



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.

**Edmonton General Hospital
School of Nursing**

**The Golden Years
1911-1961**

Source: **Edmonton General Hospital School
of Nursing Alumni**

Copyright: **Public Domain**

Digitized: **November 2018**

1911

Edmonton General Hospital

The Golden Years

100 YEARS OF NURSING



1961

The Golden Years



Opened 1954

111 Street Building



Dear Graduates:

Throughout the years, our History has been written by you. At this golden hour, surrounded by those near and dear to you, may we say that the happiness of your "dear Grey Nuns" re-echoes the gladness your presence gives to this Fiftieth Anniversary.

Let this splendid hour remain in your memory and be a source of inspiration for all the days to come.

SISTER A. GAUTHIER, s.g.m.

Superior.



"A" Building, Fronting Jasper Avenue, opened 1940



Dear Alumnae Members:

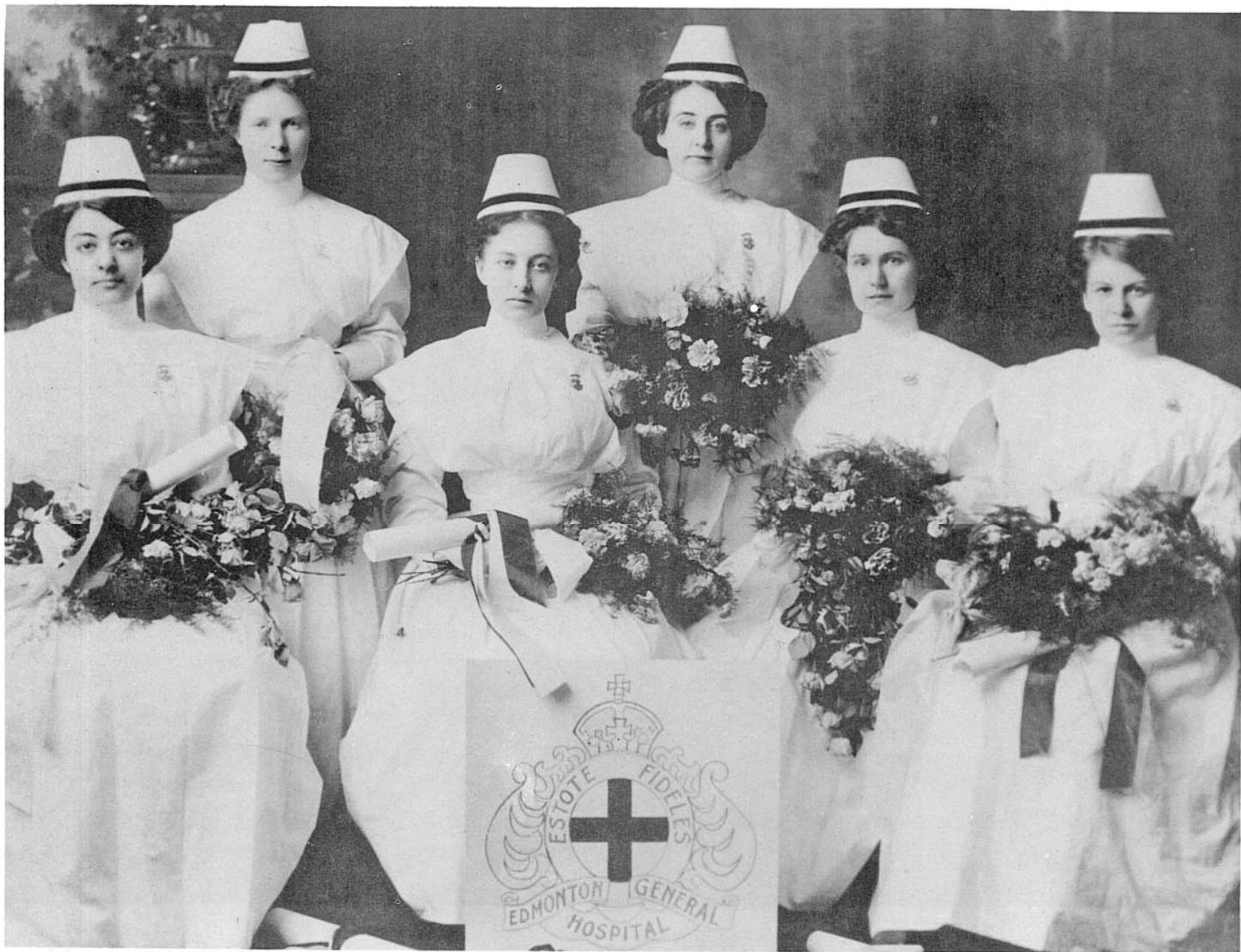
Today it is with pleasure that I welcome all the graduates of this hospital on this happy and memorable occasion, the fiftieth anniversary of its first graduating class. Though some have travelled far, they responded enthusiastically to our invitation to join us in which I hope will be three days of pleasant reminiscing and partaking of the various activities that our committee has planned for your enjoyment.

