

1859 - 2009 150 YEARS OF HISTORY



Introduction

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Introduction

This is the story of how, for the past 150 years, English-speakers in Quebec saw needs in the community and reached out to meet them. The Ladies' Protestant Home was founded in 1859, a time when epidemics, poor work conditions, and frequent urban fires made life difficult for the poor. There was a crying need for institutions to help out. In its early years, the Home provided temporary shelter for poor and destitute Protestant immigrant women. Its mandate evolved over the years, with an increasing focus on serving the elderly from the 1950's onward. The Home eventually reached out to non-Protestants, Francophones, and men before closing down in 1990. For the past two decades, the Quebec Ladies' Home Foundation has continued to manage assets from the Home's sale towards the purpose of providing health and social services to English-speakers in Quebec City.

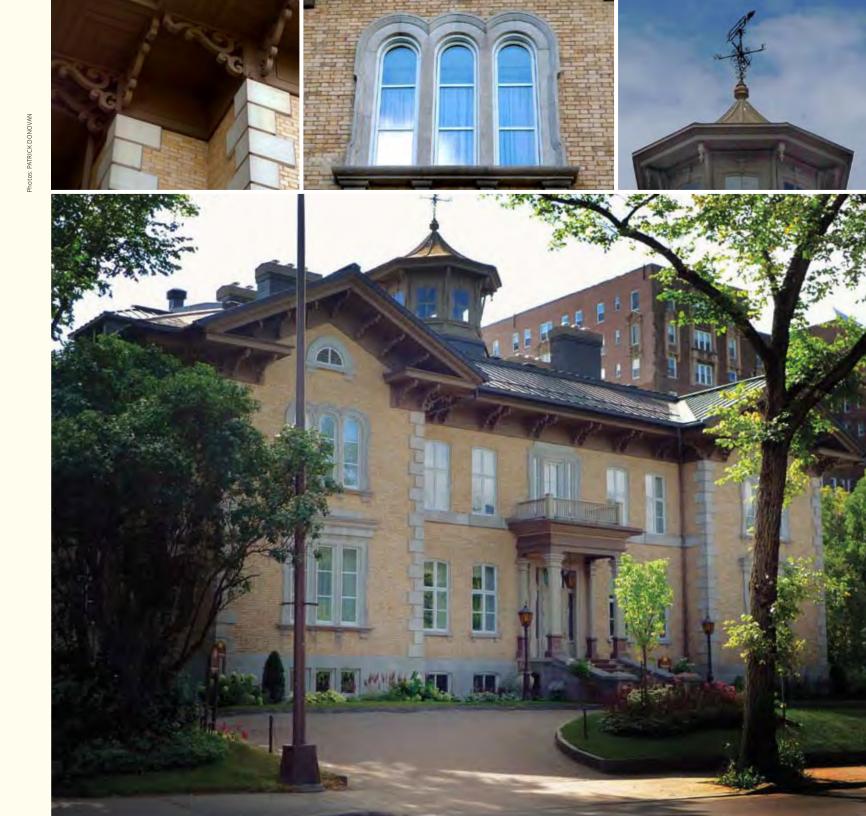
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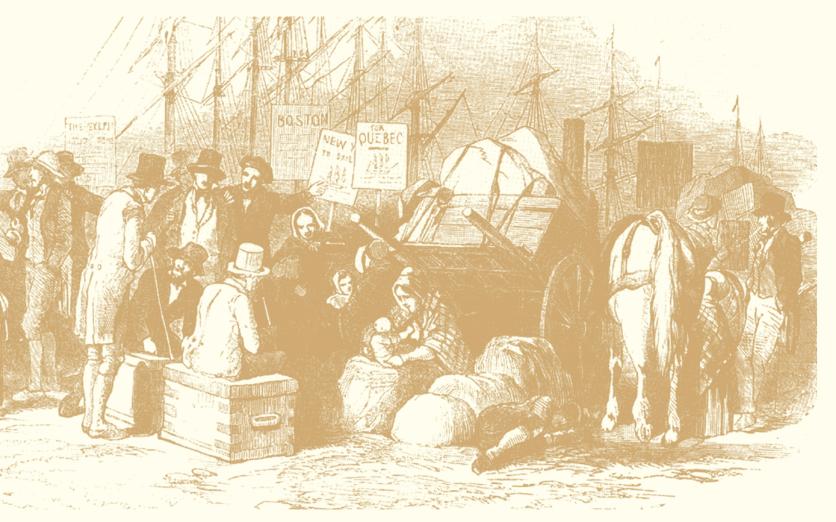


