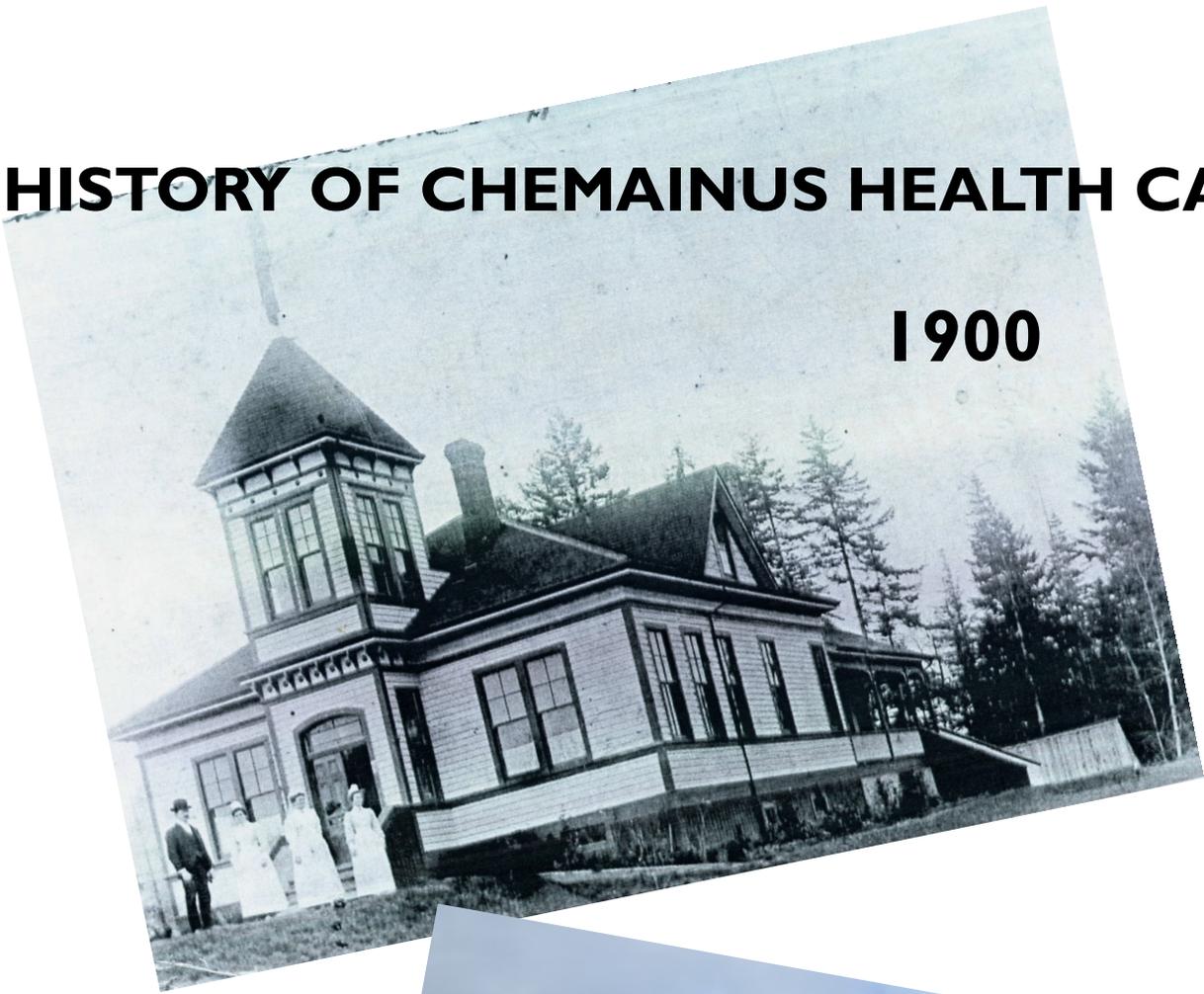


# A HISTORY OF CHEMAINUS HEALTH CARE

1900



2007



Produced by: Chemainus Health Care Foundation

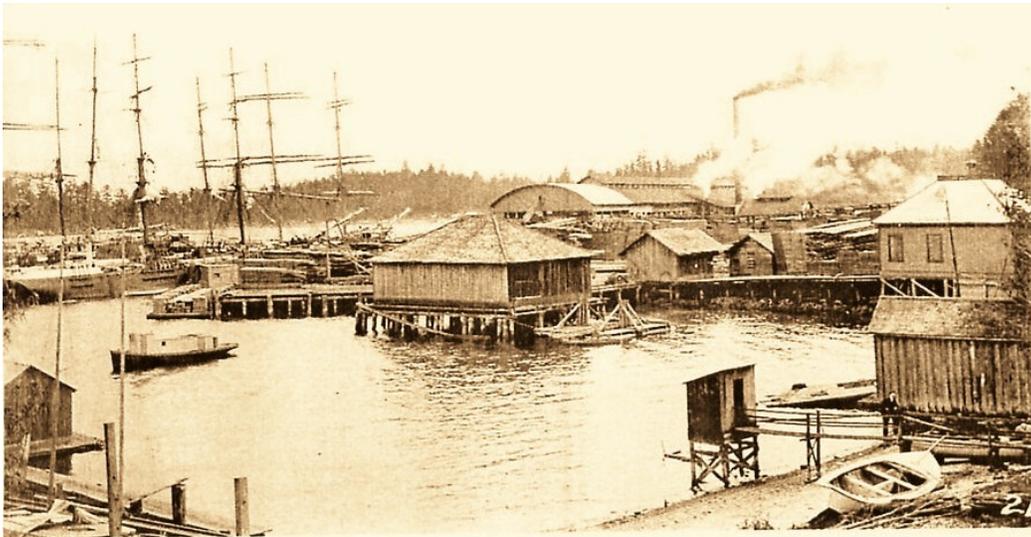
# A History of Chemainus Health Care

1900 –2007

The excellent deep-water inlet and the adjacent high quality timber made Chemainus a prime location for a sawmill. In the early years, most of the people who worked here were transients who moved to wherever work was available, in mining, construction (E&N) or the forest industry.



Lumber markets were unpredictable, as export markets had not been established with any certainty, so the early sawmills had many curtailments.



Sailing Ships transported much of the lumber produced in the sawmill in the early days of our community. It would take weeks to load some of the vessels as every piece was manhandled. In the lower right corner of the picture, note the outdoor toilet perched over the water!

The number of permanent area residents slowly increased and the concern for the lack of adequate care for the sick and injured became obvious.

## A History of Chemainus Health Care

1900—2007

In 1899 a typhoid epidemic struck, and a house on Chemainus Road, south of the Horseshoe Bay hotel, was set up as an emergency hospital. This situation prompted the community to set up a committee to prepare a plan to build a suitable permanent facility. A Society was formed and property donated and purchased. The hospital was built with volunteer labour and the sawmill donated the lumber. Required finances came from donations and from membership in the Society. The fast pace of construction resulted in a doctor being hired as the Medical Officer and shortly thereafter a Matron was hired. The hospital was opened to patients in May 1900. When the Chemainus hospital opened in 1900, it was the only hospital between Victoria and Nanaimo.



Costs of operation were minimal, but with no government assistance, those using the service were expected to pay to help keep the hospital running. In 1901, the sawmill management proposed that a payroll deduction (\$1 per month) be made by each employee for any required hospital service. This was approved and is believed to be the first such arrangement in B.C.

