June 17, a warrant was issued for his arrest, but by that time he was likely in Rochester, New York, for records indicate that Oliver was already practicing medicine there by the first week of July.

Medical student W.H. Ware also fled the country. Rumours printed by the

News-Record indicated that Abraham Groves wanted this "youth of pliable disposition" out of the way, lest he might thoughtlessly let some damaging remark drop." Ware, the newspaper concluded, had been banished in the hope that Oliver Groves and James Kennedy might escape punishment. Groves seems to have funded Ware's escape to Detroit, placing young Ware in the care of a Detroit doctor. Letters sent by Ware to Dr. Groves at the end of June suggest that the doctor also sent Ware's father to Detroit in late June to calm the medical student's jittery nerves, and that Groves encouraged Ware to head to Rochester to meet up with Oliver.

Although Dr. Abraham Groves had not been directly involved in the grave robbing incident, it was clear to most that he was far from innocent, and that he had played a significant role in coordinating the theft and subsequently the shepherding of his brother and his medical students out of the province. The *News-Record* passed this suitable judgment on the town's well-known doctor:

> It is perhaps, a pity that it has been necessary to connect Dr. Groves' name in any way with the affair. He is such a cunning fish, and endeavours to swim so deep down under water as to leave no trace of his movements, or ripple of suspicion on the surface! But, unfortunately for the doctor, while his head is down, and his eyes and thoughts are down, the back fin of his individual identity has always been apparent through all the devious movements of his small-souled vindictiveness. And he knows what and whom to thank for now being mixed up with the disreputable brood that for years he has been hatching about his business premises.

Context

So what are we to make of these three controversial incidents in the early medical career of Dr. Abraham Groves? In opening his *All in the Days Work*, Groves emphasized that, to his knowledge, there had not been an abdomen opened at the Toronto General Hospital during his time as a medical student. Charles Roland confirmed this statement in his talk a few weeks ago, noting that, indeed, the Toronto General Hospital had been closed for a year because of unpaid debts during Groves' medical education of the late 1860s. But Groves' statement needs some important qualification. While he may not have witnessed or heard about an abdominal operation on a *live* human, he most surely spent some time in the medical college's dissection room working on cadavers. It is hard to estimate the amount of anatomical education he gathered here, however, for bodies were often scarce, and during the year in which the Toronto General Hospital was closed, the main source of cadavers for the city's medical colleges had dried up. To properly judge Groves' conduct as a physician, one must consider the nature of medical education and practice during the late 1800s, and the way in which both medical students and doctors advanced the art and science of medicine.

From the origins of medical schools in Europe and North America, the

shortage of human specimens for dissection had always been a problem. In a society based on Christian faith few were willing to donate their body to be sliced apart. After all, destruction of the body after death was believed to interfere with the deceased's salvation. Either it disturbed the transference of a person's soul from the flesh into heaven, or it destroyed a person's chance of taking part in the second coming of Christ, for a chopped-up body could not rise from the grave.

From a medical point of view, however, a young man wanting to practice medicine needed to see a human body at some point during his training even though medical colleges could not keep a steady supply of corpses on hand to meet the educational needs of their students. New corpses were always in demand, for a body could be kept only for several days before it deteriorated beyond use. Therefore, in order to maintain a supply of corpses, students were quietly encouraged to supply their own specimens. The choice for a young medical student came down to either stealing a body from a fresh grave or taking a chance that he could "learn on the job" without mistake or accusation of malpractice.

To stop the spread of grave robbing in Great Britain, parliament there had passed an Anatomy Act in 1832. In subsequent years, jurisdictions throughout North America passed similar legislation to implement a legal process by which medical schools could obtain cadavers for anatomical study. The united province of Canada passed its own law in 1843. Following the British model, it stipulated that a destitute and friendless individual who had died in a provincially funded hospital or poorhouse, would have his or her body collected by a local inspector of anatomy and delivered to a medical college for dissection, so long as that college kept appropriate records and gave proper burials to all human remains after use. In effect, the Canadas, like Britain had set in place the legal apparatus to deliver the bodies of society's most downtrodden from the rough and unhealthy institutions where they had spent the remainder of their days to the dissection table, which in popular perception was recognized as little more than a macabre and inhumane butcher shop. Whereas prior to the legislation, a forgotten pauper's grave had been the most feared end to life, now the dissection table emerged as an unsettling intermediate stage before the bodies of the friendless poor could rest in pieces.

