

15-1

**GEORGE HENRY MALCOLMSON, MD
1868-1944**

GEORGE HENRY MALCOLMSON, MD 1868-1944

*“He has journeyed widely in search of knowledge
bringing to our specialty (Radiology)
that enviable prestige, in the sunshine of which we bask”⁽¹⁾*

Introduction

Dr. George Henry Malcolmson was Alberta's pioneer Radiologist. He brought the first x-ray unit to Alberta and the little town of Frank in 1906. Dr. Malcolmson became Alberta's first full time radiologist in Edmonton in 1915. In 1919 Drs. Malcolmson and Edgar Allin brought the first radium to Western Canada. In January 1941 Dr. Malcolmson was appointed the first Director of the Alberta Cancer Service. That service provided the first free cancer treatment in Canada.

From Youth to MD 1868-1897

George Henry Malcolmson was born on April 7, 1868 in Hamilton, Ontario. He entered medical school with John S. McEachern at the University of Toronto and graduated in 1896 at the age of 27. 1896 was the year the first x-ray machine arrived at the UofT. X-rays had been identified by W.K. Rontgen in 1895, in Germany.

After a year of internship at the Hamilton General Hospital, Malcolmson made a life-long decision to spend two months out of every two years investigating medical practices in more advanced centres in North America. Through those continuing educational trips he would meet and befriend Drs. Osler, Kelly, Halsted, the Mayo Brothers and many other notable physicians and teachers.⁽²⁾

Lethbridge and the Crowsnest Pass 1897-1911

In 1897 Dr. Malcolmson packed his medical bag and headed west to start a practice in Lethbridge. There he joined Dr. F.H. Mewburn as a general practitioner and anesthetist for a year. He registered as a physician in the NWT on September 5, 1898.⁽³⁾ At the end of his year with Dr. Mewburn, Malcolmson signed a contract with the Canadian Pacific Railway to serve as their Medical Health Officer, during the construction of the Crows Nest Pass Railway. That moved him to the more windy town of Pincher Creek, where he established a general practice and discharged his CPR medical contract duties.⁽⁴⁾

In 1901 Dr. Malcolmson moved his practice another thirty miles westward to the coal town of Frank. By scrimping his pennies, he was able to open one of Alberta's first rural hospitals in 1902. It was an annex to his house. His wife was one of the three nurses. Another nurse was the first graduate from the pioneer Calgary General Hospital, Mary Moodie. She joined Dr. Malcolmson in 1902 for a year and a half.⁽⁵⁾

The Frank Slide 1903

On April 29, 1903 at 4:10 am the Malcolmson house shuttered and shook as Turtle Mountain fractured. Eighty million tons of rock avalanched down its north side, narrowly missing Malcolmson's home, the adjacent annex and most of the town of Frank. Ten per-

-
1. McGuffin, W. Herbert "Address to the Canadian Association of Radiologists," March 4, 1939, as quoted in Henri Chatenay's *The Country Doctors*, page 17, Matrix Press, 1980. The Malcolmson profile was published in *Five Celebrated Surgeons of Southern Alberta*, Occasional Paper #43, by the Lethbridge Historical Society in May 2006.
 2. Stanley, George D. "Dr. George Malcolmson," CACHB 14(4): 78-85, February 1950. This comprehensive article on Dr. Malcolmson was written from notes made during a visit to Edmonton to meet with Dr. Malcolmson's widow, Dr. Pat Malcolmson and Dr. J.O. Baker. Other Edmontonians who knew Dr. Malcolmson added colorful comments. Henri Chatenay wrote a chapter on Dr. Malcolmson in *The Country Doctors*, pages 5-17, Matrix Press, 1980. H.C. Jamieson provided a paragraph on Dr. Malcolmson in *Early Medicine in Alberta*, page 131, AMA, 1947.
 3. Stanley, George D. "Doctors in Alberta registered for over 40 years." CACHB 8(4): 22, February 1944.
 4. Stanley, George D. "Dr. George Malcolmson," pages 78-79.
 5. Smith, Catherine M. "Marion Moodie: from proper lady to new woman." *Alberta History* 49(1): 9-15, Winter 2001. Also see the Jamieson manuscript entitled "Marion E. Moodie, first nurse to graduate in Alberta," deposited in the Heber C. Jamieson Papers accession #81-104 at the UofA Archives, 5 pages, (n.d.). Miss Moodie started her nursing career at the nine bed Calgary Cottage Hospital in April 1895, three weeks before its five patients were moved to the new Calgary General Hospital (CGH). She was the first nurse to graduate in Alberta, in 1898. Miss Moodie spent the next five years doing private duty nursing throughout Southern Alberta. Catherine Munn Smith was a third generation CGH nurse. Ms. Moodie was her great-Aunt. The article was based on Ms. Moodie's autobiographical notes, which were undated and unreferenced.