Thanking you for your co-operation,

MARY BETH WEBB

President,

Alumnae Association



Picture of the First Graduating Class - 1911



Dear Graduates:

On behalf of the previous Directors of our School, and myself, I am honored to extend to you a warm welcome.

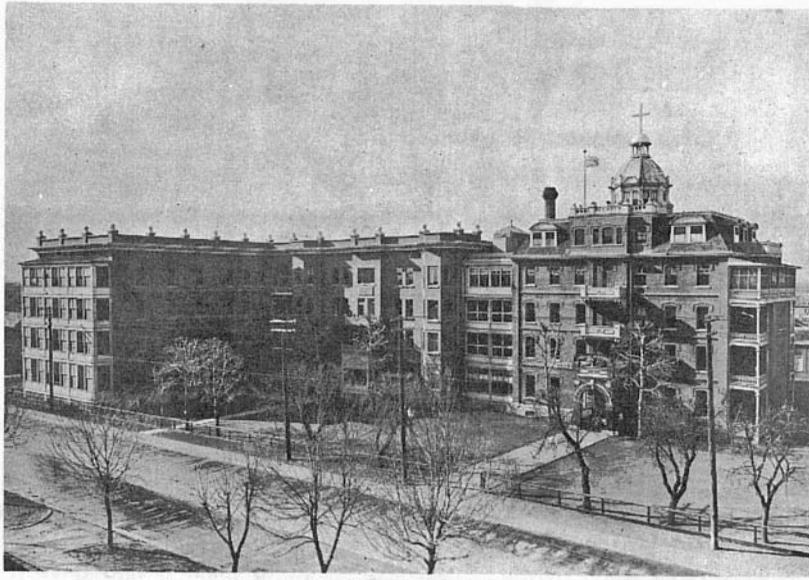
I feel unworthy of this privilege because you are the people who laid the foundation of our School, continued to build it and gave it the reputation it enjoys today.

It is with an open heart that we welcome you back home.

SISTER A. STE. CROIX, s.g.m.

Director of Nurses.

*Nursing Residence
&
Old Building*



Edmonton General Hospital
School of Nursing Alumnae Association

PRESIDENTS

- 1922-31 Mrs. Ruby M. Conroy (R. M. Larson 1921)
- 1932-33 Mrs. A. C. Hare (Bessie Wolstenholme 1928)
- 1934-35 Miss A. Hildebrand (1923)
- 1936-37 Mrs. R. J. Price (Clara Fry 1935)
- 1938-39 Miss Isabelle Shillabeer (1933)
- 1940-42 Mrs. Ross McKee (Elizabeth Dunlop 1911)
- 1943-47 Miss Elizabeth Bietch (1937)
- 1948-50 Mrs. John Palowski (M. Mathews 1939)
- 1951-52 Mrs. R. Watson (M. Marshall 1930)
- 1953-54 Miss Victoria Protti (1938)
- 1955-56 Mrs. C. Hergott (Theresa MacDonald 1951)
- 1957-58 Mrs. M. Baron (Ethyl Scheiman 1948)
- 1959-60 Mrs. J. Healy (Patricia Benn 1951)
- 1960-61 Miss Mary Beth Webb (1958)

