



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.

**Sisters of Service
Edson, Alberta
1926-1976: 50 Years of Service
St. John's Hospital**

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SISTERS OF SERVICE

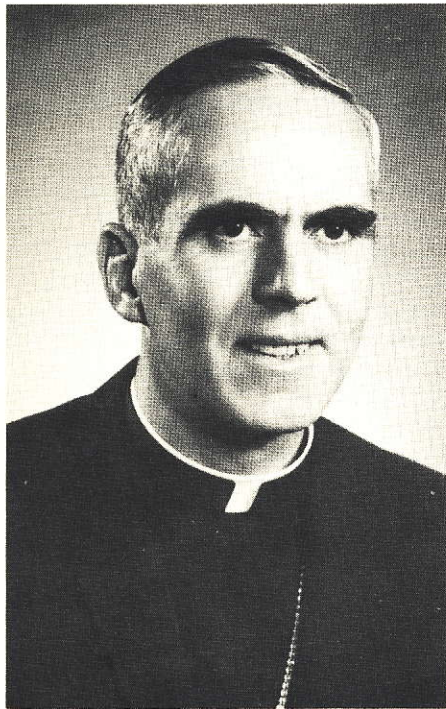
EDSON, ALBERTA

1926-1976



50 Years of Service

St. John's Hospital



A Field at Home

THE MASTER has said: "I must proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God." The Church has applied this to herself. The Synod of 1974 proclaimed with joy: "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church." Pope Paul VI continues this theme: "It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gifts of grace."

Proclaiming the Good News is achieved by word and example. Healing, caring for the sick, comforting the grieving, are means of proclaiming Christ's saving presence.

At times we tend to think of this missionary apostolate of the Church as applying only to foreign fields. And while the work of the Church in large centres of population at home seems obvious, the care of the smaller communities in our own country is easily forgotten. These "fields at home" need the loving service of proclaimers of the Good News, of apostles of mercy.

The Sisters of Service have been such apostles of mercy in serving the people of Edson and surrounding areas through St. John's Hospital these past fifty years.

On behalf of the people of this Archdiocese, I express our deep debt of gratitude to these Sisters of Service.

On the occasion of this Golden Anniversary, I pray that the Lord will reward them in his own generous way and I express the hope that they will continue to serve us for many years to come.

J. N. MacNeil
Archbishop of Edmonton



From the Sister General

ON BEHALF of the Sisters of Service I wish to express the sincere congratulations of all the members of the Community to the Sisters and staff of St. John's Hospital, Edson, on the occasion of their Golden Jubilee.

Many of our Sisters have worked devotedly in the hospital over the years. All of them found it a gratifying and challenging experience.

Jubilees are a time for gratitude. We, the Sisters of Service, are truly thankful to the people of Edson and surrounding district. Without their generous and devoted cooperation at all times this hospital could not have reached the status it holds today in the Province of Alberta.

Our Jubilee prayer then is that this centre of healing and concern for the well-being of humanity will continue to grow and prosper through the years.

Sister Helen Hayes

*Sister General
Sisters of Service*

Phase I - 1926-1931

Lady Minto Hospital

IN OCTOBER 1926 the Sisters of Service of Canada took over an old abandoned hospital in Edson, Alberta, known as the Lady Minto Hospital. Lady Minto was the wife of Lord Minto, Governor General of Canada from 1898 to 1903. Previously, Lord Minto had served in the Riel Rebellion and had been offered a post as Commandant of the North West Mounted Police. After their return to England, Lady Minto sent to the Canadian Red Cross a donation to build hospitals in the rural areas of the West. These hospitals were hence called "Lady Minto Hospitals."

Hospital History One of Achievement

THE FOLLOWING article by Sister Margaret Guest appeared in the *Edson Signal* in 1958. It tells residents of the history of the Sisters of Service in Edson and the widespread area from the Coal Branch to Shining Bank, Wildwood and Evansburg, through St. John's Hospital.

On February 6th, 1914, a representative group of the citizens of the town of Edson held a meeting and passed a resolution to incorporate themselves into a society known as the "Lady Minto Hospital, Alberta." It was then resolved to accept an offer of \$3,000 from the Victorian Order of Nurses towards the building of a hospital which would be operated and maintained by this Order.

Following the meeting, a request was made to the Town of Edson for a further sum of \$2,000 and a site of land suitable for a hospital. This was granted. On May 11th, 1914, the Edson Construction Co. was engaged to erect a two-storey building. The work must have been completed during the summer months, for a resolution was passed at a meeting on October 16th to place a mortgage on the building.

Emergency Centre During 'Flu Epidemic

There is no record of the hospital being used after erection but on January 25th, 1916, a resolution was passed at a meeting of the Corporation to write to the Victorian Order of Nurses regarding the furnishing of the hospital. (We have been told that the building served as an emergency centre under the direction of practical nurses among the women of the town during the influenza epidemic of 1918.)

On April 8th, 1921, a meeting of the Corporation was held and Nurse McRoberts, VON, was present. She agreed there was real need for a hospital in the area but there would have to be more assurance of financial support if her nurses were to operate one. She pointed



St. John's Hospital, Edson
October 1926 – December 1931

out that it would take between \$5,000 and \$6,000 to repair, alter and furnish the existing building which would not provide more than ten hospital beds unless a nurses' residence was added to the hospital.

On September 2nd, 1921, it was decided to change the name Lady Minto Hospital to Edson General Hospital. Eleven days later another meeting was called and a resolution was passed to advise Nurse Reeves of Provost, Alberta, that her offer to operate the hospital, rent free, for one year was accepted for October 1st.

For Sale Motion Defeated

On August 22nd, 1922, the resignation of Nurse Reeves and her assistant was accepted for October 1st. Nurse



Sister Catherine Wymbs, a graduate of St. Boniface Hospital, served overseas during World War I. She was awarded the Bronze Medal of Honour by the French Republic in thanks for noble deeds bestowed on the wounded of France.

Sister Wymbs was appointed as the first Superior of St. John's Hospital at Edson and at that time it was feared that the 15 beds in the hospital would not be able to meet the needs of this isolated population, as there was no other hospital between EDMONTON and KAMLOOPS, B.C., at that time.

Reeves was present at the meeting and reported that she had admitted 83 patients with almost a thousand hospital days at that date. She also stated that the hospital furnishings were worth \$1,165. A motion was made and seconded that the hospital be put up for sale, but this motion did not carry. These facts we have taken from records kept at the Town Hall and which the Secretary-Treasurer loaned us.

