

History of the Royal Jubilee Hospital

The Royal Jubilee Hospital, through its association with the Royal Hospital, is historically the first recorded hospital in the early days of Victoria in the colony of BC. More than 150 years after the original Royal Hospital was commissioned, the 37 acre campus continues to evolve to meet current medical standards and healthcare needs. Some buildings dating back to the 1920s and 1930s are still in use today. The story of the Royal Jubilee Hospital that began with a Parsonage in 1858 is reflected and maintained within the design of the site's newest building, the Patient Care Centre, adding another chapter to an already rich heritage.

The Evolution of the Royal Jubilee Hospital

The discovery of gold on the Fraser River added much to the importance of 1858 in the history of British Columbia and Victoria. The latter changed from a small, sleepy village around the Hudson's Bay Fort to the commercial outfitting centre for the Gold Rush.

Under these circumstances it did not seem too unusual, in that year, when a sick man was found on a mattress inside the garden gate of Anglican clergyman, Reverend Edward Cridge. So, in 1858 the Parsonage became the first Home Hospital in the Colony. A short time later a small cottage at the corner of Yates and Broad Streets was kindly loaned rent free, by widow, Mrs. Blinkhorn for this purpose. The need for such accommodation was soon demonstrated as the small cottage with only two beds was kept full and the necessity for larger quarters became urgent.

The Royal Hospital (1859—1869)

It quickly became apparent that the Home Hospital would not provide adequate health care to such a rapidly growing population. In 1859 a Provisional Committee (Mr. Dallas, Director of the Hudson's Bay Co, Mr. Pemberton, Magistrate and Commissioner of Police and Bishop Cridge, District Minister of Victoria) appointed by the Governor took possession of a piece of land on the Songhees Indian Reserve and erected a wooden building on the site. The building served as the Royal Hospital for 10 years before increasing medical demand required a larger building. In 1874 the Marine Hospital was

built on the same site on the Songhees Reserve, providing care to mariners for nearly 20 years until 1893.

The Female Infirmary (1864-1869)

By 1868 Mrs. Cridge, the Reverend's wife, seemed to have been the driving force in establishing The Female Aid Association to provide hospital care for females in need and sickness along the lines as those in place at the Royal Hospital. It was in 1862 that the first "bride ship" arrived in Victoria. *The Tynemouth* was followed shortly by the second and the last, *The Robert Lowe*. Two of the girls on the second ship were ill on arrival and later died. This undoubtedly focused attention on the need for female accommodations.

The Directors of the Royal Hospital secured a grant of 150 pounds from the Government for the purpose of building a female ward. Under the patronage of Mrs. (Governor) Douglas, the Women's Association was formed. This small group of women was untiring in their efforts and their reward came on November 24th, 1864, when the cornerstone of the Female Infirmary, at the head of Pandora Street overlooking the city and the harbour, was laid by Mrs. Harris, the wife of the Mayor of Victoria.

In 1869, the Female Infirmary and the Royal Hospital were amalgamated under the name of the Royal Hospital and all patients were accommodated in the institution on Pandora Avenue.

The old Royal Hospital on the Songhees Indian Reserve served to house the mentally ill from 1872-1878 and was known as the Lunatic Asylum. (source: *Royal Jubilee Hospital 1858-1958*, by Dr. Herbert. Murphy) (see also [Eric Martin Pavilion](#))

The Provincial Royal Jubilee Hospital

Victoria solved its most urgent hospital problem – the care of illness amongst the impoverished. However, the growth of the city combined with the steady advance in medical science, during the next two decades, not only made this accommodation inadequate but also made clear the need for hospital care for those who were not impoverished.

It was very natural and fitting that in 1887, when the entire British Empire was planning how best to honour Queen Victoria on the occasion of her approaching Jubilee in 1888, the City of Victoria would give careful thought and consideration to their plans for this great event. A handful of citizens knew that the Royal Hospital was no longer adequate for the rapidly growing City of Victoria and the idea of marking the Jubilee year by building a new and modern hospital seemed generally appealing.

