

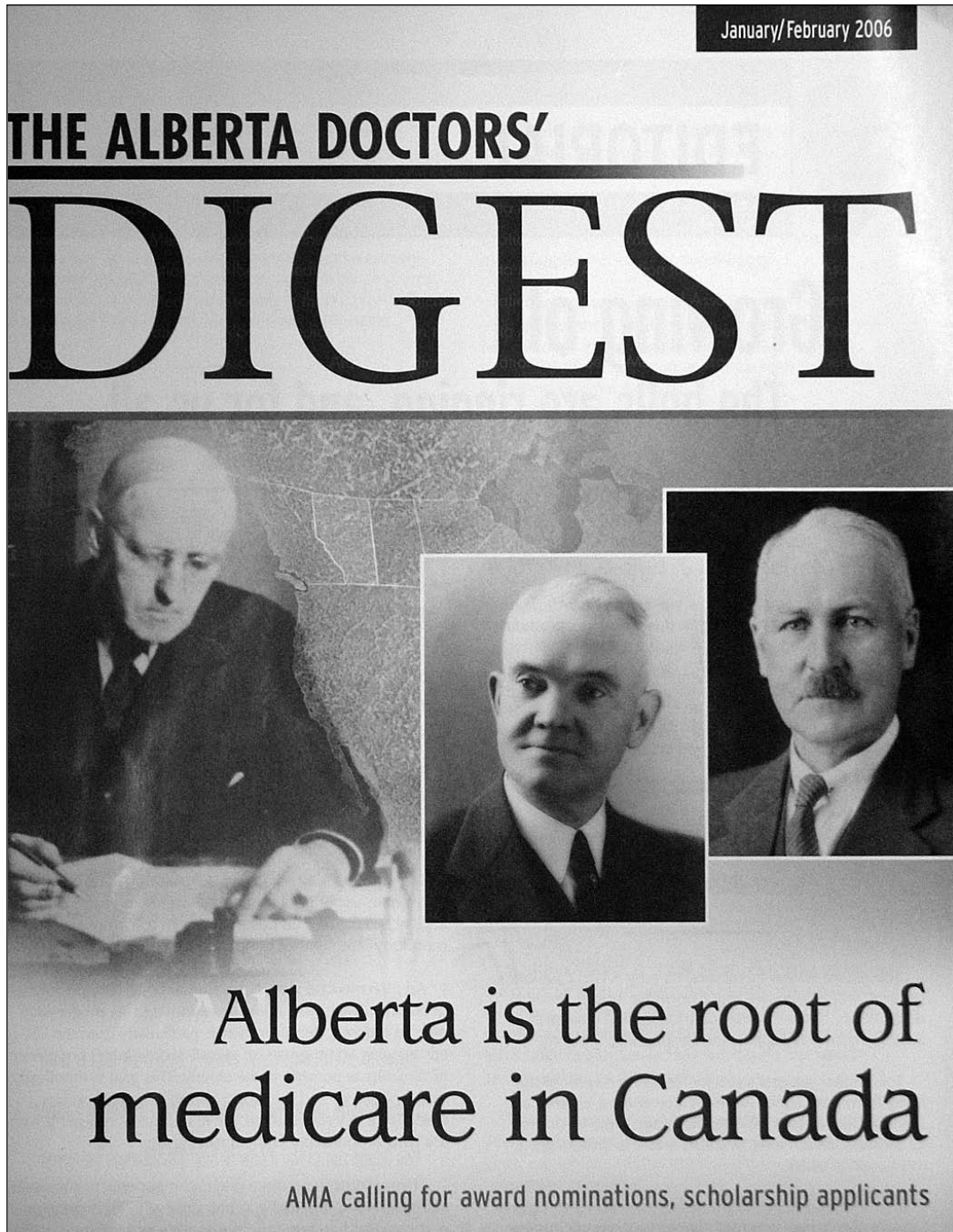


18-1

**WILLIAM ALFRED WILSON, MD, FRCS (Edin.), FRCSC
1874-1951**

January/February 2006

THE ALBERTA DOCTORS' DIGEST



Alberta is the root of
medicare in Canada

AMA calling for award nominations, scholarship applicants

*Alberta Doctors Digest, January/February 2006
The leaders L to R: Drs. A.E. Archer, J.S. McEachern, W.A. Wilson*

WILLIAM ALFRED WILSON, MD, FRCS (Edin.), FRCSC 1874-1951

*“Whispering Willie” marched to his own time.
A ruggedly independent physician and surgeon,
he was the patriarch of (now) four generations
of Western Canadian physicians.⁽¹⁾*

Introduction

Dr. William Alfred Wilson and his son Dr. Donald Robert Wilson provided over ninety years (1900-1991) of continuous contributions to the march of medicine in Canada – mostly in Alberta (1904-1991). They perpetuated a medical tradition of service, matched only by the seven consecutive generations of Mewburn physicians. Dr. W.A. Wilson's great-great-grandfather was a physician in England circa 1760. Seven of the next eight generations in the Wilson family included at least one physician.