15-2

Dr. Malcolmson's Home and Hospital, Frank, circa 1903
cent of the town was destroyed.⁽⁶⁾ There were seven houses in the path of the slide.⁽⁷⁾ Canada's most deadly landslide lasted about one hundred seconds.⁽⁸⁾

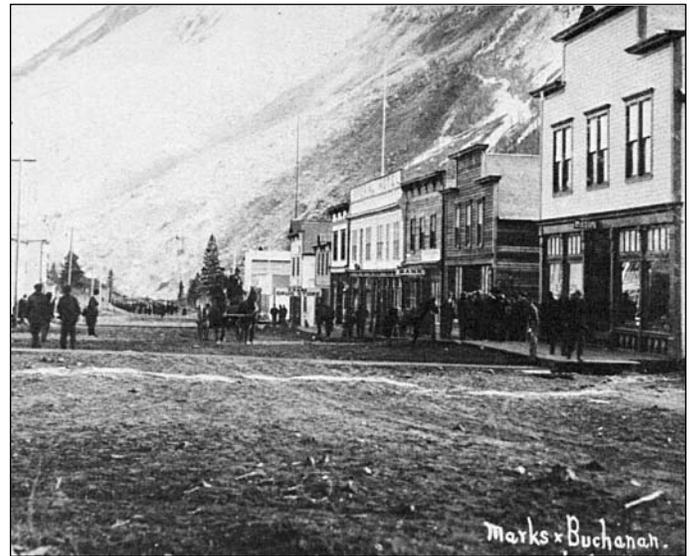
About seventy Frank residents died, as a direct result of the slide. Twelve bodies were recovered.⁽⁹⁾ Ten were injured, four of them seriously. They were all sent to Dr. Malcolmson's "hospital", which was still intact. The worst cases were from the windblast. The wind drove a board into one patient's abdomen. Feathers from the patient's bedspread were blown into the wound at the same time. Malcolmson removed each imbedded feather, one at a time.⁽¹⁰⁾ A second patient had a splinter that penetrated his liver. A third patient had a broken hip. The fourth suffered shock from internal injuries and stone splinters, which were embedded like a pincushion.⁽¹¹⁾ All of Dr. Malcolmson's hospitalized patients survived.⁽¹²⁾

After the initial rockslide, sporadic rockslides continued for the next forty-eight hours, but there were no more major avalanches. Seventeen miners were trapped underground. Surface miners worked round the clock on the Slide site to try to reach the miners

trapped underground. On April 29, thirteen hours after the Slide, the seventeen trapped miners dug their own way to freedom, through twenty-nine feet of coal and limestone.⁽¹³⁾ One had a fractured leg. The rest walked to Dr. Malcolmson's temporary infirmary.

