

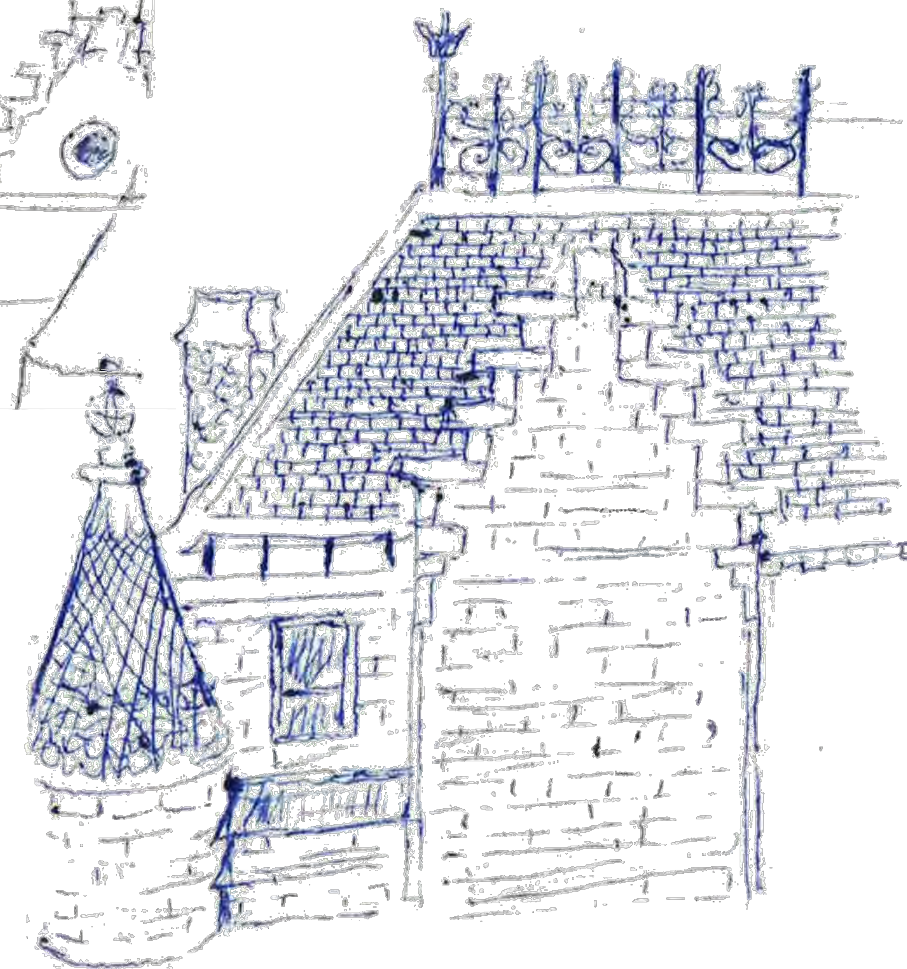
A Bedside Conversation with Wilder Penfield