Dr. W.A. Wilson came to Edmonton and practiced from 1904 until 1943 at the Edmonton General, Royal Alexandra and University Hospitals. From 1944 to 1947, he worked for the Workmen's Compensation Board (WCB). His surgical specialty was the treatment of bone fractures. Dr. Wilson's retirement from the WCB in 1947, coincided with the return to Edmonton of his eldest son, Dr. D.R. Wilson, who joined the UofA's Faculty of Medicine that year. Dr. D.R. Wilson continued his father's tradition of teaching, practicing, researching, and contributing to organized medicine.⁽²⁾ Dr. W.A. Wilson's second eldest son Gordon graduated as an orthopedic surgeon and returned to Edmonton to join the UofA Faculty of Medicine.

Dr. Wilson's medical years were highlighted by his early academic contributions to the Faculty of Medicine. They started in 1917 when he was appointed the first clinical instructor at the UofA. By 1922 he was an associate professor. In 1928 he became the President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPSA). That year his interests changed. The College faced an Alberta government that was progressively making unilateral decisions affecting the practice of medicine. It culminated with the government initiated 1928 Legislative Inquiry to determine if state medicine was feasible in Alberta.

From 1928 to 1938, Drs. W.A. Wilson and A.E. Archer were elected Presidents of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta four and three times respectively. They organized and presented the Alberta College principle-based health insurance briefs to the Hoadley Commission (1932) and to the Rowell-Sirois Commission (1938). The principles were incorporated into the Hoadley Commission's progress and final reports (1933, 1934) and the CMA's Plan for Health Insurance in Canada (1934). Those principles became the basis for CMA discussions with provincial and federal governments on state health insurance in Canada.

In Alberta's darkest fiscal days (1933) the Hoadley Commission recommended the province contribute two-ninths of the cost of the proposed Plan A (rural) or B (urban) health insurance programs. The offer was enshrined in the Alberta Health Insurance Act of 1935, which was passed but not implemented. The principles which supported a contributory health insurance plan, became the basis for the CMA's position for the next ten years, and the foundation for the Haegerty (federal) proposal for a national health insurance plan in 1943.⁽³⁾

From Youth To MD 1874-1900

William Alfred Wilson was born in Carlton Place, thirty-five miles west of Ottawa on November 1, 1874.⁽⁴⁾ One of his classmates was Dr. Harry Wallace, the father of Dr. Douglas Wallace, who settled in Wainwright. Both became well known GP surgeons.

After graduating from school, young Willie Wilson apprenticed for three years as a pharmacist in Carleton. He learned how to write prescriptions in Latin, which he did for the rest of his life.⁽⁵⁾ Once in practice in Edmonton, Dr. Wilson dictated his prescriptions to the only Edmonton pharmacist who understood Latin, Graydon Smith.

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1. Wilson, Donald R. "From Life With My Medical Father," a 42 page manuscript written during 1987-1990 by his son Dr. D.R. Wilson. Deposited in the R.W. (Dick) Wilson family archives.
 2. Lampard, Robert Profile of Dr. D.R. Wilson.
 3. Lampard, Robert "The Roots of Medicare in Canada are in Alberta," in Part 2.
 4. Blue, John *Alberta Past and Present*, Volume III: 315-316, 1924. Blue gives the year of birth as 1874. His year of birth was confirmed in the Wilson Family Bible as November 1, 1874.
 5. Wilson, Donald R. "Life With My Medical Father," pages 1-2.



18-2

McGill Soccer Team circa 1899. Captain Willie Wilson is 2nd from the left in the front row.

Following in the footsteps of his grandfather and great-grandfather, Wilson entered medicine at McGill and graduated as Dr. W. A. Wilson M.D.C.M. in 1900.⁽⁶⁾ After interning at the Montreal General and Verdun Hospitals, the latter with a focus in psychiatry, he journeyed to London and Edinburgh for a year. There he earned his fellowship and FRCS (Edinburgh), in surgery. Unsettled, Dr. Wilson traveled for two years as a ship's surgeon, venturing around the globe twice.⁽⁷⁾ He returned to Canada and Winnipeg in 1903, before moving to Edmonton, when it was still in the NWT in late 1904.⁽⁸⁾

The Edmonton General Hospital and Royal Alexander Hospital Years 1904-1922

From 1904 to 1910, Dr. Wilson ran a horse-and-buggy practice. His postgraduate training in surgery was soon called upon. During his first year, he met teacher H.H. Hepburn and convinced him to pursue a career in medicine, which he did rising to become the Professor and Head of Surgery at UofA from 1949 until 1950.⁽⁹⁾ On July 15, 1907 he assisted his partner, Dr. Duncan Smith, during a laparotomy on a two-year old young girl. The abdomen was abscessed and full of free pus. There had been no walling off of the four-inch long kinked, perforated appendix. The abscess required drainage twice postoperatively through the incision.⁽¹⁰⁾

