

Media Release – Lakefield Heritage Research

Dear Editors:

It was 65 years ago this June, that Dr. Hugh Gastle, MD, MOH-Lakefield and Coroner, administered the first ever test shots of the new Salk anti-Polio serum to 200-some children in Lakefield and immediate area.

This was called a "Closed Case Study" in that only the children going to the public and highschool in the village were to be included in this study.

Other kids going to PCVS or St. Pete's were not.

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hat made the test "pure-n-true".

By no means is this to suggest that the Lakefield Test was a "clincher", or, any other outrageous adjective, but, the Salk team, fretting thru the mounds of other tests were anxious to get what we could call a "snapshot" from someplace, any place, where there was an endemic of polio cases over at least 50-100 years.

Lakefield filled the bill.

The late Gordon Smith, son of village Dr. James Smith MD, advised that the Department of Health and Welfare of Canada [now Health Canada], did use Lakefield as its criteria for licencing later, and, had the impression from his father that Lakefield may have been the only test that the DH&W used.

Beside his medical oath, Dr. Gastle had a personal interest in this project, he had lost a good friend to polio, the Rev. Maunsel Hunt, MTh, rector of St. John's in Lakefield years earlier.

An innocent accident of slipping off the dock trying to get into a canoe, Rev. Hunt, took of swallow of water.

No one gave it a thought, even he, likely, but, by August he was dead, of the very virulent form of polio pollution.

In any event, there are still folks of certain age still living in the village or wherever that will be forever grateful that they were a part of this experiment that ultimately had great consequences for Ontario, Canada and the world.

On Tuesday night, Selwyn Township is expected to acknowledge this landmark in Lakefield's history, and, indeed the County's history.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gord Young

Lakefield Heritage Research