Through the Looking Glass

Mrs. C. Hergott

Scanning the pages of history, one finds the last sixty years included with the chapters titled 'Modern.' Technically speaking, this is of course, correct, yet as we narrow the field to the West, who could possibly consider the conditions of Edmonton in 1895 modern? The village was an infant, with dreams of a great future, but most prospective citizens in the East were quite willing to let it grow up a little, before becoming a part of it. Transportation itself was a test of endurance, and any travel was of, and by, necessity and not without misgivings. In Edmonton there was no hospital, but at the mission at St. Albert there was one, which had been opened by the Sisters of Charity, Grey Nuns of Montreal in 1881. Edmonton patients and doctors made the journey by horse and buggy to use the facilities offered, and one might imagine that the trip itself may well have rendered treatment futile.

As for the Sisters, one can only imagine the hardships these gentle women encountered both during their trip West, and in establishing their new home and hospital in the comparative wilderness. No glory seekers, they, but rather compelled by the will to serve God by easing the suffering of the sick and the needy, they established themselves as a necessary part of the growing West. Edmonton grew, both in size and population so that in 1895, at the request of the citizens, the Sisters of Charity opened the first hospital on its present site.

Upon the advice of Bishop Grandin, and under the direction of Mother d'Youville the Sisters purchased a full city block from the Hudson's Bay Company. The price of the property, where once had been the Fort des Prairies, was two thousand, three hundred dollars, but the citizens of Edmonton alleviated this amount with a gift of one thousand dollars. Regarding the size of the chosen site, it may well be mentioned, that the foresight the Sisters illustrated, has served them in good stead.

The hospital, a three storey brick building on a stone foundation, had a bed capacity of 36. It served a village of 1600 persons as well as Indians, settlers, and Metis in all locales North to the Arctic, and West to the Rockies.

At the official opening of the hospital, Sister Marie Xavier, the first Reverend Superior stated the aims of the institution:

'It is clearly understood that this is a general hospital, superintended by the Sisters of Charity, and all have access without distinction of creed or nationality. The sole object of the Sisters is to minister to the temporal wants of the suffering humanity; the rest will be left to the Lord, Who watches over all.'

Edmonton was justly proud of the first hospital, and it served its purpose well, but after the turn of the century, as the population increased, it became evident that a larger hospital with more trained personnel was required.

The Sisters were willing and able to comply with the demands of progress. In 1907, an addition of a fourth storey, as well as a two storey laundry, were added

PROGRAM

Saturday - October 21 - 1961

10:00 a.m. Mass of Thanksgiving
St. Joachim's Parish Church
—9916 - 110 Street

To follow:

Registration, Nurses' Residence
112 Street and 100 Avenue Entrance

11:30 a.m. Breakfast—Hospital Cafeteria

2:00 p.m. Tours of Hospital

Sunday - October 22

AFTERNOON

Individual Class Reunions—(See time,
and address of your class—posted in
Foyer of Nurses' Residence.)

8:00 p.m. Graduation Exercises of the Fiftieth
Class, Northern Alberta Jubilee
Auditorium, 114 Street and 87 Avenue

OF EVENTS

To follow:

Graduation Reception — Social Room
Jubilee Auditorium

Monday - October 23

- 10:00 a.m.** Mass for Deceased Alumnae
Hospital Chapel
4th Floor, Nurses' Residence
- 10:45 a.m.** Coffee Party in honor of Alumnae
mothers, whose daughters have
graduated from Edmonton General
Hospital, held in the Nurses' Residence
Lounge.
- 6:30 p.m.** Banquet (Alumnae members only)
Derrick Golf and Winter Club
121 Street south of 45th Avenue
- 9:00 p.m.** Dance—Derrick Ball Room
(Alumnae and Escorts)

to the original structure. The added space and facilities enabled the establishment of the first School for the training of lay nurses in Edmonton.

In September, 1908, Sister Mary Ann Casey opened her first class, with six young women. The candidates were interviewed, given a uniform, and sent directly to the various departments, to learn as they served. This method may indeed sound severe, but nursing was, at that time, primarily bedside care of the sick. The students were on duty for twelve hours a day, and as well, attended lectures. Sister Casey, a graduate of Notre Dame Hospital in Montreal, taught Nursing Arts, and the Sciences of Nursing. Anatomy, Physiology, Surgery and Obstetrics, were taught by the doctors in evening lectures.