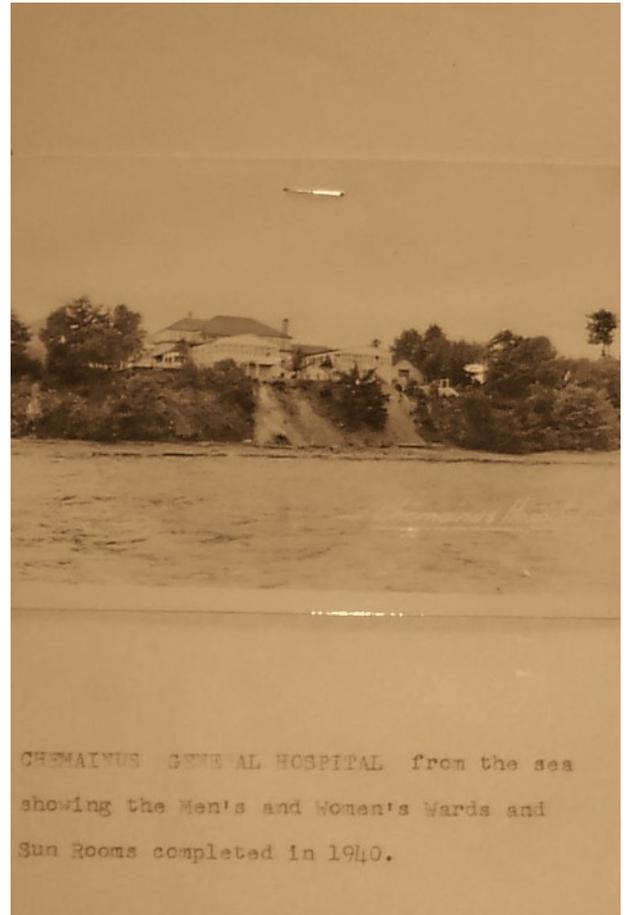
When the typhoid epidemic struck the area, a group of ladies organized themselves to assist in any way they could. When they heard of the plans for a hospital they began raising money and making sheets, pillow cases, and wearing apparel they knew would be needed in the new building. This was the beginning of the Chemainus Hospital Auxiliary.

# A History of Chemainus Health Care

1900—2007

In its earliest days, the operation of the hospital was directed by a doctor who had been appointed the chief medical officer by the Hospital Board.

When the Provincial Health Plan came into effect, an administrator was appointed who directed hospital operations and was responsible to the Board. This adjustment to the management system took place in 1947.





## A History of Chemainus Health Care

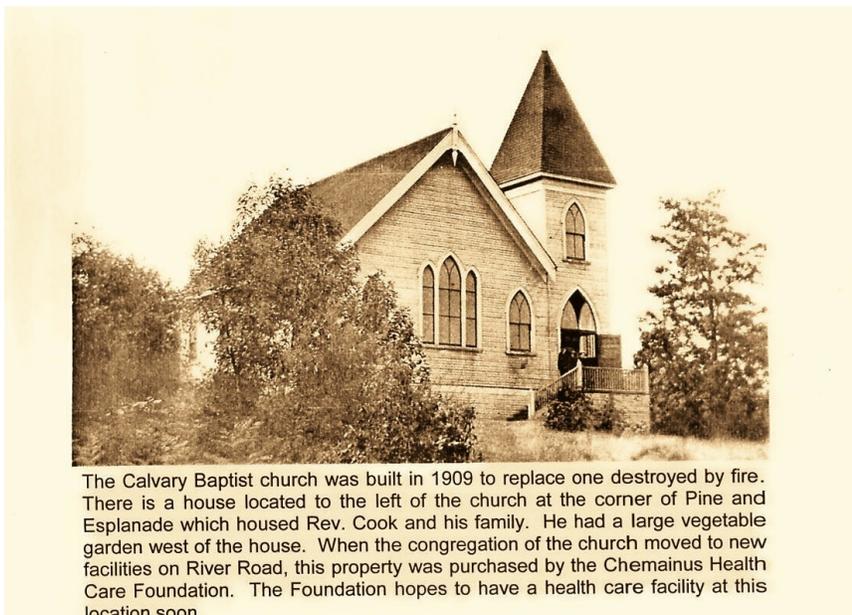
1900—2007

In 1984 the announced retirement of the long time administrator, Ernie Dickson and the long standing rumours about change to a multi-hospital administration system and the conversion of some of the acute care beds to intermediate care beds generated uncertainty and controversy. It was not until 1986, however, when, following renovations and additions, our acute care hospital officially became an intermediate and extended care facility. It did, however, continue to provide emergency and diagnostic services and some day surgery. Acute care patients from our area were sent to the Cowichan District Hospital for specialized care.

Our local physicians had always worked out of offices in the hospital . With the proposed changes to the facility, they decided to build their own office and moved in 1987.



In 1988, the Chemainus Health Care Foundation was formed to administer, in a responsible manner, funds donated or raised from the community to support local health care. When the property became available, the Foundation purchased the old Baptist church and land on Esplanade and later the adjacent lot. The intention, of course, was to build a facility to support health care at some time in the future, when demand, opportunity, and finances permitted.



