



The *Great* Canadian  
Catholic Hospital History Project

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

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

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

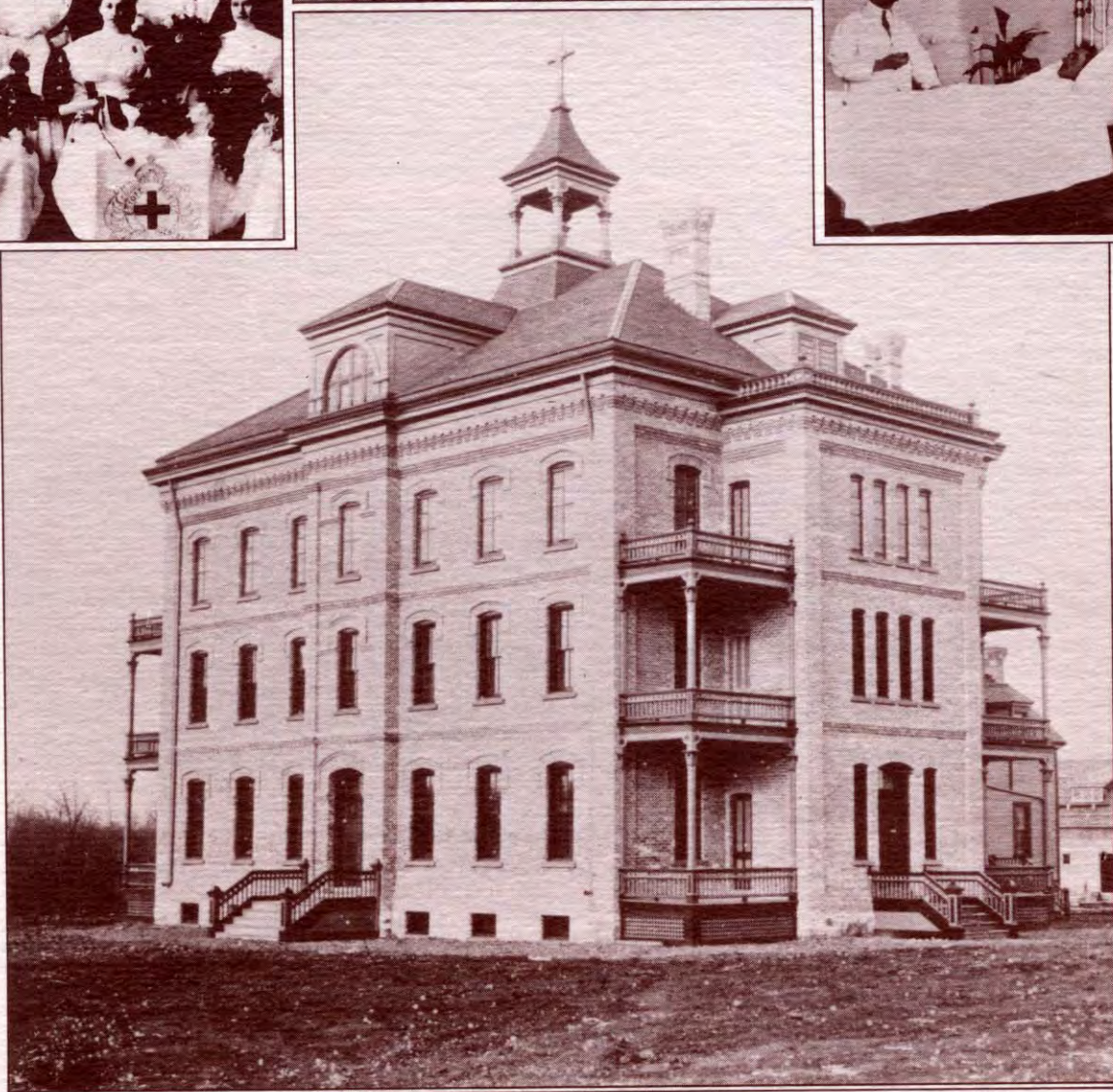
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**Edmonton General Hospital  
1895-1985  
90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

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# ***EDMONTON GENERAL HOSPITAL***



# The General Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Edmonton

## 90 Years of Dedicated Service

This chronicle is gratefully dedicated to the Sisters, Board Members, Volunteers, Physicians and Staff of the Edmonton General Hospital who for 90 years have upheld the philosophy of patient care extolled in the teachings of Blessed Marguerite d'Youville and who have nurtured the spirit of the Hospital. Their untiring devotion to their patients is deeply appreciated.

Researched and Authored by: Sr. Ann Ell,  
Grey Nuns of Edmonton

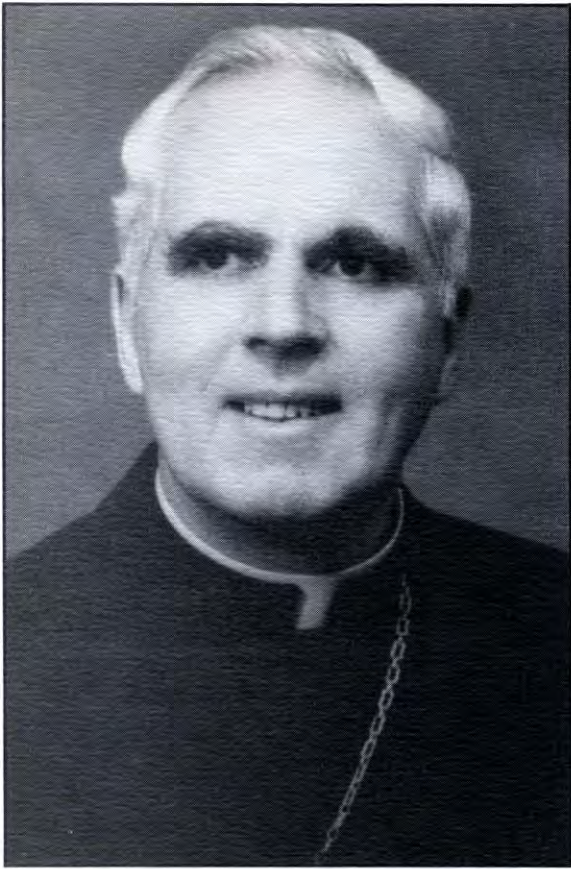
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Sr. Louisa Dupuis, Sr. Faye Wylie, Sr.  
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Castonguay

This History was researched from source materials contained in "Chronicles of Edmonton General Hospital" located in the archives of the Grey Nuns Regional Centre in Edmonton, Alberta.

A special thanks to the City of Edmonton Archives.

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*Archbishop J.N. MacNeil.*

Friends:

On behalf of the people of the Archdiocese of Edmonton I extend warmest congratulations to the Grey Nuns on the occasion of the Ninetieth Anniversary of the Edmonton General Hospital.

The history of this Archdiocese is tied closely with the ministry of the Grey Nuns in this area, especially at Edmonton General. All of us owe a great debt of gratitude to the Grey Nuns who were pioneers here in health care and who have adapted with the times to continue their service of mercy to those in need. These dedicated women link us with a rich tradition and an exciting future.

I extend my congratulations also to Board members and to all members of the health care teams who have collaborated through the years to make possible this marvellous facility.

May the generous Lord reward you abundantly for your unselfish service and professional care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'J. N. MacNeil'. The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

J. N. MacNeil  
Archbishop of Edmonton



*Sister Marguerite Laforce, s.g.m.*

## **Message from the Grey Nuns**

It is on occasions such as this launching of an historical document that one becomes aware of how impossible it is to look to the future without first looking into the past!

We, the Grey Nuns, as daughters of Blessed Marguerite d'Youville, have the privileged mission of manifesting the infinite, inexpressible love of God for all, especially the most needy. Thus, it is not surprising that ninety years ago our Sisters willingly accepted the invitation to establish the first hospital in Edmonton. This was no simple undertaking, but the need of our neighbour was evident. Over the years many devoted and loyal people joined us in our mission of service. The years and events, although not always easy, have proven to be both exciting and challenging; they have prepared us to plunge into the future with hope; a history of surviving was created. Due to the support of our collaborators, what was but a dream in 1895 has unfolded into a reality and is developing into an even greater apostolate of service. It is because of loyal and devoted co-workers, that we can boast of a tradition of service. Still today, you, our collaborators, are more than important, you are essential, if we at the Edmonton General Hospital are to continue to meet the health needs with care. You are instrumental in keeping in Edmonton General Hospital's spirit of service alive in the future.

In addition to thanking God for every person who has contributed towards our mission of service, we also pray that God's choicest blessing be upon each one of you who read this book, as well as all those who will join us in our future of service. You, our present and future collaborators, allow the lovefilled dreams of our predecessors to re-echo into the future. Your participation permits us to work towards an era in Catholic health care which can be both brilliant and attractive. You are allowing the Edmonton General Hospital's tradition of service to live on into the future.

Sister Marguerite Laforce, s.g.m.  
Provincial Superior



*David J. Hart*

## **90th Anniversary Celebration**

This history recounts the 90 years of service, dedication, and commitment of the Grey Nuns to the health care of Albertans through the Edmonton General Hospital. It is a history of which the Sisters are proud: the General while growing into a large and complex institution has in the past, and will continue, to pioneer patient care programs through innovation and dedication to caring for the sick.

The Edmonton General is now in the midst of major change. We are expanding onto a second site and planning new and revitalized services at our present location. We look forward with the confidence that the Edmonton General Hospital will continue to provide exemplary patient care, buoyed by the vision and faith of the Grey Nuns.

We offer our most sincere congratulations to the Grey Nuns on this, their 90th Anniversary of caring and compassion for the people of Edmonton and Northern Alberta.

David J. Hart  
President

# 1.

## THE CONGREGATION OF THE GREY NUNS

### *The Founding of the Institute of the Grey Nuns*

From the beginning the "Grey Nuns" have answered the call of the sick, the hungry, the young and the aged. Owning and operating hospitals, schools of nursing and nursing homes around the world, the Sisters have pioneered nursing and hospital care wherever they have been asked to fulfill an apostolic mission. The Edmonton General Hospital, in the Province of Alberta, is one of these hospitals and has been owned and operated by the Order since 1895.

More formally known as the Institute of the Sisters of Charity of Montreal "Grey Nuns", their story begins with a simple pledge taken by a young widow and her friends on the last day of the year 1737.

Marie Marguerite Dufrost de la Jemmerais was born in the small Quebec village of Varennes on October 15, 1701. The eldest child, she represented the union of two of the most important families in New France. Her ancestors had come from the small Breton village of Medreac. After crossing to the New World they settled in Varennes, where her paternal great-grandfather, Pierre Boucher, became a leading citizen and advisor to the King of France. Her uncle, Pierre de la Verendrye, was the great explorer of Western Canada and the Northern United States. Her maternal grandfather was Rene Gaultier, Governor of Trois Rivieres.

At 21, Marguerite married Francois d'Youville in the First Church of Our Lady and the two settled

at Place Royal in Ville Marie. Francois led an adventurous life in the fur trade, but his untimely death in 1730 left his widow and two young sons debt-ridden and almost destitute. In an effort to cope, Marguerite opened a small store near the

Market Place. Her shop prospered and she became known for her charity to the poor and forsaken whom she took into her house.

Her mission, as she understood it, was to manifest to the needy, without discrimination, that tremendous charity which has its source in God the Father. She saw Jesus Christ in the poor and served them with humility, gentleness and compassion, considering it an honour and a privilege to be their servant.

Several of her friends, inspired by the same ideal and with confidence in the Providence of the Father, asso-

ciated themselves with Marguerite d'Youville. On December 31, 1737, they dedicated their lives to God, simply and privately. Thus, the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity took shape. It was founded on the cornerstone of a two-fold love: the love of Jesus Christ and the love of the poor. For the remainder of her life Mother d'Youville's first and foremost concern was to do justice to the poor.

Ten years later the civil Ecclesiastical authorities gave the Charon Brothers' General Hospital to Marguerite d'Youville to operate. One can truly say this hospital has been the cradle of the Grey Nuns' Institute. From it, has spread a whole network of hospitals — facilities which have brought the Grey



*Blessed Mother Marguerite d'Youville, founder of the Grey Nuns.*

Nuns respect throughout North America and made their name a synonym for courage and devotion. Members of the Congregation have been, and are still, an important force in hospital administration, nursing and teaching. They have been active in Western Canada since 1844, the North West Territories since 1859, and in what is now the City of Edmonton, since 1895.

Marguerite d'Youville was called to God on December 23, 1771. She bequeathed to her companions a spiritual testament which urged them to live in fidelity, in unity and in charity. When Pope John XXIII beatified this servant of the poor on May 3, 1959, he stated: "Her home was open to everyone who suffered from poverty, illness, or other affliction, without regard for age, nation-

ality, sex or religion, for Marguerite wanted her love to have no limits... She deserves the title "Mother of Universal Charity."

On September 21, 1978, Postmaster Gilles Lamontagne announced that Canada Post was issuing a commemorative postage stamp bearing the effigy of the Blessed Marguerite d'Youville. The stamp was unveiled on the occasion of a solemn mass celebrated in Mary-Queen-of-the-World Cathedral in Montreal. This event, by which both Church and State honored this "valiant woman", shows that Mother d'Youville's message, a reflection of her whole life, is as alive today as it was two centuries ago.

The brochure titled, "The Dynamism of Love", summarizes the importance of Mother d'Youville's message: "In con-

secrating herself to Christ, in dedicating her life to the poor, Marguerite d'Youville did not know that she had done anything great. She saw the real needs of real people and went to help where the need was most urgent. Two hundred years after her death, her spiritual daughters, Sisters of Charity, Grey Nuns, seek to do the same throughout the world, in fidelity to the radical vision of one whose life remains a sign of hope, of joy, a sign of the Kingdom: God's love at work with man's."

But Mother d'Youville's work might have been forgotten if members of her Order had not made an adventurous journey by canoe and ox-cart to the West almost 90 years after her death.



St. Albert - 1890, Youville Convent.

## THE EARLY YEARS

### *Health Care in the Northwest Territories*

**A**lthough the native "Medicine Man" had long been the source of health care for the Indians and Inuit, the early white settlers had no such figure until the start of the 1800s.

Even the "Fort of the Prairies" or Fort Edmonton, built around 1795 by a Hudson's Bay officer named Sutherland, offered no established facilities to care for the sick and injured.

But as the early explorers and fur traders pushed back the western frontier, trained medical practitioners and qualified nurses began making an appearance amongst the first settlers. At a time when the only means of transportation were horseback, buggy or sleigh, several doctors ministered to the sick and dying. One of the first of these physicians was Dr. John Richardson, a trained surgeon from Edinburgh, Scotland. Richardson visited Fort Edmonton in 1820 while on his way north to the Arctic with Captain John Franklin.

In the 1850s the famed oblate priest, Father Albert Lacombe, began visiting Indian camps from his base at Rocky Mountain House. Often he found that his help was needed to combat diseases introduced by the white man and against which the natives had little resistance. In 1857 Father Lacombe chanced upon a village afflicted with an epidemic of scarlet fever. While he did what he could, the extent of the suffering made him realize that far more help was needed in the area.

Bishop Vital Grandin agreed and appealed to the Grey Nuns to bring their healing ministry to the West. His invitation was accepted and on September

8, 1858, the Provincial Superior of St. Boniface left the Mother House in Montreal with six recruits. While three were destined for the Red River District, the other three were to go to Ile-a-la-Crosse in Saskatchewan. After some consideration, this destination was changed to Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta.

On September 24, 1859, Sisters Zoe Leblanc-Emery, Adele Lamy, and Marie A. Jacques Alphonse arrived in Lac Ste. Anne. Their seven week voyage from the Red River Settlement had tested their faculty for adjusting to awkward circumstances but the difficulties of the journey were offset by the sense of privilege they felt at being the first white women to penetrate the frontier. Motivated by a spirit of Christian charity, they were to bring the profession of nursing to the settlers, Indians and Metis.

Within two weeks of their arrival, the Sisters had organized classes to help educate the Indians and Metis. These classes were an attempt to bring to the native people a concept of God, to teach them to read and write, and to help raise their standard of living with special emphasis on sanitation and personal hygiene. Undaunted by the poverty they discovered, the Grey Nuns spent their time caring, comforting, relieving misery, reaching out to the needy, nursing the sick and educating all who came to them.

An excerpt from a letter to Mother Julie Deschamps, Superior General in Montreal, from Sister Emery, Superior at the Lac Ste. Anne Mission, dated April 13, 1860, notes, "I forgot to tell you that I am the great doctor in this country. Not one day



*Fort Edmonton, C. 1900.*



goes by without my giving some medicines. This week they sent for me twice for a protestant woman who is always ill."

After nearly four years on the barren land at Lac Ste. Anne, Father Lacombe and Bishop Alexandre Tache reluctantly decided to close the little Mission and move the Sisters to a site located nine miles from Fort Edmonton. On March 23, 1863, the Sisters, with seven orphans, moved to St. Albert.

The Mission continued to provide education and nursing to the area's residents. Nursing in particular was desperately needed since in addition to smallpox, the Sisters found themselves combatting typhoid, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, measles and Rocky Mountain fever -- all of which took their toll. It was a herculean task but in 1864, Divine Providence intervened and sent them help -- in the shape of Dr. William MacKay. Recruited by the "Company of Gentlemen Adventurer's Trading Into Hudson Bay", MacKay had been sent to look after the needs of the Company's fur traders. Besides caring for patients in Fort Edmonton, he readily lent a helping hand to the Sisters, who gladly accepted his medical knowledge.