The first student uniform was, as described by Mrs. James McCool, a graduate of the first class, "white with long sleeves, starched cuffs, apron and bib, (the symbol of service to the Grey Nuns). At the end of the first year, we were given a black band for our caps." It would seem that this description quite accurately fits our present graduation uniform.

Mrs. McCool has also given an account of privileges and leisure time of her student days in this excerpt: 'Of course, no young lady, or nurse, left the hospital grounds without permission from the Director, even to purchase a pair of shoe laces. We had an afternoon off each week, which was from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. With extra special permission, for a great and serious cause we were given an evening out, from 8:00 to 10:30 p.m., but such occasions were rare indeed.'

Undaunted by long hours, hard work and relatively meagre leisure, this first class secured even more 'first laurels' for the Grey Nuns. These included the first graduation pin or medal, and the first Graduation from a School of Nursing in Edmonton. However, before enlarging on these important subjects, it should first be noted that this class, with the assistance of Sister Casey, was responsible for our school motto, 'Estote Fideles,' which literally translated, commands 'always be Faithful.' Mrs. Minta Kerr, also a class graduate relates that she had this motto suggested to her by Sister Mary Frances of the Order of Faithful Companions of Jesus, and it was given approval and adopted as the school motto shortly before the Graduation exercises. Concerning this, Mrs. Kerr wrote, 'So much in so little—'Fideles' encompasses so much needed in all life, so many fail to be faithful in small details or great projects (it is not easy) but there is the reminder always before our eyes.'

Another choice of the first class, was the trio of our school colors and the flower. Undoubtedly, the red rose was chosen as the symbol of love for mankind, especially the suffering; the colors, for their significance:

Red—for the greatest virtue, charity

White—for purity of intention

Mauve—for humility of spirit but courage sufficient to wear the royal purple. Returning to the school pin, the credit for this beautiful piece of metallic artistry must

rest with Sister Casey, Mrs. Kerr and Mr. D. A. Kirkland, former owner of the present Birks store in Edmonton. The history and significance of the design is best described by Mrs. Kerr in this excerpt, 'It is an entirely original, delicately executed version of achievement. The 'laurel wreath' surrounding the Cross on Shield. The wording is very complete and legible—Edmonton General Hospital, School of Nursing—and year. Surmounted on Banner (pin) is the significant motto 'Estote Fideles' which is indeed a dignified message of admonishment.'

The design for this pin, as well as others, was submitted by Mr. Kirkland. Reverend Superior Bissionette and Sister Casey accepted this design, but specified that the Cross on Shield be the Geneva Cross, which signifies neutrality, as used by the Red Cross, and which Father Lacombe carried for his personal recognition by the Indians. The die was cast, and struck in gold in April, 1911, and it is most gratifying to note that the design has remained constant, to the last delicate detail.

The first graduation exercises of the Edmonton General Hospital, School of Nursing, was held on the evening of April 19, 1911, in the Auditorium of the old St. Mary's High School on 103 Street. It was attended by the elite, the pseudo-elite, Catholics, and Protestants, in fact by any one who had the vaguest reason to qualify as one of the social 500. Invitations were at a premium, as this was the social event of the year. The stage was filled with dignitaries of the church and the government, Provincial and civic. This most significant first graduation, complete with string orchestra, potted palms, and innumerable speeches was climaxed, as it is today, with the Valedictory, given by Miss Minta Sharkley (Kerr). One deviation from the original pattern has been noted, and that is the graduates' bouquet. In 1911, the floral ensemble was a colonial nosegay, enclosed in starched white lace, and composed of violets, lily-of-the-valley, centered with red rose buds, and secured with narrow satin streamers of red, mauve and white.

First events and accomplishments always have their rightful place in history, but with initiation comes progress, and the General Hospital had too many firsts to fall behind. Telephones were installed in 1911, as well as further additions to the hospital, bringing the bed capacity in 1913 to 100.

During the First World War, it was found necessary to increase the length of training from thirty months to thirty-six months. The additional six months' training allowed the graduate to go overseas with the Army Medical Corps. Extra courses taught were Chemistry and Diatetics.

