

FRENCH ARMY DOCTORS AND MEDICAL PIONEERS

Medicine in early days not governed

One of the more fascinating aspects of Island history is the development of the practice of medicine in the province. The first reported doctors here, with such training as they have received in those days, were attached to the French army.

While many old records and books of the past have come to this paper to help make the Centennial Edition a record of our past, oddly enough the greatest aid in learning about medicine and the early doctors was obtained from a book published just this year.

The Guardian and The Evening Patriot are greatly indebted to Dr. R. Gordon Lea, Charlottetown, for his kind permission to quote "at will" from his excellent "History of the

Practice of Medicine in Prince Edward Island."

The history lists a great many doctors who practiced here from the late 1700's on to the turn of the present century, but is primarily concerned, as Dr. Lea notes, with the 19th century.

He states "prior to 1871 there apparently was no legislation governing the practice of medicine, or controlling the licensing of practitioners in the province. We do not know what qualifications were required for a man to call himself a doctor. Apparently the fact that he graduated from a college of learning degrees in medicine was enough."

The history notes there are records of some who had not completed a medical course

but were allowed to practice on a government license.

First recorded legislation governing medicine was the Medical Act of 1871—it permitted those men practicing on a government license to continue but no more such licenses were issued thereafter.

By that Act only graduates of medical schools of Great Britain and Ireland, graduates of Canadian Medical Schools and of certain specific colleges in the United States were permitted to practice here. Changes in 1878 excluded the U.S. colleges and allowed graduates of the other three countries named to practice without an examination.

Dr. Lea notes that Prince Edward Island doctors appear to have been members of the

Canadian Medical Society since its beginning in 1867 and particularly remarks the connections of the late Dr. W. J. P. MacMillan and Dr. S. R. Jenkins.

An interesting fact brought out in the history is in the following paragraph: "About 1890, when women physicians were rare everywhere, and there had never been any women doctors in practice on the island, there were seven women doctors from the Belfast district alone practicing in various parts of Canada and the United States."

Dr. A. MacDonald, who graduated from McGill in 1902, and who has practiced in St. Louis since then, remembers many of the men who began practice in the middle 1800's and recalls many of the practices of an earlier day long since discarded.

For instance, the old standby of "bleeding" a patient is still used today, but Dr. MacDonald remembers once bleeding a pneumonia patient. When he started practice office calls were \$1 and this included a bottle of medicine. Obstetrical cases brought in the fine fee of \$5—and also brought many weary hours of waiting because the doctor was usually sent for at the first sign of pain.

Frequently even extensive surgery was performed on the kitchen table in farm homes with some member of the family pouring the chloroform. The late, and oldest living practitioner in Canada at one time, Sir Roderick MacDonell—the beloved Dr. Riddle of Morril—once said he wore out a great many horses "and almost as many automobiles".

The writer of this article, who was privileged to know and admire Dr. Riddle, had several long chats with him and recalls the occasion only a few years ago, when the doctor was in his mid-90's, he was called to the scene of an automobile accident in which a young boy was killed.

Some days later Dr. Riddle appeared at the inquest held in Charlottetown and gave his medical testimony before the coroner's jury. He also posed at a medical convention here for a picture with the late Dr. MacNeill of Summerside, and Dr. Gus MacDonald of Souris. At the time their combined age was over 250 years.

No history of medicine here would be complete without reference to hospitals and Dr. Lea did not overlook the point. He notes the "first hospital"

was opened in 1879, but it and others which followed were not operated in the modern manner. For many years they held only patients who were chronically ill.

The Charlottetown Hospital was the first here and was occupied until 1921 when the hospital moved to a new building where it stayed until it was badly damaged by fire in 1921. Reconstruction took nine months and during the interim the hospital was conducted at Government House. A new building was erected in 1925 under direction of Bishop O'Leary, and though major changes have taken place still stands on the same site.

The Prince Edward Island Hospital was organized in 1933 and for the purpose of the hazard property on Longworth Avenue was acquired. It had a capacity of 12 beds and was used until 1938. In that year a new building was erected on Kennington Road and occupied until 1939 when the present hospital was opened in Victoria Park. It is interesting to note that the former structures used as hospitals are still standing.

