Calgary General Hospital # 3 opens in 1910

Deb Lee (adapted from the January ’24 article in Bridges)

The most recent hospital to be built in Calgary is the South Health Campus in Auburn Bay, at the very southern edge of the city. Farmer’s fields initially surrounded the new hospital when construction started but soon the new hospital became part of the skyline. It wasn’t long before the surrounding neighbourhood was filled with the homes and shopping malls we see today.

When the Calgary General Hospital #3 was being constructed in 1909, it too was on the edge of the city. Facing south and perched on the top of the Bow River escarpment, it could be easily seen from the more heavily populated south side of the Bow River. The hospital was located in our newly annexed community of Bridgeland. While streets of the community had been established, the population was small and there were few homes built at that time.

The General Hospital #3 was built to serve a growing Calgary population (40,000) and was much celebrated when it opened on a sunny February 1, 1910. People crossed the newly replaced Langevin (Reconciliation) Bridge, with over 1500 in attendance. Lieutenant Governor Bulyea officiated and the Calgary Rifles Band provided the music with the Ladies Aid serving a luncheon. It was exciting and all were impressed with the spacious and clean new facility.

The hospital was 5 storeys tall, with a central core and two wings and accommodated 160 patients. It was said to be the largest and most modern hospital in the province, having features such as elevators, telephones and patient call bells as well as running water. There was a designated operating room with state of the art equipment.

The matron, Miss Scott had small supervisory staff and 25 student nurses who provided most of the labour for patient care at the hospital. She was also responsible for the new departments of Laundry and Dietary and a Maintenance Department which operated the high pressure boilers that provided the heat. The nurses and students were initially housed in the upper floors of the hospital.

With the opening of the hospital in Bridgeland Calgary had moved into the modern era for medical and health care for those times. With city growth over the next decades (from 40,000 to 129,060 in 1951) the 160 bed Calgary General Hospital became increasingly challenged to provide the necessary health care for residents of our city as well as people from the surrounding area. The post war baby boom and immigration led to even more overcrowding and calls for expansion. The city conducted several plebicites in the 1940’s to determine if Calgary ratepayers were willing to foot the bill for a new hospital. The answer was “yes”, which set the stage for the planning of CGH #4.

