

GENESIS OF A HOSPITAL

The Great War Memorial Hospital of Perth & District

In 1816, the founding year of the Perth Military Settlement, Army Staff Surgeon Alexander Thom (1775-1848), the settlement's first doctor, petitioned the British Army's Quartermaster General at Quebec urging the establishment of hospital. His appeal fell on deaf ears however and, for over a century, Perth had no hospital of any kind. Most doctors visited the non-ambulatory sick in their homes where relatives nursed them to the best of their ability, while a few medical men offered a sick room of one or two beds attached to their offices. It was not until the autumn of 1918 that the Perth Board of Health, faced with the post-World War One influenza epidemic sweeping the community, Canada, and the world,¹ established the town's first hospital on an emergency basis.

Arrangements were made with the Provincial Soldiers' Aid Commission (SAC)² for the loan of the former John Haggart³ home on Mill Street. Haggart's sister, Isabella Maxwell Haggart-Millar⁴ had inherited the property in 1913 and, in her turn, had willed it to the SAC in 1917. Three rooms of the house were converted into wards, one for females, one for males, and another for patients in critical condition. Eight hospital cots were installed. Other rooms were converted to accommodate nurses and staff.

The facility was placed in charge of Superintendent Elsie Walker (1890-1965), a "*painstaking and efficient nurse*",⁵ assisted by night nurses Mrs. Boulton and Mrs. Wilson, a male attendant, a housekeeper and pharmacist Fred Hall⁶ who "*kindly volunteered his services when there were delirious patients*".⁷ In addition, "*the ladies of St. John's Ambulance volunteered their services, and rendered splendid service, both day and night*".⁸ Assistance was also provided by the local chapter of Red Cross and the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire (IODE), "*the former providing many delicacies, besides devoting a great deal of time to the hospital, while the IODE undertook to furnish all of the broth and gruel for the patients*".⁹

¹ The influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 killed some 21 million people world-wide, including about 50,000 Canadians, among whom were between 50 and 100 from the Perth area. See *La Grippe* <https://www.perthhs.org/documents/neighbour/shaw-la-grippe-web.pdf> elsewhere on this website.

² The Soldier's Aid Commission of Ontario was founded in 1915 to help returning First World War Veterans and their families with problems they faced as they re-entered civilian life, such as finding work and housing. (The SAC is still in existence).

³ John Graham Haggart (1863-1913), miller, MP, Cabinet Minister.

⁴ Isabella Maxwell Millar (1846-1917), John Haggart's sister, married sewing machine manufacturer and one-time Mayor of Perth (1873-1874) James Morton Millar (1842-1889) in 1868. She lived at Haggart House full time after she was widowed in 1889.

⁵ *Perth Courier*, November 1, 1918.

⁶ Frederick Lewis Hall (1875-1923), operator of a local drug store.

⁷ *Perth Courier*, November 1, 1918.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*



Haggart House c1910

Recognizing the Haggart House Hospital for the stop-gap measure that it was, on April 4, 1919, the IODE announced its intent to purchase property on which to build a permanent 'Cottage Hospital'¹⁰ and called for "*the hearty cooperation of the citizens of Perth and the surrounding country in their large and very necessary enterprise for the good of the community*".¹¹ The committee named to lead the initiative was composed of Jessie Mable Henderson-Stewart (1868-1956)¹², Mariam Graham Bell-Armour (1867-1950)¹³, Elsie Margaret McLaren-Hall (1869-1954)¹⁴, and Ethel J. Crosbie-Lowe (1883-1968)¹⁵, some of Perth's leading female citizens.

Meanwhile, in its edition of May 2, 1919, the *Perth Courier* published a rough survey of WW1 memorial suggestions under consideration by various Ontario Municipalities. Thinking at Picton, Sarnia and Hanover had not moved beyond vague ideas about some undefined facility for public use. public halls were under discussion in Delhi, Port Credit, Toronto, and Point Edward. Acton was considering a memorial park gate, Barrie the construction of a Nurses' Home, Pembroke a War Veterans' Club House, Exeter a 10-foot fountain, Woodstock a park of 150 oak trees with a brass plaque affixed to each, and Renfrew favoured building a hospital.