On April 30 Drs. O.C. Edwards and G.A. Kennedy arrived by train from Fort Macleod, with a team of nurses and a contingent of NWMP officers. For the physicians and their volunteers it was a short stay. The four serious casualties were in Malcolmson's hospital and were stable and beginning to recover. The triage team from Fort Macleod returned home almost immediately.⁽¹⁴⁾

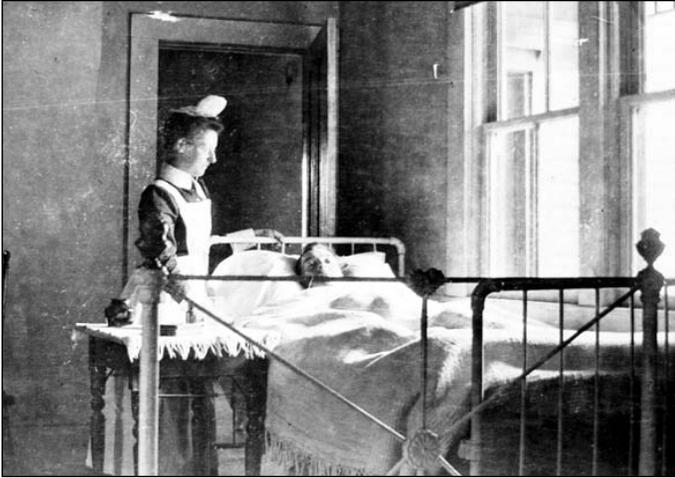
Wanting an "on the spot" story, the Winnipeg Free Press sent David A. Stewart, the future Manitoba tuberculosis leader and medical historian, to cover the unfolding Frank Slide story. The year before, Stewart had spent the summer of 1902 as a student minister at Frank. Dr. Malcolmson tried to convinced



Main Street, Frank, April 29, 1903

15-3

-
6. Anderson, Frank *The Frank Slide Story*. Frontier Book No. 1 pages 30, 32-33, 38, 42-55, 58. Frontiers Unlimited, Calgary, 1983.
7. Kerr, J.W. *Frank Slide*, page 6, Barker Publishing, 1990.
8. Cruden, D.M. "Report on the Great Landslide at Frank," *Alberta History* 50(2): 16-21, Spring 2002.
9. Anderson, Frank *The Frank Slide Story*, page 47.
10. Kerr, J.W. *Frank Slide*, pages 20, 26.
11. Anderson, Frank *The Frank Slide Story*, pages 32-33.
12. Kerr, J.W. *Frank Slide*, pages 18, 21. Injuries included a fractured thigh (Warrington), a splinter penetrating the liver (Ackroyd), internal injuries (Watkins), shock (Watkins), scrapes and bruises (six in the Ennis family), bruised leg (Warrington) and bruised chest (McKenzie).
13. Kerr, J.W. *Frank Slide*, pages 14-15.
14. Anderson, Frank *The Frank Slide Story*, page 47.



Mary Moodie, RN with a Frank Slide patient
in Dr. Malcolmson's Hospital, 1903 15-4

him to switch his studies from theology to medicine, which he did. In all likelihood, Stewart stayed with the Malcolmson's for the weeks he was in Frank, helping Dr. Malcolmson during the day, while writing Free Press articles in the evening.⁽¹⁵⁾ Stewart conducted one of the first assessments of the Turtle Mountain fracture, by climbing the mountain on May 1, 1903.⁽¹⁶⁾

Because of the threat of flooding as well as another slide, Premier F.W. Haultain and CPR chief engineer A. McHenry decided to evacuate the town on May 2, 1903. The injured, who lay in beds in the annex and Dr. Malcolmson's living room, were loaded aboard special cars and transported one and a half miles to the NWMP barracks. The NWMP moved out under canvas to vacate their barracks. It became the temporary Frank emergency hospital.⁽¹⁷⁾

A Geological Survey assessment of the Turtle Mountain slide was commissioned on April 30, 1903. Two experienced Dominion surveyors were

sent to the site: R.G. McConnell and R.W. Brock.⁽¹⁸⁾ In their June 12, 1903 report, the surveyors concluded that the mountain was very unstable. That did not close the mine. Instead new entrances and shafts were dug underneath the slide. In 1905 there were two serious fires. Seepage from the nearby lake continued to be a problem. Coalmine operations were finally discontinued in 1911, when new warnings were issued by the Geological Survey. Most of the remaining Frank businesses, relocated to Blairmore in the Crowsnest Pass.

