

# Stowe & Gullen

*Cobourg's Victoria College played an important part in the Town's mid-history and also in the development of education in Ontario and Canada. We have chosen to tell the story here of two women associated with Victoria College in minor ways, but who played a major part in the Canadian story.*



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

## Emily Stowe

The year was 1852 and young Emily Howard Jennings, just 21, presented herself for registration at Cobourg's famous Victoria College. **She was refused, for she was a woman.**

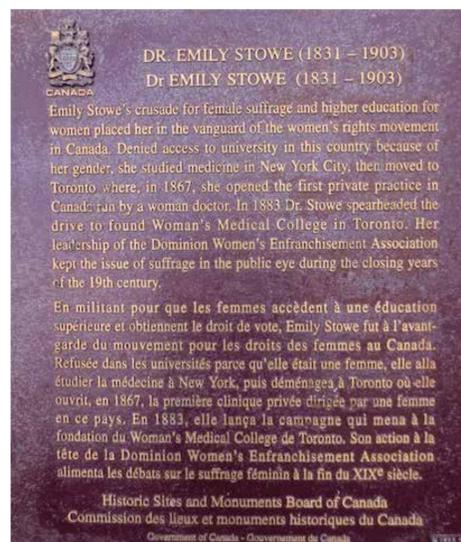
Undeterred, Emily applied to Egerton Ryerson's Normal School of Upper Canada. Here she was accepted, graduated with first class honours, moved to Brantford, and became the **first woman principal** of a public school in Canada West (Ontario).

In 1856 she married John Stowe, and that might well have signalled the end of her professional career. But John developed tuberculosis shortly after the birth of their third child, renewing in Emily an earlier interest in herbal remedies and homeopathic medicine. Emily Stowe left teaching and **decided to become a doctor.**

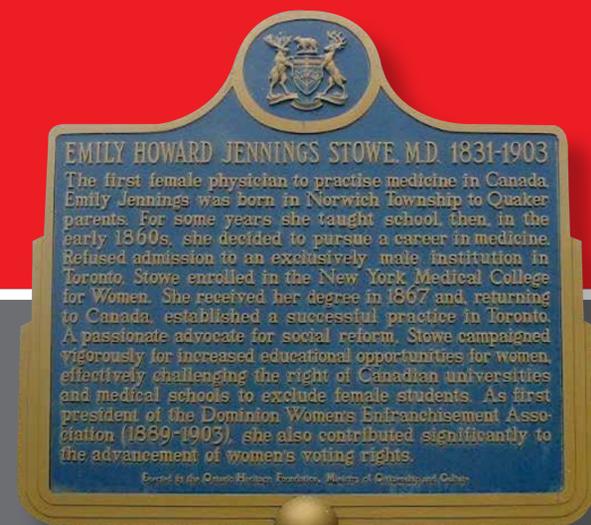
But once again her gender was against her as the Toronto School of Medicine rejected her application for admission. In the words of its Vice President, *"The doors of the University are not open to women and I trust they never will be."*

This time Emily went to the United States and graduated from the homeopathic New York Medical College for Women. She returned to Canada and in **1867 opened a medical practice on Richmond Street in Toronto.** She gained some local prominence through public lectures on women's health and maintained a steady clientele through newspaper advertisements.

In 1870, the president of the Toronto School of Medicine granted special permission to Emily and fellow student Jenny Kidd Trout to attend classes, a requirement for medical practitioners with foreign licenses. Faced with **hostility from both the male faculty and students**, Emily refused to take the oral and written exams and left the school, continuing to practice without a licence.



Stowe Plaque at Women's College Hospital - Photo by Alan L. Brown



Stowe Plaque, Norwich Ontario  
Photo by Alan L. Brown

Finally, on July 16, 1880, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario granted **Emily a licence to practice medicine**, based on her experience with homeopathic medicine since 1850. This licence made her the second female licenced physician in Canada, after Jenny Kidd Trout.

In 1876, Emily founded the Toronto Women's Literary Club, which was later renamed the Canadian Women's Suffrage Association and campaigned for improved working conditions for women. In 1883, the efforts of the Suffrage Association led to the creation of the **Women's Medical College.**

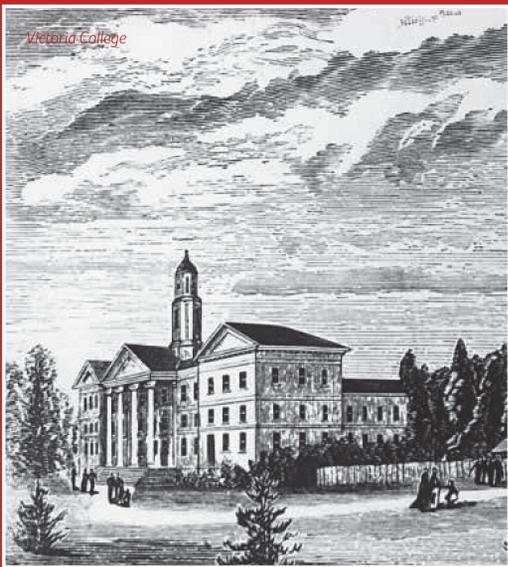
Emily Stowe died in 1903 at the age of 71, fourteen years before Canadian women were granted the right to vote in 1917.



