

Dr. William D. Young Memorial in Kew Gardens

By Jean Cochrane

April 26, 2020



[Dr. William D. Young Memorial, Kew Gardens, 2006](#)

Photo by Alan L Brown



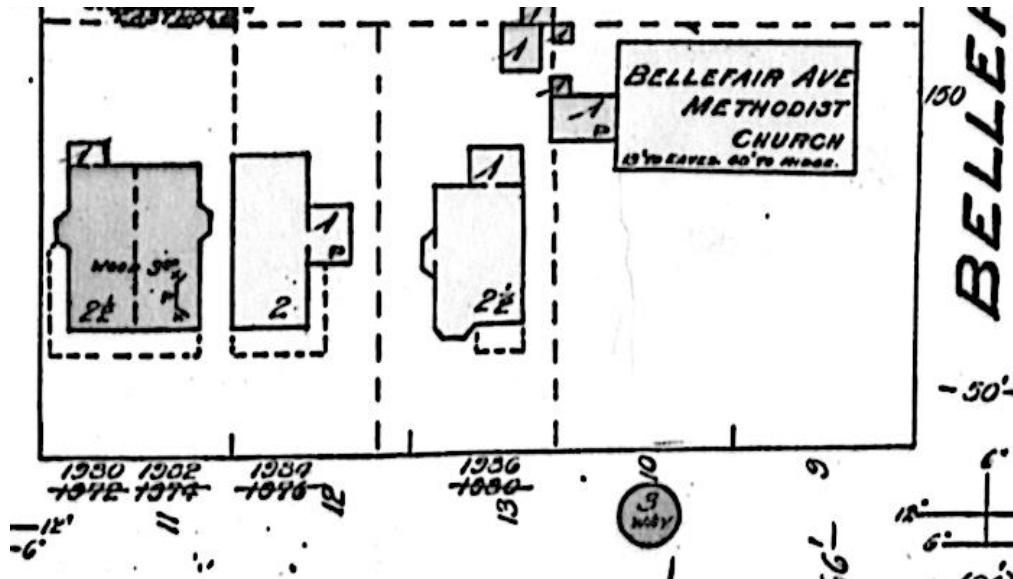
On January 4, 1918, the year when the First World War would finally end and the Spanish flu epidemic would flare, the Beach lost a hero, Dr. William D. Young. He died of acute nephritis, inflammation of the kidneys, after an illness of five days.

His death brought an outpouring of grief and gratitude. The neighbourhood closed down on the day of his funeral at St John, Norway. It was said that clergy of several denominations volunteered to join in the ceremony.

Within a week there was a spontaneous movement to find a way to honor his memory. When the resulting monument was unveiled in 1920, two thousand people turned out for the occasion.

Portrait of Dr. William Daniel Young, 1874-1918, "Friend of the Poor"
Brantford Daily Courier, January 9, 1918

Born in Ottawa in 1874, Dr. Young had practised medicine in the Beach area for 15 years when he died at age 44. He was a member of the Beaches Masonic Lodge and the Oddfellows, and was a physician for the Ontario Jockey Club at Woodbine. He worked and lived with his family at 1986 Queen Street East near Kew Gardens. He and his wife Emeline had four daughters, Margaret, Isobel, Helen and Marie.



Dr. W. D. Young's home and office at 1986 Queen Street East, 1913

The 2 ½-story frame building is shown on the north side of the street between Waverley Road and Bellefair Avenue and adjacent to the first Bellefair Avenue Methodist Church.

[Detail, Plate 455, Vol. 6, Fire Insurance Plan of Toronto, Rev. Mar. 1913.](#)



[Queen Street East looking east from Waverley Road, 1930](#)

