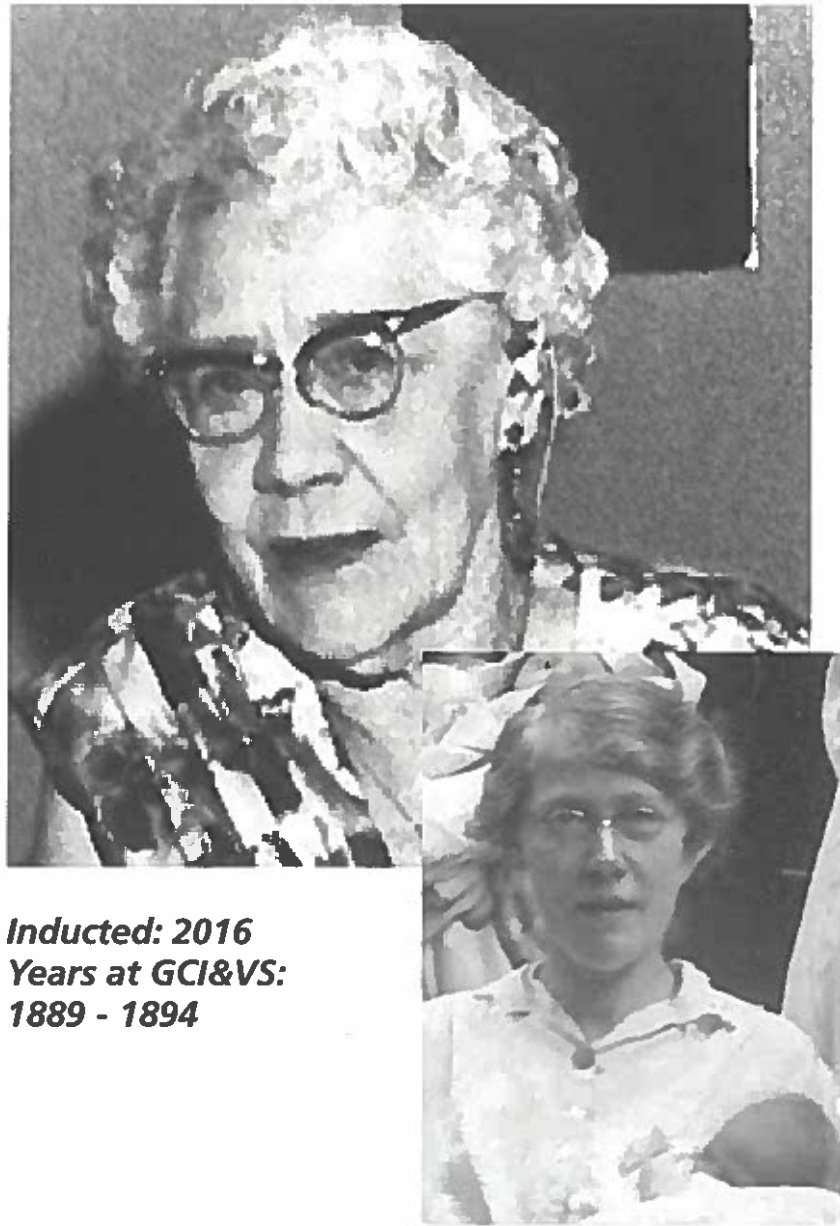


Rowena Hume

Medicine



Inducted: 2016
Years at GCI&VS:
1889 - 1894

Rowena Grace Douglas Hume was born in Galt on January 14, 1877. She was the youngest of the twelve children born to Gavin and Ann Hume who had emigrated from Scotland in the mid 1800's. Rowena attended Galt Collegiate and graduated in 1894. Following graduation she studied medicine at the Ontario Medical College for Women, one of the only two institutions in Toronto to admit women for the study of medicine. Since both her parents had passed away by this time Dr. Hume moved to Toronto with her brother, Guy, and a number of her sisters. She graduated from the University of Trinity College in 1899 and opened a general practice in Toronto in 1900. She enrolled in post graduate studies in England and the United States before returning to take a position at the Ontario Medical College for Women. Dr. Hume lectured in Pathology and Bacteriology and was an assistant in Anatomy at the college from 1902 to 1906.

Dr. Hume was a member of the committee responsible for founding Women's College Hospital in Toronto. The committee was transformed into the hospital's board of governors and she served as the hospital's first President in 1911. She was also the hospital's first Chief of Obstetrics and Gynaecology; a position that she held for twenty years.

In 1932 Dr. Hume's work was recognized and she was named an honorary staff member for life. Throughout her career Dr. Hume was also actively involved in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Salvation Army's Harbour Light Centre which offered services to addicts, immigrants and refugees and the Fred Victor Mission; a shelter for homeless men.

In what is perhaps her most significant achievement, Dr. Hume pioneered Planned Parenthood in Canada. Along with Dr. Elizabeth Bagshaw, a former colleague at the Ontario College for Women, she founded the first birth control clinic in Canada in Hamilton, Ontario on March 3, 1932. Birth control practices at that time were illegal and widely criticised by the medical and religious communities. However, Dr. Hume risked her professional reputation and her career to serve as the first attending doctor at the clinic.

Dr. Hume's work continued into her eighties until she died on October 2, 1966 at the hands of a homeless man that she had taken into her house. At the time she was the oldest practicing female physician in Canada. She left behind a legacy of social responsibility and leadership in a profession that had previously been male-dominated. Hume Lane in Toronto has been named in her honour by Heritage Toronto.