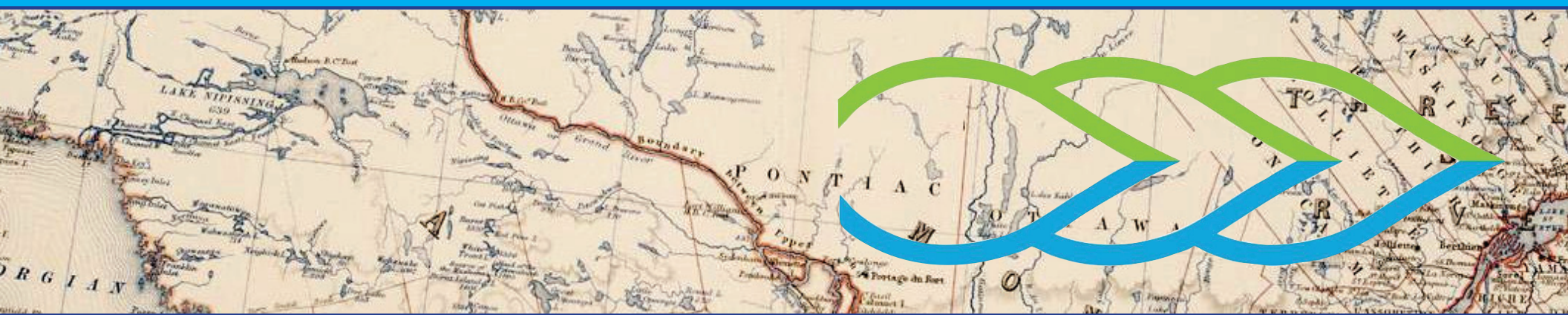


# The Mattawa Health Hub

A Vision of Community Care Becomes a Reality

The History of Mattawa Hospital  
and Algonquin Nursing Home  
Mattawa, Ontario



Greg J. Humbert

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This booklet is produced by *Foundations*, a publication of the *Catholic Hospitals Digital History Books Collection*, an online resource that seeks to document the legacy and contribution of the Congregations of Women Religious in Canada, their mission in health care, and the founding and operation of Catholic hospitals.

Greg J. Humbert  
*Foundations* Editor

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The Mattawa Hospital and Algonquin Nursing Home  
are Catholic organizations sponsored by the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario.



**2021**

*Guided by Medicine, Inspired by Faith*

*La médecine nous guide et la foi nous inspire*

# Dedication



Dedicated to  
Doctor Mark Wilkins

who has served the community of Mattawa and its surrounding municipalities  
for forty years  
from September 28, 1981 to the present  
— and still going strong.

Thank You, Dr. Mark.



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Ottawa River Bay, near the Junction of  
the Mattawa River, Ontario





*There is a story here where rivers meet,  
 Too noble for the vehicle of rhyme,  
 A tale of searching eyes, intrepid feet,  
 A tale whose telling mocks the hand of Time.  
 I stand where once the dauntless Champlain stood,  
 And scan the foothills on the neighbouring shore,  
 I sense the awe inspiring solitude  
 And feel a peace I've never felt before.  
 This cradle on the north once rocked a dream,  
 And nursed a breed that made the dream come true.  
 O conquerors of forest, hill and stream,  
 How shall a poem mark a grave for you!  
 No! Let these meeting rivers be your shrine;  
 Yours is the deed ... the heritage is mine.*

*Len G. Selle (Mattawa, Ontario)<sup>1</sup>*

### **The Town of Mattawa<sup>2</sup>**

Mattawa is a town steeped in the history of the beginnings of Canada. Situated in Ontario on the border with the province of Quebec, the town is strategically nestled where the Mattawa River flows into the Ottawa River, at a place that is overshadowed by the foothills of the Laurentian Mountains on the opposite shore of the Ottawa River.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, two important bands of the Algonquin First Nations inhabited this area as their ancestral territories. The Mattawa River had always been the traditional dividing

line between their hunting grounds, whose leaders at the time were Chief Antoine Kikwiwissens and Chief Amable Dufond. Chief Antoine's band hunted north of the Mattawa River including Rosemount, and the Temiskaming area, while Chief Amable Dufond's band hunted on the present site of Eau Claire, Rutherglen, and Lake Talon. The chiefs named the area Mattawa which meant "the meeting of the waters." Over one hundred years later the Mattawa General Hospital would occupy a commanding site on Rosemount which overlooked a picturesque and panoramic viewpoint of these two historic rivers.

In 1610 Étienne Brûlé, and in 1615 Samuel de Champlain were the first known Europeans to pass through this area. As with the indigenous First Nations people, Mattawa became an important meeting place for white explorers as well, because its location lay along the voyageurs' canoe route from Montreal to the Great Lakes. Many notable explorers passed through Mattawa including the French *coureur de bois* Jean Nicolet in 1620, and the Jesuit missionaries Jean de Brébeuf in 1626 and then Gabriel Lallemand in 1648. Canoes travelling west up the Ottawa River turned left at "the Forks" into the mouth of the Mattawa River. There they entered the "*Petite Rivière*," the "*Small River*", as the Mattawa River was known at the time when compared to the mighty Ottawa River. From there they continued on to Lake Nipissing and the French River. The Jesuits had established a major mission at Saint-Marie among Huron near Midland,

Ontario on the Great Lakes, and they always accessed Huronia via this route through Mattawa.

The Northwest Company first established a post in Mattawa in 1784 and then in 1837 the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) established a permanent post, Mattawa House, consisting of a seven-building post at Explorer's Point. During the 1820s and 1830s, the Hudson's Bay Company sent canoe brigades from their Fort Coulonge Post to this river junction in order to trade furs. The post was relocated in 1843 to the shores of the Ottawa River in the centre of present-day Mattawa. After the fur trade diminished, the post traded general merchandise to supply lumbermen and eventually closed in 1908.<sup>3</sup> Because the Hudson's Bay Company maintained an elaborate country-wide system of couriers for the fur trade, its Posts became places where trappers could trade their furs for supplies and provisions. The HBC was soon awarded the contract for mail delivery along the traditional explorer route from Montreal all the way

to Fort William (now Thunder Bay) and beyond. Mail "packets" would arrive along with the regular freight canoes.<sup>4</sup>

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mattawa developed into a hub for the logging industry that harvested large untouched stands of white pine along the shores of the Ottawa and Mattawa Rivers. Where Hudson's Bay Company canoes once reigned on the rivers, now log booms dotted the shorelines and the rivers were used to transport logs to the sawmills in Ottawa. Then in 1881 a railroad line was laid all the way to Mattawa, constructed mostly by French Canadian labourers. After the railroad's completion, many of these labourers and their families settled in scenic Mattawa and the surrounding areas, bringing with them their culture and rich heritage. A significant proportion of the area's francophone population are Métis, having intermarried with the local indigenous population.

A bridge was built over the Mattawa River at its mouth in 1877 to join the two parts of the village, and in 1896 a railway bridge was constructed across the Ottawa River to Quebec.<sup>5</sup> Mattawa was officially incorporated as a village in 1883; the infant settlement consisted of only 165 families. It was incorporated as a town on April 14, 1892.



## Frontier Ailments and Medical Care

Colin Rankin hailed from New Brunswick and was the first postmaster for the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Mattawa between the years 1848-1854. He kept a diary which mostly recorded the comings and goings of HBC canoe traffic, the trading of furs, as well as information about the mail couriers, fur traders, natives and the local shanty homesteaders. As postmaster, he remarked how people from the "interior" longed for letters. "There are



Fort Mattawa, 1876

only 3 opportunities during the year of communicating between Hudson Bay and (Upper) Canada, so you can imagine how the welcomed messages are received.”

Rankin goes on to describe how, during the winter months, the mail that left Fort William for Moose Factory was “transported on Indian’s (sic) backs. It generally takes from 30 to 34 days snow shoeing.” (*Colin Rankin Journal*, May 1850) No wonder then that Rankin makes note of an ailment common among the couriers called *mal du raquette* which was an inflammation of the tendons in the feet from too much snow shoeing.