At a meeting of the subscribers to the Royal Hospital, it was decided to “erect a building with all the improvements and accommodations at a cost of about \$40,000.” The Provincial Government was consulted and promised a grant of \$20,000, provided that an equal sum was raised by private subscription but with the reservation that the grant would not exceed the amount so donated.

A 19 acre parcel of land was purchased at the corner of Richmond and Bay for \$6,702. The newspaper of the day reported that it was “a desirable site and the price reasonable”. *(note: today the RJH site is 37.31 acres)*

By August of 1888, the Provincial Committee had decided on the main details of the proposed building. It was to be of brick and rubble masonry foundation at a cost not to exceed \$35,000.

Accommodation was to be provided for 100 non-paying patients. Architects’ plans were called, and a premium of \$800 was to be paid for the plan selected. These plans were to be unsigned but accompanied by the “motto” for identification.

In January 1888, three sets of plans were selected from those submitted, as worthy of further consideration. These were accompanied by the following “mottoes”:

1. Fresh Air
2. Work and Win
3. Theory and Practice

It is interesting to note that these three “mottoes” reflect the three “pillars” that were used to guide the design and construction of the New Patient Care Centre which opened in 2011:

1. *Green Hospital*
2. *Attractive Workplace*
3. *Elder Friendly*

The plans for the new Provincial Royal Jubilee Hospital involved three wards, one for male surgical cases, one for medical cases and one all female ward. The design also included plans for an administrative block with the necessary apartments for a resident medical officer, matron, laboratory, accident ward, committee room, kitchen, storerooms and in addition, two separate buildings for infectious diseases. There were also 12 separate smaller wards for paying patients.

The date for completion of the work was set for December 31, 1889, with a penalty of \$100 per week for delay beyond that date. The groundbreaking ceremony occurred on January 6, 1889, and J. Kinsman was appointed Clerk of the Works, receiving \$6 per day for his efforts.

The cornerstone was laid on April 23, 1889, by Mrs. Hugh Nelson (the Lieutenant-Governor's wife) using a special trowel. A copper time capsule was placed under it containing a block plan of the building, Canadian silver currency, one English sovereign, copies of *The Colonist*, *The Standard*, and the *Times* newspapers, as well as a copy of the address of the President of the General Committee, and a list of the names of those serving on the General Committee detailing the circumstances of the day on the parchment.

Grand Opening of the New Provincial Royal Jubilee Hospital

The citizens of Victoria and the province of British Columbia gained access to the hospital on May 20, 1890, following the official Opening Ceremony of the Provincial Royal Jubilee Hospital of Victoria. One of Queen Victoria's sons, Prince Albert, Duke of Connaught (and later Governor General of Canada), officially opened the Hospital. He had arrived in Victoria directly from Japan the day before the ceremony, and had yet to be invited to lead the ceremony prior to landing in Victoria. He graciously accepted the offer, and the following day officially opened the doors of the Hospital.

Following the completion of construction the Hospital was in debt \$15,000 even though construction had been limited to the absolute essentials. Over the next few decades

many additions and changes were made to the Provincial Royal Jubilee Hospital, significantly altering the function and the set-up of the site.

In 1898, in response to the onset of the Klondike Gold Rush, the Board of Directors ruled that in order to be eligible for free treatment at the hospital, a patient must be a British subject and have been a resident of BC for at least one month.

