



The *Great* Canadian  
Catholic Hospital History Project

Documenting the legacy and contribution of the  
Congregations of Religious Women in Canada,  
their mission in health care, and the founding and operation of Catholic hospitals.

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Projet de la *Grande* Histoire  
des hôpitaux catholiques au Canada

Retracer l'héritage et la contribution des  
congrégations de religieuses au Canada,  
leur mission en matière de soins de santé ainsi que la fondation et l'exploitation des hôpitaux catholiques.

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**St. Clare Mercy Hospital  
St. John's, Nfld.  
60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Historical Highlights  
1922-1982**

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St. Clare's Mercy Hospital  
St. John's, Nfld.

1922



1982

60th Anniversary  
Historical Highlights

THE WHITE HOUSE

OPENING OF THE 1939 BUILDING

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SCHOOL OF NURSING – 1939

MEMORIAL CHAPEL AND EXTENSION – 1950

HOSPITAL ACCREDITATION – 1958

FURTHER GROWTH – 1960-1962

1962-1972

ST. CLARE'S – A TEACHING HOSPITAL

1973-1982 RESPIRATORY UNIT

TALBOT HOUSE

PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT 1979-1982

EDUCATION

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St. Clare's Mercy Hospital, the only Catholic hospital in Newfoundland, is administered by the Sisters of Mercy and has a history that is almost legendary. The hospital had its beginning in the "White House", the residence of the Honourable E.M. Jackman, which for (from 1912-21) nine years previous had been used as a residence for working girls. The funds for its purchase were collected by a Presentation Sister, Sister Mary Clare English, the largest donation being obtained from the sale of a Rosary of gold nuggets brought by a friend of her family from the gold fields of the Klondyke. The Rosary was purchased by the Knights of Columbus for \$1,000.00 and presented to Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, on the occasion of the Golden Anniversary of his priesthood.

It is worthy of mention here that during the early days the Sisters of Mercy received their training at Mercy Hospital, Baltimore and straying further still, into the realm of coincidence we may note that Baltimore takes its name from Sir John Calvert – Lord Baltimore – whose first colony in the new world, was established on the shores of Newfoundland, and who gave to the peninsula of Avalon, its name.

## THE WHITE HOUSE

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The need for another hospital in the city had been considered high on the priority list of social needs and in 1921, the "White House" was renovated for this purpose. The formal opening of St. Clare's Mercy Hospital took place on May 21, 1922 with Mass celebrated by His Grace, Archbishop E.P. Roche. Sister Mary Bernard Gladney who had graduated from Mercy Hospital, Pittsburg, in September 1921, was appointed Superintendent, and Sister Mary Aloysius Rawlins took over many of the administrative functions. Assisting these Sisters in caring for the 23 patients, were one other registered nurse, Alice Casey, and five Sisters. The medical staff was composed of 12 visiting doctors with Dr. John Murphy as Chief Surgeon. In the small building the Sisters laboured for 15 years and had many stories to tell which would make interesting reading, in this day of modern technology and equipment. However, if the methods used for sterilizing in the operating room and for conveying patients back to their beds following surgery, were unorthodox, they had an efficiency born of knowledge, skill, and necessity. These pioneers knew what it meant to improvise.

Between 1922 and 1939 six Sisters graduated from Mercy Hospital School of Nursing in Baltimore, Maryland. Thus was laid the foundation of the 60 years of "Caring" for the sick.

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The little hospital grew into the lives of the people and when the inadequate facilities of the building no longer justified its operation, it was realized that a new and modern hospital must be undertaken. The task was regarded by many as utopian, since the Island was in the midst of the worst depression in its history, and discouragement of the project was met from many who were keenly aware of its need; but the people of the Archdiocese, and friends of all faiths, generously responded to a drive for funds which, together with loans, made the building possible. The 100-bed hospital was opened on October 21, 1939, scarcely two months after the shadow of the second world war had fallen over the land. Modern in every detail for that era, with up-to-date equipment, it gave to the Sisters the opportunity for service for which they had so long hoped.

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The School of Nursing opened in November, 1939. Five potential nursing students who had spent one year in the original hospital, learning both the theory and practice of nursing, moved into the new School of Nursing with fourteen new students admitted that year. Credit was given for the program already completed by the five students and they formally graduated in 1941. Buildings adjacent to the hospital on St. Clare Avenue and LeMarchant Road were purchase and remodeled for dining rooms and sleeping accommodations for the students. On September 24, 1958 a new School of Nursing known as Our Lady of Lourdes Hall was opened, with accommodation for 100 students. Since then, with an increase in the number of students and instructors, it has been necessary to renovate many of the rooms for offices and classrooms. Thirty students are accommodated at St. Bride's College, Littledale, and students from the city, remain at home. The present enrollment in the school totals 187 – and since 1939, 1,365 have graduated.