In December of 1918, the University of Alberta set the first Registered Nurses' examination for graduates of Schools of Nursing, that had been approved in 1916. In 1920 and 1921, the hospital was completely remodelled, with facilities added to allow student nurses a three-month rotation in the x-ray and laboratory departments. Changes were also taking place in the School. Sister Casey left her position as Director of Nurses, but one hundred and one graduates were living proof of Dr. Braithwaites' words regarding her, 'a wonderful woman, doing a splendid job.'

In 1922, the American College of Physicians and Surgeons, standardization committee, gave the hospital their approval and Class A standing for the teaching of Medical Internes. The significance of this movement may seem to have little relationship to the School of Nursing, but it has had a lasting effect on the careers of some of its graduates. Ambiguity is not intended here, but neither do we want to openly flaunt the subsequent chain of events which is inevitable when dedicated young men and women are training in similar fields.

Between the years of 1921 and 1928, a nucleus of the Alumnae of the School had organized a social group, which was primarily to keep in touch with the hospital and activate friendships developed during training. Mrs. Ruby Conroy was the backbone of this group, and after several attempts, with the assistance of Sister Margaret O'Brien Lafferty, Director of the School of Nursing, the Alumnae Association was organized in 1928. This was the beginning of the Alumnae as we know it now, with a Constitution and By-Laws which gave it status and purpose. Their work was primarily the encouragement and assistance of the School and the students. They instituted and presented the Bedside Nursing Medal, and later the General Proficiency Medal. As funds enabled, they also presented a \$250.00 scholarship for post-graduate education. This award has been a yearly effort of the Alumnae Association, which now devotes its entire assistance to the School.

In 1929, the students prepared and published their first school yearbook. Their leisure time had, of necessity, been increased and there was a remarkable increase in privileges. The students did however, still spend seventy-eight hours weekly in Clinical experience.

In 1935, the hospital Administration accepted a government contract for the care of Tuberculosis patients. Student nurses were given experience in this department, as well as training in Communicable disease nursing which was begun by affiliation in the Royal Alexandra Hospital.

By 1936, the hospital was affiliated with the University of Alberta and fully approved by the Canadian Medical Association for rotating internship. Under the Director of Nurses, Sister Clara Tougas, the student nurses were granted 21 days vacation, however no provision was made for student illness.

In 1937, the School had its first director with a nursing degree, Sister Alice Bonin, R.N., B.Sc. The student enrollment at that time was seventy-five, with a graduate staff of nineteen. An assistant to the Director, Miss Mitchell, was employed, who also taught Nursing Sciences. Since there were insufficient Obstetrical cases in the hospital for teaching purposes, students affiliated at either the Misericordia Hospital, Edmonton, or Holy Cross in Calgary. The students' Clinical experience was reduced to a weekly fifty-two hours with increased classroom instruction.

Nineteen hundred and thirty-nine was another year of construction. This time a need for more beds was provided by a five-storey wing which was completed and blessed by Archbishop J. H. Macdonald in 1940. The entire fifth floor was devoted to Obstetrics, rendering affiliation unnecessary. Miss Storey, a graduate of the

School, returned from post-graduate work to assume charge of the department. As the hospital grew, so did the School. Miss Florence MacDonald became the first full-time Science Instructor, with Miss Mitchell now teaching Fundamental Nursing.

By 1943, when Sister F. Keegan R.N., B.Sc., from Toledo, Ohio, took over the Director of Nurses position, the Faculty of the School found it necessary to co-ordinate theory and practice. Clinical Instructors were introduced for the first time on wards to fulfill this need.

The students gained recognition as well. For the first time, they were granted a stipend allowance of five, seven and ten dollars per month, depending on their year of training. Cost of breakages was deducted from this amount.

In 1945, the students worked a 48 hour week plus classes, although the six to nine week-night terms comprized a fifty-six hour week.