“The site of the hospital is well chosen. A few hundred yards back from the Cadboro Bay Road, standing on a fine elevation and commanding a view of the blue straits and the towering peak of old Mount Baker beyond, the hospital possesses a situation of rare scenic beauty and sanitary advantage. It is reached by a drive of about two miles over one of the most beautiful roads in Canada and is far enough away from the life and bustle of the city to ensure that quiet which is so necessary to the sick.” ~ The Daily Colonist 1889

RJH School of Nursing

Shortly after the opening of the Provincial Royal Jubilee Hospital there was a common agreement that a training school for nurses needed to be established relatively quickly. Based on the fact that historically the Jubilee was the first hospital in the province it seemed fitting that the Provincial Royal Jubilee Hospital School of Nursing opened its doors to nurses throughout the province on December 16, 1891. The School educated 3247 nurses over 90 years with the first class graduating in 1892 and the last graduating class being in 1983. On April 20, 1920, graduate nurses joined together to form the RJH School of Nursing Alumnae Association, which has been instrumental in such projects as the restoration of the Pemberton Memorial Chapel and the Chapel Garden. A separate group, the Women’s Auxiliary came into being in 1924 and has supported the Hospital tremendously over the years, through fundraisers and events. Indeed, the Auxiliary still continues to do so, partly with its Gift Shop in the new Patient Care Centre. The precursor of this group was the Women’s Association, formed in 1887 as a fundraising group. The Association, under various names has been instrumental in the purchasing of equipment and furnishing wards throughout the hospital’s history.

In July of 1893, Victoria encountered a small pox epidemic, and turned to the Hospital for support. The Hospital acted quickly and offered the city a portion of their grounds in order to erect a new building to quarantine those affected. In 24 hours a new building was constructed, followed by four cottages within the following week, designed to accommodate the infected, and staffed by the employees of the Provincial Royal

Jubilee Hospital. The City of Victoria did not fail to express its appreciation for the hospital's generous assistance during the epidemic, and to show gratitude approved a by-law for \$35,000 for the Jubilee and the mortgage on the property was paid off.

Pemberton Operating Room

In 1894, the late Joseph D. Pemberton donated \$2,000 to the hospital in order to build a specialized maternity ward. A generous personal gift from the widow of J.D. Pemberton, Mrs. Teresa Jane Pemberton, of an additional \$1,500 towards the maternity wing brought the total available funds up to \$3,500.

Following a controversial review, the Board of Directors concluded that the donation was not sufficient for a project so large and instead suggested the money should be used for an alternate project.

Two projects were proposed; one to convert the infectious disease cottage into a maternity school to train nurses in obstetrical care, and one to construct a state-of-the-art operating room.

The majority of the medical practitioners at the Provincial Royal Jubilee Hospital felt that a better operating facility was essential in order to adapt to the advances in modern medicine. Surgical operations were changing and growing, increasing the need for adequate operating spaces. Thus, in 1886, after two years of delay and dispute, design and construction began on the Pemberton Memorial Operating Room.

The Operating Room was designed as an octagonal structure with a 12 x 24 foot sterilizing room attached to the back of the operating theater. The plastered and painted walls, mosaic tile floor, and large windows were designed for easy cleaning and disinfection after each surgery.

The cornerstone of the Operating Room was laid on May 15, 1896, and Mrs. Pemberton was presented with a commemorative silver trowel to show appreciation for her generous support and flexibility towards the project.

The building was completed without any electricity, and functioned by kerosene lamplight until electricity was installed throughout the entire hospital in 1897. The addition of the new Pemberton O.R. placed the Provincial Royal Jubilee in a new phase

of development, and established the Jubilee as the leading surgical hospital in the Province at the time.

As the most expensive hospital in the Dominion of Canada, the newly enhanced Provincial Royal Jubilee was at the forefront of the health care industry, illustrated by the locally built x-ray machine installed just four years after the invention of such machines.

In 1897, the father of modern surgery, Lord Lister, visited the Royal Jubilee and gave a promising review. The following year, possibly based on Lister's recommendations, the first two post-operative recovery rooms in Canada were added to the Pemberton O.R. The Operating Room was used daily for over 30 years, until the East Wing of the hospital was built in 1925 with six new operating rooms, resulting in the old O.R. being converted into offices. In 1982, when the future of the building was threatened, the city responded by declaring the Pemberton O.R., and its anteroom, an official Heritage Site. The structure remains remarkably unaltered from its original functioning state and will be incorporated into the new Heritage Garden at the Patient Care Centre preserving the legacy of the Jubilee.