Dr. Wilson's first interest in organized medicine surfaced in 1909 when he was elected President of the Northern Alberta Medical Association. During his year in office it was renamed the Central Alberta Medical Association. Four years later it became the Edmonton Academy of Medicine (1913).⁽¹¹⁾

In 1910 Dr. Wilson bought a four-cylinder Cadillac. Fortunately the horse stables were nearby as they were frequently called upon and were more reliable. His stabled horse Old Mac, was often fitted back into harness, usually because the Cadillac failed, especially during WWI and the 1919 flu epidemic. Not infrequently a dead tired Dr. Wilson was brought home by good horse sense.⁽¹²⁾ From his horse-and-buggy experiences Dr. Wilson acquired a love of horses. He would later own his own race horse which he loved to watch.⁽¹³⁾

In his first years in practice Dr. Wilson was on the medical staff of the Edmonton General Hospital (EGH) and Alexandra (after 1907 the Royal Alexandra) Hospital, except during hunting season. Throughout his life, he would take fall hunting breaks. In season, he would carry a shotgun to his



18-3

The W.A. Wilson Family circa 1935. (L to R) Margaret, Don, Wilfred, Alan, Dr. W.A. Wilson. Missing: Gordon.

6. Vant, J. Ross, Cashman, Tony *More Than a Hospital*, page 110, UAH, 1968.
7. Wilson, Donald R. "Life With My Medical Father," page 2.
8. Wilson, Donald R. "Life With My Medical Father," page 3.
9. Vant, J. Ross, Cashman, Tony *More Than a Hospital*, page 110.
10. Smith, Duncan WCMJ 1: 451, July 15, 1907.
11. Letts, Harry *The Edmonton Academy of Medicine: a History*, page 3, Edmonton Academy, 1986.
12. Wilson, Donald R. "Life With My Medical Father," pages 3-6.
13. Wilson, Donald R. "Life With My Medical Father," page 5.

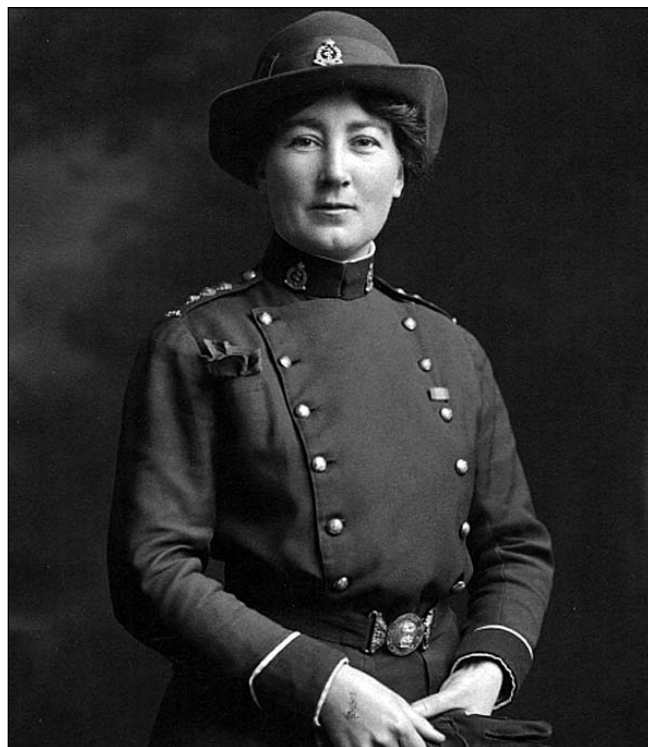
office and shoot a few ducks in the slough across from the EGH.⁽¹⁴⁾ In his later years, he hunted with Dr. Richard Proctor, the head of Radiology at UAH. His northern hunting expeditions helped referrals. They also led to an appointment as the Canadian government's surgeon for northern Alberta.⁽¹⁵⁾

In 1911 Edith Tait and five nurses from the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal, came to Edmonton to start a School of Nursing at the Royal Alexander Hospital (RAH). Ms. Tait befriended bachelor Wilson. They were married on October 20, 1911.⁽¹⁶⁾ That winter Dr. Wilson began construction of a house for the newlyweds. Progress was slow, so the couple spent their first winter living in a tent.⁽¹⁷⁾

In 1912, the UofA Senate accepted the request of the College of Physicians and Surgeons to become the examining authority for registering new physicians. Dr. Wilson was appointed the Examiner in Obstetrics for northern Alberta.⁽¹⁸⁾ For the August 10-13, 1912 CMA annual meeting in Edmonton, Dr. Wilson arranged the medical program for the Chairman of the Convention, UofA President H.M. Tory.⁽¹⁹⁾

