

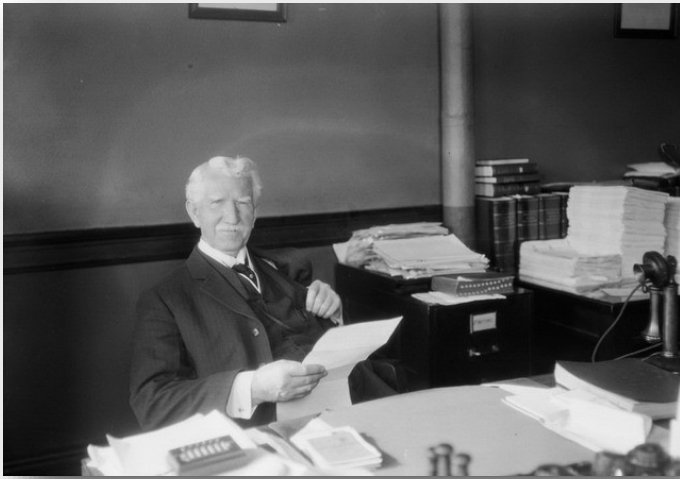
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British Home Child Group International

Design and Layout by Karen Mahoney

Dr. Charles Hastings and the Cleansing of Toronto by Sandra Joyce



Dr. Hastings - Photo courtesy Toronto Archives

A few years ago, I was lucky enough to come across an exhibit at the Toronto Archives while doing research for one of my books. It explained in detail the history and development of Toronto's public health system.

In the display, one man stood out amongst the others. Dr. Charles John Hastings, born in 1858 in Markham Township, was the Chief Medical Officer of Toronto from 1910 to 1929. He was responsible for some of the most notable changes in Toronto's public health system including his crusades for the pasteurization of milk and chlorination of the water supply – saving lives by the hundreds.

Yet, for all Dr. Hastings did for the betterment of the people of Toronto, he had one failing. Dr. Hastings was

one of the most prominent members of The Eugenics Society of Canada (ESC). The Society was anti-immigration believing that the Canadian government was sacrificing the well-being of its own people by allowing new immigrants to enter the country who were of an inferior race.

Other members of the eugenic movement were Dr. C. K. Clarke, a prominent Canadian psychiatrist, who was so against the child migrant scheme from Britain that he staged a demonstration against a group of arriving Barnardo children and demanded that they be mentally and physically examined on the spot. Dr. Hincks, who established an outpatient psychiatric clinic at the Toronto General Hospital was also a member of the ESC. Later, in 1918, Hincks, formed the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene (CNCMH) which later became the Canadian Mental Health Association. One of the early reports released by this organization suggested that certain races were genetically inferior to others, and recommended that they be sterilized in some cases.

Hincks believed that immigrants represented a large portion of the 'feeble-minded' and that these 'mental defectives' were at the root of society's problems.

According to author Thelma Wheatley on her website, "One group (the Canadian National Committee for Hygiene) focused on were the thousands of destitute British "Home" children sent to Canada by the British government as cheap indentured labour. Many organized groups arranged the immigration of these children, such as Dr Barnardo's Homes." *continued on page 2.....*

Dr. Charles Hastings continued

Aside from his forays into the eugenic world, Dr. Hastings did bring about many good changes in Toronto's public health: he introduced medical and dental inspections in schools and established children's clinics. He helped set up the public health nursing system, assisted in eliminating outdoor privies, promoted childhood immunizations, and instituted health inspections for homes and restaurants. The improvements lowered Toronto's death rate, and especially the infant immortality rate from communicable diseases, immeasurably.



From BlogTO N. McConnell, Illustrator

By 1922, under his leadership, Toronto had the lowest death rate of any large North American city. Such advancements led to Hasting's becoming the President of the Canadian Public Health Association in 1916 and later, the American Public Health Association in 1918.

However, Dr. Hastings' concerns about Toronto slums, which were overcrowded and filthy, were based on the idea that they were dangerous on the basis of morality and decency and his education policies of the 'lower classes' were seen as condescending and arrogant by some of those receiving them.

At the age of 71, Hasting retired in 1929 after nineteen years at the head of the city's health department. Upon his death two years later, he was eulogized by the Canadian Medical Association Journal: "It may be said, without the slightest exaggeration, that as a public health administrator Charles Hastings was without a peer on the continent."

Dr. Hastings did immense good for public health in Toronto and Canada but his involvement in the eugenic movement blemishes that memory. He too, along with many others in Canada, North America and Europe had a distaste of the poor, based solely on their genetic makeup.

Marchmont Plaque by Sandra Joyce



L-R - R Hughes, Mayor Christopher, S. Joyce, K. Mahoney, J Gilchrist

On British Home Child Day, September 28th, the British Home Child Group International (BHCIGI) and the Hastings County Historical Society unveiled a historical plaque that has been placed on the site of the former Marchmont Receiving Home at 159 Yeomans Street in Belleville.