Pemberton Chapel

In 1909, Mrs. J. D. Pemberton donated the Pemberton Chapel to the Jubilee as a memorial of her husband. For decades the Chapel functioned as a regular church which held weekly services for patients and staff, as well as being the location of many of the nurse's weddings. However, between 1914 and 1924 the Chapel was used as a Maternity Ward and a Male Convalescent Ward. In 1979 the Chapel was officially recognized as a Heritage building by the City of Victoria although it was closed in the early 1980's for nearly two decades due to safety concerns. In 1995 the RJH School of Nursing Alumnae Association undertook the restoration of the Chapel. With the help of a generous bequest from an Alumnae member and extensive fundraising by the Alumnae, the Chapel was seismically upgraded and reopened in 2003. The Chapel is now open 24 hours a day, providing a quiet place of refuge for patients and visitors to the hospital, and a location on the lower level, for the RJH School of Nursing Archives – Museum.

Maternity Ward

The development of a Maternity Ward at the Royal Jubilee Hospital was a complex task and provides an interesting story. As early as 1898, Dr. J. S. Helmcken began advocating the importance of introducing a maternity division to the Hospital not only for general practice, but to provide practical training for the students at the School of Nursing.

In the following year an anonymous donation to the maternity fund was received, sent only under the name "Bachelor", followed by an additional \$25 received from what appears to be the same donor in 1907. Lord Strathcona donated \$5,000 in 1903 towards the new maternity division, however the Directors felt the time was not opportune, and as had happened with the Pemberton donation eight years earlier, the money was used towards other construction projects.

Apparently no further action took place until 1913 when the Women's Auxiliary gave \$4,000 to the maternity ward fund, and the Victoria Branch of the Council of Women lent their support for the cause. The Great War was well underway in 1915, and resulted in a surplus of enlisted families coming to Victoria, greatly increasing the need for a proper maternity ward. Because of this, the Women's Auxiliary stepped forward and offered to convert a recovery ward into a maternity ward and defray all costs. On May 26, 1916, the ward was officially opened and the first birth was recorded the following day. This served as the maternity ward until 1925 when the East Wing was opened, designating the 4th floor with 32 beds as the new maternity wing. For 21 years this sufficed, until in 1946 a modern, fully equipped ward was constructed containing 90 beds at a cost of \$380,000 – the Richmond Pavilion.

The Strathcona addition was constructed in 1904 (total cost of \$12,812) to accommodate paying patients in 11 private rooms, and was later used as the Children's' Ward based on its exceptional construction.

The first designated Children's' Ward was built in 1906 for \$5,900, but was not opened for service until 1908 because although there was a need for more staff, accommodation was not available for these additional nurses.

A house near the hospital had been rented to accommodate nurses temporarily, but it was evident that a new Nurses' Residence was sorely needed. Plans for the home were drawn up containing 30 bedrooms, six bathrooms, one large sitting-room, a large study, a small reception and a small kitchen. The Residence was opened on January 5 1909, with an addition added in 1912. This wooden building was later the Intern's Residence as well as the Pay Office. It was located at the south side of the property and was built by Parfitt Brothers Construction Company.

By 1913, the need for further general accommodation was recognized and great interest and financial backing was shown to support this. The Women's Auxiliary collected \$110,000, the Directors raised another \$100,563, and Oak Bay Municipality gave \$10,000. The City of Victoria then passed a By-law to give the hospital \$225,000 and the Provincial Government contributed \$150,000. It seemed like the new wing was guaranteed, however due to the impacts of the First World War, construction was postponed.

