

# John Stuart Foster and Canada's First Cyclotron

CAP Congress – Halifax 2018

David Hanna

McGill University



## Sources and Acknowledgements

John Stuart Foster, 1890 - 1964

R.E. Bell - Biogr. Mems. Fell. R. Soc. 12, pp 147-161, 1966

John Stuart Foster, McGill University, and the  
Renaissance of Nuclear Physics in Montreal, 1935-1950

J. Thomas – Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences 14, pp 357-377, 1984

The Physics Department of McGill University: A Brief History 1889 - 1939

M. Cohen - unpublished

John Crawford, emeritus professor, McGill University Physics Department

Jean Barrette, emeritus professor, McGill University Physics Department

## John Stuart Foster (1890 -1964)

born 1890/05/30 in Clarence, NS

attended Pictou Academy, Acadia,  
and Mount Allison Universities  
(graduated 1914)

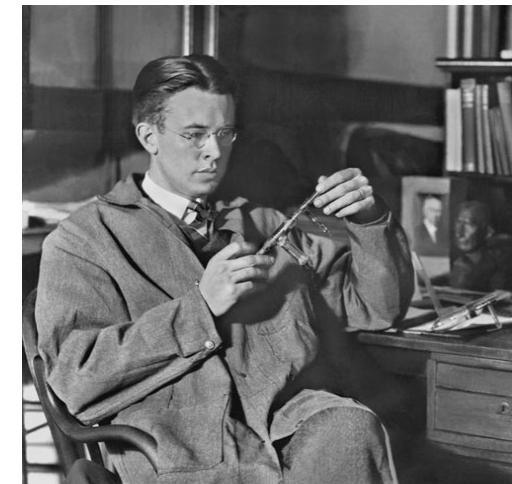
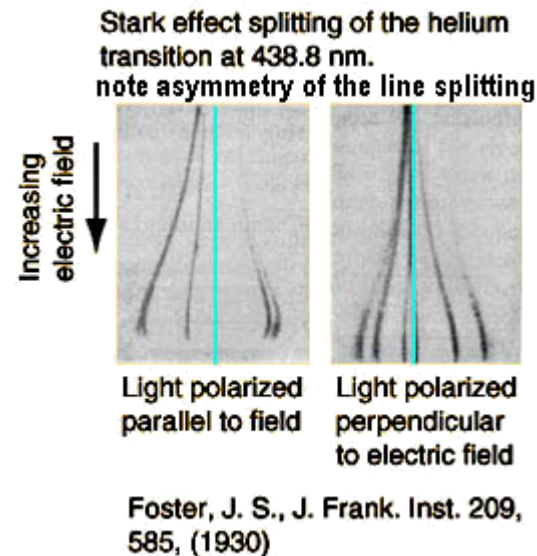
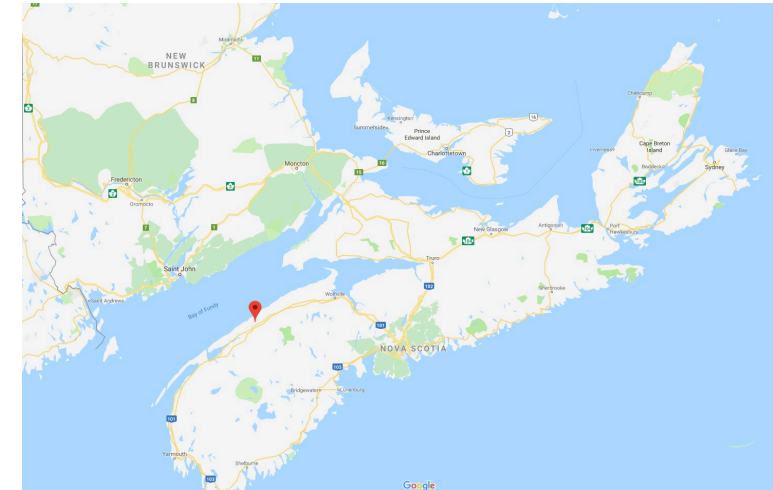
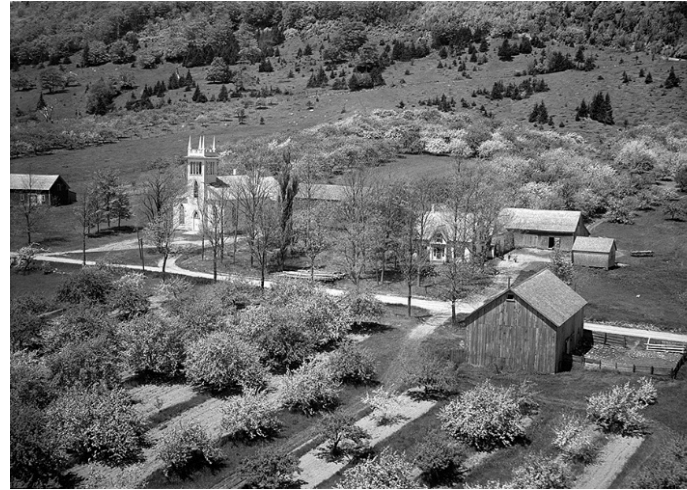
spent (latter part of ?) WW I in USA  
(Fort Monmouth, NJ – US Army signals corps)

awarded one of the newly-established (US) National  
Research Fellowships

PhD studies at Yale 1920 – 1924

thesis:  
Stark-effect spectroscopy in hydrogen and helium

fellow student:  
Ernest Lawrence – later inventor of the cyclotron



E.O. Lawrence at Yale



## Assistant Professor at McGill (1924)

he joined

Arthur Eve	- chair
Louis King	- radio engineering
Norman Shaw	- thermodynamics
Alice Vibert Douglas	- astronomy
David Keys	- electrical properties of matter



Foster was the first professor who had not come via some kind of Cambridge connection

He was also the most modern – the Stark effect is very much a quantum phenomenon

The effect of Rutherford at McGill had pretty much decayed away – no serious nuclear physics was being done



## Institute for Theoretical Physics in Copenhagen (1926-27)

- published his most important work (Stark – related)
- obtained the admiration and respect of Bohr and Heisenberg
- came to appreciate the direct, simple, intuitive approach to theory and experiment



Heisenberg and Bohr

*Application of Quantum Mechanics to the Stark Effect in Helium.*  
By J. STUART FOSTER, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Physics, McGill University ;  
Fellow of the International Education Board (in Copenhagen).

(Communicated by N. Bohr, For. Mem. R.S.—Received August 8, 1927.)

[PLATES 6-13.]

*Introduction.*—Many interesting features of the Stark-effect may be seen with unusual clearness in the arc spectra of helium, and these we shall mention very briefly before referring to the theory.

35 pages of text and diagrams.....

In conclusion, the writer wishes to express his best thanks to Prof. Bohr for his interest in this work, the major part of which was done in Copenhagen. His thanks are also extended to Dr. Heisenberg for many helpful and friendly discussions.