Dr. MacKay seems to have been both dedicated and ingenious. Needed in Edmonton during the autumn, he apparently skated most of the way from his post on Lesser Slave Lake on locally manufactured skates. Sir James Y. Simpson, the discoverer of chloroform anaesthesia, recommended MacKay for a position in Scotland and wrote, "His excellent professional abilities will be greatly appreciated, in as much as they are combined with great professional zeal and much kindness and amiability of character." For the Sisters the presence of such a man was the answer to a prayer.

In addition to their duties at the Mission, the Grey Nuns pioneered "district nursing". Begun in England in 1859, the concept was put to use in congested city areas. On the frontier, however, Alberta's Sister-nurses served isolated communities and learned to cope with every kind of emergency.

Grounded in Faith and a deep love of souls, the three Grey Nuns -- Sisters Emery, Lamy and Alphonse -- were versatile, resourceful and endowed with joyful personalities. These traits served them well and made the "Youville Asylum", as their convent was eventually called, an oasis of comfort and charity in the bleak Territory.

From time to time their medical knowledge was updated by visitors. In 1865, another English explorer, Dr. W.B.

Cheadle, stayed at the Fort for a few days on his journey to the Pacific coast through the Yellow Head Pass.

The last smallpox epidemic began in 1869 and lasted through two summers of horror and nightmare. By 1870 the epidemic was raging from Fort Benton, Montana, through southern Alberta and



Father Lacombe.

was beginning to spread to the Indians and Metis of the North. The Grey Nuns of St. Albert moved fast to meet the threat, but even their efforts were swamped by the rush of the disease. Of the 900 people in the district, two-thirds were stricken and 311 died. Throughout the epidemic the Sisters endured suffering, hardships, privations and difficulties -- and served their people.

Shortly after this, the Territories became part of the Dominion of Canada and the frontier country made its first move towards self-government. In that part of the Dominion which was to become Alberta, a major step forward in the field of health care occurred. It began with the appointment of a Territorial Branch of Health in 1871. The membership was drawn from men who had been deeply involved in the smallpox disaster and they took steps to prevent another occurrence. First there was a temporary stoppage of trade in furs, buffalo hides and leather. They also placed an embargo on all goods leaving the affected districts, in case they might carry the infection. A decision was also made to quarantine the Indians, but, fortunately, a newly-perfected vaccine arrived which would eventually save thousands of lives.

In 1872 George MacDougall, the son of the pioneer Methodist missionary, arrived in Edmonton from the Red River Settlement. In his company was Dr. George Verey, who proceeded to set up a practice. A graduate of Bartholomew's Hospital in London and member of the Royal College of Surgeons, Dr. Verey enters the chronicles of the Mission as a physician who treated Sister Alphonse. In September 1879, it was recorded that the Doctor, who visited her once a week, prescribed a daily buggy ride... perhaps in the belief that fresh air and sunshine would go a long way in curing her ailment. At his death in 1881, the Edmonton Bulletin remarked that, "In his medical practice he was singularly successful and the greater part of the people had every confidence in his skill."

In 1874 two major events took place which would assist the Sisters: The first school of nursing opened in Eastern Canada and the Royal North West Mounted Police arrived in the west.

The Mounted Police provided valuable assistance in the fight against disease. They not only ministered to the sick, but also enforced quarantines in remote areas. They also brought with them Dr. George Kittson, who spent a good part of his career attempting to isolate the cause of Rocky Mountain Fever. Although he never identified the germ, his contributions pointed the way for other researchers.

Also, while constructing Fort Macleod, the Police designated one building as a hospital. It wasn't much as hospitals go, but it is considered to have been the first non-staffed hospital in Alberta.

The Grey Nuns made another important nursing contribution in 1881, when they invested \$10,000 to create a hospital wing at the St. Albert Mission. It consisted of a one-storey frame building, 80 feet long and 40 feet wide, with a service wing 40 feet by 20 feet leading off from one side to serve as a dispensary.

This simple, yet serviceable structure became Alberta's first fully-staffed hospital and was of great benefit to the community during the typhoid outbreaks of 1881 and 1884, and the measles epidemic of 1886.

The lure of the frontier was proving irresistible to a number of physicians. Between 1882 and 1887, no less than four doctors arrived to contribute their skills and dedication to the sprawling region. From Ontario came Dr. Hebert Charles Wilson, who settled in Edmonton in the fall of 1882. That same year also saw the arrival of Dr. James H. Tofield, who eventually settled 40 miles east of Edmonton where he stayed for 25 years.

The town of Tofield was named in his honour.

From New Brunswick, by way of Winnipeg, came Dr. Herman L. MacInnes. Arriving in 1886 he formed a partnership with Dr. Wilson and established a flourishing practice, which he continued until his death in 1923.

Another early surgeon who made his way to Fort Edmonton was Dr. Edward A. Braithwaite. In 1887 the West was fertile field for his surgical

ambitions. Dr. Braithwaite possessed the most modern working knowledge at that time. As a surgeon with the Mounties he was situated for a while at Fort Saskatchewan and often found himself riding post-haste into Edmonton to give emergency treatment during the absence of local practitioners.

Little is known about the practice of medicine in Edmonton between 1882 and 1885. No doubt the doctors endured considerable hardships in both their

personal and professional lives. A major drawback was certainly the supply problems inherent in living so far from the centres of distribution. In those days drugs had to come by stage, ox-cart or, at times, by river steamer from Winnipeg. In 1883, however, an event occurred that at least eased the matter considerably.



## *The Coming Of The Railroad*

After years of effort the steel tracks of the Canadian Pacific Railway finally reached Calgary. It was 1883 and for the population of what was to become Alberta, it was a landmark year. The railway opened up the region for settlement. Thousands of hopeful families poured in, bringing with them the prospect of a major land boom. But there was a darker side to the event. Typhoid gained a stranglehold on the villages and townsites being thrown up by the tracks. Immigrant labourers were particularly hard hit. The workers and their families were exposed and countless numbers succumbed.

The need for hospitals grew ever

more acute. A series of temporary shacks strung out along the main line served as "field hospitals" but the only staffed hospital was the Grey Nuns addition to their St. Albert Mission.

By 1888 there were two more hospitals. One in Lethbridge, opened two years earlier and maintained jointly by the Alberta Railway and Coal Company and the Mounted Police, and one in Banff, opened in 1888. This last facility was opened to serve the people who were building and running the railway. It comprised the second floor of a rough two-storey building, leaving the first floor in use as a business and social centre. Dr. R.G. Brett supervised the

hospital and performed surgery. Later he became the second Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta.

For the doctors of Alberta, the hospital situation demanded attention. Since most of them were based in Edmonton, the continued need to travel back and forth over rough country roads between their offices and the only close hospital (at St. Albert) constituted a very real hardship. So, as a group, Drs. Braithwaite, Harrison, Tofield, Royal, MacInnes and Wilson, began to advocate for a hospital in a more populated area...specifically Edmonton.

# Alberta's First Hospitals

As each and every train steamed its way across the Prairies, it brought a fresh complement of settlers. The sheer size of the immigration dictated that the fledgling municipalities along the way turn their attention to health care. The first recognized municipal hospital in the North West Territories was the only one on the railroad between Winnipeg and Vancouver. Opened in 1889, the Medicine Hat General Hospital consisted of a 25-bed, two-storey stone structure constructed at a cost of \$25,000.

In Calgary, an eight-bed General Hospital was opened in 1890, followed in

January 1891 by the Holy Cross Hospital.

The Holy Cross Hospital had been initiated by Vital Grandin, Bishop of St. Albert. In 1887, seeing the need for a hospital in Calgary, he had written to several religious orders in the East, pleading for help. Only the Sisters of Charity of Montreal had accepted his challenge. Four Grey Nuns led by Sister Agnes Carroll, superior, arrived to serve the sick. Their resources were limited; so limited in fact that besides \$73.75 in cash, the early chronicles tell us, "they have no other resources than their confidence in Divine Providence."

When the Sisters arrived on January 30th 1891, they found an unfinished two-storey building, twenty-four feet square, and plans for an extension for another four beds. The place was lighted by candles and was to be heated by a single stove...which had not yet been installed.

Further south, in Lethbridge, the original coal miners hospital had been replaced by an up-to-date fifteen-bed unit built with the help of Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt.



## Plans For The Edmonton General Hospital

By 1891 there were three thriving population centres in the Upper Saskatchewan River Country: St. Albert was the focus of the Roman Catholic population, Fort Saskatchewan, the nucleus of the North West Mounted Police activity, and Edmonton -- the Hudson's Bay Company Trading Post. The arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway at Strathcona (now South Edmonton) spurred the population of the one time "Fort of the Prairies". On February 10, 1892, Edmonton became a town, capable of assuming municipal responsibilities.

The Sisters of St. Albert were now running the only health care facility in a region supporting some 15,000 people. And it was simply not large enough. On July 11, 1894 Sister Delphine Brassard, Superior, wrote to Sir Donald A. Smith, president of the Hudson's Bay Company. In it she mentioned, "...Our Convent of St. Albert...is at the present time actually crowded with sick, some on account of having undergone privation which necessitates amputations, while others are suffering from grippe, etc. All these claim-shelter and charity."

Earlier that same year Bishop Grandin had received the following letter: "To His Lordship Bishop Grandin, St. Albert.

We, the undersigned Medical Practitioners of the town of Edmonton do hereby agree that we will do all in our

power to support a general hospital to be built by the Grey Nuns in the town of Edmonton; and that we will agree to support it to the exclusion of any other Hospital, provided that it be built this year with accommodation in proportion to the size of the town, and that it be run as a general hospital under the management of the Sisters without a Resident Doctor.

(signed)

H.C. Wilson, P.G. Royal M.D., J.D. Harrison, H.N. McInnis, James H. Tofield, E.A. Braithwaite"

Bishop Grandin replied three days later on April 28, 1894 saying that although he had nothing to do with the administration of the Sisters of Charity, he would place the matter before the Superior General and do everything in his power to assist in the establishment of such an institution. He pointed out that a hospital, if it were to be a credit to the Town of Edmonton, must be constructed of brick and have a stone foundation. It should be a short distance from the Catholic Church and have a good supply of drinking water. He ended his letter by saying, "An entire city block, I think, would not be too much. What do you think?"

Mother Julie Deschamps, Superior General of the Grey Nuns in Montreal, was favorably disposed to this project, and shortly afterwards Sister Delphine Brassard, Superior of the Mission, began negotiating for a plot of land in

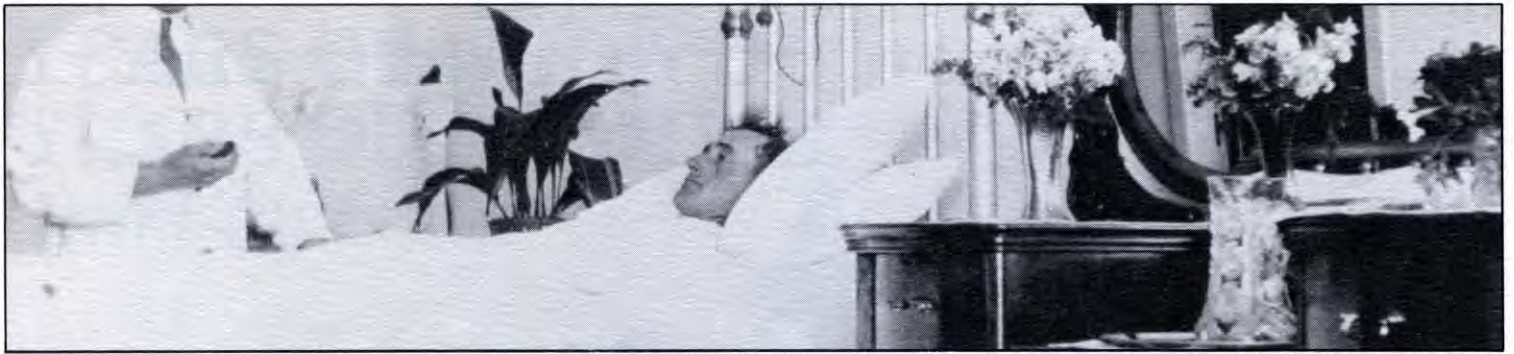
Edmonton. Through arrangements with Mr. C.C. Chipman of the Hudson's Bay Company, and Sir Donald A. Smith, there was an official transfer of 46 lots -- an entire block -- to the Corporation of "The Sisters of Charity of the North West Territories".

The transfer of this land, located between Jasper Avenue and McKay Avenue and 11th and 12th Streets was done at a cost of \$2,300. The chronicles of the Grey Nuns say that even before the transaction was finalized, Sister Brassard asked to immediately dig a well.

For some years the Sisters had been quietly working on gathering funds for a new hospital. During the Christmas midnight mass of 1878, a collection for the project taken by Sister Guenette had yielded \$96.33 in silver and \$125.52 in paper money. A second collection a year later, taken up by Sister Emery, brought in \$50.33 in silver and \$38.00 in paper money. Although it was a beginning, the Sisters were unable to raise enough to undertake the project.

With land now available, Father Lacombe suggested that financial aid be solicited from the Municipality. On November 1, 1895 Sister Marie-Xavier, Superior, received a grant of \$1,000, to assist in the construction and furnishing of the Hospital. For the Sisters, their trust in Divine Providence was well rewarded.

## Construction and Opening



*Typical patient room, complete with brass bedstand, doilies on the dresser and an electric call button.*

In the spring of 1895 workmen began turning the plans of St. Boniface architect J.A. Senecal into a three-storey red brick hospital large enough to accommodate 36 patients.

In the meantime four Sisters had been named at the Mother House in Montreal to serve in Edmonton. Sister Arthemise Gosselin, Sister Saunders and Sister Coursol journeyed to St. Boniface where they met with the newly-named Superior of the Edmonton General, Sister Marie-Xavier. Sisters Saunders and Coursol remained in St. Boniface where they spent three months doing nursing service. The two others duly arrived in Edmonton to supervise the progress of the new facility and prepare the various departments.

Throughout August the two Sisters went back and forth between the site and St. Albert. The chronicles state that this was tiring for the Sisters and a loss of time for the employees who had to make these daily trips. For the next three weeks the Sisters lived in an old shack furnished with two cots and chairs, a rickety table and a stove. Deprived of every luxury and comfort but inspired by the shining example of their foundress Mother d'Youville, the Sisters were happy to dedicate their hardship to the service of their fellow human beings.

By November 1, four rooms were finished on the third floor and the Sisters moved in on the 5th. Mass was celebrated for the first time in the newly-finished chapel on November 17th. For Bishop Grandin, who performed the service, the sight of the Sisters in their new surroundings must have prompted a comparison with the early days at Lac Ste. Anne. In his heart he must have sent an extra prayer of thanks to God the Father for the work that had been accomplished.

A notable milestone in the historic development of Edmonton occurred in the next month. On December 16, 1895,

His Grace Archbishop Adelard Langevin of St. Boniface, accompanied by Bishop Grandin and Bishop Grouard - Vicar Apostolic of the Extreme North - presided at the official blessing of the new building.

Encouraged by the good wishes of the community expressed during the service, and spiritually uplifted by the Mass, the Sisters had retired for the evening when Sister Gosselin became aware of prolonged knocking at the front door. After opening a window she beheld three new recruits -- Sisters Desmarais, Dosithee and St. Leon. "Sisters," she cried, "we were not expecting you this evening." "Open just the same," came the reply. Both the door and the arms of the Sisters were opened wide to welcome the travel-weary trio.

On the day following the official blessing, the Hospital experienced its first crisis. Dr. Braithwaite said that he was admitting a patient for surgery. Unfortunately the operating room was not yet ready and the Sisters prayed mightily that something, anything, might delay the event. Next day Mrs. Graydon sent word that she preferred to wait a few weeks before undergoing her operation. On the same day, however, Mr. S. Vankonghuet became the first patient treated at the Hospital.

By the end of December 31, 1895, 31 patients had received treatment in the three-storey red brick building described in the Edmonton Bulletin as being, "very pleasing in appearance, substantial without being gloomy and handsome without being tawdry. It has cost \$30,000. Its erection is due to the philanthropic enterprises of the Sisters of Charity."

Although the Hospital had received its blessing in December 1895, it was not officially opened to the public until February 5, 1896. Both the Hospital Annals and the evening edition of the Edmonton Bulletin stated: "The Sisters of Charity have the pleasure of announcing to the public that the new

Hospital will be open for the patients on Wednesday, February 5th." In that month the Bulletin also announced that, "It is to be clearly understood that this is a general hospital, superintended and run by the Sisters of Charity, and all have free access without concern for creed or nationality. The sole object of the Sisters is to minister to the temporal wants of suffering humanity, the rest will be left to the Lord who watches over all. Clergymen of every denomination will be welcome, and will find the hospital open to them at any hour of the twenty four, when necessary to visit their people."

Support for the Hospital continued to come from the community. The women of Edmonton organized a society known as "The Ladies' Aid Society" and the young girls formed "The Branch of Hospital Aid Society". The activities of both groups provided much needed financial support for the facility.