The building must have been entirely vacant from October, 1922, until the summer of 1926 when negotiations were under way for the transfer of Edson General Hospital to the Sisters of Service of Canada, with headquarters in Toronto. The building was now in need of extensive repairs and these were made at the Sisters' expense and the building was rechristened St. John's Hospital.

On December 8th, 1926, it was officially opened and on December 9th two patients were admitted: Mr. Bedome with a fractured hip, and Joe with an injured foot. Both were Workmen's Compensation cases. After discharge Joe remained as maintenance man and orderly when required.

Sister Catherine Wymbs First Matron

Sister Catherine Wymbs (deceased February, 1954), who had served in the Canadian Army in World War I, came as matron of the hospital and the superior of the first group of Sisters assigned to work in Edson.

Conditions were primitive in this first hospital and the limited space made it difficult to operate. Plans were soon under way for a new building – a two-storey brick building with full basement – at a cost of approximately \$90,000. This sum would not go very far today towards building a hospital, but it was a great debt to assume in those days.

St. John's Hospital

IN AUGUST 1926 the contract was given to Mr. J. J. Doyle of Edmonton to repair the old building which had been bought for the Sisters of Service by our founder, Rev. G. Daly, C.Ss.R. The meeting of Father Daly with some of the influential men of the town with regard to a hospital grant, was held in the front room and, as chairs were rather scarce, boxes and nail kegs were used for seating purposes.

Sisters Wymbs and McNally went to Edson to see the hospital to get an idea of the equipment needed, number of beds, etc. Father T. Ryan, P.P., met the Sisters and took them to the Imperial Hotel as they had to remain overnight. When they went to the hospital they saw a large, dilapidated, two-storey square building with numerous windows (only a few escaped the expert stone-throwers of the village).

Inside the plaster had fallen and floors were ruined. There was a huge skylight in the operating room through which snow and rain found many inlets to the regions below. Mrs. MacDonald, President of the Altar Society, introduced the Sisters to several ladies who were very kind and interested.



Sisters Eveleen Donnelly, M. Rodgers, M. A. Paradis and F. Egan with one of our first patients, 1927.



First patient in old hospital – Joe Vondra – December 9th, 1926.



"The Powerhouse"

Marie Tenta, Laundress



"Doc Tiff"



Fathers McGowan and Ryan

When paying the hotel bill before leaving, the manager handed back the amount paid as a donation to the hospital.

Busy Days

The days were very busy. Mrs. Wilcox was hired to help with the work, and Mrs. Fred Hindle will ever be gratefully remembered by the Sisters of Service for her kind and generous help. She and Sister Rodgers made the sash curtains, painted the radiators and screens, etc.

The name "St. John's Hospital" was owing to a gift of \$5,000 made by Mrs. T. Small in memory of her brother, John Korman.

When the Sisters arrived and opened St. John's Hospital, there were two doctors working in the town: Dr. McCordic and Dr. R. Johnston. Dr. M. E. Tiffin arrived shortly afterwards and was well known as "Doc Tiff" to all who knew him and loved him. Nothing was too difficult for him – from orthopedic work to delivery of babies, or repair of severe lacerations of lumberjacks, miners and railroaders.

Father Timothy Ryan was the Pastor in 1926. He was succeeded by Fathers Art McGowan, Kennedy McLean and Cornelius Landrigan.

Sister Catherine Wymbs was the Superintendent until she was succeeded by Sister Agnes Brunning in 1931. Other Sisters on the staff were Sisters Mary Rodgers, Catherine McNally, M. A. Paradis and H. LaMothe. A Miss Hildebrand, R.N., was one of the first lay nurses employed; her salary was \$65 a month. There was also a Miss McNamara, R.N., and a number of temporary nurses from the General and Misericordia Hospitals in Edmonton who helped in times of emergency and busy seasons.

Mary Koebel (nee McMullen) was also employed in the hospital in the early days and later George Koebel was added to the staff as engineer, in 1931.

In Sight of the Rockies

BEING a division point on the main line of the CNR between Edmonton and Jasper Park, Edson is an admirable location for a hospital. South of this point there are some 5,000 miners in the coal-fields at the foothills of the Rockies.

The Sisters have been extremely busy around the Christmas season. The work was so heavy that our Sisters had to hire two lay nurses to help them.

A collection taken up among the people of Edson for our St. John's Hospital shows how much the work of the Sisters is appreciated by the railroad people and miners of this town and vicinity.

In addition to working in the hospital, the Sisters radiated as catechists into the mining camps south of Edson, where there are some 5,000 miners in the coal-fields. Many visits were also made to poor families in the rural areas in Yates and Rosevear, etc.

(From January 1927 and 1929 *Field at Home*)



Sister Agnes Brunning succeeded Sister Wymbs as Superintendent in 1931.

A Grizzly Bear Turns Missionary

HE WAS NOT a bad Indian. He had been brought up in the Faith and he had never really abandoned it, but out in our great West churches are far apart and priests cannot always be found, so it is extremely easy to slip into careless habits with regard to religious duties. Life is hard out there and when one has a family to support it means that every effort must be put forth to keep them provided with the necessities of life – so, sometimes even when the priest does come around one is away from home, or something prevents one from going to the Sacraments. So it was that this Indian had been a long time absent from them.

Hunting and trapping have to be done and our Indian was on one of his expeditions when he met a grizzly bear. The grizzly was doing a bit of hunting, himself, and being hungry he thought an Indian would be as good game as anything else, so he started out to try to satisfy his appetite. There was a terrific battle, the Indian fighting with all the skill of a human being, the great bear with his enormous strength and the native animal cunning which had so often served him well. The outcome seemed doubtful more than once, but finally the man prevailed and the grizzly was conquered, but at what a price! The man's hands, arms and face were a mass of bleeding flesh, his lower lip was almost severed by the fierce claws of the monster brute, and it was a very sick Indian covered with running, festering sores whom his companions finally brought to the little hospital of the Sisters of Service at Edson, Alberta.

Need for the Church

With the skill of trained hands they bathed and bound up his wounds; they watched for signs of infection and combatted them with the best of scientific treatment, and it was not long before the Indian patient was on the road to recovery. He was a docile and grateful patient, and as his wounds became scars and his strength returned, he began to bethink himself of the great goodness of God is sparing him and in allowing him to be placed in this



haven of refuge. His thankfulness made him realize his need for the Church and her Sacraments and before he went back to his home he had gone to confession and communion and departed with a full determination never again to be neglectful of his duties.