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In 1947 Archbishop Roche celebrated the Golden Anniversary of his ordination to the Priesthood and the people of the Archdiocese donated \$83,000.00 for the Archbishop Roche Jubilee Memorial Chapel. With the aid of additional funds, this extension included a new dining room and cafeteria, as well as additional beds for Obstetrics and Pediatrics.

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Following the re-organization of the Board, the formal organization of the Medical Staff in 1957, an application was made to the Joint Commission on Hospital Accreditation for a survey. The Board, anxious to maintain a high standard of patient care, realized the importance of being involved in this program. Accreditation was received for one year – and the re-survey in the following year by the Canadian Council of Hospital Accreditation resulted in full accreditation for three years. Since 1957 St. Clare's has been surveyed 7 times and has maintained the highest accreditation status. The next survey is due in 1983. At that time, St. Clare's will have completed 25 years as an accredited hospital.

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In 1960 the Board of Governors, with Most Reverend P.J. Skinner as Chairman, completed plans for the construction of a new wing which would provide accommodations for 40 Pediatric patients, 60 Obstetrical patients, a Dietary Department and Emergency facilities. The cost of this extension, \$2,662,000.00, was financed by a federal grant of \$285,000.00, a provincial grant of \$750,000.00 and the arrangement of a bank loan to cover the balance. Construction started on May 1, 1960 and the Extension was officially opened by His Grace, Most Reverend P.J. Skinner, C.J.M. on January 8, 1962.

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The additions and extensions over the years were made to take care of immediate needs but continued lack of space created a real problem. Almost immediately after the opening of the 1960 wing, the need for future expansion was obvious, for the service areas could not keep pace with the present day standards. Following a survey, Agnew Peckham & Associates of Toronto advised the erection of a new structure which would replace and enlarge the service areas located in the 1939 building and, with renovations in the 1961 extension, provide accommodations for 300 patients. After much consultation and prayer the decision to expand to 300 beds with adequate services was made. However, because the Sisters were still using their salaries and room differential to pay off loans obtained for previous renovations, it was impossible for them to finance such a project.

The Board, by a special arrangement with the Provincial Government agreed to a budget which would cover five years of planning and construction, a portion of which would be repaid over 25 years, following completion of the project. The first phase of construction, a \$1,740,000. heating plant, was completed in 1969. Financial restrictions at government level necessitated delays with the second phase but in the following year satisfactory financial arrangements were negotiated.

Even though the construction period experienced strikes in every trade, the building was completed and achievement of our goals became a little more concrete in April of '72 when the switchboard moved to its new location and went into operation and the Laboratory staff moved from crowded quarters in the original hospital, the "White House", the spacious new facilities.

This extension and the renovated 1961 wing provided accommodations for 300 patients with completely new and modern facilities for operating and emergency suites, coronary and intensive care units, new-born and intensive care nurseries and psychiatry. The new section also contained up-to-date laboratories, X-ray, dietary, physiotherapy, Inhalation therapy, Occupational therapy and social services, a new central dispatch to ensure continual supplies of necessary articles from central stores, sterilizing rooms and pharmacy. The renovations of the 1961 wing extension in addition to updating patient areas, provided new administrative offices, improved and enlarged out-patient facilities, larger quarters for the Auxiliary and a new medical library. The formal dedication and official opening of St. Clare's Mercy Hospital Extension on September 8, 1972 was a fitting culmination of 50 years of service to the sick.

## 1962-1972

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In 1968 an agreement was signed between St. Clare's Mercy Hospital and the Medical School of Memorial University of Newfoundland and since then St. Clare's has been a teaching hospital providing clinical teaching and experience to students, interns, and residents, in the following disciplines:

Obstetrics and Gynaecology  
Medicine  
General Surgery  
Chest and Peripheral Vascular Surgery  
Orthopaedics  
Psychiatry  
Radiology  
Pathology

**ST. CLARE'S – A TEACHING HOSPITAL**

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**EDUCATION**

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In 1973, because of a decreasing incidence of tuberculosis in the province, the Government decided to close the Sanitorium and requested the Board of St. Clare's to open a Respiratory Unit in the South Wing. An agreement was reached and the following year the chest clinic on Harvey Road was also transferred to St. Clare's at the request of the Department of Health. At the same time a co-operative arrangement was made with the St. John's General Hospital for the temporary operation at St. Clare's of a convalescent unit for Orthopaedic patients.