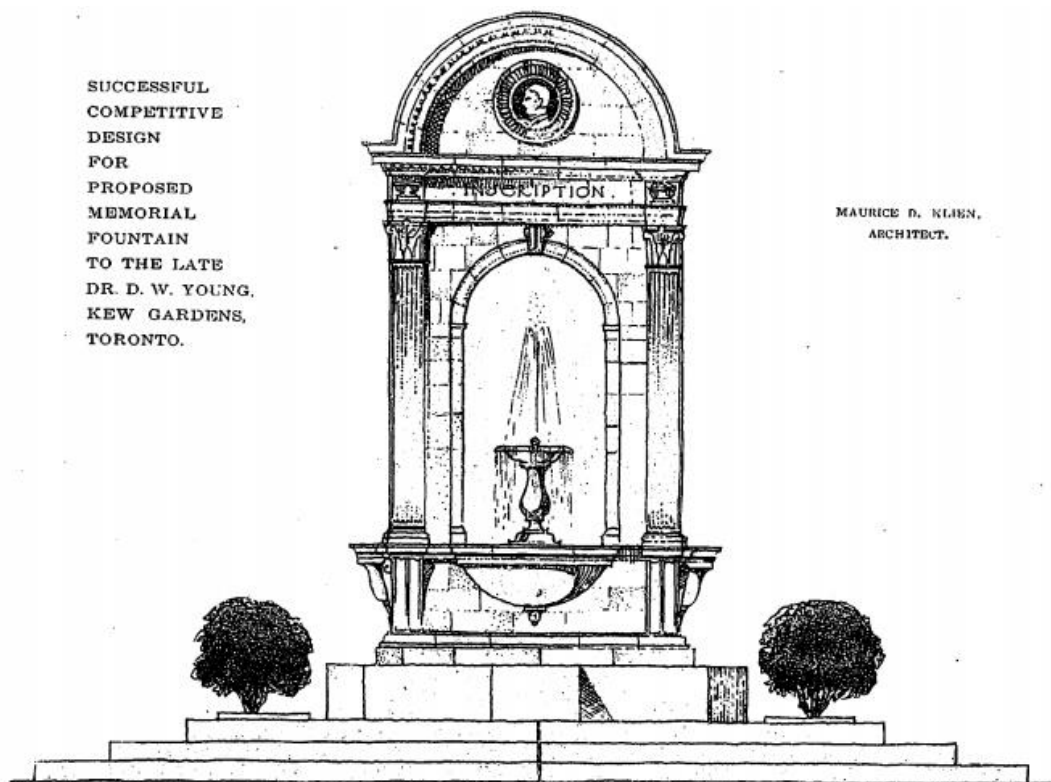
Dr. Young's old house and office is visible on the left, adjacent to Bellefair Methodist/United Church's second building completed in 1923.

Dr. Young would not bill a family he knew could not afford to pay him. He showed kindnesses, providing food or small amounts of money for the needy. He took a special interest in the families of men who had been killed in the war.

The *Star* reported on February 2, 1918: "Every day some story of Dr. Young's sacrifice is told. Only a short time ago a mother came to Toronto from some outside point with her sick child. She was penniless, and enquired where a doctor could be found, and was told that Dr. Young at the Beach would come, money or no money. He was sent for, and when the mother mentioned in an embarrassed way that she had no money to pay for his services, he promptly answered while attending the baby, 'Never mind the money if I can save the child'."

By April 1918, a Monument Committee had been formed in the community. With permission from the city to erect a memorial in Kew Gardens, they began raising funds. They divided the local area into 13 blocks, with a captain and 24 volunteers to each block, and raised \$2,500, (about \$32,500 today). Committee Chair W.E. Nugent, probably testily, assured a committee member who grumbled that it wasn't good enough, that "the entire district has been canvassed thoroughly". A card with the doctor's picture on it was designed to give to donors.

A design competition was held for the proposed memorial and was won by [Maurice D. Klein](#), a young Toronto architect. A sketch of his design was published in *Construction*, a trade journal, in August 1919.



"Successful competitive design for proposed memorial fountain to the late W. D. Young, Kew Gardens, Toronto"

Construction, 12 (August 1919), page 233.

The design of the fountain was changed from the “bronze spray” that appeared in the 1919 rendering to the figure of a child created by Toronto sculptor [Florence Wyle](#). She also designed the pair of bronze medallions of Dr. Young, said in *Construction* in August 1920 to be “a remarkable likeness of the late physician modelled from a photograph by Mr. Ivor Lewis.”



On Monday afternoon August 2, 1920, that crowd of 2000 gathered on the east side of Kew Gardens for the dedication. The headline on the *Globe* story read, “A Gift to the City, Mayor Church There to Accept It on Behalf of the People.”

The *Toronto World*, noting that Mayor Thomas Church was a friend of Dr. Young, quoted him as saying, “It is not only in times of war that men become heroes and do noble deeds. Dr. Young was a peace hero whose life work consisted of one noble act after another.”