In 1917 Dr. Wilson became the UofA's first clinical instructor. His appointment commenced with the first class of third year medical students. The students were transferred to the RAH for their clinical orientation, because the Military Hospital Commission and the Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment (SCR) Commission had acquired the Strathcona Hospital to treat returning veterans from 1916-1922. Dr. Wilson would be joined by another clinical instructor, Dr. Gordon Gray.⁽²⁰⁾

Although Dr. Wilson did not enlist, he responded like most physicians by working day and night to treat the cases referred to them from the practices of their absent colleagues. On one occasion during the 1919 flu epidemic, he was away from home for almost three straight weeks.⁽²¹⁾ His sister Evelyn, did enlist in 1915 leaving her position as Superintendent of her hospital in Connecticut. She successively became the



Dr. Wilson's sister, WWI Matron Evelyn Wilson, RN ¹⁸⁻⁴

Matron or Superintendent of the Canadian Army Hospitals at Lennox Island (Dardanelles), No. 2 General Hospital (France), and No. 3 General Hospital (Amiens, France).

Practice at the UAH 1922-1947:

The University of Alberta bought back the SCR (Strathcona) Hospital in October 1922 for \$150,000, and opened it in November 1922 as the University of Alberta Hospital (UAH). The UAH was reopened as a "closed" hospital with medical appointments by invitation only. Dr. Frank Mewburn of Calgary had been recruited as the Professor of Surgery in 1921, following the appointment of Dean of Medicine, Dr. A.C. Rankin, under the terms of the conditional \$500,000 1920 Rockefeller grant. Drs. Mewburn and Wilson were appointed to the UAH medical staff and the first Medical Advisory Board. Dr. Wilson was named the Associate Professor of Surgery.⁽²²⁾

14. Wilson, Donald R. "Life With My Medical Father," page 4.

15. Vant, J. Ross, Cashman, Tony *More Than a Hospital*, page 110.

16. Stogryn, Joan Personal communication, October 29, 2004.

17. Wilson, Donald R. "Life With My Medical Father," page 4. This story was recounted in *More Than a Hospital*, page 100, by Dr. J.R. Vant and T. Cashman.

18. Jamieson, Heber C. *Early Medicine in Alberta*, page 102, AMA, 1947.

19. Proceedings 1912 CMA Annual Convention Program, Edmonton, August 10-13, 1912.

20. Vant, J. Ross, Cashman, Tony *More Than a Hospital*, pages 49-57.

21. Wilson, Donald R. "Life With My Medical Father," page 6.

22. McGugan, Angus C. *The History of the University of Alberta Hospital, 1914-1964*, page 22, UAH, 1964.

SURGERY**Director of Surgical Division and Surgeon-in-Chief**

Alexander Russell Munroe, M.D., C.M. (McGill), F.R.C.S. (Canada).

Senior Surgeon

Wilfred Alfred Wilson, M.D., C.M. (McGill), F.R.C.S. (Canada).

Associate Surgeons

Howard Havelock Hepburn, M.C., M.D., C.M. (McGill), F.R.C.S. (Edinburgh), F.R.C.S. (Canada), in charge of Neuro-Surgery.

William Fulton Gillespie, M.A. (Alberta), M.B., M.S. (Toronto), F.R.C.S. (Canada).

John Alexander McPherson, M.D. (Toronto).

John Keith Fife, M.D., C.M. (McGill).

UAH Members of the Department of Surgery, 1935

Dr. Wilson worked at the UAH for the rest of his medical and academic career. Initially the Department of Surgery consisted of eight surgeons. In the 1925 UAH annual report Dr. Wilson was listed as “one of the visiting indoor surgeons”. In 1926 he probably received an Alberta Diploma, acknowledging him as a specialist in surgery. In 1930 the Royal College reassessed his training and experience in surgery and awarded him an FRCSC. By 1931 Dr. Wilson had become the senior surgeon in the Department of Surgery.⁽²³⁾

1922 was a noteworthy year in another way. Wilson's Cadillac completely expired. It was replaced with a McLaughlin Buick. On one of Dr. Wilson's first drives past the current site of the Edmonton Petroleum Club, the steering wheel came off. The car drove into the adjacent slough. No passengers were injured.⁽²⁴⁾

Sometime during the 1920's, as the Northern Alberta Railway surgeon, Dr. Wilson was called to Mayerthorpe. A railway man had caught his leg under the wheels of a train. The mangled leg was still trapped when Dr. Wilson arrived. It required an amputation on the spot, followed by a transfer to the RAH.⁽²⁵⁾ Another accident occurred, when the airplane Dr. Wilson and his son Don were to have ridden, departed instead with two soon-to-be patients. While father and son Wilson watched, the plane dipped on take off, caught the airplane wing on a power wire and did a complete 180° turn before

crashing. The pilot's jaw was neatly but completely severed. The passenger had a compression fracture of his vertebra. After the crash the plane ignited, burning both occupants. They were taken to the RAH where Dr. Wilson wired the fracture jaw. The spinal fracture was treated with a full body cast and a dose of whiskey every two days.⁽²⁶⁾