The first x-ray machine in Alberta 1906

During an educational trip to Boston in 1906, Malcolmson's interest in x-rays was rekindled. He became so excited by their potential that he bought an x-ray machine and brought it to his hospital in Frank that same year.⁽¹⁹⁾ It was the first x-ray unit in a rural hospital, if not the first in Alberta, arriving the



Clearing Debris from the Turtle Mountain Slide,
Frank, April 29, 1903 15-5

-
15. Houston, C. Stuart "D.A. Stewart, 1874-1937: Western Tuberculosis Pioneer." *Annals RCPSC* 25(1): 36-38, February 1992. David Stewart returned to Frank in the summer of 1903 to do a locum. Dr. Stewart pioneered the TB program at the Ninette Sanitorium in Manitoba.
16. Stewart, David A. "A Disaster in the Rockies." *Canadian Magazine* 1903(4): 227-233. The article was one of the most descriptive and well illustrated (9 photographs) of the Slide. The population of Frank was 1000.
17. Anderson, Frank *The Frank Slide Story*, pages 47-48.
18. McConnell, R.G., Brock, R.W. "Report on the Great Landslide at Frank, Alberta, 1903," 52 pages, dated June 12, 1903, for the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC). The report was included as Part VIII of the 1903 GSC annual report and was reprinted by the Edmonton Geological Society in 2003. The report concluded that sudden movement, weather, earthquake shock, heavy precipitation, rapid temperature change, closing chambers of the mine "... may precipitate ... a second destructive slide ... It certainly seems advisable that it be moved a short distance up the valley ..."
19. Stanley, George D. "Dr. George Malcolmson," page 82. Stanley says Malcolmson decided to install an x-ray machine in 1906. Jamieson in *Early Medicine in Alberta*, (page 131) says it arrived in 1907. Dr. E.A. Braithwaite brought his first x-ray unit to Edmonton in 1906. In his letter to Dr. G.R. Johnson June 19, 1942, Dr. Braithwaite was careful to point out that he brought the first, second and third x-ray machines to Edmonton, not Alberta.

same year as units in Edmonton and Saskatoon.⁽²⁰⁾ X-rays were not new to Western Canada. A decade earlier the first glass prints had been made in Winnipeg.

There was no indication how often either Drs. Malcolmson in Frank or Braithwaite in Edmonton used their early machines. Nor was there any publication of a spectacular “first case”, as documented by Dr. M.S. Inglis in Winnipeg in 1896. He used an x-ray to settle a legal suit.⁽²¹⁾ If it was a Victor like Dr. E.A. Braithwaite brought to Edmonton in 1906, it took twenty minutes to wind up.⁽²²⁾

The General Practice Years in Edmonton 1911-1915

In 1911 Dr. Malcolmson took another medical education break, traveling to Europe to study x-ray prac-



Picnic at the Roo Dee Ranch, May 24, 1899. 15-6
Mrs. Malcolmson 3rd from left, front row (wearing white hat) and Dr. Malcolmson 1st from left, front row (seated with his hat on his knee.)

tices. That was the same year the Frank mine closed, so Dr. Malcolmson moved to Edmonton and joined the staff of the new Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH)⁽²³⁾ and Dr. E.W. Allin in practice. Dr. Malcolmson was already well known in Alberta's medical circles. He had been the Vice President of the AMA in 1907/08, and would be the President of the College in 1914/15.⁽²⁴⁾ In 1911 the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons asked the UofA Senate to examine candidates wishing to register for practice in Alberta.⁽²⁵⁾ Dr. Malcolmson was appointed to the first Board of Examiners in Medicine, by the Senate of the University of Alberta, in 1912. In addition to his 1914/15 college duties, Dr. Malcolmson was elected President of the renamed Edmonton Academy of Medicine in 1915.⁽²⁶⁾

The value of x-rays continued to impress Dr. Malcolmson. His interest may have been fostered by the diagnosis of renal tuberculosis in one of his kidneys, by x-rays, at the Mayo Clinic in 1914. The diagnosis had been missed by the physicians at Johns Hopkins University one week before. Dr. Will Mayo removed the kidney.⁽²⁷⁾ Malcolmson remained tuberculosis free for the rest of his life.