Accepting the monument on behalf of the city, the mayor said, “The city is proud to honor his name. Dr. Young devoted his whole time to the welfare of the sick and needy, and you residents of Kew Beach know how generously he administered to the physical and spiritual needs of poor families without hope of reward or thought of glory.”

“Memorial to late Dr. W. D. Young Unveiled”
Toronto Star, August 3, 1920: 8.



Plaque at the base of the Dr. William D. Young Memorial, installed 1920.

Photo by Barbara Myrvold, April 22, 2020



"The Dr. Young Memorial Fountain, Kew Gardens Toronto. Maurice Klein Architect"
Construction, 13 (August 1920), page 246.



The Globe gave a detailed description of the memorial on August 3, 1920:

"The fountain is in the Italian renaissance style, 14 feet high, mounted on an Indiana limestone platform 18 feet square, and surmounting three steps from the platform. There are four carved archways In the centre of the archway is the figure of a child holding a shell over his head from which water was spraying, a fit emblem of Dr. Young's life, overflowing with generosity and kindness. In each archway is a water basin, three feet above the platform. On the east and west sides are bronze medallions of Dr. Young, and the four friezes bear inscriptions, on the front and back, "Service was his aim." and on both sides, "Friend of the needy."

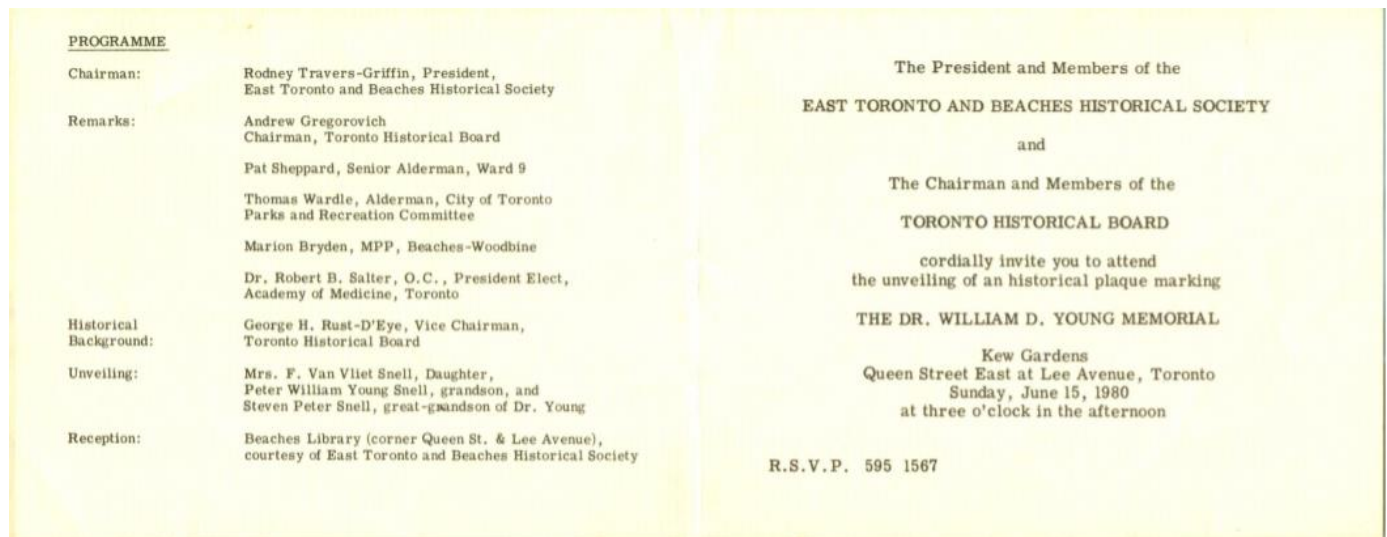
"Dr. Young Monument, Kew Beach, Toronto, 1920"

