



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.



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.

**Sacred Heart Hospital
Cheticamp, Nova Scotia
50th Anniversary Bulletin
1982**

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SACRED HEART HOSPITAL

50^{th.}

Anniversary Bulletin

Cheticamp, Nova Scotia

June 6, 1982



The northern part of Inverness County had long felt the need of a hospital. The nearest one was at Inverness, 40 miles from the village of Cheticamp, and it was almost impossible to travel that distance during the winter season.

FIRST STEPS

In 1930, the village of Cheticamp was struck by a serious epidemic Asian influenza resulting in a great number of deaths. At the time, a Doctor Leo LeBlanc was practicing medicine in the area. He was of tireless devotion. In all kinds of weather, during the winter months, with the blizzards and difficulties, it was only with dogs and sleighs that he was able to make the house calls.

This situation was very painful for the parish priest, Reverend Patrice LeBlanc, who worked very hard on a project he wanted to realize at all cost. The Filles de Jesus were teaching school in Cheticamp, so he decided to approach them. He went to Three Rivers, P. Q., to discuss with Mother Marie Ste-Agathe, Superior, the possibility of having the Sisters open a small hospital in Cheticamp. He also asked for trained Sisters to give nursing care to the sick. His visit finally paid off; the request was granted.

In 1931, the Honorable John G. Winant, director of Atlantic Gypsum (Canada) Limited, firm that operated the gypsum mine in Cheticamp, visited the community. This millionaire stayed in Cheticamp for two or three days. Before leaving, he told Mr. Joseph W. McFarland, manager of the gypsum mine, that he wished to donate \$5,000.00 towards a Cheticamp project. His donation was greatly appreciated and later it was applied on the construction of the hospital.

CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE

Upon his return from Three Rivers, P. Q., Father LeBlanc set up a construction committee. The members were:

Reverend Patrice LeBlanc, parish priest
Anselme Boudreau, manager at the Gypsum mine office
Joseph McFarland, Gypsum mine manager
Louis Pothier, Royal Bank manager
Charles W. Aucoin, Cheticamp merchant
Polite W. Deveau, Cheticamp merchant
Joseph E. Chiasson, Petit Etang merchant
Didace W. Roach, Belle Marche merchant
Pierre Chiasson, Grand Etang merchant
Ephraim Chiasson, Point Cross teacher

Father LeBlanc was elected president and Anselme Boudreau was named secretary-treasurer. The meetings were held at the Gypsum Mine office. Only two members of that committee, namely Anselme Boudreau and Louis Pothier, are still amongst us.

THE SMALL HOSPITAL

In 1918, the Sisters had bought the house belonging to Doctor Lous Fiset and they used it as a school. In 1931, this house had become a storage building for the vegetables grown on the Sisters' farm. Members of the hospital construction committee asked the Sisters to convert it into a hospital.

The Sisters accepted and the renovations which amounted to \$12,500.00 began in the spring. The Gypsum Mine Company donated \$1,000.00 to help the project. The deficit of \$6,500.00 was borrowed from the Royal Bank. The committee organized picnics, concerts, lotteries, card games, etc... to pay off this loan.

THE FIRST SISTERS

In November 1931, four Sisters from Three Rivers arrived in Port Hawkesbury where Father LeBlanc met them. They were: Mother Marie Ste. Agathe, Provincial; Sister Eliza Marie, nurse; Sister Marie Ediltrude, nurse; and Sister Marie Marthe de Bethanie, cook. The founding Sisters were Sister Marie Anice de St. Charles, Sister Marie Jean de la Croix, Sister Marie Ediltrude and Sister Marie Marthe de Bethanie.

The Sisters of the Convent provided the necessary bedding for two beds, one for the nurse and one for the first patient, Mrs. Doctor Leo LeBlanc. On November 28th, Mrs. LeBlanc gave birth to a baby boy who was named after the parish priest, Leo Patrick. Two cases of bedding from the Provincial House soon arrived on the Kinburn. They contained bedding for twelve beds.

On December 5th, the blessing of the hospital took place and the first mass was celebrated in the beautiful little chapel prepared by the Sisters. Father LeBlanc and the Sisters were very happy that a small hospital was now established in Cheticamp and together they expressed their gratitude to God.

GREAT DEDICATION

SURGEON ARRIVES

On December 6, 1931, Sr. Marie Anice, Superior, finally arrived in Cheticamp. However, a certain deficiency prevailed; there was a great need for a good surgeon. Doctor Clader and Doctor Egan had to come from Sydney for surgical operations.

Our good parish priest was searching and the Sisters were praying, hoping that a surgeon would soon be found. In June 1932, Doctor Wilfred Poirier, well known to many, came to settle in Cheticamp. Everyone was happy that a surgeon had finally arrived and he soon gained the confidence of all the people.