The Calvary Baptist church was built in 1909 to replace one destroyed by fire. There is a house located to the left of the church at the corner of Pine and Esplanade which housed Rev. Cook and his family. He had a large vegetable garden west of the house. When the congregation of the church moved to new facilities on River Road, this property was purchased by the Chemainus Health Care Foundation. The Foundation hopes to have a health care facility at this location soon.

# A History of Chemainus Health Care

1900—2007

It became obvious that our old hospital was no longer able to meet the standard of the day nor was it large enough to meet the demand. In September 1995, the first of a two-stage construction project was completed which provided forty long term care beds. In June of 1996, the second construction phase was completed which added thirty-five more beds for a total of seventy-five beds in a building now known as the Chemainus Health Care Centre. Day surgery was eliminated, but emergency and diagnostic services were maintained. This is now called 'Urgent' Care and is open from 7:30a.m. to 10:30p.m. daily.



In recent years, two of the care beds have been converted for respite and palliative care use.

# A History of Chemainus Health Care

1900—2007

Major changes in health care management occurred in November, 1996, when Regional Health Boards were appointed by the Provincial Government to take over the administration of health care in their areas. The transfer of responsibility from the local hospital board to the regional board became contentious when no assurance was given, that should the property on which the new Health Care Centre was located was no longer required for health care, it would be returned to the people of Chemainus. When no agreement was reached, the local hospital board was dismissed by a Government Order in Council and the ownership transferred to the Province of BC. A public administrator was appointed to temporarily take over the responsibility formerly held by the hospital board.

On July 17th, 1997, a resolution was passed by the Regional Health Board 'to support the use of the site for the provision of health care services; to ensure the community will be consulted about any proposed sale to move to another site within the community; and to return the land to the community by way of the municipal government if it is no longer needed for health care.' In October of 2004, this assurance was re-confirmed as fact by MLA Graham Bruce.

April, 2002, the 24hour Emergency was changed to Urgent Care open 7:30a.m –10:30p.m

In 2000 the Chemainus Health Care Foundation conducted a survey to get community in-put as to how best to use their property. Three options were offered and added space for suggestions. A multi-purpose facility, including hospice, rehab, adult day care, assisted living, therapy pool and a resource centre was the first choice and assisted living was a second. An architect was hired in 2001 to draw up a sketch to accommodate the first choice. He suggested building in stages and utilizing the existing church building. It became apparent, after serious consideration, that it would not be possible to include all the services desired and prioritization would be necessary. In January 2003 the Foundation went to the North Cowichan Municipality for re-zoning.

In April of 2003 the government put out a call for an 'Expression of Interest' for Independent Living BC projects to be built in partnership with VIHA and BC Housing. The Foundation took up the challenge and submitted their proposal in November of that year.

Discussions with BC Housing, Vancouver Island Health Authority, the architect and other agencies proceeded in 2004 and a society was formed in 2005 to build and manage a new Independent Assisted Living facility. The new organization was named the Chemainus Health Care Housing Society.

Construction of the new facility began in 2006, and the 'ground-breaking ceremony' took place on January 17th. A contest was held to name the new building. The name chosen was 'the Steeples'. The first occupant moved in on April 15th, 2007, and the 'official' opening was held on June 2nd.

# A History of Chemainus Health Care

1900—2007



# A History of Chemainus Health Care

1900—2007

In reviewing the history of health care in our community, the contributions of the Women's Auxiliary, with their volunteer labour and money raising efforts to contribute to the needs of local people, stand out prominently. Their very impressive efforts have continued unabated for more than one hundred years.

The community continues to support health care, and bequests and 'in memoriams' are frequent and generous. The Foundation manages these funds and continues to look to the future.

This history was compiled by Earle Patterson and Rondeau Fenton. Produced by the CHC Foundation Board 2006—2007  
Photos provided by CHC Auxiliary, Chemainus Museum and R. Fenton



Left to right: Back: Earle Patterson, Rex Hollett, Irene Dutton, Don Fisher, Jim Whittaker  
Front: Vi Chang, Bernie McColl, Rondeau Fenton  
Missing: Bill Taylor