Photo by M.O. Hammond
Archives of Ontario F 1075-15-0-0-48

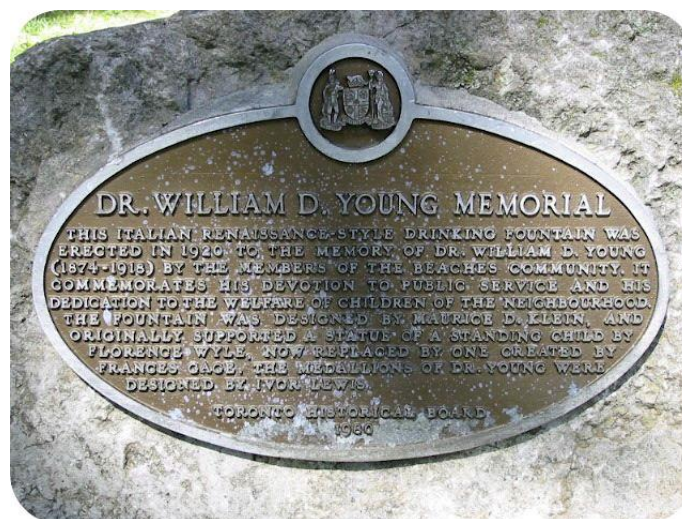
The war, of course, ended on November 11, 1918 but the flu epidemic was not officially over until the spring of 1920. It killed about 1,800 people in a Toronto of less than a million. Its useful legacy was the formation of a federal Board of Health.

On January 17, 1977, Toronto City Council [designated the “William D. Young Drinking Fountain Kew Gardens](#) of architectural interest and historical value”

The Toronto Historical Board restored the memorial in 1978. It replaced the beautiful bronze by Florence Wyle, which was stolen in the 1940s and was never found, with one by [Frances Gage](#) that followed the design of the original. The Board installed a plaque on a rock slightly north of the memorial in 1980, which was unveiled on June 15.



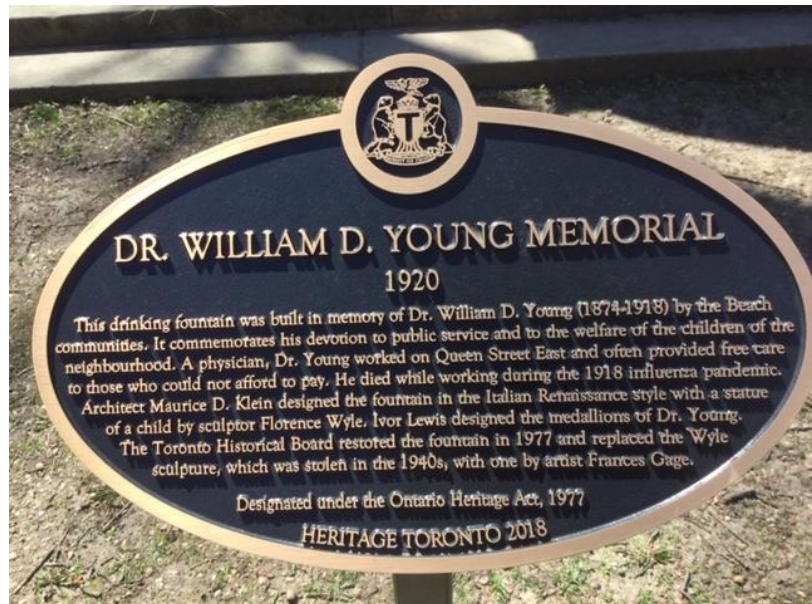
**Invitation to plaque unveiling, June 15, 1980.
Courtesy Barbara Myrvold**



[Dr. William D. Young Memorial plaque, Toronto Historical Board, 1980](#)

Photo by Alan L Brown. Posted September 2006

A replacement plaque was created by Heritage Toronto in 2018 and installed in front of the memorial.



Dr. William D. Young Memorial replacement plaque, Heritage Toronto 2018

Photos by Heritage Toronto, 2019 (l) and Barbara Myrvold, 2020 (r)

Editor's note: The replacement plaque states that Dr. Young "died while working during the 1918 influenza pandemic." However, Dr. R. E. Davidson of 1980 Queen Street East, the "Physician who Attended Deceased" reported on January 5, 1918 that William Daniel Young died the day before of acute nephritis of five days duration. Moreover, contemporary newspaper accounts of Dr. Young's death and the subsequent fundraising efforts for a memorial mention his kindnesses and professionalism, but not the Spanish flu, which did not hit Toronto until October 1918.

About the author

Jean Cochrane is a long-time Beach resident and a member of The Beach and East Toronto Historical Society. She has written many history books and articles including [*The Beach: an illustrated history from the lake to Kingston Road*](#) (2009) that she co-authored with her late husband Glenn Cochrane.