**1973-1982 RESPIRATORY UNIT**

**TALBOT HOUSE**

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**EDUCATION**

**1982**



The disease of alcoholism is one of the major medical and social problems confronting our society today. It is an illness in which psychological, sociological and biological factors intermingle with a simple drug – alcohol, to produce debilitating effects on the human person. Because of the devastating results affecting the whole personality, it is a major concern of people in the Health Field. In June, 1977 at the request of the Provincial Government and after several months of planning, the Board of Directors of St. Clare's Mercy Hospital agreed to administer a detoxification centre and on May 1, 1978 the facility was blessed and opened by the Chairman of the Board, Monsignor D. Morrissey. Talbot House is a non-medical, residential facility which provides a quiet, non-threatening atmosphere for people needing help when intoxicated. As a satellite of St. Clare's, it shares the philosophy of the hospital which concerns itself with the intrinsic nature of man with his God given rights and privileges and strives to provide "care" for its residents respecting each of them as an individual.

## **TALBOT HOUSE**

**PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT 1979-1982**

**EDUCATION**

**1982**

After many months of research and discussion and the search for financial assistance, St. Clare's Mercy Hospital opened a Palliative Care Unit on October 1, 1979. As the name suggests, the Unit provides palliative, and supportive care, for terminally ill cancer patients and their families either directly or indirectly, on a continuing basis. In order to assist them at this time we believe in total, supportive care of the patients by our reverence for life — not necessarily by prolonging terminal illness but by assisting the terminally ill patients to live fully, to preserve mental alertness, and to experience the support of a family and of a caring community. There are two main goals to this unit, (1) To maintain the family oriented program apart from the acute hospital setting and (2) To free the patient from pain and its associated mental anguish and anxiety by a program of pain control.

With these goals as a guiding principle the multi-disciplinary staff work for the following objectives: • To assist the patient and the family to find value in the moment of death • To develop appropriate programs for persons engaged in the care of terminally ill patients and • To develop bereavement follow-up programs for the family.

The philosophy, goals and objectives of the Palliative Care Unit are implemented and fully developed through a well co-ordinated approach of: • A trained, multi-disciplinary team • A nursing unit, home-care and consultation service • Emphasis on specialized nursing care and the control of pain • Concern for the patients psychological, emotional and spiritual need • Treatment and care of the family as a unit.

This Unit is located on the Third Floor of the South Wing and consists of nine private rooms, a bright, cheerful solarium, a family room, a conference room, kitchenette, and utility rooms. The atmosphere and decor is designed to make it as home-like as possible. Now nearly three years in operation, staff and volunteers of the Palliative Care Unit have provided treatment and service that is "special", personal, loving, and continuous, and have included the family in all phases of treatment, which has been appropriately designed to improve the quality of life, of the terminally ill patient with a malignant disease.

**PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT 1979-1982**

**EDUCATION**

**1982**



Education has been built totally into the structure of the hospital. Not only in its School of Nursing, but in its affiliation with the various departments of Memorial University, the Trades College, training programs for professional associations, the Cancer Foundation, the Alcohol & Drug Addiction Foundation and Alcoholics Anonymous.

Because St. Clare's is aware of the need for on-going education for its staff, many dollars are devoted each year to in-service education and staff are encouraged to belong to, and participate in, their professional associations.

As one of the main objectives of St. Clare's is to help provide for, and maintain the health of the community, Health Education for our patients is very important. Within the limits of our budget, several in-hospital programs have been established which are preventative as well as remedial.

Through our closed circuit television on local Channel 5, programs on health and prevention are available six hours a day. These may be viewed in the Nursing Units and in waiting areas throughout the hospital, and include programs relating to the hazards of certain lifestyles, such as abuse of alcohol, smoking, obesity, drugs, improper nutrition and lack of exercise.

In health services, changes come rapidly even within established services, therefore within the physical set-up, several changes have been made within the last decade. Periodic review of these services has enabled us to make effective changes where unnecessary duplication was obvious, to co-ordinate, augment and introduce new services, as we strive to keep abreast of the increasing needs of the community and the province.

Over the past sixty years the philosophy of St. Clare's has held its core of stability while at the same time it has expanded, adapted, and, we trust, deepened its commitment. During these three-score years, numerous medical, nursing and allied health and support workers as well as volunteers have, through their loyalty, devotion and dedication, helped maintain our Christian approach to the health services. To all of these the Sisters of Mercy are deeply grateful. To those who have gone to their Eternal reward we offer our prayers of gratitude and to those who are still with us, we say "Thank You" as together we continue to implant the works of Mercy into the living History of St. Clare's Mercy Hospital.



