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Opening of the Dr. Henry Norman Bethune Memorial House

The four-bedroom house in Gravenhurst, Ontario, birthplace of Dr. Norman Bethune, was officially dedicated to his memory as a historical museum on August 30, in ceremonies attended by a distinguished group of visitors from the People's Republic of China, where Bethune's name has become a legend.

Transport Minister Otto Lang officiated and Assistant Deputy Minister A.T. Davidson of Parks Canada, the department that carried out restoration of the house, acted as master of ceremonies.

Ten Chinese officials, led by Vice-Minister of Public Health Chang Chih-chiang, one of the most senior Chinese visitors to have come to Canada in recent years, were there specially for the opening. He addressed some 400 people, crowded on the front lawn, on behalf of the Government of China. Mr. Chang's delegation included senior medical officers of the People's Liberation Army who were associated with Dr. Bethune in China, as well as officials of the People's Republic of China Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Representing the provincial government and the municipality of Gravenhurst were Health Minister Frank Miller and Mayor Allan Sander.

Chester Ronning, former Canadian diplomat, who was born in China, spoke for some five minutes in Chinese on Dr. Bethune's career. Also attending were Chinese Ambassador to Canada, Chang Wen-chin, and many members of his staff, as well as Canada's Ambassador-designate to China, Arthur Menzies, who takes up his post in Peking this autumn.

Present also was Mrs. Jean Kovich, formerly Jean Ewen, who on Dr. Bethune's arrival in China in 1938, served as his translator during an all-night conversation with Chairman Mao Tse-tung. During the two years that followed, Miss Ewen served as Dr. Bethune's nurse working with him until his death in November 1939.

Henry Norman Bethune, born in 1890, was a surgical assistant at the Royal

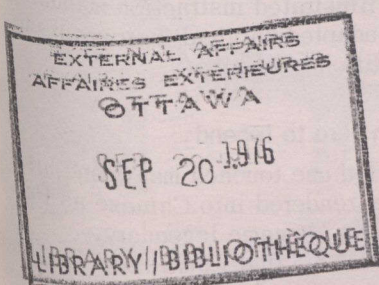
Victoria Hospital, Montreal in 1928, and left to become chief of the department of thoracic surgery at Sacré-Coeur Hospital, ten miles north of Montreal in 1933. He wrote for medical journals and began to invent new medical instruments during that time, something he continued to do for the rest of his life.

He was devoted to his patients, admired and despised by his colleagues - a man impatient with others and with himself.

In 1935, during the depression when a third of Montreal's population was receiving relief, Bethune opened a free clinic for the unemployed. The same year, following a visit to the Soviet Union to examine socialized medicine he returned to organize the Montreal Group for the Security of the People's Health. In 1936, he joined the Communist Party.



Chang Wen-pu (left), and Tsai Tsai-tu, two officials of the group from the People's Republic of China, carry this carving of Dr. Bethune and soldiers in action, which China donated to the Norman Bethune Memorial House on August 30.



Secretary of State for External Affairs Allan J. MacEachen returned to Canada on September 6 from an official visit to Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Australia. Coverage will appear in a subsequent issue.