In 1947, growing pains within the nurses' residence had to be alleviated by the purchase of 'Villa Casey'—a three-storey dwelling directly across the avenue from the hospital. Some of the students were accommodated here, but still others in their third year were billeted in neighborhood homes, while city students were free to live at home. The School, of course, assumed all the expenses incurred by the residential problem. Meanwhile, the hospital was again stretching bed capacity. A temporary, but somewhat fairly permanent one-storey wing was opened, which had a fifty-eight bed capacity. This frame building was named St. John's Ward, in honor of Dr. John Orobko, who was at the time, President of the Medical Staff.

Also in 1948, the students' night duty was reduced to forty-eight hours per week, that is, eight hours broken to cover a twelve hour shift.

In 1950, at the partial expense of the Alumnae Association, a student was sent to Vancouver to represent the Edmonton General Hospital in the newly-formed Student Nurses' Association. On her return, the student, Miss Theresa Macdonald, duly reported her observations and comparisons to Sister Keegan and her assistant Director, Miss Elizabeth Bietch, as well as the Alumnae Association, and it was evident that insofar as the students were concerned, all measures would be taken to insure that the training school would not be out classed by any other in Canada.

In 1951, under the direction of Sister M. Laramée, R.N., B.Sc., the *students* were granted two-weeks' sick leave yearly, as well as their three weeks' vacation. Cost of breakages were no longer deducted.

In 1952, the hospital was once again able to gather all her student nurses under one roof. The original nurses' residence which had been built in 1920, and then used as the tuberculosis section, was restored to its purpose. The entire West section of the south wing of the hospital was remodelled for the accommodation of the students. A reception room was furnished by the Alumnae Association. Other facilities, included a Rumpus room, laundry and kitchenette as well as offices for the Faculty.

Owing to the closing of the Tuberculosis section, the students took their training in this field at the Aberhart Provincial Sanitorium or at Charles Camsell Indian Hospital during a four-week affiliation.

During 1952, the first full-time Educational Director, Miss F. MacDonald, was employed by the School. Also in that year, the students began working a straight eight-hour shift except in the Operating Room, Children's Ward, and Dressing Room. It was in that year, that the first National League of Nursing examinations were written for provincial registration.

One wonders just how much building can be done, and how many wings can be added to present structures. It would seem that Mother d'Youville and Bishop Grandin were very wise indeed to secure the property on which the General Hospital has grown. In 1954, the latest, but probably not the last addition was opened. This was a seven-storey wing containing 203 beds, bringing the total bed capacity to 434.

The average student enrollment at this time was one hundred and sixty, facilitating the movement of teaching to a complete study program, that is, six to eight weeks of lectures, without concurrent clinical work. This system proved beneficial to the student, and results were gratifying.

In 1955, Sister A. Ste. Croix, R.N., B.Sc., became Director of Nurses, and at that time, Nursing Education was completely separated from the Nursing Service which was put under the direction of Sister A. Bonin, R.N., B.Sc.

The students were given four weeks annual vacation as well as three weeks cumulative sick leave. Elevating their status further, Reverend Sister Jeanne Pinard became their housemother, with three assistants, as well as a desk clerk for the Nurses' Residence. Classrooms were remodelled and Instructors' offices were built for the opening of the 1956 Fall Class.

To reminisce a little, one recalls that the classrooms were well ornamented with pictures of previous graduation classes. They were, at times, a source of inspiration but also proved quite a distraction. Wall space was almost at a premium. During the remodelling processes, which occurred, all the pictures were removed to storage. It was brought to the attention of the Alumnae Association that some of the pictures were in bad disrepair, and in some instances, individual portraits were missing entirely. After 'hanging proud' for so many years, these pictures had to be disciplined. The Alumnae Association President, Mrs. Hergott, and her executive, undertook the project of restoration and preservation. The entire group of pictures was re-photographed and framed in their respective order in a Multiplex Picture Board. It now stands in the Nurses' Reception Room, with its subsequent additions, where once more the classes of yesteryear may give inspiration or perhaps help pass the time of day.

Returning to the School, in the Fall of 1956, classes opened with a Faculty of eleven members. Miss G. Graves, R.N., B.N., after three-months' study on the Masters Level at Catholic University of America, became Educational Clinical Co-ordinator in charge of the student curriculum revision. Dr. J. A. Boyd was named Medical Co-ordinator to assist the faculty with student education.

