

# ASTRONOMER MARY GREY AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF CANADA'S DOMINION OBSERVATORY

> SHARON ODELL

SHARON ODELL has a twenty-five-year career in museology at municipal, provincial, and national level museums; as a mentor she presently sits on an Algonquin College advisory committee for Applied Museum Studies. She resides in Ottawa and holds an M.A. in Art History from Carleton University; she specializes in research on art, architecture, and the history of Canadian women in science. Her latest publication is on public landscape art of Cairn Cunnane in *Render Journal* 2017, and her latest co-curated exhibition at Carleton University Art Gallery was a Science Lab series titled *HERbarium*, 2017. In addition, she conducts annual presentations (2017-2020) on the Canadian history of scientific architecture and women in astronomy, to Canada wide audiences, as a member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada.

When the first National Dominion Observatory of Canada opened in Ottawa, Ontario, in April of 1905, its function was to mirror that of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich and to become a Canadian institutional resource used for timekeeping, railway, and survey requirements. Built by David Ewart between 1902-1904, its architecture, an example of a blend of Romanesque Revival and Edwardian classicist styles used in North America, was meant to visually highlight the national importance of the science of astronomy within a colonized country striving for independence (fig. 1). Today, thankfully, this building's legacy has been preserved in part thanks to the keen foresight of the last self-taught astronomer who worked there, Mary Grey. Grey's curatorial work in her later museum role helped bring focus to this same architecture, which still holds layers of great significance at local, national, and international levels, advancing its cause for comparison to other observatory histories around the world. Many believe the key for this building to continue its educational value today is to strengthen its scientific heritage designation by following the same principles that Grey laid out, as this article will reveal. Specifically, these principles include her public outreach and preservation of the Observatory campus as-a-whole. Otherwise, without all parts of this story, only a fragmented lesson in Canada's history of astronomy will be known to future generations.

The late John Hodgson, who supervised Grey as director general of the Earth Physics Branch of Energy Mines and Resources (EMR) in 1979, wrote the first



FIG. 1. DOMINION OBSERVATORY, OTTAWA, BY ARCHITECT DAVID EWART. | SHARON ODELL, AUGUST 10, 2019.