But the act proved ineffective for supplying cadavers to meet the demands of medical education. During the mid-nineteenth century and beyond Confederation, the number of people dying at provincially operated hospitals and Houses of Industry were not sufficient to meet the growing number of medical colleges, the number of students studying at them, and the increasing requirements for the study of anatomy. As a result, body snatching continued throughout the province, but most particularly near Toronto, Kingston and London, the locations of the Ontario medical schools. By the 1880s, medical men were exerting great pressure on the Ontario Legislature to amend the old

Anatomy Act (of course, doctors were often politicians, too). Under the 1843 act, local inspectors of anatomy had access only to bodies from institutions within the municipality surrounding the medical colleges. Furthermore, the law allowed an unspecified time for friends or relatives to claim a body. Too many bodies, the medical men claimed, were being wasted by hospitals and poorhouses who protected the deceased by burying them, or by allowing friendly societies to claim bodies when no one else came forward. Medical colleges pushed for a province-wide mandate for the anatomy inspectors and a twenty-four hour period in which a body must be claimed. After several years of pressure, the Ontario Legislature amended the Anatomy Act in 1885 and again in 1889. The act was to apply to the entire province and the government could appoint inspectors of anatomy in any community. Municipal leaders and coroners were to report all unclaimed bodies to such inspectors who would then forward them to medical schools. In 1885, the period of claim for a body was set at forty-eight hours, but reduced to twenty-four hours in 1889. Medical schools, however, were required by the 1885 amendment to preserve the body for five days, and, in 1889, the period was extended to fourteen days in case a claim for the body could still be made. (Possibly, this would explain why Mrs. Gardner's body had not yet been dissected a week after it had been delivered to the Toronto Medical School.) Family members and friends were still able to claim a body, but friends were first required to obtain a magistrates certificate.

One can understand how the poor might have felt about the Anatomy Act, but how did the rest of Victorian Ontario society accept its terms? And with reference to Dr. Abraham Groves in particular, how controversial did the residents of Fergus consider him to be when he and his students attempted to acquire bodies for anatomical study? If we read between the lines, we can tease out indications of the local community's overall approval or disapproval of Grove's actions with regards to matters that society would rather not have to publicly consider.

First, in connection with the Kinnettles incident of 1879, Dr. Groves' rather forthright conversation with the Fergus undertaker provided some rather juicy testimony at the inquiry into Mary Wilkin's death, but the issue was laid to rest by Groves' unabashed confirmation of Thomson's statements. Public disgust seems to have gone only as deep as the community's reluctance to be reminded that doctors needed bodies for dissection or, as Groves had indicated, to remove a corpse's flesh to create a hinged skeleton for medical study.

If we look beyond the sensation of the incident, it is clear that public sympathy (or at least that of the *Fergus News-Record*) did not lie with Mary Wilkins. First, on the evening of December 23rd, little effort had been made to find the escaped inmate of the House of Industry. Although the coroner's jury recommended that, in future, county council establish a more effective process to search for those who might escape from the House of Industry, almost half the jury believed that the institution deserved no criticism, and that such a

recommendation was entirely necessary. Second, no search was made for Mary Wilkins body after its theft from the Kinnettles woodshed or after something like a body had been spotted floating through the union of the Irvine and the Grand Rivers. After the inquest, Mary Wilkins was simply forgotten once again. At most, as the *News-Record* suggested, the incident had provided a useful warning to respectable society. Wilkins had led a depraved and sinful life, and her tragic end was what befell the iniquitous. In terms of stealing bodies for medical study, Mary Wilkins' body had been an easy target, lying in an abandoned woodshed. How then did the Fergus area accept true grave robbing?

A useful comparison can be made to the 1887 theft of Mrs. Gardner's body. In 1881, just a few years after the House of Industry had opened, a 51-year-old inmate, Jane Irwin died with no friend or family to claim her body. As the poorhouse was not funded by the provincial government and there was no local inspector or medical college in the area, Irwin was buried at the institution's cemetery near the edge of its property. However, soon after her early May burial, Irwin's body was stolen. Unlike the sensation caused by the theft of Mrs. Gardner's body six years later, no newspaper ever reported the incident. Despite the fact that Wellington County Council offered $100 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction "of the perpetrator or perpetrators of the outrage" the reward was neither well-advertised, nor would it seem, ever claimed. Jane Irwin proved just how lonely a burial in a pauper's grave could be.

Significantly, the removal of Mrs. Gardner's body from Belsyde Cemetery was not an "outrage" merely because of its theft. The *Fergus News-Record* even admitted: "Medical students must have subjects, we admit, but there is a legal and legitimate way of procuring such subjects." But Oliver Groves, James Kennedy and W.H. Ware fell outside the bounds of this tacitly accepted, though undesirable practice. They had stolen the body for profit. Moreover, the *News-Record* argued, the crime was "perhaps one of the most heartless cases of the kind ever perpetrated in the Province" because Mrs. Gardner had suffered from mental illness and had taken her own life by drowning. Not only did the robbery serve to renew the family's grief, the mentally ill had always been excluded from the Anatomy Act. Some have claimed the exception had been made, so that the upper classes could be protected from the fate of dissection. Institutionalization for mental illness cut across class lines, but poverty was brought upon by a person's conduct.