The former Ladies' Protestant Home is located on Grande Allée facing rue Cartier.

Built in 1863, it welcomed the community's poor, destitute and elderly until 1989.

The Home was then sold to developers who preserved the building's exterior and transformed it into private condominiums.





{ Emigrants' Arrival at Cork, A Scene on the Quay

Social Atmosphere: Early Nineteenth-century Quebec

In the early part of the nineteenth century, Quebec City grew exponentially. The population increased from 5,000 in the beginning of the century to 57,000 by the 1860's. This change came about through a great influx of immigrants from England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. While some were wealthy entrepreneurs seeking opportunities in the New World, most emigrated due to lack of employment and poverty. Thousands traveled to the city in the holds of lumber ships. Few had plans for employment or lodging upon their arrival.

All over the city, men, women, and children worked under difficult and dangerous conditions for very little money. Until the 1885 Quebec Factories Act, there were no laws against child labour and no laws regulating health and safety conditions in the workplace. When work-related accidents took place, labour unions and charitable organizations were expected to provide, as there were no public social security programs in Canada until 1914.

Many newly-arrived immigrant women and children were employed as servants in the upper-class homes of Quebec City. Conditions for a servant were difficult. Work began early and ended late, with an average day lasting fifteen hours. Servants changed employers often, always in search of better pay and conditions. Even with the high demand, changing employers was still a risky move; wages were low and the loss of a week's pay could be disastrous. About half the working servants were children.

With the waves of immigration also came major outbreaks of disease. Despite efforts to contain these diseases, Cholera and Typhus epidemics killed thousands on their journey across the Atlantic. Even when immigrants made it across, sanitation conditions in New World slums led to further diseases. In 1856, traveller Isabella Bird refers to Saint Roch as a place of "streams as black as Styx."

₽AGE 5 Quebec City physician Dr.William Kelly writes that the streets of Saint Roch

"were no better that sloughs, and very offensive sloughs too... little has been yet effected towards the equally material objects of paving and draining. Here are abundant causes of sickness; and when we add to them, the situation of the labouring poor, chiefly composed of immigrants, many of whom arrive here in a state of destitution; that their usual disposition to crowd together in their wretched habitations, is increased by the high rate of house rent, and the expense of fuel in winter; and that the filth usual in such circumstances is augmented in consequence of the want of a ready supply of water; we cannot be surprised at the frequency of disease and death."

Many immigrant families were decimated as a result of these conditions, leaving single mothers struggling to support themselves and their children.

The history of Quebec City was also marked by many fires. Three conflagrations in particular caused the most serious and widespread damage the city has ever known. Two fires occurring within a month of one another in 1845 destroyed 1,932 buildings, affecting approximately 22,000 people.



{ Saint Roch fire, 1886

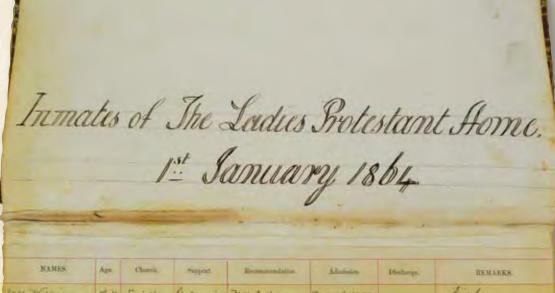
Another blaze in October of 1866 affected anywhere from 15,000 to 18,000 people, destroying about 2,500 buildings in all. Many residents were left homeless as a result of these fires, and temporary shelter was not always easy to find.