¹⁰ The term is still in use in the United Kingdom to describe a small, village hospital.

¹¹ *Perth Courier* April 4, 1919.

¹² Wife of John A. Stewart (1867-1922) MP 1918-1922.

¹³ Wife of James Armour (1863-1936), County Registrar.

¹⁴ Wife of Francis William Hall (1871-1927) Mayor in 1909-1912.

¹⁵ Wife of Alfred Lowe (1876-1957), builder.

The idea that a hospital might best serve as a memorial to Perth's war dead was floated for the first time when the IODE sponsored a two-day fundraising event dubbed the 'Perth Peoples Popular Patriotic Peace Party' welcoming home Perth and district war veterans. Addressing an assembly of several thousand at McLaren's Grove¹⁶ on July 30th and 31st, 1919, guest speaker Lieutenant Colonel Francis Bethel Ware (1877-1951)¹⁷ said,

I feel it must be hard tonight for a great many who are here when they know that some of their friends and loved ones will not return, but the honor you should pay those men will not be just a stone tablet or bronze memorial, but I prefer that a hospital be built where the soldiers who have returned can be treated and also the citizens of Perth may receive excellent treatment. A stone memorial means so little, but the hospital will aid the sick and suffering and be a wonderful tribute to the memory of those who have gone before.

The idea did not, however, gain much immediate traction. In late November 1919 less than 50 people turned out to a public meeting called to discuss the creation of a memorial hospital. Meeting chairman John A. Stewart¹⁸ (1867-1922) observed that the attendance "*showed that the people of Perth were not in any way interested in the proposition. To raise \$75,000, the estimated cost of the hospital, is a mighty big undertaking and the maintenance after the erection would be a big problem*".¹⁹ The meeting resolved that the best means of clearly ascertaining the view of the citizens at large would be to submit to the ratepayers a debenture by-law providing for raising the money necessary to erect and equip a hospital.

The meeting appointed a committee to confer with Council, a committee composed of citizens whom council would have to take seriously -- Judge James Henderson Scott (1858-1935)²⁰, Thomas Albert Code (1854-1937)²¹, William Brown Hart (1859-1863)²², George Sutton James (1869-1964)²³, William Joseph Rabb (1862-1933)²⁴, James P. Hogan (1876-1947)²⁵, Philip John Cotter MacDonnell (1862-1940)²⁶, Boyd Alexander Conyngham Caldwell (1879-1949)²⁷, Jessie Mable Henderson-Stewart, Mary Theresa Downey-Conway (1881-1973)²⁸, Anne Elizabeth Fitzpatrick-Shaw (1869-1959)²⁹, Jean/Jane/Jenny A. Drysdale (1859-1936)³⁰, Lilly Hall Smith-

¹⁶ On the grounds of Nevis Cottage, Drummond Street, the home of Sophia Elizabeth Lees-McLaren (1845-1923), widow of Senator Peter McLaren (1831-1919).

¹⁷ During WW1 on HQ Staff (D.A.A. & Q.M.G.) of 5th Canadian Division. Native of London, Ontario.

¹⁸ MP 1918-1922, Minister of Railways & Canals 1922.

¹⁹ *Perth Courier*, November 28, 1919.

²⁰ County Court Judge.

²¹ Proprietor of Code Knitting & Woolen Mill.

²² Bookseller and publisher.

²³ Foundry and hardware store owner and President of the Board of Trade.

²⁴ Building contractor.

²⁵ Hotel owner.

²⁶ Manager Bank of Montreal.

²⁷ Textile mill owner.

²⁸ Wife of John T. Conway (1881-1950).

²⁹ Wife of Henry Montague Shaw (1865-1931).

³⁰ CNR/CPR telegraph operator.

MacDonnell (1867-1941)³¹, Margaret R. Riddell (1857-1939), Edith Hogg-Fowler (1863-1956)³², Teresa Dwyer (1858-1954)³³.

For its part, Town Council named its own committee to study the operating cost of a hospital -- John A. Stewart, Boyd Caldwell, George Herbert Ansley (1873-1955)³⁴, T. J. Maher³⁵, Mary Theresa Downey-Conway, Jessie Henderson-Stewart, and Ethel Crosbie-Lowe. That group met with officials of two hospitals then operating in Smiths Falls³⁶ and concluded that *"in addition to all fees received from and on account of patients, it will be necessary to raise by voluntary contribution, the sum of \$10,000 per annum, to cover the maintenance of the hospital when fully organized"*.

