

1858 MOUNT HOPE HOSPITAL for the MENTALLY ILL – DARTMOUTH

By Gloria Stephens

Mount Hope corner stone was laid -June 8, 1856, for a new Provincial hospital for



the ‘insane’ and completed in 1858 and given the name ‘Mount Hope’. The hospital was located in an area called Woodside, high on a hill, on the shores of Dartmouth, overlooking the Halifax Harbour.

The establishment of this hospital was due to the long efforts of Dr. Hugh Bell stemming back to 1832. He was horrified over the horrendous conditions that patients were subjected to in the Halifax Poor House: “...like inferior animals to be caged, chained and whipped into submission....as if the link which

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unites them to the human family were entirely dissolved”. Bell tried in vain to get someone interested in making changes to these inhuman conditions. He became Mayor of Halifax in 1844 and at the same time, Commissioner of the Poor House, trustee of the Acadian School and judge of the Probate Court. Still working to improve the situation, he could not convince the government to do anything.

Dr. Bell and Dr. Alexander Sawyer went to New England to study the care and treatment of mentally ill patients. While there Bell met Dr. Luther Bell (no relation) who was the Medical Director of the famous McLean’s Asylum in Boston. Here Bell picked up helpful ideas and information.



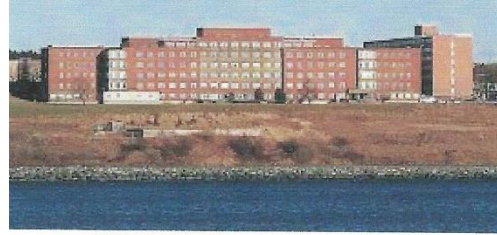
DR HUGH BELL

Bell then met Dorthea Lynda Dix, who was recognized as a competent authority on care of the mentally ill. She was eager to assist Bell and in 1849 she sent a report to the House of Assembly, NS, describing the “*ghastly and deplorable conditions within the Poor House*” and enclosed several pointed statements with the hope of making the members ‘feel guilty’ for not listening to Bell and relieving the condition. Her report was mostly discarded as “*coming from an arrogant meddling female and not even Canadian*”. They especially were appalled at her suggestion to purchase land for the sole purpose of building a hospital dedicated to the mentally ill. She donated plans for the building anyway.



Mount Hope was opened as a mental hospital in 1858 and the first Administrator was Dr. Stephen DeWolfe. Unfortunately Dr. Bell died May 16, 1860 at age 80. The Mount Hope was rebuilt and renamed

in 1940's to the NOVA SCOTIA HOSPITAL (NS Hospital) and became one of the first accredited psychiatric facilities in Canada. This is how the hospital appears today (2023) as a fully accredited teaching facility and affiliated with Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS.



THE NOVA SCOTIA HOSPITAL

Joseph Howe, the politician, once said of Dr. Hugh Bell ... "he can hold his own in debate with any member of the legislature and he is a fit representative of the victims of the 'middle-class'. At Bell's funeral in Halifax, Howe stated ... "the hospital ever to remain a monument to his memory". Dr. Hugh Bell was Mayor of Halifax 1844 -1845, a member of Joseph Howe's first cabinet of 'Responsible Government' and Governor of Dalhousie College 1840 -1858

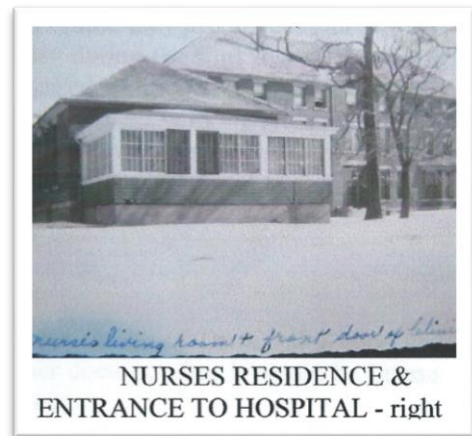
1945 POLIO EPIDEMIC

The Mount Hope hospital served another important aspect of patient care, that being the first institution to serve Nova Scotia polio victims in the 1940's, under the direction of Dr. C.B. Kinley. This site was chosen as there was, at the time, a separate unused building so the patients could be isolated.

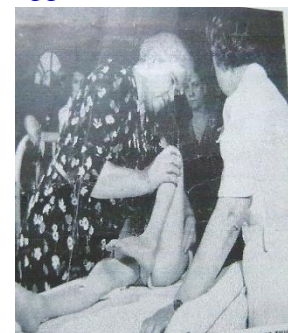
(The following pictures and description of the polio clinic is from an interview with Mabel G. (Purdy) Doucet by the writer, G. Stephens in 2013.)