These disastrous fires, epidemics, and bad work conditions created an unfavourable situation for the poor. Destitute women and orphaned children roamed the streets of the city. If work and proper shelter were not found before winter, many would be faced with death, prison, and, for many women, prostitution. In 1810 there were anywhere between 400 and 600 prostitutes working the streets at any given time, with the population only totalling about 14,000 people. The poor of Quebec City needed help.

Religious Relief Societies Take Action

Various committees were formed in order to provide help for those who would otherwise have been left alone to face the harsh Quebec winter. Approximately fifty women's organizations were established in Quebec between 1820 and 1900. Most did not manage homes or institutions, but were groups of volunteers who provided money or practical help to Quebec's poor and destitute. Money for these groups was collected from many sources. Various religious, financial, and government institutions, as well as businessmen and professionals, pooled their resources to provide housing, clothing, and food for those in need.

It was in this benevolent spirit that the **Quebec Ladies' Protestant Relief Society** was established on November 20, 1855. This institution filled a specific niche by providing "relief in wood, food, and clothing" to destitute Protestants in the city. More specifically, the Society targeted aid towards female servants and immigrant girls.



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{ The Home's first register of inmates }

The Beginnings of the Ladies' Protestant Home

After operating as a charity for a few years, the Relief Society expanded its mission by setting up a home. The Ladies' Protestant Home opened in temporary quarters on February 2, 1859. The home stood on the edge of Coteau Ste Geneviève, in today's St Jean Baptiste district, overlooking Saint Roch and the Saint Charles river valley. A few months later, through an act of Quebec Legislation on May 4, 1859, the Ladies' Protestant Home was officially incorporated.



{ Logo of the Ladies' Protestant Home }

Barbara Bignell Collection

In its first year of operation, the Home welcomed 40 women and 12 children. The "register of inmates" shows that the first resident was a Mrs. Wilkinson, admitted May 3, 1859, who later died in the Home. The first recorded child to be admitted was a girl named Catherine Parker on June 1, 1860. While the early residents were between 2 and 92 years of age, most were children, adolescents, and young adults. With the exception of infants, all children admitted to the Home were girls, as the mandate of this institution was to provide shelter and relief exclusively for females.

Nevertheless, the Home hoped to expand its mandate to eventually serve the male population. This intention is first seen in the report presented at the second annual meeting in 1861, but no action was taken until nearly forty years later. It was only in 1898 that donations from the community allowed the Home to provide outside relief for men and boys in need. This remained a preoccupation throughout the organization's history, which eventually opened its doors to men.

A Permanent Home on Grande Allée

In 1862, property for a new Home was purchased on Grande Allée and construction began soon after. The Ladies' Protestant Home was one of several public institutions erected on Grande Allée at this time. In this tranquil area on the outskirts of Quebec City, there were still many large plots of land available for purchase, making it a good location for charitable establishments.

The Irish Catholic Saint Bridget's Home (now Saint Brigid's Home) was the first of these institutions to be constructed.

The Ladies' Protestant Home was built shortly thereafter, located practically across the street. The Home opened on May 16, 1863.

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{ The Ladies' Protestant Home }



{ The former Irish Catholic Saint Bridget's Home on Grande Allée }

A major campaign was launched at the time of the opening, which helped finance over half of the final property and construction costs. This campaign spanned three years, from 1863 to 1865. Donations streamed in from the community; subscriptions were made from 57 citizens in all, the final amount totalling over £2,200, or \$10,000 (approximately \$400,000 in today's currency).

LADIES' PROTESTANT HOME.

OPENING CELEBRATION!

HE Committee beg most respectfully to invite all the friends and subscribers to the Institution to visit and inspect the new Building

to TO - DAY, "Ga

SATURDAY, the 16th Inst.

Doors to be open to the public from TWO till SIX in the afternoon, when, by the kind permission of Col. HAWLEY and the Officers, the

BAND of the 60th RIFLES

will be in attendance.