## Accomplishments and Honours

1929 - Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada

1930 - Sterling Fellow of Yale

1935 - Fellow of the Royal Society of London

1935 – Macdonald Professor of Physics at McGill

25 graduate students wrote theses on the Stark effect but by the end of the 1920s it was getting to be a 'mature' science

Foster had reached the point where university administrators knew him and wanted to keep him

"As far as I could learn abroad Dr. Foster's work has created much favourable comment and he is rapidly winning for himself a splendid place in the world of Physics. Undoubtedly, he will go far and I am most anxious to keep him at McGill." – Principal Arthur Currie

## SOME LEADING FEATURES OF THE STARK EFFECT.\*

BY

J. STUART FOSTER, Ph.D., F.R.S.C.

Associate Professor of Physics, McGill University.

### OUTLINE.

#### I. INTRODUCTION.

1. Spectra sensitive to physical conditions.
2. Doppler effect.
3. Zeeman effect.
4. Discovery of the Stark effect.
5. The Lo Surdo Method.
6. The general features of the Stark effect (with demonstration)
7. Stark effect essentially a quantum phenomenon.
8. Difficulties in the case of hydrogen.
9. Effects in some complex spectra more typical.
10. Role of the Stark effect.

#### II. EXPERIMENTAL.

1. The sources of light.
2. Flexibility of the Lo Surdo source.
3. Lo Surdo source as modified by Nyquist.
4. As modified by Foster.
5. High potential apparatus.
6. Operation of source.
7. McGill glass spectrograph.
8. Stigmatic grating spectrograph.

#### III. ELEMENTARY INTERPRETATION OF H AND HE SPECTRA.

1. Hydrogen atomic spectrum.
2. Sub-levels.
3. Par- and ortho-helium systems.
4. The normal helium spectrum.
5. New combination lines.
6. Fine structure of orthohelium lines.

#### IV. THE STARK EFFECT IN PARHELIUM.

1. Variations in Stark displacements.
2. Bohr's relation between Stark displacements and "hydrogen differences."
3. Predictions of Stark displacements in known spectra.

\* Presented Thursday evening April 14, 1929.

Journal of the Franklin Institute (1930) - 45 pages

## Particle Accelerators

nuclear physics was limited by the energies of naturally-occurring high-energy particles (e.g. alpha particles from radium)

people were trying to devise ways to accelerate particles like protons *artificially*

three classes

- electrostatic

  - Van de Graaff - 1929

  - Cockcroft-Walton - 1932

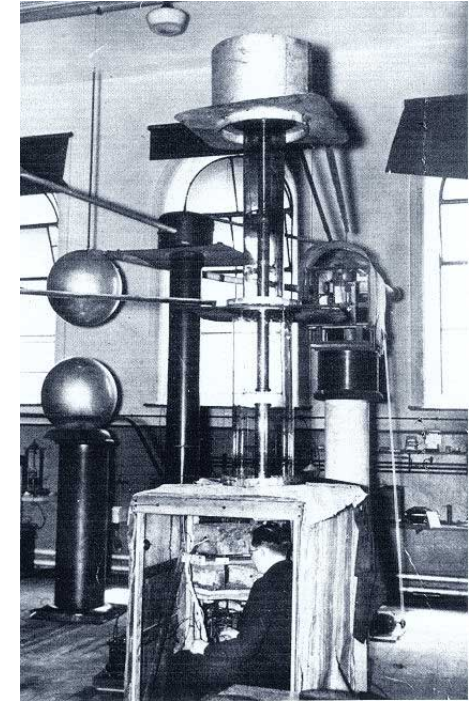
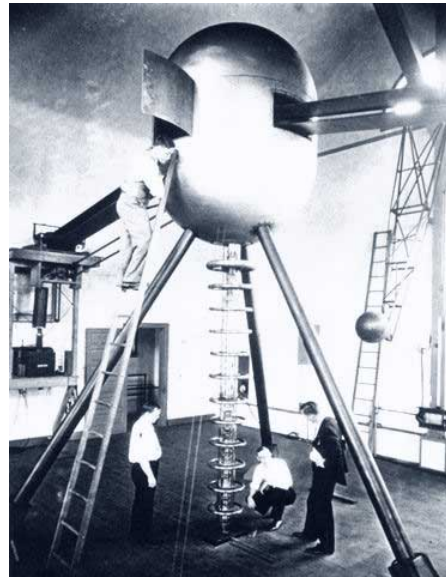
- induction

  - Betatron – 1935

- radiofrequency

  - Drift-tube (Wideroe) Linac - 1928

  - Cyclotron – 1931





# Cyclotrons

the idea is to exploit a natural resonance to give the accelerated proton a series of small kicks – two for each circular orbit in the magnetic field

$$v = \frac{qBR}{m} \quad E = \frac{1}{2}mv^2 = \frac{q^2 B^2 R^2}{2m}$$

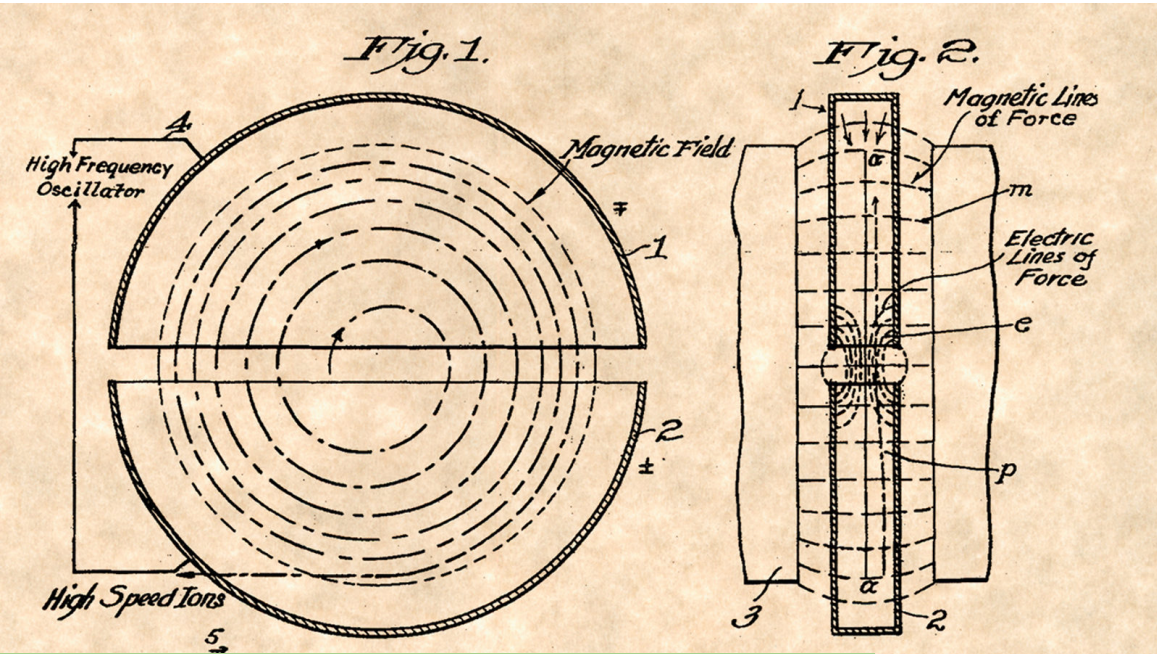
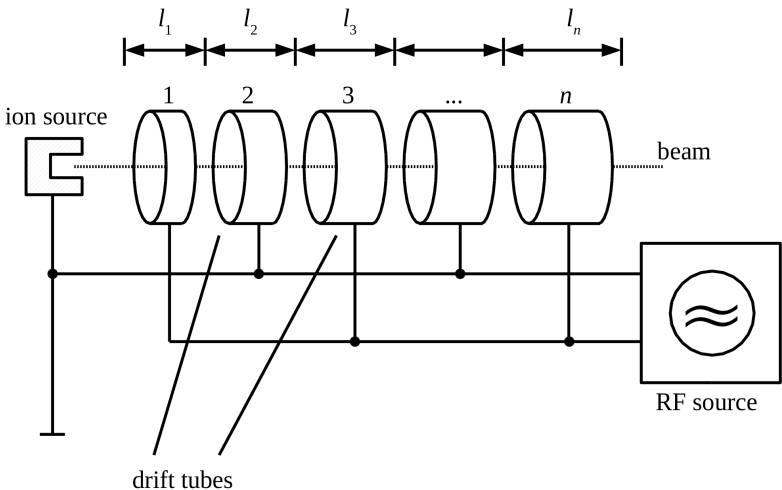