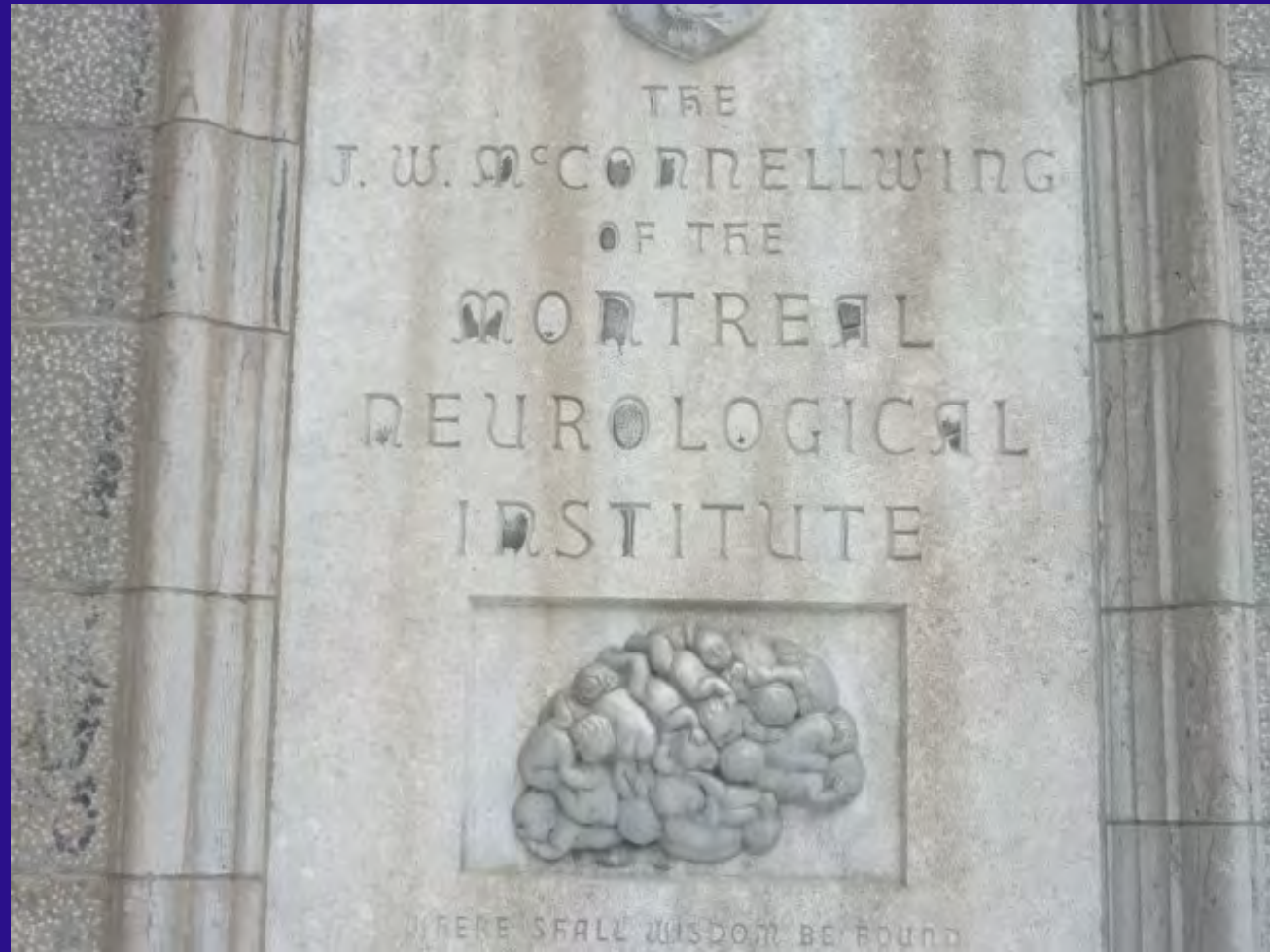
Alan Blum, MD

American Osler Society May 13, 2018





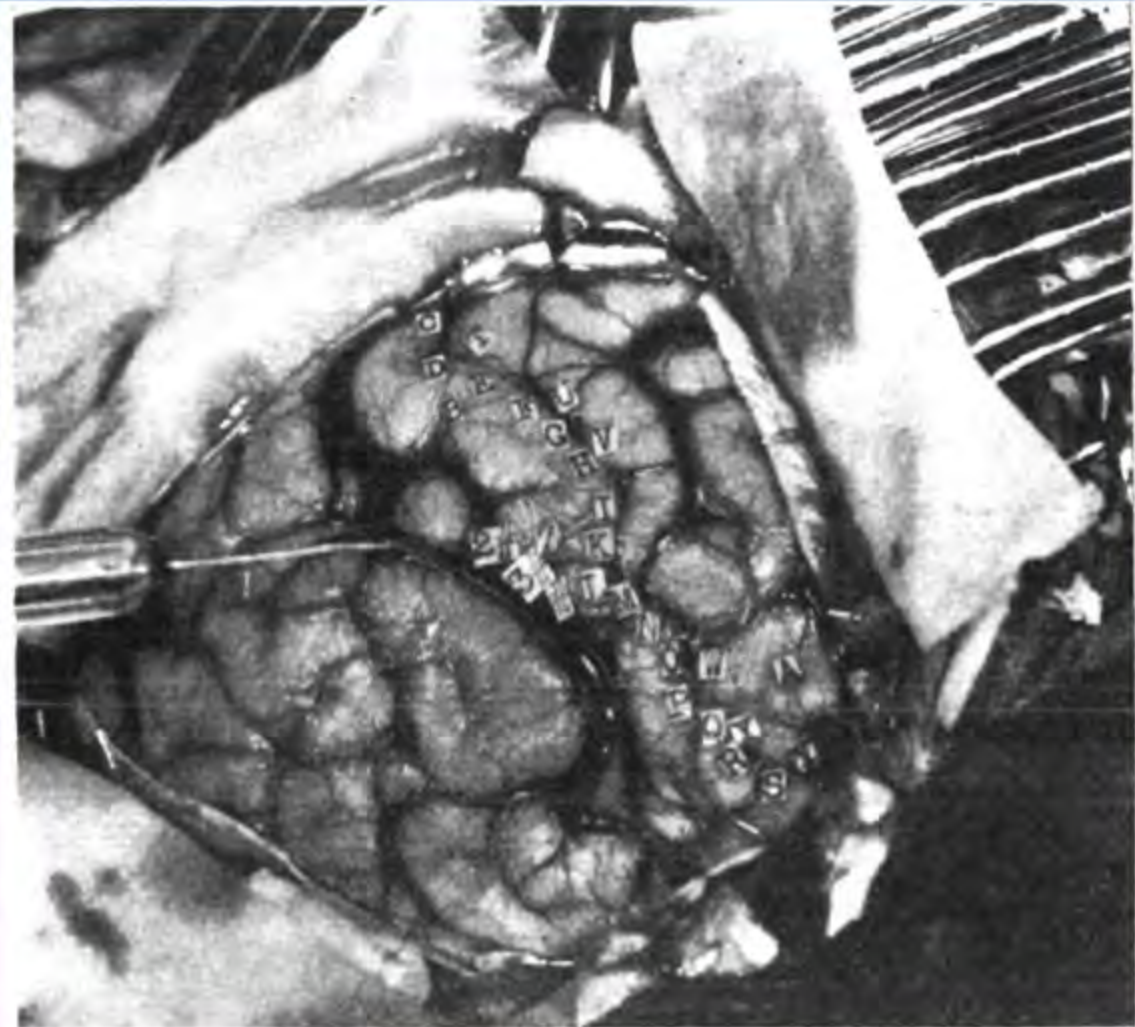




Wilder Penfield – first to identify motor and somatosensory homunculus



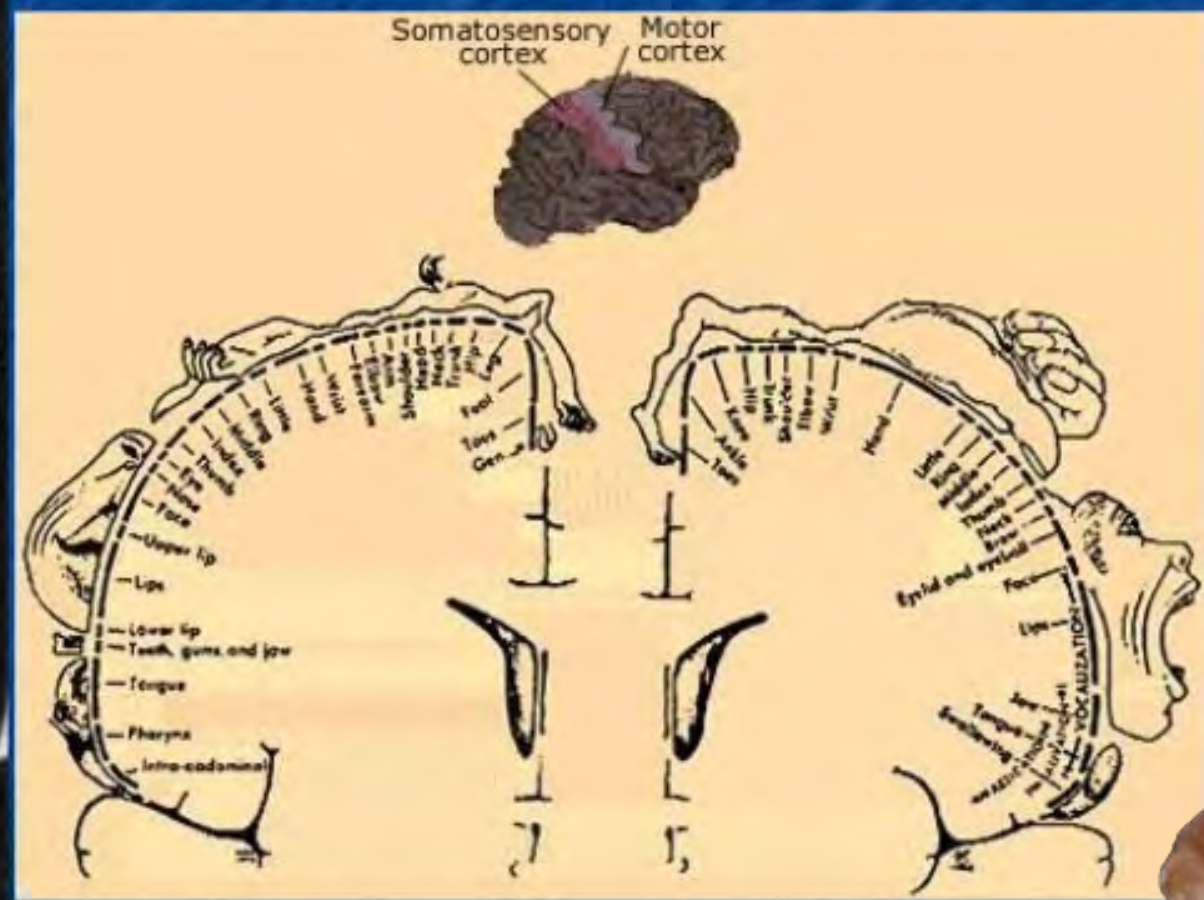
Wilder Penfield
1891-1976



Penfield and Boldrey 1934 Cerebral Cortex & White matter



Wilder Penfield



Thucydides - the real
historian

6 Thucydides
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1 The killing of
Socrates was sort of a
strike.

There's not much Hippocrates
in Osher. At least not the individual
But it's all there.

And I had such fun writing
it. It's the right way really, when
you write imaginatively you know
what's right. The historian
can't do that when he says that
such and such happened.

When I was working on it at the
Institute for Advanced Studies
one of Oppenheimer's secretaries had to take
over typing the manuscript, and she
became my secretary really. Well, Oppenheimer
saw the thing and said I've just seen
the word 'I' used on my typewriter.
He was a physicist, see, and dealing
with the first person was something that
hadn't happened to him.