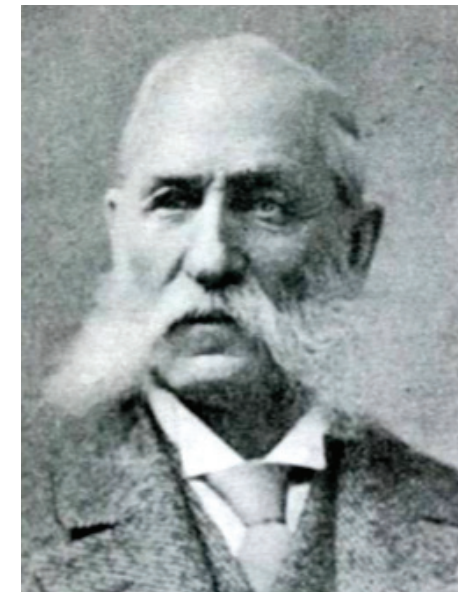
From time to time Rankin wrote in his journal about the physical hardships that were part of pioneer life. In an entry written on November 19, 1849 he writes, “Messrs. McKenzie and Cameron arrived this evening. The later gentleman I am sorry to say, is very weak – but I trust

once he gets medical attendance that he will soon recover. The full charge of (gun) shot entered his neck, passing between the windpipe and jugular and lodged in the neck bone. He happened at the time to be passing [hand written script indecipherable] with the pistol loaded in his hand when off she goes!”

On December 31, 1849 Colin Rankin writes, “We sport our own doctor as well as the more civilized regions – and I must say the old gentleman has a tolerable share of practise. Not that there are many local diseases .... He gets but poor recompense.”

In other entries he speaks of having tried his hand at dentistry since no one else offered to help the poor suffering man. “With no dentist being handy – I, as no other offered – tried my skill.” Colin Rankin pulled with an instrument until his “arm trembled” without success. Finally, he gave up and let “the tooth have its own way, for I saw it was determined to hold...”<sup>6</sup> One can only surmise how the poor “patient” made out.

Colin Rankin returned to Mattawa to work for the Hudson’s Bay Company as Chief Factor of the district from 1882 until 1898, during which time he became the first mayor of the newly incorporated town in 1892.



Colin Rankin

## The Sisters of Charity of Ottawa

Élisabeth Bruyère<sup>7</sup> who was born on March 19, 1818 in L'Assomption in Lower Canada is the Mother of health care for Mattawa. Her own story illustrates that she was a pioneer in her own right, a woman of courage and vision. Her father had died when she was only six years old spending her childhood in Montréal where her mother earned a living working as a servant. To help the family Élisabeth cared for her two brothers while attending school. At an early age Élisabeth heard a calling to make the service of the poor her way of life, and when she was only sixteen years old decided to teach at the Rural School in the village of Saint-Esprit.

Élisabeth seemed naturally attracted to those good works that leaned towards a preferential option for the poor, caring for those on the margins and those who had no one else to care for them. As a result, in 1839 she decided to enter the congregation of women religious founded by Saint Marguerite d'Youville, namely the Sisters of Charity "Grey Nuns" of Montreal. She immersed herself in the spirituality and charism of Mother d'Youville, a spirituality that would inspire and energize her throughout her religious life.

Élisabeth Bruyère's zeal and leadership qualities were recognized and soon she was asked to establish a community of the Sisters of Charity at Bytown, now Ottawa, Ontario. She arrived in Bytown on February 20, 1845 with three other Professed Sisters and two other women.

Barely three months after the Sisters' arrived in Ottawa, a school, a general hospital, a home for the aged, an orphanage and a home for abandoned children all came into existence. The general hospital which opened on May 10, 1845 was a mini Hotel-Dieu which was the predecessor of the Ottawa General Hospital and Bruyère Continuing Care.

Mother Bruyère and her group of sisters also provided services to the poor in their homes. Shortly after they had arrived a typhus epidemic raged in 1847. Sister Bruyère and her companions immediately offered their property to care for the almost three thousand Irish immigrants who feel sick during that scorching summer.

Mother Bruyère never anticipated she would become the founder of a congregation. However, by 1849 the community in Bytown became independent from the Montreal congregation and was incorporated on May 3, 1849 as the Grey Nuns of the Cross. Many years later, on June 24, 1977, an amendment was made to change the congregation's name to the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa. Élisabeth Bruyère passed away on April 5, 1879 leaving behind a well-established community of 198 Sisters living in 23 different convents.

Soon three of these Sisters of the newly-formed congregation were on their way to Mattawa.



Élisabeth Bruyère



Illustration of the village of Mattawa, 1881



VUE DE LA VILLE DE MATTAWA, ONT.—Photo, B. Charron

### The Sisters Arrive in Mattawa

Just as the two rivers meet in Mattawa, so too did the history of the town of Mattawa intersect with the mission of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa.

Father Jean-Marie Nédélec, OMI,<sup>8</sup> was among the first Oblate missionary priests in charge of the vast area surrounding Mattawa. “He was a stern looking man with short cropped hair and thick shaggy eyebrows but below that stern looking exterior and robust body lay a heart that embraced God and the people he met since his arrival from the Oblate seminary in 1862.”<sup>9</sup>

As the population increased to approximately one hundred and sixty families, it became evident to him and other leading citizens that Mattawa was becoming the centre of an expanding lumber industry with a growing population. Nédélec also served the railway camps and describes his work there as the most difficult of his ministries. He describes the workers living in extreme poor conditions, the men disgustingly dirty, covered in vermin and dwelling in “*dans se vrais trous de siffleux [mormotes]*” — *in holes no better than those dug by groundhogs*. Another missionary, Father Alixis de Barbezieux speaks of the “*triste prospérité,*” the *glum prosperity* of the area because of rapid growth.<sup>10</sup>

These conditions prompted Fr. Nédélec to recognize the need for establishing a hospital where the sick and injured could be cared for properly. In a letter dated March 10, 1873, his request to his superiors was twofold: (1) the

creation of a hospital for the treatment of patients and those wounded working in the lumber yards operated in the region of Mattawan and Lake Kippawa, and (2) the need for a separate school.<sup>11</sup>

The accounts of how this all unfolded and came to fruition seem to vary. One version simply relates that Chief Amable Dufond built a log house (that remains as one of the town’s oldest buildings) for the purpose of housing both a chapel and an infirmary.<sup>12</sup>

Another account has Fr. Nédélec writing persistent letters in 1873 to his superiors in Ottawa, explaining the urgent need for a hospital. Not until 1878 was a modest hospital of five beds built on Timmins Street, next to the home of Miss Annie Lamont at the time. For many years, the Lamont family occupied this site. As the story is told this building was a combination chapel and hospital, the latter being on the first floor. The large parish church had been located across the river in Rosemount, on



Jean-Marie Nédélec, OMI

the west bank of the Mattawa River. For many it was somewhat difficult to attend Mass regularly because there was no bridge built to cross the river. Fortunately, at this time the small chapel on the second floor above the hospital was used for the public on the east side.<sup>13</sup> One can only wonder if this makeshift hospital was the same building first mentioned in the story of the log cabin built by Chief Dufond. It is possible.

What remains certain is that a more permanent institution needed to be established to care for those who were sick, and that Fr. Nédélec was determined to make that happen. He lived to see his dream become a reality and died in Mattawa on February 23, 1896<sup>14</sup> and is buried in the Catholic cemetery in Mattawa.<sup>15</sup>

When the Grey Nuns of the Cross (now the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa) accepted to open a mission in Mattawa, two representatives from Mattawa, a Mr. Arthur Fink, the town's tinsmith, and Mr. Noé Timmins, arranged to meet the Sisters and accompany them back to Mattawa.

Again, one account has these men meeting the Sisters in Ottawa while another version has the meeting taking place in Pembroke. Wherever the rendezvous point, it was such a momentous occasion that Mr. Timmins purchased a team of horses and a large sleigh for the very purpose of transporting the Sisters with their luggage and the equipment they brought to open and operate the hospital. At the time there were no direct roads to speak of, so the band of citizens accompanied the Sisters along a series of winding, twisted, and ice-packed rudimentary trails constructed for use by the lumber companies.

Despite several days of a difficult journey the three Sisters and their guides finally reached their destination

on January 12, 1878. Those three pioneering women of the Grey Nuns of the Cross who travelled to Mattawa to begin their mission in northern Ontario were Sœur St. Alexis, Superior, along with her assistants, Sœur Eudoxie and Sœur Mélanie.



Sr. Sainte-Mélanie, SCO



Sr. Sainte-Eudoxie, SCO

Gerard N. Therrien, in his book *Mattawa, Our Timeless Town* relates the story this way.