The building of hospitals made possible better records of operations and the records of the P.E.I. Hospital for 1938 show there were five amputations of breast, two amputations of thigh, one herniomy, one Hysterectomy and one double Salpingo-Oophorectomy.

Expectant mothers did not use hospital facilities to any extent, in fact the first normal confinement at the P.E.I. Hospital was not recorded until 1908. The first Caesarian section done there was in 1911.

So far as public health work by government is concerned the first real step taken was in 1949 when an "Asylum for the Insane" was built in Brightwood Farm on the East River was acquired by the government for the mentally ill and Dr. Hinchman was superintendent in 1930.

An outbreak of infectious disease in 1949 resulted in the appointment of a Health Officer and building of a small structure to serve as "Quarantine Hospital" for smallpox and d typhus cases. A vaccination Act was passed in 1925 and in 1936 an Anti-Tuberculosis Society formed. Registration of births and deaths was made compulsory in 1907.

The first tuberculosis sanatorium here was opened at North Wilshire in 1915, a gift of the late Sir Charles Dalton, and the Provincial Sanatorium opened here in 1930.

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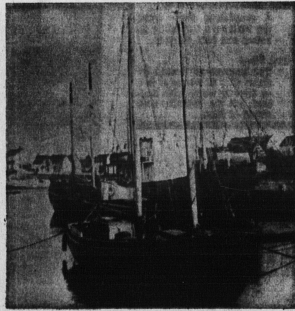
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QUEEN SQUARE

Confederation meeting Jubilee held in 1914

"Prince Edward Island is preparing to celebrate this year the Jubilee of the First Confederation Conference, which fortuitous event took place in Charlottetown in the early days of September 1864. The celebration will be of national importance in two ways, firstly as to the inception of the great idea of uniting all British America under one government, and secondly because of the recently changed attitude of the people of the Island province towards the union compact."

Those words were written for "The Canadian Courier", a weekly, by Hon. J. A. Matheson, Premier of Prince Edward Island, in 1914, as Canada prepared for the 50th anniversary of the Confederation conference.

The Premier wrote: "Fifty years ago there was no railway connection between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, nor between New Brunswick and Lower Canada, nor between New Brunswick and the United States. Prince Edward Island had no railway. Both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia had begun the construction of Government railways, from Saint John on the one hand and from Halifax on the other, designed to connect those two provinces together."

"With the prospect of railway connection had come the idea of closer political connection and free trade between the Maritime Provinces of British America, and out of this grew correspondence between the three governments, initiated by the government of Nova Scotia."

Mr. Matheson in the article listed all the delegates present and noted "never before had there been a meeting of so many eminent British American statesmen in one place, assembled together for a common purpose."

It is interesting to read his statement regarding the dissatisfaction of the east with the Canadian union and his opinion that in the 1860's had the people

the privilege of a publicist at that time they would have voted themselves out of Confederation in favor of the originally scheduled Maritime Union.

"In Prince Edward Island a feeling of bitter discontent grew up, and the union with Canada had come to be looked upon by many as a most unenviable but irremediable event."

"GOVERNMENTS OF BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES HAD BROKEN FAITH WITH US AND HAD CONFESSED THEIR FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT THE TERMS OF UNION IN THE VITAL MATTER OF OUR WINTER TRANSPORT TO AND FROM THE MAINLAND."

Another indictment of Confederation is noted in the words: "UNRELIABLE FINANCIAL TERMS, UNWISELY AGREED UPON BY OUR UNION DELEGATES IN 1871, THE PROVINCE WAS ABSOLUTELY UNABLE TO PROVIDE DECENTLY MAINTAINED PUBLIC SERVICES, EVEN WITH THE CLOSEST ECONOMIC WITHOUT INCREASING ANNUAL DEFICITS."

Mr. Matheson wrote that in 1868, when winter communication was at its worst and for two months no steamers crossed between the Island and the mainland, outraged public feeling grew so loud that leading newspapers of the mainland sent special commissioners here to learn if a determined secession movement were likely.

The Premier wrote of the recent better financial deal the province was receiving from Ottawa and how the people were looking forward to the new air ferry route from Cape Tormentine and twice daily mails as a result.

He added the province could look forward to the celebration of confederation because the Island is now coming emancipated and the ties which bind her to her sister Provinces are no longer looked upon as fetters of iron."

However, the 50th anniversary was never celebrated as the First World War intervened.