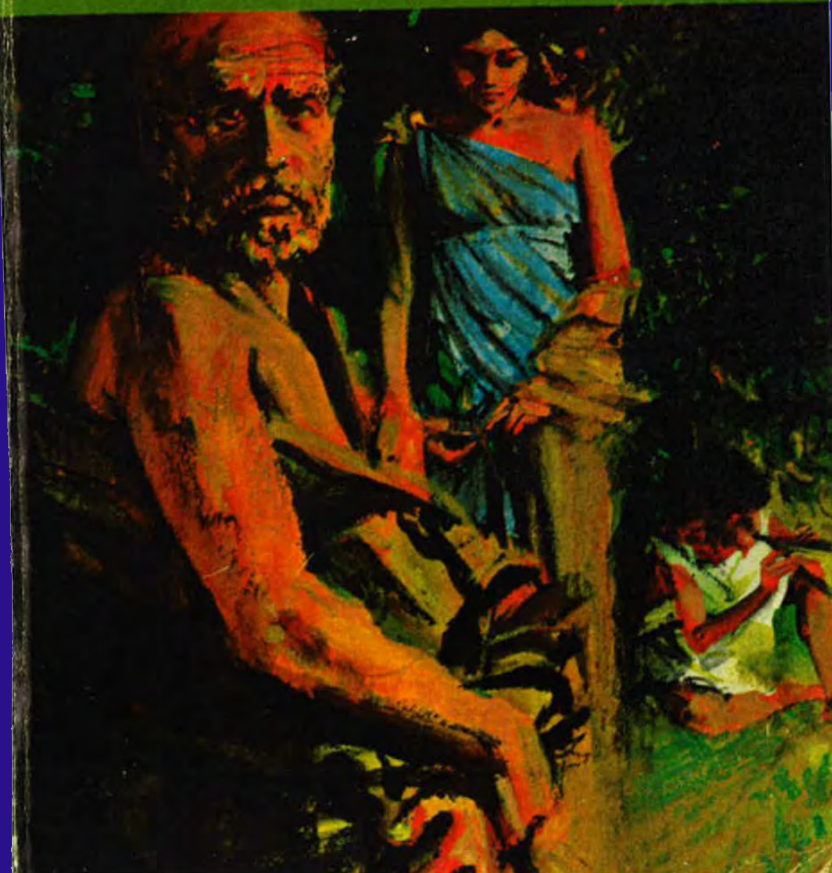
I know,

CANADIAN BEST-SELLER LIBRARY / 95¢

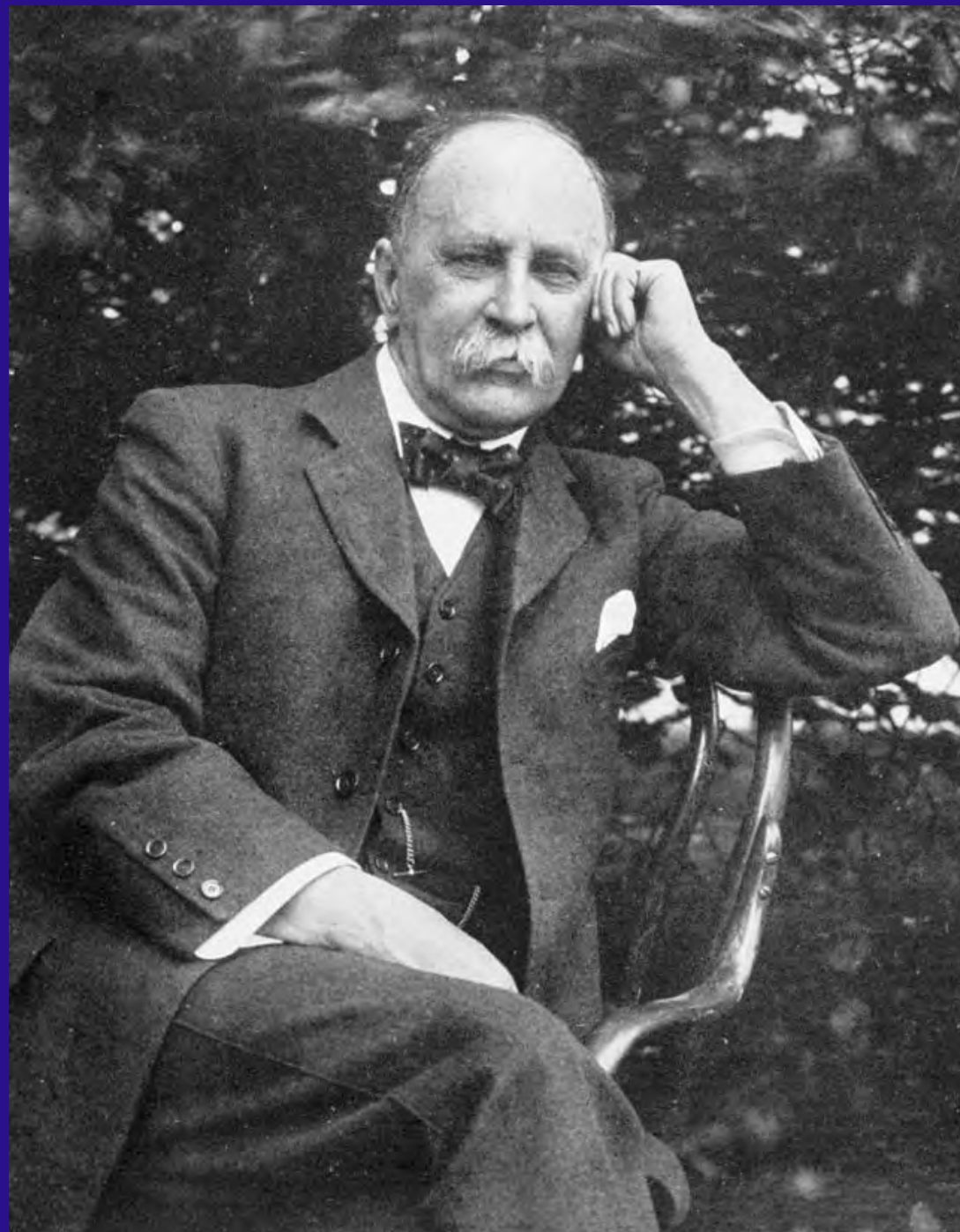
WILDER PENFIELD

The Torch

LOVE, TREACHERY, AND A BATTLE
FOR TRUTH IN ANCIENT GREECE







THE OSLER LIBRARY

THE MEDICAL BUILDING



McGill University
Montreal

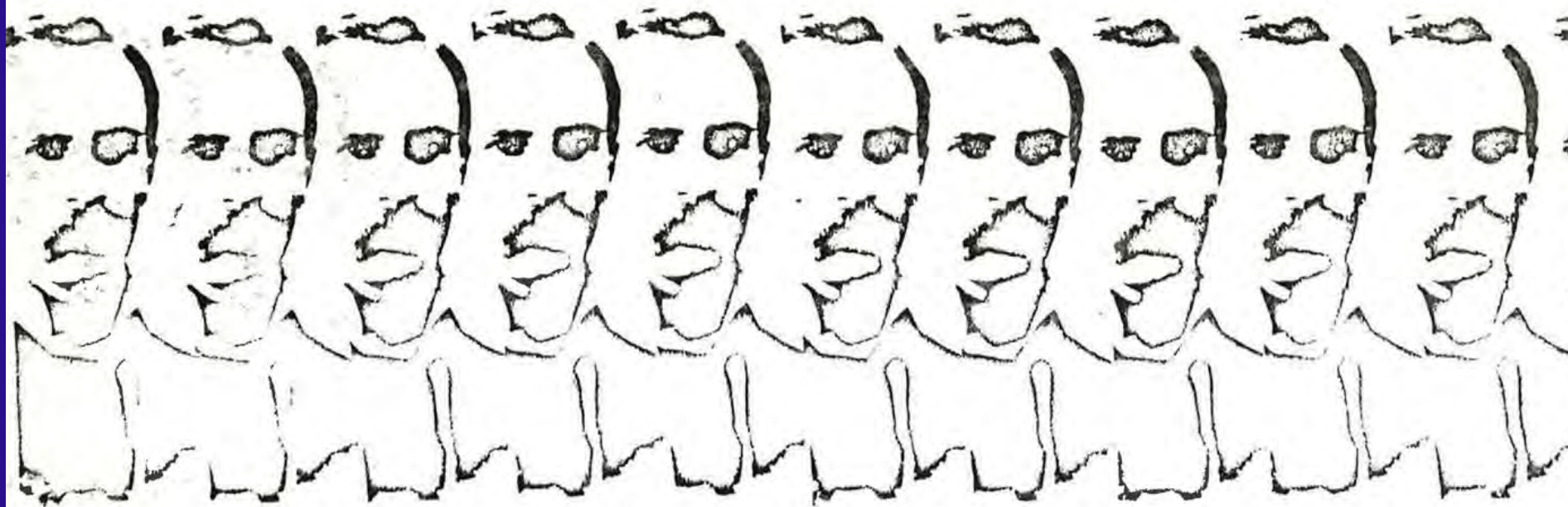
ALAN BLUM MD, intern RVH

POETRY AND MEDICINE: THE CLINICAL ART OF W. H. AUDEN

8pm WEDNESDAY 10. DECEMBER

REFRESHMENTS

OSLER SOCIETY MONTREAL MCGILL UNIVERSITY