Several other aspects of the case against Groves, Kennedy and Ware indicate the Fergus community's unstated views on the matter. First, witnesses had seen the accused enter the cemetery with Dr. Groves' wagon, they had heard the digging, and they had witnessed the wagon's departure. Second, witnesses had seen blood oozing from Oliver Groves' trunk as he waited for the train at the Fergus station. Baggage handlers between Fergus and Union Station also acknowledged that an awful smell had emanated from Groves' trunk. Yet, at no time, did anyone apparently alert authorities. Instead, it took three and a

half days for the theft to be discovered. Possibly because the perpetrators had been recognized as medical men, the witnesses did not bother to alert the authorities. As the *News-Record* indicated, an opportunity was even granted to the accused to return the body so that formal charges would not have to be laid at all.

Significantly, there were those who thought the grave-robbery should have been simply covered up when discovered. Though the *News-Record* initially called such people heartless, it later noted on two occasions that the case of Mrs. Gardner had caused numerous parties to come forward with claims of other body snatching. Some claimed that grave robbery had been carried on in the Fergus area "as a regular business," with others insisting that almost as many bodies had been stolen as remained in local cemeteries. While the *News-Record* insisted that the latter claim was "simply nonsense," it had heard from individuals who were clearly not "alarmists" that two robberies had been committed at McKee's Cemetery in West Garafraxa, along the Fergus-Orangeville Road. Nevertheless, the editor asserted, "at the worst, only an occasional corpse can have been stolen; and the wild talk, will, we trust, end in talk." An outrage over Mrs. Gardner's particular case was good for selling papers, but even the *News-Record* was not willing to investigate reports of widespread grave robbing in the county. But other evidence suggests that the truth may have laid somewhere in between the newspaper's assurances and the wild talk of others.

Groves, Kennedy and Ware were not likely the first to come up with the idea of selling a body to the Toronto Medical School. By 1887, Toronto had three medical schools and rural cemeteries and those in provincial villages had always been the easiest targets for medical students. People residing in Toronto, London, and Kingston were well aware of the medical students' needs and were more likely to keep a watchful eye over the fresh grave of a recently buried family member or friend. Clearly, some other unfortunate individuals from the local area had been resurrected for the benefit of Dr. Groves and his students, however, the letters written from Detroit by Dr. Groves' escaped medical student W.H. Ware offer support for the *News-Record's* attack that Abraham Groves had been "hatching" a "disreputable brood" at his Fergus medical practice.

Realizing that he would never return to Ontario, Ware requested that Groves send some anatomical specimens to him from the office in Fergus so that he could continue his anatomy studies in Detroit. The only way he could get human bones in Detroit was to pay for them, and he had no money. Promising to return the bones in good order, Ware gave Groves a shopping list of specimens to be collected from those at Groves' office. Among the various bones Ware asked Groves to send him were the skull that he and Oliver had dug up, along with a set of articulated ribs that Oliver had got in Toronto. Groves was to first send the bones and the skull to Ware's parents. They could boil the

skull to "get the meat off," he noted, pack the bones in some old luggage along with some of his other belongings, and send them to him at Detroit.

But this incident surrounds Grove's medical students. What of Dr. Abraham Groves' own use of cadavers? Quite rightly, one might wonder if Groves, using his position as physician of the House of Industry took a broad interpretation of the provincial Anatomy Act and employed the bodies of its deceased and friendless inmates for medical science prior to their burial in the poorhouse cemetery. Away from the public eye, the inmates could have provided a sporadic source of cadavers. But evidence would suggest that this was not the case. The management of the House of Industry was performed by the Keeper, Matron, Physician and Inspector, and one incident suggests that the management, in general, respected the rights of its deceased inmates.

In May 1885, following recent amendments to the Anatomy Act that expanded its mandate throughout the province, a medical student arrived at the House of Industry bearing a telegram from Dr. H.H. Wright (the very professor at the Toronto Medical School who would return Mrs. Gardner's body two years later) requesting that the body of a recently deceased inmate be sent to the school. The keeper of the poorhouse refused to accommodate the student's wishes and the body was buried.

With disgust, House of Industry Inspector John Beattie related this incident in his report to county council a month later. The original Anatomy Act, he noted, was intended to apply only to provincially funded institutions, not a county-run facility like the Wellington County House of Industry. But the revised act omitted reference to its application to provincially funded institutions alone. Though not denying the need to procure bodies for dissection, Beattie argued that it had never been the intention of council to deliver the bodies of deceased inmates from the House of Industry for dissection. If that was now to be the case, he predicted, many inmates would escape the institution, and those who were unable to flee would spend the rest of their days in a miserable state realizing that there was little they could do to keep their bodies from being dissected. The very thought of dealing with the inmates' remains in this manner was so repugnant, Beattie asserted, that council needed to discover if the terms of the act did indeed apply to its House of Industry, and if it did, seek amendment to the "objectionable provisions." Following the delivery of his report, one councilor suggested that in the interests of science the odd body ought to be given to the medical schools. Inspector Beattie and another councilor shot back by stating that perhaps all county officials and county councilors should offer their bodies for dissection. Debate ceased immediately.