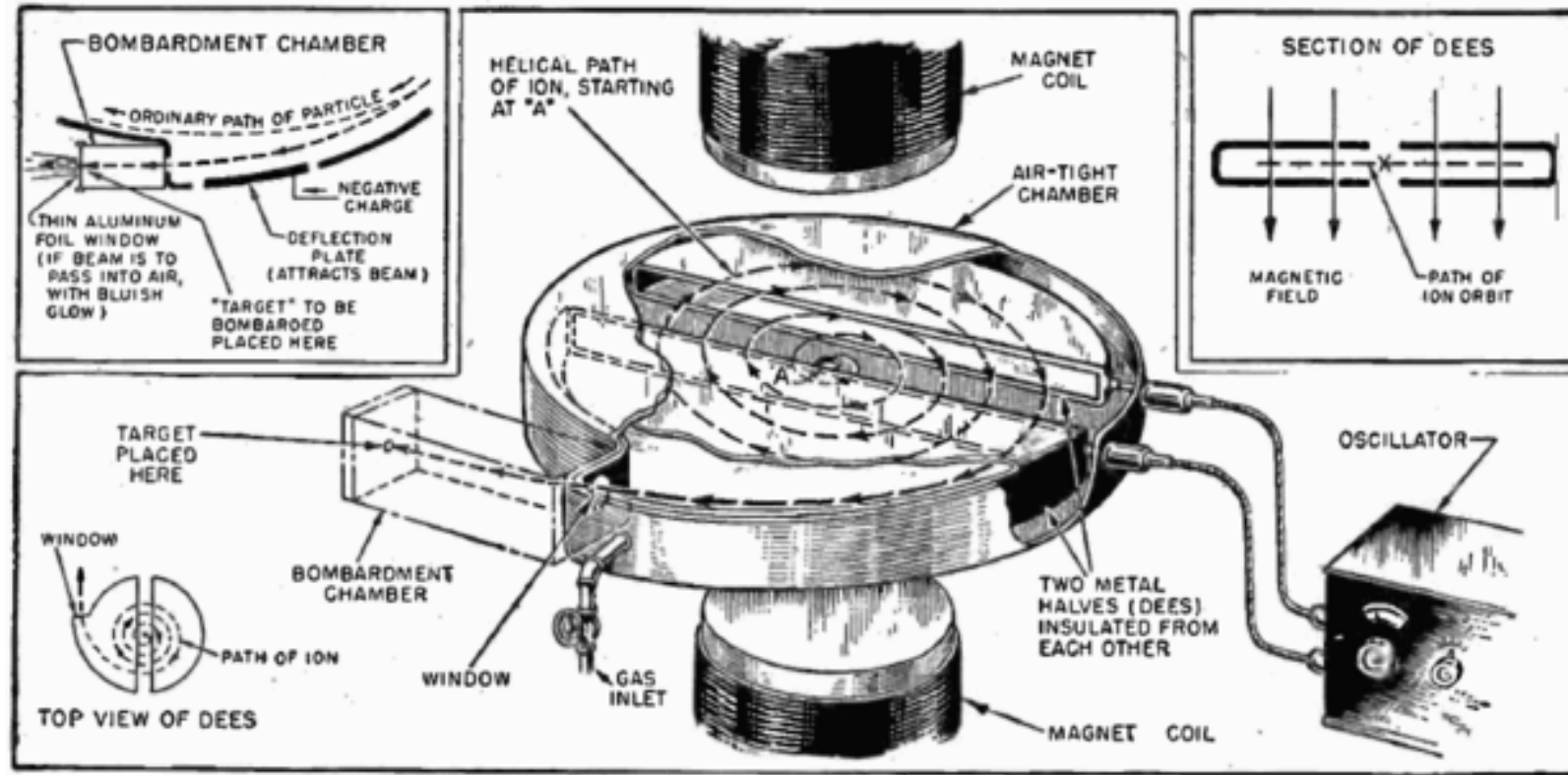
Diagram from the original patent application (1932)



inspiration came from Wideroe’s drift-tube linac

Lawrence’s genius was to see that bending in a B field would allow one to coil up a very long accelerator

