

Hospital Idea Took Form at Commerce Chamber Meeting

Raffle Veto, Avro Shut-Down Didn't Deter Promoters

The concept of building a hospital in Georgetown first gained acceptance in late 1954 and early 1955. Basically, it was the brainchild of a group who have remained interested in the work until its present completion. Among those in the group were Mayor John Armstrong, John Gunn, Mrs. Muriel Adams, Rev. A. Calder, Dr. A. Macintosh, and Dr. J. Chamberlain. And while no doubt there were many others, these were the ones mentioned in news reports of that time.

However, the project remained static until the Chamber of Commerce sponsored a public meeting to discuss the idea and to form a committee. This took place and hospital consultant G. Friesen, gave the results of a survey he had completed. The projected cost was \$300,000 for a 50 bed hospital. The committee first formed was headed by John Gunn, Chamber of Commerce head and chairman of the Hospital Board since its inception.

Almost a year passed in discussions and planning, and it was decided to launch the campaign on Victoria Day, 1956. A very generous boost was received when Delrex Developments gave a \$12,000 home to be raffled off. This project ended in near disaster when the postal department "cracked down" on using the mails for lucky draw tickets.

The bombshell struck on July 30, 1956, "Black Friday" when Mayor Armstrong and treasurer Mrs. William B. Hamilton received word that their mailing privileges were cancelled. The offence? . . . They had signed the letter accompanying draw tickets mailed to former resident. This brought an emergency meeting and mailing privileges were restored to the individuals and Hospital Association, on the proviso that all ticket money coming by mail would be returned to buyers. The target of \$30,000 was thus shattered, although the price of the house was realized upon its subsequent sale.

All told '56 was a black year as not only did the foregoing fiasco take place, but county council were given a negative picture of local hospital needs in the Agnew Report, a report that was drawn up to forecast hospital needs in the county. However, with the projected development in town, they reached its height. Dr. Agnew subsequently reversed his stand and admitted the possibility of need for a Georgetown hospital in a possible three years or at most four.

With the enthusiasm thus engendered, estimates were received for a proposed 50 to 60 bed hospital, at a cost of nearly \$700,000. In February, 1957 a brief was presented to the Ontario Hospital Commission and the Association was promised an early decision. Association members met with the Hospital Services Committee on several occasions and finally almost a year later, approval was given for a 50-bed hospital. Actual approval was received on January 30th, 1958.

At that time grants of some \$568,000 were assured from government grants and other sources. It was estimated that locally the Hospital would need \$180,000 in subscriptions. Various sites were looked at and a final choice of 17 acres was finally obtained. The location was on part of the Harold Cleave farm, adjacent to the Park Public School, in Esqueving township.

Plans were requested and a sketch was made, along with a model of the proposed building. A short time later the architectural firm of Govan, Lindsay, Ferguson, Kaminker, Langley and Keenleyside presented plans of two different types of hospital, one storey and two storey. Mr. John Langley, of the Toronto architectural firm, submitted the sketches. Directors and the hospital consultants decided on the one storey building, with Dr. Campbell of Toronto stressing that there could be such a demand that the projected 60 to 70 bed hospital could be enlarged to a possible several hundred beds in the future.

The rest of the year was taken up with various money making projects by local organizations, and with extending and improving plans for the building and financing.

Locally a recession had set in, with the closing of a major portion of the A. V. Roe plant, and grave concern was felt for the future of a fund raising campaign.

At a meeting held on Tues., Feb 24th, 1959 the directors reluctantly decided to withhold

a direct appeal to the public for funds. However, all organizations in the town were urged to sponsor projects to earn the money that would be inevitably needed for the Hospital.

The tempo of various fund-raising projects began to quicken during the year, and the first pledge was made officially, as the Lions Club, promised to give \$25,000. This in turn gave a lift to the entire project. But it was still not until January of 1960 that a campaign committee headed by Thomas Dillon of Glen Williams was set up. John Ord became vice-chairman. The estimated amount to be raised was slightly over \$250,000 locally, with county, provincial and federal grants swelling the amount to the needed \$1,000,000. All organizations in town volunteered workers, and there was a heartening flood of workers from every facet of community life. Over 500 people eventually were involved in the financial campaign.

The internationally-known fund raising specialists, Brakeley's Ltd., were hired for the campaign, and Stan Plumer, a fund raising specialist set up an office to coordinate and direct efforts. This proved a very happy choice, as Mr. Plumer bent his every effort to making the campaign the success that it was. The efforts of all the campaign members were so successful that in March of that year tenders were asked for by the architects.

The drive received a final send off on its way to success, when Mr. and Mrs. Licata held a dinner for over 200 campaign workers and supporters in Knox Presbyterian Hall. From this point the campaign never looked back and went on to be the most successful fund raising effort the community ever witnessed.

The next few weeks passed in a maze of feverish activities, as the campaign reached and passed the \$250, \$260 and finally \$270 thousand marks and slowly then inched on to the \$300,000 mark. As the opening of the building approaches, it has reached \$318,000.

Meanwhile the board hired a general contractor, the very reputable Hamilton firm of Robertson and Yates, and selected subcontractors, on advice and assistance from the architect. The sod turning and the planting of the memorial tree on the site took place on Sunday, June 12th, 1960, with the Ontario minister of health as guest speaker.

Since that time plans have been made, furnishings purchased and equipment installed. Actual recent activities are far too well remembered, and have received so much publicity, that further comment would be repetitious. Suffice it to say that the financial campaign still is receiving support, and that a great deal remains to be done. The entire community still is working towards a better hospital for Georgetown.

Every newspaper story, picture, dates and reports of meetings, have been faithfully kept. Our chief regret is that space limitations make it impossible to do justice to her work. It is our hope that sometime in the future the two books may be used as the basis of a history of this project.

(The writer is indebted to Mrs. Muriel Adams for her excellent two volume history of the Hospital since its beginning.)

—Les Clark



CHIEF OF STAFF

DR. J. H. CHAMBERLAIN, right, is chief of medical staff. He confers here with Graham Gilhooly, business administrator.



JUNE 12th, 1960, saw the official sod turning and here W.A. president Mrs. John Inglis throws a healthy shovel full of earth on the maple tree, commemorating the event.

Toronto Firm Was Architect

To give readers an idea of the length of time involved in the building of a Hospital, here is a brief summary about the architectural firm who supervised the structure from 'blue-print to completion'.

The architects, Govan, Ferguson, Lindsay, Kaminker, Langley and Keenleyside were engaged in March, 1958 to prepare plans. Up to this point the site had not been chosen and after thorough investigation by the architect, consultant and Board one of five possible locations was selected. This is the present site.

In June of 1958 preparations and drafting of sketches were commenced, and the plan was arranged that additions could be

made to a capacity of 150 patients. The general contractor, Robertson-Yates, was awarded the contract in May of 1960 and construction began without delay and is now completed.

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The architect in charge was Mr. J. B. Langley.

New Hospital is One Of Largest Industries

A little-known fact about the Hospital is that of its position as one of the community's largest employers. As it will employ over 100 persons, this will add immeasurably to the economic growth of Georgetown. And of course, what the ultimate situation may be only time can disclose. However, it is almost certain that the number will grow, and indeed the community may find some day in the future, (as Burlington has), that it may develop into the largest single employer in the community!

So not only have residents of the community created a life-saving and healing institution in the town, but they may derive great satisfaction in knowing they are contributing to the future economic growth and welfare of their hometown.

Our Best Wishes

To Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital

We Are Pleased To Have Had A Part In The Construction of This Handsome Building

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