The Radiology years in Edmonton 1915-1941

In 1915 Dr. Malcolmson became the first full-time Radiologist in Alberta. His practice was primarily based at the Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH). His decision was made three years before Dr. W. Herbert McGuffin decided to become Calgary's first full time radiologist. McGuffin had bought an x-ray unit for his office in 1911. During the war he did radiological

-
20. Becker, A. Radiological Pioneers in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan History 34(3): 31-37, Winter 1983. Also see the “E.A. Braithwaite and H.G. Mackid” profiles for a discussion of their early x-ray machines in 1906-8.
21. MacEwan, D. “The history of imaging in Manitoba.” Prairie Medical Journal 66(2): 75-78, 1996.
22. Parsons, W.B. “Information on the Early Days of Radiology in Alberta” (n.d.). 12 pages. A copy was deposited in the UAA as Manuscript #77-183-3. Dr. Parsons cautioned he could find no primary documentary material after a six month search. His sources were from conversations and correspondence sometime after 1959. An updated, abridged version of Parsons’ article (1974) was published in J. Aldrich and B. Lentle’s *A New Kind of Ray* pages 157-163, CAR 1995. The earliest recorded use of an x-ray machine uncovered by Dr. Parsons, was in Medicine Hat, by Dr. Woodland. No date was given. The second x-ray unit Parsons found was purchased by Dr. Lovering in Lethbridge, in 1909, shortly after Woodland acquired his unit. Reprinted in Part 2.
23. Letts, Harry *The Edmonton Academy of Medicine: A History*, page 5, Edmonton Academy, 1986. Stanley stated the new RAH opened in 1911 (CACHB 14: 82), but Jamieson said it was in 1910 in *Early Medicine*, p131.
24. Jamieson, Heber C. *Early Medicine in Alberta*, pages 199, 201, AMA, 1947. Also see the WCMJ 2(9): 393, 1908. During Dr. Malcolmson’s term as Alberta College President, 1913/14, he chaired the committee that recommended making library grants to the Edmonton Academy of Medicine. Extracts of the college minutes of December 19, 1913, and September 12, 1914 were located in the G.R. Johnson Fonds, File M600, File 6 in Glenbow, and were confirmed as correct in the rediscovered College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta minutes in 2005.
25. Jamieson, Heber C. *Early Medicine in Alberta*, page 102.
26. Letts, Harry *The Edmonton Academy of Medicine: A History*, page 5.
27. Stanley, George D. “Dr. George Malcolmson,” page 85.



Royal Alexandra Hospital, opened 1911 (sideview) ¹⁵⁻⁷

work while stationed at the Sarcee Military Camp, before becoming a full-time radiologist, in 1918. ⁽²⁸⁾

In 1919 Dr. Malcolmson and Dr. Edgar Allin purchased the first supply of radium for the treatment of cancer in Western Canada. ⁽²⁹⁾ In 1924 Malcolmson left the Allin Clinic and became a full-time hospital based radiologist at the RAH. About the same time he was appointed a consultant in Radiology at the University of Alberta Hospital, under Radiology Department Head Dr. Richard Proctor. When the RAH was renovated in 1928, Dr. Andrew F. Anderson set aside a substantial amount of main-floor space for Radiology, to the chagrin of the medical staff. In return, Dr. Malcolmson installed the first high KVH generator unit in Alberta. ⁽³⁰⁾

Dr. Malcolmson continued to base his work at the RAH and practice full-time radiology through the 1920s and 1930s. He was particularly helpful to the orthopedic surgeons. In 1936 he discovered he had another serious personal illness, cancer of the bladder. Palliative surgery was performed. Recurrences shortened his life, but not before his son Pat joined him in practice as a Radiologist in 1938.