At the municipal elections of December 1919, the Town of Perth proposed a by-law to authorize the issue of debentures *"in the amount of \$75,000 for the erection, establishment, and equipment of a public hospital in the Town of Perth for the treatment of persons suffering from disease or from injury"*.³⁷ Ratepayers approved the proposition, but by a margin of only 10 votes. The *Courier* observed that there had been *"no real enthusiasm shown in the campaign for the hospital and several property owners voted for it in a general way, not particularly anxious whether it passed or not. With this feeling in town the Council should consider very carefully whether they spend \$75,000 on a hospital or not"*.³⁸ The town fathers agreed that such lukewarm support fell short of a mandate and did not demand immediate action. The matter was left in abeyance.

When Town Council failed to proceed, however, advocates of the hospital project protested, led once again by the women of Perth. Expressing a sense of betrayal, in April the IODE sent a letter to council reminding them that the organization had already purchased a building a lot, and a month later Elizabeth Scott Mathewson-Clayton (1865-1936)³⁹, Secretary of the Perth Red Cross Society, told council that,

*... the Society, believing that a hospital was to be built, sent an early application to the Society Headquarters in Toronto asking for hospital supplies and received full equipment for 30 beds, besides other equipment, the total value being over \$3,000, and this we were prepared to hand over to the Town by deed of gift. If there is to be no hospital built in the near future, we will have to return the supplies as other places are asking for just such things.*⁴⁰

³¹ Wife of P. J. MacDonnell (1862-1940).

³² Wife of Dr. Richard Victor Fowler (1864-1925).

³³ Sister of Dr. Andrew W. Dwyer (1860-1939).

³⁴ Perth Shoe Factory Manager.

³⁵ Secretary-Treasurer of Henry K. Wampole Company and a Director of the Perth Shoe Company.

³⁶ St. Francis de Sales Hospital, established 1904, expanded 1914, a Catholic institution, and Chambers Memorial Hospital, established 1912, a public hospital.

³⁷ *Perth Courier*, December 12, 1919.

³⁸ *Perth Courier* January 9, 1920.

³⁹ Elizabeth Scott Mathewson-Clayton (1865-1936), wife of Archdeacon D'Arcy Thomas Clayton (1864-1935), Priest at St. James Anglican Church.

⁴⁰ *Perth Courier*, May 14, 1920.

Unmoved, council instructed the Town Clerk “to notify the Society in similar terms in which the IODE were recently notified ... that the Council did not feel justified in taking any action in the matter in view of the small majority in favor of the by-law.”⁴¹

Several letters to the editor of the *Perth Courier* also protested Council’s inaction and one reminded council that “the Town of Perth has over \$1,000 worth of supplies which were secured over a year ago for our Emergency Hospital and which was packed up when the epidemic was over”.⁴²



Major John Andrew Hope

That summer, in an effort to put the hospital project back on track, the local chapters of the IODE, Red Cross and Women’s Institute, called a joint meeting to re-consider the idea of a Cottage Hospital, a project on a more modest scale than the one represented by the \$75,000 debenture by-law proposed at the January vote. As events unfolded however, the meeting found itself considering, instead, a letter from Major John A. Hope⁴³, of the Perth Branch of the Great War Veterans Association (GWVA)⁴⁴. In that letter Hope announced, for the first time, that the GWVA hoped to implement plans “for a Hospital as a memorial to the men who had made the supreme sacrifice in the late war”⁴⁵.

Although the ladies’ groups had been the first to proposed just such a memorial hospital and had been fundraising and leading the campaign to make it a reality for over a year, they gracefully deferred further consideration of their Cottage Hospital scheme. Recognizing, no doubt, that in the male dominated society of the day (and politics being the art of the possible), that Major Hope and the GWVA would carry more weight with Town Council and the municipal electorate.⁴⁶ “A resolution was carried unanimously that, in the event of the GWVA succeeding with their plans, the women’s organizations represented at this meeting should give them every possible support”.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Perth Courier*, June 4, 1920.