## Cyclotron principle



## Cyclotron evolution



1931 – 4.5 inch – 80 keV protons



Livingston and Lawrence

1934 – 27 inch – 1.6 MeV protons

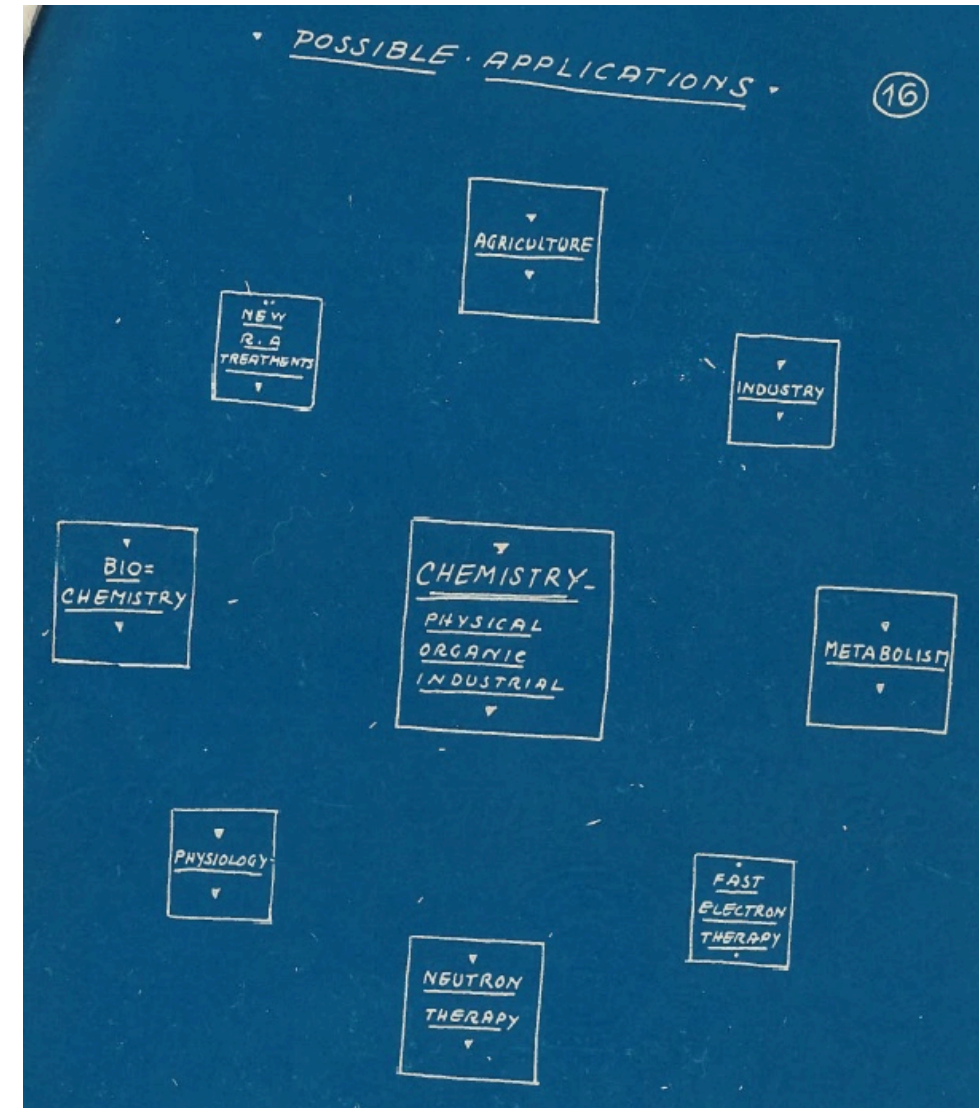
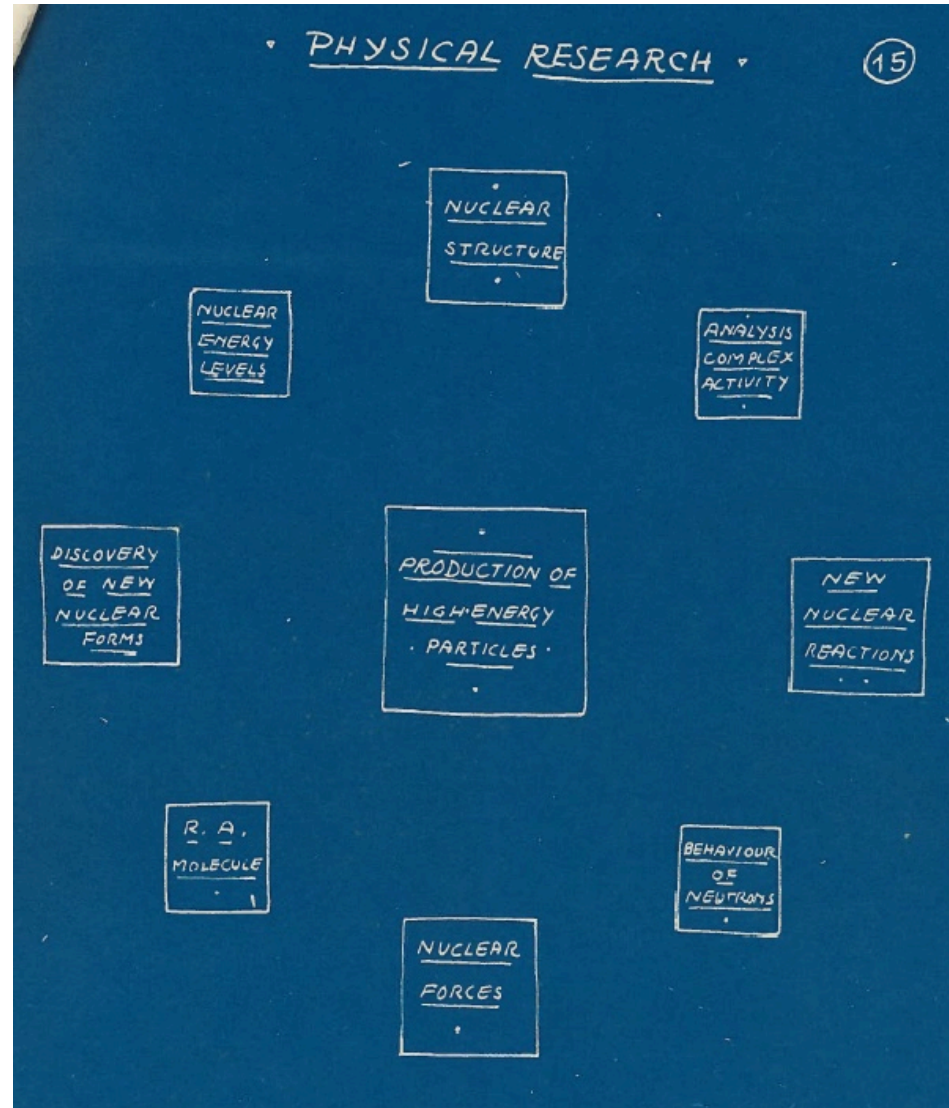


## Cyclotron proposal

- idea first broached by Foster in the fall of 1933
- Robert Thornton (PhD 1933) dispatched to Berkeley on a Moyse Travelling Fellowship
  - McGill was biggest single contributor of guest manpower to the Rad Lab for some time afterwards
  - Arthur V Snell was in the same cohort
- presentation to McGill board of governors in December 1936
  - enthusiastic response
- proposal submitted to board November 1937
  - 15 MeV
  - \$30.3 k equipment ← wrong emphasis?
  - \$63.0 k building
  - emphasis placed on preventing a “brain-drain”
  - multidisciplinary use also – see next slide



## Cyclotron proposal





## Cyclotron proposal

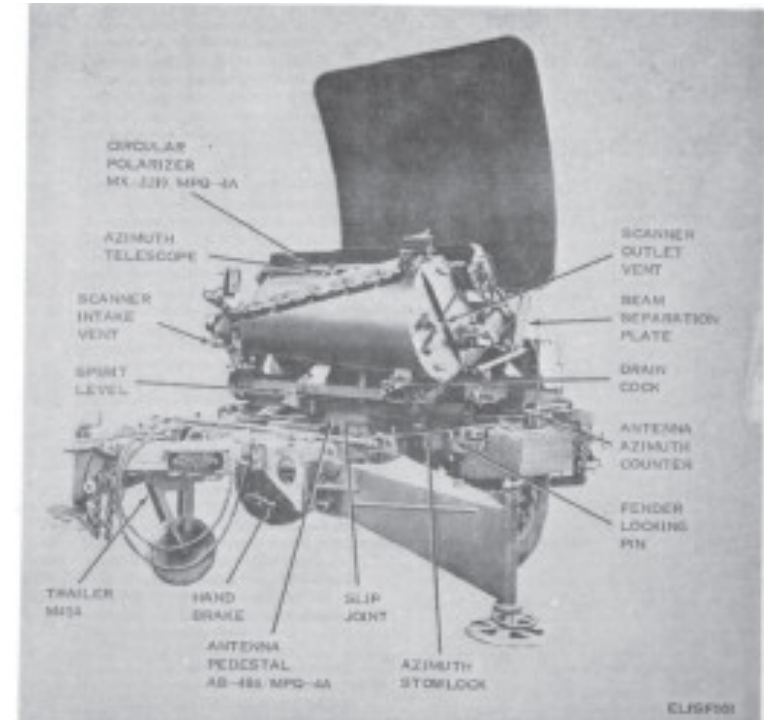
- board approved spending \$100k from university general funds
  - almost immediately back-pedalling started
  - March 1938 – recommend getting funds from 3 or 4 private donors
- planning and preparations (and financial waffling) went on until summer 1939
  - NIMBY-ism concerning the location (biologists)
  - architectural progress was slow due to technical nature of the building
  - technical plans promised by Lawrence were not supplied (they did not exist)
  - cost reviews by new principal
  - etc
- meanwhile events were unfolding in Europe .....