*After several days on the primitive road with the snow swirling about them, the three sisters riding in the sleigh towards Mattawa began to doubt their courage and fortitude to carry their vocation of love to the poor; the alleviation of suffering among the sick and the duty to promote Christian education at all levels in all environments. The cold blast of wind as they travelled made them shiver and doubt.<sup>16</sup>*

But not for long! Soon they would arrive at their destination and set about their mission of care in the most practical way.





**Sœur Saint-Alexis, SCO**  
**First Superior and Administrator of Mattawa Hospital**

### **Sœur St. Alexis (Céline Roy)**

Sr. St. Alexis (Céline Roy) was born in Saint-Gervais, Quebec the daughter of Alexis Roy, a farmer, and Adélaïde Goulet. She entered the novitiate on April 9, 1870, at the age of 25 and made her profession on August 25, 1872. Her career was directed alternatively between teaching and the care for the sick. She was known for her keen intellect and a lively compassion as well as being cheerful and even-tempered—qualities that served her well as administrator of the new hospital.

Prior to coming to Mattawa she taught school. Then in 1878 she became the founder and first superior of the newly established Mattawa Hospital and mission. She oversaw the construction of a more permanent structure for the hospital. Sister St. Alexis left Mattawa in 1886. She died on August 12, 1901 at the young age of 56 having served in religious life for 31 years.<sup>17</sup>

### **Progress and Set Backs**

A few days later, the first patient was admitted. Over time the Sisters, not only carried out their duties in the hospital, but also made house calls. The Sisters endured the physical hardships of a harsh and unforgiving landscape to bring their mission of mercy to those who were sick or who might suffer in other spiritual or emotional ways. They possessed a missionary zeal and a frontier spirit on their journeys through the surrounding forest, frequently having to meander through thick bush

or swamplands in order to reach a shantytown where they would care for a sick lumberjack.

In the summer, they would journey by canoe and on foot, plagued by mosquitoes and heat, all while still wearing their bulky habits. During the winter months, they travelled by snow-shoe and dog-sled, often hampered by extreme cold temperatures, many times sleeping overnight outdoors, in the quiet of the forest, under lean-tos, their only shelter.

A short summary history from the archives of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa explains the beginnings in this way. They arrived in Mattawa about thirty years after the foundation of their congregation in Bytown, as Ottawa was named at the time.

*In January, 1878, according to the parish chronicles, the Revered Père Poitras, Mr. Timmins and Mr. Arthur Fink went to Pembroke to meet the Sisters. Mr. Timmins had to buy a team of horses as well as a large wagon to bring them to their hospital. The two other men came back in their cutter which had brought them to Pembroke on January 12, 1878.*

*As early as January 14, the Sisters began to display their zeal in the narrow dwelling which the day before was the Oblate Pères' rectory. It was 40 feet by 22 feet long and was to house the Fathers, the Sisters, the sick and a class of students.*

*The hospital, considered too small, was replaced in 1885 by a brick structure, 60 feet by 40 feet, built at the end of Rosemount, very close to the church. The work was carried out so quickly that at the end of the year the hospital was put into service. On October 12 of the same year, the old hospital was consumed by*

*flames and the Sisters had to take refuge in the new building even before the workers left on November 7.<sup>18</sup>*

As stated above, it was Mr. J. St. Jean who had been contracted to build the new hospital in 1885 on Rosemount next to the church and the rectory. It was a well-equipped two-storey building. St. Anne's Church records suggest that the work of the builders had to be hastened because the first hospital burned to the ground while they were constructing the second. The church records also note that patients who were well enough were sent home, while others were transferred temporarily to the church hall where beds were installed and the needed equipment and supplies set up.

On January 8, 1886, Father Poitras celebrated the first Mass in the small chapel of the new hospital building. A few weeks later on January 14, 1886 the building was blessed by Bishop Narcisse Zéphirin Lorrain of Pembroke. The cost of this new hospital was eleven thousand dollars.

The large district of Nipissing was once a centre for trade between the indigenous population at the outpost of the renowned Hudson's Bay Company, later the gathering place of thousands of sturdy woodsmen better known as shanty men or lumberjacks. The men worked in the woods north of the Ottawa River up to Lake Kipawa, and also west to Lake Chant Plein and Lake Talon for various lumber companies such as, Booth, Mackey, McLaren, and Gillies. In 1880, the lumber labour force reached between three and four thousand men.

Accidents frequently occurred among these sturdy woodsmen, and at times, even fatalities. For those who

needed to receive medical care the wounded man had to be transported by canoe or boat, then on land over rough roads in wagons or on horseback. It is said that to ease their pain the patient was often given a strong swig of *John de Kyper* Gin (substitute medicine) to maintain them in a state of drowsiness so that they would be able to withstand the long rough ride. It was with great relief when these “makeshift ambulance” attendants were able to deliver their patient to the emergency door of the only hospital in this vast region, knowing now that the injured man would finally receive proper medical care.

### The Community Pitches In

The citizens of Mattawa recall many tales about this first medical venture. These stories have been handed down by word of mouth from their parents and grandparents.

In 1878 there were few places to buy provisions. Staples such as flour, sugar, rice and spices were brought in through rough trails. To keep the hospital well supplied with fruits and vegetables the Oblate Fathers decided to purchase land along the Ottawa River. An orchard was planted on the lot behind a home owned by Mr. and Mrs. Hector Morel.

Nearer the hospital a large garden was developed which the parishioners helped to plant and maintain. As the autumn season arrived, the “root cellars” were well stocked with the fruits of their labour. As well, the Sisters worked late into the night to can and store much of it for winter use.

In the 1880s the population suffered a severe outbreak of a contagious disease which made it necessary to quarantine the patients. Although no photos have been found of an *Isolation* building, many older citizens remember its

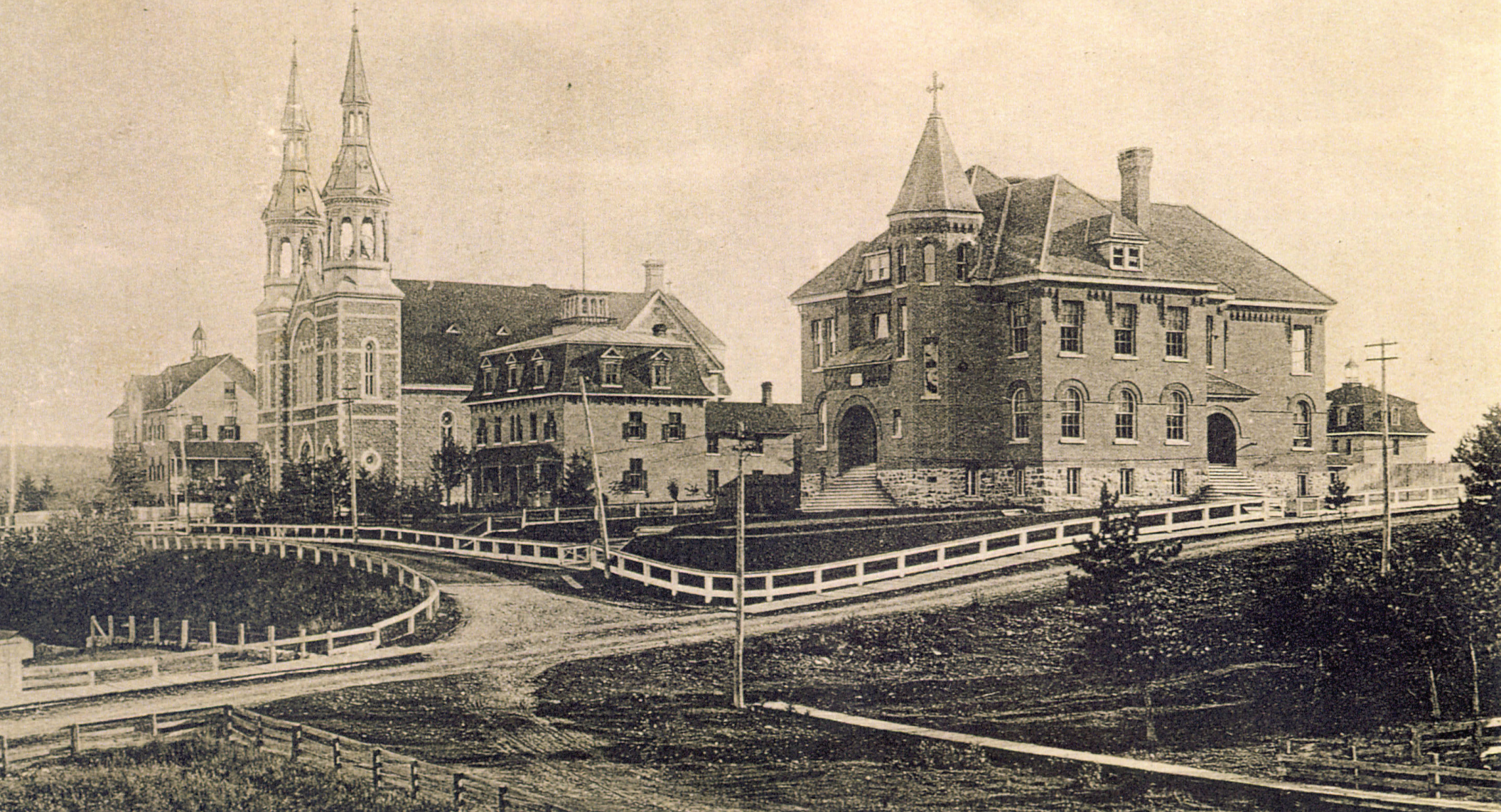
location near the present site of the Valois Motel. Later on, as new settlers built their homes along the river, a second building for quarantine was built at Boom Creek, some distance away from the homes. In these places the nursing Sisters brought back to health many settlers and Native People struck by these epidemics. Sadly, so many died in these places of quarantine the building became known as the “*Death House*” or “*Pest House*,” by the citizens.

