

Mission Memorial Centre

33070 5th Avenue
Mission, British Columbia

Description

The Mission Memorial Centre, also known as the Old Hospital, is a one storey building located on the corner of Fifth Avenue and James Street in Mission, British Columbia. It is easily identified by its symmetrical brick façade, hip-style roof, and formal driveway entry.

Heritage Values

The Mission Memorial Centre is important for its cultural and historic significance.

Cultural:

The Mission Memorial Centre, formerly the Mission Memorial Hospital, is most valued for its original purpose. It was built as a living memorial to commemorate and honour the war dead, first of World War I and then of World War II. Rather than build a cenotaph, the people of Mission wanted to create a useful structure that would help the living while honouring the dead. As noted in the *Fraser Valley Record* newspaper in 1947, "In this Mission was unique, for most communities lacked the vision to erect a useful, contributing edifice to its WW1 dead."¹

Of interest is that a scroll containing the names of the Council, Commissioners, School Board, as well as the names of the war dead from World War I, was placed in a lead receptacle and then inside of the foundation stone during the opening ceremony in 1925, where it presumably remains.

Constructed in 1924, the Mission Memorial Hospital was the first purpose-built hospital in Mission. The community of Mission continues to be proud of the significant contributions made by local citizens through fundraising and special events that allowed the hospital to open debt-free and to add important equipment and space over the next forty years of its operation.

The building continued to operate as a hospital until 1965, when the new Mission Hospital opened in another part of town. The old hospital building was purchased by the local government in 1966, but sat empty until 1973 when the Mission Memorial Centre Society was created and took over operation of the building. This society is significant for being the first in the province to collect a number of different social service agencies under one roof.

Associated with this building is the first ever Mission May Day celebration. Originally called "Empire Day", the first May Day was organized by the Mission Memorial Hospital Auxiliary to raise funds for the hospital. This group of dedicated volunteers ran the annual May Day celebrations from 1920 -1942, when it was handed over to the Elks & Royal Purple who ran it until 1982. Of interest is the 1924 raffle of a brand new Ford car, possibly the earliest example of a fundraising strategy that continues to be popular

¹ *Fraser Valley Record*, July 17, 1947, p. 1.

today. This and other fundraising events represent the strong community support that the hospital had.

Historic:

Constructed in 1924 with additions in 1938 and 1948, the Mission Memorial Centre is valued for its age and architectural design, and for its association with a number of important Mission residents and groups, as well as architects.

The original configuration of the hospital was designed by the Vancouver architectural firm of Benzie & Bow (James Anderson Benzie and William Bow). Known later for their residential and institutional design work, they were Scotsmen who had only entered into partnership in 1923; the same year they presented sketches for the hospital, making this one of their first projects.

An addition was added to the hospital in 1938 and again in 1948. The 1948 addition was designed by Vancouver architect J. H. Harvey as a memorial to those who died in World War Two. The new wing matched the original by using the same double course of buff coloured bricks made by the Clayburn Company in Abbotsford.

An important aspect of the hospital is its location. It is situated four blocks north and up the hill from First Avenue, overlooking both downtown Mission, the Fraser River and the Fraser Valley. According to the local press at the time of the hospital opening, there could not be a better or healthier location for a hospital.

There are a number of important people who are associated with the Mission Memorial Hospital. They are: Mrs. J. B. Lambarde, first president of the hospital Board of Directors; Mary Alice Wilson, the first May Queen as she represents the original May Day celebrations that were used as fundraisers for the hospital; Grace M. McCallum, nurse and matron; and Catherine Marcellus, the first president of the Mission Memorial Centre Society.

There are also a number of significant groups that are associated with the building. They are: the Gallipoli chapter of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, who were the first to discuss the creation of a hospital; the Mission Memorial Hospital Auxiliary; the Elks & Royal Purple; the Mission Memorial Hospital Board of Directors; the Mission Memorial Centre Society; and the Mission Study Group for their research and publication of the book titled *Mission's Living Memorials*.

Recognized for its heritage value, the Mission Memorial Centre building was formally protected with a Designation Bylaw by the municipality as an historic building in 1987.

Character-defining Elements

The Character-defining elements of the Mission Memorial Centre can be found in the following:

- The form, massing and scale of the building as evidenced in its footprint, its multi-planed facades, one storey height, multi-hipped roof, formal front entrance.
- The architectural elements such as: double course of primarily buff coloured Clayburn brick, bay window, plain pediment and brackets over the main entrance, the two corner stones (one dated 1924 and one dated 1948), the plain 1/1 windows.
- Other significant elements include the location of the building on a corner lot, the view from the lot towards the town and Fraser Valley, and the scroll listing war dead that was placed in the 1924 corner stone.