⁴³ Major John Andrew Hope (1890-1954), 59th Infantry, Perth lawyer. In 1933 Hope was placed on the bench of the Ontario High Court of Justice and in 1945 made a Justice of the Court of Appeal, where he sat until 1954. He was awarded the King’s Jubilee Medal in 1935 and the Coronation Medal in 1937 and in 1945 was named a Governor of the University of Toronto.

⁴⁴ The GWVA was the largest of several veterans’ organizations in the inter-war period. It merged with smaller groups to form the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League in 1925. The Canadian Legion became the Royal Canadian Legion in 1960.

⁴⁵ *Perth Courier*, August 13, 1920.

⁴⁶ Women in Ontario had only won the right to vote in April 1917.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Five months later, at its December 1920 meeting, Perth Town Council received a reorganized Memorial Hospital delegation⁴⁸ requesting that Perth submit a new debenture by-law to the ratepayers to grant the sum of \$25,000 to the hospital scheme. In his capacity as Chairman of the Hospital Committee, Major Hope told Town Council that,

*The proposal is receiving the whole-hearted support of town and country. In the townships of Bathurst, Drummond, and North Burgess the matter has been received most favorably. It is also expected the townships of Elmsley, North Sherbrooke, Dalhousie, South Sherbrooke, and Lanark will give assistance.*⁴⁹

As part of the committee's presentation to Council, Hope outlined plans for converting the Haggart property on Mill Street into a permanent hospital. That property, he explained, could be purchased from the Soldiers' Aid Commission for \$3,000-\$4,000 and that various improvements, including an addition, could be carried out at an estimated added cost of \$40,000. The completed hospital would contain 22 beds -- two public wards with three beds each, four semi-private wards with two beds each, and eight private wards with one bed each, supported by an operating theatre and maternity ward. An existing frame out-building would be converted for staff housing. The proposed hospital would be provided with modern equipment throughout and furnished with the \$3,000 in equipment and supplies already secured from the Red Cross, and \$1,000 in surplus supplies purchased by the Town for the emergency hospital.

When the Town of Perth put the \$25,000 debenture proposition to the ratepayers as part of the municipal elections held on January 6, 1921, it passed with a large majority.

In addition to the \$25,000 contribution from the Town of Perth, the organizing committee also secured funding commitments from the surrounding municipalities. Drummond and Bathurst Townships promised \$4,000 each. North Burgess, Dalhousie, and North Sherbrooke Townships \$1,500 each, North Elmsley Township \$1,000, and South Sherbrooke Township \$800.⁵⁰

In February 1921 the Memorial Hospital Committee purchased the 41 Mill Street Haggart property at auction for \$5,000 and public fundraising to make the project a reality began in earnest – a masquerade ball sponsored by the Victorian Order of Nurses, IODE tag days and dances, amateur theatre productions at the Balderson Theater, a 'stringed orchestra concert' by the music students of Mrs. W. R. Spence⁵¹, a skating party and bazaar sponsored by the Hospital Ladies Coordinating Committee, benefit hockey games, etc.

Architectural plans, drawn by A. W. Harwood of Ottawa, were completed in May and tenders received in June. In July the initiative was legally incorporated as the Great War Memorial Hospital of Perth District, but the committee concluded it could not proceed immediately owing to the prevailing high costs of labor and material. Post-war inflation had driven the cost of building

⁴⁸ Composed of Major John Hope, Judge Scott, Dr. Richard Victor Fowler (1864-1925), B. A. C. Caldwell, Hugh Anthony O'Donnell (1893-1958), lawyer, F. J. Kehoe, P. J. C. MacDonnell, Mrs. R. V. Fowler, Mrs. A. R. Lowe, Mrs. T. J. Devlin, Julia King-Devlin (1867-1956) wife of John T. Devlin (1865-1941), Teresa Dwyer, Jean Drysdale, and Miss Dawes.

⁴⁹ *Perth Courier*, December 3, 1920.

⁵⁰ In the end only the Townships of Bathurst, Drummond, North Burgess and North Elmsley honored their funding pledges.

