

# The Journal of Dr. Tiberius Hess

## Librarian's Introduction

A few months ago, a longtime Hamilton resident donated a battered cloth-bound journal she discovered during a renovation. It's a vivid story written by Dr. Tiberius Hess, a doctor who lived and practised in Hamilton during the Victorian era.

In it, Hess claims to have invented a time machine, powered by electricity and steam, and governed by mysterious "nautilus gears". He wrote of using that machine, called a "Chronocycle", to travel to present-day Hamilton. The enigmatic Hess wrote of things far beyond the period in which he lived. Fascinating.

His journal is divided into two parts. The primary section contains first-person entries about his experiences in Hamilton from 1854 - 1860, with a brief sojourn to 2019.

The second section is made up of six "clue sets". Hess claims these clues point to the location of a set of nautilus gears that he hid somewhere in Hamilton during his brief time-travel here. You can delve into those clues, and try to locate his nautilus gears, elsewhere on this website.

The journal entries offer a fascinating glimpse into life in Victorian Hamilton. As befits a time traveller, Hess's entries jump about in time, capturing his experience more as a rousing tale than a strict chronological account.

They mention real historical figures such as: Isaac Buchanan, Sir Allan Napier McNab, James McFarlane and others. Hess lived through actual historic events such as the cholera outbreak of 1854, the Desjardins Canal rail disaster of 1857 and the visit to Hamilton by the Prince of Wales in 1860.

Many of the businesses, sites and craftsmen of the time are real, too: these include the Hamilton Waterworks Pump House, the Crystal Palace; The Royal Hotel and the Argyle Coffee Rooms and the Arbor Dining Hall. They all existed; so did the craftsmen John Pettigrew and Edward Zealand.

In all, from his descriptions of Victorian medical treatments to the business and politics of the day, Hess paints a vivid picture of a time before this city became an industrial powerhouse.

But, what are we to make of his claims to have invented a time machine? The science seems sound and resonates with the discoveries of the time. But, did he? That we shall leave to you. Enjoy the journal.

Karen Milligan

Manager, Local History and Archives

Hamilton Public Library



## The Dark Night Of Pursuit

**September 25, 1860 - 2:10 a.m.**

It has finally rained. For the sake of the citizenry of Hamilton I am pleased. Although, a few hours sooner and my enterprise would have foundered before it had begun. But now, a cold September downpour falls through the obsidian darkness. It is a rain that burdens greatcoats, tests the finest macintoshes and penetrates boot leather as though it were wrapping paper.

It urges torrents headlong down the recently parched fissures of the escarpment. It weaves watery curtains that blow through our streets like howling phantasms. In the gutters sodden shreds of bunting, a reminder of the Prince of Wales' recent visit, clog and cluster. The smell of dampened smoke is carried on a west wind.

On such a night MacNab, Sanford and other such worthies curse their rheumatism and ring for coal and blankets, while the destitute scurry for whatever meagre shelter our harbour town can offer in this mercurial, mad and merciless season.

It is after 2 a.m., later than I need it to be, and I hurry to Henry Street towards the dry comfort of the stable that has served, these past many months, as my laboratory and workshop. The rain courses off the brim of my Homburg as I hunker against the lashing wind. Beneath my coat an oilskin is keeping my newly acquired gears dry, but still I instinctively hold the package close,

like a mother shields a child – oh, cruel simile that comes so sharply to my mind.

A stranger, merely a rough shape in the masking gloom, still follows me, as he has since my deliberately circuitous journey from a workshop near the waterfront. My pursuer is less than discrete in his surveillance. I suspect he is one of Buchanan's men; in fact, I am certain. He may know of MacDonald's earlier deed. He may know all! I pray not, for then all is lost.

I had hoped to evade him and his intents, but with bitter irony I acknowledge that I am Time's slave, for a while still at least. I must press on, despite the possible cost to my endeavour. But what a storm! As if the Heavens themselves rebel against what I must do, and by so doing, rend the orderly fabric of nature asunder.

But my story rushes headlong and I get ahead of myself and my tale. Let me, good reader, begin anew.



## The Grand Physics Society

**September 8, 1858**

I was nursing a brandy in the company of my fellow members of the Grand Physics Society, a fanciful name for our little gathering of local doctors, tinkerers and armchair philosophers.

It was our regular monthly meeting in an upstairs lounge of the resplendent new Royal Hotel. I had been, with both bluster and eloquence, expounding the theories which I'd refined for some months. It were these hypotheses that had kept a flame of hope alive since the terrible loss of my dear wife and daughter four years earlier.

"My dear Hess," said Captain James Hickson, a bellicose Scot with prodigious moustaches, "do you mean to suggest in all sincerity that you believe time and space can be skipped about as readily as a tossed stone hops on the surface of a still pond?"

Hickson, as a gangly youth, had fought at Queenston Heights, and had seen General Brock fall there. He also comported himself nobly at Lundy's Lane and at the Battle of Buffalo. But now he was a belligerent and corpulent old war horse, an expert on the science of armed conflict, and a connoisseur of fine shag tobacco. He was also, I must note, a confederate of Isaac Buchanan, a railway man with military ambitions of his own. As a former ship's surgeon I've had

a belly full of war and have little time for sabres or their rattlings.

