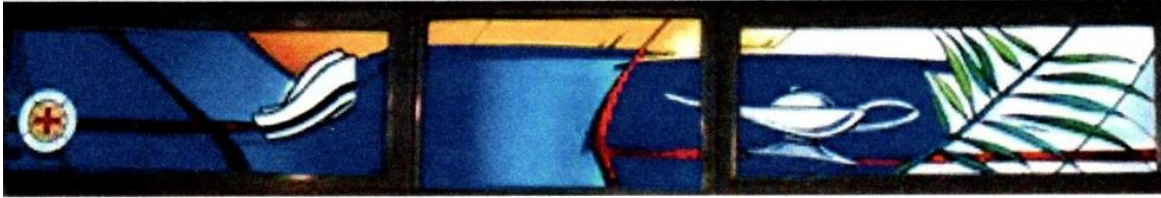


THE STORY OF THE STAINED GLASS WINDOW – CENTENNIAL BUILDING – VG SITE

By G. L. Stephens, 2019



As a member of the Victoria General Hospital School of Nursing Alumni, Gloria (Webb) Stephens made two proposals to the membership, for consideration, in June 2003: 1) place a wreath at the Halifax Cenotaph each year on November 11 to honour VG nurses who have served; 2) asked members to support an idea of installing a stained glass window in a public building somewhere in Halifax, this would commemorate VG nurses and their commitment to serving the community of Nova Scotians throughout many years. It was also noted that the project may be a lengthy process as much had to be done such as: appropriate design and placement, as well as procuring funds for the project. Windows and other types of ‘Public Art’ exist in major Canadian cities, why not Halifax. After considerable discussion two motions were made on the two proposals and both were accepted to proceed. Gloria was appointed as Chair which she gladly accepted, to continue in the investigation on the feasibility for such a project.

The VG hospital has been a ‘beacon’ in the health care for the citizens of Nova Scotia since named after Queen Victoria’s Jubilee, 1887 and the founding of the School of Nursing in 1890, having graduate some 5000 and then the official organization of the VGH Alumni 1920, followed by the formation of the VGH Alumni Archives in 1938, a remarkable accomplishment and impressive history.

The following are the procedures which were immediately completed:

- September 2003- determined that no window exists in Halifax that would represent nurses
- November 2003 – Terms of Reference presented to the Alumni members for approval
- December 2003 – agreement to proceed with the project

Between January 2004 and April of 2004, many areas were investigated such as gathering information for a draft design and possible placement for the window. Several meetings took place between Mary Ellen Gurnham, Chief Nursing Officer, VGH, and Gloria Stephens to discuss the possibility of placing the window in the lobby of the Centennial building. The first choice was the bottom centre panel but this was not acceptable to the hospital as the window would interfere with patients looking for their transportation. A compromise was reached and the three top panels were accepted for the placement of the window.

May, 2004 – during an Executive meeting, it was agreed to have an artist draft several possible designs for the window, to be ready for the membership to view at the Fall meeting. Prior to this Gloria had investigated several companies who produce stained glass windows and on her recommendation it was agreed to work with Sattler’s Stained Glass Studio in Pleasantville, NS.

At the time one of their artist, Sue Obata was assigned to do the window design. A \$500 deposit was sent to Sattler's Studio by Gloria (Webb) Stephens in order for the design to proceed.

By June 2004, written permission was granted by the hospital administration to proceed with the project and the site for the installation of the window was confirmed. Now the artist was able to proceed with submitting different designs as several suggestions, pictures and drawings were given to the artist by Gloria, especially the cap design. Personnel from Sattler's Studio visited the site to take accurate measurements for the window.

September 2004 was the beginning for active fund raising. Gloria met with a member of the VGH Foundation and arrangements were made for financial donation through the Foundation as then an income tax receipt would be available. Publicity was the next step undertaken and articles were presented to the Chronical Herald, Foundation Newsletter and the VGH Alumni Newsletter and other channels.

October 2004, three window designs were viewed at Sattler's Studio by Mary Sue MacKenzie (Alumni President), Norma Price and Gloria. Two designs were discarded right away. The third had possibilities but one section had to be improved, that being the pin and the cap. The cap looked like three sailboats and had a blue band not a black one, this is where Gloria assisted with the cap. A meeting was held at Gloria's with Mary Sue, Norma and two other alumni members to consider the revised design before it being shown to the membership at the November meeting. So at the November meeting two designs were presented on an overhead projector and one was chosen by a majority. The artist could now prepare a final design. A major 'push' was on for funding as this was an expensive project but one worthwhile as by now the majority of the membership were excited to see the window installed. Hasty Notes were developed as part of the fund raising and sold 6 for \$10 dollars, and are still available. The next activity for Gloria was to organize a 'Dedication' ceremony.

April 2005 Sattler's installed the window in the lobby of the Centennial building, VG site. What excitement!! The window description: has the VGH school pin and cap, the yellow stripe across the top signifies warmth and positive energy, the palm branch symbolizes victory, success, hope, love and caring, the lamp as Florence Nightingale to nursing.

May 12, 2 PM, 2005 the 'Dedication' of the window, took place in the lobby. Special invited guests who brought greetings were: Honourable Angus MacIsaac, Minister of Health, CEO Don Ford- Capital Health and Mary Ellen Gurnham, Chief Nursing Officer who did the unveiling. Other dignitaries who attended were: Kathleen Graham- VP Clinical Care, Karen Mills- Project Coordinator Centennial building, Sattler's Studio members, Linda Hamilton – Executive Director College Registered nurses NS, Barbara Oke – Nursing Policy Advisor NS Dept. of Health. Beside the window there is a plaque on the wall: "The stained glass window commemorates the care and commitment of Victoria General Hospital School of Nursing graduates, 1890 to 1995. Dedicated by the VGH Nurses Alumni, May 2005"

It is the hope that the light, colour and creativity in this window will be uplifting to patients and their families and bring 'life' to this part of the hospital as a legacy of the nurses who gave their 'duty of care'.