

POSTCARD FROM THE PAST

New hospital provided a breath of fresh air

By BOB SCULLION and FRED THIRKELL

The first hospital in what is now Vancouver was a nine-bed cottage belonging to the CPR. It stood at the side of the track between Hawks and Heatley Streets.

Opened in 1886, it was brought into existence to care for workers injured while extending the railway's main line from Port Moody to Vancouver.

In 1887 the city took the responsibility for the small hospital, and in 1887, Dr. J.M. Lefevre, the CPR's surgeon, and an alderman, convinced city council to appoint a medical health officer. In the same year, the city's health by-law provided free medical and nursing care for the poor, either at home or in the city hospital.

A new city hospital opened on Sept. 25, 1888. Located on Pender Street, between Cambie and Beatty, it was a frame building on a stone foundation. It had 35 beds, and was under the control of the city's health committee.

Brick additions completed in 1902 brought the city hospital's capacity to 50 patients — and the same year, the city hospital was incorporated by a provincial act as Vancouver General Hospital.

Voters approved a money by-law in 1903 that made possible the erection of the first building on the site of the current Vancouver hospital at Fairview. Architects Grant and Henderson designed the building pictured here.

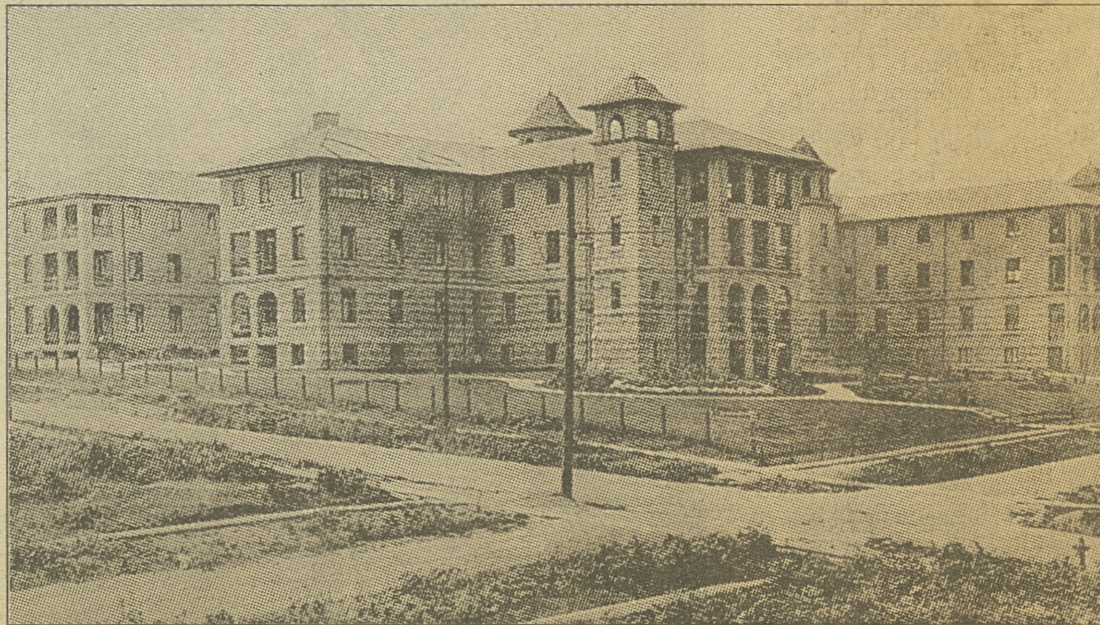
Located on the corners of Tenth Avenue and Heather

Street, the hospital consisted of three floors plus basement, and was built of stone and pressed brick. Its many open balconies reflected the importance attached at the time to fresh air as an aid to healing and health.

The skylighted operating rooms on the top floor of the east wing suggest that electric light was still considered less than either ideal or totally reliable, although the new hospital did have its own generating plant.

When the new Vancouver General Hospital opened in January, 1906, 47 patients were transferred from the old downtown building to the Fairview facility. The new building was initially intended to accommodate 104 patients.

Part of that building can still be found hidden away in the immense complex that is now Vancouver Hospital and



ORIGINAL Vancouver general hospital had skylighted operating rooms

Health Sciences Centre. It is now called the Heather Pavilion. Some things were built to last. ♦

*Fred Thirkell and Bob Scullion are always on the lookout for old postcards.
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