In his forty-two-page manuscript entitled “Life With My Medical Father”, Dr. D.R. Wilson recalled the ninety-mile house call his father made to Athabasca to visit the son of fur trader Colin Fraser. The boy had developed lobar pneumonia. Dr. Wilson arrived just as the youngster was going through the eighth day crisis. Mother Fraser became very agitated when Dr. Wilson left her son's room and would not return. When he did return they found the boy alert, sitting up and much improved to his mother's surprise and joy. Colin Fraser made periodic visits to see Dr. Wilson in Edmonton. The Fraser family often paid their bills in furs. On one occasion Fraser came to Edmonton to make a payment. His inattention to his own hygiene during the winter permeated the room, and it emptied in minutes.⁽²⁷⁾

In April 1, 1925 Dr. L.C. Conn spent an evening at the Wilson home. The topic of discussion was the insulin isolator, Professor J.B. Collip. Collip was completing an MD with the first graduating class at UofA. His obstetrical delivery card was incomplete. Dr. Wilson wanted an exception made, to allow Collip to graduate with the class of 1925. The loud discus-

*Colin Fraser, 1903*

18-6

23. Vant, J. Ross,
Cashman, Tony

More Than a Hospital, pages 109-110. For more details on the department see R.A. Macbeth's biography of Dr. Fulton Gillespie in the CJS 10: 3-10, January 1967.

24. Wilson, Donald R.

“Life With My Medical Father,” page 10.

25. Wilson, Donald R.

“Life With My Medical Father,” pages 6-7.

26. Wilson, Donald R.

“Life With My Medical Father,” pages 11-13.

27. Wilson, Donald R.

“Life With My Medical Father,” pages 37-41.

ROUGH DRAFT

MY MEDICAL
LIFE WITH FATHERFather's Early Days

My father was born in a little town called Carleton Place, about 35 miles west of Ottawa. He grew up there, and took all of his schooling up to high school graduation. As a matter of fact, ^{HE} ~~I~~ was in the same room ^{school} ~~and school~~ as Doug Wallace's father who, many of the old-timers will remember subsequently settled in Wainwright where he practised up until the time of his death. Doug, of course, followed along in his father's footsteps. He was a colleague and a friend of mine, and I knew him first in the Royal Canadian Airforce, and later when he was Medical Superintendent of the University Hospital ^{HE} ~~and~~ subsequently went on to be the General Secretary of the Canadian Medical Association.

because of the cost involved.

That was not the only reason for the visit. The topic switched to state medicine. Dr. Wilson said he anticipated that "new legislation was brewing in the Provincial House". He did not know what amendments to the Health Act were being proposed, but he knew the Minister of Health (Hoadley) had some "proposed amendments along the line of socialized medicine as in New Zealand, where the best medical and surgical talent is shut out from the hospitals...". That was according to Dr. Malcolm MacEachern of the American College of Surgeons, who had recently reviewed the New Zealand experience with the Edmonton medical men.⁽²⁹⁾

In February 1928, MLA's Fred White and Chris Pattinson (Labor) made a motion to have a Legislative Inquiry into the feasibility of a state medicine program for Alberta. The motion was approved by the UFA government. The seventy-two page report was tabled in February 1929 and indicated that such a plan was feasible.⁽³⁰⁾

Although the report was not implemented, the AMA/CPSA soon had more reasons to be alarmed at the government's intervention into the practice of medicine. In February 1929, the Municipal District Act was amended to allow municipalities to use tax revenue to pay for municipal doctors, as was already legal in Saskatchewan and had been since 1916. The same year the 1922 UAH Act, which restructured the UAH board was implemented. It permitted one-half of the eight Board positions to be filled by government appointments. They were.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta responded by seeking committed men to react to the government's interventions. "Whispering Willie" as he became known and Dr. A.E. Archer of Lamont along with Dr. J.S. McEachern provided it. Dr. Wilson was elected President of the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1928 and again in 1933, 1937 and 1938. Dr. A.E. Archer was President in 1930, 1931, and again in 1936.⁽³¹⁾ Both remained College board members during the less critical years. The College was unusually important as it had merged with the AMA in 1921/22. It collected the

from Dr. D.R. Wilson's biography of his father, 1987-1990

sion continued late into the night. Dr. Conn had his way and Dr. Collip graduated with the second class in 1926.⁽²⁸⁾

The Alberta College of Physicians and the Medical Insurance Negotiations 1928-1943

By 1928 Dr. Wilson was a respected senior member of the College/AMA fraternity. With Dr. F.J. Fowlinsbee, he attended a Calgary Medical Society meeting on January 3, 1928. The topic of discussion was the appointment of a full-time physician Registrar for the College. Four provinces already had paid full time Medical Registrars. At the end of the discussion, it was agreed that every physician in the province would be circularized on the subject

28. Wilson, Donald R. "James Bertram Collip," pages 20-25, an Appendix to the Committee Reports of the 77th AGM of the AMA/College, September 30 to October 1, 1982.

