



It's Our History, Our Country

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*Dec. 9, 1851 Sir George Williams
and the YMCA*

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Many people dance and have a fun time doing it, you can go and work out there and some places rent you a room to stay there. I am of course taking about the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) or simply called the "Y".

This legacy started when Sir George Williams (1821-1905) founded the YMCA. The first Canadian YMCA opened in Montreal on Dec.9, 1851.

Williams was born on a farm in Dulverton, Somerset, England. Williams didn't think too much of himself at first. Careless, thoughtless, godless, swearing young fellow were the words he described himself as, but eventually for unknown reasons, he became a devout Christian.

At the age of 23, he went to London and worked in a draper's (obsolete term for a wholesaler, or especially retailer of cloth shop) in 1844. His colleagues were similarly employed, and they were concerned by the lack of healthy activities for young men in cities such as London. The alternatives were often taverns, brothels, and other temptations to sin. On June 6, Williams founded the first YMCA in London for "the improving of the spiritual condition of young men engaged in the drapery and other trades."

Williams was knighted in 1894

by Queen Victoria. After his death in 1905, he was commemorated by a stained-glass window in the nave of Westminster Abbey. Sir George Williams is buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.

Back in 1851 the YMCA supported people during their leisure time by focusing on their personal growth in spirit, mind and body. The YMCA was interested in putting Christian principles into action, giving people the opportunity to learn, improve themselves, choose a healthy lifestyle and support others, the Y still holds to these beliefs today.

Other worthwhile timelines of the Y include: 1872 First Canadian YMCA community building is erected; 1868 First Home for Street Boys is opened 1867; 1866 YMCA begins offering physical activities, Volleyball, a YMCA invention, comes to Canada; 1892 First leadership program to train Physical Directors starts in Montreal YMCA; 1891 Canadian YMCA director invents basketball; 1890 First YMCA resident camp starts; 1889 Canadian YMCA goes international; 1910 First national YMCA swimming instruction program launched; 1939 Staff in YMCA War Services support Canadian Armed Forces in WWII; 1960s and 1970s The Y is one of the first groups to develop the concept of youth staff going onto the streets to reach out to other youth; 1960s Licensed child care programs open. There are 122 countries that have Ys worldwide.

No matter the times we live in or the people which surround us one thing is certain, it's our history, our country.

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