

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Thurs., Feb. 16, 1967

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Hospital Is Recalled McLean Memorial

By NEIL A. MATHESON

I WONDER how many readers know that our Government House was once the administrative centre for the Rena McLean Memorial Hospital – for veterans of the First Great War.

It was built during the war by the federal government as a military hospital. The main Government House building provided the space for the administrative offices, and the operating room and a few private rooms. There was a large double-deck annex with four huge wards that had 50 beds each. This was located on the Government Pond side of Government House and was connected to the building by a passageway. A big kitchen annex was also built on.

The information came from Dr. J. S. (Jack) Jenkins, Charlottetown who took over command of the hospital when he returned from overseas in 1919 – he had been a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps.

THE HOSPITAL was named for Nursing Sister Rena McLean, the daughter of the late Senator John McLean of Souris. She was lost when the Germans torpedoed the hospital ship Llandovery Castle, on June 27, 1918.

Incidentally the name of Nursing Sister McLean is on a plaque in the P.E.I. Hospital indicating that the X-Ray Laboratory there is a memorial to her.

Nursing sister McLean would be a sister of the late Harry McLean and the late Roy McLean, who was in the Provincial Legislature from 1915 to 1935. She was an aunt of John McLean who also served in the legislature for many years and was Speaker of the House during the Walter Shaw administration. He died several years ago.

The first commandant of the memorial hospital, I understand, was Dr. James Warburton, a one-time mayor of Charlottetown, and I presume he held the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. It opened as a military hospital but it became a civilian institution when Dr. Jenkins took charge.

Dr. Jenkins Took Charge in 1919

IT WAS opened in 1917. Dr. Jenkins took over in 1919 when the hospital was transferred from the military and placed under the department of Soldiers Civil Re-establishment, a department we know now as Veterans Affairs.

The capacity of the hospital was 200 patients, but it appears that the occupancy never neared that figure.

Dr. Jenkins recommended that the hospital be closed – that would be in 1920, he suggests.

In addition to having charge of the hospital Dr. Jenkins had the direction of all of the other doctors who looked after soldiers in the province. He visited them, certified their accounts, etc.

As District Soldiers Civil Re-establishment director, Dr. Jenkins also had under his supervision the Dalton Sanatorium at North Wilshire – I did a column on this institution

several years ago – although Dr. Garrison, a Maine man was in immediate command of the Sanatorium.

There was a dispensary on the first floor of the double-decker annex. Eugene Wynn was the dispenser. Wesley Bell, a brother of Mr. Justice R. R. Bell, was clerk. William Hughes was quarter-master.

Doctors on the staff included the late Dr. J. C. Houston and the late Dr. J. J. Blake.

Some of the ladies on the staff included Miss Helen White, RN who later married Wesley Bell; Miss Ina Gillan, later Mrs. (Dr.) Beer; Jean Martin who later married F. A. S. Jones and Frances Moore, later Mrs. Art Vinnicombe, who died a few days ago.

Miss Winifred MacLeod, RN was the matron.

In the basement of the structure was a vocational training school. Phil Palmer and Harry Whitlock, both of Charlottetown were among the instructors.

### Charlottetown Hospital Used It

AFTER THE Memorial Hospital was closed out the Charlottetown Hospital used the building and facilities for several years until the new Charlottetown Hospital was built. The old hospital had been destroyed by fire and it was most fortunate that the administrative, medical and nursing staffs were able to move into those facilities.

The old Charlottetown Hospital fire was on November 22, 1921 and Lieutenant-Governor Murdock MacKinnon offered the Rena McLean hospital building which was then vacant. The hospital authorities accepted the offer and moved their patients into the facilities.

Then the old hospital building was hauled across the street and repaired – it later became the Sacred Heart Home which was not torn down until recently – the patients were moved into it, and they were there until 1925, a spokesman for the Hospital kindly told me last night.

When the Rena McLean Memorial Hospital was closed out arrangements were made so that veterans needing treatment could be treated in the hospital of their choice, Dr. Jenkins told me.

I should have said that a nurses' residence was constructed west of Government House – on the Victoria Park side. This building was purchased by Samuel Kennedy, a one-time mayor of the city, split in two and converted into two bungalows which are located alongside the Ordnance Compound.

When the Memorial Hospital was closed the office of the DSCR (Dr. Jenkins) was moved to the Legion Home on Grafton Street. Staff members who moved there included Mr. Bell and Helen White, RN the lady who married Mr. Bell.

I realize that many names of hospital staff members are omitted here, but only a few were available.

My sincere thanks to Dr. Jenkins for his generous co-operation. I remember visiting the hospital as a very young Rose Valley boy, with my uncle Hugh McLure of Breadalbane, and often wondered where I could get enough information to make a column. It was my good fortune to learn that Dr. Jenkins knew the story which I have the pleasure to present to column readers today.