29. Wilson, William A., Fowlinsbee, F.J. Minutes of the Calgary Medical Society, January 3, 1928.

30. White, Fred, Pattinson, Chris "Report of the Inquiry into Systems of State Medicine," 72 pages, Legislative Assembly of Alberta, 1929.

31. Jamieson, Heber C. *Early Medicine in Alberta*, page 201.

registration dues and fees from physicians in the province. Then the College paid a negotiated amount to the Alberta Medical Association.⁽³²⁾

In 1930 the CMA's Committee on Economics recommended the CMA develop a set of principles to add clarity to the subject of state medicine. Little happened until February 1932, when the Alberta Legislature responded to the annual White/Pattinson

**PRESIDENTS OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
AND SURGEONS**

1906-07	R. G. Brett, Banff.
1907-08	G. A. Kennedy, Macleod.
1908-09	J. M. Hotson, Strathcona.
1909-10	C. J. Stewart, Calgary.
1910-11	E. A. Braithwaite, Edmonton.
1911-12	John Park, Edmonton.
1912-13	F. H. Mewburn, Calgary.
1913-14	C. W. Field, Edmonton.
1914-15	G. H. Malcolmson, Edmonton.
1915-16	F. W. Crang, Edmonton.
1916-17	W. S. Galbraith, Lethbridge.
1917-18	R. G. Duggan, Killam.
1918-19	R. D. Sanson, Calgary.
1919-20	R. G. Brett, Banff.
1920-21	J. S. Wright, Edmonton.
1921-22	G. D. Stanley, Calgary.
1922-23	D. G. Revell, Edmonton.
1923-24	W. S. Galbraith, Lethbridge.
1924-25	W. S. Galbraith, Lethbridge.
1925	H. W. McGill, Calgary.
1926	W. G. Anderson, Wardlow.
1927	W. V. Lamb, Camrose.
1928	W. A. Wilson, Edmonton.
1929	R. Parsons, Red Deer.
1930	A. E. Archer, Lamont.
1931	A. E. Archer, Lamont.
1932	H. W. McGill, Calgary.
1933	W. A. Wilson, Edmonton.
1934	R. B. Francis, Calgary.
1935	W. G. Anderson, Wardlow.
1936	A. E. Archer, Lamont.
1937	W. A. Wilson, Edmonton.
1938	W. A. Wilson, Edmonton.
1939	W. V. Lamb, Camrose.
1940	Richard Parsons, Red Deer.
1941	R. B. Francis, Calgary.
1942	R. B. Francis, Calgary.
1943	W. G. Anderson, Wardlow.
1944	S. M. Rose, Lethbridge.
1945	T. H. Field, Edmonton.
1946	W. A. Lincoln, Calgary.
1947	M. A. R. Young, Lamont.

From Jamieson's *Early Medicine in Alberta, 1947*

motion by appointing the Hoadley Commission to design a state medicine plan for Alberta. The plan was to be an implementable one. The Commission secretary was Dr. A.C. McGugan. The two cabinet members on the Commission were Health Minister George Hoadley and Minister Without Portfolio Irene Parlby.⁽³³⁾

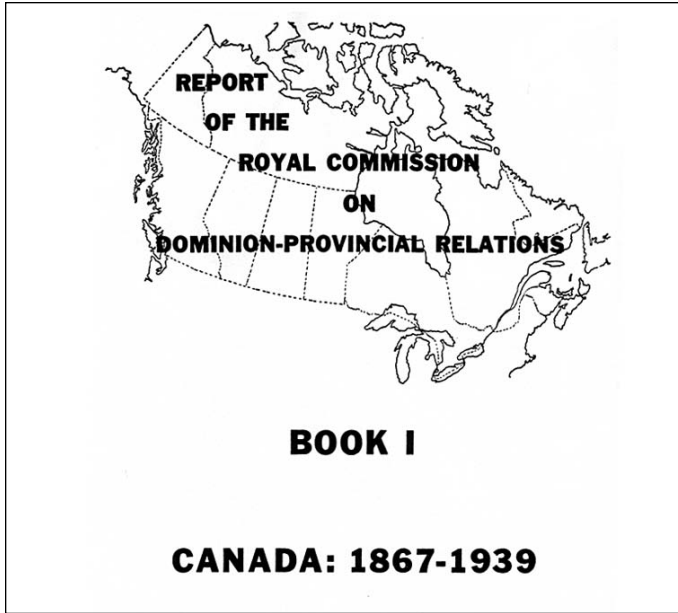
Drs. Wilson and Archer presented the College brief to the Hoadley Commission on November 8, 1932. The Alberta College brief was based on the medical insurance principles drafted by the British Medical Association in 1930.⁽³⁴⁾