Edmonton had good reason to be proud of the General. In March 1898, the Inspector of Hospitals, Dr. E.A. Kennedy toured the building and noted in the Visitor's Book that, "I find an excellent building, well heated and ventilated, light and cheerful. It is in admirable order and kept scrupulously clean. The Sisters seem to be most attentive to the charges and the patients well satisfied."

That attention and care was tested during the chicken-pox epidemic of 1901. The Sisters offered their services free of charge if a proper place for an isolation unit could be provided. A three-storey house was rented by the municipality and for three long winter months, four Sisters and a graduate nurse cared for the patients, often as many as 45 at a time. By the end of the epidemic only one patient at the unit had died. In gratitude the Municipal Councils of Edmonton and Strathcona presented the Sisters with a cheque for one hundred dollars.

***“SUBSTANTIAL WITHOUT BEING GLOOMY,  
HANDSOME WITHOUT BEING TAWDRY”***



*The original Edmonton General Hospital.*

On the 19th of December the editor of the Edmonton Bulletin accompanied by Doctors H.D. Wilson, J.D. Harrison and E.A. Braithwaite, made a detailed visit of inspection to the Hospital. A few days later he conveyed his impressions to the public:

“The exterior of the building is very pleasing in appearance, substantial without being gloomy and handsome without being tawdry. It is carefully and

well planned for the purpose for which it is intended. It is of three full stories besides attic and basement. The walls are solid brick resting on a stone foundation. Each storey has four verandahs and the attic, two balconies. The summit of the roof is surmounted by a belfry from which a magnificent view of the country can be had. Above the tower there is a beautiful gold cross. The General Hospital is actually the largest,

most substantial and most costly building in Edmonton, and it is a credit architecturally as well as in the purpose for which it was erected.”

There is no doubt from this, that Edmonton was proud of its first hospital!

# 3.

## YEARS OF GROWTH, YEARS OF PROMISE. 1903-30

### *“The Immigrant Boom”*

With the completion of the Edmonton, Yukon and Pacific Railway in 1902, the City entered a period of astonishing growth. Between 1903 and 1914 tens of thousands of immigrants flocked into Western Canada. In 1905 Alberta was a province and the following year saw the selection of Edmonton as the Provincial Capital.

During that 11-year period a total of 274 new subdivisions were created, in spite of the fact that there was a severe housing shortage that forced thousands to take temporary residence in tents. For the 35-bed General an increase in bed capacity became not only advisable but an absolute necessity.

In 1907 a four-storey wing was annexed west of the building, giving not only increased patient accommodation, but also more space for operating rooms, a dressing room and a consultation room. At the same time a two-storey laundry was built north of the Hospital. The pipes were joined to the main building by an underground tunnel. The laundry building also contained a power house to service the growing complex.

Edmonton's population continued to expand. Glowing advertisements in Europe painted pictures of a new life in the West. For the restless in the United Kingdom, Germany and Russia, they offered an opportunity for prosperity; a new beginning. As each train pulling into the station brought new families, the Sisters began to plan for a further addition, this time a fourth storey to the original three-storey building. The plans were presented to Mother Anna Piche, Superior General, who was

making an official visit in 1911, and were gladly approved by her.

While several submissions were presented to the Hospital, it was felt that it would be less costly if the work were done on a day-to-day basis, with an architect to revise the plans, a contractor to look after the purchasing and a carpenter to supervise, while doing work at the same time. Curiously enough this procedure, now called “fast-tracking”, is being adopted (or re-adopted) throughout the development and construction industry.

In reference to the latest additions and renovations, the chronicles noted that, “The location is perfect for the hospital purposes. It is sufficiently removed from the business part of the City to be free from noise and dust. The grounds are spacious,

the edifice is well-equipped, each department with its well-ventilated halls, bright sunny rooms and wards afford the patients the sanitary conditions usually exacted in up-to-date hospitals and the result of treatment has been most satisfactory. The building is most comfortably heated by hot water, lighted by electricity, and has bathrooms so arranged for hot and cost baths, which is a great luxury.”

A final construction period, undertaken in the eve of the 1914-18 War, added a third storey to the laundry building and a three-storey wing to replace the original kitchen and to increase patient accommodation. Upon completion, the addition and renovation raised the General's capacity to 100 beds.



*Onward, immigrants to a new land!*

# The School of Nursing



April 19, 1911 the first graduates of the School of Nursing in Edmonton. From left to right, they were: Mary Blanchard, Sadie Cummings, Mabel Denhart, Eva Letellier, Ida Roseborough and Minta Sharkey.

Since the opening of the Hospital the nursing staff had been drawn from the ranks of nurse sisters who had trained at the St. Boniface School of Nursing. After the turn of the century some came from Montreal but the numbers were never really enough. To meet this need a training school for nurses was opened in September 1908.

Six young women enrolled for a two-and-half year course under the direc-

tion of Sister Mary Ann Casey. For Mable M. Denhart, Ida Roseborough, Eva Letellier, Mary Blanchard, Sadie Cummings and Minta Sharkey the next 30 months passed in a hectic whirl of bedside care and comprehensive classes. Sister Casey taught Nursing Arts and the Sciences of Nursing. Anatomy, Physiology, Surgery and Obstetrics were taught by doctors in evening lectures. It was this first class that developed the

school motto, "Estote Fideles" which literally translates to "Always Be Faithful". On April 19, 1911, the six became the first graduates from a School of Nursing in Edmonton. For Sister Casey they became the first of the 101 graduates she guided during her time as Director, a position she left in 1922 in order to become the Superior at St. Paul's Hospital, Saskatoon.

## "The Lights Are Going Out" 1914-1918

During the years 1914-1918, while nations rocked under the shattering impact of the Great War, the Grey Nuns at the Edmonton General Hospital continued to carry on their Mission in spite of daily obstacles. Colonel Harwood and Captain Ferris, from the Military Unit, asked the hospital administration if they would receive convalescing soldiers in return for a reasonable per diem rate. The Sisters were happy to accept the offer, not only for the financial support this would give the Hospital, but, more importantly, because it gave them an opportunity to help the young men.

Due to prompt payment on the part of Ottawa's Militia and Defence Department the Sisters were able to institute improvements in the facilities and services as well as make payments on the mortgage principal.

By August 1916 a convalescent home



Returning veterans parade, City of Edmonton.

in Calgary had been organized by the Alberta Red Cross Society, which then took over the responsibility for the soldiers.

The General's contribution to the war effort was not limited to simply caring for convalescing soldiers. By increasing the length of the nurse training program by six months, graduates were able to qualify for overseas service with the Army Medical Corps.

In 1918 the guns fell silent but Edmonton's jubilation over the War's end was tempered by the realization that Spanish Influenza had broken out in the City. Schools, theatres and churches were closed and public meetings banned in order to try and prevent the rapid spread of the disease. The doors of the General were thrown open and the Sisters, Medical Staff and Nurses fought its effects on a 24-hour basis. Their efforts, as well as those of the staff at Edmonton's other hospitals, prevented what might have become a municipal catastrophe.

# Health Care In The Twenties



*Interns of the Edmonton General Hospital, 1928 - 1929.*

During the progressive decade of the 1920's the physicians and surgeons at the General achieved conspicuous results in their pursuit of new techniques and medical advances. No longer a frontier town, Edmonton was attracting people of talent, ability and education. Their efforts resulted in the Hospital obtaining a Class "A" standing from the Standardization Committee of the American College of Surgeons. The wards were opened for teaching the medical faculty of the University of Alberta and in 1924 the first intern, Dr. Kirkpatrick was accepted at the Hospital.

The Twenties were a time of almost limitless optimism. The War, with its blood and suffering was over; the economy improved until by the latter part of the decade it had almost reached its pre-War heights. The new techniques and advances in Surgery, Radiology and Obstetrics (to name only a few) put fresh demands on available space. And, as before, municipal prosperity increased the population and the need for hospital beds.

New construction began in 1920 with the addition of wings to the west and south. The South Wing, with the exception of the second floor which was given to the obstetrical patients and the nursery, became the Nurses Residence. The fourth floor of the West Wing comprised clinical suites of rooms for the laboratory and x-ray departments. On April 8, 1920 the Edmonton City Council voted to give \$10,000 to the General in order to support increased patient accommodation. As well, the Provincial Government increased the grant per patient day from 25¢ to 50¢ a day.

The total cost of the additions was

estimated at \$90,000, which was to be met by a loan for \$100,000. The loan was approved by Monsignor Pilon, Vicar-General for the St. Albert Diocese on condition that the yearly interest be paid, as well as a \$1,000 a year remittance toward the principal. The chronicles note that, "This will be heavy debt for the Hospital, which St. Joseph should think about and get down to business."

The opening of the new Clinical Laboratory took place on December 14, 1920. Until this time the Provincial Pathologist at the University of Alberta had doubled as the General's Pathologist. This arrangement was changed in 1921 when Dr. J.J. Ower and the Hospital signed a contract that installed him as the General's Medical Pathologist in the Laboratory Department. For a monthly remuneration of \$90.00 Dr. Ower assumed full responsibility for all professional work done in the area whether by himself, his assistants or other aides designated by the hospital authorities. His first assistant was a trained Sister Technician, Sister Nantel.

By this time the Radiology Department was also in operation and equipped with improved x-ray equipment for radiographic and treatment work. A Roentgenologist was in charge, assisted by none other than Sister Nantel (who divided her time between Radiology and Pathology). The chronicles mention that the first radiography taken was of Sister Francois de Sale's foot.

The construction program applied new financial pressure to the General. To counter the squeeze ingenious fund-raising ideas were put into effect. When the Nurses Residence opened in February 1921, a "Linen Shower" was organized in order to buy linen for the new

residence. The event was attended by His Worship Archbishop O'Leary, members of the clergy and many of the City doctors. The result may be read in the chronicles: "Thanks be to God and to these devoted people, for the tidy sum of \$900.00".

New construction, up-to-date techniques and a strict adherence to the standards set by the American College of Surgeons resulted in the Edmonton General Hospital receiving a place of merit on the approved list. Dr. M.T. McEachern, in charge of hospital activities for the College, addressed a congress at the MacDonald Hotel in September 1923 on the subject of health care. His speech included the following statement:

"This is the greatest hospital movement the world has ever seen or perhaps will ever see. It strikes right at the root of things that have a vital bearing on human life. It is a movement destined to lessen the number of days stay of patients in the hospital through better service...to reduce complications and infections to a minimum through better diagnostic facilities, more consultations, and closer check-ups, and finally, greatest of all, to lessen the hospital death rate."

The confidence he expressed was justified. Advances had been made and more were to come. Education, Science and Technology were presenting challenges that the Grey Nuns were ready and willing to face, for like their founders, Mother d'Youville, they had an unlimited trust in Divine Providence. It was a trust, however, that often was their only support in the next decade.



## THE DEPRESSION ERA 1930-1939

### *“Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?”*

The Depression years affected everyone in Alberta. There was no rain, no crops and no money. It was a time when factory products went begging for buyers and, most discouraging of all, when hard-earned skills went begging for work.

The General Hospital was no exception. Already stretched financially, the Depression brought almost insurmountable problems. It was for this reason that the Grey Nuns decided to send a petition to the Honorable Mr. Stewart, Minister of the Interior, offering to admit sick soldiers to the General. It was felt that the addition of soldiers to the low daily census would pose no operational problems and relieve, to some extent, the financial strain.

The increased bed capacity at both the Royal Alexandra and University Hospitals diminished the number of new admissions and, as the chronicles note, “The financial situation is trying everywhere. It goes without saying we are hard up! The future of the Hospital worries us. However, like our Holy Foundress, we place our trust in Divine Providence.”

To make matters worse the Government of Alberta condemned the third and fourth floors of the original building in August 1931. Although structurally sound the floors were declared to be

insufficiently fireproofed. The resulting patient transfers cost a substantial amount of money, which the Hospital could ill afford at the time.

As the decade dragged on the worries of the Grey Nuns increased. The Hospital was at a low ebb and needed to be rebuilt in some areas. Without costly modifications its Class “A” status with the American College of Surgeons was in jeopardy but there was simply no money available.

The declining economy and rising unemployment sparked demonstrations in the City. Workers marched to the City Hall asking for any sort of labor, but there was nothing available. Frustrated, many of them rolled a few possessions into a blanket and “rode the rails” back and forth across the country.

By 1933 the situation was still grim. The chronicles mention that, “There are still only 123 patients in a two hundred bed hospital. Maternity cases are scarce. Poverty is felt everywhere. The “mamas” remain at home in order to reduce expenses.”

Despite the economic difficulties, the Grey Nuns remained firm in their faith and proceeded with what repairs and renovations could be managed. The Hospital maintained its efficiency and nurses and staff did their utmost to keep abreast of advances in the health field.



*Depression work crews.*

# Tuberculosis Care At The General

Since the end of the Great War Alberta had become something of a haven for tuberculosis sufferers. The dry, sunny climate attracted people from across-Canada who came in the hopes of finding relief from, or even a cure for the disease. At that time tuberculosis was known as "the white plague", referred to in hushed tones, and generally believed to be fatal.

A temporary sanatorium had been opened in the town of Frank in 1917 to care for veterans with the illness. Later, in 1920, an agreement between the Federal and Provincial Governments resulted in the 180-bed Central Alberta Sanatorium being built. When the Province assumed full responsibility the institution was renamed The Baker Memorial Sanatorium in honor of its first director, Dr. A.H. Baker. Clinics were also opened in Drumheller (1925) and Edmonton and Calgary (1928).

Despite an increase in the Central Alberta Sanatorium of 100 beds there was still not enough capacity to handle the number of cases. The Grey Nuns, aware of the situation, had petitioned the Government in 1932 to allow them to handle some of the overload. Dr. Bow, the Deputy Minister, promised to give the request serious consideration ... a promise, however, that was some time in being fulfilled. It was not until May 30, 1936 that the contract between the

Provincial Department of Health and the General Hospital was finally signed.

The first 12 patients were admitted to the General on June 3, 1936. Sister Louise Boulet, a registered nurse, arrived from St. Boniface to take charge of them and organize the department. A registered lay nurse and a student nurse provided day-time help and one registered nurse took over the night duty. Dr. G.R. Davison was appointed physician in charge.

In order to accommodate the patients, who required a special ward, the Hospital's female employees moved to the basement, leaving their quarters for the registered nurses, who in turn left their's for the use of the patients.

That same year saw the passage of the Tuberculosis Act and since that time, diagnosis and sanatorium treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis has been free to all Alberta residents. Alberta was the second province in Canada to provide, by law, for such free treatment.

The skills and care provided by the General to its tuberculosis patients impressed no less than Dr. Baker, who visited the ward on July 6, 1937. He requested that another 40 beds be made ready by September 1st, thus initiating another round of administrative changes. This time the maternity de-

partment was used, with the children's ward becoming a department for women. Six beds were reserved for children in the case of emergencies.

Inspector M. Moore visited the Hospital on May 26, 1938. What interested him above all else was the floor which had been condemned a few years earlier. The Government was interested in increasing the number of tuberculosis patients at the General and wanted to know if the space could be used for that purpose. After a painstaking inspection Mr. Moore informed the Sister Superior that the Department would probably be agreeable. Three days later, the affirmation arrived, as well as a request that arrangements be made for the admission of 25 more patients.

In the mid-forties diagnostic services for tuberculosis patients were increased by the purchase of two mobile x-ray units by the Alberta Tuberculosis Association. Using Christmas Seal funds the Association presented the units to the Alberta Board of Public Health, in order that people, particularly in rural areas, could be contacted. By September, 1946 a total of 226,987 people had been x-rayed.



Jasper Avenue looking west, c. 1920.

## *Step by Step, Progress.*

The "Thirties" may have been a time of financial strain for the General, but it was also a period of progress. In November 1930, the Hospital welcomed a new Sister Superior in the person of Sister Clarilda Fortin. Her first official duty following her arrival was the reorganization of the Medical staff.

A circular letter was addressed to each doctor in Edmonton as a means of learning what assistance they would be willing to give the administration. The cooperation of the doctors was heart-warming, with many of them asking to be an integral part of the active committee, rather than simply being on the consultative or associate committees.

With the reorganization of the medical staff, the General hired another graduate intern for surgery. The graduate, Dr. Giffon, was hired as part of a program to increase the number of interns on staff. Some months previously the Hospital had acquired the services of Dr. Kenneth Hamilton as an intern. Hamilton, who was provided with a room, his meals and \$20.00 a month by the Sisters proved his worth by becoming something of a mentor for the student interns at the General.

At a meeting of the Standardization

Committee on April 28, 1931, Dr. Moots, surveyor for the College of Surgeons, praised the Hospital for the "recent improvements in the reorganization of the medical staff, also in the services of the radiology and maternity departments." Before the end of the year, the medical committee had chosen Dr. Huckell, an orthopedic specialist, to keep an eye on bone fractures.

More good news came to the Grey Nuns in May 1932, when, at a meeting of the Catholic Hospital Convention in St. Boniface, the three prairie provinces set up an organization to deal with the problems of health care. Known as the Western Canada Institute, the organization elected as its first president, the Grey Nuns' Mother Provincial, Sister Laberge.