But there remains one last controversial aspect of Dr. Groves' position as Physician of the House of Industry and Refuge, the accusations of inhumanity in performing unnecessary surgery on inmates. On this count, it is more difficult than one might think to pass judgment.

For example, one could contend that Dr. Groves acquired much of his surgical skill by practicing on inmates behind the closed doors of the House of Industry. He did, after all, perform his first appendectomy a year after his appointment as the poorhouse's physician. But many of the medical firsts Dr. Groves claimed to have performed occurred years before his appointment to the county facility, and without the evidence presented at the council hearings of 1885 and 1886, it is difficult to gauge exactly the number or the nature of surgeries that Groves may have performed on inmates. Although Groves had been less than forthright about admitting that he had performed surgical procedures at the House of Industry, one cannot assume that the complaints of inhumanity lodged by members of the public on behalf of inmates at the institution were necessarily valid. In the 1880s, people did not consider surgery to be the standard first line of medical treatment. Moreover, we cannot assume members of Wellington County Council did not possess the same prejudices against surgery as those lodging the complaints, nor can we assume that by virtue of their elected office they possessed any greater capability than the general public to pass judgment on the necessity or severity of the surgical procedures performed by Dr. Groves at the institution.

One must also take into consideration the doctors at the Guelph General Hospital. In reading the minutes of Wellington County Council, one could interpret the proceedings involving the Guelph General medical staff and the House of Industry physician as "city doctor vs. country doctor," as "specialist vs. general practitioner" But the difference in medical education between doctors at Guelph General Hospital would have been minimal, and perhaps even slanted in favour of the talented and daring House of Industry physician. In addition, hospitals of the 1880s were years away from shaking their reputation as refuges of last resort for the incurable and as institutions that bred disease and ensured death. It is also important to recognize that doctors at Guelph General Hospital, with their attending medical students observing, performed surgical procedures for educational purposes that, to the general public of the 1880s might also be deemed unnecessary.

What is most striking about the inquests into Dr. Groves' conduct as House of Industry physician during 1885 and 1886, however, is that the verdict of all three inquires was one of procedure, not medical malpractice. Instead of transferring inmates who required substantial medical treatment to Guelph General, Groves had treated them at the House of Industry. Significantly, there is no mention that council had even considered releasing Groves from his post as Physician. At the third inquiry in December 1886, not only did the committee clear Dr. Groves of charges of inhumanity, it upheld the procedure of transferring the infirm to Guelph. Furthermore, the committee recommended to council that if, in future, the transfer of infirm patients was met by similar interference on the part of the Guelph doctors, council should consider constructing a hospital ward at the House of Industry. "For," it concluded, "it

will never do whatever the cost may be, to allow our needy and suffering people to be in any way neglected." It was an odd recommendation though, for council had just financed the construction of a "hospital" wing at the House of Industry in 1884.

From the beginning of his appointment as House of Industry physician in 1882, Abraham Groves, in conjunction with Inspector John Beattie, had sought repairs to the institution as well as the construction of new facilities that would ameliorate the living conditions of the inmates. In 1883 Groves had argued in front of council that if a hospital wing were added, the county could take care of "its sick-poor" who, he claimed, were "certainly as much objects of charity as those who are in health." In addition, the county could save money by eliminating the need to offer grants to Guelph General for the care of infirm inmates.

When construction was complete, Inspector Beattie invited the council out to the institution to see the improvements for themselves. On the afternoon of June 3, 1885 the council travelled from Guelph to visit the House of Industry and upon the resumption of the council session, a motion was carried stating council's satisfaction with the management and officers of the poorhouse. Just a few months later, council would launch its inquiries into Dr. Groves' conduct at the House of Industry.

By agreeing to construct the hospital wing to keep the ill from mixing with the general population of the poorhouse, it would seem that Dr. Groves had assumed council was implicitly encouraging him to take care of the ill inmates and the House of Industry instead of transferring them to Guelph for care. But the odd recommendation of December 1886 indicates that council viewed the construction of the hospital as a way to separate the ill inmates from the rest of the House of Industry's population only, but not as an operating room. Therefore, it seems that the three inquiries into Dr. Groves' conduct were, in fact, a rather awkward manner of clarifying the House of Industry's

Cartoon of Dr. Abraham Groves by J.W. Bengough. Published in the *Fergus News-Record,* 16 July 1914, and several times since. The paper reported, 22 January 1914, that it had secured the services for a day and a half of "the noted cartoonist of Toronto," to sketch some twenty of the professional and business men in town, adding "This work has been undertaken at a great expense, but if our readers appreciate the effort made, we shall feel repaid." Wellington County Museum and Archives A1996.129.

mandate, the Physician's role, and the procedure for the transfer of patients to Guelph for treatment. That was the controversy, not apparently, Dr. Groves' performance of inhumane surgeries on the House of Industry inmates.