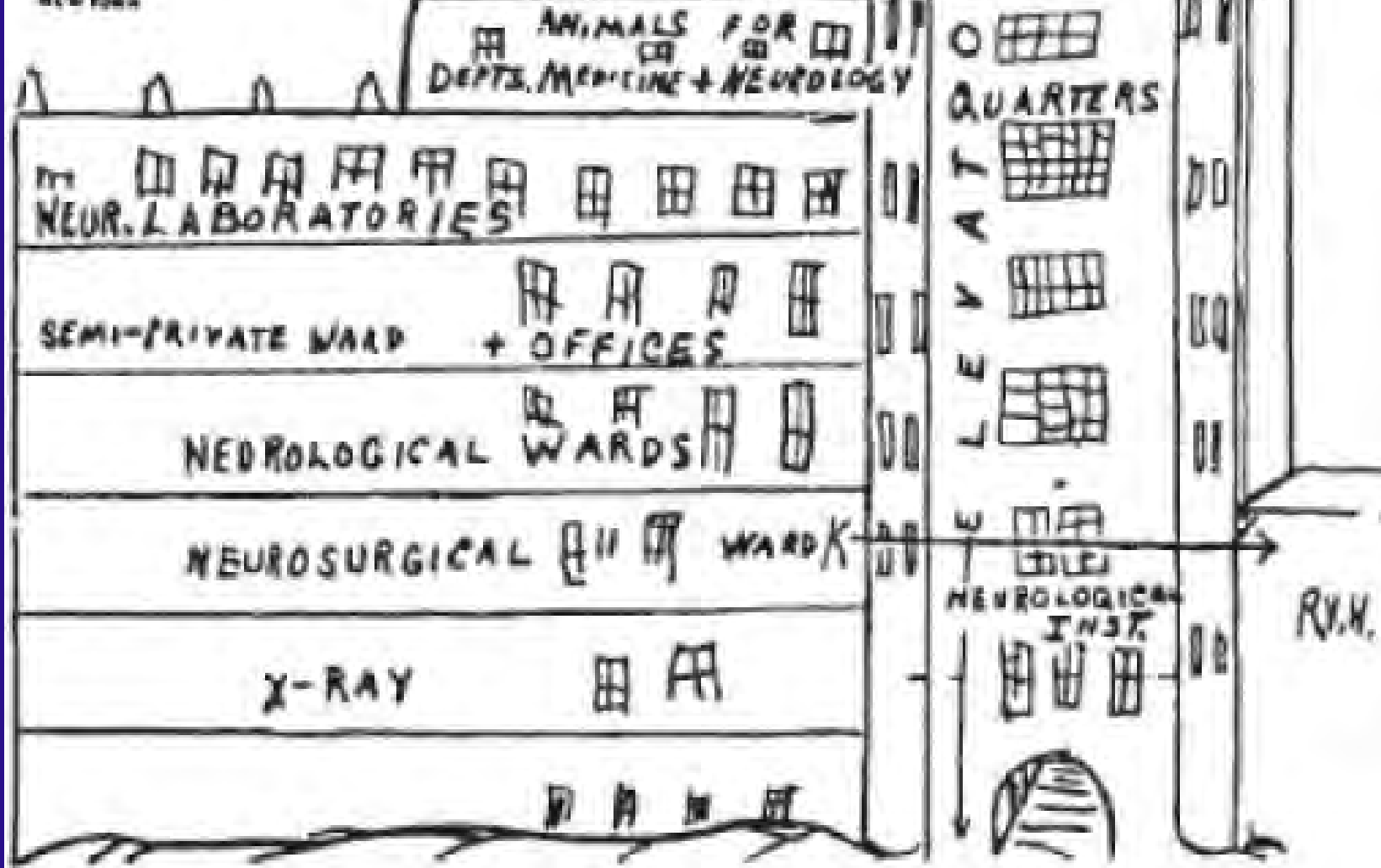


MCGILL UNIVERSITY OSLER SOCIETY 8PM OSLER LIBRARY





THE BILTMORE
NEW YORK



Volunteers Pitch In As Patients Transfer

Hospitals slash services as nurses wait for offer

Doctors polled on strike feelings

CITY'S HOSPITALS READY FOR STRIKE

Ordered to Concentrate on Emergencies

NOS HÔPITAUX DANS UN ÉTAT CRITIQUE

11,000 INFIRMIERES FONT DU ZÈLE

le journal de montreal

le no 1 du matin

PHYSICIAN STRIKE GROWS ON COAST

Hospitals hamstrung by walkout