Nurses lived in residence on the hospital site. The nurses worked a 12 hour shift with one afternoon off a week. Their pay was \$4.00 an hour. Their uniforms were individually purchased but the hospital provided aprons to help protect them from the polio virus. Gloves were not worn but the nurses were advised to wash their hands frequently. Masks were not worn either. Actually there were no particular precautions described to protect the 'workers'. Instruction as to how to nurse these victims of the dreaded polio disease only came about when Dr. Kinley and Mabel (Purdy) Doucet returned from Massachusetts. Mabel said "Everyone was so busy during a shift that there was no time to worry about yourself. One day a young patient fell and fractured his arm and a cast could not be applied until the severe muscle spasm subsided after hot packs were applied."

Dr. Kinley went to Rochester to obtain information as to how to treat the patients and on his return sent several nurses to learn the 'Sister Kenny Hot Pack and Physio' treatment. Mabel (Purdy) Doucet was one of the nurses sent and returned to the Mount Hope Hospital to teach the rest of the nursing staff the Sister Kenny treatment. Mabel said "Giving nursing care to patients who required the Iron Lung machine, was like giving care to patients in a coffin." Sister Kenny exercising a patient's leg before the application of hot packs.



NURSES RESIDENCE & ENTRANCE TO HOSPITAL - right



SISTER KENNY



The picture on the left is Dr C B Kinley standing on the Mount Hope (NS Hospital) steps. This polio clinic was closed when a new polio clinic was opened at the VG hospital about 1950, still under the direction of Dr. C.B. Kinley.

Mabel Doucet centre, left - daughter Marie (graduate of VG School of Nursing class 1976); right - granddaughter Sarah (graduate Dalhousie School of Nursing 2005). Mabel received a Citation from the Canadian Red Cross, 1980 and a Distinguished Service Award, Red Cross 1995 for her work with polio victims. In 2009 Mabel received the College Registered Nurses NS, Centennial Award of Distinction. Mabel died March 19, 2016 at age 99.

THREE GENERATIONS OF NURSES



(This picture was on the cover of Focus, Journal)



In 1951 the polio clinic in Halifax was first located in the Army Barracks at Anderson Square (behind the Cathedral) before being situated to the West Annex, behind the Victoria General Hospital (1948 building). Before the end of summer there were 400 victims in Halifax. The space was limited making nursing the victims of polio difficult because of the large equipment required. The clinic was under the direction and founder, Dr. Cecil B. Kinley who was also Chief of Surgery at the VG. Instrumental in establishing the in-patient Polio Clinic was Dr. H. Gordon Quigley.

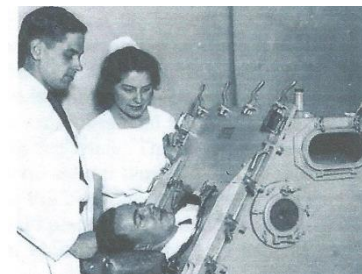
Dr. C. B. KINLEY



Veronica Richard was the Nurse-in-Charge. She was a graduate from Timmins School of Nursing. The staff included one orderly and ten nurses who shared shifts to cover 24/7 care as these patients required constant monitoring. Veronica studied the “Sister Kenny” treatment program in New York. She returned to Halifax to set up the clinic along with Dr. Kinley and Dr. Quigley. The nursing shifts were 12 hours and 6 1/2 days a week. *“We ate on the ‘run’ and frequently worked overtime, without question, when patients needed care and we were short of trained nurses”*, said Veronica. *(Following retirement, Veronica lived alone in a house in Londonderry, NS. One night a man broke into her home, beat her up and raped her. She managed to escape but collapsed on the roadside where she was found by a passerby who gave her assistance to hospital. The man was caught and sent to jail.*

Veronica continued to live in her home.)

One of the staff nurses was Maude D. MacLellan, a VG graduate, class 1936. She studied in Minnesota during the polio epidemic of 1942, under Sister Kenny. Maude did further studies at Toronto University in Public Health. She then travelled with the ‘Crippled Children’s Clinic’ throughout NS, administering care to the polio victims. Maude died June 23, 1995 at age 93.



MAUDE MacLELLAN

The NS Society of Crippled Children introduced the mobile clinics program in 1957.