Earlier that evening, Hickson had given our band a private lecture on the use of the telegraph during the Crimean War. I had challenged him on some of the finer points of electromagnetic amplification. I now saw that my small sting was still irritating him. But the captain and I had sparred before and I was in no mood to give ground.

“What I am suggesting,” I retorted, our small audience turning in my direction, “is that nature is harmonic. If we can but tune an instrument so that it resonates with nature’s overtones and partials, perhaps we can leap from node to node, where the waveforms are at their nadir.”

“And this harmonic nature,” interjected MacDonald, my medical mentor whose gentle manner I had oft admired. “Have you determined its patterns?” MacDonald drew heavily on the cigar he had recently lit with a phosphor match and let the smoke languidly curl to the ceiling of the cozy lounge.

I motioned to the pattern of smoke with my own cheroot. “A spiral,” I responded. “A natural arc of the golden mean. We see it in the curve of the nautilus shell, the whorl of the sunflower head and in all manner of natural wonders. Mathematically we detect it in the series described by Leonardo Fibonacci.”

“The sequence also informs the Divine Proportion of Euclid, and of the constant Phi itself,” interjected Richard Prince, our resident classicist and a maker of fine optical instruments.

“All fascinating,” retorted the Captain, “but to suggest that man might use such knowledge to ape divinity and so leap like a gibbon from place to place and epoch to epoch is folly and hubris, sir, surely!”

“And imagine the energy such journeys would entail,” said Samuel Kellogg, my man of business and a fine amateur astronomer. “All the coal of Cape Breton would need be bent to the task.”

“Ah, there you err in reasoning,” I chided, my blood a little too warm from the brandy and the fine wines that had accompanied the oysters, trout and beef of our recent repast. “Give me a place to stand and I shall move the Earth!”, so said that fine Greek fellow, Archimedes, and so say I of these Fibonacci harmonics. Why, think with how little effort the master flautist jumps octave to octave with a precise adjustment of embouchure, or the manner in which standing waves build strength to strength of their own accord! Offsetting oneself in space would require merely the electrical force even a small Wheatstone dynamo might offer,” I concluded.

“Pish!” rumbled the Captain, his face blotching red in consternation. “Flummery of the first water!”

All eyes turned to me through the room’s bluish haze.

“And yet my calculations stand,” I countered, my colour rising.

“And, Time itself, sir? Do you suggest one might hopscotch through time from the Pleistocene to the Ming Dynasty and then have tea with Napoleon on the force of a gnat’s sigh or the single beat of a hummingbird’s wing?” Captain Hickson inquired and cast a brightened eye on the others.

Our band chuckled mightily at Hickson’s jab, but I parried swiftly.

“The harmonics of the fourth dimension are more challenging, it is true. Time is not a two-headed arrow. All moves from order to entropy, but not the converse, so history is immutable. One cannot return to a time prior to the one you departed. The past is carved in a tablet of stone. But, with a rapidly applied jolt of great electromotive force I believe the future can, and will, be journeyed to!” My fist landed upon the table with more anger than I had intended.

Here, I feared I had lost my fellows. Even kindly MacDonald looked into his glass and fell silent. But Captain Hickson held my gaze. His eyes narrowed slightly and I knew that he considered I could be travelling beyond the theoretical.

“Speaking of time,” said Thomas Harris, the printer, clapping his hands nervously, “it is perhaps time for more coffee and some of the excellent apricot tarts this establishment has on offer!”

The Society’s meeting came to a close shortly after our refreshments. Hickson kept to himself as he donned his coat and hat. As we were dispersing, MacDonald touched my elbow.

“Tarry a while, Tiberius,” he said. “I have a pretty chess puzzle you may find amusing.” He led me to a corner of the room where we had a board set up for our members’ use.

“Of course. I am in no hurry,” I replied. And, in truth, I enjoyed the company of the kind doctor immensely. Over the years I had learned much by his side as his eager apprentice. And, I had admired his bravery the prior spring as we worked to save the stricken who lay dying on the ice when a train left the bridge at the Desjardins Canal. How I cursed the owners of the Great Western Railway whose parsimony had resulted in the death of sixty innocent souls.

MacDonald toyed with the chessmen in a desultory manner as I took my place opposite him. "You do yourself no good making an enemy of Hickson, young man," he said. "And you do your anger no service by wasting it on him." I felt ashamed and my colour rose again. "And the spirits you insist on pouring into yourself, they will not drown your ghosts."

The good doctor knew of my mental anguish since the passing of my dear wife Adelaide and daughter Miranda. Many a night I think it was only his good counsel that kept me from joining them in their flight from this world. And he had been at my side as I sweated and swore the last of the laudanum out of my system a year after those dreadful deaths.

"You are right, sir," I said. "And you are correct to admonish me for it."

"I am, indeed," said MacDonald, smiling faintly. "But, that is not why I wanted to talk to you," he added, moving a pawn forward a square.