The plans were re-opened in 1919 and by 1925 the five-storied, 175 bed addition to the hospital was complete. The addition cost approximately \$500,000 and was made up of 34 private wards, a maternity section of 32 beds, and six operating rooms. The Great Depression led to an even greater need for hospital beds, and yet again the Royal Jubilee underwent construction. On November 27, 1941 the grand opening of the Central Block provided 59 more beds in a 4 storey building. In 1940 "Provincial" was dropped from the hospital name.

The increased size of the hospital resulted in a growing need for staff, and in turn, more staff accommodation. The new Nurses' Home was aimed at providing the staff with an excellent place to live, learn and relax. The Home's purpose was to educate the students with clinical benefits such as classrooms and laboratories, as well as lecture rooms and a clinical library. The Home also provided the staff with recreational amenities such as a hobby room, a fiction library, and a multi-purpose reception area for functions such as student dances, capping ceremonies, and amateur plays. The Residence was opened on February 14, 1930, and accommodated 209 nurses for a total cost of \$176,825.

Memorial Pavilion

In 1974 Veterans Affairs Canada and the BC Ministry of Health went into partnership to provide health services to Veterans in residential care. At that time the Veterans' Memorial Pavilion or DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs) Hospital as it was originally known,) was transferred to the Provincial Government, forming the basis of the Priority Access Beds program.

June 1992, the Tillicum and Veterans Care Society announced funding for 115 Priority Access Beds at a new facility to be called The Lodge at Broadmead, replacing beds to be closed at Veterans' Memorial Pavilion. The Lodge at Broadmead opened in April 1995. All Veterans from the Memorial Pavilion were moved to the new facility.

Source: [Broadmead Care Society](#)

RJH Site Renewal

In the early 1960s discussions took place about replacing RJH facilities that were built in the late 1890s and early 1900s. The building program began in 1962 with the addition of inpatient units, a cancer clinic, and x-ray department and operating rooms in the new Royal West wing. The second phase was to occur in the 1970s and was to replace crowded diagnostic and treatment services. And the third phase was to replace nursing units built in the 1920s and 1930s. All this was to happen by the end of the 1980s; however there were many delays along the way.

The first delay was the result of the need to replace St. Joseph's Hospital with the new Victoria General Hospital which opened in June 1983. The second postponement was due to indecision around how to best create an effective and cost efficient health facility and in 1982 a decision was made to completely replace the existing RJH. The funding was not available at the time, so the project was placed "on hold". However, certain areas of RJH were in terrible condition and needed replacement: the Royal Block Addition was built in 1984, the Emergency Department was renovated in 1985, the Cancer Clinic was built in 1987 and the new food services building opened in 1988.

During the 1990s, a "master plan" for the RJH site was developed and altered several times. In 1996, the government announced the funding for a redevelopment at the RJH, and the Minister of Health and Minister Responsible for Seniors broke ground on the

project in June 1997. The redevelopment encompassed the building of the new Diagnostic and Treatment Centre only. (see [Diagnostic & Treatment Centre](#))

Eric Martin Pavilion

B.C. has dealt with sporadic crises about mental health facilities for most of its history. So many prospectors broke down during the 1858-9 Gold Rush stampede through Victoria to the Caribou that arrangements were made to care for them in California.

That didn't last long. Within a few years they had to house mental patients in the Victoria jail. That consisted of 12 cells in a log cabin, already overcrowded. So the milder cases were moved to the Royal Hospital, a quarantine facility also known as "The Pest House," on the Songhees Reserve. It was later converted to a provincial asylum, B.C.'s first, and opened in 1872 with seven patients. Four years later there were so many [patients] that they moved the hospital to the north bank of the Fraser River, on the site of what would become Woodlands School. By the turn of the century 10 wards and a cottage held 310 patients.