On the evening of the same day a CONVER-SAZIONA will be held at the Home, with Music, Amateur Singing, Readings and Addresses. To commence at EIGHT o'clock. Price of admission, 25 cents.

A REFRESHMENT TABLE will be held both in the afternoon and evening. Quebec, May 16, 1863.

{ Ad for the Inauguration of the Home }
The Quebec Daily Mercury, May 16, 1863

These new buildings marked a transition period in the city's architectural history. Symmetrical neoclassical designs gave way buildings incorporating eclectic influences from a variety of eras and countries. The Home was designed by architect Joseph-Pierre-Michel Lecourt, who was inspired by Italian villas of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The building is a rare example of this architectural style in the city, as exemplified by the rounded openings of various shapes and sizes, a towering cornice supported by carved decorative brackets, and the large dome-like cupola. Elsewhere in North America, this style was typically used for the opulent mansions of the rich, yet here it was intended to house the poor.



Once open for operations, no time was wasted in reaching out to the community. The number of women and children to whom the Home could provide relief grew rapidly. The ninth annual report shows that 310 people had been admitted to the Home since its opening in 1859. The tenth annual report shows that there were 100 occupants from 1868

to 1869 alone.



Farming on Grande Allée

The new property, which extended across the Plains of Abraham and faced the Saint Lawrence River, had previously been farm land. The Home kept some dairy cows until 1913, when they sold off a parcel to the National Battlefields Commission, who built greenhouses on the property. The land retained by the Home was cultivated as a fruit, vegetable, and flower garden, but this was more than a small backyard garden! It proved to be a sustainable source of food for the Home; there was a steady supply of fresh vegetables throughout the summer and root vegetables were harvested and stored for the winter. In the 1950s, a tractor was purchased to help with the gardening work. In one year alone, 30 bags of potatoes were dug up and kept in the basement.

Female Management of the Ladies' Protestant Home

Nowadays, it is neither shocking nor surprising to consider female management of a business or institution. However, at the time of the establishment of the Ladies' Protestant Home, this was exceptional. Charitable institutions were generally led by men,

with women volunteers assisting in daily operations. In the case of the Ladies' Protestant Home, the roles were remarkably reversed, with men forming the auxiliary and providing support for fundraising and investment. Thus, the Ladies' Protestant Home served not only the poor of Quebec City but also greatly benefited the women who ran the institution, providing them with the rare opportunity to prove that they were capable of effective and energetic management of a prominent public establishment.

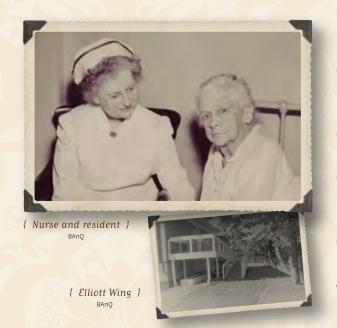


{ Office }

Changing Social Issues: From Working Women and Orphans to the Elderly

As early as 1878, the issue of care for the elderly was raised by the Home's administrators. At this time, it was widely accepted that the place of an aging person was in the care of a family member. Unfortunately, the sad reality was that an increasing number of elderly people did not have homes where they could comfortably live out the remainder of their days due to a loss of family members and friends. However, the Ladies' Protestant Home had its hands full and continued to remain focused primarily on working women and children. It wasn't until the 1950's that this focus changed to the elderly.

This new focus was linked to broader social changes. Labour conditions for working women had improved since the Dickensian days of the nineteenth century, leading to a decreased need for temporary shelter between jobs. There were also social changes with regards to orphanages. Research in the 1950's showed that children should not be raised in institutions. Foster homes were believed to provide children with a better opportunity to receive affection and to form typical family attachments. As a result of these changes, the majority of residents at the Ladies' Protestant Home were elderly by 1954. However, since the Home was originally conceived in order to provide care to both women and children, a handful of beds were allotted to provide emergency shelter for children before they could be placed in a suitable foster home. Additionally, the Home continued to provide outside assistance to children they had already placed in foster homes.