Thus a hungry grizzly became a missionary and helped in saving a soul, but suppose his attack had taken place far away where such aid as that given at St. John's Hospital at Edson was not available, and where the devoted care of the Sisters of Service could not be had! For it must be remembered that this little hospital is the only one for 130 miles in each direction. In an area of more than 15,000 square miles it stands alone, and there are similar areas scattered all over the West where there is not even *one* hospital. Community after community is pleading for them – the Sisters of Service have to turn a deaf ear to these pleas because they have neither the means nor the vocations to answer them. Surely Canada's young womanhood will not let the latter reason long stand in the way, and Canada's Catholics in general must feel a responsibility for the former.

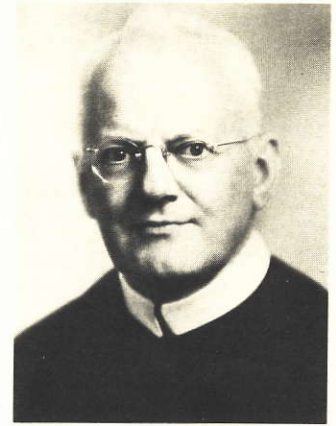
There are still "perils in the wilderness" as there were when St. Paul wrote of them, and they are right here in the "field at home." There are still thousands of souls who need the Church's ministrations for both body and soul, and we cannot always rely on grizzly bears to help us by seeking their prey where aid can reach the victims. But please God, the day is dawning when throughout the sparsely settled regions of the Dominion the habit of the Sisters of Service will be seen everywhere and their tender ministrations will be a familiar theme in the household of many a settler.

(From January 1930 *Field at Home*)

The Frontier Line

THE CATHOLIC HOSPITAL on the frontier line of the Mission Field stands out as one of the highest expressions and living symbols of Christian charity. It has always ranked in the vanguard of our missionary efforts, often blazing the way to the return to or the acceptance of the true Faith. For as Pius IX said to Ozanam and his worthy disciples: "When the world has ceased to believe in miracles and sermons it still believes in charity."

The precept and the example of the Master has given to the Catholic hospital this place of prominence in the Mission Field. The corporal works of mercy are an integral part of His Gospel. Do we not read of the Saviour that – "He went through all the towns and villages teaching in Synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and *healing all diseases and infirmities*. Many followed Him and He healed them all." (Matt. xii, 15). And as proof of His Messiahship did He not say to the Precursor: "The blind see, the lame walk and the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear." Did He not command His Apostles to do likewise: "And



Father G. Daly

into what city soever you enter – heal the sick that are therein and say to them: The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." (Luke x, 8-9), Pius XI, in his memorable letter on Catholic Missions, orders the missionaries to take an interest in the public health of the community and to minister to the sick, so that the hearts of the people may be easier won over to the Gospel by the kind offices of charity.

First to Erect Hospitals

This lesson and example of the Master was always held in favour by our missionaries throughout all ages. The first missionaries in our Western Field followed them to the letter. They were the first to erect hospitals at various points along the mission trail. The larger Catholic hospitals which now serve the needs of our larger Western cities were a few decades ago but frontier hospitals in sparsely-settled towns. But with immigration the frontier line has been pushed back. Can we say that our hospitals have followed the settler into the hinterland of our prairies? The rapid extension of our larger hospital-units in the cities have so absorbed our forces that we seem to have left the rural field to non-Catholic organizations. These various churches have dotted the Western field with small hospital units so as to meet the needs of the new settlers.

It is not a case of saying with the Master: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." (Luke xvi, 8). The multiplication of these small Catholic hospital-units, in our estimation, would have better the interest of Faith and Charity than the present large developments of our city institutions. A more even distribution of our forces would have been more profitable to the souls of our people than their concentration in our large urban centres. For the rural hospital remains a missionary and charitable endeavour. It offers greater scope to the charitable efforts of the individual Sister and offers more occasions for real Christian Charity. Our present large city hospitals, we must admit, are so controlled by exigencies of state and civic and federated-budget regulations, that the hands of our Sisters are tied and their charity becomes as it were commercialized. Moreover,

the administration of these large units so absorb the forces of our Sisterhood that the nursing Sister hardly comes in direct contact with the patient, who is thus deprived to a very great extent of her soothing care and spiritual influence.

Realize Our Mistake

Under the pressure of events we have begun to realize this mistake in our policy. This explains the program of extension that is now in progress in various parts of our Western Provinces.

In accordance with this missionary ideal, the Sisters of Service, like some others, have gone out to the very fringe of the country to minister to the sick and the dying. Moreover the rule of their institute prohibits them from accepting large institutions in towns and cities. It is essentially a missionary endeavour. Pioneer work is the special calling of the Sisters who have taken as the motto of their life the words of the Master, "I have come to serve."

G. DALY, C.S.S.R.

(From January 1927 *Field at Home*)

Some Choice Snippets from Father Daly's Early Letters

November 25th, 1926

☪ "I hope by this time that you are quietly settling down in your new foundation. I was greatly impressed by your little hospital and its great possibilities. The only fear I have is that you will be over-burdened with work, but I will do my utmost to help you. I will send you Sister Paradis after her vows, which she takes on December 9th, and I will try to get you Sister Brunning for a few months if it is at all possible. But you know it is not always easy to know how to meet the various demands – but, let us have confidence in God. He will be with us, for we are working for Him, and Him alone."

December 10th, 1926

☪ "Be economical in your expenditures, for I can assure you that Edson is going to cost us more than we thought of in the beginning, only I can tell you *confidentially* that I had an interview with the President of the Canadian National Railways, Sir Henry Thornton, and he has promised me \$1,000 a year for ten consecutive years for your hospital. Have courage and do the work for the love of God and souls."

December 24th, 1926

☪ "My heartfelt congratulations on the opening of your hospital. I just received a letter from His Grace, the Archbishop, who is very much pleased with his Sisters at Edson.

"Take my advice and buy as little on the installment plan. It is far better to do without a thing for a time and get it when you are able to pay.

"In the meantime be full of cheer and carry on the good work. We are all behind you with our money and our prayers. Only, I would ask you to proceed very economically. Make no other important expenditure without referring it to headquarters, as the Edson Hospital is costing us far more than we ever expected to spend, but like yourself I believe in its paying power.

"Do not worry about it, I will see to it. With renewed best wishes to you and to all of the Sisters."

February 1st, 1927

☪ "You know your health is an asset with which you must count. . . . If you see the necessity of hiring a nurse even for some time do it by all means.