Nurses stay off despite promise

Israel's hospital MDs quit in pressure move

MEDECINE DE GUERRE A MONTREAL?

la plupart des salles d'urgence fermées.

la quasi totalité des cliniques externes inopérantes.

des milliers de patients évacués

Wards closed as strike nears

Doctors strike hits British hospitals

Hospitals face further staff trouble

More British Doctors Joining Hospital Slowdown

Hospital strike vote under way

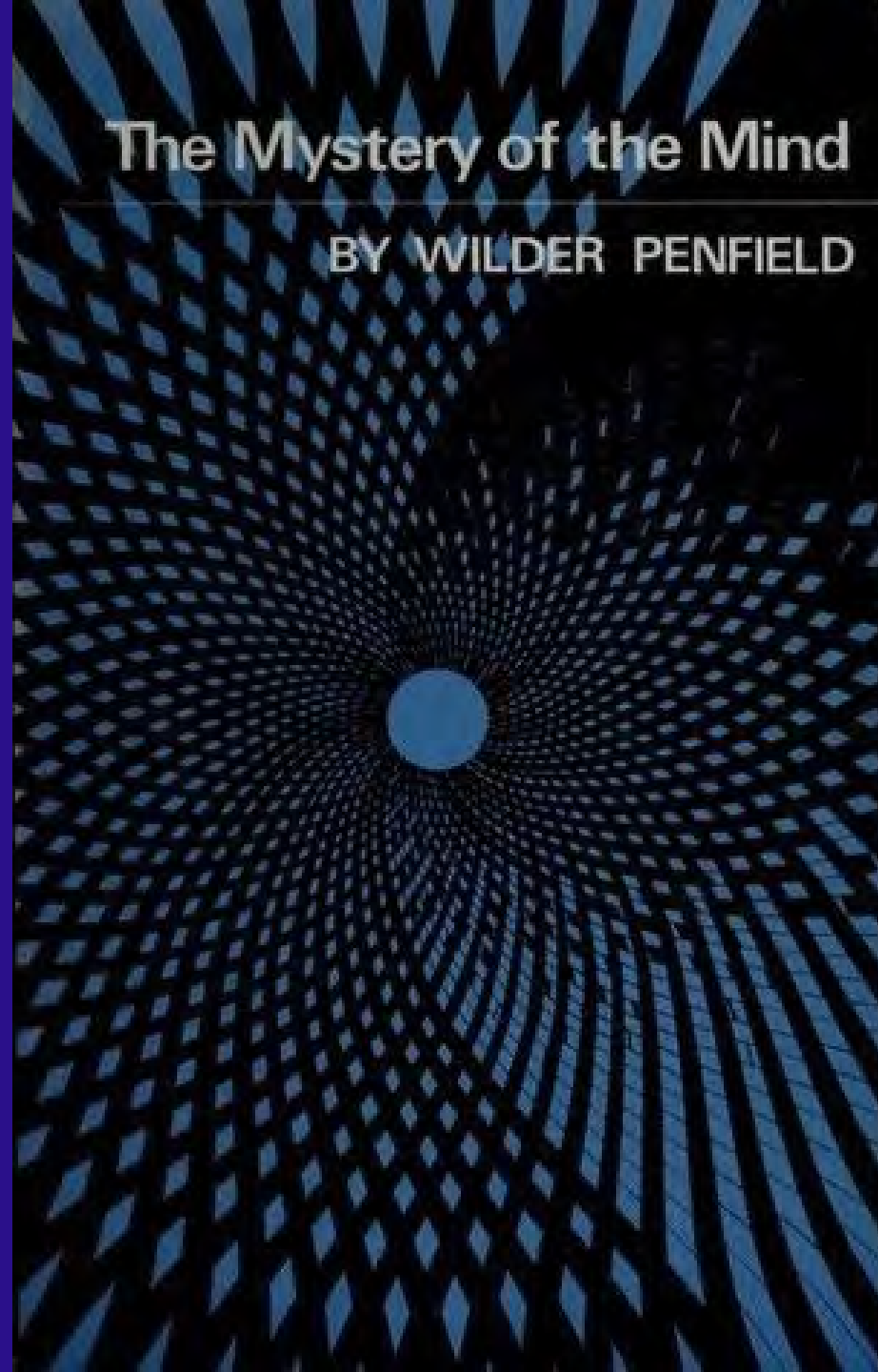
By Girard of La Presse (Montreal)