During these early days, medicine was not as advanced as it is today and hospitals were not as well equipped. The word “rehabilitation” was a term seldom used in general medicine and practically non-existent as a therapy. Yet the Sisters of the “little hospital in the wilderness,” with their training and foresight, realized that during convalescence their patients improved and recovered much faster when they were occupied or remained interested in their surroundings.

Arthur Mailloux, a senior citizen, recalls that his father, Anthony Mailloux, had a long stay in the hospital as a teenager. During his convalescence the Sisters taught him to keep busy using his hands. This skill proved to be helpful in later years when he got married and had a family. He often spent Winter evenings by the fireside knitting socks and mitts for his growing family, just as the Sisters had taught him.

Many elderly citizens also remember the small herd of cattle that were owned by the Grey Nuns of the Cross of the hospital. These were cared for by some of the church parishioners. To prevent the milk and butter from spoiling, it was placed in pans on the cool earthen floors of cellars or in ice boxes.

Hospital Hill, Mattawa Ont. Looking South





Dr. Michael James and Mrs. Mary Ann O'Meara-James

### Dr. Michael James, Longest Serving Doctor<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Michael James was born on September 12, 1861 in Centreville, a small community between London and Woodstock in southern Ontario, the son of Michael James Sr. and Margaret Tomlinson. Prior to applying to medical school at Queen's University he completed his Bachelor of Arts degree and then taught school for four years, two years in his home county and an additional two years in Perth. After receiving his degree in Medicine in 1887 he set up a private practice in Brudenell, Ontario before coming to Mattawa two years later in 1889.

In those early pioneering days the hospital was ill equipped to care for many of the emergency cases that arrived at the door. However, Dr. James was known to have a "sturdy, athletic build, and is physically, as well as mentally equipped for the exactions which medical practice in frontier settlements put upon a man."<sup>20</sup> A jovial disposition also helped a great deal.

The story is told that his first case ended rather humorously. When he had nursed a patient back to health the man in question informed the good doctor that "times were tough" and he had no money. The patient offered to pay the doctor's fee in feathers. Dr. James readily and graciously accepted the "in-kind" payment, although what became of the feathers was never known. However, it was a story Dr. James loved to tell (among the many others he recounted) for he was known to be a raconteur *par excellence*. It became a matter of common knowledge that many poor people, when they were unable to pay his fee, received his services, the medicines they required, and the necessary nourishments for convalescence as a discrete gift from the doctor. "The annals of the institution reveal that the kitchen was used in lieu of an operating

theatre, and the kitchen table pressed into service as an operating table in the first surgical case where Dr. James officiated with the knife.”<sup>21</sup> It is no wonder that the very first *bona fide* operating table was purchased by Dr. James and presented to the hospital, the beginning of a long list of donations and gifts to the hospital over his years of service.

In 1896 Dr. James married Mary Ann O’Meara of Pembroke. Mary Ann was a consummate host and accomplished musician. Dr. James was known to address his wife as “my Lady Bountiful.” Together they contributed to the cultural and social life of Mattawa for many years.

Dr. James immersed himself in Liberal politics from the time he arrived in 1889. As a respected country doctor, he had little difficulty being elected in 1902 in the newly established riding of Nipissing East. He was elected a Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) to the tenth parliament and served in that capacity from May 29, 1902

to December 13, 1904.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly enough, his name has been enshrined and perpetuated in James Township in the Timiskaming District of northern Ontario.

Dr. James is the first doctor of note on a long list of doctors serving the people of Mattawa. Although a few names appear before his, it seems their medical practise in Mattawa was brief. Only Dr. Charles William Haentschel before him seemed to have practised in the area for some time as a CPR railway doctor. Dr. James is registered as having practised in Mattawa from 1889 to 1939 a total of 50 years.<sup>23</sup> The Sisters of Charity celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a doctor in 1937 and delivered a glowing tribute to him and the service he rendered.<sup>24</sup> By 1939 Dr. James had been a doctor for 52 years, fifty of them in service to the community of Mattawa.

Mrs. Mary Ann James died November 3, 1940 at age 75 and her funeral mass was celebrated at Ste. Anne’s Parish Church in Mattawa. Dr. Michael James died in April 27, 1943 in his 83 year. Both are buried in St Anne Parish Cemetery.<sup>25</sup>



Tombstone in St. Anne’s Cemetery, Mattawa

Judy Toupin, Curator of the Mattawa Museum, relates a story of an incident that occurred when she was manager at the Pinehaven Bed & Breakfast at 530 McConnell Street, the former residence of Dr. and Mrs. James.

*I had a couple stay with me one time. The next morning the husband came down to the dining room first and as a matter of regular conversation, I asked if they had slept well. He just chuckled and said that he would wait until his wife came down before he answered that question. Needless to say that left it kind of open ended and certainly piqued*



Mattawa Hospital in 1894.





my curiosity. When the man's wife finally arrived and sat down at the table, the husband said to her, "Go ahead, honey, tell Judy how you slept." Then he winked mischievously. She proceeded to mention that she had a couple visitors in their bedroom through the night. First she thought they were other guests who had accidentally walked into their bedroom. Quickly I assured her that all the B&Bs doors were locked every evening. Then she admitted that she was a psychic and that the visitors were 'other worldly'.

One was a gentleman, and as she went on to describe his appearance, it was Dr. James described to a T. There were three photos in the B&B library – a portrait of Dr. James by himself, another of he and his wife, and another of the house – but I had not yet put them out on display. I went into the library, retrieved the photo of Dr. James, brought it into the dining room and showed it to her. She immediately remarked, "Yes! That's the man. That's him!" She then said that Dr. James had told her that he was very happy with things, but didn't like where I'd placed the bed in the room. We all had a laugh at that. Finally she reassured me that he was not a malevolent spirit, but more like a caretaker.

### The Second Fire

By 1894 the hospital had already hospitalized four hundred patients. Things seemed to be progressing well, when on December 17, 1901, for the second time, fire destroyed the hospital operated by the Grey Nuns. The chronicles of the Sisters describe the event like this.

*Our hospital was consumed from the ground up with all its content. Fortunately, there was no loss of life. At the time of the fire, there were twelve sick: five women, six men and one religious. For a month and a half, we had to be lodged at the presbytery. The sick, for the most part, were sent home; the others took refuge in the hotels.<sup>26</sup>*

So important had the place of the hospital and its service to the community grown that it became imperative for reconstruction to begin immediately. Of course, there was no readily available cash for such a large project. But a lack of funds did not stop the Sisters, nor did it intimidate the people of Mattawa. It would not be the first or last time that the citizens of Mattawa took risks to provide the best health care for its citizens.