"Our hospital at Edson was rather a heavy undertaking for the small number of Sisters we had to dispose of but I do hope that all will work out for the greater glory of God and His Church. The field is open for great missionary work, particularly in the mining district south of you. I hope to see the day when Edson will have become a most flourishing centre."

August 3rd, 1931

☪ "Yes, my dear child, there is a lot of trouble in the world today, and I am afraid we are facing a terribly hard winter. We shall be called upon to do a great deal of charity so let us husband our forces and finances to meet the emergencies of the hour. To help others, to be of service to others should always be our joy, for we are then in our real vocation.

"As to George M.'s letter re paying off his bill in vegetables, I would suggest he pay *some* of it in that way, for as he writes himself, you will likely be 'drowned' in vegetables at the Fall of the year.

"Bad times will not always be with us – so look at the 'silver lining' – of the passing dark cloud."

March 6th, 1935

☪ "My sole desire, my dear Sisters, is to see your Institute do 'well' what you are called to do in the Church of God. You owe to God and to the Church the best that is in you."

October 26th, 1935

☪ "My dear Sisters, if we do the right thing, if we lead a real religious life, if we are truly apostolic and zealous for the conversion of souls and the welfare of the Church, Providence will always come to our assistance. The only thing I fear at times is, shall we always be worthy of this special protection of Divine Providence?"

October 2nd, 1939

☪ "During the war period particularly I would ask you to live strictly within your means and not take on burdens that are not absolutely necessary. Beware of payments on the installment plan. At first it looks very easy, but you would be surprised how heavy this burden can become when you have to add these monthly installments to the ordinary running expenses."

Phase II - 1931-1969

Official Opening - October 15, 1931

OCTOBER 15th, 1931, will go down as one of the most important dates in the history of the town of Edson, Alberta, for at 2:30 in the afternoon His Excellency H. J. O'Leary, Archbishop of Edmonton, and M. A. D. McMillan, Mayor of Edson, met at the hospital, and each cut a ribbon which was drawn across the main entrance, and so officially proclaimed St. John's Hospital open to the public.

Father C. Landrigan, Parish Priest of Edson, was chairman for the occasion, and introduced the various speakers, who were all eloquent in their praise of the new hospital.

His Excellency outlined the history of the coming of the Sisters of Service to Edson, and told of the sad conditions which existed prior to their arrival. "I remember some ten years ago when I first came to Edson your hospital was in ruins, and a large number of people, probably three or four thousand, in this vicinity, were practically without hospitalization. The conditions were very sad. Children were born under conditions which were a disgrace to modern civilization; the sick had to be sent to Edmonton in order to receive proper medical attention . . . now the people of Edson have a splendid new hospital with equipment equal to any large city hospital in the country . . ."

Something Had To Be Done

"The idea came to my mind that something had to be done. I heard that the good Victorian Order had tried to run a hospital but had failed. I sent Father Hughes, now of Regina, to study conditions and find out if the situation was as grave as it seemed to me. He investigated and replied that something should be done for the people of this district. I communicated with the Victorian Order. They said that they would be glad to assist me, but doubted if it would be a financial success, and they finally donated their share in the old building.

"It was then that I met Father Daly. Once he told me that he would undertake the venture, I felt safe that your district would receive not only the necessary but efficient service. I have often had the opportunity of speaking to the good Sisters, and they have never been able to speak too highly of both the doctors and officials of the district in this matter. At all times they have been loud in their praise, and it was only as I expected, for nowhere else could we find a more generous hearted people than in this district of Alberta. These Sisters have worked with you and you seem to feel that they love you. They are a voluntary organization and have left their homes and consecrated their lives to one purpose, that of labouring for the Master and love for humanity. It was only as a result of their generous response and service that you yourselves responded and their efforts have been a success.



OFFICIAL OPENING - OCTOBER 15th, 1931



Left to right: Sisters H. LaMothe, M. Morgan, A. Blaney; Archbishop H. J. O'Leary; Dr. M. E. Tiffin; Father Daly; Sisters M. Burke, C. Wymbys and C. Egan.

Optimism More Than an Illusion

"When Father Daly came to me and proposed the construction of this new hospital, I was doubtful. Times were hard and money was scarce, but such was Father Daly's faith and that of the Sisters that they persuaded me almost against myself to make the venture. Life is not constrained by a few years, hardly by decades, rather by centuries, and when we look back and consider that in these foothills of Alberta fifty years ago there was hardly a human being, we can realize that Father Daly's optimism was something more than an illusion. We look forward to the evidence of this optimism with enthusiasm.

"After all, this hospital belongs to nobody but you. It is true that the management may be handed to the Sisters, but it is also true that it must become your responsibility, because its service is to the public who find their needs met therein. I notice that the operating room is one of the finest; the equipment equal to many of the large city hospitals. You have here also a very extensive amount of fire protection

"I want to congratulate Father Daly. He has at all times been a friend of Western Canada. He has always been a booster of Western Canada. It is because he is a

man of vision. We all feel the weight of these days, but in fifty years from now these days of depression will seem a very small thing indeed. And Father Daly has the vision that in later days there will be a population in Northern Alberta of 70,000 and that in this Province we will have one of the finest populations of people on the earth. Therefore, he has not hesitated to build this hospital, investing more than would seem prudent.

"I also want to congratulate the Sisters. They have left all that the heart holds dearest. I have often been asked what it is that makes the work of the Sisterhood so successful. It is that they are taught to see in every poor sick person the Master himself, and to minister to that sick person with the same devotion and the same love as they would to the Master himself. They have now facilities to work with and that work must continue to develop and grow.

"I want to congratulate the Canadian National Railway for their sympathy with this hospital work."

Father Daly Speaks

Reverend Father Daly, C.Ss.R., who was present for the opening of the hospital, also spoke of the coming of the Sisters of Service to Edson and stated that though beginnings seemed so dark, the Sisters had carried on, trusting in a brighter future, and their hopes had now been realized. "So, on this great day," concluded Father Daly, "I wish to thank you all for your kindness to the Sisters of Service. They came five years ago, and are still living among you. They are dedicating their lives to your sick; and let us never forget that life is the dearest possession we own . . . On behalf of the Sisters I wish to thank the doctors. They have been most unselfish in their work, and surely there is no profession wherein a man has to sacrifice himself so much as that of a doctor? . . . and then may I also thank His Excellency, to whom, after all, we owe this hospital. . . . He is a great Canadian, not only a great Archbishop . . ."

