

It's back to the future at the Montreal Neuro Time capsule is opened to mark institute's 75th anniversary, raise money for new wing

ALAN HUSTAK

The Gazette

Tuesday, September 30, 2008

It takes time to break into a time capsule.

To commemorate its 75th anniversary, the Montreal Neurological Institute yesterday decided to open the building's cornerstone, originally laid by Canada's governor-general, Lord Bessborough, on Oct. 6, 1933.

Dozens of reporters and photographers and television crews arrived at the set hour to record the moment. As they milled about University St., it took stonecutters four hours to pry the block loose from its foundations.

"I knew it was going to take a long time to cut out the block," said sculptor Claude Bernard, who worked with an assistant, Sébastien Olscamp.

"They thought it would go faster with drills and saws, but in the end I had to chip at it the old-fashioned way - with a chisel."

At one point, William Feindel, a former director of the institute, took hold of a drill and tried to speed things along.

What they found was hardly worth the wait.

When the copper box was finally opened, all it contained were eight newspapers of the day, including The Gazette, a McGill University yearbook, a guide to the McGill faculty of medicine, financial contracts and a photo of Sir Arthur Currie, the McGill principal and vice-chancellor who at the time worked with neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield to build the research institute.

All the documents were neatly wrapped in brown wax paper and in excellent condition.

"I would have thought we might have found one of Penfield's brain-dissecting instruments or something like that inside," Feindel said.

"Opening the cornerstone is a special occasion to let people know we need money to complete the north wing. Our 75th-anniversary celebrations will give us positioning in



CREDIT: DAVE SIDAWAY, THE GAZETTE
William Feindel (left), a former director of the Montreal Neurological Institute, and David Colman, the hospital's present director, look over newspapers found in the time capsule.

the public eye."

When the \$40-million addition is completed, it is expected to be the world's largest and most innovative brain imaging centre.

David Colman, the institute's director for the past six years, said he is much more interested in what will be put into the stone when it is replaced in a week or two than what was taken out.

"We think it might contain photographs, fundraising campaign documents, and items that illustrate the advances in brain scanning," he said.

A second cornerstone with its own contents is to be placed in the north wing when construction begins next year.

ahustak@thegazette.canwest.com

© The Gazette (Montreal) 2008

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2008 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#). All rights reserved.
CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#). All rights reserved.