Hospital Fire, December 17, 1901

After the fire, alms began to pour in from all over the region. As well, numerous events were organized to help the Sisters. It is reported that a picnic in July 1902 brought in \$300.00, another in September realized \$425.00. A recreational evening brought in \$35.00. In 1903, a bazaar raised \$1,186.00, a staggering amount for its day. The balance of the construction costs remained a debt for the Sisters to pay, one they accepted with courage and generosity.

After little more than a month's stay at the presbytery, the Sisters moved into the washhouse of the new hospital, which they had arranged as best they could into a residence, while they waited for their new convent to be built.<sup>27</sup> This new hospital was a striking two-storey, red-brick building with a capacity of 52 beds.

### **Addition to Hospital**

In 1927, a new wing was added to this hospital to accommodate more patients and services. Preliminary work began on May 11<sup>th</sup> and by December the Sisters occupied the whole building. With a larger hospital to manage and unable to obtain more Sisters, it became necessary for the Sisters to hire lay people to help. The first of these lay helpers was Miss Marie Jeanne Ferland who later entered the congregation and became Sister Joseph. They also hired eight nursing aides and seven young girls for housework.

The journal of the Sisters provides a snapshot of the layout of the new hospital that was equipped with a modern heating system, and even boasted an electric OTIS-FENSOM elevator. On the first floor, close to the front door were the offices of the Superior/Administrator and that of the accountant. A little further down the hall was the Sister's community room, an office for patient

records, private rooms and two public rooms of four beds each, for ladies. The laboratory was opened in 1944 down this hall as well where sixteen different tests were conducted.

The second floor was reserved for men—two public rooms containing eleven beds in total, two semi-private rooms and three private rooms. The chapel, the pharmacy and a metabolic chamber with its Basal apparatus were also on this floor.

The third floor was for the ladies with two private rooms, a semi-private and a public room for five patients. The dormitory for the Sisters was on the same floor. As well, this floor housed the operating room, equipped with a gas Heidbrink appliance and a modern sterilizer. The Sisters were particularly enamoured by the “removal of the skylight and installation of an electric projector fixed next to the operation table. On the ceiling, above the table, Sister Superior ordered two beautiful tube lights.”<sup>28</sup>

The refectory of the Sisters, the cafeteria for the nurses and the central kitchen all opened in 1944. The general kitchen, three bedrooms for the use of employees, the X-ray and a study room for nurses were all situated in the basement.

After this addition was built the hospital was now 120' x 40'. Statistics reveal that between 1903 and 1944 there were 14,023 hospitalizations, an average of 350 annually. In the years 1943 and 1944, they recorded 514 and 618 respectively. Between 1943 and 1945, 456 operations occurred and 429 X-rays were taken.

A Vision of Community Care Becomes a Reality





Hospital staff — 1938 or 1939. Sister Obéline Desabrais (Saint-Firmin) superior of the hospital from 1936 to 1942; Sister Corinne Laflamme (Madeleine-de-Jésus) on mission in Mattawa in 1938-1939; Albert Bergeron, doctor and another member of the nursing staff.



# Diamond Jubilee

On January 14, 1938, the hospital celebrated sixty years since its foundation. The festivities for this anniversary were held August 14 in order to gather as many of the townsfolk as possible. His Excellency Bishop C. Nelligan presided over the celebrations that began with a Mass at St. Anne's Church where the bishop praised the work of the Grey Sisters of the Cross. A lunch was held at the hospital and served by the Ladies Auxiliary.

In the afternoon, Bishop Nelligan blessed the new grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes which was constructed on the grounds of the hospital. The ladies of the parish had donated the statues of Saint Bernadette Soubirous and Our Lady for the grotto and offered them to Sister St. Hermas, the Superior of the hospital at the time. At this ceremony, the choir of the parish performed a song which was composed by Mr. N. Charbonneau in honor of the Our Lady of Mattawa.

# Fire Strikes Again a Third Time

On Friday April 1, 1966, at 4:45 p.m., fire struck once again and partly destroyed the hospital. The fire began while burning waste in the incinerator. The blaze quickly spread between the roof and the false ceiling, and to other parts of the third floor. The fire was held to the top floor thanks to the combined action of three area fire departments.

This fire proved the value of the provincially mandated Mutual Fire Aid System and also the Emergency Measures Organization in coordinating and providing communications between fire departments. However, a great deal of water damage occurred as the building was flooded top to bottom. Unfortunately, the fire and

**"Peg-leg wolf" finally snared**  
TRICOT CREEK (Staff)—Purred by sea rodents for more than two weeks, a "Peg-leg" wolf was netted Friday in a gannet's nest set by trapper Joe George. The wolf, which was a female, was about 10 weeks old and was found on the shore of West Lake. Local residents say they are not sure if the wolf is a true wolf or a dog. The wolf was taken just 10 yards off the main road at its home on the shore of West Lake. Joe George, a trapper, Joe George had known about Peg Leg for some time.

# CLC brewing language row

OTTAWA (CP)—A full-scale row over bilingualism is expected to be shaking up for the Canadian Labor Congress biennial convention at Windsor April 22-25. Labor members of the Quebec Federation of Labor is reported preparing an attack on the congress and its leadership for allegedly not giving sufficient attention to the French language.

# Pilots to get pay hike

OTTAWA (CP)—Pay for pilots is expected to rise 11.8 per cent in 1966, according to a report by the Canadian Pilot's Association. The report says that the pilots' union has agreed to a 10 per cent increase in pay for the year, but that the airlines are offering a 11.8 per cent increase.

# Nine die in fire on Reserve

PARRY SOUND, Ont. (CP)—Nine people died in a fire here early today. The fire broke out in the home of Joseph J. Kelly, 45, 100 St. James St. The fire was caused by a gas leak. The fire spread to the kitchen and the living room. The fire was held to the second floor by firefighters. The fire was caused by a gas leak.

# Reshuffle of Wilson Cabinet to headline weekend action

LONDON (CP)—Prime Minister Harold Wilson's reshuffle of his cabinet is expected to headline weekend action in the House of Commons. The reshuffle is expected to include the appointment of new ministers to the cabinet.

# ONR announces \$4,709,981 budget

Mr. Betty Aileen, Minister of Natural Resources, announced today that the Ontario North-West Transportation Commission (ONR) has received a budget of \$4,709,981 for the year 1966-67.

# FOOT TRAPPED—Firmen work (left) to free the foot of seven-year-old child

McMechan (right) in the days of a snow Friday. At center the girl's father carries her from the building to a stretcher where she was held until the foot was freed. The girl was held for 10 hours before she was freed. The girl was held for 10 hours before she was freed.

# THE NORTH BAY NUGGET

# GOOD TEAMWORK STOPS MATTAWA HOSPITAL FIRE



Capt. Max Miller of the Mattawa Fire Department sprays water on the roof of the Mattawa Hospital near the source of the blaze which threatened the structure Friday.



Girls and women from Mattawa rallied along with the rest of the community Friday when the town's hospital was threatened by fire. Medical supplies, furniture, etc. were piled outside, safe in the event the flames could not be contained. Fortunately, fire was confined to the top portion of the hospital.

Additional photos, stories on pages 3, 11

# 41 patients saved as 3 fire depts. check outbreak

MATTAWA (N.B.)—A spokesman for the town of Mattawa, in charge of the Mattawa General Hospital, said here this morning no definite plans are being made to reopen the hospital which was damaged by fire Friday.

# Hospital opened in 1903

BY LEN PARKER  
Nugget Staff Reporter  
The history of the Mattawa hospital dates back to 1873 when Dr. C.F. Taylor, a physician, had constructed the original building on the site of the present hospital. The building was destroyed by fire in 1903.

# Laud EMO for response to Mattawa hospital fire

BY RICHARD FINNISON  
Nugget Staff Reporter  
"Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) has been praised for its prompt response to the Mattawa hospital fire. The EMO coordinated the efforts of the three fire departments and the hospital staff to save the lives of the patients and staff.

# Diefenbaker may refuse to testify

OTTAWA (CP)—Bellefleur, Ontario, Minister of Justice, Arthur Meighen, said today that Prime Minister John Diefenbaker may refuse to testify in the commission of inquiry into the Mattawa hospital fire.

