



# **SIR FREDERICK BANTING 1891-1941**

**A COLLECTION OF FORTY SKETCHES  
PRESENTED WITH THE  
CO-OPERATION OF LADY BANTING**

**OCTOBER, 1967**

**OWENS ART GALLERY  
MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY**

## SIR FREDERICK GRANT BANTING 1891-1941

In 1891 Frederick Banting was born into a pioneer Scottish-Canadian farming family which had settled in the fertile county of Simcoe, Ontario. He was the youngest of five and the dauntless ambition of his mother ensured that every opportunity for education be provided for her last-born. Family life was happy though strictly disciplined to conform with basic Christian principles of traditional Methodism. The latter was tempered with maternal gentleness which inspired in her son a love of beauty in nature, music and literature. He did not study for the ministry as she had wished but entered Victoria College in the University of Toronto and later changed to the Faculty of Medicine joining the class of 1917. Military service was necessarily combined with medical training and as a newly graduated doctor he served as a battalion medical officer in England and France. He was wounded in action but remained at his post caring for casualties. In recognition of courage and devotion to duty he was awarded the Military Cross. Following the end of the war he pursued further training in surgery and ultimately well-trained but deeply in debt he ventured into private practice in London, Ontario. At the University of Western Ontario Medical School he obtained a part-time position as demonstrator with a meagre stipend. The paucity of patients seeking his service and the freedom of the academic environment provided the time and stimulation which generated the original idea for the isolation from the pancreas of the hormone insulin. The development of this theory resulted in the discovery of a treatment for diabetes which had been heretofore a fatal disease. The rest of his life was devoted to research. He inspired many young scientists who worked in his department. He integrated the efforts of his team of investigators and from his laboratory were produced many important research projects. On behalf of the National Research Council he surveyed the whole field of medical research in Canada. At the outbreak of the Second World War his attention and the facilities of his laboratory were turned to the study of military and aviation problems. He enlisted again and in the course of his liaison duties with British scientists he lost his life when an aircraft crashed off Newfoundland en route to England in 1941. For the discovery of insulin he was awarded the Nobel Prize and was knighted by King George V. Many academic honours were bestowed and reluctantly accepted. Fame did not hold any attraction for a man who longed for time to enjoy simple pleasures and who found complete relaxation and satisfaction with his sketch box and birch panels. A word of approval from an artist friend was worth far more than an honorary degree.

## foreword

When Frederick Banting returned from the war, he settled in London, Ontario. There was not much demand for doctors with only military experience and time hung heavy on his hands. It turned out to be a blessing for mankind for he spent a lot of time in the libraries reading medical books and the subject of diabetes was one of the problems that interested him. He also tried to paint, but with no one to advise him he made little progress.

After he won the Nobel prize he purchased some paintings, mostly bad ones but for one exception, a Rosburn. His interest in art led him to become a member of The Arts and Letters Club in Toronto and he became a very popular member and met a number of painters.

He heard I had some war sketches and came to see me — he was shy and apologetic about bothering me and of course I felt very proud of meeting him. He chose a sketch and after that I saw him frequently and invited him to go sketching with me in March to St. Jean Port Joli in Quebec. It was cold and windy but he stuck to it. I never had a better sketching companion, cheerful, enthusiastic, and untiring. He loved wandering about old farms, his father had been a farmer. On the south shore of the St. Lawrence as the days got warmer the difficulty with frozen paint and numb fingers ended and he made a lot of progress.

That same year, 1927, he went to the Arctic on the BEOTHIC, a government chartered steamer taking supplies to the police posts up north. This was my first trip north too and we found both good company and no end of material to sketch. After delivering supplies at the Bache Port, on Ellesmere Island, we turned south into Lancaster Sound. We made numerous drawings of the coastline, icebergs and rock formations.

We were supposed to repair and renew supplies at a cache on Melville Island but were stopped by fields of solid ice and so turned about and went to Pond Inlet, then south to Pangnirtung, quite a settlement on the south of Baffin Island, then into Hudson's Strait and home.

This was the longest period Banting had devoted to paintings. He also made a report on the health conditions of the Eskimos. On the following year we went to Great Slave Lake and across to the Yellowknife river with Macintosh Bell, a geologist who some years earlier had staked claims at Pine Point, now one of the greatest mines in Canada. It was early summer and the mosquitos and black flies made sketching almost impossible. Back home there were trips to the Georgian Bay and to Quebec again. In 1935 he went to Russia and while he had no time to paint he made some interesting pen drawings.

He would not sell his paintings but gave them away to almost anyone who liked them. I doubt if he thought he would win fame as a painter; to him it was a fascinating pastime and he loved the Canadian country — he liked artists — and was becoming quite a good judge of their work.

He painted a number of canvases from his sketches and sent them to current exhibitions, then concluded that they passed the jury because of his standing as a scientist rather than an artist and stopped sending.

When the second war started he was soon busy with research and had no more time to paint. He intended to resign from the Banting Institute and work as a consultant, so he could devote much more time to painting.

One of the last things he said to me: "Won't it be wonderful when this war is over and we can get out in the country and paint again."

A. Y. Jackson



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| 22. MALIGNE RIVER — JASPER NATIONAL PARK — 1936 | Dr. & Mrs. J. S. McCannel<br>Fredericton, N. B.  |
| 23. BIC — QUEBEC — 1927                         | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 24. COBALT — ONTARIO — 1932                     | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 25. ST. IRENEE — QUEBEC — 1931                  | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 26. ST. TITE DES CAPS — QUEBEC — 1937           | Dr. & Mrs. J. S. McCannel,<br>Fredericton, N. B. |
| 27. QUEBEC BARN — 1930                          | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 28. ST. TITE DES CAPS — QUEBEC — 1937           | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 29. GEORGIAN BAY — ONTARIO — 1933               | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 30. CANADIAN ROCKIES — 1936                     | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 31. ST. IRENEE — QUEBEC — 1931                  | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 32. MARY LAKE — CANADIAN ROCKIES — 1936         | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 33. FRENCH RIVER — ONTARIO — 1930               | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 34. COBALT — ONTARIO — 1932                     | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 35. COBALT — ONTARIO — 1932                     | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 36. COBALT — ONTARIO — 1932                     | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 37. COBALT — ONTARIO — 1932                     | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 38. COBALT — ONTARIO — 1932                     | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 39. COBALT — ONTARIO — 1932                     | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |
| 40. COBALT — ONTARIO — 1932                     | Henrietta Banting, Toronto, Ont.                 |