Conclusion

So what is the final judgment on the early medical practice of Dr. Abraham Groves? By today's standards, of course, his conduct in all cases appears rather shocking. In the 1870s and 1880s, however, there continued to exist the unpleasant business of acquiring corpses for medical study that, to the general public, was both distasteful and unsettling. But Dr. Groves was conducting himself as most other doctors in the province. He could be labelled "controversial" only for not being ashamed when speaking of his need for a cadaver during the Kinnettles incident of 1879. His conduct was most disreputable during the spring of 1887 when, like a mob boss, he shielded his medical students from arrest by shepherding them to safe-havens. But that grave robbery became a controversy only due to the fact that the Groves brothers, James Kennedy and W.H. Ware had been sloppy enough to get caught in the theft and sale of Mrs. Gardner's body. And as for Abraham Groves' conduct as Physician at the House of Industry, while the reports of the inquiries suggested accusations of medical malpractice, in the end, it would appear the controversy surrounded a misunderstanding of the purpose for which the hospital wing had been added to the poorhouse, along with a territorial war between Groves and doctors at the Guelph General Hospital, fought within the inquiries of Wellington County Council. As with his business dealings and political aspirations, Dr. Abraham Groves gave the local Fergus community plenty of opportunity to question his conduct. But in his medical practice, it would appear that he only ventured into the grey, though sometimes controversial, area to the risht side of the law.

PRESCRIPTION FOR SUCCESS

by Greg Oakes

West Garafraxa Township's most memorable contribution to medicine may be Doctor Abraham Groves whose family moved to Living Springs when he was nine years old. However, Gordon Tamblyn, born in 1878 in Belwood, the son of a physician, deserves recognition for establishing one of Canada's largest retail pharmaceutical empires and revolutionizing the retailing in Canada in the process.

Gordon Tamblyn was born June 8, 1878 at Belwood, Ontario, the son of Doctor and Mrs. T. James Tamblyn. His mother died while he was a child and his father married Catherine Quarrie of West Garafraxa Township. His father died when he was 15. He attended public school at Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute.

In 1901, he graduated from the Ontario College of Pharmacy in Toronto where high marks earned him a gold medal and a scholarship. After graduation he apprenticed for three years in a drug store in Whitby, east of Toronto, and then for a year at the Powell Drug store at King and Yonge Streets in Toronto. He saved four hundred dollars and used it to open G. Tamblyn's Cut Rate Drugs, his own gaslit store on eastern Queen Street at Leo Street, in Toronto's beaches neighbourhood. He worked from morning until night dispensing drugs, decorating, merchandising and making deliveries. There were cottages on the nearby shore of Lake Ontario so Tamblyn also added impulse five and dime items like ice cream and soft drinks to supplement his income. He kept his prices low and he started to attract business. It was tough going at first. He grossed $7,000.00 in revenue the first year and a sizable chunk was from ice cream. But sometimes he cut prices to best rivals and took losses. Often the price cutting worked when the loss leader filled the store and

encouraged the sales of other regularly priced items. A self-made man, Tamblyn pioneered some of the mass marketing concepts prevalent today.

In 1910 he expanded, purchasing a second drug store from a retiring pharmacist who was stunned by the volume of business Tamblyn's merchandising and price cutting attracted. Tamblyn was a fanatic about cleanliness and service. Soon he was selling much more at that location than the previous owner. He incorporated his company as G. Tamblyn Ltd. in 1911 and added another store or two each year. Several of his business partners invested in the corporation, recognizing his gift for meticulous planning and retail savvy. Growth was gradual and sustained. He was confident his business plan would succeed although contemporaries predicted the chain store would fail. Merchandising systems worked on a dignified heavily structured Victorian model but Tamblyn correctly predicted the success of quantity turnover at cheap prices. Changes in shopping patterns after World War One proved his retailing system worked. The older Victorian belief in the restrained and self regulating market place was crushed against war, inflation and consumer unrest. The large retail monoliths kept one palatial urban store and the rest of their business was through mail order sales. Together the various retailers and manufacturers combined to keep prices at a profitable level for the vendors. The Proprietary Articles Trading Association (PATA) had members from virtually every link in the product chain. The power of the wholesalers to resist direct marketing was being eroded. Tamblyn challenged the legality of the Proprietary Articles Trading Association in 1924. He demanded an investigation under the Combines Investigation Act of 1923. Tamblyn cut prices on the goods of any manufacturer who joined PATA. Both Beecham's and Dodd's saw their products prices slashed by fifty percent. Tamblyn caught the price fixers off guard with his huge warehouses with inventory in the event of a long siege. With Tamblyn's help the consumer was born.