In 1957, for the first time in the history of the School, only one class was accepted. In September of that year, fifty-five students entered a new educational concept, under a Faculty of fourteen members. The curriculum had undergone a complete change to a correlated study programs which included Psychiatric affiliation at Oliver, as well as Tuberculosis affiliation at the Aberhart Sanitorium or Camsell Hospital, and students are no longer trained but educated. In 1958, Reverend Sister Superior presented a \$1,000.00 scholarship for post-graduate education.

A Master Rotation plan went into effect in January, 1959. The students were given a complete three-year plan which assured their proper education in each clinical field, as well as a guarantee that there would be adequate personnel in each department. The faculty is now composed of sixteen members. There were no longer students working broken shifts in any department.

To the student uniform was added a half-time collar pin in mauve and white bearing the initials, E.G.H.

The University of Alberta passed a regulation which came into effect in September, 1959, insisting that only those students who had successfully written their R.N. examinations would be eligible for Graduation. A fall Graduation ceremony was held for the first time which insured, that with the receipt of R.N. results, all those receiving diplomas, were eligible for registration. It is indeed gratifying to note that this ruling has had no effect on any subsequent Graduating class, as all have been successful.

Over the years that have been reviewed, it is very evident that mammoth changes have taken place in the field of nursing. The Edmonton General Hospital, School of Nursing has indeed kept pace with progress, and in many cases, set the pace. Changes within the last two years have been many, perhaps a significant one was the recent establishment of a forty-hour week for the students. More changes will come. Perhaps there will be more building, as it seems the Grey Nuns accomplish the most to the accompaniment of a hammer and saw. Progress—in building, learning and teaching—on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the School of Nursing, each and every woman that has passed to the role of Alumnus can look with gratitude to the Grey Nuns, and each in her heart can thank God for the privilege to have been educated under these devoted Sisters of Charity to gain their status of professional nurses.



What a joyous occasion is a fiftieth anniversary reunion of a school of nursing, when women gather to reminisce of the "Good Old Days." But to many, this has been a great deal of arduous work which has only been lightened by your many expressions of approval.

On behalf of each of the Alumnae I would like to thank all who have aided this committee in the preparation of this Golden Anniversary.

Needless to say—the mountains of letters sent out was a gigantic task to the corresponding committee, as well as the tabulation of the replies—To those who folded and addressed the first letters, as well as to those who placed the last stamps—our heartfelt gratitude.

To those who worked on the class reunion committee, the finance committee, the publicity committee, who donated precious time, automobiles, and those who braved snow and rain to run the many errands these various gatherings necessitated, our deep appreciation.

To the members of our medical staff who so generously contributed to our golden anniversary scholarship fund—a sincere thank you.

To the housemothers and staff of the school of nursing, who patiently worked on the tedious task of checking and rechecking—and to those whose encouragement kept us alive, to one and all who have helped us—Thank you!

—GILDA RATH,

Chairman of Reunion Committee.

Appreciation

We wish to thank the following commercial firms for their support:

Anonymous Friends of the School—(2)

Alberta National Drug Co. Ltd.

Canada Packers Ltd.

Corona Flower Shop Ltd.

Creative Printers Ltd.

Dominion Stores

Dower Brothers Ltd.

Gainers Company Ltd.

Gaults Alberta Ltd.

MacDonald Consolidated Ltd.

National System of Baking Ltd.

Yellow Cab Ltd.

La Survivance Printing

Scott-National Fruit Co.

Western Supplies Ltd.

Western Grocers Ltd.

School Song

“ For Christ The King ”

*So Val-iant and blessed Sis-ters in Grey journeyed West, True
symbols of char-i-ty. Their con-stant love guidance
From up a-bove. Help us hold our banner Free With
head's lif-ted high Helping the help-less our cry May
God give us strength to be al-ways true faithful too E-ver
more shall we sing for our school, for our faith, for Christ the King.
Al-ber-ta, Fair, Golden and rare, moun-tains and hills and prairie
wide. In this fair land our school does stand faith-
ful. E-ver proud our youth to guide the rose our em-blem
We'll De-fend es to-te, Fi-de-lis to the end.
Ma-ve and white shall our co-lors be to our school we pledge loyalty.*

