The VGH School of Nursing Alumni officially has functioned the first Tuesday of the month since March 2, 1920. It was started by the Superintendent of Nurses, Bertha Pickles. The first president was Mildred (Hollaway) Hall, class of 1909. One could say that the Alumni is 124 years old as the first class graduated 1892; a remarkable feat and accomplished through the efforts of dedicated volunteers.

The Alumni is managed by an Executive (minimum of 2 year term) of president, president elect, secretary, treasurer and past president/ nominating chair. The Board consists of the Executive and the Chairs of the Standing committees: Archives, Program, Bursary & Awards, Newsletter, Publicity, Sick & Visiting & Telephone. Regular meetings are held the first Tuesday of April, May and October through to December from 7 to 9 PM in the Ballroom of the Bethune building, VG Site. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held in June as a dinner or luncheon meeting in the Weather Watch, Dickson building.

Membership dues ($20 annually) are collected in January. One can become a Life-Long Member by paying at once $150. Notices are sent through the quarterly Newsletter. A copy of the first Newsletter is filed in the Archives. The Newsletter contains stories of graduates and their accomplishments, notices of events, class reunion reports, historical articles, obituaries and contact information. Bylaws are reviewed periodically and a copy is filed in the Archives and can be viewed on request. The logo for the Alumni is the last school pin and the motto: “Respect the Past to Build the Future”.

The Halifax Explosion occurred a few years prior to the Alumni formation in 1917 and the VGH was very involved in treating the victims, so one of the first activities of the Alumni was to knit items of clothing, make parcels of food, dressings and other essentials and gave to those who lost their homes. Nurses also made dressings for the hospital, nurses’ caps and did volunteer duties within the hospital.

During WW1 and WW2 VG graduates served as Nursing Sisters to the point of almost depleting the hospital of nurses. Many distinguished themselves in both wars, receiving medals, mentioned in dispatches for their outstanding and courageous performances under fire. One such nurse in WW1 was Laura Hubley (class 1898) who was Matron of the #7 Dalhousie Medical Stationary Hospital Unit serving throughout France, received the Royal Red Cross 1st. Class Medal. Another in WW1 was Margaret MacKenzie who served in Gallipoli and on return graduated in Public Health and...
became the first Director of Public Health in NS. She received the Mons Star, King George V Jubilee Medal and the British War Medal. She was from the VG class of 1908. Many could be named in WW2 as well, so as a representative, will feature Jean Nelson. She was a Matron of a 1200 bed hospital in France and received several medals: Royal Red Cross 1st Class, Officer Sister of St. John Ambulance, 1939 -1945 Star, France & Germany Star, Defense Medal, War Medal 1939 – 1945 and 8 ribbons. On return she was for many years Director of Nursing at Camp Hill Hospital, Halifax, NS. During WW2 members of the Alumni once again knitted items, packed parcels with food, letters and other items and sent overseas to the Canadian troops. They also made dressing again for the hospital as supplies were difficult to obtain and where they could did volunteer duties in selected areas because of the shortage of nurses.

The objectives of the Alumni have changed over the years according to the events of the time but the mandate has remained. Recent accomplishments have included:

- Donated a brick in Victoria Park, Halifax with inscription: “from the VGH School of Nursing”
- Planted a tree with a plaque in front of the Centennial building to replace trees destroyed in the hurricane of 2003
- Place a wreath annually November 11, at the Halifax Cenotaph, since 2003
- Installed a stain-glass window to honour graduates of the VGH School of Nursing, 2004; (picture at the top of each page)
- Donate articles to Palliative Care, VGH site, such as money to the Music Therapy Fund, blanket warmers
- Donate a sum of money annually to the VGH Site Foundation for patient comfort
- Provide a quarterly Newsletter to the Alumni members
- Provide annually, bursaries to University nursing students who would be associated with a graduate of the VGH School of Nursing
- Provide occasionally, equipment for the nursing student Learning Lab, such as a hospital bed
- Donate food and clothing annually to local charities
- Award presented occasionally, to an Alumni member who has contributed significantly to the workings of the Alumni.
- Sponsored Victorian Teas, Bridge Evenings and other events for the Alumni members

The Alumni remains vibrant with plans to celebrate 100 years in 20/20 with a three day event to be held at the Westin Nova Scotian Hotel, Halifax, as a “Welcome Home”, September 11 – 13, 2020. Registration information found on the newly installed website.