⁵¹ Julia Lilian Skey Bengough-Spence (1866-1950), wife of William Ramsay Spence (1859-1946), musician, composer, church organist.

materials so high that the lowest tender was thousands of dollars beyond budget estimates. The building program was postponed until the following spring, but when tenders were re-called in March 1922 it was found that bids still far exceeded the available budget. The high costs were partly the result of continued inflationary pressure but had much to do with the fact that Haggart Island is solid rock and the cost of installing sewers was beyond prohibitive.

In May 1922 the Hospital Committee announced a major pivot in its plans with the purchase of Victoria Hall on Drummond Street at the cost of \$9,812.45. The Soldiers' Aid Commission agreed to cancel the Haggart house sale, refunded the committee its money, and announced the property would, instead, be used as an orphans' home⁵².



Victoria Hall c1865

The Victoria House property had been granted as a 25 acre 'town lot' to Reverend William Bell⁵³ in 1824. In 1841 Bell sold the property for £300 to his son-in-law Judge John Glass Malloch⁵⁴ who, between 1854 and 1856, had a large and opulent home built on the site. In completing the project, cost overruns nearly ruined the general contractors Dodds & Ballantyne⁵⁵ of Smiths Falls.

Stone for the walls was quarried in Drummond Township but most of the interior fittings were imported from much further afield. The

two-storey home, with a single-storey kitchen wing in the rear, contained 17 rooms, served by two large halls ten feet in width, plate glass windows and a solid walnut staircase. Polished marble mantle pieces graced the downstairs rooms, while the chimney pieces and mantles upstairs were painted to imitate coloured marble. The ceiling of the entrance hall was decorated with flowers and shields, and the ceiling of the paneled library was embellished with portraits of literary greats Scott, Byron, Milton, Moore, McCauley, Shakespeare, and Rollin, all painted by local artist Robert A. McLean⁵⁶. Outbuildings included a carriage house and stables. The surrounding grounds, gardens, and orchards, laid out by expert gardeners, were enclosed by a buck-thorn hedge.

⁵² Neither the orphan's home nor a later scheme for use as a rehabilitation home for wounded soldiers came to pass. The property returned to Haggart family ownership when John A. Haggart's grand-daughter, Mariam Bell-Armour (1867-1950), purchased the house in 1923.

⁵³ Reverend William Bell (1780-1857), first Presbyterian minister at the Perth Military Settlement.

⁵⁴ Judge John Glass Malloch (1806-1873), Lanark County Judge.

⁵⁵ John Dodds and Francis Ballantyne (1805-1874) (built Smiths Falls Town Hall in 1859).

⁵⁶ Robert Allan McLean (1823-1881), McLean took first prizes at the first world's fair held in the Crystal Palace, London, in 1851.

In its day the house was considered one of the finest homes in eastern Ontario. Malloch named the mansion 'Victoria Hall' for the reigning monarch and lived there until he died in 1873. Thereafter, except for brief stays by visiting family members, the property sat unoccupied for a quarter century until it was purchased by Thomas Campbell⁵⁷ in 1898, after whose death it was bought by Sophia (Mrs. Peter) McLaren⁵⁸. Sophia McLaren sold it to the Great War Memorial Hospital of Perth District in 1922.

Remodeling work at Victoria Hall got underway in June 1922. The general contractor was W.J. Rabb. Hope & Son⁵⁹ had the plumbing contract, Perth Hydro System was responsible for electrical work, Chapin & Code⁶⁰, for heating, and Hugh R. Gamble⁶¹ for painting. Renovation to the main building cost about \$30,000 and conversion of the coach house into a nurses' residence another \$3,000 (financed by the Ladies Coordinating Hospital Committee⁶²). Equipping the kitchen, pantry, laundry, domestic rooms etc., added nearly \$10,000 to the bill and \$250 was spent on clearing the over-grown grounds.



Great War Memorial Hospital c1922

⁵⁷ Thomas Campbell (1847-1910).

⁵⁸ Sophia Elizabeth Lees-McLaren (1845-1923), wife of Senator Peter McLaren (1831-1919). The property was offered, successively, to her sons James and William as a wedding gift, but both declined. Legend holds that their lack of interest may have been due to the fact the house was said to be haunted.