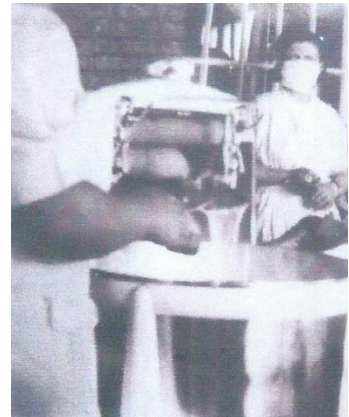
The President of the USA National Society for Crippled Children introduced the Easter Seals stamp in 1933. The idea gradually spread across Canada, becoming a major fund-raising event by 1957. This was a tremendous boost to the care of polio victims

With the 1950's epidemic in Halifax, student nurses in the VG School of Nursing were used to fill in for staff and every one received the Salk vaccine. As quoted from such a student, Edith Bogle, class 1953A:



“My work included assisting in the care of 14 patients, all in the Iron Lung machine. The Iron Lungs were all lined up in a large room where the swishing and sucking sound never stopped. The machines acted as bellows and were powered by electricity.” Edie continued on with her talk;

“There were large washing machines with a ringer at the top. The basin was filled with scalding hot water and large flannel packs were immersed into this water. We used large tongs, about two feet long, to remove the packs from the water and put the packs through the wringer. The packs were tested on ourselves as many patients were not sensitive to heat or cold because of the effect of the polio. The packs were applied to the affected area, covered by a protective sheet to keep the heat longer. These packs were applied 4-6 times a day followed by exercise and massage. It was very difficult and dangerous to the workers moving these washers across the floor to where the packs were needed. Today it would not be permitted, a safety issue. The children and adults were often very emotional because of the long separation from family as no one was allowed visitors while in the infectious stage. I will never forget the crying of patients, the worried faces of parents, but most importantly, watching the positive results of our hard continuous work to help these patients to a normal life, at least as much as possible.”



Edie Bogle, daughter of Myrtle and Alfred Bogle of Londonderry, NS. A graduate of the Victoria General Hospital School of Nursing, (VGH) RN, BSN, MSN, MS (HAS) from Michigan University where she graduated Magna Cum Laude. She received the RNA Michigan 'Most Able Award', 1992 and the Hospice & Home Care Award for 37 years of volunteer service.

Dr. Jonas Salk's discovery of the polio vaccine in 1955 has presented a much different picture regarding polio throughout the world. Nevertheless, there are still pockets of the disease in parts of the world where the vaccine has not been used and the World Health Organization is monitoring this very closely.

A quote from Dr. H. Gordon Quigley: *“NS was ill prepared for an epidemic of polio. As for the victims who endured the lung, had it not been due to the generosity of an English Nobleman who donated an artificial lung to each county in NS, many more deaths would have occurred. No one, no person or doctor in most of the counties even tried to operate a lung, they sent the lung and patient to Halifax, to the VG clinic. It was the hard working volunteer nurses who made the success of the clinic. The staff who worked here were like 'lepers' as no other health care worker would come near the clinic and that included doctors, interns except two. Obtaining equipment*

like metal suction tips was sometimes a matter of begging or stealing, everyone was so fearful of the disease.”

Quote from a patient Greta Peppard 1951

With a new sense of purpose I returned to school and graduated two years later from Lunenburg Regional Vocational School with a certificate in bookkeeping. I then could help run the family business; return to my painting as she did in the 1940's and type articles for the local newspaper. I also had the self-confidence to become a public speaker on the subject of being a polio survivor in 1981 for the 'Year of the Disabled'. My miracle is not so much regaining the use of my hands. Its having the love and encouragement my family has given me. I'm a very lucky woman.

Dr. Arthur Shears (1924-2013) started the NS Rehabilitation Centre in Halifax, 1956, for polio, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries. He was the first Medical Director of the centre. Shears also started the Royal College Residency Program in PMR, and the Dalhousie Physiotherapy Program 1963. Shears served on many Boards including NS Polio Foundation and the NS Crippled Children's Society.



Dr A SHEARS



GLORIA WEBB –VG School of Nursing, Class 1953A

Post-Polio Syndrome affects approximately 25-80% who have previously survived an acute attack of poliomyelitis, which is a viral infection of the nervous system. Symptoms may appear 15-30 years after recovery at an age of 35-60. Symptoms would be muscle weakness, pain and fatigue. The reason for this recurrence is unknown. Treatment is lots of rest to control the fatigue, and to manage activity with energy- saving equipment such as canes, walkers and perhaps wheelchair use. The Post-Polio Syndrome is not 'life-threatening'.

Another nursing polio story - Jean Livingston, VG class of 1937 during the polio epidemic in Halifax, was sent to the Civic Hospital to care for these polio victims. Jean became a patient in the Camp Hill hospital and while there was awarded the Queen Jubilee medal for her long service in the nursing profession. She died in the 1960's.