Superintendent McDonald, of the Canadian National Railways, who was also present on the occasion, very pointedly marked the contrast between the present-day institution and the few spasmodic efforts that had been made in the past to establish a hospital.



Big Eddy bridge to the Coast and Coal Branch.

The Sisters



1936 – Left to right: Sisters M. Bohan, B. DeMarsh, A. Geraghty, M. O'Hare, A. Brunning, H. Furman, M. Muldoon and C. Wymbs.



1939 – Retreat and Final Vows – Front: Sisters Ella Deland, L. Tyler, M. O'Kane, A. Geraghty, E. Donnelly, M. Corke and R. Jolicoeur. Back: Sisters C. Albury, S. Dube, M. Regan, R. Mill, M. Fitzgerald and A. Brunning.



A well-earned picnic at Pyramid Lake, Jasper, 1939. Sisters G. Walsh, R. Jolicoeur, M. Fitzmaurice, M. Quinn.

A Tribute - 1939

To the Editor of the Star.

SIR: In last Saturday's *Star Weekly* I read the account of Mrs. Small's benefactions and was particularly interested by the mention of St. John's Hospital in Edson, Alberta.

I lived for some time in the wild country north of Edson and consequently became well acquainted with the town and surrounding community. Moreover, I had a direct interest in several men who were sick or had met with accidents of a more or less serious nature, to whom the hospital proved to be a haven of healing and comfort, which only those who have lived in such pioneer regions can appreciate. There is nothing like it nearer than Edmonton, about 150 miles east of Edson.

Although the hospital is small, it is equipped with everything a city institution can command, and the medical attention and care given by the Sisters deserves the highest commendation, especially as their accommodation is often over-taxed.

In the news article, Edson is spoken of as a mining town. This is not strictly correct, as it is a divisional point on the Canadian National Railway and the last town before reaching Jasper Park, whose mountains are seen from Edson standing clear and sharp against the western sky.

The coal mines mentioned are situated in the west and south of the town on a railway, a spur from the main line of the C.N.R., locally known as the Coal Branch, some fifty miles long. This line runs into the mountains linking up a whole series of well-equipped mines of excellent coal, unfortunately producing but a small fraction of their capacity at present.

Edson is the business centre of a tremendous area of farming, homesteading, lumbering and mining lands; also the adjoining magnificent National Park at Jasper; hence the value of the hospital in town.

The beneficence of its patron and the splendid work of all associated with that very essential ministrations to human welfare amply deserve to be mentioned in the *Star* because of their connection with this city.

R.L.H.

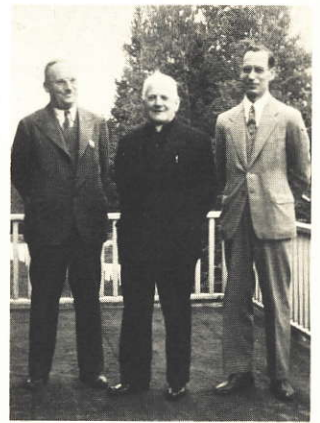


Dr. Tiffin found these workers good targets for snowballs - January chinook, 1945.



Dr. Tiffin's office, 1946.

Sister C. Wymbs with Doreen Johnston.



Dr. Tiffin, Father Daly and Dr. Patton.

Dr. Cook and Growling Feather.



Drs. Robins, Scherer, Tiffin and Cook.



Funeral at Haddock, December 1942.

Administrators



Sister M. Quinn

Sister M. Roberts

Sister L. Tyler



**Sister M. Phillips
Office, 1943.**



Evelyn DeMontigny, 1945.



Sister B. Knopic



**Red Cross Donors Clinic, 1944 – Sisters A. Brunning,
L. Tyler and M. Knechtel.**



Muddy road to Haddock, Summer 1944.



Sister M. Knechtel



Sister M. Reansbury



**Dr. Russell, Misses Mary Loveniuk and MacGillivray,
Mrs. Louise Buck and Dr. P. Kimmitt.**



Dr. D. Begg, Ian and Patsy, 1953.



Dr. and Mrs. Reynor, Dr. and Mrs. P. Kimmitt.



Sister M. Roberts: Spring floods on 4th Avenue, 1954.



Staff, 1955 – Back: M. Naeth, A. VanRootselaar, B. Naeth, I. VanRootselaar, B. Groenwold. Front: Greta Kennedy, Kathy Frith and Helen Kennedy.



Dr. and Mrs. Reynor and Karen, 1954.



Hugh and Nora Grant with Patsy Grant Fortier, R.N., centre.



"Maw" Blair



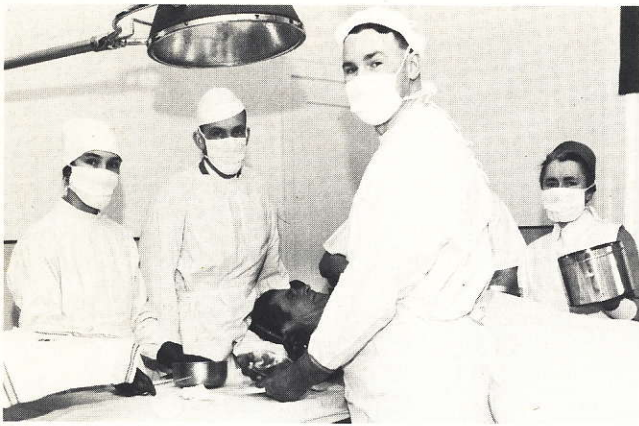
Mrs. A. May of Hospital Auxiliary.



Maria (Koebel) Connelly, R.N.



Our miracle baby – triumphant after many struggles to live.



Left to right: Sister Rose, Dr. Crawford, Dr. Begg and Sister Dube.



Left to right: Madeline and Bernice Naeth, Sister Gallagher, L. DeJong, Mildred Naeth, Hilda Engel and Sister Jansen.



Sisters DeMarsh and Dube with two patients in the sun porch



Sister K. Allen



Sister S. Dube



Sister E. Zink



Sister B. Jackson and F. Zwiers



Sister B. DeMarsh



Sister L. Rose



Sister V. Dulaska, Dr. Cook



Sister R. Sullivan

Sister J. Schafhauser



Sister M. O'Hare



Sister D. Daley



Sisters M. Knechtel, C. Wymbs, Miss A. St. Pierre, 1946.



Sister L. Rose



1945 - Dr. Tiffin, Sisters M. Murphy, B. Knopic, L. Tyler.



Sisters Daley, Allen, DeMarsh and Knopic.