THE STERILIZER

Before coming to Cheticamp, Sister Marie Ediltrude and Sister Eliza Marie had gone to Montreal to buy a sterilizer that had belonged to the late Doctor Edmond Aucoin. This sterilizer would be used by the hospital to sterilize the linen needed for the nursing care of the sick.

At that time, there was no electricity in Cheticamp. The power for lights and other electrical needs was furnished by dynamos installed in a warehouse between the hospital and the barn. The electric current was not strong enough to charge the sterilizer. Anselme Boudreau came up with a solution.

The sterilizer was installed in the Mine Office. Two or three times a week, Sister Ediltrude went to this office for sterilization needs. Both Anselme and Placide Boudreau carried water needed for this operation from Johnnie à Eustade Aucoin's residence, close to the Mine office.

The Sisters were greatly dedicated to the hospital. At first, Sister Ediltrude was the only registered nurse. During the night, the Sisters, overcoming fear and anxiety, often went to the barn with a lantern, an ax and a pail to get the ice needed for cases of pneumonia, fever, etc... The ice was taken from the frozen harbour during the winter, cut into pieces and kept in the barn.

When there were seriously sick patients, the Sister on night duty would sleep on a rug in the corridor near the patient's room, because there was no calling system. Each patient had a small bell but it was hard to distinguish where the ringing came from. To help provide funds for a calling system, Sister Ediltrude started to embroider a set of table cloth and serviettes. A profit of \$50.00, the sum needed to pay for a calling system, was made on that lottery. Mr. A. Deveau, a Cheticamp electrician, offered his services to install the system.

In 1932, Sister Marie Patricia and Sister Marie Prudentienne arrived to work at the hospital. Sister Marie Patricia was a very efficient registered nurse. Notwithstanding the hard work, the Sisters were happy and willing to help "such good people". This is what the Sisters observed: "Many of these patients, still under the effect of ether, would be saying their rosary. Others would kneel near their beds for the evening rosary."

THE NEW HOSPITAL-1937

The hospital soon became too small, with only twelve beds to serve the population of Cheticamp and surrounding areas. Therefore, in 1937, the Sisters decided to build at their own expense a thirty bed hospital. Plans were made for a fireproof building. The contractor was a Mr. Rousseau, who was then deputy at the Quebec Parliament. In March 1937, Anselme Boudreau met Mother Provincial in Three Rivers to discuss the construction of the new hospital which began in April of the same year.

Anselme Boudreau who was manager at the Mine Office was the driving force that motivated Mr. McFarland. The Mine Company lent many trucks and a mechanical digger operated by Paulite à Paddé Roach. The basement space was dug quickly, "gratis". Strangely enough, the mechanical digger which often broke down when operating for the mine worked like a clock through all the digging work for the hospital. As a matter of fact, a statue of Saint Joseph had been placed in a little niche just above the main door of the convent. And it stayed there as long as the convent existed.

The blessing of the cornerstone took place on July 25, 1937. Under this stone were placed a few documents, a few coins, some moss and soil taken from Massabielle Stone in Lourdes, and the names of Father LeBlanc, all the Sisters and of Sister Marie Ste. Agathe. The stone was then embedded by Father LeBlanc.

THE CONSTRUCTION.

All parishioners were asked to donate some wood. The Mine Company offered their sawmill. The gypsum sheets and all the building materials: steel, bricks, equipment, etc... were brought from Montreal without cost by the boats which were coming in for plaster on their way to England. The cement was also obtained free. The Buixarier Boat which carried the plaster from Cheticamp to the Canada Cement Company, also brought cement to Halifax. This boat unloaded automatically with the help of a "self-unloader". There was always a quantity of cement in the slipway after the unloading. No one was allowed to take this cement, but permission was granted to do so for the construction of the hospital. When the boat arrived, the manager, Mr. McFarland, sent workers to gather the cement which they put in bags. After two or three trips, there was enough cement for the construction.

Mother Provincial and Sister Eliza Marie, Superior at the Hospital, often came to check the work during the construction period. The foreman was a Mr. Toutant from Three Rivers.

The hospital was completed in 1938. The sick were transferred to the new hospital on May 31, 1938 and the first mass was celebrated on June 7th of the same year. The blessing of the building took place on July 20th, 1938.



DOCTOR RATCHFORD

DOCTOR GABRIEL BOUDREAU

In 1942, the hospital was glad to welcome Doctor Gabriel Boudreau. Father Anselme Chiasson, in his book entitled "Cheticamp, Histoire et Traditions Acadiennes", talks about Doctor Boudreau. We quote: "Presqu'infailible dans ses diagnostics, très bon medecin, hautement apprecié, le docteur Boudreau se fait aimer en plus par sa charmante simplicité."