⁵⁹ Peter Hope (1853-1929) & William Ross Hope (1880-1939).

⁶⁰ Thomas Mervyn Chaplin (1883-1936) and Mervyn Code (1885-1961).

⁶¹ Hugh R. Gamble (1885-1974).

⁶² President Isabel Frances Geddes-McLaren (1884-1971), wife of James Lyon Playfair McLaren (1878-1934), Secretary Miss Jean Drysdale (1859-1936).

Ten months later, at 3:00 p.m. on the rain-drenched afternoon of Thursday, March 8, 1923, the Great War Memorial Hospital was officially opened in a much-truncated ceremony conducted on its front porch. The foul weather made it impossible to have a proper ceremony, and there was insufficient room indoors to accommodate the crowd of nearly 2,000 that attended despite the downpour. In declaring the facility open, Hospital Board Member Judge James H. Scott told the rain-soaked crowd that the building,

... with its beautiful equipment and attractive outlook was the public expression of the public sense of this district of an appropriate memorial to our glorious dead, of a fitting and living tribute to the flower of this part of Lanark County who had made the supreme sacrifice in the Great War. And surely no structure could more permanently, or more usefully record the acknowledgement of obligation by those for whom they fought and died than this Memorial Hospital which, it is hoped, will for all time administer to the suffering and injured".⁶³

That day and the following afternoon 1,600 visitors toured the hospital and nurses' home, in groups, guided by members of the Hospital Ladies Coordinating Committee. On the first-floor visitors saw two public wards, 17 X 24 feet, open on each side of the corridor, as well as two private wards, three semi-private wards, and the maternity ward. Each of these had its own fireplace, built as part of the original house plan. The first floor also contained the Superintendent's three-room suite with bathroom, the nurses' dining room and the dispensary. A two-storey sun parlor for the use of convalescents had been added to the southeast side of the original structure.

The first floor's broad corridor was duplicated upstairs, at the end of which was an operating suite of three rooms, the doctors' waiting room and lavatories. The operating room was provided natural light by a window stretching the full length of the room, a skylight, and high-wattage electric lights. All floors, with the exception of the operating room, were of newly laid hardwood.

Both floors were equipped with a 'diet kitchen', outfitted with a sink, refrigerator, and electric stove, communicating with the main kitchen in the basement by dumbwaiter. The basement also housed the laundry, pantry, root cellar, furnace room, caretaker's living quarters and a large staff dining room. The laundry was equipped with the most up-to-date Myer Brothers electric washer, electric dryer, electric roller.

The former carriage house had been reconstructed as a nurses' residence, including a dining room and sitting room with brick fireplace, kitchenette, bathroom and five bedrooms. A cellar was dug beneath it to accommodate a furnace, and two verandahs added.⁶⁴

⁶³ *Perth Courier*, March 16, 1923.

⁶⁴ The nurses' residence was demolished in 1986.

On Saturday, March 10th, the hospital admitted its first 11 patients, placed under the nursing care of Superintendent Mrs. S. A. Price⁶⁵, formerly Superintendent of the 25-bed Haldimand War Memorial Hospital at Dunnville, Ontario, and nurse Constance Anne Elizabeth Winfindale-Kincaid (1897-1959) a graduate of the Brockville General Hospital Training School. Over the next year additional staff were recruited including Assistant Superintendent Miss A. Menzies,



Nurses' Residence

graduate nurse Marie Dooher, probationer nurse Miss M. Duncan, cook Edith Eady, two maids, Ellen Burke and Mrs. John Keays, janitor Allan T. Stewart (1864-1934), and a laundress. In 1924 the hospital also established a nurses' training school and enrolled its first four students: Olive Blanchard⁶⁶, Agnes Duncan, Emily Rowley, and Jean Anderson.

Over its first 10 months of operation, March-December 1923, a total of 287 patients were admitted to the GWMH, almost equally divided between men and women and between town and townships. Fifty-three major and 99 minor surgeries were performed, including an appendectomy performed on Major John A. Hope, the man who had played such a pivotal role in bringing the hospital into being. There were 28 births and 10 deaths recorded.