Our Nurses in White – Back: Sisters B. Jackson, M. Knechtel, B. DeMarsh. Front: Sisters K. Allen, J. Schafhauser, M. Roberts.



Sister K. Allen and Baby "White".



Sister M. Guest and Mrs. ~~Lindgren~~ ^{LINGITZ}.



Pediatrics



Sister B. Jackson with a group of new mothers and babies.



Waiting for the "chuckwagon."



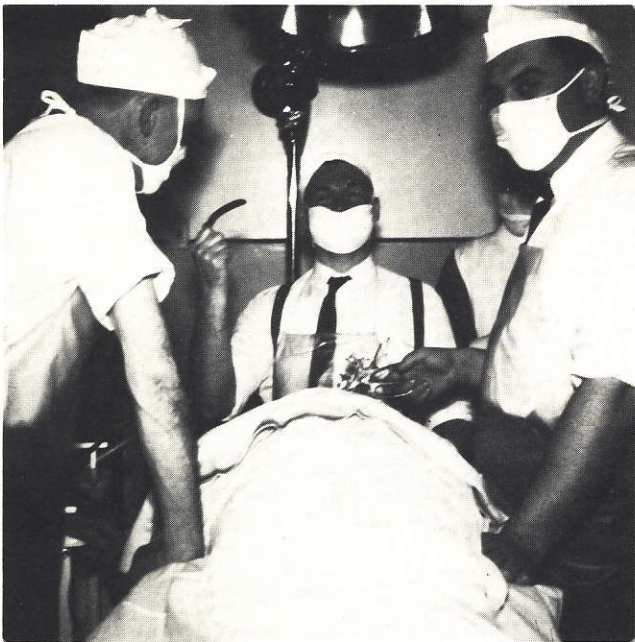
Waiting for the visitors' bell - "Sparkling Eyes."



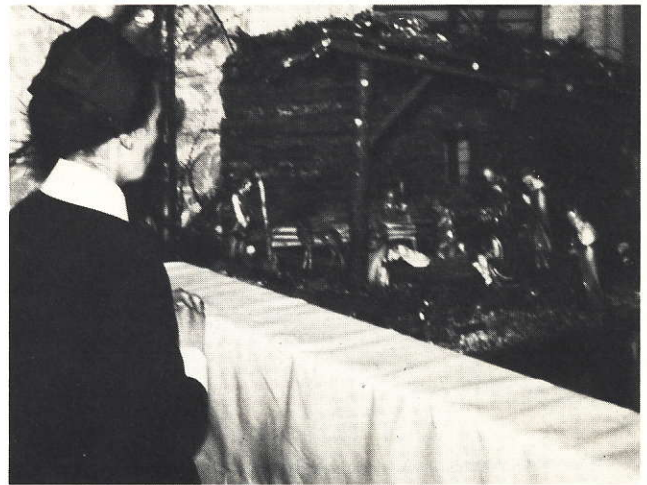
Audrey Somerville, office clerk



Sister E. Tunney



Drs. Crawford, Begg and Lee



Sister J. Kinch

ADVISORY BOARD

An Advisory Board was set up in 1963 to assist the Sisters in their work in the health field and much thanks is due to the endeavours and interest of the first Board and all succeeding members. The first Board was composed of Guy Coulombe, President; A. Stanton, Vice-President; J. Wynne, Secretary, Paul O'Hara and H. Affolter.



Mrs. Pat Loth, nee Langston



A. Stanton

Phase III - 1969 -



Ribbon-cutting, December 8th, 1969: Dr. D. Ross, Minister of Health L. Halliwell, Hon. Bob Dowling, Hon. A. Sulatycky, Sisters Tunney and Roberts, and S. Hodgson, Architect. Back: G. Coulombe.



Inspection of Kitchen: A. Sulatycky, K. Wilson, B. Dowling, Sister Roberts and Dr. Donavon Ross.



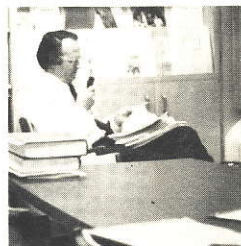
Back row: Sisters D. Daley, M. Guest, R. Hurley (visitor), E. Tunney, J. Schafhauser, M. Reansbury, M. Roberts and M. Halder. Front: Sisters M. Knechtel, P. Coates (visitor), M. Quinn, H. LaMothe and B. Knopic.

Medical Records Department

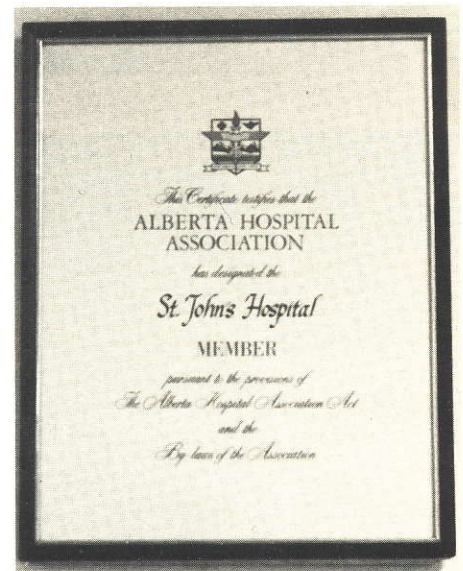
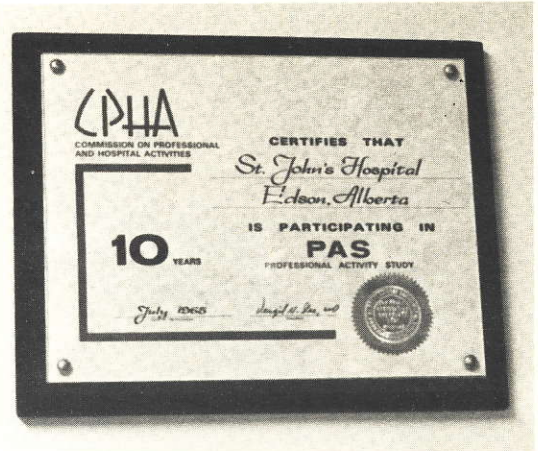
We are grateful for the efforts of Sister Margaret Guest, Regd. Record Librarian, in setting up our Medical Records Department. This was a very important item in the attaining of Accreditation by the Canadian Hospital Association. Accreditation was attained on our first inspection and for a period of two years, followed by a second period of three years.



Sister M. Guest



Dr. T. Morgan dictating histories.



Demolition



Demolition of first hospital, with new hospital in the background – Sixth Avenue looking west.