Sister Marie Ediltrude who had worked with him for many years, considered him as having been "the angel of the hospital".

After a few months of waiting and searching, Doctor Ratchford from Inverness decided to come and establish himself in Cheticamp. He consented to work with Doctor Boudreau. They were both appreciated for their knowledge, their ability and devotion.

In 1936, Anselme Boudreau, municipal councillor, had the hospital recognized by the Municipality of Inverness. Therefore, in 1958, when the Hospitalization Plan came into effect, the Cheticamp Hospital was incorporated in this Plan. The hospital remained the property of the Sisters but after that date, the government had the responsibility of paying all the bills. The Sisters were now paid salaries, as all other employees.

THE FIRE OF 1948

In 1948, the hospital underwent a harsh trial. The village of Pleasant Bay was struck by a forest fire which moved violently towards other communities. Residents worked hard to preserve their homes from fire, but soon they had to strive to save lives. Consternation swayed among the population and many even feared "the end of the world".

At the same time, the Cheticamp Island was also struck by fire, therefore, strenuous work and devotedness was urgent.

The good Doctor Poirier sacrificed his days and part of his nights, to the point of exhaustion. He died soon afterwards. His death left Cheticamp and surrounding communities in a great state of mourning. He was greatly missed by the Sisters as a benefactor and qualified doctor and almost as the lost father for some of the hospital staff.

THE WING OF THE CHAPEL 1954

The wing of the Chapel was constructed in 1954 when Sr. Ediltrude was Superior. This extension consisted of four floors with an elevator. On the fourth floor ten small bedrooms and a large conference room were built for a Sister's residence. On the third floor several bedrooms were included for nurses (boarders). Later this floor was transformed into an operating room suite. On the second floor a chapel with three other bedrooms were also constructed. In the basement, a cafeteria was provided for the Sisters. Later, rooms for the Laboratory and Radiology departments were completed. In 1956, Sr. Ediltrude left Cheticamp after 25 years of service. The construction of the new wing was not totally completed. The laboratory and X-ray departments that were situated in very small rooms of the hospital were established in the basement of the new building in 1958-59 when Sr. Emerentienne was Administrator. Other changes and renovations for the operating room suite were planned, pursued and completed under the direction of Sr. Clement Marie and completed in 1968-69 when Sr. Alice Gagnon was Administrator.

SISTERS MOVE OUT 1954

In 1954, the Sisters moved out from the small hospital to the fourth floor of the present hospital. They stayed there until 1971 when they moved at that time in the present convent.

The bedrooms of the fourth floor have been worked out into a conference room and storage rooms.

VARIOUS DOCTORS

A number of doctors have served the Cheticamp hospital: Doctors Leo LeBlanc, Wilfred Poirier, Doucet, Gabriel Boudreau, Ratchford, Didace Bourgeois, Samson, McNamara, Gilles Melanson, Lorne Marsh, and Claude Aucoin, presently chief consultant.

At present, there is no surgeon on the premises but Doctor Jim MacLean from Inverness comes to Cheticamp for surgery. He has been offering this service since Doctor Ratchford's retirement. Also, surgeons and anaesthetists from Sydney and Inverness have often served the Cheticamp Hospital in case of need.

OTHER COLLABORATORS

The parish priests and curates have also contributed their services to the Cheticamp Hospital. Father McLean displayed his dedication to the sick for a period of seven years. Others have also served the hospital with great devotion: Fathers Cyr, Gallant, Tremblay, Comeau, MacDonald, Desjardins, St. Laurent, LaChance, etc...

The prime mover in this undertaking was Reverend Father Patrice LeBlanc. Sister Marie Ediltrude likes to tell that Father LeBlanc has cured as many patients with his faith and prayers as the doctors did.

We must also mention Father Samson, was hospitalized for many years. The hospital was more than pleased to benefit from his know-how, even during his period of sickness. The Mother Provincial at the time, during one of her visits, had written the following about Father Samson: "He is a real treasure to the hospital by assuring daily mass. His work is greatly appreciated. He looks after the hospital property and is very handy around the hospital-he makes everyone feel comfortable."

FIRST ANNUAL MEETING 1964

The first annual meeting of the Board of Directors was held on June 13, 1964. Wilfred A. Boudreau was elected president and Patrice Boudreau, secretary-treasurer.