## Augusta Stowe-Gullen

1883 was the year that Emily Stowe's pioneering efforts led to the creation of the first Medical College for Women in Ontario. It was that same year that Emily's daughter, **Ann Augusta, received her M. D. degree from Cobourg's Victoria College**, the same one that had refused admission to her mother 31 years earlier!

Augusta was not only the first female graduate of an Ontario university but also **the first woman to earn a medical degree in Canada**. She is legendary for her lecture hall outburst where she chastised the professor and students who were mocking her being there.



The Department of Medicine at Victoria College was established in 1854 when the University of Toronto ceased instruction in medicine. Classes in medicine were actually held at the Toronto School of Medicine although the degree was granted by Victoria College.

On graduation, Augusta married Dr John B. Gullen, and was appointed **Demonstrator in Anatomy at the Woman's Medical College** in Toronto (from 1894 known as the Ontario Medical College for Women and eventually transformed into the Women's College Hospital).

In 1890 she was appointed Lecturer on Diseases of Children, subsequently **Professor of Diseases of Children**. She also served among the original staff

members of Toronto Western Hospital when it was founded in 1896.

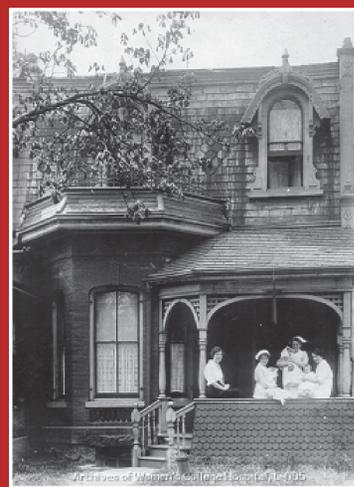
Augusta Stowe-Gullen was a member of the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Ontario Social Service Council and the Senate of the University of Toronto where **she represented women in the medical profession from 1912 to 1924**.

Among a host of other affiliations and associations she was also **active in the suffrage, temperance and other social movements**. She was among the founders of the National Council of Women in 1893, President of the Canadian Suffrage Association and Vice-President of the National Council of Women.

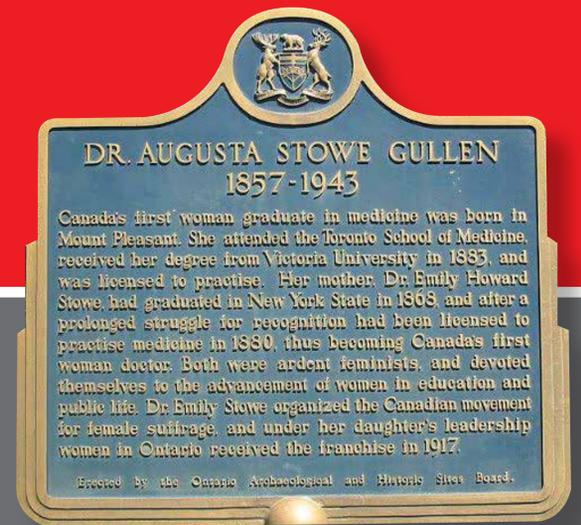
She succeeded her mother, Emily Stowe, as President of the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association in 1903.

In 1935 Augusta Stowe-Gullen was **awarded the Order of the British Empire** by His Majesty King George V.

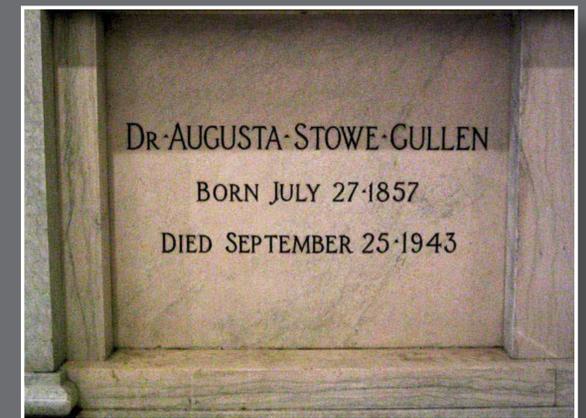
She passed away in Toronto in 1943 at the age of 86.



Women's College Hospital



Gullen Plaque, Mt. Pleasant, Ontario  
Photo by Alan L. Brown



Stowe-Gullen Memorial



Order of the British Empire