

Chant Medal – Peter Broughton

This medal is awarded, not more than once a year, to an amateur astronomer resident in Canada on the basis of the value of the work carried out in astronomy and closely allied fields of the original investigation and specifically not for the services of the Society, worthy though these may be.

Peter Broughton is an outstanding writer on the history of Canadian astronomy. He is a doyen of those working in the field, by virtue of the quality and quantity of his contributions. For the entirety of the nearly four decades during which he has published, he has done so as a RASC member. A former RASC National President (1992-1994), and holder of many other Society offices, Peter is a retired mathematics teacher (Toronto Board of Education), but an autodidact as an historian. Unlike many amateurs who venture into writing astronomical history, including some quite prominent professional astronomy writers, Peter is at home with original sources in archives, and rare book collections. He has no need to repeat what is found in every book, but, from the vantage of original research, can write of what was not previously known. It is something to which we should all aspire.

Within the Society he is chiefly known for *Looking Up: a History of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada* (Toronto-Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1994), the history of the RASC (incidentally, Peter's work on the source material at the National Office in preparation for writing *Looking Up* led directly to the creation of the present RASC Archives). To this can be added his numerous papers published in the *RASC Journal*, such as

- Astronomy in Seventeenth-Century Canada, *JRASC* 75, 4 (1981, August), 175–208
- Daniel Knode Winder (1828-97), the First President of the Toronto Astronomical Club, *JRASC* 102, 6 (2008, December), 238–241, &
- Astronomical Observations by Peter Fidler and Others in “Canada” 1790–1820, *JRASC* 103, 4 (2009, August), 141–151.

Many of these remain key treatments in print.

Peter has published other work, less known to most Society members, but arguably of more significance than *Looking Up*, including

- First Predicted Return of Halley's Comet, *Journal for the History of Astronomy (JHA)* 16 (1985), 123–132
- Arthur Storer of Maryland: His Astronomical Work and His Family Ties with Newton, *JHA*, 19 (1988), 77–96
- Auroral Records from Canada 1769–1821, *Journal of Geophysical Research*, 107. A8 (2002), SIA1–9
- The Accuracy and Use of Sextants and Watches in Rupert's Land in the 1790s, *Annals of Science*, 66, 2 (2009, April), 209–229

as well as entries in both editions (2007, and 2014) of the *Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers*, ed. Thomas Hockey et al., (New York, NY: Springer), for which Peter and his collaborators won the prestigious Donald E. Osterbrock Book Prize for the Historical Astronomy Division of the AAS in 2017.

Peter Broughton's major monograph on J.S. Plaskett (2018) is his most important achievement (<https://utorontopress.com/ca/northern-star-1>). It enables us now to see the first Canadian astrophysicist of world standing in the round. It is the product of over a decade of research, and its results, significant for refining the narrative of astronomy in Canada, are of interest not only to researchers here, but also to those abroad.

Peter's published work has allowed us a fuller view of the world of amateur and professional astronomy leading to the present stage of the discipline in Canada. In doing so he has enhanced the reputation of the Society. His contributions well merit the Chant medal.

Submitted by:
Roy Bishop
Randall Rosenfeld