As was the case elsewhere in Alberta the nursing profession made progress during the decade. Despite economic difficulties the General, like other Edmonton hospitals, became more sophisticated and offered more services. It was no longer a case of a hospital only offering nursing care, thus more people used the facility and more nurses had to be employed.

At the General the acceptance of tuberculosis patients meant a reduction

in the number of obstetrical beds. Consequently there was an insufficient number of obstetrical patients to assure adequate student experience. To remedy this, an affiliation in obstetrics was arranged with the Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton and the Holy Cross Hospital in Calgary. A further affiliation, this time in Communicable Diseases, was arranged with the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton.

Milestones occurred and were noted. In 1934, Dr. John Darley Harrison, one of the General's pioneer doctors, furnished the medical library with 110 medical texts -- a gift that, in effect, gave the Hospital a medical library.

In 1935 the General was approved by the Canadian Medical Association for rotating internship and was affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Alberta for clinical teaching. The first two University lecturers were Dr. Alexander R. Munroe for surgery and Dr. Pope for medicine. A class "A" rating was again given to the Hospital by the American College of Physicians and Surgeons. And in 1937 the School of Nursing welcomed its first director with a nursing degree -- Sister Alice Bonin, s.g.m., R.N., B.Sc.



*Jasper Avenue and 101 st. Street, c. 1931.*

## *Celebrations And Great Occasions 1930-39*

For the Grey Nuns and the staff of the Edmonton General Hospital, the Depression Years did offer several bright moments. In 1933 Viscount Bessborough, Governor-General of Canada, and Countess Bessborough, arrived to inspect the General and the Misericordia. The vice-regal party was greeted by the Mother Provincial, Sister Laberge, Sister Marie de l'Eucharistie the Sister Superior and Doctors Blais, Braithwaite and Levey. In his reply to the welcoming addresses, Lord Bessborough remarked that he, like many others, was familiar with the valuable work performed by the Grey Nuns.

For Sister Marie de l'Eucharistie, 1935 brought the honour of a Silver Jubilee medal. The medal, which observed 25 years of the reign of King George V, was presented to citizens who had achieved distinction in their chosen profession. The chronicles note that, "upon return home (from the presentation) the Sisters rejoiced with Sister Marie, expressing their pleasure in having this great honour bestowed upon their Sister Superior. The nurses and employees then had the opportunity to express their congratulations too."

The middle of the decade saw the Hospital hosting two Church dignitaries. His Eminence Rodrigue-Cardinal Villeneuve, Archbishop of Quebec, o.m.i., arrived at the General accompanied by Mgr. Grandbois, P.D.; Mgr. O'Gorman (from Edmonton); Mr. Pettigrew, Knight of the Order of the Saint Sepulchre; and

Mr. Corriveau, Chamberlain to His Excellency. For the Sisters, nurses and staff of the General, the visit provided a brief but shining relief from the daily routine. Similarly, the visit of His Excellency Monsignor Andrea Cassulo, Papal Delegate to Canada, made the afternoon of June 18, 1936 a date to remember.

The year 1938, however, was truly a special occasion. In that year Grey Nuns' the world over celebrated the second centenary of the founding of the Sisters of Charity of Montreal. Following the example of the Mother House, the Sisters made the three-day celebration a "Feast For The Poor". The celebrations began with a solemn mass during which thanks was rendered to God for the many graces and blessings bestowed upon the Congregation and the General Hospital. Clothes, which had been knitted or sewn previously, were distributed to the needy and all employees were invited to a special dinner.

The celebration gave others a chance to express their own appreciation of the Sisters' services. The "Western Catholic" published a lengthy article by His Excellency J.H. MacDonald, Archbishop of Edmonton. The following quote is excerpted from that article: "The Prairie Provinces have reason to be especially grateful to the Grey Nuns for their self-sacrificing service since coming here, almost one hundred years ago. Few of us living today can appreciate the hardships of those pioneer days, when living conditions were such that only the

strongest could stand them, when dangers were equally great from man and beast. Canada will never see such conditions again, for modern inventions have rendered even the Arctic Circle more accessible and more bearable than the prairies were ninety years ago."

Clerical appreciation, civic recognition and the thanks of the community in general brightened the year and culminated in the presentation of the "Bene Merenti" medal to the Superior General, Mother Evangeline Gallant, and through her to all the Grey Nuns, by His Excellency Monsignor Hildebrando Antoniutti, Papal Delegate to Canada.

At the close of decade came the visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to Edmonton on June 2, 1939. Citizens and Sisters turned out to cheer their sovereigns.

The "Thirties" were years of endurance for the General Hospital. The Depression brought an economic decline that created hardships and often hopelessness. But there was more progress than might be realized. The Hospital as a whole enjoyed advances in patient care; medical services were improved and expanded. In the next decade these improvements and advances continued and led to the standard of health care we enjoy today.

## *40 Years of Service*

May 22, 1935 was chosen as the date to celebrate Edmonton General's 40th Anniversary. Intensive preparations had been made to provide a fitting observance of this special occasion and as the day dawned, an air of excitement made itself felt throughout the Hospital.

The ceremonies opened with a Eucharistic celebration in the chapel. The concelebrant, Monseigneur Nelligan, vicar-general, expressed his admiration for the works of Mother d'Youville and expressed his desire to see her name among the ranks of the "Blessed". In a later ceremony Monseigneur Nelligan addressed the Grey Nuns' themselves, reminding them of the good works they had accomplished. His remarks were particularly appropriate as Sister Arthemise Gosselin, one of the Hospital's

foundresses, was present.

In the evening it was the medical profession's turn. A dinner at the Corona Hotel hosted by Dr. John Orobko, saw Edmonton's medical professionals turn out to celebrate the Anniversary. From Dr. H. Jamieson came an entertaining historical sketch of medicine and a toast to the Hospital, in which he noted that, "I believe the General Hospital to be one of the pioneer institutions in the City and can say that it has held to the tradition of the medical profession." Dr. Aristide Blais responded to the toast and gave a brief outline of the early days of the profession in St. Albert and Edmonton.

It was an evening of recognition and entertainment. Dr. Alexander R. Munroe toasted the medical pioneers and was

answered by Dr. E.A. Braithwaite, who stated that the Hospital had proven to be a God-send to the people of Edmonton. Following his response Dr. Braithwaite read a second response to the toast, sent by Dr. John Darley Harrison who was absent because of illness. The evening closed with a musical program by Doctors Boissonneault and McGregor, accompanied by Miss M. Mulligan and with recitations in French Canadian dialect by Dr. R.B. Mooney. This function, organized by Dr. J.A. Lobsinger, rounded out a day of celebration to commemorate 40 years of service by the Hospital to the people of Edmonton and Alberta.

# 5.

## ENTERING A NEW ERA. THE 1940's

### *New Growth*

While politicians redrew the map of Europe in the late thirties, the Sisters initiated plans for a new addition to the General. On August 18, 1938, work on the five-storey building began. Although the original proposal was modified, given the unsettled condition of the world, the new structure was designed to be joined to the older sections by a series of tunnels and passages. The new unit increased the Hospital's bed capacity by 100, bringing the total up to 300. There were also new facilities for the obstetrical floor, the operating suite and the laboratory and radiology departments. The basement area contained service rooms and utility units.

Because the arrival of tuberculosis patients at the General had reduced the area available for obstetrics, the entire fifth floor of the new unit was given over to that department. This meant that once again the General could offer its students experience in obstetrics and when Sister Florence Neuhausell s.g.m., R.N., B.Sc., arrived to replace Sister Alice Bonin as Director of the School of Nursing, the affiliations in obstetrics with the Misericordia and Holy Cross Hospitals were discontinued.

The official Blessing of the new unit took place on June 12, 1940. The service was conducted by His Excellency Archbishop J.H. MacDonald, Archbishop of Edmonton. Assisting him in the service was His Excellency the Right Reverend Gabriel Breynat, vicar apostolic of MacKenzie and titular

Archbishop of Garella, a man who for nearly 50 years directed mission work in the Canadian Arctic. It was however, left to Reverend Father Henri Routhier, o.m.i., the Oblate Provincial Superior to speak the following words: "If we wish to know the

secret of prosperity that characterizes this institution, we must believe it is the same spirit that incited the first Sister of Charity who landed on the shores of the Riviere Rouge, in 1844, that continues to incite the Grey Nuns of Edmonton."

In a simple ceremony the unit was officially opened by His Honor J.C. Bowen, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. Also present were the Premier, the Honorable William Aberhart and Mrs. Aberhart, and His Worship Mayor John W. Fry and Mr. Fry.

Later in the day the unit was opened to the general public, and it was estimated that almost 10,000 people toured the \$300,000 facility. Later the Edmonton Journal printed the following: "Hundreds of Edmontonians viewed with amazement and enthusiasm the luxurious and ultra-modern finish and equipment of the newly constructed \$300,000 annex of the General Hospital ... Exclamations of pleased surprise burst from the lips of spectators as they viewed the beautiful fixtures and furnishings, the comfort of which was evidenced in every room, and the wonders of the modern, scientific equipment which has been installed."



*The Edmonton General Hospital,  
c. 1940.*

# *The World At War. 1939 - 1945*

With the announcement of hostilities the City of Edmonton went into action. Despite a 10-day delay in Canada's declaration of war on Germany, recruiting for Edmonton's army units began immediately and by September 30th the regiment was up to full strength. In the following year an office was opened within the Hospital walls to enable personnel to register without leaving their place of work. This consideration on behalf of the military establishment

was appreciated by the Grey Nuns ... even though it aggravated the problem of maintaining the medical and nursing staff.

The General sent a dozen graduates overseas in the Military Services. A large number of doctors also joined up. One of them, Dr. R.G. Huckell helped set up an orthopedic and plastic surgery unit in Scotland. It was this same, Dr. Huckell who had served as the first orthopedic specialist at the Hospital.

Despite the shortage of trained nurses and doctors, the General maintained its standard of efficiency throughout the war years. This standard of service was vital as the grim realities of war once again became apparent. In 1942 the Government approached the Grey Nuns with a request for the hospitalization of military personnel. A ward was prepared in the basement of the South Wing and served its purpose until the war ended in 1945.

## ***“THE LADIES’. GOD BLESS THEM”***

In its early history the Edmonton General Hospital was ably assisted by its lay auxiliary group, the “Ladies’ Aid Society”, founded on December 21, 1895, “to give assistance to the hospital”. At their founding meeting the ladies elected Mrs. E.A. Braithwaite as President. Her executive consisted of Mrs. H.E. Lauder, Mrs. D.D. Beck and Mrs. S. Larue. Forty-five members joined the Society and began to organize the first of many “sewing bees”, charity entertainments

and Christmas parties. Sixteen young girls founded a “Branch of The Hospital Aid Society” known as the “Medicine Fund” in the same year.

The two groups were a financial mainstay in those early years. Their efforts provided funds for coal, food, blankets, mattresses and comforters, pillows, linens and bed rests. In 1906, however, the Society was disbanded.

Forty three years later, in 1949, a meeting was once again held at the

General for the purpose of reorganizing the Society. Renamed as the “Edmonton General Hospital Auxiliary” the members inaugurated services such as the Library Service and annual projects such as the Hospital Day Dinner. Today the Ladies’ Auxiliary is a vital part of the General’s daily routine. Their efforts in the form of fund raising events, help at staff blood donor clinics and overseeing the Gift Shop comprise a quiet but effective contribution.



*Chemistry Laboratory, 1954*

## ***“Keeping Up The Good Work”***

When Roentgen discovered the x-ray in 1895, the same year that the General was built, he probably had no idea of the effect it would have on the practice of medicine. The General was, in fact, the first hospital in Canada to install an x-ray machine and, over the years, developed what was by the 1940's, the most complete, spacious and efficient X-Ray Department in the country. Besides being capable of making an x-ray film in one-twentieth of a second, the Department featured other radiological advances such as fluoroscopic examination and deep x-ray therapy. In 1938 the Department was approved to give two year courses to X-Ray Technicians.

The 1940s also saw changes and improvements in the Laboratory

Department. In 1946 the part-time pathologist, Dr. J.J. Ower, was replaced by Dr. Samuel Hanson, who joined on a full-time basis. Dr. Hanson was asked to reorganize the laboratory service and he was so successful that on February 26, 1947 he received approval from the Canadian Medical Association to teach technicians. The General thus became one of the few Canadian hospitals authorized to give courses towards a diploma from the Canadian Society of Laboratory Technologists.

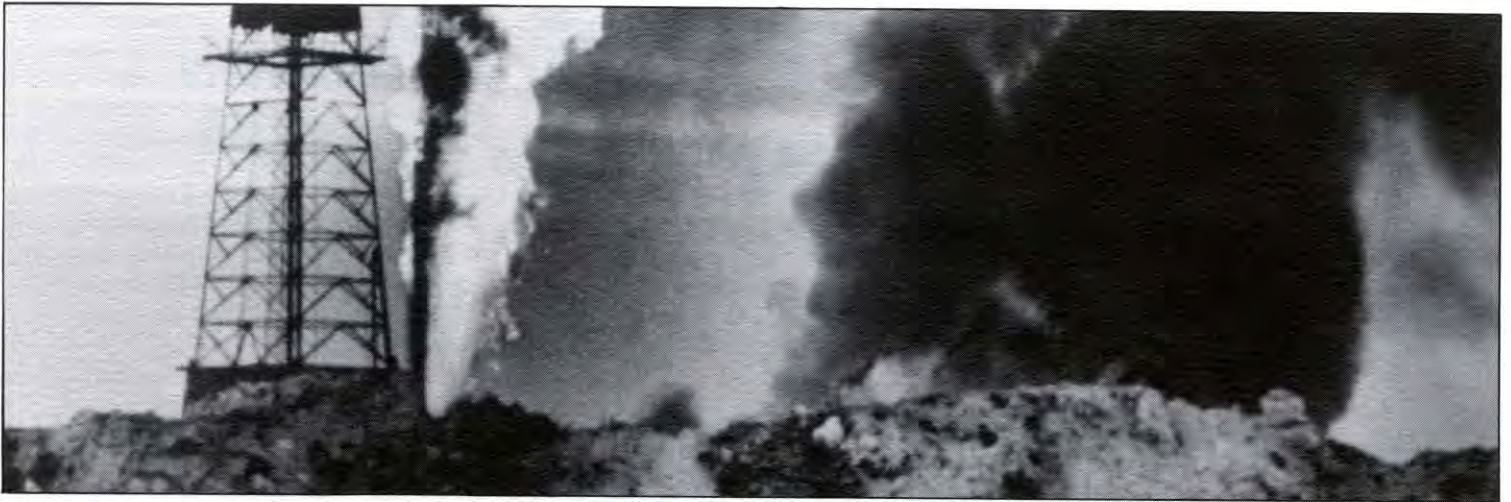
The Physiotherapy Department began its career during the improvements initiated in that decade. In March 1948, Mrs. Elizabeth Metcalfe, a graduate therapist from the University of Toronto became Director of a department that was immediately popular. The records

show that in the month of June alone, 505 patients received treatments and massages.

Finally, in September 1949 the Sister Superior, Sister Alice Herman received a letter from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons that had been awaited for at least two years. The letter approved the Hospital's request to provide advanced graduate training by authorizing a one-year course in Internal Medicine and in General Surgery.

The 1940s saw a series of changes that prepared the General for the years ahead. In addition to those mentioned, other improvements included the installation in the Pathology Department of an “autotechnicon” machine to dye tissues within 24 hours without the need for a technician.

## Post-War Growth



*Leduc No. One.*

The end of the war brought about significant changes in Edmonton and Alberta. In part these were due to wartime activities as much as to the adjustments brought by peace.

Chief among the wartime activities that changed the face of Edmonton was the construction of the Alaska Highway and the Canadian Oil Pipeline Project between Norman Wells and Whitehorse. Both these projects used Edmonton as a staging point for people and equipment. In fact the City became the headquarters for the United States Engineering Department. Over 2,500 engineer troops and hundreds of tons of equipment went through Edmonton between 1942 and 1944. The rapid increase in the population brought about by American, Canadian and Commonwealth troop movements led to a demand for space and facilities. Housing boomed to meet the needs of the people. By 1946 Edmonton's population had increased from 90,000 to 113,116. And then in 1947 Leduc No. 1 blew in.

Like the railway construction boom of the turn of the century, the oil boom precipitated a drastic increase in the

population. More and more jobs opened up and more people came to Alberta.

This picture of a prosperous post-war city provides the reason for the General Hospital's problem in 1947. Despite the recently-completed annex the Hospital was once again stretched to the limit. The Medical Staff and the Lay Advisory Board began to put pressure on the Grey Nuns to expand the Hospital in order to relieve the pressure on patient accommodations. On May 12, 1947 the Sister Superior, Sister Alice Herman, met with the following members of the Board: His Excellency Archbishop J.H. MacDonald, Mr. Milton Martin, president and hospital legal advisor, Mr. P.E. Poirier, Mr. J. Coillisson, Mr. C.E. Barnett, Mr. J. Garrett and Mr. J.A. Gallant. Their task was to determine how best to meet the accommodation needs without breaking the Hospital financially.

After considerable discussion the suggestion was made to construct a temporary hut . . . a frame building 136 feet by 50 feet that would accommodate 60 beds. It was felt that this would serve until the financial situation allowed another permanent wing to be built.