Cash donations and gifts-in-kind came from every corner of the community. The Perth Branch of the Red Cross outfitted the operating theatre and the anesthetizing and sterilizing rooms with complete up-to-date equipment and also supplied a special electric sterilizer for the maternity ward. The Canadian Red Cross Society supplied 30 hospital beds, bedside tables, linens, blankets, mattresses, etc. The Perth Nursing Division of St. John's Ambulance furnished the babies' nursery. Private rooms were furnished by Loyal Orange Lodge (LOL) No.7 Drummond Center, Margaret Dick-Pink (1841-1932)⁶⁷, Esther Scott-Hanna (1864-1953)⁶⁸, Mary Louise Molly Sprague-Girdwood (1881-1966)⁶⁹, Alexander Blair (1875-1953)⁷⁰, the family of Thomas Hicks (1835-1905)⁷¹, and W. J. McKerracher (1866-1927)⁷². Perth-Upon-Tay IODE contributed approximately \$2,000 for equipment maintenance. The Catholic Women's League donated a dinner set and tea set for nurses' residence. The 1905 Old Boys' Reunion Trust Fund contributed \$485 to furnish the administrative office.

⁶⁵ Mrs. Price served as the hospital's first Superintendent 1924-1926. She was replaced by Mary Edith McFarlane-Walker (1882-1943), a native of Lanark Village and widow of James Walker (1876-1921), who held the post for 18 years.

⁶⁶ Olive Willena Blanchard of Lombardy became the GWMH Training School's first graduate in June 1925. She had completed her first year's training at Smiths Falls Public Hospital so graduated a year ahead of her Perth classmates.

⁶⁷ Wife of William James Pink (1843-1922), furniture manufacturer, Mayor 1887-1888.

⁶⁸ Wife of Dr. Adelbert Edward Hanna (1863-1918).

⁶⁹ Wife of Frederick Albert Girdwood (1878-1931), drug store owner.

⁷⁰ Furniture dealer and funeral director.

⁷¹ Carriage maker.

⁷² Former partner in Shaw & McKerracher Dry Goods.

Innisville Women's Institute furnished the Superintendent's sitting room and bedroom. The Ladies Aid of Calvin Baptist Church, Bathurst, furnished the second floor sitting room and hall. St. James Anglican Church Ladies provided six bed tables, three bed trays, three white enamel trays and covers. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Ladies gifted window curtains for the entire hospital. J. Simpson Gould⁷³ of Smiths Falls donated a two-plate electric stove and James Brothers Foundry and Hardware Store built and installed the fire escape free of charge.

Those wishing to donate preserved fruit for the GWMH menu could collect empty sealers to fill by calling upon Jean Drysdale at the CPR telegraph office. A three-day bazaar held by Ladies Hospital Committee grossed \$1,800. A two-day shooting tournament among 32 teams of 10 men each, organized by George Sutton James at the skating rink, raised \$250.

Over the course of 1924 numerous additions and improvements were made at the new hospital. Jessie Henderson-Stewart paid for the installation of an elevator from the basement to top floor, with an outside ambulance entrance at ground level. An X-Ray machine was purchased by the IODE. A cow stable and chicken coop were added to the property ensuring a ready supply of fresh milk and eggs for patients and staff. A garden to furnish fresh summer vegetables and produce for canning was also established and the local Horticultural Society planted flower beds around the grounds.

At the GWMH's second annual meeting in February 1924 it was announced that \$500 would be spent on a bronze memorial tablet to be placed in the hospital's entrance corridor, beneath which would be a case containing a parchment book engraved with all the names and records of the boys and men from Perth and district who had not returned from the Great War.

On Armistice Day, Tuesday, November 11, 1924, in the presence of a huge crowd, the Great War Memorial Hospital at Perth was officially dedicated to the fallen of 1914-1918. Guests of honor at the ceremony were hometown hero Major Clyde R. Scott (1893-1941)⁷⁴, then serving as Military Secretary at the Department of National Defense, and General Henri Alexandre Panet (1869-1951), Canadian Army Adjutant General. They were attended by the 42nd Regimental band, the PCI cadet corps and bugle band, the full student bodies of both the public and separate schools, militia veterans of the 1866 Fenian Raids, and veterans of the Great War. Following two minutes silence at 11:00 a.m. and the singing of 'O God Our Help in Ages Past' Judge James H. Scott spoke to the gathering.

