



Pen & PADDLE

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The Champlain Society and the “Chalmers Award in Ontario History”

For the past fifteen years, the Champlain Society has had the distinct honour of administrating The Floyd S. Chalmers Award in Ontario History. This unique prize was established by Chalmers in 1983 when he was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Ontario Historical Studies Series. It is given annually to the best book written on any aspect of Ontario history in the preceding calendar year. The award is the combination of cash prize and, as stipulated by Floyd Chalmers himself, an Inuit sculpture. The winner is announced and feted at the annual general meeting of the Champlain Society each year.

Floyd Sherman Chalmers (1898-1993) made outstanding contributions to Canada through his work as a journalist and philanthropist. He started in the newspaper business when he was 17 as a reporter for the *Toronto News* and *Toronto World*. Chalmers moved on to the *Financial Post* in 1919, advancing to the position of editor in 1925. He eventually rose to occupy several senior executive positions with the Maclean-Hunter publishing company, becoming its Honorary Chairman in 1979.

Chalmers was extremely active in promoting the arts in Canada. He guided numerous organizations by serving influential roles: director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, vice-chairman of the Royal Conservatory of Music, president of the Canadian Opera Company and the Stratford Shakespearean Festival, and Chancellor of

York University. He founded the Floyd S. Chalmers Foundation, and initiated the *Encyclopedia of Canadian Music*. The foundation continues to provide substantial assistance to young Canadian artists. Chalmers was the recipient of numerous honorary degrees, was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1967, and was elevated to a Companion of the Order in 1984 in recognition of his contribution to the arts.

Changing of the Guard

The Chalmers Award has been directed by Dr. Jeanne Beck of Hamilton from its inception. With her retirement this fall, Mr. Lutzen Riedstra, the former archivist of City of Stratford and County of Perth, is assuming the duties. A former President of the Ontario Association of Archivists, and member of the Champlain Society Council, he is the author of *Stratford: Its Heritage and Its Festival* (1999) and *History of Perth County, 1967 to 2003* (2003). Mr. Riedstra is an avid reader, deeply knowledgeable about Ontario's history, and, as one would expect from any good Stratfordian, a dedicated theatergoer.

Adjudication of the Award

The entries are solicited from publishers, and are adjudicated by a panel of distinguished Canadian historians. The panel is chaired by Dr. Francine Noel, Professor of History at Nipissing University and is completed by Terry Crowley, Professor of History at the University of Guelph (and a former

winner of the Chalmers) and Dr. Brian Osborne, retired professor of Geography at Queen's University.

Submissions are judged on the basis of the strength of the book's arguments, the range and significance of the subject, the quality of the research, and the excellence of the literary style. Entries have covered a broad range of topics, but some categories are not eligible for submission: diaries and volumes of documents (unless accompanied by substantial interpretive material prepared by the editor), textbooks, collections of essays by different authors, books in translation, and bibliographies. No award will be made if none of the entries are deemed to have sufficient quality, and in some years an additional entry may be recognized by receiving “honorable mention.”

The most recent winners were:

Kerry Abel, *Changing Places: History, Community, and Identity in North-eastern Ontario*, McGill-Queen's University Press (2006)

Philip Girard, *Bora Laskin: Bringing Law to Life*. Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, University of Toronto Press. (2005)

Peter L. Storck, *Journey to the Ice Age: Discovering An Ancient World*. University of British Columbia Press (2004)

Terry Crowley, *Marriage of Minds: Isabel and Oscar Skelton Reinventing Canada*. University of Toronto Press. (2003)

AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL MOREAU ON DAVID THOMPSON

As North America celebrates the bicentennial of the great explorer David Thompson's travels to the West, the Champlain Society is proud to be associated with the publication of a new series of his writings. The first volume, *The 1850 Travels*, will be available for purchase in the Spring of 2009. It will bring David Thompson and his world to a new generation of readers and will be a major event of the 2007-2012 Thompson Bicentennial celebrations.

David Thompson (1770-1857) is one of Canada's great pioneers and intellectual giants. Known to some as "the Stargazer", he mapped over 3.9 million square kilometres of North America and for this was described by J.B. Tyrell as the "greatest land geographer who ever lived." The Champlain Society celebrates the 200th anniversary of his travels with the publication of a new critical edition of the writings of David Thompson. This is a joint effort with McGill-Queens University Press and the University of Washington Press. Patrice Dutil, Vice President of The Champlain Society, recently interviewed Bill Moreau, the editor of the new edition. Dr. Moreau is now a school teacher in the Toronto District School Board. He will be presenting his work at the Champlain Society's Annual Meeting on October 25th.

Patrice Dutil: What attracted you to this project? Why Thompson, why now?

Bill Moreau: This project grew out of my doctoral work at the University of Toronto. In 1993, Germaine Warkentin generously agreed to

supervise my thesis, and she urged me to look at Thompson's manuscript, housed at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. I only had to look at it once to see that there was a great project here, and I spent three years puzzling out the story of how this 716-page manuscript came to be written. The last chapter of my thesis considered how the work might be edited for today's reader, and so when I was invited by the Society in 1998 to take on this task, it was a natural progression in my work. The



question of why now really lies with the publishers, McGill-Queen's and

University of Washington Press, who expressed the initial interest in publishing a new edition. The last 10-15 years have seen a resurgence of interest in Canadian history generally, and in Thompson in particular, reflected in the current Thompson Bicentennial celebrations taking place across North America. There is a sense that he is a figure who deserves to be better known, and that

his own writings ought to be more accessible.

Patrice Dutil: What did you find most challenging in interpreting his writing?