Construction of the "hut" began on July 14, 1947. From the chronicles: "the construction was placed under the protection of St. Joseph. Sister Superior, Alice Herman, paid a mass stipend that morning. Every morning the prayer 'O Glorious St. Joseph' was recited for the success of the construction. By January 23, 1948 the one-storey wing, well-lit and heated, was ready to receive patients. During a meeting of the Medical Committee it had been proposed that the wing be named 'Saint John' in honor of Dr. John Orobko, who had initiated the project.

But congestion was also occurring in another area—the nurses' quarters. At a cost of \$9,000 a three-storey building directly across the avenue from the Hospital was purchased and named "Villa Casey" in memory of Sister Mary Anne Casey, foundress and first director of the School of Nursing. Some of the students were billeted there, while others found accommodation in neighbourhood homes. In this fashion, the Grey Nuns met and mastered problems generated by their own success as a hospital.

## Social Justice

By 1949 the question of establishment of a Union needed an answer. A Catholic Hospital Employees Union had been recommended but the choice was up to each hospital administration. Sister Alice Herman invited Mr. Emmett Hall, a Saskatoon lawyer, to speak to an assembly of all the employees. His speech pointed out the pros and cons of a Union and he informed the employees that the administration was in favor of

such a step; they were free to organize if they so desired. On July 14, 1949 the Memorandum of Agreement between the Sisters of Charity of the North West Territories and Local 323 of the Building Service Employees International Union was signed.

This peaceful settlement of the question resulted in a letter to Sister Alice Herman from the City Clergy. In part its contents read: "At a meeting of

the priests of the City of Edmonton, a resolution was unanimously passed, . . . expressing the appreciation of the Clergy for the cooperation and good will shown by the General Hospital in promoting social justice . . . This was especially evident during the recent establishment of a labor union for your employees."

# MEETING THE CHALLENGE 1950-1960

## *Health Care Plans in Alberta*

**F**or the Edmonton General Hospital, the 1950's were years of adaptation and even experimentation. The decade saw the introduction of a National Hospitalization Plan that, once enacted, forever changed the role of health care in the lives of the people of Canada. Health plans however, were really nothing new to Alberta.

The Department of Public Health Act, which established Public Health as a Government department, was passed in 1919, making Alberta the second province in Canada to take such a step. Over the years several health ministers initiated improvements in health care, especially in the areas of disease prevention and extended health services. None, however, had the impact of the Honourable Dr. W.W. Cross, who as Minister of Health and Public Welfare introduced many of the major advances in public health administration enjoyed by Albertans.

While an outline of all the free health services provided by the Government would be too lengthy for this space, the following are of interest:

Alberta became the first province to provide special facilities for the care of poliomyelitis victims when, in 1928, a unit was added to the University Hospital for this purpose. Another "first", the Poliomyelitis Sufferer's Act of 1938, provided free medicine, surgical and hospital care for all residents of Alberta suffering from the after-effects of the disease.

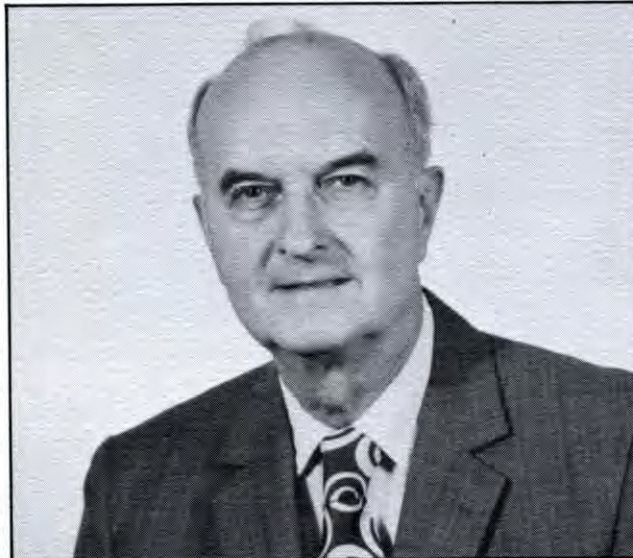
In 1936, with the passing by the Alberta

Legislature of the Tuberculosis Act, this Province became the second in Canada to make provision for all residents suffering from infectious types of tuberculosis. The Act opened the way for the great expansion of free TB diagnostic services.

But it was in 1934 that the first group hospitalization scheme endorsed by both provincial and civic governments was inaugurated by the four Edmonton hospitals. The plan provided free hospitalization for all heads of families and their dependents on payment of a set schedule of rates, determined by the size of the family. It was really a form of health insurance, and while it assured the hospitals of a more complete collection of accounts, it was by no means a financially advantageous scheme since only the operating cost could be charged -

capital charges were not included. However it did accustom Albertans to the personal benefits of group hospitalization. As their interest grew it became more and more noticeable that rising patient figures could be attributed in part to this interest and the fact that doctors began to favor hospital treatment over home visits.

Now a familiar part of Alberta's health care system, Blue Cross came into effect on August 1, 1948. The plan replaced the Edmonton Group Hospitalization program with the public contributing \$1.00 per single person per month and \$2.00 per family per month. During the next ten years Blue Cross provided health protection for 2,500,000 Canadians . . . . and brought about another bed



*Dr. Clare, Medical Director and  
Head of Radiology 1951 - 1974.*



shortage in Alberta's hospitals.

Another plan by the Provincial Government to improve health care was the Municipal Hospitalization Plan, inaugurated in Edmonton on July 1, 1952. Under this plan city ratepayers and non-ratepayers who held special contracts would receive public ward hospitalization at a cost of \$1.00 per day plus the cost of various extras (estimated to average \$4.00 per day). The remaining costs would be shared by the Municipal and Provincial Governments. The "Dollar-A-Day" Municipal Plan was again a mixed blessing for the hospitals. Constant tinkering as well as arguments over what exactly constituted "extras" made the news of the National Hospitalization Plan a welcome relief.

On March 25, 1957 the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Bill No. 320 was introduced in the House of

Commons. The debates which followed clearly indicated that the representatives of the people of Canada were conscious "a new way of life" was being inaugurated for Canadian hospitals and a people they served. As with every Government plan before it, the new health care program generated certain problems for the General. The Grey Nuns, like all those who owned and operated voluntary hospitals, had to deal with the fact that the Federal Government left the responsibility for capital financing of hospitals entirely to the Provincial Government. It followed, therefore, that to maintain the voluntary hospital system in Canada, a formula had to be found to provide for the replacement of depreciated, obsolete and inadequate buildings and for the building of new hospitals where needed. In other words a cost formula to

reconcile certain exclusions noted in the Bill with the assurance that had been given by the Honorable Paul Martin, Minister of Health: "There must be no interference", he said, "in the operation or ownership of hospitals, whether they be municipal institutions, owned by the community, or hospitals directed by religious or other voluntary organizations."

While the General did experience some problems, their impact was lessened simply because the Sister - Administrators were motivated by objectives far beyond those which could be reduced to dollars and cents. They continued to provide able and efficient administration and, eventually ways were found to pay capital costs, keep current costs justified by the quality of service given and, as always, to increase the standard of care.

## ***THE ABERHART MEMORIAL SANITORIUM***

The General's contribution to tuberculosis care in the province ended in 1952 with the opening of the Aberhart Memorial Sanitorium on the evening of February 20th. Situated on the grounds of the University of Alberta, the new facility hosted an array of dignitaries, including Premier E.D. Manning, the Honorable Dr. W.W. Cross, the Minister of Health, and Sister Superior Alice M.

Herman.

The citation, taken from the program, reads: "This evening the Aberhart Memorial Sanitorium is being opened. It is appropriate that this institution -- one of the finest of its kind in Canada -- should be dedicated to the memory of the late Premier William Aberhart. Until his death in 1943, Premier Aberhart maintained a keen interest in health

problems, and it was during his term in office that the health service program of Alberta was broadened and intensified."

On February 26, 1952 the first patients were moved from the General into the new facility. Within a week all the patients from the four Edmonton hospitals were admitted.



## ***The Polio Epidemic — 1952***

In mid-1952 poliomyelitis again reared its ugly head. This time, however, Alberta was able to face the crisis head on, for the province had been the first in Canada to promote special facilities for the care of polio patients.

When the epidemic broke out all the active patients were centred at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton. Dr. D.R. Easton, Superintendent, asked for medical assistance through the Academy of Medicine, an organization embracing all medical men in the City. More than 50 Edmonton doctors

answered the appeal and volunteered to help supervise the care of the polio patients in the overcrowded isolation ward at the Royal Alexandra. They were organized into teams to supervise the care of patients confined to iron lungs.

Lack of facilities and personnel to carry out treatment and rehabilitation had reached a state of emergency in the Edmonton area by mid-October. The epidemic continued to spread, although more slowly than before. Nevertheless more help was needed.

On October 20, 1952, Dr. A. Sommer-

ville, Provincial Deputy Minister of Health, approached Sister Superior at the General to ask for beds for patients who were past the infectious stage but who required massage, treatment, and exercises to gain full recovery. The request came at an opportune time, for the General's Tuberculosis section which had been opened in 1936, had recently transferred the last of its patients to the newly built Aberhart Memorial Sanitorium on the University campus.

Eleven patients were transferred from 2-A in order to prepare a ward for the polio patients. Administration hired another physiotherapist, while the Department of Health named Dr. Gordon Wilson, orthopedist, to direct the department. By November 29, 19 cases had been admitted. By mid-1953, 30 beds were in use.

The epidemic was still making itself felt when an announcement was made by 26 service station operators that Edmonton's first "cough machine" would be donated to the General. Valued at \$435, the machine could be used for polio patients whose lungs had been

affected. The chronicles note that sincere thanks and appreciation were given to Mr. Jim Hope, the instigator of the campaign and to all his Imperial Oil service station operator friends for their assistance. The chronicles further note that the machine had barely arrived at the General when Dr. Taylor, who was in charge of the polio patients at the Royal Alexandra, visited Sister Bernadette Bezaire, the Sister Superior. He was anxious to borrow the machine and, knowing how helpful the equipment could be for some cases, she was happy to oblige.

When the polio epidemic broke out,

the Department of Health approached the social problems in a different manner. It was decided not to close the schools and public places, but rather to encourage the population to remain calm, avoid over-exertion and dampness and, in general, take reasonable precautions. Happily the introduction of the Salk vaccine in 1956 reduced much of the danger of polio.

By August 27, 1957, only seven polio patients remained at the hospital. These were all transferred to the University Hospital on September 4, 1957, ending another era of healing and care at the Edmonton General.

## ***Reorganizing the Advisory Board***

During the Depression of the early 30's, the Grey Nuns at the General faced mounting hardships and decreasing finances. During that time the following brief note occurs in the chronicles: "July 3, 1931, a reunion of four businessmen organized by the Mother Provincial (Sister Clarilda Fortin), in view of forming an Advisory Board for the hospital."

That "reunion" became the Advisory Board, a voluntary group of citizens who were sympathetic to the Hospital. At the next meeting Mr. H. Milton Martin became the first Chairman, a position he retained until July 19, 1952 when he was relieved by Mr. Charles E. Garnett, and re-appointed as Honorary Chairman.

Mr. Martin had, in fact, been a long-time associate of the Grey Nuns. The chronicles contain the following: "At the beginning of construction in 1913, which cost \$75,400, a Mr. Milton Martin, Insur-

ance Agent against Fire and Accidents, advised the Grey Nuns' to insure their building, construction, material etc. The price he quoted was \$500.00. The Superior, Sister Bissonnette, thanked him for his kindness, saying that all that had been done already. As a matter of fact, she had just come from the chapel where she has confided all this to St. Joseph, so as to obtain special protection." The chronicle continues with the comment that, "She was not deceived in her naive confidence. The good Saint proved once again that one does not invoke him in vain. During the two years that construction, renovations and additions were carried on, there were no accidents whatsoever, not even a scratch. And one can further add, in all truth, not one disagreement took place between the Sisters and the construction workers. Homage and Thanks go to St.

Joseph!"

The new Edmonton General Hospital Lay Advisory Board was organized under the Sister Superior, Sister Alice Herman. After considerable study and review the Constitution and By-Laws were adopted in 1954.

The purpose of the Board was to act as counsel in matters concerning the inter-relation between the Hospital and the population of the service area, as well as working to improve the effectiveness of hospital services. A voluntary association, the members were reputable persons of experience and character, who would be able to assist the Sister Superior-Administrator with good advice. They represented a broad cross-section of the community, in whom the Sisters of the Hospital had a great deal of confidence. Over the years that confidence has never been in vain.

## ***"Make Room, Make Room"***

Another milestone in the General's history took place on May 3, 1953, when the new \$2,000,000 extension was officially opened with a special program for about 350 invited guests. The Honorable John J. Bowlen, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, gave the opening address and declared the new wing officially open.

This latest addition to the General reflected the growth of Edmonton into one of Canada's major urban centres. The oil boom precipitated by Leduc #1 had boosted the City's population and increased the pressure on all the hospitals. As well, the ever-increasing use of hospital facilities, promoted by the health care plans, brought about the need for yet another building program.

The original contract for the wing was given for \$1,654,888.12 to Mr. G.H. MacDonald, Architect and Mr. Harold MacDonald (of Christensen and MacDonald) Contractor...the same contractor in fact who had built the new wing in 1940. The equipment for the wing and the new dietary department were estimated at \$300,000.00.

Once again the building of a new wing gave the General the opportunity to acquire the latest in hospital equipment and facilities. The ground floor provided an area for a staff cafeteria, dining rooms and central supply rooms. On the first floor were the pharmacy, emergency department, admitting and discharge offices. A complete Surgical

Unit containing nine operating rooms, Doctor's and Nurses' Lounges and a Recovery Room were located on the fourth floor. Obstetrics comprised the fifth floor while on the sixth were situated a children's ward, Premature Unit and Formula Laboratory.

The new wing increased the General's bed capacity by 203, giving a total of 443 beds. As soon as the patients were transferred into the new wing, the student nurses were again free to return to their former residence on the second floor of the "old" hospital, consequently the "Villa Casey" property was vacated after serving for several years as a residence for student nurses.

The official dedication ceremonies

of the new wing were not only a celebration of the opening, but also a renewal of the contract between the Grey Nuns and the citizens of Edmonton and its environs. As with other occasions speeches were made, music was played and greetings exchanged between the participants. Some of the faces were familiar, His Excellency John H. MacDonald, Archbishop of Edmonton, gave the benediction and stated: "May the General Hospital continue with the same spirit and service that has characterized the Hospital since its inception 58 years ago." Other faces belonged to long-time supporters of the Hospital, such as the Honorable Dr. W.W. Cross, Minister of Health, who represented the

Provincial Government and who thanked the Sisters for their "marvellous spirit of cooperation with the Department of Health." And, happily, the occasion was graced by two parties who between them represented the true roots of the Hospital: On the one hand were Mother Flore Ste-Croix, s.g.m., Superior General of the Grey Nuns' Congregation, with her secretary, Mother Cecile Girardeau and the Provincial Superior of the Province of St. Albert, Sister Rose Vincent, s.g.m.

The other party consisted of the Doctors, inheritors of an association with the General, already a half century old. Dr. William Shandro, President of the Medical Staff, brought with his

greetings a promise to the Sisters, "we will try our utmost to maintain the ideal standards that made this hospital a Class "A" hospital." Dr. Marshall, representing the Medical Association of Canada, declared that, "the greatest contribution of the Grey Nuns to the Hospital and to the people of Edmonton is the example they give us." And Dr. Louis P. Mousseau, Chief of Medical Staff, expressed his greetings in French and utilized the occasion to thank the Superior General for the magnificent gift that she had made to Edmonton by having this extension opened.



The graduating class of 1954.

## Education and Medical/Paramedical Advances

By 1950 the General had passed several milestones: It was approved by the Canadian Medical Association for the training of interns; it was affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Alberta for clinical teaching; and it had received a Class "A" rating from the American College of Physicians and Surgeons. In addition two other schools had been approved: Radiological Technology and Medical Technology. The increase in accommodation in 1940 had raised the bed capacity to 300. This enabled the hospital to obtain approval from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons for an advanced training school in Internal Medicine and Surgery.

With the doors wide open to teaching, progress in medical and paramedical education continued throughout the decade. In 1951, approval was given by the Committee of Approval for

Hospitals for the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, for a one-year training course in Pathology and Anesthesia. Apparently it had been a long wait, since the chronicles note that, "we rejoiced upon receiving this much prayed for reply, and we thank the Lord."

The General was by then able to offer the following programs for interns: General Surgery, Internal Medicine, Pathology, Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Anesthesia and Radiology.

As a means of improving patient care as well as student training, a full-time radiologist was employed. Dr. R.M. Clare became the first permanent radiologist, replacing Dr. M. Mallet who had provided part-time services for many years. Under Dr. Clare the Radiology Department was reorganized and given a welcome facelift.

The Grey Nuns and the Doctors had

reason to rejoice in August 1954, when the Canadian College of Physicians and Surgeons named Dr. Rene Boileau, Examiner for the Post Graduate Examinations in Surgery, Western Section. Dr. Boileau held his first exam at the General in October of the same year. In the same month, a Medical Records Librarians School, the first in Alberta, was approved by the Canadian Association of Medical Records Librarian Board of Registrars. The School opened on January 25, 1955 and provided a twelve-month course directed by Sister Marie-Paule Rheault, s.g.m.