The following were members on the Board of Directors:
Wilfred A. Boudreau, president
Patrice Boudreau, secretary-treasurer
Reverend Father Jules Comeau
Lionel Deveau
Louis Luc Chiasson
Wilfred P. Boudreau
Sister Marie Euchariste
Sister Clement Marie
Sister Joseph Maria
Sister Frederic Marie
Clarence Am Aucoin

ACCREDITATION OF THE HOSPITAL
1964

In 1964, the Cheticamp Hospital was accredited by the Canadian Council for Accreditation of Hospitals. The accreditation of a hospital is granted following a detailed inquiry led by a doctor delegated by the Council of Accreditation. The enquiry touches the following points: the administration, the nursing, organization of the medical Bureau, the care given to the sick, the keeping of medical files, the competence of the staff, the security measures, and the rendering of different services: X-rays, Laboratory, Kitchen, etc...

RENOVATIONS
1968-69

In 1968, definite needs arose for more operating room space. The living quarters on second floor were renovated and made into an O.R. suite providing two major rooms, one recovery room, one doctor's room and a scrub room.

In 1969 the front entrance of the hospital was totally renovated. The south side of the hospital was completely reconstructed with new bricks and aluminum windows.

SISTERS RESIDENCE
1971

In 1971, the Sisters' living quarters of the fourth floor addition were condemned by the fire department. The Sisters moved to the Convent. The rooms are now used to store supplies. A large room is used for a Conference room.

WAITING ROOM AREA
1975

In 1975, space in the chapel was provided for a waiting room because of the increase in the number of Out-Patients. Folding doors were installed between the altar and the remainder of the room to allow chapel services also when necessary. Two small rooms were built to provide for office space.

WATER SYSTEM

In 1977, the main water system was upgraded. A project that cost \$39,000.00. A concrete Cistern with a capacity of 12,000 gallons of water was constructed at the south side of the hospital. The storage water tank is connected with piping to a duplex pump and water softener in the basement of the convent to be distributed throughout the hospital.

In case of emergency, a temporary water system is connected at a distance of 650 feet to the school water system. A project of \$6,500.00.

INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

In 1979 one of the patients' room (102) was renovated to accommodate equipment and supplies for an intensive patient care unit. The patients with heart attacks and/or other serious illnesses, accidents requiring special care are first admitted to this unit and they are transferred to another room when their conditions are improved.



L'escalier de secours à l'hôpital du Sacré Coeur à Chéticamp en voie de construction avant la couverture d'asbeste. (photo Sr. M. A. Boudreau)

FIRE ESCAPE

In 1979-80, another main project was constructed, an enclosed fire escape that cost \$23,565.00. It is situated on the south side of the hospital providing more security to patients.

CENTRALIZED KITCHEN

In 1981, a centralized kitchen was approved by the Department of Health. This required new equipment, steam tables, new carts, new trays and dishes, etc. With this new system, the patient's meal trays are now served from the main kitchen. Until then, the food was taken to the floors and the nurses served the trays. This new system was an improvement to patient care.

GENERATOR

In 1981, an automatic power plant was installed.

Also in 1981, the doors to the front entrance were changed and new brick shelter was added for protection against strong winds.

FUTURE PLANS PENDING APPROVAL

The two present Out-Patient treatment rooms have become inadequate because of the continual increase of out-patients admitted daily for treatments.

Much time, imagination and repeated efforts were taken to figure out new plans. The personnel involved finally arrived at tentative agreements that were sent to the Department of Health for approval.

The actual waiting room and chapel areas would be totally utilized for Out-Patient services. This would include three treatment rooms, one waiting area and a doctors' room.

The chapel would be moved to another area. The rooms now utilized for Out-Patient services would be converted for patients and other rooms would become office areas.

To keep up with the times and to offer the best of services, Sacred Heart Hospital will certainly undertake more modifications in the future.

Following is a copy of the document written by Patrice Boudreau concerning the hospital property:

DELIMITATION OF THE SACRED HEART HOSPITAL GROUNDS

Beginning at the point of intersection of the South Western boundary line of lands of Her Majesty the Queen in her right of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the edge of highway right of way of the main paved highway leading from Pleasant Bay to Inverness and running South 37° 15' East a distance of two hundred thirteen (213) feet to a point; then running South 51° 30' West a distance of two hundred fifty (250) feet to a point; thence running North 37° 15' West a distance of two hundred thirteen (213) feet more or less, to the aforementioned edge of highway right of way; thence running North 51° 30' East along aforementioned edge of highway right of way a distance of two hundred fifty (250) feet to a point said point being the point of beginning.

Bounded on the North West by the main paved highway leading from Pleasant Bay to Inverness; on the North East by lands of Her Majesty the Queen in her right of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; on the South East by lands of the Grantors and on the South West by lands of the Grantors.

Also a right of access to above described lot 17 1/2 feet in width extending along entire South Western boundary line of said above described lot.

Prepared by Mr. Patrice Boudreau for the contract of the "Hôpital du Sacré Coeur" corporation; exact limits, copy given to the Provincial House.