

Bob Edwards

The binge-or-bluster ink spiller who edited *The Eye Opener* was a man contradictory as his own writing.

Robert (Bob) Edwards skewered the corrupt, mocked the pious and parodied the priggish, striking terror in the hearts of those he wrote about. Shy in person but fearless on the page, his rapier wit stabbed the extramarital affairs of public officials, dismissed “pink tea women” and satirized pretension. Least safe from his attentions were liars and shady businessmen, politicians, and preachers. With his newspaper as a tool, he fought for an end to corruption and lies.

For 20 years (between 1902 and 1922), *The Eye Opener* was both treasured and vilified. It was “put off the mails,” denied distribution because it criticized the government. The Canadian Pacific Railway too refused to carry a paper that condemned its poor safety record, train wrecks, graft, and corruption.

The paper appeared sporadically because when Edwards was on a bender, he suspended publication for weeks. At its peak, 35,000 copies per issue were printed, and read by up to 10 times as many people.

He was buried with a bottle of whisky and a copy of his paper.

Blame it on the Bottle



Robert C. “Bob” Edwards, editor of the Calgary Eye Opener
Glenbow Archives NA-450-1

His voice may have boomed from the pages of *The Eye Opener*, but in person Bob Edwards spoke with a slight lisp – a shy man who preferred the company of one or two close friends to a boisterous crowd.

Although not a daily drinker, Edwards was a binge drinker all of his life. Everyone knew when he “went on a bat” because *The Eye Opener* did not appear that week. Whether Edwards was off fishing or it was a slow news week, Edwards’ reputation as a drinking man meant any failure to publish was blamed on the bottle.

“The price of this paper is one dollar a year,” Edwards wrote. “It ought to be five, but we knock off four for irregularity.”

Bob Edwards’ Summer Annual

In 1920, Bob Edwards was persuaded to collect some of his writings into a book. The first *Bob Edwards’ Summer Annual* appeared later that year, containing a collection of humorous material from *The Eye Opener*. The sixty-cent book was a huge success, selling about 40,000 copies each year. After Edwards died in 1922, his widow, Kate, published the *Annual* until 1924.



Front page of *The Eye Opener*,
Calgary, Alberta
Glenbow Archives NA-1143-1

Many of the articles reprinted in the *Annual* are from issues of *The Eye Opener* that have not survived.

Born: September 12, 1859 or 1860 – Died: November 14, 1922

Additional Resources

- **Alberta Champions Society**
<https://albertachampions.org/Champions/bob-edwards-1860-1922/>
- **Dictionary of Canadian Biography**
http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/edwards_robert_chambers_15E.html

Our Collections

Glenbow Museum

<https://www.glenbow.org>



Glenbow Western Research Centre | Glenbow Library and Archives

<https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/glenbowlibraryandarchives>

Glenbow Library and Archives | Digital Collection

<https://digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca/asset-management/2R340826N9XM?WS=PackagePres&Flat=1>

Glenbow

© Copyright Glenbow Museum, 2005. All Rights Reserved