In light of the Ladies' Protestant Home's new focus on providing services solely to the elderly, a new infirmary was deemed necessary in 1964. This new wing would make it possible to provide round-the-clock care and was built at a total cost of \$243,204, including furnishings. Part of the medical equipment was donated by community physicians and a second garden was landscaped for residents of this wing to enjoy. The new dispensary was called the Elliott Wing, after then President J.M. Elliott, and was opened in 1965.

In 1971, a parallel organization named the Quebec Ladies' Home Foundation was incorporated as a way to help better protect the Home's assets. In 1973, ownership of the Home was transferred to this foundation. Members of the community who wished to donate to the Home did so through the foundation. Money raised subsidized the salaries of workers and bridged the gap when a senior was unable to afford the care required.

Not Just for Protestant Ladies Anymore

In the early years of the Home, shelter and employment was provided strictly to Protestants. In 1947, when the administrators of the Home discovered that their janitor was a Roman Catholic, he was fired on the spot. A chapel, complete with pews dating back to the 1840's from a church in Frampton, was inaugurated soon after by ministers from the Baptist, Anglican, Presbyterian, and United churches – the Catholic priest didn't bother to cross the road from Saint Patrick's, or maybe he simply hadn't been invited. An atmosphere of temperance and discipline reigned in the Home.

Times changed. The 1960's saw a decline in religious practice throughout the West, which also affected how Catholics and Protestants saw each other. In 1973, the issue of accepting non-Protestants into the Home was discussed. Roman Catholics were soon accepted. Shelter was also provided to several Jewish people over the years.

The declining number of applicants and liberal spirit of the 1970's also led to other changes. In 1976, with ten rooms vacant, the Home began accepting male applicants. The languages spoken at the Home also changed. As Quebec's English-speaking community became more bilingual, the Home eventually admitted French-speakers.



{ Inauguration of the chapel }



In the 1970's, discussions in the front room, where the elderly people would spend their afternoons, were often carried out in a combination of French and English. This is how it came to be that the last person to die in the Ladies' Protestant Home was neither a lady nor a Protestant, but a Jewish man named Edward Cecil Joseph.

The Ladies' Protestant Home continued to serve the elderly of Quebec City until January 12, 1990, when it was finally forced to close due to financial problems. There were two main reasons for these problems. First, the Quebec Ladies' Home Foundation's assets had declined due to its generous policy of paying the difference for residents who could not afford the monthly fees required to stay at the Home. This, combined with the increasing cost of providing the necessary level of care and of maintaining the building, meant that the Foundation could no longer continue running the Home.

The announcement was made in May, 1989 that the 130 year old institution would be closing within a year. The decision to close was greeted by surprise and disappointment by employees and the community at large. Rev. Kevin Pentland, pastor of Quebec Baptist Church at the time, was actively opposed the closing of the Ladies' Protestant Home. He wrote a letter to the editor of the Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph to speak out against the uprooting of senior citizens from their homes with only a year's notice. The staff of the Home also wrote a letter to this newspaper, reprimanding the community for its inaction in light of the impending closure. Despite this ardent opposition and countless efforts made by the board to explore other options, the most viable solution remained to close the home and transfer the 34 elderly residents to Saint Brigid's.

Saint Brigid's Home had also evolved into a nursing home dedicated to providing long-term care for the elderly of the English-speaking community, having abandoned its Grande Allée premises for larger facilities in Sillery in 1973. As rooms there became available, residents were moved until the Ladies' Protestant Home was empty soon after the New Year of 1990.



{ Saint Brigid's Home in Sillery



{ Saint Brigid's Home main entrance }

Photo: Patrick Donovan



{ Saint Brigid's Home backyard Photo: Patrick Donovan

Concern was raised for the health of the elderly residents. One woman, Eva Penney, was 105 at the time of the move. Sillery resident Barbara Bignell was called in to serve as president of the Home and to help in the closing of the institution, the relocation of the residents, and the proper notification of family members. According to Ms. Bignell, the most difficult aspect of the move for the very elderly was the adjustment to the different

sounds of their new places of residence. The floors at Saint Brigid's for example, were made of terrazzo, and residents would no longer hear the click of the nurse's shoes on the wooden floor. The seemingly small changes that accompanied the relocation were very stressful for many of the tenants, some dying even before the move and others shortly thereafter.