This plaque would not have happened without the help of funding provided by members of our group. Thank you! You were all there in spirit!

Speakers included Richard Hastings, President of the Hastings County Historical Society, Belleville's Mayor Taso Christopher, BHCIGI President Karen Mahoney and Vice-President Sandra Joyce and Jim Gilchrist, author of the book, *The Marchmont Home*.

The BHCIGI thought it important to have a plaque at the former Marchmont Home, as many British Home Child descendants have had trouble finding the building. The building's former postal address was listed on Moira Avenue. Parts of the grounds had been sold off, and houses were built that now block the access from Moira.

We also thought it important for residents to pause for a moment when they see the plaque and become aware of the building's significance.

Over 10,000 children were brought to Canada through the Marchmont Home that was run by Annie MacPherson, a Scottish evangelist. Although the first two buildings run by MacPherson burned down, the third still stands. Through these three buildings, under Annie MacPherson's direction, other organizations like Barnardo's and Quarrier's also distributed children to farms and domestic situations before they opened their own Receiving Homes.

There were around 150 people who travelled to Belleville to witness the unveiling and it was a perfect day. After the ceremony, descendants mingled, sampled refreshments and viewed artifacts set up by the BHCIGI.

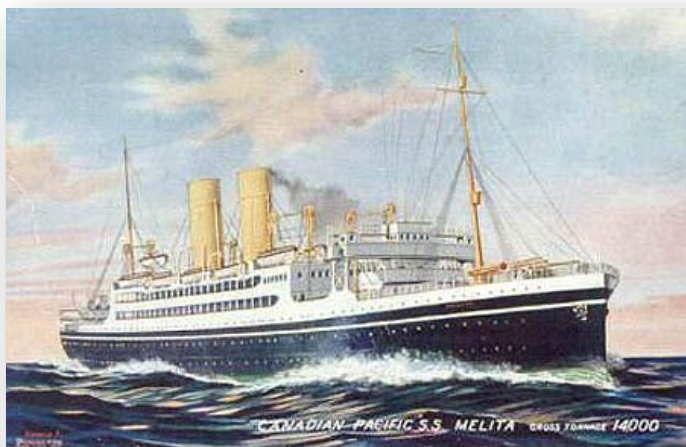
Two quilts were also displayed in the room – the British Home Child Group International's Sesquicentennial Quilt and Hazel Perrier's 2010 Year of the Home Child Albertan quilt.

The stories of the 2010 Albertan quilt, the 2010 Ontario quilt and BHCIGI's Sesquicentennial British Home Child quilt [on our website](#)

Thanks once again to all the plaque's sponsors!!



S.S. Melita by Sandra Joyce



The SS Melita had a slow start to life. At first, known just as 136367, she was put on hold just after her keel was laid down in Glasgow in 1913. Although her builders, Barclay, Curle and Co, were British, her purchaser was the German Hamburg-America Line (HAPAG) and the First World War was fast approaching.

While on the stocks, the Canadian Pacific bought her and sent her to Belfast to Harland and Wolff to be fitted out and have her engines installed.

In January 1918, she was launched as the SS Melita and immediately requisitioned by the Royal Navy to serve as a troopship. She brought many soldiers across the Atlantic

and was even attacked by an UBoot in July but managed to carry on, unharmed.

After the war, she was involved in transporting Canadian and American troops back across the Atlantic to their homes and returned German POWs who had been held in North America, back to Europe.

After being overhauled in Antwerp in 1920, she began to service the Liverpool – St. John, New Brunswick route. It is estimated that 1070 British Home Children from various organizations including the Church of England Waifs and Strays, Barnardos, and Annie MacPherson arrived in Canada aboard her.

At this point in time, she had 386 Cabin class berths, 115 alternative third class, 331 permanent third class and 1098 portable third class berths.

From 1922 to 1927, the Melita's route was change to the Antwerp - Southampton - St John route. During this time, in 1925, she was withdrawn from service in order to be refitted, with the tonnage increased and superheaters installed. Some cabin spaces were replaced with room for cargo. After 1925, she returned to servicing British routes like Liverpool, Glasgow, Greenock and Belfast to Halifax and St. John

After the Great Depression, cheap cruises became popular and the Melita was transferred to this role, steaming to destinations like the Canary Islands and different ports in the Mediterranean.

The SS Melita was sold for scrap in Genoa, Italy in 1935. However, with World War Two approaching, she was bought by Italian government, renamed the Liguria and was used once again, for troop transport. It didn't take long before she was badly damaged on New Year's Day, 1941 during a British raid in Tobruk, a port city on Libya's eastern Mediterranean coast, near the border of Egypt. She was scuttled.

Five years after the end of the war, in 1950, she was refloated and towed to Italy where she finally ended her days.



*British Home Child Group
International*

For Research: karen@britishhomechild.com

By regular mail: 97 Dagmar Ave., Toronto, ON, M4M 1V9

Our website: www.britishhomechild.com

To book a speaker: sandrajoyce@rogers.com

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