The Edmonton General Hospital recorded another first in this decade. The chronicles note that: "Tuesday, July 9, 1958. The operating room recorded a Corneal Transplant done by Dr. Reices, the first of its kind in Edmonton. Apparently it was truly a success."

## *“No longer trained but educated”*

By the late 1940's the shortage of nurses in Alberta had become acute. The rapid increase in population (and thus bed capacities), the war years and the lack of any centralized Schools of Nursing combined to lower the number of nurses in the province. But there was another reason as well.

The status of nurses in the medical profession was still that of a trade rather than a profession. Hospital Schools of Nursing were regarded as just another department. They were there to provide personnel for the hospital and thus were controlled by the hospital. This apprenticeship system of Nursing Education suited the hospitals far more than the nurses. Advances were made; the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses was established in 1916; in 1918 graduates of the General Hospital Training School wrote the first “Registered Nurses Examinations” at the University of Alberta, granting them licensure for nursing.

But nurses were still not yet considered to be able to set and police their own standards. Doctors, as a matter of course, set the examinations. Affiliation programs improved the training but did not address the real problem; the need to separate Nursing Education from Nursing Service.

By 1948 plans were being considered to affiliate Schools of Nursing throughout Alberta with rural, tuberculosis and mental hospitals, and the establishment of a central School of Nursing, which would be financed by the provincial government under the Dominion-Provincial Health Plan. The subject of a central School was a controversial one, with the possibility of reconciling all the viewpoints seemingly remote.

A number of educational changes took place at the General's School of Nursing in the early 1950's. In August 1953, the School Director, Sister Marie Laramee, R.N. B.Sc., called a meeting of all the instructors with a view to discussing the introduction of the “Block System” to the program. Her interest carried the day and in September of 1954, the students' education was placed on a complete class block of 6-8 weeks of lectures, without concurrent clinical experience. Finally on July 15, 1955 with Sister Apollonia Ste-Croix as Director of Nurses, Nursing Education was completely separated from the Nursing Service.

During the latter part of the 1950's, the School encouraged graduates to

take advantage of a Scholarship offered by the Hospital to further the education of students. Hospital Administration also encouraged members of the faculty by sending them to conventions, seminars and workshops. In 1957, for



*Sister Marie Laramee, R.N. B.Sc.*

the first time, only one class was accepted; 55 students entered a new educational concept, a program which had undergone a complete change and now offered correlated studies, including Psychiatric affiliation at the Oliver Mental Hospital, and Tuberculosis affiliation at the Aberhart Sanatorium or Charles Camsell Hospital. In the words of the chronicles, “... now the students were no longer trained but educated.”

Towards the end of the decade nurs-

ing education showed no signs of moving away from the old, albeit improved, system or to a new one. The Canadian Nurses Association undertook a pilot project that would examine and evaluate Canadian Nursing Schools. This was to determine if national accreditation of the Schools would in fact improve the standards of education and service. If the results were positive the Association would seek such accreditation.

Although Nursing Schools were already approved by the Province, each had its own standards which had to be met. National Accreditation would at once simplify the situation and provide a stimulus for improvements. At the General, the first-year curriculum was modified in January 1958. It was changed to patient-centred care as part of a correlated medical-surgical program occurring in the last half of the Freshman year. To help the third-year students, study-days of five hours of class and seminars were instituted.

With the Department of Health's assistance in the upgrading of classrooms at the School of Nursing the Hospital was able to open a training school for “Nursing Aides” on March 6, 1958. A short course was designed and instituted in order to relieve the nursing shortage experienced by the General, a shortage that had been aggravated by the opening of the new 203-bed wing in 1953. A Master Rotation Plan went into effect in January 1959, under which the students of the Nursing School were given a three-year program to assure their proper education in each clinical field, as well as assuring the Hospital that there would be adequate personnel in each department to do follow-up.

The year 1959 also saw the passage of a regulation by the University of Alberta that limited graduation to those students who had successfully written their R.N. examinations. To ensure a uniformly high standard of nursing throughout the province, a new examination, to be called the conjoint examination, was scheduled for August. The examination, formerly the registration examination for nurses, now became a requirement for graduation from a hospital School of Nursing.

The system had been improved, but for the nurses it was far from ideal. It was not until the next decade that further changes and improvements were implemented and then only after considerable pressure.

## *Sixty Years to Celebrate*

Longevity in an institution carries with it a delightful side-benefit; the longer the institution is in existence, the more often its people can celebrate. In the case of the General, 1955 was a year for a double celebration; not only was it the Hospital's sixtieth anniversary, its Diamond Jubilee, but it was also the Golden Jubilee for Alberta.

In early December the chronicles mention that in honor of the Diamond Jubilee, "La Surviance" published an article on December 7th, giving a detailed description of the Edmonton General Hospital under the heading, "To the glory of the Reverend Grey Nuns of the General Hospital 1895-1955: Sixty Years Serving The Suffering." A week later the

Edmonton Journal published an article under the heading, "Growth of General Hospital Parallels Progress of City." The article contained a number of interesting points, among which were the following: "Edmonton and the world," the reporter wrote, "shared the year 1895 as a landmark in medical history. The world at large that year saw Roentgen's discovery of the X-ray; Edmonton opened its first hospital - the 36-bed General Hospital, situated between Victoria and Jasper Avenues and Eleventh and Twelfth Streets..."

The City had changed drastically in the 60 years since the Hospital's opening, but the General kept pace. From the single 36-bed structure it had grown to a

capacity of 443 beds, 373 of which were adult beds, including 30 for polio cases, and 70 bassinets. Some idea of the Hospital's growth is indicated by a sad milestone. The original structure was finally demolished to make room for new buildings. The chronicles report: "Friday May 9, 1969. Goodbye Old House!" Mr. Gordon Pickering, who had by then become the first lay Executive Director, removed the first stones and the wooden cross on the dome of the chapel and presented them to Sister Apollonia Ste-Croix, Sister Superior.

## *"Remember When"*

During the Province of Alberta's Golden Jubilee Celebrations in 1955, Senator Aristides Blais, M.D. was among the invited guests for the City's special program. When the ceremonies were over, Dr. Blais, who was one of the General's pioneer doctors, dropped in to pay a visit to the Grey Nuns. While there he recalled some pleasant memories of Sisters he had known at the turn of the century.

Dr. Blais had first arrived in

Edmonton in 1901, with only twelve dollars in his pocket. Originally intending to go to the Coast, the depleted state of his pocket book procured for Edmonton a man whose kindness and devotion to duty won for him the respect, admiration and love of all with whom he came in contact. A true friend of the Grey Nuns and an avid supporter of the General Hospital, Dr. Blais considered it a privilege to write a few words in the Year Book of the School of Nursing

on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee. He entitled his remarks "Remember When" and, after paying tribute to the pioneer doctors and nurses concluded by stating, "We will never repeat frequently enough all the good and all the moral comfort the Grey Nuns of Edmonton gave so unstintingly, not only to their patients, but also to the entire population."

Sixty years may be a brief moment in the history of a people. In the history of the General it is long enough to accumulate some impressive statistics: 225,000 patients cared for, 79,505 operations performed, 21, 129 babies delivered and more than 23, 930 children who received the benefits of medical attention and nursing care.

Other statistics provide a perspective on the General's contribution to its service area:

\* Since the opening of the training

school in 1908, 1,101 nurses graduated (including the class of 1955)

\* In the sixty year period the medical staff increased from six doctors in 1895 to 260 doctors and 17 dentists in 1955

\* Since the opening of the School of Medical Technology in 1947, 34 laboratory technicians graduated

\* Since 1938, 28 X-Ray technicians graduated from the Department of Radiology

\* A school of Medical Record Librarians

opened in 1955 (and graduated 6 in 1956)

\* By 1955 all Hospital employees are unionized, have personnel policies and pension plans; all auxiliary staff come under the direction of a Personnel Officer; Graduate Nurses number 110 on staff and are under the Director of Nursing.

\* Since 1924, 250 medical students took their internship in the Hospital.

## *"Esprit de Corps"*

Celebrations at the General were marked by the efforts of the Ladies Auxiliary. Convened by Mrs. F. Reardon, the Annual Hospital Ladies Auxiliary luncheon for the 60th Anniversary was attended by, among others, the Honorable J.J. Bowlen and Mrs. Bowlen, His

Worship Mayor William Hawrelak and Mrs. Hawrelak and Mr. Lucien Maynard. The chronicles report that, "the members of the Auxiliary have a wonderful 'esprit de corps', so that everything was well organized and the luncheon went over smoothly."

'Esprit de Corps' is an attribute shared by all those who are involved with the General. It is an attribute that, as much as the Hospital itself, stands as a monument to the memory of the pioneer Grey Nuns who arrived in the area so long before.

## Civil Defense

As early as 1951 Premier Manning was stressing the importance of being prepared for any emergencies which might occur in war or peacetime. With this in mind the General began an evening class on Civil Defense on February 6, 1952. Held in the School of Nursing the two-hour class was attended by all graduate nurses and the Sisters. The course itself lasted for six weeks and was given by Miss Farquason, R.N. Later that month the Provincial Government opened a Civil Defense Building in the west end of Edmonton.

As the threat of war receded, the Hospital turned its attention to developing a Disaster Plan. By September 20, 1960, the program was well underway under the direction of Dr. W. Shandro.

On October 10 the first evacuation exercise took place; 100 patients were removed from their rooms in under 20 minutes. The chronicles noted that it was, "a good record for a first practice!".

On October 19, 1960 a much more elaborate exercise was held. The General, in cooperation with the Edmonton Civil Defense Organization, simulated the arrival of 100 emergency patients from a train wreck. The Edmonton Journal reported on the event: "Realism was the theme of the exercise. Casualties, simulated at St. John Ambulance Centre by civil Defense members, stumbled into the Edmonton General and were carried in on stretchers. There were 50 members of the 2nd Batt. Princess Patricia's

Canadian Light Infantry and 50 student nurses from the Hospital... The realistic makeup and acting would have won Hollywood several awards but at the emergency department it gave nurses, doctors, interns and official observers a blood-curdling idea of what conditions would be in an actual disaster."

The hospital disaster plan, now a compulsory part of hospital accreditation in Canada, took two years to organize. In his evaluation of the exercise, Dr. Shandro noted that, "the value of the disaster plan depends upon it being reviewed and revised as a dynamic part of the hospital program."

## Doctor Louis-Philippe Mousseau

When Dr. Mousseau joined the medical staff of the General in 1934, it was the beginning of a long and strong friendship with the Sisters. His concern for the Hospital was second only to his concern for the welfare of his patients. And both of these interests superseded by far any concern for his own welfare.

His skills and dedication brought him the post of Chief of Surgery in 1952, and Chief of Staff in 1953; the latter's duties he had in fact been fulfilling for many years without an official title. In 1952 Dr. Mousseau received an Honorary



*Dr. Louis-Philippe Mousseau.*

Degree of Doctor of Laws from the

University of Montreal, and, five years later, an Honorary Degree of Licentiate from Laval University.

In December 1959, at the Medical Staff Christmas Dinner, his professional colleagues and friends gathered to offer congratulations to a man who was celebrating his 25th anniversary with the Hospital, years during which he became known as a man to whom all could turn at any time. In the words of His Grace Archbishop J.H. MacDonald, "His coming to the West was a lifesaver for the General Hospital."

## "IT'S TWINS...AGAIN!"

Hospitals, like sports teams, love to break records and make history. The 1950's were a banner year for the General in this respect with twins and triplets appearing again and again.

Twins, in fact, appeared not only in the Maternity ward but also in the student body. With an impressive candle-lighting ceremony held at the School of Nursing in February 1952, 34 nurses were officially accepted into the Edmonton General Hospital School of Nursing. Caps were presented to the students and for two of them, the capping marked a historic moment for the General. The students were identical twins and their presence meant that the General could boast of having twins in the first year... and twins in the second

year...and twins in the third year!

"Seeing Double Can Become A Habit" was the caption in the Edmonton Journal on March 5th, 1958. The occasion was the birth of yet another set of twins. In all five sets were born at the General within three days.

On June 3, 1958 triplets were born at the General, the first in over a year in Edmonton. Their arrival apparently came as a surprise to the parents and as the father, Mr. George McCall, commented, "We were arguing about choosing one name, now our troubles are threefold."

The next set of triplets, however, made medical history. On October 15, 1958 Mrs. Raymond Croteau of Dawson Creek, B.C. entered the General where she expected to give birth to triplets.

The first two infants, a boy and a girl, arrived shortly after her admittance. Two and a half months premature they were rushed to incubators while the staff waited for the third baby. They waited...and waited. On October 22, Mrs. Croteau was told she might as well go home. Then 24 days later the third baby, a boy, arrived shortly after Mrs. Croteau reached the hospital. Never before had triplets been delivered over a 24 day period and Mrs. Croteau soon realized that she had become world news. Her comment when asked if she knew that she carried triplets was, "I knew three months ago I was going to have triplets, but I didn't know they'd come in shifts!"

## FACING THE STORM. THE 1960's

### *Administrative Changes At The General*

**B**y 1960 the General was in an enviable position. Located in the heart of a still growing industrial city with a large rural hinterland and a population of almost half a million, the General was affiliated with the University of Alberta Medical School and fully accredited by the Joint Commission on Hospital Accreditation. But as the decade progressed, forces for change that had been gathering strength in the preceding years came into play and provided new directions for the Hospital. These changes made themselves felt primarily in the areas of administration and nursing.

In January 1962 Sister Superior Alice Gauthier completed her term as Superior-Administrator and was replaced by Sister Therese Chaloux. More significant, however, were two other appointments announced in that year: an experienced, licenced accountant as the Hospital's comptroller and a personnel director. These appointments reflected the trend towards the use of lay persons in administration. In fact the number of Sisters at the General declined from 27 in December 1962, to only 17 in November 1964. It was in 1964 that yet another important lay position, that of Assistant-Administrator, was created. Mr. Robert Aman was hired for the position. Sister Claire Gauthier, who had held the position, was able to devote more time to future construction planning.

This decade also saw the end of the position of Superior-Administrator. The reasons for this break with tradition were simple in that the growing

complexities of the Hospital's position required a separation of the job functions. Sister Therese Chaloux was elected Provincial Superior of the Grey Nuns of Alberta and Chairman of the Hospital Board of Directors and Mr. Gordon Pickering was

appointed as Executive Director of the Edmonton General Hospital in August 1968.

Prior to coming to the General, Mr. Pickering had held a number of important positions, including the chairmanship of the Manitoba Hospital Commission and a directorship with the Canada Pension Plan. For many years he had been employed at various times with the Grey Nuns in Regina, Calgary and St. Boniface, Manitoba. In short, his 21 years of hospital experience made him a good choice for this new position.

The statement of Mr. Pickering's appointment was issued following a conference with Sister Therese Chaloux. In commenting on the change of policy, she expressed confidence that the new plan of separating the role of Superior and administrator would both ensure continuity and contribute to the traditional success of the hospital's administration. Mr. Pickering proposed the formation of a local Board of Management at the General.

Up to this time the Hospital had been under the guidance of a Board of Directors consisting of seven members of the Congregation and the Provincial Superior (as Chairman). The day-to-day direction was delegated to the Administrator, who met with the Board once a month to review policy direction



*Mr. Gordon Pickering, Executive Director of the Edmonton General Hospital, presents bricks from the original hospital to Sr. Ste. Croix and Sr. Anna Beaulac.*

and report on the operation of the Hospital.

The growing complexity of hospital administration, a result of both medical advances and the increasing role of Government in hospital finances made it difficult for the Board to provide more than a very broad overall direction. It was, however, the funding situation that made it imperative for a change to take place. The system covering the financing of Alberta hospitals generated vague areas which led to some costs not being covered by the Government. In such circumstances the hospital had no recourse to local tax funds except under conditions set out in the Alberta Hospitals Act. This Act made it possible for a privately owned and operated hospital to enter into an agreement with a Municipality to underwrite such costs. One of the conditions however, was that the Municipality could appoint members to the Hospital Board. The fact that the City of Edmonton was not interested in doing so made the provisions of the Act of no value to the General -- even if the Grey Nuns had been willing to accept

such a condition.

With all this in mind the Board of Directors began to explore ways and means of delegating an increased degree of authority and responsibility for the Hospital's administration, while at the same time, retaining overall control.

On April 15, 1969, Mr. Pickering, regretfully announced the decision to dissolve the Lay Advisory Board and replace it with a Board of Management. The Board would be responsible for administration under terms of reference established by the Board of Directors.

The initial meeting of the new Board of Management was held in October 1970. Mr. Pickering chaired the meeting and pointed out that it was such a significant milestone in the history of the Hospital that it was fitting to have present Sister Fernande Dussault, Provincial Superior and President of the Hospital Corporation. Sister Dussault extended her gratitude and appreciation to the members of the Board of Management on their decision to serve. As well, Sister Dussault made a number of important points relative to the

establishment of the Board which were that: "The establishment of the Board marks a significant change in the policy of administering hospitals owned and operated by the Grey Nuns... This change in policy is the result of a number of factors, the most important of which are the ever growing complexity of hospital operations as a result of advances in science and technology, the increasing complexity of hospital financing... and the need to involve residents of Edmonton in the operation of the hospital to ensure that the hospital reflects the views of the community it serves."