{ Moving Day for Miss Eva Penney, January 1990 }

The Ladies' Protestant Home was sold for \$1.4 million to a local contracting company called Quartier Kreighoff, owners and developers of the Mérici condominium complex and Le Petit Quartier. Some of the Home's contents were donated to other homes in the area, and the remaining articles were auctioned off on June 7, 1990. The auction was a large affair, where dishes and flatware, along with antique loveseats, trunks, desks, mirrors, and other furniture previously owned by residents were sold to the highest bidder. This auction raised over \$27,000, which was donated to the Quebec Ladies' Home Foundation, with a portion of these funds used to pay off debt incurred by the Home.

After the Home

After the Home closed, the Foundation's board discussed how to best use the proceeds. Long-time Foundation member Richard Walling recalls that the idea of opening a new seniors' residence in a wing of Jeffery Hale's Hospital was raised. Since this need was being well provided by Saint Brigid's Home, the Foundation decided instead to focus on serving senior community members living in their own homes. This goal was achieved through annual donations to the Holland Centre, which had a mandate to provide health and social services to elderly members of Quebec's English-speaking community.

In 2008, the Holland Centre changed its name to Jeffery Hale Community Partners and now promotes the well being of people of all ages in the English-speaking community. This organization in turn supports the Jeffery Hale Community Services of Saint Brigid's-Jeffery Hale Hospital, helping seniors at both the Jeffery Hale and Saint Brigid's. For seniors living in their own homes, services provided include housing advice, home support, nursing care, and wellness initiatives, with volunteers providing friendly visits, frozen meals, transportation, and telephone check-ins.

In 2009, 150 years after the Home first opened, the Quebec Ladies' Home Foundation transferred all its assets to The Jeffery Hale Foundation. The mandate of this larger foundation is to finance the health and social service sectors of Quebec City's English-speaking community. This donation brings the story of the Ladies' Protestant Home full circle, as Jeffery Hale himself, who lived from 1803 to 1863, was a major philanthropist and one of the Home's original benefactors. Though the Home no longer exists, its spirit will live on through the work of The Jeffery Hale Foundation, strengthening the health and social service sectors in the community for the future.

Forget.Me.Not Scrapbook of memories and special moments

Inside the Home

Main staircase and clock



"It was very friendly and warm. There was always a big bouguet of flowers in the front hall. A lovely, winding staircase going up, making it very homey. People brought in their own furniture and often their own curtains."

Barbara Bignell, past president

Entrance hall



Dining room

"The staff were terrific, so loving and so kind. We had many young men, university students who became the night-time supervisors. When the nurses would go home for the day, these five young men would come in on different rotations. They were so good to the ladies, providing that sort of young atmosphere."

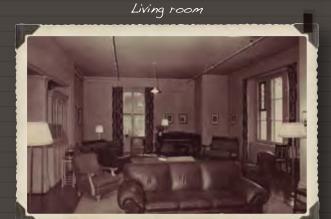
Barbara Bignell, past president



Main floor pantry



Basement kitchen





Newspaper article from 1971

Photos: BAnQ

Then came the Ste-Foy Elementary School choir, Robert Burns lookalikes, and even occasional visits from the Governor General of Canada.

The St. Andrew's Society celebrates Scotland at the Home, 1970's





A visit from Ste-Foy Elementary School choir



SPCA dog obedience class

Bonhomme Carnaval visits the Home, 1984

" A monthly game of BINGO was organized for the residents of the Home. Women would come in to help out. They would collect jewellery from their own collections to use as prizes. Volunteers would make sure that every woman received a prize, even if this meant cheating ... One of the men never wanted to sit with his wife while they played BINGO because he said that she was bad luck."