A workaholic, Tamblyn paid close attention to the design, employees and inventories of his growing chain of Toronto stores. Every store was cookie cutter in design with uniform pastels of green and orange, the corporate colours, and wide aisles of glass and chrome. Most drug stores were holes in the wall with floor to ceiling wooden cupboards and glassed in shelving along the walls with a thin alley leading to the pharmacy at the rear wall of the store. Tamblyn made wide aisles and low shelving the custom in his stores. He discovered most

customers looked down, so displays were never higher than eye level. Like grocery stores today, he had a strategy for item placement to encourage customers to buy things they never expected to buy.

Instead of placing cigarettes near the door for customer convenience he placed them at the rear of the store. Though his cigarettes had a low mark up the customer would have to walk by displays of seasonal items and sales items. Tamblyn followed the sales patterns in every store and adjusted his inventory accordingly. His downtown stores focused on cosmetic and health items for office girls and supplies for busy white collar workers on lunch hours. The large traffic stores had lunch counters. Suburban stores emphasized house wares and toiletries for growing families. No detail was overlooked. A store in a wealthy neighbourhood might carry several colours of toilet paper but an outlet in a low rent district only white. A store near the stock yards sold veterinary supplies.

Tamblyn insisted on virtually antiseptic premises - today we might call him a "clean freak." His employees were often surprised by unannounced visits from their corporate president, who would stride through a store to an obscure spot and run his deerskin-gloved hand over a shelf. Woe betide the manager if he discovered any dust. He insisted that customers were to be treated as welcome guests in a spotless living room. Maintenance crews from head office attended each shop year round repairing, repainting and modernizing every store. All shelves were feather dusted twice daily. All merchandise was stacked and displayed in uniform rows. Tamblyn admitted his fetish for cleanliness was derived from his mother. She ran a meticulous home.

The customer was king. If the store did not stock an item requested Tamblyn would source it and supply it. Even if he did not profit on that one item it kept the customer coming back. Tamblyn advertised heavily in the local print media. "Tamblyn's Saves You Money" was his battle cry. By 1924 he had 20 stores all over Toronto with annual sales of $1.8 million. Tamblyn is given credit in many sources to be the first retailer in Canada to develop the chain store concept so common today. The techniques supermarkets use today were trumpeted by Tamblyn.

Tamblyn used his mass buying power to get lower prices from the manufacturers. His market clout encouraged manufacturers to sell to him at a discount as he could promote a product with a prominent display in several stores simultaneously. Tamblyn's grew big enough it could ignore wholesalers. It could buy bulk items and repackage them under their own label - eons before Dave Nichol's and no frills grocery products. By buying in large lots he was able to cut prices and still make a profit. Independent druggists would lose money trying to compete with Tamblyn's. Their profit margins dried up in direct storefront competition. The nineteen twenties brought more expansion and Tamblyn's grew to 60 stores by 1930 with outlets in several Ontario cities. The Tamblyn name returned to Wellington County when Guelph got a store at this time. Annual sales approached 4 million. Tamblyn was one of the first

employers to adopt group insurance for its employees. He had a pension plan for store managers.

Tamblyn could not abide the depression of the early nineteen thirties. Concerned with dissipating sales figures, he countered with aggressive merchandising and increased print and radio advertising but revenues still declined. Tamblyn's solution was to work harder. He spent longer hours at the office and he often visited his stores at night. The company was his key interest and he devised further innovations for the comfort and convenience of the public to attract more sales.

Tamblyn was an intense driven man. He took up golf to try to relax but he played it the same way as he ran his business. A perfectionist, if he sliced a shot he brooded about it through the whole round. On August 18, 1933, Tamblyn was playing golf at the Rosedale Golf Course and collapsed from a massive heart attack on the 7th green. Fifteen minutes later he died. Tamblyn was only 55 years old. His widow was Edna B., nee Hurry of Owen Sound and they had four minor children. He had 3 sisters and one brother. His half-sister Elizabeth, born in Guelph married Andrew Granville de Sherbinin, a descendent of a Russian Czarist family, lived in Brazil, then New Jersey where she died in 1979 and is buried in Belsyde Cemetery in Fergus. Tamblyn was an Anglican and a Conservative. He also belonged to the Granite Club, the Parkdale Canoe Club and the Royal Canadian Yacht Club.