The government's next move was to buy 1,000 acres at the junction of the Coquitlam and Fraser rivers and start work on what was to become Essondale, a big new hospital for the mentally ill. By the First World War, more than 900 patients were housed there. Meanwhile, in the Colquitz part of Saanich, the government opened the Provincial Home for the Criminally Insane, the first forensic psychiatric facility.

There was more building, but by the end of the Second World War there were 4,100 overcrowded mental patients. A post-war push on improving treatment brought new buildings at the Woodlands School, which eventually reached 1,182 beds, and the farming out of patients to other facilities all over B.C.

By the early 1950s, with 4,600 patients residing in mental health facilities, most forms of physical restraint were abolished and alcoholics were admitted for treatment. Unlocked wards were not uncommon.

Work on providing for mentally disabled children intensified through that era. When the Eric Martin Institute opened in 1970, a search and rescue helicopter ferried 25 of them

from Woodlands School to EMI, while construction of Glendale Lodge in Saanich was underway.

Source: [Times Colonist \(Victoria\) - CanWest MediaWorks Publications Inc.](#)

Diagnostic & Treatment Centre

The Diagnostic & Treatment Centre is a 34,700 square metre facility that includes outpatient clinics, diagnostic testing, laboratory and pharmacy, surgical services, intensive care, cardiac services, emergency services, administration, materiel management and a morgue. Blasting, drilling and excavation were completed in 1998, construction was underway by June 1999 and the facility opened in April 2002. The project budget was \$116,000,000.

The Royal Jubilee Hospital Patient Care Centre

In order to meet the demanding healthcare needs and replace some of the older buildings at the Royal Jubilee, the proposal for a new \$348.6 million Patient Care Centre was approved in 2007. On April 9, 2009, 120 years after the original cornerstone of the Royal Jubilee Hospital was laid, the new cornerstone for the Patient Care Centre was unveiled. A commemorative ceremony was held to celebrate the past and the future of the Royal Jubilee, as well as to reveal the new RJH Time Capsule.

In 2011, the new state-of-the-art facility was opened with the goal of providing the best possible care for patients, staff, and visitors. The 500-bed Patient Care Centre encompasses what it means to be an innovative, adaptable hospital, ensuring support is provided to those who need it now, as well as in the future.

Old Town Deconstruction

In October 2011, deconstruction began on four major buildings on the Royal Jubilee Hospital site. These buildings were Centre Block, East Block, South Block and the old Emergency Building. The first phase of deconstruction involved the removal of hazardous materials (including asbestos) from the buildings. This process took a number of months and many old fixtures and architectural elements were preserved by the Victoria Hospital Foundation. In Spring 2012, physical deconstruction of the structures began.

In June 2012, during the tear down of the final building, a picture of children playing was revealed behind many layers of concrete on the 3rd floor of East block (south side on the second to last beam before Central block). A reminder of the hospital's history and the maternity ward that opened in 1925. (see [Maternity Ward](#))

Planning for the Future

The Vancouver Island Health Authority has developed a Master Campus Plan for the Royal Jubilee Hospital as part of its strategic planning for health care delivery in the region, and in fulfillment of the terms of the Master Development Agreement between the Health Authority and the City of Victoria.

The purpose of the Master Campus Plan is to establish clear principles and guidelines that create a flexible framework to guide future decisions about the growth of the Hospital and its precinct. It is both visionary and practical, and is shaped by VIHA's commitment to excellence and sustainability, and by the need to address long-term goals for health care in the region. The principles and guidelines also provide boundaries of change and development within which the Health Authority agrees to work. This will ensure the reasonable alignment with the needs of local residents and the constituent municipalities.

The Master Campus Plan was developed in consultation with the planning departments of the City of Victoria and the District of Saanich, and extensive consultation with interested community groups, individuals and other stakeholders. Input from this consultation was used to develop the Plan, and stakeholders helped to review and refine the final document.

(Visit: www.viha.ca/about_viha/community/rjh_campus/ for more information)