## World War II

- in September, 1939 the cyclotron was immediately put on hold
  - principal of McGill asked General MacNaughton (NRC president) if it had military value
  - MacNaughton supported the cyclotron but could not think of any military applications
  - decision to reconsider after the war
- Foster stayed at McGill doing radar work but soon (1941) headed to MIT where the real action was (and double the salary)
  - other members of the microwave antenna group included Alvarez, Purcell, and Dicke
  - Foster used his experience with optics to invent the “Foster Scanner” (capable of tracking a single bullet for 3 km)
  - he was awarded the US Medal of Freedom for his contributions
- While at MIT he returned to Montreal every two weeks to see family and deliver lectures at McGill (and smuggle radar components)



## World War II – return from MIT

by 1944 McGill was desperate to get Foster back

- three faculty had retired
- students were in the army or doing graduate work elsewhere
- private money was flowing into McGill (thanks to J.W. McConnell)

Dear Professor Foster,

I am very glad indeed to tell you that the Board of Governors has asked me to request your return from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in regard to which matter I am today writing to the President, and authorized the construction of the cyclotron as soon as definitive plans are ready and contracts can be prepared, provided that the over-all cost of the enterprise does not exceed \$125,000.

We shall therefore have to start work as soon as you return to Montreal, which I hope will be at an early date.

Cordially yours,

Dear Dr. Compton,

In view of developments at McGill University, and of the fact that the staff of the Physics Department has been seriously impaired of late by the departure of another of its outstanding members, the Board of Governors has asked me to request the release of Professor J. S. Foster from his work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I have discussed this matter with the President of the National Research Council in Ottawa who fully understands the situation, and I believe that he will endorse the request from McGill University.

Naturally we do not wish to interfere more than may be necessary with the research work that is being carried on by Professor Foster, so that I should appreciate your advice as to the appropriate time at which he might be released. Naturally we hope to have him back with us at the earliest possible moment, but if a week or two is of considerable importance for the work that he is doing at M.I.T. we shall fully understand the situation.

With renewed good wishes to you, I remain,

Cordially yours,

letters sent on Oct 12, 1944 from McGill Principal (F.C. James) to Foster and to Karl T Compton (President of MIT)



## World War II – return from MIT

-NRC was in the business of nuclear physics thanks to the Anglo-Canadian effort at the Montreal Labs and Chalk River Nuclear Laboratories



John Cockcroft lobbied C.J. Mackenzie (NRC) to obtain support for the cyclotron and suggested it be an 'outstation' of the Chalk River operation

Foster was not amused, but returned to Montreal to re-engage



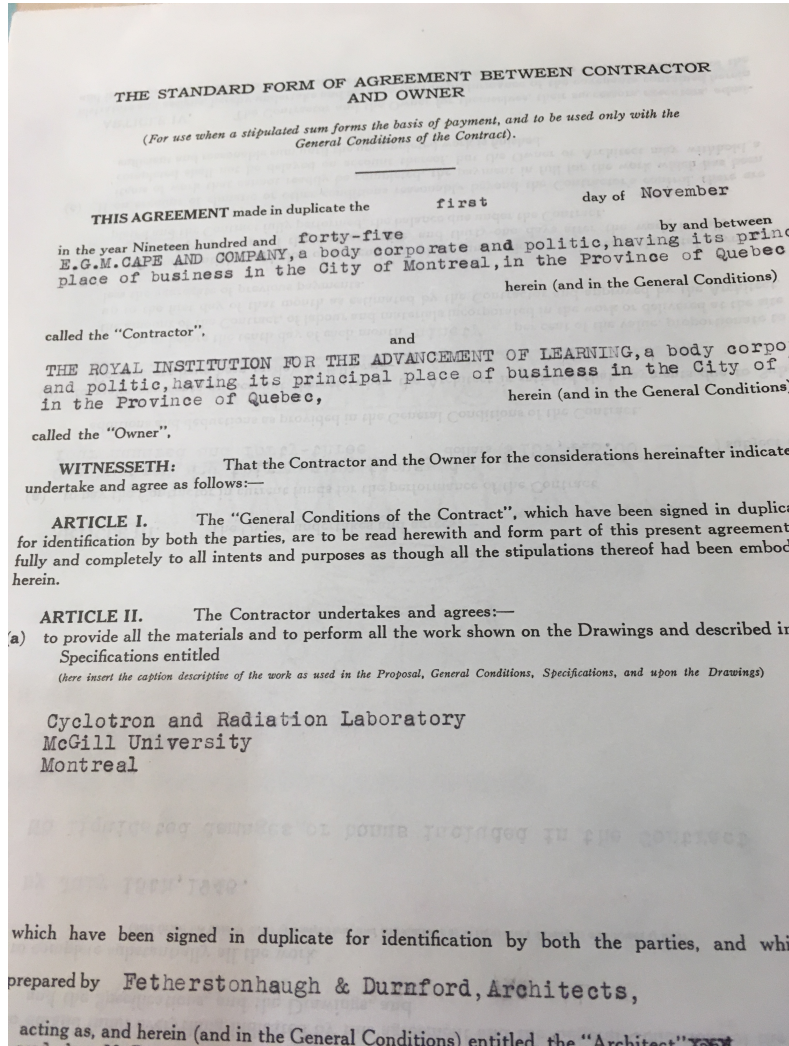
## Cyclotron Redux

- Foster revised the proposal to incorporate arguments for increased energy - 25 MeV (eventually raised to 100 MeV)
- stressed that the cyclotron would continue McGill 'tradition of excellence' in nuclear physics (despite a 40-year lapse)
- with a combination of McGill and NRC support, the project was approved (\$125 k authorized by McGill governors in 1944)
- October 1946 convocation included honorary degrees for Bohr and Lawrence and an "official opening" of the lab



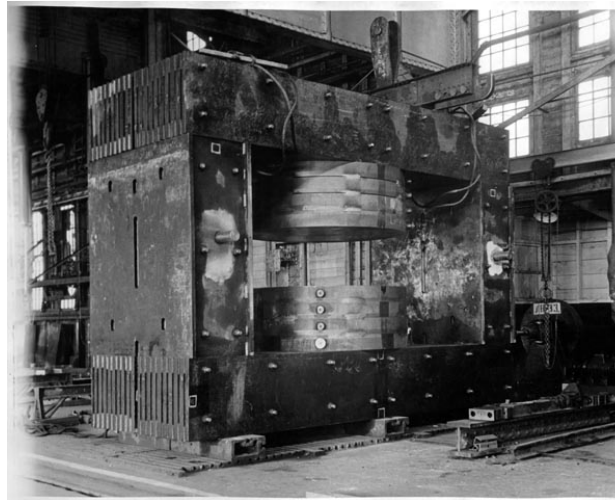
JS Foster, N Bohr, J Anderson, FC James, EO Lawrence

# Cyclotron Redux



lab in 1947  
(cyclotron vault is under the earthen mound with the ventilator)

later enlarged (1962) to add a fourth floor and a beam hall for experiments using the extracted beam



November 1945 – construction of the lab starts



# Cyclotron Redux

cost of construction up to 1949 is stated as \$350,000

much of the savings came from using graduate-student labour

Department of Physics

McGILL UNIVERSITY  
PRINCIPAL'S ROOM  
RECEIVED  
MAY 31 1946

May 30, 1946

Dr. F. Cyril James,  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor,  
McGill University.