MORE ABOUT the NOVA SCOTIA HOSPITAL – DARTMOUTH

The Mount Hope was renamed in 1940's to the Nova Scotia Hospital and became one of

the first accredited psychiatric facilities in Canada, as mentioned before. To continue with a few personal nursing stories:

Betty Walker, a graduate nurse from PEI who nursed several years at the Nova Scotia hospital has recorded her experiences with the electrotherapy treatment as follows; “I admitted a 45 year old female nurse following a suicidal attempt. She was recently divorced with two teenage daughters, fighting a difficult battle for custody and saving the home. The home was sold due to law to divide assets. Numerous anti-depressants were tried with little success. Electrotherapy (ECT) was suggested which brought extreme fear to the patient. I sat and talked softly to her for considerable time, explaining the procedure and the possible outcome and that I would accompany her and remain with her. I also said that I had a selfish reason, I wanted her back to work as she was such a terrific nurse. She had the ECT and eventually discharged and back to nursing. She relocated to different community, established a home and her daughters graduated from University. I saw similar results for ECT’s and was glad to be a help to so many.”

(Betty, a member of the Nursing History NS Society (started 2007) was Treasure for a session)

The control of the violent patient was, for several years, the performing of a Frontal Lobotomy which rendered the person extremely docile. The writer, Gloria Webb Stephens was a member of the original surgical team at the VG hospital under the Director, Dr Wm Stevenson and Head Nurse, Don Carruthers, VG grad of Class 1941. This was all pioneer nursing as we worked alongside the medical team. There were only three nurses at the time so we were on call 24 hours, a lot of overtime but still rewarding and exciting work. Lobotomies were done routinely and this is another ‘full-story’ for much later to be told.

The Director of Nursing at the NS Hospital from 1951 – 1977 was E.C. Purdy, RN. She published a book: ‘History of the Nova Scotia Hospital’. A building was named after Miss Purdy and is still in existence (2023). As described by a nurse who worked under Purdy during the late 1960’s; Joyce (Stevens) Baxter a VG graduate, class 1961B: described Purdy as being ‘professional to the core, ran a tight ship as a military background but always



THE PURDY BUILDING

fair. She was held in high regard by all the nursing, medical staff and patients, but she had an ‘intimidating presence’.

Purdy lived in an apartment within the hospital, so could be seen at any hour making rounds of the hospital. Purdy fell and fractured her arm and often a member of the nursing staff would be asked to braid her hair, as she had long braided hair that she wore in a bun. One morning Joyce was assigned to go to Purdy’s quarters, which were located in the hospital proper, to braid her hair. “*Even with trepidation, because I had never braided hair before, I found Miss Purdy to be a grateful patient. She guided me in what to do. Looking back, I believe the lesson I learned that morning, was what nurse theorist Virginia Henderson first described as the ‘Art of Nursing’- “that regardless of an individual’s status, you help*



JOYCE BAXTER.

them do what they cannot do for themselves, as we were nurse patient relationship”.

(Virginia Henderson was born in Kansas (1897 – 1996) a graduate of the Army School of Nursing, Washington, DC in 1921 and then a Masters of Nursing from Teacher’s College, Columbia University. She was considered the 20th century – Florence Nightingale as an author, editor, educator, who defined the modern nursing profession. She developed the ‘NEED THEORY’, that is the 14 components that make up basic nursing care)

Joyce continued to describe the hospital as being: old and had a beautiful curved wooden staircase. The patients were either in ‘Open Units’ or in locked rooms during the 1960’s for the safety of the patient and the nurse. Nurses had to carry many keys for these rooms, and became quite heavy. Each key had a number which was recorded along with the name of the nurse assigned to it, a lost key was a major breach in security, promptly reported and resolved. There was always concern that the keys would be left lying around, so were carefully monitored. One had to be very careful going into the ‘locked rooms’ as many patients were on ‘the ready’ to escape. Joyce told the story of one such incidence that occurred to her; *“I opened the door and was nearly knocked over by a female who bolted passed me. I reported immediately and she was quickly apprehended by security staff as she ran towards the harbour. In an attempt to describe the way she felt about life, she wrote the following poem. Joyce has wondered since - how she is- where she is -IF she is”.*



‘A WISH’

“If I were God and He were me
If I were God from up above
I’d make a woman who could see
I’d make a planet called love

Beyond that first impression which
A place where people could share
Is quick and always so unkind
of every thought and deed and care.
Without a wit to bear in mind

There would not have to be a law
I’d be a person with a Heart
an institution or a brow,
Not like me a real Farce!

This planet would outshine the rest,
I’d have an idol all my own
because it would be the happiest
A woman who is very known

Beyond that tenderness, Love andre
Care
And it would make my life
which would solve the problems in
the end.
complete if I could come
But I always have it in my Heart
within her reach.
For only fools like me go on
the way I do,”