Drs. Wilson and Archer completed their presentation of the College brief on December 11, 12, 1932. On December 13, 14 the Hoadley Commission revised their preliminary report. It was released in the spring of 1933.⁽³⁵⁾ On November 29, 1932, between the two College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPSA) presentations to the Hoadley Commission, the CMA executive met and charged their Committee on Economics, with developing A Plan for Health Insurance in Canada.⁽³⁶⁾

To keep their colleagues informed, Drs. W.A. Wilson, A.C. McGugan, and (Conservative MLA) Dr. W.A. Atkinson participated in a state health insurance panel organized by the Edmonton Academy of Medicine.⁽³⁷⁾ Drs. Wilson and Archer then canvassed AMA members to determine their level of support for a health insurance plan throughout 1933. The questionnaires were returned by 227 physicians. They favored a plan 20:1.⁽³⁸⁾

The Hoadley Commission and the CMA plan were both tabled in the spring of 1934. They were in agreement on the medical insurance components of the proposals. The Hoadley Commission's preliminary and final reports went further. They recommend-

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32. Letts, Harry *The Edmonton Academy of Medicine: a History*, page 22.
33. Hoadley, George The Preliminary (1933) and Final (1934) Reports of the Hoadley Commission, Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Also see, Hons. G. Hoadley, I. Parlby, W.W. Cross, and the UFA Healthcare Program (1921-1935) in Part 2.
34. Wilson, William A., Archer, Albert E. College of Physicians and Surgeons Brief to the Hoadley Commission, 11 pages. Presented November 8 and December 11, 12, 1932. Deposited in the Alberta Legislative Library.
35. Hoadley, George "The Preliminary Report of the Hoadley Commission," Legislative Assembly of Alberta, 1933.
36. Smith, Harvey W., Fleming, A. Grant "A Plan for Health Insurance in Canada," CMAJ Supplement, pages 25-62, September 1934.
37. Letts, Harry *The Edmonton Academy of Medicine: a History*, pages 9-13. The round table discussion was held in October 1933.
38. Archer, Albert E., Wilson, William A. Report on the 227 Physician Questionnaire Responses, as authored by Dr. G.E. Learmonth in "Medical Services in Alberta," CMAJ 30: 201-203, February 1934. Physicians in Ontario voted in favor of a plan in 1934, 853 to 35, as noted by Dr. C.D. Naylor in *Private Practice, Public Payment*, page 66, McGill-Queens, 1986.



Rowell-Sirois Royal Commission, 1937-1940 18-7

ed the UFA government contribute two-ninths of the cost for a Plan A and/or B, in a contributory health insurance plan.⁽³⁹⁾

The Alberta government acted on the report's recommendations in March 1935 by passing the Alberta Health Insurance Act. After the Brownlee "scandal" of 1934 and the Social Credit promise of free "script", the UFA MLA's were defeated to a man in August 1935.

While the Act was not implemented, neither the new Social Credit government nor the Alberta College changed their position on health insurance. In April 1938, Drs. Wilson and Archer again presented the College of Physicians and Surgeons brief to the Rowell-Sirois Commission (1937-1940). It was studying federal-provincial responsibility for five social programs. The College brief restated its support for the principles for a health (hospital plus medical) insurance plan, as presented to the Hoadley Commission in 1932.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Dr. Archer assumed the mantle for presenting the Alberta position through the CMA, following the retirement of Dr. McEachern as CMA President in 1935. Back in Edmonton Dr. Wilson found time to squeeze in extracurricular teaching requests. At the popular annual Continuing Medical Education

refresher courses, he regularly presented lectures on the principles of fracture treatment.⁽⁴¹⁾

In 1938/39 Dr. Wilson was again President of the College. Concurrently he was the representative of the College on the AMA Board, and a member of the Finance, Legislation, Education, and Discipline Committees of the College. As well, he was on the AMA Committees on Pharmacy and Hospital Service.⁽⁴²⁾ Rarely out of harness, and apparently never able to ever say no, Dr. Wilson was appointed Chairman of the Finance Committee for the 1942 CMA annual meeting in Jasper.

Dr. Wilson attended the special CMA meeting in Montreal held on January 18-19, 1943, called by the

**COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS
REGULAR MEETING**

The Regular Meeting of the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons was held in Calgary, January 19th, 1937, the following members being present:

Dr. A. E. Archer, Dr. W. A. Wilson, Dr. W. V. Lamb, Dr. R. B. Francis, Dr. W. G. Anderson and Dr. P. M. Campbell, also Dr. G. R. Johnson and W. G. Hunt.