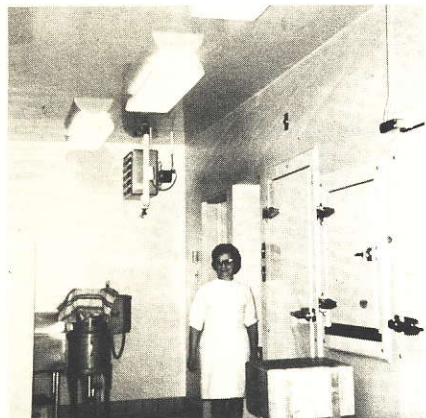
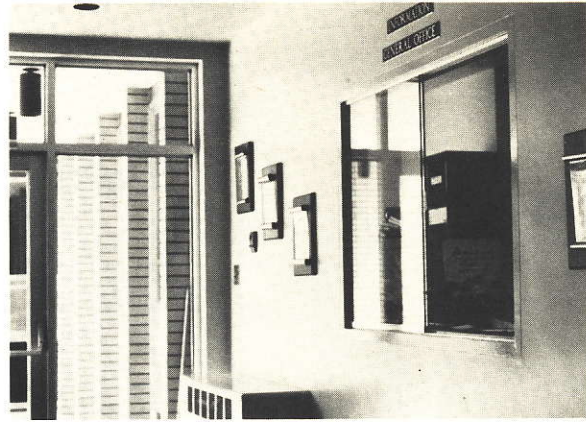
Demolition of second hospital, Fifth Avenue, June 1970.



Board Room – Medical Library.



Arrival and presentation of Cardiac Monitor – Dr. A. Macdonald, Mr. Mushtuk, Sister Roberts and L. Halliwell.



Mrs. A. Joy, Dietary Supervisor

Disaster Plan

Scenes from one of our exercises . . .



Result: Administration, Staff and Town Participants lauded by E.M.O.



Instruction for hospital staff held regularly by Sister J. Schafhauser



Mrs. A. Langston, R.N., Cardiac Machine in operation.



Father G. Gunnip, C.Ss.R., saying Mass in the Chapel.



L. Joy, Ambulance and Funeral Director.

1976

Board of Governors

L. Halliwell, *Chairman*
 W. Fowler, *Vice-Chairman*
 J. J. Wynne, *Secretary*

Members

Sister General and the General
 Council of the Sisters of Service
 Sister K. Allen
 Sister B. Knopic
 Miss F. Ciciarelli
 Mrs. D. Cooper
 R. Corser
 F. Magyar
 R. Martin
 P. O'Hara

Administrator

A. Mercier

Medical Staff

Dr. J. E. Crawford
 Dr. J. E. Hood
 Dr. A. R. Macdonald
 Dr. T. D. Morgan
 Dr. G. G. Lagasse, D.D.S.

Pharmacist

J. Switzer

Radiologist

Dr. J. T. Mason

Nursing Staff

Sister K. Allen, *Director of Nursing*
 Mrs. B. Andruchow,
O.R. Supervisor

Nurses

Miss M. Bals
 Mrs. F. Bardar
 Mrs. S. Broughton
 Mrs. K. Culver
 Miss A. Fyfe
 Mrs. C. Graham
 Mrs. B. Hicks
 Mrs. M. Hood
 Sister B. Knopic
 Mrs. J. McPhee
 Mrs. M. Nelson
 Mrs. I. Prier
 Mrs. S. Sangha
 Mrs. M. Schellenberg
 Mrs. E. Silverthorne
 Mrs. L. Tiedemann
 Mrs. K. Wilson

Nursing Aides

Mrs. P. Fisher
 Mrs. V. Fisher
 Mrs. D. Fossheim
 Miss J. Hansen
 Miss W. Heath
 Sister M. Harding
 Mrs. L. Sylvester
 Mrs. S. Zapisocki



Dr. Crawford



Dr. Macdonald and Dr. Hood



Coffee breaks!



Candy Strippers

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| L. Belhumeur | L. Jenkins |
| S. Boos | G. Labas |
| A. Carpenter | K. Mitchell |
| R. Cressman | H. Morgan |
| R. Forscutt | B. Sorenson |
| | I. Tailby |



Supportive Staff

Mr. E. J. Magnan, *Business Manager*

General Office

- Mrs. H. Chwyl
- Mrs. K. Gogowich
- Miss D. Lovell
- Mrs. K. McNaughton

Medical Records

- Miss S. Hinchey
- Mrs. A. Brandle

Laboratory

Mrs. L. Berg

X-Ray

Miss K. Hryciw

Combined Lab and X-Ray

- Sister D. Daley
- Miss P. Sallie

Central Supply

Mrs. J. Bossert

Physiotherapy

Mr. O. McMillan

Dietary Department

- Mrs. A. Joy, *Supervisor*
- Mrs. N. Thibodeau, *Cook*
- Mrs. M. Gambin
- Mrs. R. Hartwick
- Miss G. McNaughton
- Mrs. I. Minelli
- Mrs. T. Roome
- Mrs. M. Tkachuk
- Mrs. P. Trydal
- Mrs. R. Wylie

Laundry and Housekeeping

- Mrs. V. Ramisch, *Supervisor*
- Mrs. M. Babich
- Mrs. A. Hamm
- Mrs. M. Koebel
- Miss M. Preece
- Mrs. M. Sparks
- Mrs. F. Wassing
- Mrs. I. Yurkewich

Sewing Room

Mrs. J. Preece

Engineering

Mr. G. Zapisocki

Maintenance

Mr. H. Deacon

Administration



Standing: A. Brandle and S. Hinchey, Medical Records. Seated: H. Chwyl, K. McNaughton, E. J. Magnan, Business Manager, and A. Mercier, Administrator.