Surgeon: "What would be the best time for a kidney transplant?"
Janitor: "I've got to look at the strike schedule."

The Mystery of the Mind

BY WILDER PENFIELD

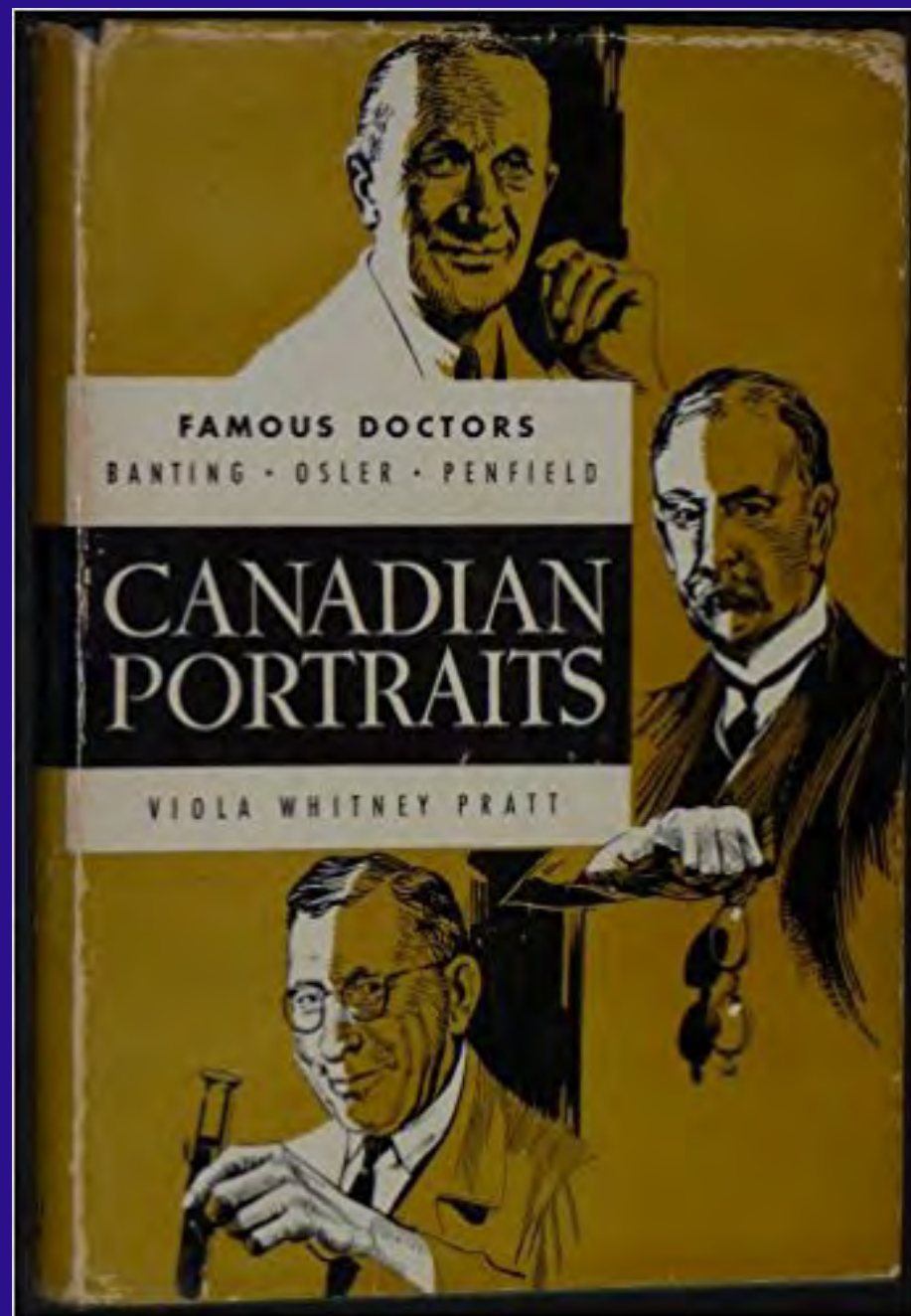


NO MAN ALONE

A Neurosurgeon's Life



WILDER PENFIELD



FAMOUS DOCTORS

BANTING • OSLER • PENFIELD

CANADIAN PORTRAITS

VIOLA WHITNEY PRATT

The Torch

by Alder Penfold
autographed with with
great appreciation and
thanks for Alan Blum



CMAJ·JAMC

MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE THAT MATTERS

CMAJ celebrates 100 years

RESEARCH
Avalanche survival patterns

ANALYSIS
Flexner's role in the birth of CMAJ

PRACTICE
Sex in pregnancy



CMAJ

100 YEARS

A bedside conversation with Wilder Penfield

From July 1, 1975 to June 30, 1976, I served as an intern in internal medicine at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montréal, Quebec after graduating from Emory University School of Medicine.