In her closing remarks Sister Dussault stated that, "the Corporation is confident that each of you will continue to work in furthering the primary objective of the hospital, which is, of course, the care of the sick and injured, while at the same time maintaining the Christian tradition and atmosphere which has been the hallmark of the Edmonton General Hospital since it was founded."

## Construction in the 60's

For those who provide hospital beds to the public it must seem that no sooner is a new wing planned, financed, constructed and opened then it is already time to begin the process once again. By 1957 the shortage of beds at the Hospital had become so acute that the Lay Advisory Board began to discuss the feasibility of new construction. In the back of each Board member's mind was the fact that the "Alberta Hospitalization Benefit Plan" was due to be introduced on April 1, 1958 and that this Plan would certainly necessitate fresh negotiations with the Provincial Government regarding hospital funding.

It was around that time that the Edmonton Journal reported an interview with Dr. J.P. Moreau, President of the Medical Staff at the General. Dr. Moreau commented that, "an extreme shortage of beds was expected for the winter due to a steady increase of about 1,000 people per month to the city's population and the new doctors practicing in the area. About 274 doctors use the Edmonton General Hospital and all doctors qualified by Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons are allowed to care for patients in the building... another extension is urgently needed."

Meeting after meeting took place over the next four years. The chronicles

note that, "Today we narrowed our prayer requests down to the point that we implore only the Holy Spirit in order that our superiors will see the light on the deliberations of such importance."



*The nursing residence under construction.*

Finally, in March 1963 representatives of the Provincial Government informed the public that a grant of \$5 million would be given for the construction of a Nurses Residence and a 250-bed wing. Since the original request had been for

\$10 million and the Government had previously announced that only \$2½ million would be granted, the amount was received with heartfelt thanks.

On December 8, 1965 the Sod Turning Ceremony took place right in the middle of the Hospital tennis court. One after another clerical and lay dignitaries stepped forward to present their congratulations. The ceremony was hosted by the Assistant-Administrator, Mr. Robert Aman. Present were Mr. E. Christensen, President of the Lay Advisory Board and Dr. L.E. Beauchamp, President of the Medical Staff. Representing His Grace Anthony Jordan, Archbishop of Edmonton (who was in Rome) was Monsignor E. O'Donahue, P.D. and Vicar General of the Edmonton diocese. Present also was Sister Yvonne Prevost, Provincial Superior and Chairman of the Hospital Corporation, who brought the greetings of the Mother General and her Council in Montreal.

The Honorable Dr. J. Donovan Ross, Minister of Health of Alberta slowly turned the three shovelfuls of earth and recited in a loud voice, "May God bless this earth where the new building will rise, in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

The construction resulted in a new School of Nursing, a new Nurses Resi-





*Hospital construction.*

dence, a new service unit for Laboratory, Radiology, Physiotherapy and Central Supply and additional beds to bring the total complement to 520 (adult and children) and 100 bassinets. Numerous alterations were also required to connect the new construction with the existing facility.

The chronicles relate: "Tuesday, December 14, 1965: a fence several feet high is surrounding the work in progress, with cabins here and there and heavy machinery of all sorts that will eventually bring about destruction and renovation. It's this morning that the imposing mechanical scoop takes the first formidable mouthful, going at full speed in spite of the frozen earth."

Months later the chronicles return to the site and mention that, "Monday, July 18, 1966: an historical day to remember! The St. John's ward is on its last leg. Space has to be provided for the current construction. The Ward was built in 1947 as a temporary frame building to relieve a bed shortage, while awaiting the East Wing opening in 1953. The name St. John was given the ward to honor Dr. John Orobko, the instigator of the project and a good friend of the Sisters."

The long awaited day of the Laying of the Corner Stone and the Official Opening of the Centennial School of Nursing arrived. Held in the afternoon of August 11, 1967, the program was

hosted by the Master of Ceremonies, Dr. S. Hanson. Once again the Honorable Dr. J. Donovan Ross addressed the guests, all of whom appreciated his presence since he represented the Government that had made the ceremony possible. Other speakers bringing greetings were the Honorable Grant MacEwan, the Lieutenant-Governor; Reverend Mother Yvonne Prevost; Doctor Morris Weinlos, the Acting Mayor of Edmonton; Mr. Paul D. Bowlen, Chairman of the Hospital Advisory Board; and the Right Reverend Monsignor E. O'Donahue. In his remarks Monsignor O'Donahue stated that, "The Archdiocese of Edmonton feels deeply indebted to the spiritual daughters of Blessed Marguerite d'Youville, who have labored here even before Canada was a nation or Alberta a province." As a means of bestowing appreciation where it was due Monsignor O'Donahue said, "The Archdiocese of Edmonton is extremely aware of the generous support given by our governments and we take the opportunity to express to the Honorable Minister of Health, Doctor J. Donovan Ross, and to the Government of Alberta, our appreciation for the part they have played in bringing the project to a successful conclusion."

Last to speak from the platform was Dr. Rene Boileau, President of the Medical Staff. In his short remarks Dr. Boileau paid a grateful tribute to all the

hospital workers when he said, "To all who compose the ancillary services of the Hospital and who are so important as members of the medical team, may I publicly express our deep appreciation for your support and devotion. Without you, the nurses, the technicians, the aides, the orderlies, the engineers and the maintenance people, the medical care of the patient could not function. We thank you most sincerely."

After the last speaker had concluded Dr. Ross and Monsignor O'Donahue proceeded to set the cornerstone. Dr. Ross remarked that the box of documents being placed behind the stone would eventually be brought to light again and attest to the devotion of the Sisters.

Following this ceremony the guests were asked to gather at the School of Nursing where a short presentation took place. With the following words Dr. Ross officially opened the Centennial School of Nursing, "It is now my pleasure, with the cutting of this ribbon, to officially declare open, the Centennial School of Nursing operated by the General Hospital under the Grey Nuns, and may the years that lie ahead in this field be rich ones for all the girls who enter these doors and who three years later will graduate and go out into broader fields to serve the needs of their fellowmen. By the cutting of this ribbon, I now declare the Centennial School of Nursing officially open."

# The Nurses: Celebration...



The graduating class of 1924.

The invitations were sent across the country and by Saturday, October 21, 1961, those who could come were gathered at St. Joachim's Parish Church in Edmonton. The occasion was the 50th Anniversary of the graduation of the first nursing class at the General. Over 300 nurses attended the celebrations; reminiscing, renewing old friendships and touring the hospital. The Alumnae Committee had taken care to plan a range of activities but for many the sense of history was more than enough.

Edmonton. 1895. A village with dreams of a great future, but most prospective citizens from the East were quite willing to let it grow up a little, before becoming part of it. Transportation was a test of endurance, and since there was no hospital in Edmonton, doctor and patient alike had to travel by horse and buggy to the mission at St. Albert, opened by the Grey Nuns in 1881.

Edmonton's growth, or perhaps it was that buggy ride, spurred the decision by the doctors of Edmonton to ask the Grey Nuns to open a hospital in the city -- a step they gladly took. Edmonton was

justly proud of its first hospital, and it served its purpose well. But after the turn of the century, as the population continued to increase, it became clear that a larger facility with more trained personnel was required. In September 1908, Sister Mary Ann Casey opened her first nursing class with six young women as students. Much of their teaching was "learn as you do", for twelve hours a day.

The celebrations continued. On Sunday October 22, the Golden Anniversary of the School, a total of 57 nurses received their diplomas. And their feelings must have been just the same as those experienced by the original six so long ago. During the commencement exercises nurses wearing the original uniforms (from 1908-1925, 1925-1935, 1935-1961) placed baskets of flowers before a large, draped portrait of Mother d'Youville, which was mounted on the stage. A "tribute of Homage to the Past" was presented by the students after which the 57 graduates took their places on stage. For the 2,000 guests in attendance, the lights, flowers and singing of the Glee Club made the evening a

memorable one.

On Monday, October 23, the Eucharist, celebrated by Monsignor J.M. Malone in the Hospital Chapel for all the deceased Alumnae, opened the final day of the reunion. That evening a banquet was held at the Derrick Golf and Winter Club. Dr. L.P. Mousseau, known to the students as "Pop" was the guest speaker, and the only male in attendance. The chronicles say that, "It was at this banquet, for the first time in the history of the School, the Grey Nuns had the privilege to take part in the Graduate's Banquet." In the words of Sister Superior Alice Gauthier: "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 your memory and be a source of inspiration for all the days to come."

# And Closure

On April 21, 1963, having completed a formal six months course of studies, the 19 orderlies of the General Hospital were given certificates and pins at a graduation ceremony in the Hospital. Completion of the course made the orderlies eligible for registration with the Alberta Association of Nursing Orderlies. The General pioneered this field of in-service education and the ceremony was to honor the contribution of the orderlies towards nursing care.

But by this time the traditional diploma programs in hospital nursing schools were coming under attack. They were deemed inadequate. In Saskatchewan experiments in a central nursing education plan were underway as well as the implementation of a two-year nurses training program. This two-year program was launched in 1962 at the Grey Nuns Hospital School of Nursing with Sister Therese Castonguay as director.

In 1962 the Canadian Nurses Association, supported by the provincial associations, recommended that a new type of School of Nursing be established at the post high school level. When the

Report of the Royal Commission on Health Services (the Hall Report) was released in 1964, it supported the notion that nursing education should be organized as other professions, and recommended that an orderly transfer be undertaken to remove the training from the aegis of the hospitals to that of the educational institutions.

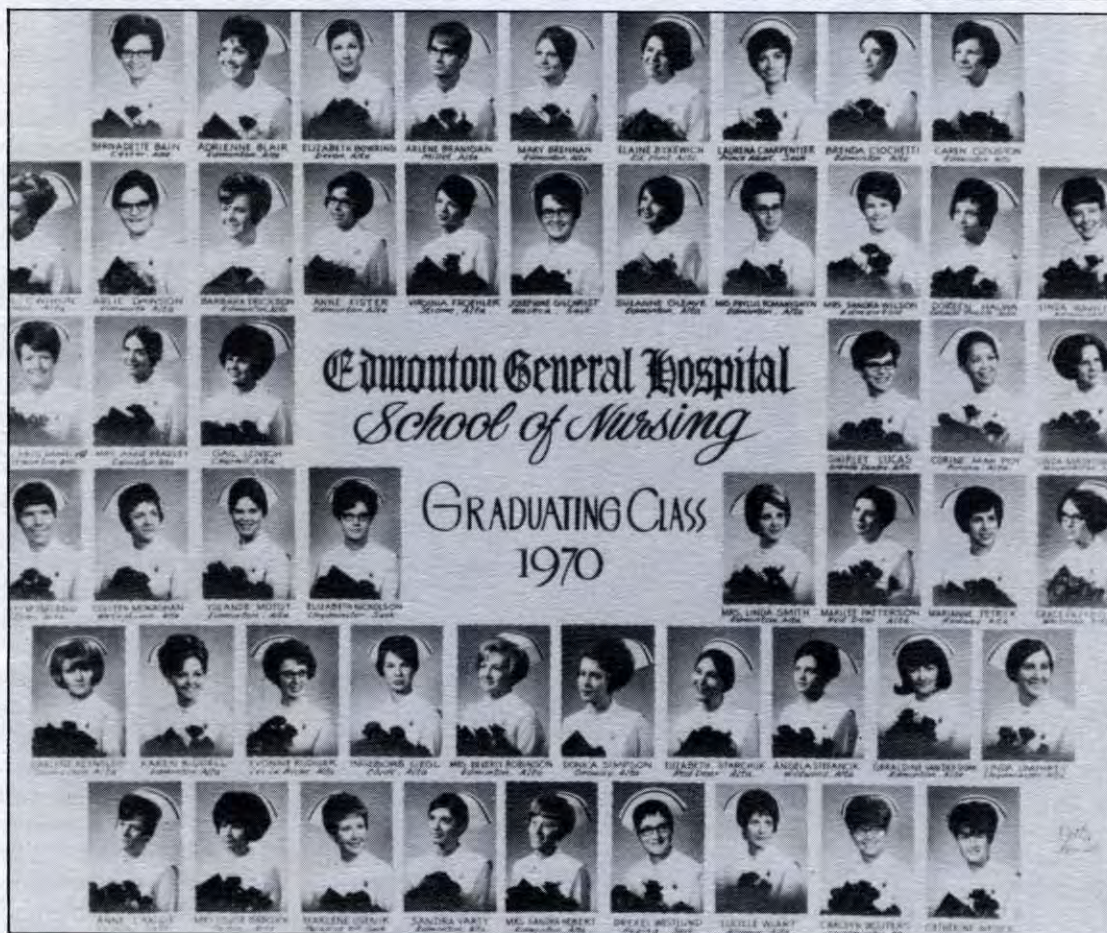
Alberta was the second province to partially undertake the transfer of basic diploma programs from hospitals to the provincial education system. The announcement that Mount Royal College had developed a diploma nursing program was made and the first class was ready for admittance in 1967. The director of the Edmonton General Hospital School of Nursing, as well as the Hospital Administration, firmly believed in the need for better means to educate nursing personnel. Thus, in 1968, the transfer of the training programs from the General School of Nursing of St. Jean College was begun. The chronicles state: "Tuesday, September 10, 1968: This afternoon our new student nurses registered at College St-Jean where students will study three days of the week. On the other two days

they will receive practical experience in nursing at the General."

Grant MacEwan Community College hired a Grey Nun, Sr. Therese Castonguay, to plan and administer the new Nursing Program.

On August 19, 1973, after 65 years of providing nursing education, the School of Nursing closed its doors. Chagne, both perceived and substantiated in the Weir Report, the Wallace Report, the Hall Commission and the Scarlett Report, had ushered in yet another new era. Henceforth, the academic portion of the program would be carried out at MacEwan Community College and the clinical units at various health services including the General.

Over the course of its existence the General's School of Nursing graduated nearly 2,000 nurses to to an ancient and honorable calling. The years had seen dramatic changes, both socially and professionally, but the roots of nursing, the care and tendering of the sick and injured, have never, and will never change.



The graduating class of 1970.

# Health Care Plans and the Hospital

Health Care plans are an excellent institution. Their implementation, however, have provided voluntary hospitals such as the General, with what the Chinese have been known to refer to as "interesting times".

With the introduction of the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act in 1957 by the Federal Government, the largest single program ever undertaken in peacetime Canada was launched. Meanwhile Alberta brought forth "The Alberta Hospitalization Benefit Plan" which took effect on April 1, 1958. Hospitalization services rendered by the voluntary hospitals, as well as others, came under the new plan. From that date forward, rates of payment to health care institutions were established to cover the operating costs, but not, however, the capital costs.

Under this plan the owners of the hospitals were required to assume certain financial responsibilities. These covered the areas of site costs, working capital, unapproved costs and any excess costs which would normally be approved unless they were above the level set by the Provincial Government.

The Edmonton General Hospital, owned and operated by the Grey Nuns, entered "The Alberta Hospitalization Benefit Plan" in good faith and has done its utmost, since 1958, to operate within the ceilings established by the Department of Health. Nevertheless the financial areas that were considered to be the responsibility of the Hospital, fueled by inflation, soon brought the Hospital close to a precipice: either the hospital must receive additional assistance or the services must be reduced.

The scope of the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act was enormous. Brought into effect on July 1,

1958, the need for the closest possible co-operation between Federal and Provincial government levels was soon made clear. By 1961 all the provinces were participating and the necessary adjustments were beginning to be implemented.

Meanwhile the Federal Government, reacting to pressures generated by the provinces, established a Royal commission on Health Services -- the Hall Commission.

The Commission, under the chairmanship of Chief Justice Emmett M. Hall of Saskatchewan was, "to enquire into and report upon the existing facilities and future needs for health services for the people of Canada, and the resources to provide such services..."

The members of the Commission studied Canada's health services from coast to coast, specifically the existing facilities for providing those services, which included disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment; present and future requirements for training health personnel; and costs and present methods of financing all Canadian health services.

The briefs presented to the Commission were numerous, thought-provoking and comprehensive. One such brief was that of the Associated Hospitals of Alberta. It brought forward an important issue -- that of the inadequacy of the Provincial Government grants to the hospitals. Sister Mary Legris, the Past President of the Association, presented the views of the voluntary hospitals and told the Commission that there was a basic inequality to the system. Municipal hospitals could cover their "excess costs" by simply requisitioning the money from their municipalities; voluntary hospitals had no such

recourse. The inevitable results would be the disappearance of the voluntary hospitals, as their owners succumbed to the financial pressures.

The General had already experienced a near disaster. On June 18, 1962 the chronicles note that, "Government representatives came for a meeting in order to investigate why the administrative costs of the Hospital were so much higher in 1961. They reached a conclusion which was favorable on the Hospital's behalf, to the great satisfaction of all. The deficit was found to be a real one and thus nearly total reimbursement could be expected. Our prayers of request were fervent with this intention in mind. When all was over Sister Superior had a Mass of Thanksgiving offered next morning."