After Tamblyn's death, business eventually recovered as the depression waned. Tamblyn's continued to expand its horizons purchasing other drug stores and small drug store chains. In 1939 Tamblyn's hired Kate Scott Aitken and sponsored her daily radio program. Kate's older brother, Bruce Scott was a classmate of Gordon Tamblyn's at pharmacy college. Their other brother Walter worked in the head office at Tamblyn's. Dr. James Tamblyn was a friend of the Scott family and had delivered all those children. The Tamblyns and the Scotts were childhood playmates. Kate Aitken was a natural radio personality and soon developed a career giving advice to homemakers. She eventually became a popular radio and television personality and spokesperson for Tamblyn's. The "Martha Stewart/Oprah" of her day she had two million radio listeners and travelled the world interviewing world leaders and famous personalities. As word of Tamblyn's spread beyond the borders of Ontario more stores were opened and other drug chains in other provinces were bought up. Kate Aitken's twice daily radio program was broadcast on private radio stations all across the country. Her brother Walter Scott eventually became president of Tamblyn's but died in 1943. If Aitken endorsed a product within days it was sold out of all the stores. By the nineteen fifties there were over 130 stores coast to coast and 700 employees. Many of the stores were large department size stores. With the increased emphasis on pill cures and antibiotics, the wonder drugs of the post war era, even more customers flocked to Tamblyn's. Its market

dominance ensured a lucrative profit filling prescriptions. Tamblyn's was the largest drug store chain in Canada in 1955 delivering over 1 million prescriptions a year, although prescriptions accounted for less than 20 percent of its total revenues. Aitken was even more successful on television and gained even more fans. "Mrs. A." was likely the most popular woman in Canada and she always enthused over the firm and its products.

None of Gordon Tamblyn's young children followed their father's footsteps into the pharmacy business. Weston Ltd., the large Canadian food and retail conglomerate purchased Tamblyn's. By the 1960s Tamblyn's began to experience a decline in business. The arrival of suburban malls with discount stores like Towers, Top Discount and Zellers began to cut into Tamblyn's business. Weston's began to tinker with the company's image by renaming the stores Super Save Drug Mart in 1970. That experiment failed and the stores were renamed Tamblyn Supersave and then Tamblyn Drug Mart. By this time Weston's had several subsidiaries suffering severe losses. Weston's was declining. Despite all the rich corporate takeovers it failed to manage its new charges. Planning was weak and in some cases subsidiaries needing investment were ignored. In the late 1970's with poor sales continuing Weston Ltd. sold the 147 store chain to Boots The Chemist PLC of Britain which replaced the Tamblyn's banner with its own. Boots evolved into Pharma Plus Drug Marts Ltd., which is now owned by The Katz Group of Edmonton.

Abraham Groves may be a well known name within the confines of Wellington County but I suspect Gordon Tamblyn became more famous due to his business innovations in the retailing of pharmaceuticals.

REFERENCES:

Aitken, Kate Scott, *Never A Day So Bright,* (Toronto: Harlequin, 1963).

Davies, Charles, *Bread Men,* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1987). pg. 10.

Frayne, Trent, "Tamblyn's Ingenious Prescription For Success," *Maclean's,* 16 April 1955, Pg 31-35.

Guelph Daily Mercury, 19 August 1933, pg. 1.

Hutchinson, Jean, *Wellington County History,* (Grand Valley: Star-Vidette, 1998).

Kearney, Mark and Randy Ray, / *Know that Name,* Dundurn, Toronto, 2002, pg.269-270.

Toronto Daily Star, 19 August 1933, pg. 1.

WELLINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

EXECUTIVE 2002-2003

The editors welcome for publication articles relating to
all aspects of the history of Wellington County

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The Groves Lecture Series was organized by the Wellington County Historical Society, and presented at the Victoria Park Seniors Centre, Fergus, on various Monday mornings, October - December 2002. The series received financial support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture.

Steve Thorning attended Elora Public School and Elora District High School. He received his BA in English and Business Administration from the University of Guelph; his MA in History from McMaster University, addressed the topic "T.E. Bissell of Elora, Ont: A Small Town Manufacturer and His Milieu." His PhD thesis topic was "Hayseed Capitalists: Private Bankers of Ontario." Following a career in banking, he began writing a regular column "Valuing Our History" - it appeared weekly in the *Elora Sentinel / Fergus Thistle* from 1990-1994, and bi-weekly in the *Fergus-Flora News Express* 1994-1998. Since January 1999 the column has been running weekly in the *Wellington Advertiser,* and in 2001, Steve began a second column in the *Dray ton Community News.* From 1973, he has been active in postal history organizations; from 1983 with the Wellington County Historical Society; from 1984 with the Elora and Salem Horticultural Society. Dr. Thorning's civic involvement dates from the Elora Library Board in 1982 through Deputy Reeve, Village of Elora (1994-1998). His publications ever reflect his wide interests and curiosity, ranging from railways, banking and business history through industrial archeology and small-town medical practitioners.

Charles G. Roland, Hannah Emeritus Professor, History of Medicine, McMaster University. Dr. Roland returned to Canada from Mayo Medical School and Mayo Clinic to take up McMaster's Hannah Chair in the History of Medicine, 1977-1999. Upon his retirement, he was appointed Professor Emeritus. He has had a distinguished career, publishing dozens of scholarly articles in the history of medicine. He is best known for his work on Sir William Osier, for compiling important reference material on the history of Canadian medicine, and more recently, for his two latest books on the medical experience of prisoners of war.

