

# St. Mary's Hospital



A postcard photo of St. Mary's Hospital, Pender Harbour. Built by the Columbia Coast Mission of the Anglican Church, it opened in August 1930. The building to the left is the chapel, which later became the Sundowner Inn.

Below: The lagoon (sometimes called the children's swimming pool) at Hospital Bay, Pender Harbour. The Brynelson's home at centre. The original St. Mary's was located just to the left of the photo.

St. Mary's was the first local hospital to be built, and remains the only hospital on the Coast, however its roots go back to the 1930s in Pender Harbour.

The inaccessibility of medical services was a major reason that the upper coast community campaigned for the hospital. Pender Harbour had the highest concentration of fishing and logging camps in the region, and many men were injured on the job. Before the existence of a hospital, people seeking medical attention would have to wait, sometimes overnight, for a ship to transport them to Vancouver. Many couldn't survive the wait, let alone the trip.

Rev. John Antle had arranged for the purchase of three hospital float houses, which were to be towed over from O'Brien Bay, but they had gotten destroyed in a storm enroute in July 1929. The Reverend and other locals continued to raise funds regardless of this setback.

Land for the hospital was later donated to Coast Columbian Anglican Mission by R "Barney" Brynelson Sr. He had apparently donated part of the land belonging to his neighbour, real estate agent Henry Darling. Once informed of the community's cause, Henry let the effort continue and deeded his land for the hospital. The building was constructed in 1929-30 and upon completion it housed 12 beds, two solariums, a maternity room, nursery, case room and operating room. Dr. Johnson was the resident physician and surgeon, and one nurse was also employed. Johnson was succeeded by Dr. Leo Friesen, followed by Dr. Tripp.

Once the hospital was established, it became evident that some form of insurance was needed for the residents and workers to be able to afford medical care. Groups of 75 people could pay one dollar a month for six months in advance, in return for three months of treatment per patient (50 cents if they were married men).

The first road linking the hospital to the rest of Pender Harbour was completed in the late 1930s. Many loggers and fishermen who fell on hard times during the Depression and were seeking other avenues of work found employment constructing the road. It was finally paved in 1957. Prior to the road, patients were transported by Mission boats.

In the 1960s the decision was made to relocate and update the hospital's equipment. Land was donated by the Sechelt Indian Band and a new hospital was built in Sechelt. The St. Mary's of Garden Bay officially closed November 29, 1964, when the last patients were transferred to Sechelt. **CL**



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