Dr Archer, the retiring president, was succeeded by Dr. Wilson, who has been president on two previous occasions, in 1928 and 1934 Dr. W. V. Lamb was elected Vice-President, he also was president in 1927.

The following other elections and appointments took place:

Executive Committee—Drs. W. A. Wilson, Campbell, Francis, Archer and Parsons.

Finance Committee—Drs. Parsons, Wilson, Lamb and Francis.
Legislation—Drs. Anderson, Archer, Lamb and Wilson.
Education—Drs. Wilson Campbell, Anderson and Parsons.
Discipline—Drs. Anderson, Archer, Wilson, Lamb, Parsons, Francis and Campbell.

Representatives on the Medical Council of Canada:
Drs. Francis and Anderson.

Representatives on Board of Directors of Canadian Medical Association, Alberta Division.
Drs. Wilson and Francis.

Representatives on Committee on Maternal Welfare C.M.A., Alberta Division.
Drs. Lamb, Campbell and Parsons.

Representatives on Committee on Pharmacy and Hospital Service C. M.A., Alberta Division.
Drs. Archer and Wilson.

The Council appreciated the assistance of members who sent in suggestions on various phases of the practice of medicine in this Province and would urge all medical societies, or individual members of the profession, to send to the office of the Registrar any information or suggestions that the Council and its individual members acting upon or investigating, may render the maximum of services to the public and the profession as a whole.

The wishes of any informant who does not desire publicity, will be respected.

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta
Committee Appointments, Alberta Medical Bulletin, 1937

39. Alberta Government The Alberta Health Insurance Act, RSA Chapter 49, 1935. Also see the Preliminary (1933) and Final (1934) reports of the Hoadley Commission in the Alberta Legislative Library.

40. Archer, Albert E.,
Wilson, William A. Interim and Final Memoranda submitted by the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta to the Rowell Royal Commission. The memoranda are dated December 8, 1937 and March 3, 1938.

41. Edwards, Glen *Life Near The Bone*, page 62, privately printed, 1991.

42. Wilson, William A. AMA/College Committees, AMB 2(8): 19-20, January 1937.

CMA President Dr. A.E. Archer. Dr. Wilson voted along with seventy-eight other CMA delegates, for a national health insurance plan for Canada. The final vote was 78-0 in favor.⁽⁴³⁾

In 1947 Dr. Wilson was made a life member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. By then he had retired from practice and was working as the Chief Medical Examiner at the Workmen's Compensation Board.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The contributions of Drs. Archer, Wilson and McEachern to the Alberta roots of Medicare were highlighted in three articles in the Alberta Doctors Digest.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The Dr. W.A. Wilson Family

As his son frequently noted, "Whispering Willie" marched to his own time. It was neither Edmonton's nor Mountain Standard. He would appear on the right day, but not necessarily the right hour and certainly not the right minute. He was always late for his office appointments, just as he was for supper. A nighthawk, he would stay up with a rye whiskey and still be working at 2:30 am.⁽⁴⁶⁾

In his last years, Dr. Wilson developed Type II diabetes. He became a brittle insulin-dependent diabetic. Diabetic retinitis followed but it did not change his personality. He remained a "very independent old bird".⁽⁴⁷⁾ Dr. Wilson died in January 1951.

The Wilson's eldest son, Donald Robert (D.R.) Wilson, was born on January 20, 1913, the same day as Heber Jamieson's only son. D.R. would be followed by Gordon (born June 2, 1915), who became a UofA/UAH orthopedic surgeon; Allen (born October 8, 1918) a diabetic who died at age twenty-eight; Margaret (born May 5, 1922), and Wilfred (born May 18, 1927) also a diabetic, who had Downs Syndrome and died in December 1943.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Related Profiles: Rankin, Jamieson, Collip, Mewburn, McEachern, Archer, Bow, D.R. Wilson

Related Perspectives: The Roots of Canadian Medicare are in Alberta, Hon. Hoadley, Parlby, Cross and UFA Healthcare, The Cardston Medical Contracts, Di Bozsha May The Lord Give You Health, The Second CMA Convention (Edmonton 1912), The Fourth CMA Convention (Jasper 1942)

Key Words: pre1905 surgeon, 1912 and 1942 CMA conventions, horse-and-buggy doctor, UofA Faculty Medicine Instructor (1917), Alberta's "state" health insurance plan

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Alberta Medical Bulletin, Vol. 1(1), April 1935

43. Editor, CMAJ

44. Jamieson, Heber C.

45. Lampard, Robert

46. Wilson, Donald R.

47. Wilson, Donald R.

48. Stogryn, Joan

"Special Meeting of the CMA, on January 18, 19, 1943," CMAJ 48: 251-260, March 1943.

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"Life With My Medical Father," page 42.

"Life With My Medical Father," pages 35-36.

Personal communication, October 29, 2004. Dr. Joan Stogryn is Dr. D.R. Wilson's daughter. Two of her children are medical doctors.