Bill Moreau: The greatest challenge for me was to situate his writings in the land. With little practical knowledge of Western North America, that meant long hours poring over maps and itineraries, trying to understand just where Thompson was, and when. But in the end, Thompson himself became the finest guide to the spaces of the West that one could wish to have.

Patrice Dutil: What surprised you most about the man and his life?

Bill Moreau: For me, the most awe-inspiring facet of Thompson's life is the sheer breadth of his experience, both in time and space. This is a man who grew up literally in the shadow of the Palace of Westminster, while the great debates about the rebellious American colonies were taking place, and who in his last years saw the beginnings of responsible government and industrialization in Canada. That's a huge chunk of history. And the ground he covered in North America, from Lake Athabasca to the banks of the Missouri, from New York City to the mouth of the Columbia, is on an epic scale.

Patrice Dutil: What was the most pleasant task?

Bill Moreau: The most pleasant task was surely the opportunity to come to

know other Thompson “fans.” He has such a diverse following, from wilderness canoeists and land surveyors to academics and archivists, and each one of us seems to have our own unique take on who Thompson was and why he mattered.

Patrice Dutil: How would you characterize Thompson?

Bill Moreau: My angle on Thompson is the master storyteller, which is also a reputation he enjoyed in his own time. He just knows how to tell a tale, and accounts like his encounter with the Devil or his near-drowning on the Fond du Lac River really come to life when they are spoken aloud. So, I really hope that the Travels makes it onto an audio CD!

Patrice Dutil: How have you chosen to divide the material?

Bill Moreau: Volume One, to appear in the Spring 2009, will contain what I’m calling the “1850 Travels,” covering roughly the years 1784-1805. It’s the draft that Thompson was working on when he had to abandon writing because of his poor eyesight. Volume

Two will contain an earlier draft, the planned, containing a selection of “1848 Travels,” which tells the story of Thompson’s letters, contributions to the newspapers and prose sketches from his notebooks, very little of which has been published before. In addition, a third volume is

The Champlain Society’s “Order of Good Cheer”

To recognize and honour the generosity of its members, the Society created new membership categories in 2008:

Patrons of the “Habitation”: This membership category recognizes annual gifts of over \$5,000 and identifies supporters of the very “foundation” of the Champlain Society: individuals, corporations and foundations who provide sustaining grants.

Patrons of the “Astrolabe”: This membership category recognizes annual gifts that range between \$1000-\$4999 and identifies supporters whose funds allow the Champlain Society the capacity to “seek out” and publish manuscripts

Patrons of the “Capitaine”: This membership category recognizes annual gifts that range between \$100-\$999 and identifies supporters whose funds allow the Champlain Society the capacity to “steer in confidence”.

Patrons of the “Voyageur”: This membership category recognizes annual gifts that range between \$50-\$99 and identifies supporters whose support allows the Champlain society to pursue the production of its books and website.

(Please fill out the membership form)

The Champlain Society Website (www.champlainsociety.ca)

For many years, the Champlain Society website has been a point of contact for members and the history-passionate public seeking information about the works of the CS.

The Society has been hard at work to make the site easier to navigate, easier to use, and more fun. More information about the activities of the Society will be provided, and a new look will make the visit more pleasant. The new site will make membership renewals and upgrades easy to accomplish, ordering books will also be easier.

Certainly, the jewel of the Champlain Society website is its digital collection. It contains fully searchable digital editions of **83** of the Champlain Society’s most important volumes (over 41,000 printed pages). Among them are Samuel de Champlain’s voyages in New France, Sagard’s *Long journey to the country of the Hurons*; *The diary of Sir John Franklin’s first land expedition to the Arctic, 1819-22*, *Select British documents of the Canadian war of 1812*, John McLean’s *Notes of a twenty-five year’s service in the Hudson’s Bay territories* and *The journal of*

Captain James Colnett aboard the Argonaut from April 26, 1789 to Nov. 3, 1791, to name but a few.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

The Champlain Society “Roast” for
Samuel de Champlain:

Massey College, 18 November (starts
at 6:30 pm)

Please sign up at
www.champlainsociety.ca.

WHAT'S NEW

With You?

Are you moving?
Do you have a new email address?

Send us your new information so we can keep in touch with you. Mail it to the address at the right or email info@champlainsociety.ca.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
Province _____ Postal Code _____
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With Us!

Upcoming Events
& Publications

The Society is pleased to present the following schedule for its publications, which may be subject to change as projects unfold during the coming years:

- *The Meaning of Life: The Scientific and Social Experiences of Everitt and Robert Murray, 1930-1964.* By Donald Avery and Mark Eaton. Late 2008.
- *The Writings of David Thompson.* Edited by William E. Moreau. Published with McGill-Queen's University Press and University of Washington Press. 3 volumes, with volume 1 scheduled for 2008.
- *The Works of Samuel de Champlain, 2nd Edition.* Edited by Conrad Heidenreich and Janet Ritch. 6 volumes, with volume 1 scheduled for 2008.
- *The Letters and Diaries of Harry Cassidy and Beatrice Pearce: The Courtship Years.* Edited by Keith Walden. 2009.
- *The Voyages of Pierre-Esprit Radisson.* Edited by Germaine Warkentin. 2010.

For more than 100 years, **The Champlain Society** has increased public awareness of and access to Canada's rich documentary heritage. Our goals are

- to publish Canadian documentary materials edited and produced to the highest standards both for members of the Society and for the public at large;
- to assist the Canadian public to a better understanding of the nation's past through occasional public lectures, seminars, colloquia, conferences and the publication of occasional papers;
- to serve as an advocate on the proper care of and accessibility to Canada's historical records; and
- to increase participation in the work of the Society by enlarging and broadening the membership.



The Champlain Society
www.champlainsociety.ca

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