Dear Dr. James:

The following men wish to work on the construction of the cyclotron during the next four months at the rate of \$125 per month for full time.

Anderson, D. A.	half time	\$62.50 per mo.	\$250.00
Bartholomew, W. F.	full time	125.00 per mo.	500.00
Fraser, J. S.	half time	62.50 per mo.	250.00
Henry, W. H.	full time	125.00 per mo.	500.00
Hone, D. W.	half time	62.50 per mo.	250.00
Mathison, J. F.	full time	125.00 per mo.	500.00
Stephens-Newsham, L. G.	full time	125.00 per mo.	500.00
Turner, T. E.	full time	125.00 per mo.	500.00
Warren, Ross	full time	125.00 per mo.	500.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$3,750.00</b>

This amount is saved from estimates on the Cyclotron and does not represent additional cost.

Yours faithfully,  
J. S. Foster,  
Macdonald Professor of Physics.

real Daily Star

HA. 5101  
Connecting All Depts. pts.  
WANT NT

REAL, SATURDAY, MAY 10, 1947

## McGill's Mighty Atom-Smasher



This is the atom-smasher nearing completion at McGill University, and it weighs a mere 300 tons. The cylinders contain five miles of aluminum ribbon. Between the poles of the nation's biggest magnet will be placed a vacuum chamber in which atoms will be bombarded with electron bullets with, of course, incomprehensible velocity.

### Canada's Only Cyclotron Ready for Initial Trials Soon

#### Gen. McNaughton Announces Federal Grant Of \$85,000 Will Be Sought for Research

FIVE miles of aluminum bus bar, in which there is a central passage allowing for the flow of cooling water, have been installed in the mighty McGill 300-ton atom-smasher in preparation for the initial trials shortly.

The long aluminum ribbon with a hole in it is one of the outstanding features of Canada's only cyclotron which will be used to keep the Dominion in the van of atomic research.

The cyclotron was inspected today by Gen. A. G. L. McNaughton, chairman of the Atomic Energy Control Board, who announced yesterday that Parliament would be asked to approve an \$85,000 grant to McGill to assist in paying for the



## Cyclotron → Synchrocyclotron

the cyclotron equation no longer works  
as the mass increases due to relativity  
- the effect becomes important for energies  
greater than 25 MeV

$$v = \frac{qBR}{m} \quad E = \frac{1}{2}mv^2 = \frac{q^2 B^2 R^2}{2m}$$

a solution to the problem was found by  
E. McMillan (1945) and applied to the 184-inch  
cyclotron at Berkeley: reduce the frequency as  
particles gain energy – use a rotating condenser

beam is now structured – no longer CW

lower current as well

15  $\mu$ s bursts

400 bursts/s

4 nA

TABLE I  
STATUS OF SYNCHROCYCLOTRONS IN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE  
*Synchrocyclotrons in Operation*

Location and (Supervisor):	Pole Diam.: (in.)	Particle- Energy: (M.e.v.)	Magnet Weight: (tons)	Magnetic Field: (kg.)	Pulse Rate: (c/s)	Av. Beam Current: ( $\mu$ a)	Approx. Cost: (excl. bldg.)	Date First Operation:
(United States)								
1. Univ. of Calif. (E. O. Lawrence)	184	p—350 d—200 $\alpha$ —400	4,300	15.0	60	0.75	—	Nov. 1946
2. Univ. of Rochester (S. W. Barnes)	130	p—240	1,000	17.0	100	0.1	—	Dec. 1948
3. Harvard Univ. (R. B. Holt)	95	p—130	700	16.5	50–200	0.1	\$750,000	May 1949
4. Columbia Univ. (J. R. Dunning and E. J. Booth)	164	p—385	2,400	17.4	30–100	0.1	—	Mar. 1950
(Foreign)								
5. Amsterdam, Holland (C. J. Bakker)	71	d—28	210	13.7	2,000	25.0	—	Sept. 1949
6. Harwell, England (T. G. Pickavance)	110	p—175	670	16.8	100	1–2	£300,000	Dec. 1949
7. McGill Univ. (J. S. Foster)	82	p—100	260	16.4	200	0.2	\$200,000	June 1950

### *Synchrocyclotrons under Construction*

(United States)								
8. Univ. of Chicago (H. L. Anderson)	170	(p—450)	2,200	18.6	50–360	—	\$2,500,000	—
9. Carnegie Inst. Tech. (E. C. Creutz)	141.7	(p—440)	1,500	20.5	300	—	\$2,000,000	—
(Foreign)								
10. Upsala, Sweden (The Swedberg)	90.5	(p—200)	720	22.0	500	—	3 M Sw. Kr.	—
11. Univ. of Liverpool (H. W. B. Skinner)	156	(p—400)	1,640	18.0	—	—	—	—