Patricia Marchessault, daughter of a former resident from the 1980's



Governor General Vincent Massey visits the Home in the 1950's



Santa at the Home

"Volunteers went to
The Bay and purchased
a stuffed animal for
every woman at the
Home. They had found
out ahead of time what
kind of animal each
women liked and made
sure they each had a
plush version of their
favourite animal."

Patricia Marchessault, daughter of a former resident from the 1980's

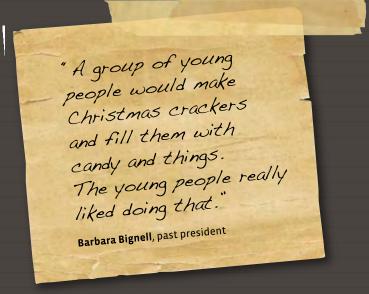


Santa at the Home, 1980's

Ohristmas

Christmas at the Home goes back to the Victorian days. In 1889, the list of Christmas donations to the home included: "sugar canes for the children, and cakes, from Miss Potton; three and a half dozen bags of candies, six dressed dolls and cards for all, from Mrs. Darlington; two geese and two currant loaves, from Mrs. Stevenson. From members of the committee: Three-storied cake, eight pounds of sausages, eight dozen buns, one box of candies and one jar of preserves, peppermints and a dressed doll, four dozen oranges," and the list goes on.

This continued in the Home's later years.



Pigare Hes & alcohol

The Ladies' Protestant Home was quite strict. In ominous tones, the By-laws specify that "the Rules are to be read to each inmate on their entering the Home and it is to be understood that they will obey them." It goes without saying that these rules upheld the Protestant virtues of temperance, banning cigarettes and alcohol.

"My Auntie Katie died at the home at 103.

I used to go see her while I was living in Quebec City. She had her own room. They were not allowed any alcoholic drinks, so mother used to sneak in some beer for the women."

Ronald Blair

"The residents of the Home were allowed to smoke, but only with the nurse. There was one woman named Dorothy who really liked to smoke. She would have her cigarette with the nurse. Later, she would try to get another by telling the nurse that she hadn't had it yet.

Of course, this never worked."

Patricia Marchessault, daughter of a former resident from the 1980's



{ The Ladies Protestant Home } Watercolour by Miriam Blair

Past Presidents of the Ladies' Protestant Home

Mrs. McLean Stewart*	1855
Mrs. Bradshaw	1859-1862
Mrs. John Gilmour	1863-1875
Mrs. McLean Stewart	1876-1877
Mrs. C. G. Holt	1878-1879
Mrs. William Walker	1880-1883
Mrs. Turnbull	1884-1891
Mrs. C. F. Smith	1892-1894
Mrs. T. H. Thompson	1895-1897
Mrs. Gregor	1898-1903
Mrs. G. B. S. Young	1904-1935
Mrs. J. McD. Wilson	1936-1937
Mrs. Edmund Judge	1938-1942
Mrs. H. H. Gibaut	1943-1948
Mrs. J. M. Elliott	1949-1953
Mrs. R. C. Cream	1954-1955
Mrs. J. M. Elliott	1956-1969
Mrs. W. E. Rourke	1970-1981
Ms. Joyce Quinn	1982-1989
Ms. Barbara Bignell	1989-1990
Mr. John McGreevy**	1990-2004
Ms. Karen Macdonald**	2004-2009

^{*}President of Ladies' Protestant Relief Society

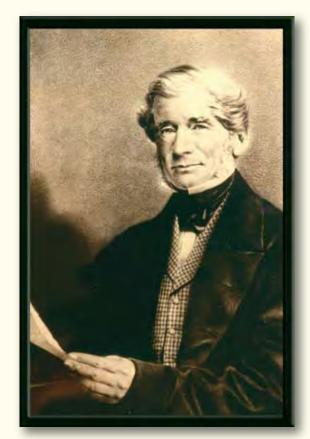
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^{**}President of the Quebec Ladies' Home Foundation



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