# ONR announces \$4,709,981 budget

Mr. Betty Aileen, Minister of Natural Resources, announced today that the Ontario North-West Transportation Commission (ONR) has received a budget of \$4,709,981 for the year 1966-67.

# TODAY IN THE NUGGET

|                    |          |
|--------------------|----------|
| Ann Lander         | 18       |
| Classified         | 14:15-16 |
| Covered            | 17       |
| Editorial          | 18       |
| Photographs        | 2, 6     |
| Sports             | 12, 13   |
| District           | 7        |
| Pub. Daily Average | 14,000   |
| Full Circulation   | 18,251   |

ensuing damage forced the Sisters to suspend hospital services for the first time in 78 years.<sup>29</sup>

*A nurse's assistant, Denise Dandenault was one of the first persons to discover the fire. "I was wheeling a patent to one of the third floor washrooms but as we neared the door the woman refused to enter, she said. "Instead, terrified, she pointed to flames leaping from a few cracks on the ceiling." Miss Dandenault raised the alarm, instigating what ended as a total evacuation of the hospital.*<sup>30</sup>

Thankfully all forty-one patients were safely evacuated and lodged elsewhere; seven of the most critically ill were transferred by ambulance to hospitals in North Bay. Many patients were "taken to area homes where good Samaritans took them in, knowing they would be there for several days," according to Rev. Lloyd Conrad, a priest saying mass only a few feet away when the fire broke out.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps one of the most unheralded acts was performed by Mr. and Mrs. Don Nelson of Eighth Street, who took into their home three small babies from the pediatric ward. On that special occasion, Mrs. Nelson, who was assisted by Winnie Byers R.N., took care of the "wee" ones until they were strong enough to go home.

In an effort to contain the fire mattresses and furniture were thrown out of the building and all of this was not salvageable. However, all the equipment and most of the supplies were salvaged. This was taken to Ste. Anne's Parish Hall and the overflow accommodated at the Parish Rectory. Miss Dandenault related how she had returned to the top floor to rescue drugs locked in a cupboard there. "The cupboard was locked and I didn't have the keys," she explained, "so I just broke the glass and removed the medicine, placing them in a safe place outside the hospital." Sr. Marguerite-des-Anges, hospital administrator, attributed the quick and orderly evacuation for saving the Medical records which could not have been replaced.<sup>32</sup>

The part of the hospital which was occupied by the Sisters was less damaged. After the clean-up, the patients were readmitted. Eleven beds were set up; the male patients across from the chapel on the second floor and the female patients on the third floor across from the Sisters' rooms. This was a temporary measure since the building was for a time condemned and as soon as another arrangement could be made, the old red-brick hospital would never house patients again.

The home of the late Dr. Bergeron, which had been purchased by the Sisters in 1957, was used as the Sisters' living quarters until a new hospital could be built.

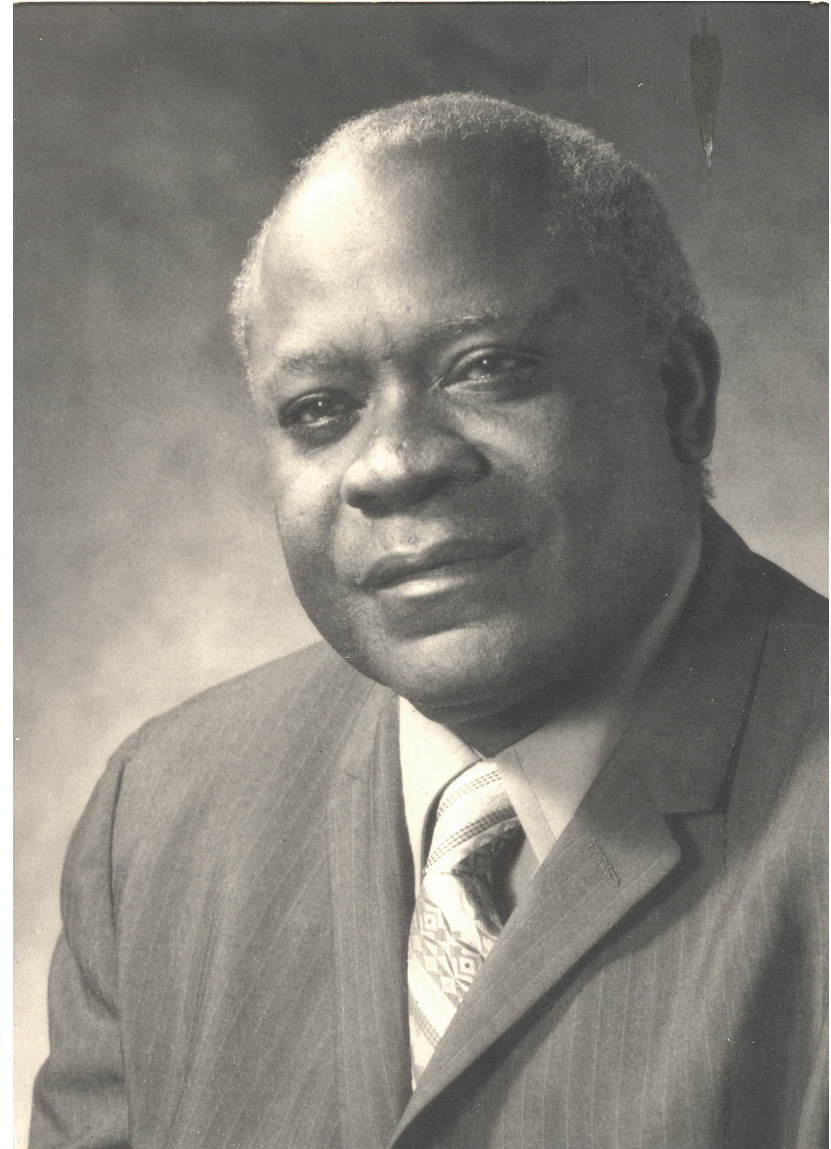


### Doctor Saint-Fermin Monestime

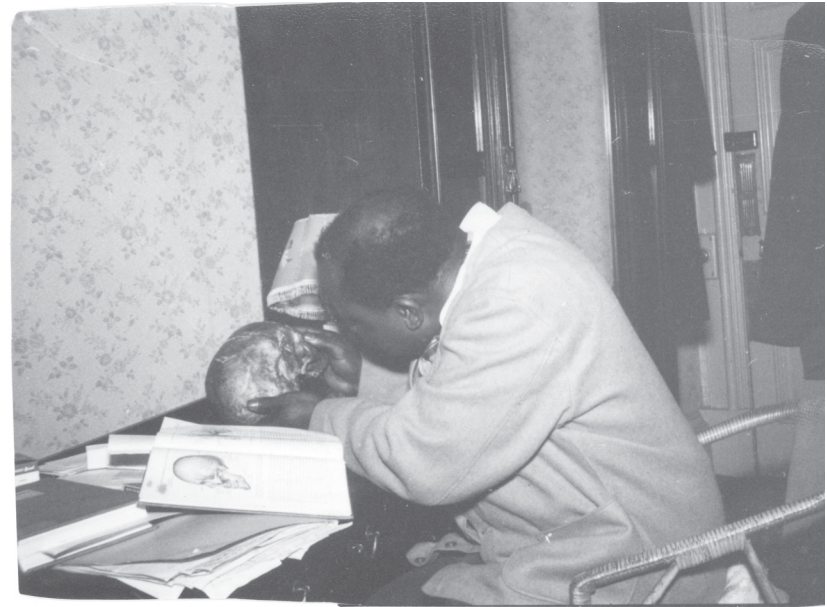
Doctor Saint-Firmin (S. F.) Monestime<sup>33</sup> (December 16, 1909-October 27, 1977) was a Haitian-Canadian politician and medical doctor, and the first Black Canadian elected mayor of a Canadian municipality. Born in Haiti in 1909, Dr. Monestime studied rural medicine and wrote three books on the subject. In 1937, he was one of the only doctors on duty during the Parsley Massacre, and was subsequently awarded the Haitian Legion of Merit for his work during that crisis. He moved to Quebec City in the 1940s to upgrade his medical training and subsequently became a certified Canadian medical doctor.