The Hall Commission released its findings in 1964, with the central conclusion being that Canada must make "the legislative, organizational and financial decisions, necessary to make the fruits of health sciences available to all Canadian residents without hindrance of any kind." The Commission's first recommendation was that "the Federal Government enter into agreements with the provinces...to assist the provinces to introduce and operate comprehensive, universal, provincial programs of personal health services..." This led, in 1968, to the implementation of the Medical Care Act (1966). The Act provided for Federal sharing of approximately 50 per cent of the costs of a provincial medical insurance plan if it incorporated comprehensive medical coverage, a universally available plan, portable benefit coverage and public authority administration. By April 1972, all Canadian provinces and territories were participating.

## The Question of Money

In late 1967 both the Edmonton General and Misericordia Hospitals requested that City Council provide financial assistance. Their position was that while the Provincial Government regulations restricted the Hospitals' sources of revenue on the one hand, they only reimbursed part of the costs (the operating costs) on the other. The gap into which "excess costs" fell, i.e. costs not considered reimbursable by the government, was rapidly becoming a financial quagmire into which the facili-

ties were sinking.

The Hospitals also pointed out to City Council that just because there had been no deficits for a number of years did not mean that the deficits did not in fact exist. They did, but they had been covered by much "belt-tightening", most of which involved staff and employees working longer hours for no extra money. It was, however, a situation that could no longer continue.

Compelling though these reasons were, the City Council felt that it could

not provide the necessary funds and suggested that the Hospitals adopt a united front and go back to the Provincial Government for the assistance.

A further complication to the situation was the question of the Owners' Equity in privately owned hospitals. Ever since the inception of the Alberta Hospitalization Benefit Plan there was a concern that the Owners' Equity would eventually be absorbed, without compensation, by the Plan. This possibility was made increasingly plain with the

introduction of the "Capital Debt and Re-imbusement Formula", in lieu of depreciation. Although few recognized the implications of the formula in the beginning, as time went on the gradual disappearance of the equity became more and more apparent.

It is not surprising that in view of all the meetings, discussions, hearings and consultations that took place between the Advisory Boards, Governing bodies, Hospital personnel, Cabinet committees and the like that recognition of the

Owners' Equities was achieved and an agreement negotiated that would provide for the payment of interest and the redemption of the equities.

On September 9, 1969, a meeting was held in Edmonton by the Sisters of Charity of the General Hospital of Montreal (Grey Nuns), for the purpose of reviewing the final draft of a By-Law pertaining to the formation of a Board of Management. The By-Law was approved by the General Council in Montreal on April 14, 1970 and the

initial meeting of the Board of Management held on October 8, 1970. In his opening remarks Mr. Gordon Pickering welcomed the new members and indicated that the By-Law under which the Board of Management was established provided for nine members: seven appointed by the Hospital Corporation; one by the City Council and one by the Dean of Medicine of the University of Alberta.



*Behind the scenes at The Edmonton General c. 1960.*

# LAYING THE GROUNDWORK.

## 1970 - 1980

### *Changes And Rearrangements*

The years of the seventies at the General saw a great deal of renovation and rearrangement. It was a time of refurbishing rather than new construction. Departments such as Out-patient Emergency, Respiratory Therapy, Obstetrics, Admitting and Physical Medicine all underwent major renovations between 1971 and 1973.

The Nurses Residence became the home of Psychiatry, Occupational Therapy, Diabetic Instruction and Medical Photography. The Psychiatric Unit was in fact, able to increase its patient care from 21 to 40, and the space formerly occupied by the Unit was taken up by Extended Care. However it was becoming clear that both these areas, Psychiatry and Extended Care, would require much more space, even their own wing before too long.

New departments were brought on line: the Department of Nuclear Medicine, a three-bed Hemodialysis unit and a Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, which comprised physiotherapy, occupational therapy and recreational therapy. As well, an Active Treatment Unit for the care of alcoholics was established in cooperation with the Provincial Government.

By late 1974 authorization was received to begin planning for a new addition that would accommodate psychiatric and extended care patients. In the meantime a psychiatric day care program was established, and by year end it was accommodating 25 patients a day.

By mid-decade, which somehow seemed to be passing more rapidly than usual, the General had upgraded, improved, rearranged and refurbished much of its physical facilities and departments.

Plans for the Youville were underway, as were plans for a parkade to be located across 100th Avenue between 111 and 112 Streets. Inside the hospital a Pastoral Care Service was established in 1973 by Sister Alice Romanchuk. For patient families and

staff, Pastoral Care is synonymous with support, comfort and prayer. The presence of the Sisters in Administration and other service areas was decreasing and Pastoral Care provided a new way to perpetrate the Christian Philosophy and Christian atmosphere that has always permeated the General Hospital.

New programs were instituted in the latter half of the decade as well. An outstanding success was the initiation of an out-patient surgery program. Designed to care for surgery patients who did not need to be admitted for a



*Dr. John J. Lipinski, Vice-President - Medical, 1969 - 1985.*

lengthy stay, the Unit operated for a six-month trial period. The evaluation revealed that the Unit exceeded original expectations and, as a 10-bed unit, began permanent operation. In another area a four-bed Satellite Intensive Care Unit was developed to supplement the existing 10-bed Unit.

Construction on what was to become the Youville Wing finally began in July 1978. Planned as a 12-storey structure, the facility reflects an understanding of what the Province will need in the years to come as the "baby boom" generation ages. A further important development in the late seventies was the inception of a Coronary Care Unit made up of six acute care beds and six intermediate care beds as well as a rehabilitation area. Specially trained nurses and other staff provide patient care, and constant monitoring of the computerized cardiac equipment installed as part of the Unit.

## Bright Occasions

The 1970's had their share of highlights, both personally and professionally. In 1974 for example, the Department of Radiology was surveyed by the Joint Committee of the Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Association of Radiologists, Canadian Society of Registered Technologists and received full accreditation for its student program. In that year also special awards were presented to physicians who had been associated with the Hospital for 25 years and to physicians who had held the position of President of the Medical Staff. Accreditation was received in 1975 for an additional four years for the training program in the Department of Respiratory Therapy and in 1976 an

extremely complimentary report on the General was received from the Hospital Visitors Committee.

A very special highlight occurred in 1978. On September 1, the Post Office Department issued a stamp bearing the likeness of the Blessed Marguerite d'Youville. The stamp was unveiled during a solemn mass held in the Mary-Queen-of-the-World Cathedral in Montreal. The honoring by Church and State of the Grey Nuns' foundress proved that her message still possessed its original force and was as timely at that moment as it had been in 1737.

In the following year a patient questionnaire was distributed. Questions were asked on the following subjects:

"Did you receive good care?", "Were you treated with dignity and respect?" and "Were you treated in a sympathetic and understanding manner?"

To the first question patients responded 99.4% "Yes". To the second, "99.9%" "Yes" and to the third, 98.9% "Yes". It is a result that shows quite conclusively that the principles and philosophy of Mother d'Youville have been kept alive and put to work to benefit the community by her daughters and by their co-workers.



## **"SOMEONE TO COUNT ON..." Employees at the General**

From the day the General opened its doors, its employee philosophy has been based on certain principles; the most important of which is that every individual has an inalienable right to be treated with tact and respect regardless of race, creed, color, religion or status. This principle is applied equally to staff, patients and visitors alike.

But in a hospital as large as the General had become in the 1960's, it might seem to the outside observer that such principles would be paid only lip service given the pace and pressures associated with a modern health centre. At the General, however, this "golden rule" has served as a unifying force and done much to create a sense of family over the years.

It is true that in the past that sense of closeness was much easier to feel and appreciate. In 1903, there were only ten sisters on staff and one male employee -- whose task it was to drive the Sisters to and from their convent in St. Albert. The buggy drawn by "Old Bob" also doubled as the Hospital's first ambulance. For more than one injured citizen, the sight and sound of Old Bob shambling up meant that help and treatment would

soon be at hand.

The growth related elsewhere in this story meant that new faces did make an appearance at the General. By 1936 for example, the lay staff of the Hospital was comprised of 8 registered nurses, 1 dietician, 2 graduated interns and 2 senior interns, 31 female employees, 21 male employees and 72 student nurses. Two years later during the "Feast of the Poor" held to celebrate the second Centenary of the Congregation, the employees were treated to a banquet and a day off.

Perhaps more than any other institution, a hospital inspires longevity. In 1946, on April 3, a celebration banquet was held to congratulate Mr. Joseph Picard on 25 years of service as an engineer at the General. Five months later the spotlight was again turned on the employees with the establishing of a separate Personnel Department by Sister Superior Margaret O'Grady.

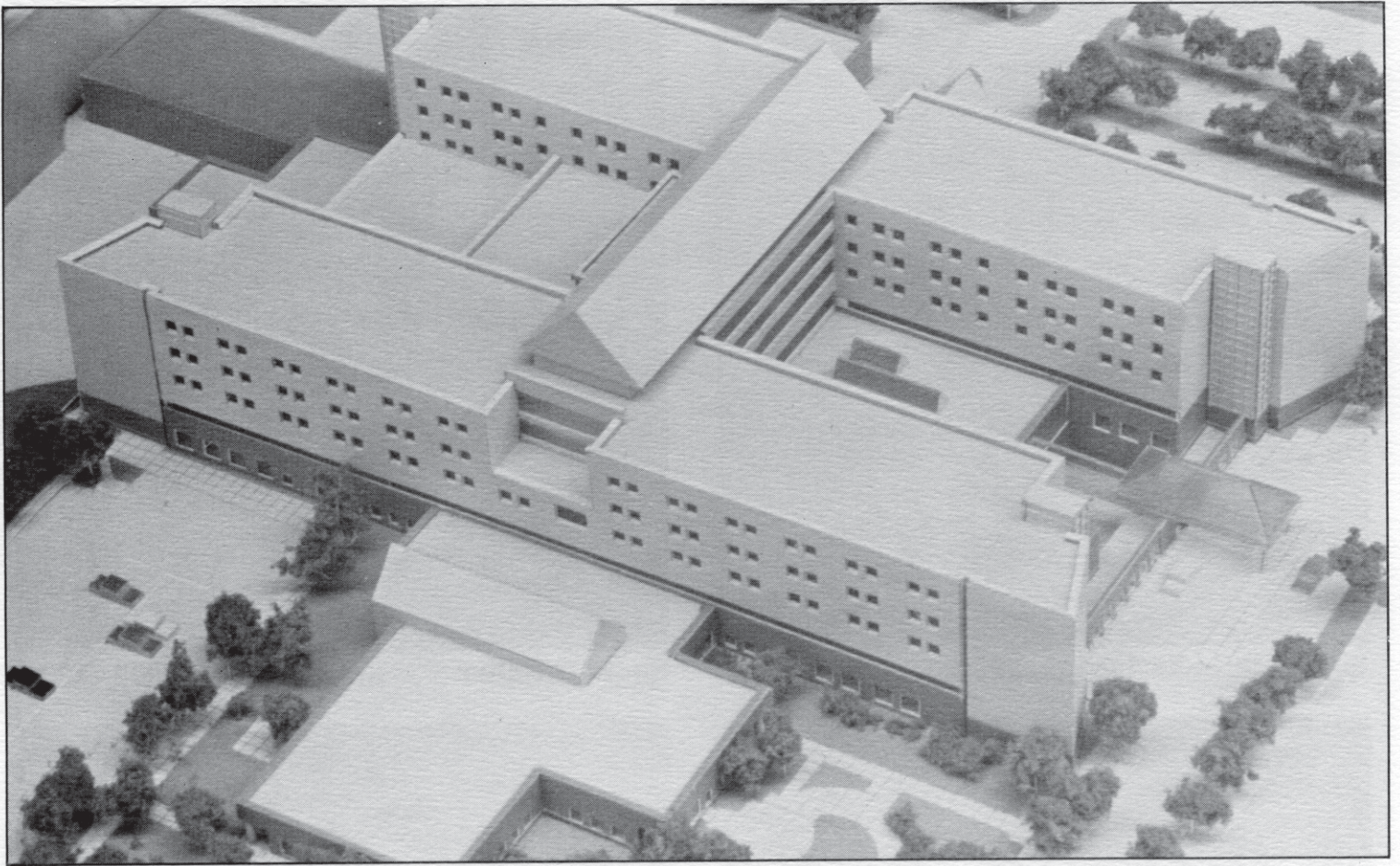
The Personnel Department was immediately plunged into projects and plans that would provide support for the employees. A pension plan was developed and, in 1947 a newsletter designed and published. "Teamwork" was

an instant success and encouraged better relations between staff and employees, between the employees themselves and between the Hospital and the general public.

The years rolled by, each bringing celebrations and tribulations. In 1949, the Great Flood created a lake in the sub-basement and threatened the medical records. Prompt action by two interns saved them. The Community Chest campaign of 1951 saw an employee donation of \$500, a magnificent gesture that received an accolade from the Edmonton Journal. "Football Fever" was seemingly contracted by everyone in the hospital in 1954 when the Eskimos brought home the Grey Cup after defeating the Montreal Alouettes. In the same year the Journal paid tribute to chief engineer A.F. Baril, whose novel use of a stethoscope to find water and steam leaks gave the General a hearty morale boost.

Much more could be said about the employees who have brought so much to the General over the years; of their loyalty, faithful service, friendship and understanding. They will be remembered.

## NEW BEGINNINGS. THE 1980's



*The Mill Woods Hospital.*

Every decade begins with the promise of change, of new directions and innovative programs. For the General the 1980's are no exception. The very beginning of the decade saw one significant change -- a new corporate name for the institution. Up until the 1950's transactions had been made through a Corporation constituted by an Act of Parliament passed in 1882. In 1959 the General achieved complete autonomy by an Act of the Legislative Assembly in Alberta that incorporated The General Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Edmonton. Some 20 years later, after the autonomy of the General was well established, the head Corporation under which the hospital had been first incorporated and under whose auspices the hospital's business transactions had been carried on, was known as "The Sisters of Charity of the Northwest Territories". On the 14th of July, 1981, the head Corporation became known as "The Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Montreal".

In April 1982, the construction of the Youville

Wing was finally completed. Built at a cost of \$21 million, the new 12-storey structure provides much-needed geriatric rehabilitative care and a psychiatric facility. It contains 210 geriatric care beds and 70 psychiatric beds of which 10 are intensive care beds. The Wing also contains a Geriatric Day Hospital capable of accommodating 50 patients, a 15-bed Palliative Care Unit, a Department of Rehabilitation Medicine and various support services.

Perhaps the most dramatic "new direction" achieved during the 1980's will be the completion of The Mill Woods Hospital which will become the second site of the General. The commitment by the General to the new facility was prompted by the original need for the General itself--a community health care centre. Since Edmonton has expanded so significantly since 1895, particularly in Mill Woods, the acceptance of responsibility is very much in tune with that which was undertaken by the Sisters so long ago.



**Superiors — Administrators 1895 - 1968**



**Sister Marie-Xavier**

**1895 - 1898**



**Sister Letellier**

**1898 - 1902**



**Sister Dionne**

**1902 - 1904**



**Sister Margaret O'Brien**

**1904 - 1909**



**Sister Arthemise Gosselin** 1916 - 1921



**Sister Elisabeth Quesnel** 1921 - 1927



**Sister Catherine Duckett** 1927 - 1930



**Sister Marie de l'Eucharistie** 1932 - 1936

**Sister Bissonnette** 1909 - 1916



**Sister Clarilda Fortin 1930 - 1932 1936 - 1940**



**Sister Marguerite O'Grady 1940 - 1946**



**Sister Alice Herman 1946 - 1953**



**Sister Bernadette Bezaire 1953 - 1955**



Sister Alice Gauthier

1955 - 1962



Sister Therese Chaloux

1962 - 1968

## Directors of the School of Nursing

Sister Mary-Anne Casey 1908 - 1912  
 Sister Heloise Marchant 1912 - 1914  
 (Marie du S. Sacrement)  
 Sister Mary-Anne Casey 1914 - 1921  
 Sister Cecilia Wagner 1921 -  
 1926 (Aug. 31)  
 Sister Margaret O'Brien-Laverty 1926  
 (Sept 1) - 1929 (June 18)  
 Sister Antoinette Chauvin 1929 (June  
 22) - 1932 (July 15)  
 Sister Clara Tongas 1932 (Sept 8)  
 - 1936 (Nov. 23)  
 Sister Annette Lachance (relieving)  
 1936 (Nov. ) - 1937 (July)

Sister Alice Bonin, R.N. B.Sc 1937  
 (Aug 24) - 1940 (Nov. 28)  
 Sister Florence Neuhausel, R.N. B. Sc.  
 1940 (Nov. 28) - 1943 (July)  
 Sister Florence Keegan, R.N., B.Sc.  
 1943 (July) - 1951 (May 30)  
 Sister Marie Laramee, R.N. B.Sc. 1951  
 (June 13) - 1955 (July 25)  
 Sister Apollonia St. Croix, R.N. B.Sc.  
 1955 (Aug. 5) - 1965 (Aug. 8)  
 Sister Cecile Leclerc, R.N. M.Sc.  
 1965 (Aug. 10) 1971 (January)  
 Sister Ellen Marfin, R.N., M.Sc.n.  
 1971 (June) 1973 (August)

1895/96

EDMONTON GENERAL HOSPITAL  
THE LADY NUNS OF EDMONTON

1985/86

90<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

SERVICE      OUR TRADITION      OUR FUTURE