starting in ~ 1950, the cyclotron was a productive engine for research

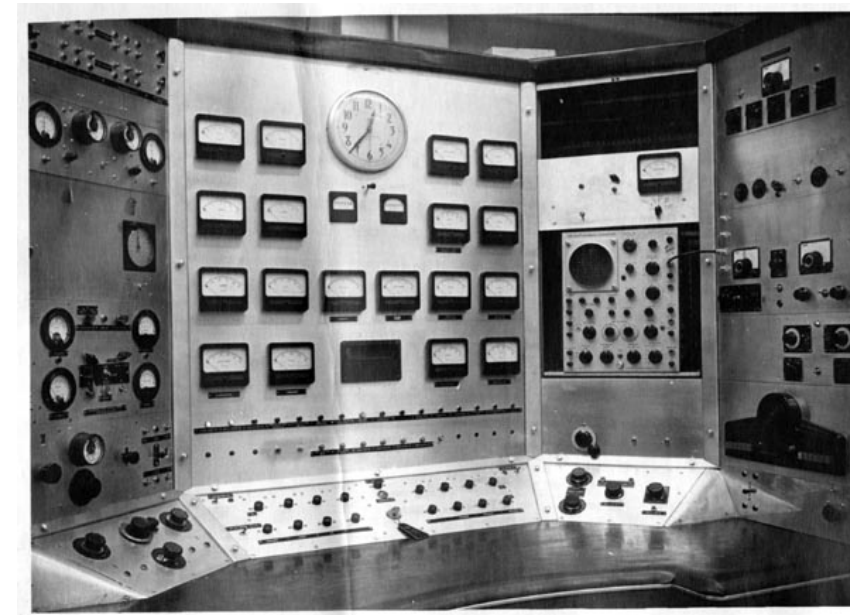
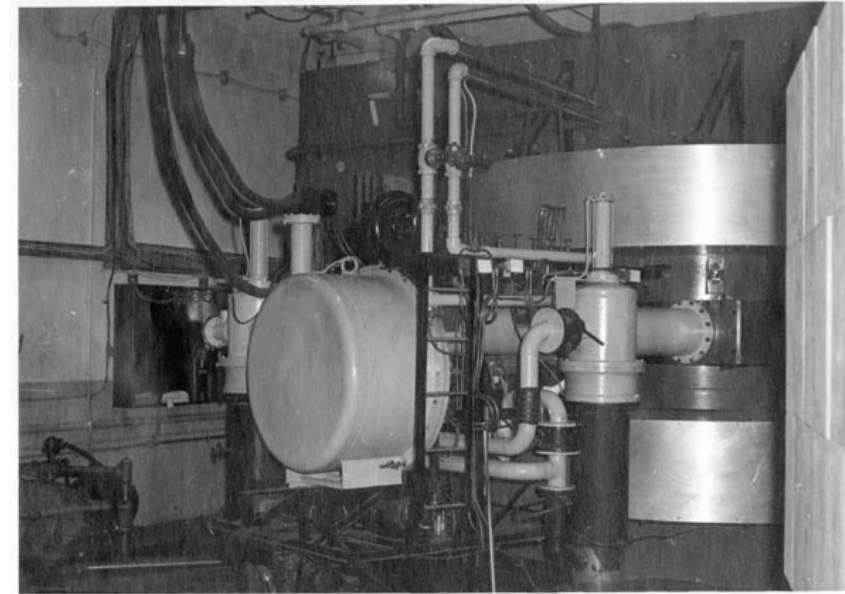
- 70 new isotopes were identified
- internal targets were bombarded, producing neutron-deficient isotopes
- complementary to the neutron-rich isotopes produced in reactors

in 1960 an external beam was commissioned, allowing reaction studies

- beta-delayed proton emission is arguably the most important discovery made at the lab

between 1948 and 1968 about 125 MSc and PhD degrees were obtained

in 1964 the lab was named for Foster shortly before his death

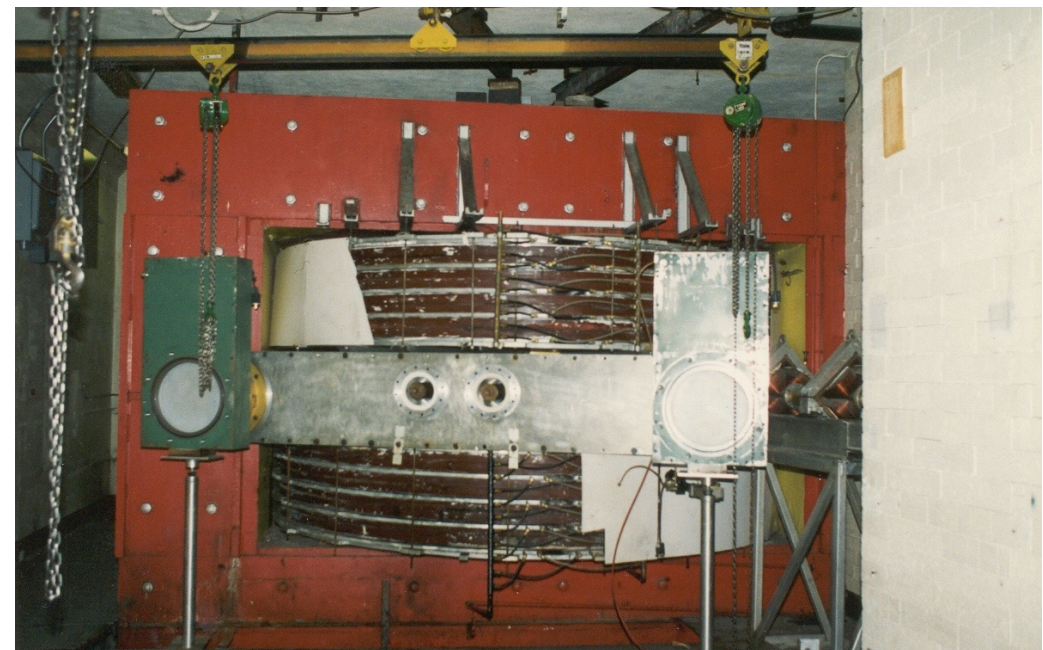
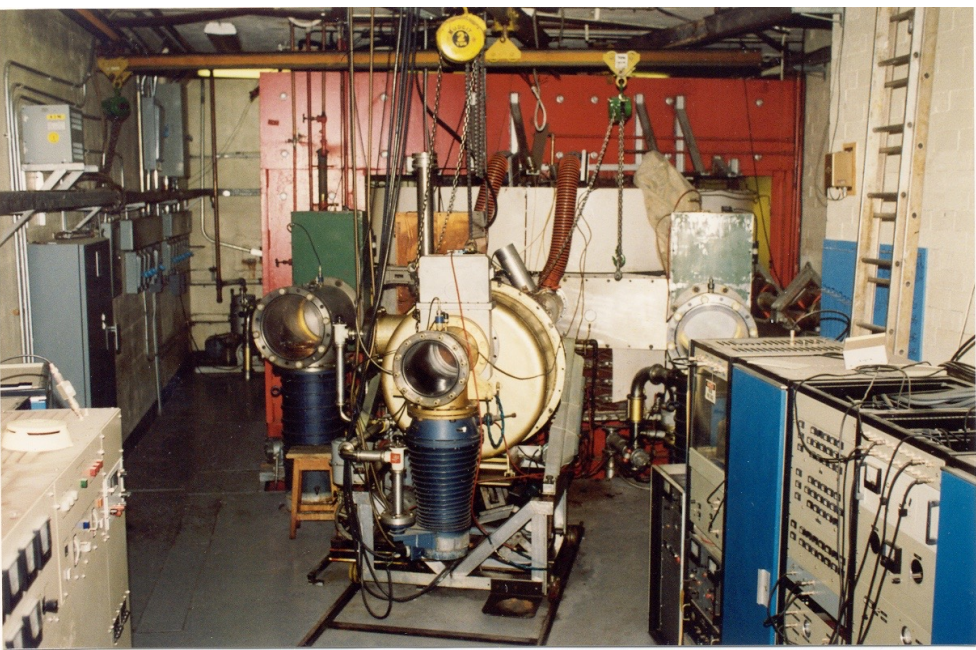




