

The Champlain Society

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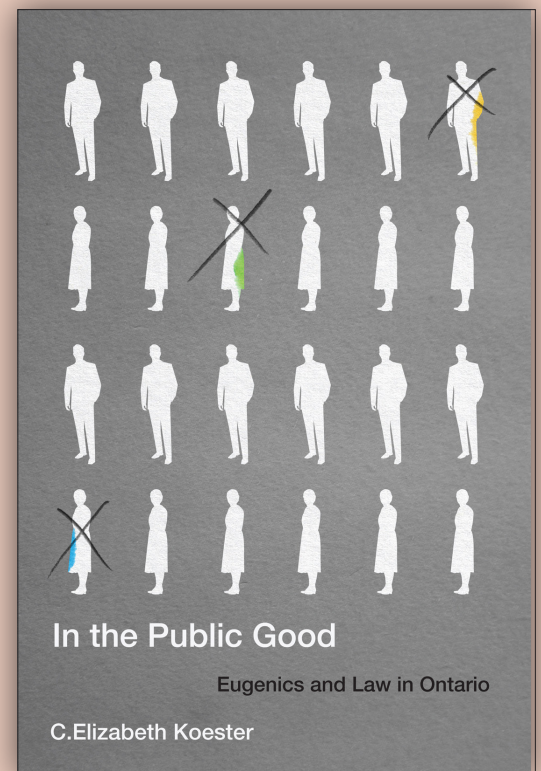


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In the Public Good: Eugenics and Law in Ontario **by Elizabeth Koester** Wins the Floyd S. Chalmers Award for Ontario History

The Champlain Society is pleased to announce that Elizabeth Koester is the winner of this year's Floyd S. Chalmers Award for her book *In the Public Good: Eugenics and Law in Ontario*.

Published by McGill-Queen's University Press, *In the Public Good: Eugenics and Law in Ontario* analyzes legal structures involved in eugenics discourse in Ontario between 1910 and 1938 to demonstrate "how a variety of actors attempted to use law to implement eugenic solutions to social problems" (p. 211). Three innovative case studies form the heart of Koester's study. First, she examines eight private member's bills introduced into the Ontario legislature between 1910 and 1921 by Dr. Forbes Godfrey dealing with sterilization or marriage restrictions for targeted groups demonstrating the widespread public debate about eugenics despite the failure of these proposed measures to be enshrined in provincial law. Koester then explores the complex workings of three royal commissions that recommended actions restricting the rights of the "feeble-minded" that again were not adopted by successive provincial governments wrestling with the practical application of eugenics policies that threatened individual liberty. Finally, *In the Public Good* investigates the 1936–37 trial of Dorothea Palmer for providing birth control advice on behalf of A.R. Kaufman's Parents' Information Bureau; her ultimate acquittal on the Criminal Code charges was based on the legal system's recognition of the public good of contraceptive practices, and the trial furthermore demonstrated the links between the birth control and eugenics movements. Based on exhaustive research and written in an engaging manner, *In the Public Good* is an important addition to the study of eugenics in Canada and joins the lengthy list of worthy recipients of the Champlain Society's Chalmers Award.



Established in 1983, the Floyd S. Chalmers Award is given annually to the best book written on any aspect of Ontario history in the preceding calendar year. This year's award selection committee included Laurel MacDowell (University of Toronto), Michael Stevenson (Lakehead University), and Janet Noel (University of Toronto) as members, with Craig Mantle (Champlain Society) providing secretarial support. The prize includes a \$1000.00 cash award as well as an Inuit carving, as dictated by Floyd S. Chalmers himself. Elizabeth Koester will receive her award at a future date.

For more information, contact: info@champlainsociety.ca.

About Mr. Chalmers

Floyd Sherman Chalmers (1898–1993) made outstanding contributions to Canada through his work as a journalist and philanthropist. He started in the newspaper business when he was 17 as a reporter for the *Toronto News* and *Toronto World*. Chalmers moved on to the *Financial Post* in 1919, advancing to the position of editor in 1925. He eventually rose to occupy several senior executive positions within the Maclean-Hunter publishing company, becoming its Honorary Chairman in 1979.

Chalmers was extremely active in promoting the arts in Canada. He guided numerous organizations by serving in influential roles: director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, vice-chairman of the Royal Conservatory of Music, president of the Canadian Opera Company and the Stratford Shakespearean Festival, and chancellor of York University. He founded the Floyd S. Chalmers Foundation and initiated the Encyclopedia of Music in Canada. The foundation continues to provide substantial assistance to young Canadian artists. Chalmers was the recipient of numerous honorary degrees, was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1967, and was elevated to a Companion of the Order in 1984 in recognition of his contribution to the arts.



The Floyd S. Chalmers Award in Ontario History was originally established by Chalmers in 1983 when he was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Ontario Historical Studies Series. In 1993, having completed its government mandate to commission and publish 30 books on the history of Ontario, the Series was disbanded. Its final act was to transfer the administration of the trust fund and the award to the Champlain Society.

About the Champlain Society

For more than 100 years, the Champlain Society has worked to spread awareness of Canada's documentary heritage. The Society has published over 100 volumes on a wide variety of explorations and discoveries and will continue to do so with the support of its members. From the lively episodes of the *Witness to Yesterday* podcast series and the informative monthly *Findings/Trouvailles* blog posts to the extensive collection of digital archives, the Champlain Society continues to increase public awareness of, and accessibility to, Canada's rich store of historical records. Members benefit from full access to all Society publications and resources.



Explore the Champlain Society at www.champlainsociety.ca