We have appropriately, I think, taken advantage of this historic anniversary to complete what was in the minds of the promoters of this Memorial Hospital at the time it was projected ... to furnish the answer to enquiring generals in the years to come that this tablet was erected as a memorial of the brave Canadian lads from this community and surrounding district who not only served in the Great War of 1914-1918, but gave their lives and sacrificed their all that Canada and the Empire might live ...

⁷³ James Simpson Gould (1867-1930) owner of the Citizens Power Company, Smiths Falls.

⁷⁴ See *Captain Hooper's Farmhouse* elsewhere on this website <https://www.perthhs.org/documents/captain-hooper-farmhouse.pdf>

Everywhere throughout the allied countries, reminders of the war's dead have been erected ... In Perth and its surrounding district, the consensus of opinion pronounced in favor of a Memorial Hospital. It is regarded here as a permanent, useful, and living testimony of our regard for the memory of our sons, brothers, and fathers who in the greatest war in history have given their lives for their country ...

This is not a private enterprise; it belongs to and is carried on in the interest of the people who must individually regard it with jealous care and be prepared at all hazards and at all times to see that the necessary means are forthcoming to preserve its efficiency. Mindful always of Kipling's injunction 'Lest We Forget' ...



Memorial Plaque of 1924

On the conclusion of Judge Scott's remarks, the memorial tablet, mounted inside the hospital porch was unveiled by Major-General Panet who read aloud the inscription,

To remind us of Great Sacrifice and of our duty, this Hospital is dedicated to the memory of the men of the Town of Perth and the Townships of Bathurst, Drummond, North Burgess and North Elmsley, who gave their lives for their King and Country in the Great War of 1914-18, and whose names are recorded with gratitude and love in the Book of Remembrance.

Unable to be present at the Armistice Day ceremony, Governor General Lord Byng of Vimy⁷⁵ and Lady Byng⁷⁶ visited Perth two weeks later. They arrived by special train on November 29th, attended a reception at the Balderson Theatre and then inspected the Great War Memorial Hospital where they were served lunch as guests of Perth Mayor Wellington Douglas (1879-1950)⁷⁷.

⁷⁵ Field Marshal Julian Hedworth George Byng, 1st Viscount Byng of Vimy, GCB, GCMG, MVO (1862-1935), served as 12th Governor General of Canada, 1921-1926.

⁷⁶ Viscountess Marie Evelyn Moreton-Byng (1870-1949).

⁷⁷ Manager Code Felt Mill, Mayor 1923-1924.



Twenty-six years later the GWMH's duty of memory was compounded by the casualties of another World War. On July 8, 1948, during Perth's Old Home Week, veterans of both wars and more than 1,000 citizens from Perth and the Townships of Drummond, Bathurst, North Elmsley, North Burgess and South Sherbrooke assembled on Drummond Street to dedicate newly constructed memorial gates opening on the hospital's front entrance. During the ceremony, held in a rain storm as heavy as that of the hospital's original dedication, Lieutenant Colonel William Gourlay Blair (1890-1957)⁷⁸, and Lanark County Warden Harold David Mather (1895-1961)⁷⁹ read aloud the names of 70 men who had fallen in WW1 and 45 more who died in WW2. Colonel John A. Hope, the hospital's first president, delivered the dedicatory address. The following year bronze plaques bearing those names were installed on the gate's pillars and, in due course, engraved stones were incorporated honoring those who served in the Korean War and on United Nations Peace Keeping operations around the world.⁸⁰

- Ron W. Shaw (2023)

⁷⁸ A Perth physician, Dr. Blair served 1916-1919 with the Royal Canadian Medical Corps and sat as the (PC) MP for the constituency of Lanark 1945-1957.

⁷⁹ Reeve of Drummond Township 1943-1952.

⁸⁰ Although the GWMH had been created in 1922 to memorialize those killed in WW1, annual Armistice Day wreath laying ceremonies from 1921 through 1948 (except the 1924 ceremony) were held at a portable cenotaph set up each November 11th in Market Square, behind Town Hall, on the edge of Stewart Park.