At that time, interns were still given their own on-call room. My pre-morning rounds ritual consisted of a maple donut and orange juice at the hospital coffee shop, while also devouring *The Star*, *The Gazette* and *La Presse*. Olympic fever was in the air. Separatist tensions were still palpable and René Lévesque, the charismatic, chain-smoking leader of the separatist Parti Québécois dominated the news.

I was fascinated by the renowned Montréal Neurological Institute, where I once went to watch neurosurgery through opera glasses from an enclosed observation area above the operating room.

Recently, I came across six prescription-size pages of handwritten notes from an hour-long conversation I had with the Institute's founder, Dr. Wilder Penfield on the morning of Apr. 3, 1976, when he was a patient in the Ross Pavillion at the Royal Vic. Having hoped to meet him since the start of my training, I stopped off at my room after completing night-call and sign-out to muster the courage to introduce myself and to pick up my copy of *The Torch*, his novel about Hippocrates' battle to lay the foundations of medicine.

On that sunny Saturday morning, Dr. Penfield, age 85, was alone in his room, looking wan and tired, but serene. When I tapped on the open door, he graciously invited me to sit by him at his bedside, adding, "I'm an interesting case, you know. Inflammatory myopathy, inclusion body myositis type. Have you read my chart? This damn myositis. Weakness. Can't do a thing. And on top, there's that cancer."

I told him I'd met a former patient of his, an attendant at the Veteran's Hospital who'd had viral encephalitis 30 years before and on whom he'd operated.

"Don't expect I did him much good," he quipped.

He beamed when I showed him my paperback copy of *The Torch*. "I had such fun writing it," he said. "It's the right way, really, the novelist approach. When you write imaginatively, you know what's right. The historian can't do that when he says such and such happened."



"When you write imaginatively, you know what's right," Wilder Penfield (above) told the author and artist, Alan Blum.

It was ironic that he should mention this, for here I am all these 35 years later, trying to reconstruct our conversation from a few notes that I have kept all these years and from my personal recollection. In this reimagined encounter, I glimpse what Dr. Penfield was asserting: even if the words aren't exact, the feeling the encounter engendered is accurate.

Dr. Penfield continued talking about his book. "When I was working on it at

the Institute for Advanced Studies [at Princeton], one of [J. Robert] Oppenheimer's secretaries had to take over typing the manuscript. Well, Oppenheimer saw the thing and said, 'I've just seen the word "I" used on my typewriter.' He was a physicist, see, and dealing with the first person was something that hadn't happened to him."

In my notes, I quote Dr. Penfield as saying, "There's not much Hippocrates in Osler. At least not the individual. But it's all there." Although I can't recall the context, apart from alluding to *The Torch*, he venerated Sir William Osler, who made him a veritable member of his family when Penfield was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford and Osler was Regius Professor of Medicine.

Another comment without context: "The killing of Socrates was sort of a strike." Perhaps this was a reference to the unrest in the hospital workplace. During my internship year, there were job actions by x-ray technicians, laboratory technologists, 14 000 nurses, and 80 000 nonprofessional employees. A cartoon by Girard in *La Presse* showed a surgeon at the doors of an operating room asking, "What would be the best time for a kidney transplant?" and a janitor replying, "I'll have to look at the strike schedule."

That morning, Dr. Penfield shared the story of how his career evolved when he returned to the US from England in 1921. "When I went to Henry Ford Hospital, they wanted to give me \$5000 to work there, and I went out and spoke to the hospital administrator, a man called Leopold — used to be Ford's secretary — I told him I was interested in the problem of decerebrate rigidity and wanted to do some work in the lab. But he said we've got a good man already in the lab, and if you've got a problem just tell him about it. So I said, 'I won't

100 YEARS

The Torch

by Wilder Penfield
autographed with a
great appreciation and
thanks for Alan Blum

Blum went to visit Dr. Penfield that day to ask him to sign his copy of *The Torch*.

stay," and he thought I was playing that little game with him. So he said, 'I'll pay you \$500 more.'

"At the time I had two other offers of positions, at much lower salaries. I wrote my wife at Devil's Lake, Wisconsin, 'Would you be willing to go to Philadelphia or New York?' And the answer that came back was one word, 'Timbuktu.'

"Presbyterian in New York was changing to a fulltime hospital, and I met with the leader there. It looked perfect: three months in neurosurgery — I hadn't had much surgery — three months pathology, three months physiology, three months vacation. I had to tell him, honestly, that I'm not trained sufficiently in neurosurgery. 'But we want a neurophysiologist and a neuropathologist,' he said. So it all worked out brilliantly. Three years." While there he would be invited to bring together all the neurosciences under one roof for the first time in the world by founding the Montreal Neurological Institute.

I mentioned I'd read a review in *The New York Times* of his 1975 book, *The Mystery of the Mind: A Critical Study of Consciousness*. He replied, "I'm right: the remark that the admission of billing to say monothism." "All it will take how one form of m into another. And, it'll all be so simple electrical system. It kind of electricity even." "It won't be long cover that switch to asleep it's off, and I wake up again it's you're dreaming, the And then the mind, "I've been thinking things only lately, to believe in prede come to the conclusion and a God — between the Creator man. If you look at has evolved, it must about when you leave." "You believe in asked.