## Foster Theses

Aikman, Edward P.	Ph.D.	33-	Haslam, Robert N.	Ph.D.	33-	Scott, Donald Burton	Ph.D.	40-
Aikman, William E. P.	Ph.D.	35-	Heard, Jack F.	Ph.D.	32-	Sellen, John M.	M.Sc.	51-
Alcock, Norman Z.	Ph.D.	49-	Henriksen, Arne	Ph.D.	53-	Shugar, David	Ph.D.	40-
Anderson, Donald A.	Ph.D.	49-	Henry, William H.	Ph.D.	51-	Skarsgard, Harvey M.	Ph.D.	55-
Badior, Mark A.	M.Sc.	54-	Hilborn, John W.	Ph.D.	54-	<u>Snell, Arthur H.</u>	Ph.D.	33-
<u>Bell, Robert E.</u>	Ph.D.	48-	Hilborn, John W.	M.Sc.	51-	Stephens-Newsham, Lloyd	Ph.D.	48-
Bernstein, Hyman	M.Sc.	56-	Hone, David W.	Ph.D.	51-	Telford, William M.	M.Sc.	41-
<u>Bloom, Myer</u>	M.Sc.	50-	Hopkins, Nigel J.	Ph.D.	52-	Thomas, George H.	Ph.D.	58-
Brannen, Eric	Ph.D.	46-	Hopkins, Nigel J.	M.Sc.	49-	Thomas, George H.	M.Sc.	56-
Breckon, Sydney W.	Ph.D.	51-	Horton, Cyril A.	Ph.D.	37-	<u>Thornton, Robert L.</u>	Ph.D.	33-
Brunton, Donald C.	Ph.D.	48-	Hunt, John W.	Ph.D.	56-	Tilley, Donald E.	Ph.D.	51-
Carruthers, James A.	Ph.D.	49-	Hunten, Donald M.	Ph.D.	50-	Turner, Terry E.	Ph.D.	48-
<u>Carter, Alfred L.</u>	Ph.D.	58-	Hug, M. Shamsul	M.Sc.	56-	Van Steenberg, Arie	Ph.D.	57-
Chalk, Mary L.	Ph.D.	28-	Jackson, Ray W.	Ph.D.	50-	<u>Voyvodic, Louis</u>	Ph.D.	48-
Clark, Eric N.	Ph.D.	51-	Johnson, Frederick A.	Ph.D.	52-	Walker, Laurence Richard	Ph.D.	39-
Cloutier, Joseph A.	Ph.D.	55-	Jones, Donald C.	Ph.D.	37-	Warren, F.G. Ross	Ph.D.	48-
Cloutier, Joseph A.	M.Sc.	53-	Kennedy, John Edward	M.Sc.	42-	Weaver, Ralph S.	M.Sc.	59-
Crawford, Gerald J.	Ph.D.	54-	Keys, John D.	Ph.D.	51-	Whitehead, Andrew B.	Ph.D.	57-
Dahlstrom, Carl E.	Ph.D.	53-	Langstroth, George C.	Ph.D.	30-	Whitehead, Andrew B.	M.Sc.	55-
Dewdney, John W.	M.Sc.	52-	Link, William T.	Ph.D.	57-	Wolfson, Joseph L.	Ph.D.	48-
Din, Ghias ud	M.Sc.	59-	Lorrain, Paul	Ph.D.	47-	*Campbell, Herbert N.	M.Sc.	30-
Dodds, John W.	Ph.D.	49-	Lorrain, Paul	M.Sc.	41-	*Fraser, John S.	Ph.D.	49-
Douglas, Donald G.	Ph.D.	49-	Maclure, Kenneth C.	Ph.D.	52-	*MacDonald, James L.	M.Sc.	28-
Eadie, Frank S.	Ph.D.	52-	Maclure, Kenneth C.	M.Sc.	50-	*McRae, Duncan R.	Ph.D.	30-
Eadie, Frank S.	M.Sc.	49-	Martin, William M.	Ph.D.	51-	*Reeve, Herbert A.	M.Sc.	31-
Eappen, Collaparambil	Ph.D.	59-	Mathison, James F.	Ph.D.	56-	*Telford, William M.	Ph.D.	49-
Epp, Edward R.	Ph.D.	55-	McKay, Kenneth Gardiner	M.Sc.	39-			
Feeny, Harold Francis	M.Sc.	40-	Michel, Walter	Ph.D.	48-			
Flower, Louis G.	M.Sc.	54-	Millar, Charles H.	Ph.D.	47-	ster, J. .		
<u>Foster, Leigh C.</u>	Ph.D.	56-	Moody, Harry J.	Ph.D.	55-			
Geldart, Lloyd Philip	Ph.D.	41-	Moyn, James H.	Ph.D.	50-	*Danby, Gordon T.	Ph.D.	56-
Girdwood, Barbara M.	M.Sc.	46-	Mocre, Robert P.	M.Sc.	59-			
Girdwood, Barbara M.	Ph.D.	48-	Morrison, Wesley A.	Ph.D.	48-			
Gransden, Max M.	Ph.D.	51-	Munn, Allan M.	Ph.D.	47-			
<u>Green, Ralph E.</u>	Ph.D.	56-	Neamtan, Samuel M.	Ph.D.	37-			
Groves, Trevor K.	M.Sc.	53-	Panter, Shraga P.	Ph.D.	36-			
Gunton, Robert C.	Ph.D.	47-	Pepper, Thomas F.	Ph.D.	48-			
Guptill, Ernest W.	Ph.D.	46-	Perlman, Martin M.	Ph.D.	55-			
<u>Hargrove, Clifford K.</u>	M.Sc.	57-	Perlman, Martin M.	M.Sc.	51-			
Harkness, Harold W.	Ph.D.	30-	Piggott, Carmen I.	Ph.D.	53-			
			Pounder, Elton R.	Ph.D.	37-			
			Rao, C. Kanaka D.	M.Sc.	58-			
			Rotenberg, Avraham B.	Ph.D.	41-			
			Fowles, William	Ph.D.	28-			
			Fowles, William	M.Sc.	26-			





all good things come to an end

- the lab was shut down in the late 1980s  
(as part of the scaling back of nuclear physics in Canada)
- the cyclotron was dismantled
- the McGill profs became users of other machines

(part of) the building remains but has been re-purposed





## John Stuart Foster

- extraordinary career and lasting legacy
- endowed with scientific and organizational gifts
- blessed with good luck; a knack for being in the right place at the right time
- brought nuclear physics back to McGill



# Extras



## Robert L Thornton PhD 1933

- went to Berkeley in 1933
- co-author of first paper where 'cyclotron' name was used
- built cyclotrons at U Michigan (1935) and WUSL (late 30s)
- returned to Berkeley (1942) to assist in Calutron development
- worked on Manhattan project in Oak Ridge
- declined offer to direct CRNL
- returned again to Berkeley (1945) – promoted to professor
- served as assistant director (1954) and associate director (1959) of UCRL



First beam of 184-inch cyclotron, November 1, 1946; foreground, left to right, R. Thornton, Ernest Lawrence, Ed McMillan, and James Vale

1851 Exhibition Scholarship (England-Canada) held at University of California, Berkeley, 1930-37; Research Assoc., Univ. of Calif. 1937-38; Research Instructor, Univ. of Chicago, 1938-42; Chief, Cyclotron Group, Manhattan Project (Chicago) 1942-44; Group Leader, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, 1944-48; Director, Physics Division, ORNL, 1948-57; Director, Thermonuclear Div., ORNL 1958-67; Assistant Director, ORNL, 1957-70; Associate Director, ORNL, 1970-71. Consultant, ORNL; Member, Board of Directors, Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies, 1959-62. Chairman, Subcommittee on Nuclear Instruments and Techniques, National Academy of Science-National Research Council, 1954 -61.



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