

Hospital care in Midland - came a long way

When Miss Emma Baker was the superintendent of the original Midland Penetanguishene Marine Hospital in Sunnyside she supervised everything in the 12 bed hospital.

If the cook had a day off, Miss Baker took over at the wood stove in the kitchen. She attended to the mending in her spare moments. Her evenings were often spent in the kitchen as she made pickles and preserves for the patients. She ordered supplies and on occasion, mopped floors. She supervised nurses and patients and was on duty 24 hours a day. For this she was paid about \$100 a month.

But then, the daily rate for ward patients was fifty cents. Those in private rooms paid 01.50.

Miss Baker's prime concern was the well being of her patients and she took this seriously. One night, a thyroid patient was restless. Her sleep had been disturbed by one of the hospital cows which had wandered close to the building, its cow-bell swinging.

Miss Baker took a dim view of such noisy goings-on. She rose from her bed, got a carving knife from the kitchen and marched out to the offending cow and cut off the bell. She did the same to the other bovine wanderers.

When Miss Baker retired in 1942, after 30 years of service, she wrote down some of her memories of the early days in the three storey brick building which was the forerunner of our present St. Andrew's Hospital.

The building was erected in 1903 for \$6700,

and there was a fireplace in each of the two public wards. There were twelve beds in the hospital. The nurses and the maid lived on the top floor.

A circular drive led up to the building and there were flower beds, cared for by the Midland Horticultural Society.

There was no nursery, because most babies were born at home but those who did arrive in hospital either stayed in the room with the mothers, or were kept in baskets in the shelves of the linen room. If there was an overflow, dresser drawers were pressed into service.

The first baby born in the Midland Penetanguishene Marine Hospital was Chris Foster. Born on March 2, 1906. Mr. Foster now lives on a farm in the rural area.

In those early days, there was no steriliser. Miss Baker described sterilising methods this way: "We used a wash boiler and tied cotton to each handle and placed the wrapped goods inside. We held the lid down with a flat iron. We let everything boil for one hour and then put the bundles in the oven of the wood stove to dry out overnight."

"We had two large tin cans with spouts for sterile water. One was boiled at night, and the other in the daytime, so we always had hot and cold sterile water."

A hospital auxiliary was established in 1906, and these ladies furnished many of the rooms. When the kitchen was moved from the second floor down to the basement, a dumb-waiter lift was

added to ease the work load of the nurses.

Doctors who worked in that first hospital were Dr. Raikes, Dr. McGill, Dr. MacDonald, Dr. Tanner, Dr. Walbridge, Dr. Clark, Dr. Johnson, Dr. McPhee and Dr. Spohn and his son Dr. Howard Spohn.

"They were all wonderful," said Miss Baker, "and so were the nurses. We were all like one big happy family."

In those days, when most water came from wells, typhoid was a serious problem. A small frame house was bought, and put on the property next door to the hospital to form an overflow isolation ward.

In 1914, James Playfair donated the spacious Manley Chew home on Bay Street to be used as a hospital. Because of the view of the water, it reminded him of his ancestral Scottish home, St. Andrew's by the Sea, and his only stipulation was that the new hospital be named St. Andrew's.

The Hospital inspector suggested a few changes in the building and the gradual moving of furniture and patients began.

The post war epidemic of influenza struck Midland in 1918 and the new hospital was filled to overflowing. Ships arrived in Midland Harbour with desperately ill crews and there was no place to put them. This was when many patients were bedded down in Midland's public schools. The townspeople rallied to the emergency by cooking great pots of soup which they brought to the hospital.

Said Miss Baker, "The

doctors were so busy we hardly saw them. Through the God's great mercy and help, we were able to carry on." One nurse, Miss Atkinson, died in the epidemic.

In the post war years, a rum-running ship was caught in Midland harbour. The alcoholic cargo was confiscated by the local police, who gave it to Miss Baker. She hid it under the eaves of the new hospital, and doled it out for medicinal purposes, as needed.

By 1922, a south wing was added to the hospital and the first electric range had been installed. There were extensive vegetable gardens and Rena Bell, secretary of the present hospital board, remembers that there were thriving raspberry patches behind the nurses' residence.

Nurses lived in a neighbouring house which had been purchased by Mrs. Playfair in 1922. She furnished it completely with her private funds.

There were student nurses in those days, who learned not by any curriculum, but by doing what had to be done. They were paid six dollars a month in their first year, seven in their second, and eight in their third year. It was real apprenticeship training.

In 1922, a cow was added to the hospital's facilities, and the milk was set in pans and the cream skimmed off for the private patients. There were chickens too, to assure patients of a supply of fresh eggs.

There were other big doings in 1922. The first electric range was in-

stalled, and a new south wing was added, and opened by Royalty. (The official St. Andrew's opening had been delayed by the flu epidemic). The Duke of Devonshire and his daughter-in-law, the Duchess of Devonshire officiated, and the Duke's aide-de-camp was a gentleman called Harold MacMillain, who later became Prime Minister of Great Britain.

Emma Baker's name was commemorated in the opening of the new West (Emma Baker) wing in 1936. The sod was turned by Lord Tweedsmuir.

The newest part of the hospital was opened in 1955 and in 1956, the renovated older part, named the James Playfair wing, was opened.

Now the 101 bed

hospital is for sale, and Midland is entering upon a new chapter in its health care history with the building of a beautifully equipped modern facility - the Huronia District Hospital.

* There may be a few problems ahead, but one thing the supervisor of nurses will not have to do is silence wandering midnight cows.



St. Andrew's becomes history

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Midland General and Marine Hospital, one of first hospitals built in the area, is pictured above in a photograph taken around 1913. Contact-printed onto modern photographic emulsion, it originated from a glass plate negative, used by professional photographers at the time in conjunction with huge flat-bed view cameras. Several years after this photo was taken, the hospital burned to the ground but at the time it was no longer used as a medical centre, but was in fact a home owned by a Midland family. In 1918, Mr. James Playfair donated the Manly Chew residence to the town with the stipulation that the Bay Street

building be called St. Andrews, and the hospital operated there until 1955. During those years of operation, two wings were added, one in 1922, and another in 1937. The present hospital has been in service since 1955, but will be replaced by the Huronia District Hospital, presently under construction. In addition to many changes in names and locations, no change is more startling than the cost per day for hospital care. A mere 50 cents per day was required at the Marine Hospital, compared to an astounding 83 dollars per day required in the present institution.



United Church operetta

Taken in the 1940's this photo captures the actors in a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta produced by the St. Paul's United Church choir in the Anglican School room.

Standing, left to right: name unknown, George Ingram, Mrs. Auld, Herb Pearce, Mrs. Marcellus, Mrs. Tushingham, Mrs. Whiteman, name unknown, Mrs. Bremner, Mrs. Nicholson, Mr. Tushingham, Bill Wilson, name unknown,

Charles Vent, Frank Clute, and Mrs. James. Seated: June (Hager) May, Ruth (Warner) Montgomery, Miss Wilson, Joan (Taylor) Barnett, Elizabeth Corbett, D.M. Hartis (music director), Ruth (Topping) Wilson, Miss Wilson, name unknown, Mrs. T.J. Campbell, Mrs. Pauline Wray. Front: Mrs. Bremner, name unknown, Ruth (Vent) Faulkner.