The story is legend about how Dr. Monestime came to practice medicine in Mattawa. In the summer of 1951, he and a colleague, Dr. G. Lamontagne were on their way to the city of Timmins where they had heard there were openings for doctors in the northern Ontario community. By noon they had arrived in scenic Mattawa and decided to stop for lunch. They drove down Main Street to look for a place to eat. Little did he know that stopping for lunch would change the direction of Dr. Monestime's life, not to mention contribute greatly to the wellbeing of the people of Mattawa. As it happened, that very year one of Mattawa's long standing doctors, Dr. J.A. Bergeron died after 27 years of service to the town.

However, Dr. Monestime did not know about that when he entered Chez François Restaurant for a bite to eat. As he recalled latter, "When I sat down the manager



looked at me in surprise and I thought he didn't want me in his restaurant. This part of the country wasn't too familiar with negroes." But that wasn't the case at all. Some would call it chance, fate, even grace. Amazingly the owner of the restaurant, François Martin, had been operated on by Dr. Monestime a few months earlier in Ottawa. "The celebrations started and the party shifted upstairs to the apartment over the restaurant, where I ended up living." Dr. Monestime recalled. They tried to convince him to stay and practice in Mattawa, but he countered by saying he had no resources. However the Martins persisted. His fiancée, Zena Petschersky, a Russian immigrant who came to Canada through Poland, lived in Ottawa at the time, and as she put it "Mattawa is a lot closer to Ottawa than Timmins is!" François Martin had an empty apartment above the store where





he could live and also set up a doctor's office. He agreed to stay a few weeks and never left.<sup>34</sup>

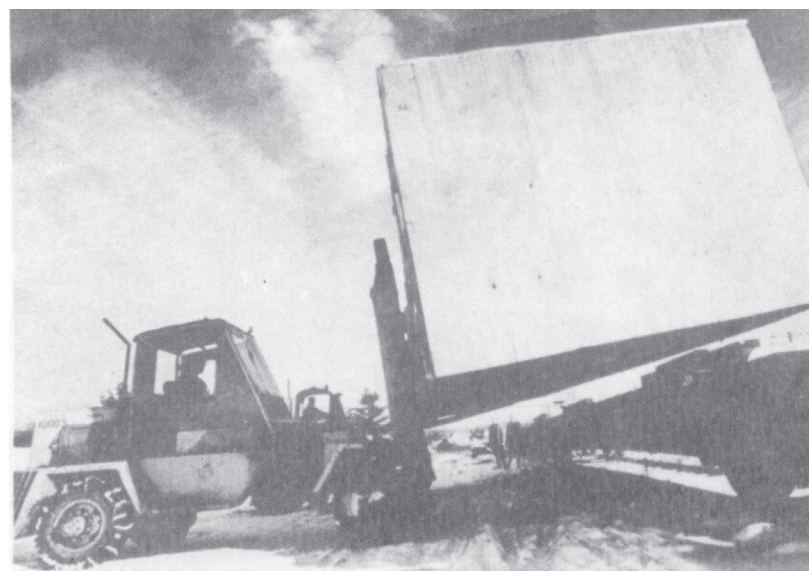
The next day a local car dealer, Fred Lafreniere visited the new doctor and handed him the keys for a Cadillac that was parked in the driveway. Dr. Monestime was dumbfounded. He told the man he had no money, but Lafreniere insisted that he could pay him when he was able. It was this kind of hospitality and generosity that convinced Monestime to make Mattawa his home from this point on. But grace did not end here. The Sisters of Charity, who operated the hospital in Mattawa also knew Dr. Monestime from having practiced at another hospital they operated, the Ottawa General.

Dr. Monestime was soon married to Zena Petschersky in the Russian Orthodox Church in Ottawa and they moved back to Mattawa to begin their life together and start a family. His medical practice boomed and his care for the people of Mattawa, as well as his on call and emergency service at Mattawa General are remembered fondly.

Monestime practiced medicine in Mattawa until 1964 when he was elected the town's mayor. Except for one year that he took off for personal reasons, he remained mayor until his death on October 27, 1977. Monestime and his wife Zena established Algonquin Nursing Home in Mattawa and his daughter Vala Monestime-Belter continued to run the home until it was sold to the Mattawa Hospital in 2013.

### The Portables

At the time many feared there would no longer be a hospital, however, once again the determination of the people of Mattawa was undaunted. A civic delegation met with members of the Provincial government and



**The portables are delivered to the Mattawa Hospital site.**

finally they received a grant which amounted to two-thirds of the cost of a new hospital. A local fund-raising drive brought in \$15,000 or just about \$5.00 per capita. The remainder of the construction costs was paid by the fire insurance settlement.

The cost of the new portable wings was estimated to be approximately \$300,000. In order to save time a prefabricated building was agreed upon as a practical solution. The structure was a prototype design finished on the outside with aluminum siding. In the late fall of 1966 and in 1967 approximately 20 portable units were built in Calgary by the Atco Company and then shipped in sections to Mattawa for assembly. The portable units were set on a concrete foundation poured by Arthur Huard, a resident of Mattawa.

The two new wings were based on a one-storey plan with provisions for an additional storey if needed. The building

was designed in a T-shaped footprint. The south wing accommodated thirty-one patients, serviced by three private or single bedrooms, four semi-private rooms, three four-bed rooms, a geriatric ward and the maternity suite. Thirty-nine persons were on staff, including eight Sisters. The north wing accommodated the special services such as laboratory, radiology, pharmacy, treatment room, central supply room, operating room, medical records and administrative offices. The nurses' station, the utility rooms and the shower cubicles occupied the centre of a double corridor.

This north wing was joined to the ground floor of the previous red-brick hospital building that had been restored and retrofitted after the fire. On the ground floor of the old hospital, the dietary and linen services, along with the staff's lunch and locker rooms were housed. The first floor, in time, provided accommodation for the Sisters up until the mid-1990s.

Then a group of volunteers started the local Food Bank and Clothing Depot for the needy in that space. The Sisters moved from the old Hospital site to a new location in the community and continued to provide pastoral services to the hospital patients and the community. On the second floor the chapel was converted into a large conference board and meeting room. The third floor provided storage space for furniture and equipment as well as a room for medical and housekeeping inventory. The heating unit for the new wing and previous hospital was located in the basement of the former hospital, as well as space for general maintenance and janitorial workshops.

Before of the present hospital on Turcotte Park Road was constructed, these two wings made from portables

attached to the old building were commonly known at the time as the "new" hospital. The Official Grand Opening of this new makeshift structure took place on May 8, 1967. Mayor George Davidson welcomed all present and Mr. Carl Legault, M.P. provided greetings from the Government of Ontario and the Ministry of Health. The "Ribbon Cutting" ceremony was conducted by the Reverend J. A. O'Mara, a commissioner of the Ontario Hospital Services Commission. The new building was blessed by Bishop W. Smith, Bishop of Pembroke.

At the OHA Hospital Convention in Toronto in October 1967, a replica of this new hospital plan was on display in the main hall of the convention floor; it was the first hospital to be erected using this type of construction.

Many citizens, clubs and organizations donated money and furniture to equip the various rooms in the hospital. On the wall in the main entrance of the hospital was an oil painting of a winter scene of the early logging days. This is the work of the late Gordon Dufoe, a resident of Mattawa.

By virtue of the type of construction employed for the portables they were always intended to be a temporary solution with a building life expectancy of ten years. Therefore during 1977 the Hospital Board initiated talks with the Ministry of Health concerning the replacement of the portables with a completely new hospital structure. However, thus would begin the long wait. It would be another 40 years before the people of Mattawa celebrated the construction of a brand new hospital in 2008. In the meantime the old red-brick hospital and the portables would be repaired and patched and kept together with a great deal of tender loving care and ingenuity in order to serve the health care needs of the population.

During the 1980s and 1990s patient care services evolved and surgical and obstetrical services were transferred to North Bay General. The number of beds was also reduced to 19.

In 1992, the Hospital and Nursing Home were officially designated bilingual under Ontario's French-Language Services Act (Bill 80).

### **Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario**

In 1997 the governance and management of the hospital was transferred from the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa to the Board of the Mattawa General Hospital. Around the same time the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa transferred the Catholic sponsorship of Mattawa Hospital to the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario (CHSO), then known as the Catholic Health Corporation of Ontario (CHCO).

This new model of sponsorship by lay men and women officially entrusted them with a mission of the Church. The Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario remain charged with ensuring Catholic identity in an atmosphere formed by the mission and values of the organization and the direction of the *Health Ethics Guide*. The CHSO appoints the Board and the CEO of Mattawa Hospital, and provides high level guidance and direction. The connection with the sponsor is maintained by the appointment of a board member as a “designate” for the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario.

