

Wonder Men and Women

May 19, 1910 Earth passed through the tail of Halley's Comet and the world changed forever! Men and women developed new wondrous powers. Age did not seem to be a determining factor, everyone from babies in the womb to 90 year old Florence Nightingale gained powers. In the case of those below the age of majority¹ their powers usually waited until the onset of puberty to manifest.² The powers manifested exhibit a bewildering range:

- Wondrous physical and mental abilities,
- Flight and stranger modes of transportation,
- The ability to shoot destructive beams from your hands³,
- Hideous or bizarre physical transformations.⁴

Many of the transformed do not survive their transformations but others change unnoticed by society despite the close observation children approaching adulthood are subjected to. No test can identify the likelihood of an individual transforming and no one has managed to mathematically calculate the possibility. It seems to operate in a weirdly random manner.

When a young person does exhibit wondrous powers they are whisked off to a special Academy where they are trained in being a Wonder Man or Woman with the goal of subtly or overtly encouraging them to serve the state. The continued appearance of new heroes⁵ who have avoided notice shows how flawed the system really is.

For every L. Frank Baum whose 1918 book "The Wonders Among Us" was a wonder positive book there are a hundred books, pamphlets, etc. in which Wonders are at best villains and at worst monsters. Oswald Mosley in Britain is the leader of the Anti-Wonder Party which advocates even stricter controls over Wonders than already exist. In North America a woman named Carrie Remington leads a Eugenics movement that seeks to get rid of anyone that does not match Adam and Eve. The movement doesn't care about race but they do dislike Wonders and anyone with a disability. Their movement is known as Back to the Garden. In Canada a man named François Xavier runs a similar, if not quite so strident group known as Not Like Us.

¹ Sixteen, or thereabouts.

² This is not a hard and fast rule but infants and babies in the womb who manifested powers tend to die and usually take their mother's with them.

³ Eyes, mouths, ears and much, much worse.

⁴ One of the most important Canadian heroes is a man whose physical appearance is that of a beagle but whose intelligence is unmeasurable. Formerly a great Canadian scientist with a family to protect out of a sense of black melancholic whimsy he now goes by the name Agent Rover.

⁵ And villains.

A lot of people still remember the horrors of the Great War and they actively fear wonders. You're a tiny wonder who can fly like a bullet, well many people remember the horrors that was trench warfare with this kind of attack slaughtering soldiers. The panic, the inability to do anything about it. The inevitable attempts to shoot or use grenades on these wonders which led to more deaths through friendly fire. No, the Great War veterans for the most part hate wonders. This attitude has rubbed off on younger generations as well though it may not be held so strongly.

The Campaign

You are all part of the hero squad that defends the city of Assiniboia from ne'er do wells. You can be the product of an Academy education. Manitoba has an excellent academy at Ninette⁶, the Manitoba Academy of Wondrous Service. In this case you have no secret identity as all Academy graduates are public figures. You could also be one of the secret heroes or heroines who managed to reach adulthood without either dying or exposing themselves. The city of Assiniboia is happy to hire capable heroes or heroines for its squad. A surprising number of Wonder Men and Women are incapable of performing as heroes or heroines and instead serve society in other ways.

Wondrous Men and Women in Canada

In the days and years immediately after Halley's Comet governments all over the world had to decide how they were going to deal with the wondrous in their midst. The war helped focus things remarkably. After much dominion-provincial wrangling in Canada over jurisdiction⁷ the dominion government proclaimed Men and Women of Wonder to be firmly under dominion control. Oversight of Men and Women of Wonder is the responsibility of the Bureau of Human-Wondrous Interactions (BoHWI) under the Department of the Interior.

- Thomas Gerow Murphy, Minister of the Interior
- Sterling Galworthy Updike, Deputy Minister of the Interior with special focus on Wondrous Matters.

BoHWI runs a registry of Wondrous Men and Women⁸ that virtually all such affected individuals are listed in. They also run a series of camps⁹ across the country where individuals who manifest their powers early or who are incapable of passing as normal are raised or trained.

⁶ Site of a former tuberculosis hospital that closed after Florence Nightingale cured the disease in 1917.

⁷ Including a lawsuit brought forward by the governments of Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba that went all the way to the Supreme Court. The court ruled Men and Women of Wonder to be "natural resources of strategic national importance."

⁸ And other assets such as wondrous plants, animals and minerals.

⁹ Derisively referred to as farms by pretty much everyone.

These camps also serve as homes for these “assets” when they are incapable or unwilling to work for the good of society. They also run the Academies where training and schooling occurs for those who pass as humans. There’s one of these in every province except Atlantic Canada which only has one located near Halifax. Students from the Dominion of Newfoundland also make use of this academy. Manitoba's camp is located at Garden Hill while its Academy is located in the former TB hospital at Ninette.

Men and Women of Wonder are technically free, equal citizens of the Dominion AND “natural resources of strategic national importance.” The government seems to emphasize the latter at the expense of the former. Many places of business will have signs up saying "Wonders not welcome" and they are legally allowed to do so. If wonders insist on violating these restrictions and want to cause trouble every large city has a trained crew of RCMP from M Division that are equipped to deal with wonders. If necessary they can summon government wonders to help them.

There is a burgeoning movement to emancipate the Men and Women of Wonder and make them truly equal citizens. This movement is known as the Wondragette movement. Mrs. Mildred Bountiful Harlington is the national leader of this movement. The famous Icelandic feminist Margret Benedictsson (66 years old) is the provincial leader of the movement. Many places of business will have signs up saying "Wonders not welcome" and they are legally allowed to do so.

The Assiniboia wonder base is Gingerbread Hall which was the old city hall built in 1886 and which was replaced by the new city hall in 1920. The hall was extensively renovated and reinforced to improve the structure. A minder from BoWHI named Gwendolyn Montgomery oversees the hall and "manages" the wonders.

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