The Alberta Cancer Clinic 1941-1944

In 1941 Dr. Pat H. Malcolmson took over his father's RAH practice. It coincided with the Alberta government's introduction of the first free diagnostic and therapeutic Cancer Services in Canada. Dr. Malcolmson became the first Head of the Alberta Cancer Services and the physician in charge of the University of Alberta Hospital cancer clinic in Edmonton on January 1, 1941. ⁽³¹⁾

Dr. Malcolmson and the Malcolmson Family

A long time friend of Dr. Malcolmson, Dr. J.O. Baker, recognized his inquisitive mind as far back as his years in Frank, Alberta. Malcolmson was one of the first physicians in southern Alberta to use a microscope for making a diagnosis, and grow or culture the bacterial specimens from his patients. At one time his Crowsnest hospital was such a center of medical activity that he had four assistants working for him. ⁽³²⁾

Dr. Malcolmson enjoyed relaxing on the golf course. Another interest was playing the violin. He had learned to play as a youngster and continued to enjoy it until x-rays damaged his fingers and made it impossible. He was Provincial Commissioner for the Boy Scouts. ⁽³³⁾ For his patients he had the delightful habit of wearing a rose in his coat lapel or under his



Edmonton Cancer Clinic, west of the UAH, circa 1941 15-8

28. Hardwich, E.,
Tregillus, E.
Jamieson, E.,

The Science, the Art and the Spirit, pages 81-86, Volume 4, Century Calgary, 1975. Mr. E.S. Hoare, a British diagnostic x-ray technician, came to Calgary and Dr. McGuffin's clinic, circa 1911. In Dr. W.B. Parsons' article on "Dr. William Herbert McGuffin," in *A New Kind of Ray*, pages 157-162, 260, by J. Aldrich and B. Lentle, CAR, 1995, he outlined how significant a contributor Dr. McGuffin was to Radiology and cancer care in North America. Dr. Parsons suggested Dr. McGuffin began his radiology career in 1912 and served as a radiologist during WWI, before specializing in radiology in 1918. The authors erroneously suggest Dr. McGuffin's Radium and X-ray Institute started in 1911. It was opened in 1929.

29. Letts, Harry

The Edmonton Academy of Medicine: a History, page 5.

30. Parsons, William B.

"Information on The Early Days of Radiology in Alberta," pages 4-5, circa 1974. Manuscript deposited in the UofA Archives #77-183-3. Reprinted in Part 2.

31. Stanley, George D.

"Dr. George Malcolmson," pages 82-83.

32. Stanley, George D.

"Dr. George Malcolmson," page 81.

33. Jamieson, Heber C.

Early Medicine in Alberta, page 131.



Dr. W.H. McGuffin 15-9

lead apron when he was working in the x-ray room, bringing a fresh aroma to those he treated. He was a well-known Christmas Santa Claus to the children in the cancer clinic and always carried extra candies in his pockets for special occasions.

In recognition of his thirty-three years of work in the field of Radiology, and for his many contributions to the Canadian Association of Radiology, the

Association gave Dr. Malcolmson a gold-headed cane in 1939. Dr. W.H. McGuffin made the presentation and acknowledged Dr. Malcolmson was the first full-time Radiologist in Alberta and one of the first in Canada.⁽³⁴⁾