K. Gogowich



D. Lovell





**Mrs. V. Ramisch,
M. Preece and
I. Yurkewich**

Ladies' Auxiliary

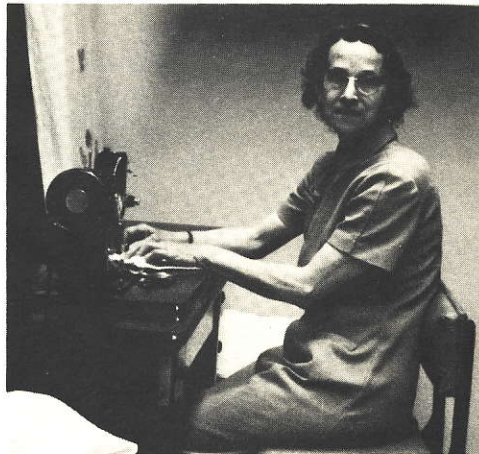
- Mrs. C. Halliwell, *President*
- Mrs. J. Sapelak, *Secretary*
- Mrs. M. Ashmead, *Treasurer*
- Mrs. J. Adam
- M. Aschenmeier
- H. Grensmann
- T. Guenette
- M. Johnson
- O. Kalawsky
- H. Kitchen
- M. Koebel
- O. Larson
- J. Lynch
- B. Martin
- V. Martin
- J. Mercier
- B. Radbourne
- K. Schneider
- J. Stordock
- B. Weisser
- E. Weisser
- I. Wynne



**Mrs. A. Hamm,
Mrs. M. Sparks,
Mrs. K. Wilson, R.N.**



Mrs. M. Koebel



Mrs. Joan Preece

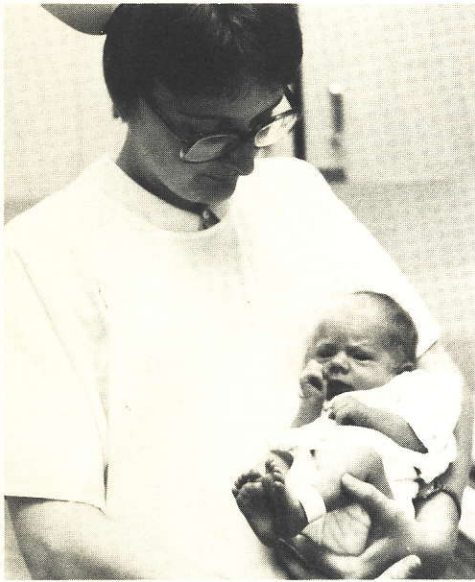


Sister Daley - Lab.



X-Ray L. Berg - Lab.

Some June 1976 Arrivals



"The Right to Live!"

Catechetical - Edson and District - Through the Years



1932 Confirmation – With Archbishop O’Leary and Father C. Landrigan.



1937



1940 – Star family, Edson.



1938 – First Communion class at Haddock: Sister G. Walsh.



This is how she got there! Would you like to come for a drive?

June 1941 – First Communion class with Father Landrigan and Sister Reinhardt.





August 1944 – First Communion at N. Rosevear School: Father Landrigan and Sister M. Philips (Baudins and Stitzenbergers).



February 1944 – Sodalists: Catholic Press Month.



August 1953 – Father I. Shalla and Sister D. Daley.



Summer 1945 – Sister M. Philips and Conovers.



Sept. 3rd, 1950 – Archbishop J. H. Macdonald.



1945 – First Communion, Mountain Park: Sister Margaret Murphy and Father Young.



1953 – Summer Vacation School, McBride, B.C.



Father G. Gunnip, C.Ss.R., Chaplain, stands beside the spire of the last church in the Coal Branch.



1946 – Summer school, Haddock: Sister M. O'Hare.



Class of 1963



1968 - Grade 6 Religious Class.

Later



1971 - Marlboro Confirmation Class.

Sister Daley and baby Ho, 1972.



Sisters' Residence, Sixth Avenue.





Photo: Edson Leader

THE GIFT OF SIGHT

Through the co-operation of the doctors of the Edson Medical Centre, St. John's Hospital is now able accept the donation of eye cornea for transplants to restore sight. In the picture, Mr. Barry Freeman presents Sister B. Knopic, R.N., with the special container in which to pack the eyes for their trip to the eye bank in Edmonton.

Mrs. Mina Goulay, who died in St. John's on June 26th, and well known for her many good neighbourly deeds, donated her eyes for transplants, and her body to science. It was Mina's eyes that were the first to be packed and sent on to Edmonton for some fortunate recipients.

Hospital Boners

☐ Young Raymond was one of our New Year babies and had been re-admitted to hospital on a number of occasions following. Naturally he felt very much at home and was quite a favourite with all the staff, particularly with his grandmother, one of the cooks at this time. Sister Reansbury would bring him on the elevator to the kitchen to get a cookie from his grandmother. However, one day Raymond surprised Sister by saying he wanted to walk down and didn't want to ride on the "alligator." He was in the habit of visiting the office frequently and this day he had seen the picture on the cover of a magazine and enquired what it was and in his infantile mind he had confused the alligator with elevator.

☐ Sister Guest in the Medical Records was transcribing Dr. Seward's histories and she was rather puzzled when she read that he had put a "Baloney" cast on a young man's leg. In her studies and experience she had never heard of that type before. However, on consultation with the Operating Room Nurse, she learned that it was a "below the knee" cast.

☐ "Hire a student." We hired a number and had some on work experience in the office. This was fairly satisfactory but I found spelling was not a strong point and asked them to use the dictionaries, standard and medical. However, what happens when the doctor does not speak very clearly on the phone and the terminology is quite foreign. What was our surprise to see that a lady had been booked for a "Blasting Blood Sugar" instead of a "Fasting Blood Sugar"; and a man had been booked for a "Riding Little Hernia" instead of a "Right Inguinal Hernia." Thank God for phonetics!

☐ Some Edson residents may have been surprised one day when an announcer on the radio said he had been to St. John's for a "Blood Sugar Curve" and the girl in the office said, "Oh, is that the curve sixteen miles east of Edson?"

☐ One day a man arrived and said he was hurt at work. When I enquired where he was hurt, he replied "In Galloway." I didn't recognize that as part of the anatomy but later learned that it was a little hamlet near Marlboro.

☐ Was it Dr. Begg or Dr. Kimmitt who told the story about his trying to get the medical history from one of his men patients but the man's wife gave all the answers. Finally the doctor asked the lady to leave the room and the doctor then found that the man could not speak. The doctor called the wife back and apologized for not realizing that the man had a loss of speech. The wife was really surprised as she didn't know it either.

Epilogue

*T*HERE has been no attempt to include all who have helped to make St. John's Hospital what it is today. But you know – and we all know – all our friends over the past half-century.

We have used pictures which are only representative of many others that could have been included, and those used have been culled from the records and resources on hand.

Whereas everyone's participation is different, but according to their talents, we thank most heartily all who have shared in our endeavours.

It is with some of Father Daly's enthusiasm that now Phase IV is about to be born. We are counting on your continuing support for St. John's Hospital's new Health Care Complex.

This brochure has been compiled and photos selected by Sister Evelyn Tunney, S.O.S.

----- *Autographs* -----