Lian goodall describes herself simply as "an Ottawa writer, editor and history researcher." Originally from Belwood, she has lived in Fergus, Elora, Dufferin County and France. She is a graduate of the University of Guelph, and a two-time winner of the Dorothy Shoemaker Award in Kitchener. She has worked at "Woodside," the boyhood home of William Lyon Mackenzie King, about whom she has written a biography. In the early 1990s, lian founded *PLUME* a newspaper to encourage children's reading and writing skills. Lian is an avid soccer fan and player; her first book, published in 1999, is about Argentinian soccer player Diego Maradona. When she was in Fergus, she played flute with the Fergus Brass Band, and found them delightful group; for *Wellington County History,* she wrote about the group's effort to hire a Bandmaster. She is currently working on a biography of the first black woman

to receive national recognition in this country, Nova Scotian singer Portia White. Before she left Elora for Ottawa, Han's farewell gift to the Belwood community was her performance of *Grand Women, Quilts, Music and More,* the success of which earned further performance at Guelph's River Run Centre.

Sheri Cockerill who grew up in Elora, was fortunate to attend Elora Public School in the old building, graduated from Centre Wellington and studied Law and Security at Conestoga College. She has also lived in Guelph and Rockwood, and then returned to Elora, where some of you may remember her from the LCBO checkout counter. From St. Jerome's College, Waterloo, Sheri received her BA in History, with a legal studies option. From the University of Guelph, she has her Master's degree in Canadian History.

Ross Fair is a former resident of the Arthur area, having grown up on a dairy farm in West Luther. He holds a Bachelor's degree from Waterloo, for which he focussed on Canadian, American and Ontario social and political history. For his Masters, he honed in on 20th Century Ontario social history. He holds a PhD from Queen's University. He is the author of *Churchless Sundays*, a history of the Anglican Church in Erin Township. His article on the original survey of Arthur Township appeared in a recent edition of *Wellington County History*. His study concerning the leadership offered by Upper Canada's agricultural societies is currently under review for publication. He is also writing a history of the attempts to cultivate hemp in Upper and Lower Canada.

Greg Oakes' story of Tamblyn's Drugstores was not part of the lecture series, but is included to gratify that author's loyal following.

Greg Oakes, LL.B, C.O., practices law in Elora. He is a Life Member and Past President of the Wellington County Historical Society, the Elora Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, and the American Bashkir Curly Registry. A Captain in the 1 l^{m} Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery, he has served the guns for 24 years. He was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal. Together with his wife Sonya, he owns a horse breeding farm on the Elora Road.

For the sake of consistency, the spelling of practice as a noun and verb has been adopted, in deference to *The Globe and Mail Style Book.*

Production assistance was gratefully received from James Gow and Wayne Bridge. Cover photo of Dr. Abraham Groves: Wellington County Museum and Archives, ph 627; The illustration of the first Tamblyn's store from that company's advertisement (page 217) in *Toronto's 100 Years* by Jesse Edgar Middleton (Toronto: The Centennial Committee, 1934). Rear cover advertisement: *The Guelph Mercury*, 26 June, 1958. Printing: Ampersand, Guelph.

...fully completed a full trans... ...al cycle in flight. The X-14, in ... ...t test at Niagara Falls, N.Y., ...rose vertically from the ground ... ...convention.

...the week this week ... ...sided. It will include a ... ...ence the hospital ... ...occurred Sunday, ...itself. Mrs. A. Grove ... ...thumously. Dr. A. G...

Mrs. Groves, herse... ...tered nurse, lives ju... ...street from her la... ...lifelong work—the ... ...is a lifelong residen... ...with a sojourn to N... ...where she receive... ...diploma. As a grad... ...a time when nurse... ...she was a great h... ...tor husband in hi... ...career.

The amazing pa... ...tal story, is that ... ...ality, most hospi... ...and stone and do... ...personal touch t... ...hospital has. Fro... ...tient enters for ... ...they leave ever... ...for the patient's ... ...being. The fri... ...that prevails ... ...would have to ... ...personality, an... ...the most vita... ...Fergus.

20,000 OPER...

Dr. A. Gro... ...better classe... ...of the centu... ...is concerne... ...Lockwood h... ...Dr. Groves ... ...travelled ... ...country ro... ...gy, a cutte... ...bile. He n... ...performed ... ...operations ... ...physician ... ...friend a...

"Dr. G... ...practised ... ...before e... ...expound... ...had the ... ...to boil ... ...gauze ...

...to be ... ...tions". ... Dr. ... ...appen... ...tinent ... ...remo... ...throu... ...He...

...The Name Of Mrs. Groves ... ...Of Hospital