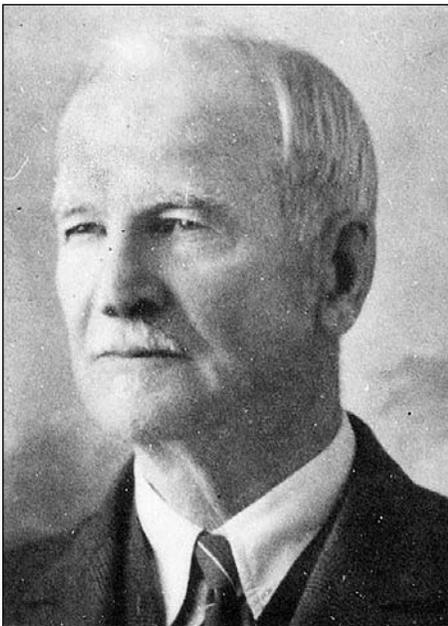
Dr. Malcolmson met his future wife, while on a house call to Blairmore from Lethbridge in 1898. The two nursed his future sister-in-law, through a prolonged illness. The Malcolmson's had five children: three daughters and two sons. Daughter Norah joined Dr. Malcolmson as an early x-ray technician. Another daughter died of diphtheria at age two, despite an emergency tracheotomy performed by her Father. Striking miners refused to dig the grave so Dr. Malcolmson dug it himself.⁽³⁵⁾ His son Dr. Pat Malcolmson joined him as a radiologist in 1938 and took over the practice in 1941.

Dr. Malcolmson died on February 28, 1944 at the age of 76.⁽³⁶⁾

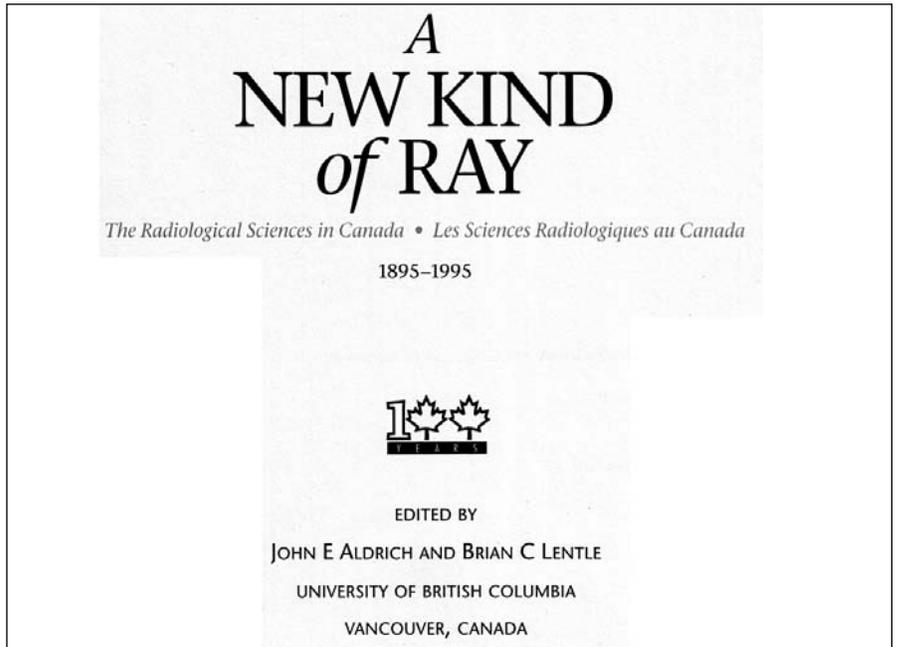
Related Profiles: Mewburn, Kennedy, Braithwaite, McEachern, Mackid, Bow

Related Perspectives: Hoadley, Parlby, Cross and UFA Healthcare, Early Days of Radiology in Alberta

Key Words: Frank Slide, Early Radiology in Alberta, Radium, Alberta Cancer Clinic



Dr. George Malcolmson 15-10



The History of Radiology in Canada, Canadian Association of Radiologists, 1995

34. Chatenay, Henri Dr. George Henry Malcolmson, in *The Country Doctors*, page 17, Matrix Press, 1980.
 35. Stanley, George D. Dr. George Malcolmson, page 80.
 36. Jamieson, Heber C. *Early Medicine in Alberta*, page 131.