In these ways, the healing ministry of Jesus and the legacy of care and compassion that the Sisters of Charity nurtured since 1878 are sure to remain a central vision of the Mattawa Hospital for many years to come.

### **Hospital Auxiliary**

The first meeting of the Mattawa General Hospital Auxiliary was held on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1973, with Sister Marie Adam, Administrator of the hospital at the time, was named the first Honorary President. A temporary executive was appointed.

Honorary President – Sr. Marie Adam, SCO  
President – Anne Hartman  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – Dorothy Sword  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – Yolande Bélanger  
Secretary – Marguerite Ross  
Recording Secretary – Linda Irssard  
Treasurer – Noella Ribout  
Membership – Annie Lamont  
Library Cart – Hazel Swindle

The by-laws and constitutions were drawn up and approved by the membership. It was decided to operate a Tuck Shop and a portable cart that could be wheeled to the bedside of patients. Sister Marie Adam assured the members of the Hospital Auxiliary that a space would be found as close to the Admitting Office as possible for the Tuck Shop.

In no time the Hospital Auxiliary membership grew to 108 ladies who were soon engaged in all kinds of fundraising projects: bridge tournaments, bingos, a Tag Day during Hospital Week, showers for the Tuck Shop and a June Tea to mention only a few. Many raffles were held at the time of the tea with gifts donated by various members of the community.

One “fun” project was the making of favours for the patients’ trays on special occasions during the year. These helped to add a little cheer to a patient’s stay in

the hospital. As well, the Auxiliary undertook to provide TV service for patients. Originally small individual black and white televisions with earphones could be rented for a nominal daily fee. For many years a gift was presented to the first baby of the year born at Mattawa Hospital.

Over the years, through their endeavours, the Auxiliary has provided an ongoing source of funds to the hospital for the purchase of much needed equipment. The original Auxiliary tuck shop and cart was initiated by Irene Roberge and her committee members, Hilda Hurdman, Marguerite White and Helen Paupst.

Three lifetime members of the Hospital Auxiliary, Isabelle Rainville, Bea Langben and Millie Lamarche were honoured in 2009. All three lifetime pioneer members contributed to ongoing fundraising for the hospital. Isabelle Rainville recruited many new members and supported fund-raising events; Millie Lamarche was instrumental in launching the “Tree of Lights” campaign in 1988, a campaign that collected more than \$170,000 for the Mattawa Hospital over a period of 20 years; and finally Bea Langben faithfully rolled the gift cart around the hospital for patients and visitors alike.<sup>35</sup>

### **Doctor Mark Wilkins: One of the Longest Serving Doctors in Mattawa**

The professional careers of Dr. Monestime and Dr. Mark Alexander Wilkins did not intersect like the rivers that flow outside the hospital and nursing home but their spirit was the same—to serve the needs of the community. Like Monestime before him, Dr. Mark Wilkins arrived in Mattawa on September 28, 1981 shortly after he graduated out of Medical School at the University of Toronto. He ended up staying and falling in love with

the people. Dr. Mark Wilkins celebrated forty years as a doctor in Mattawa in 2021, one of the longest serving doctors to have served the people of Mattawa.

He grew up in Ottawa near the National Science Research Council and notes that most of the other children in his classes had parents who were scientists. In fact, 50% of his Grade 1 class went on to medical school. It is no wonder that in High School he excelled in Math and Science where the guidance counsellors naturally steered him to either science or engineering when he was applying to university.

Initially he enrolled at the University of Toronto in the Science program but after two years he switched to the Faculty of Medicine studying there from 1975-1979. To help fund his last year of medicine he applied for a *Northern Ontario Medical Bursary* because of his natural interest in rural medicine.

Dr. Mark Wilkins completed his residency in Family Medicine at the Calgary General Hospital from 1979 to 1981 obtaining his Family Medicine Certification (CCFP).

“Medical School is hard work. There is a lot of material to learn, but you have to find the time for other things,” remarked Dr. Wilkins during an interview<sup>36</sup> in 2003. While at the University he produced and acted in two original musicals, and then went on to produce a 24-minute documentary about the making of those musicals.

Dr. Wilkins even found the time to acquire his aviation pilot’s license in 1981. As he reflected, “You have to show other interests, like sports or volunteering with community groups. These interests will help with personal development.”

Dr. Wilkins was always interested in returning to Northern Ontario as a physician. “I had a specific criteria for choosing a location,” recalled Dr. Wilkins. “I was looking for a place with a hospital, near water, with a ski hill and a place where I could fly.” To the community’s great benefit, he found what he was looking for in Mattawa, but not before spending six weeks in St. Charles, near Sudbury. When he arrived in Mattawa on September 28, 1981 he set up practice with Dr. Caron and Dr. Bender in the medical building which was once the Town Hall.

Dr. Wilkins has held the position of medical Chief of Staff for 28 years in total (1986-1993 and 1999-2021) a position that automatically made him chair of the Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) and also an ex-officio

member of the hospital Board of Directors. He attended all these meetings faithfully and his dedication, wisdom and commitment to the hospital and nursing home were evident and appreciated time and time again.

In 2006 when Dr. Mark Wilkins celebrated 25 years of service as a doctor to the community of Mattawa he noted his excitement regarding the pending construction of the new state-of-the art hospital. When he first arrived in Mattawa, the portable structures that housed much of Mattawa General Hospital were already 15 years old and in 2006 they were 37 years old. “It is time for a change,” Wilkins remarked. “A modern facility will help recruit new physicians. It will also help us continue to provide excellent medical care to the community.”<sup>37</sup>

And yet, forever a team player he humbly noted at the time of the opening of the new hospital, “(The new hospital) is more for patients and nurses. We doctors are just visitors. It is the nurses who actually run the facility and care for the patients. We (doctors) are sort of consultants.”<sup>38</sup>

Dr. Mark’s approach to medical practise and his pride for Mattawa Hospital can best be summed up by the observation of a hospital board member.

*Sometimes it is the little things that demonstrate the true nature of a person. One board member remembers arriving early for the Grand Opening ceremony for the new hospital only to discover Dr. Wilkins outside on the front lawn with a plastic garbage bag picking up little bits of paper that had blown in on the wind. He wanted everything to look its best for the guests who would soon*



(l to r): Colleen Lalonde, nurse; Dr. Mark Wilkins; Courtney Wunsch

*be arriving. That care; that pride for the new hospital; that willingness to serve in any way he can; that sense of belonging — it demonstrates*

*that Dr. Mark Wilkins was not just serving the community; it showed that he was, and remains in fact, an integral part of the community.<sup>39</sup>*



In April 2001, under the leadership of Mr. Jerry Betick, the Executive Director, approval from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care was granted to build a new Mattawa Hospital. Its hope was to continue to serve the residents of Mattawa and the surrounding townships of Calvin, Mattawan, Papineau-Cameron, Bonfield and Head, Clara and Maria. Much of the planning and execution of the construction project would then be directed by Mr. Edward (Ted) Darby, who was Executive Director from 2004 – 2007.

In choosing a site for the new hospital building, the Hospital Board examined three options: 1) the site of the exiting hospital next to the parish church; 2) land close to the Algonquin Nursing Home on 231 Tenth Street; and 3) what was known as the new “greenfield” site on Turcotte Park Road. The decision of the Hospital Board came down to choosing either the old hospital site or the “greenfield” site. The vote ended up being a tie, so the board chair at the time, Ms. Beverly Bell, Executive Director of the Mattawa Women’s Resource Centre, broke the tie in favour of 217 Turcotte Park Road, where the hospital was eventually built. The 10.4 acres of land for the new hospital was owned by the town and sold to the hospital for a nominal fee of \$80,000.

Fund-raising for the new hospital began immediately. At the time of approval, the province would honour its 75% commitment, which was \$12,900,000. The other 25% or \$5,105,000, would need to be raised by the community, which had already brought in nearly \$4 million in

reserves and pledges. Fundraising continued throughout the construction phases.

The architectural firm awarded the design contract was Laroque Elder Architects Inc with partner ANO Architects. Originally the building was designed as a one-story building with a crawl space below the hospital for storage. However, the slope of the site allowed a split-level approach with the south elevation being one story and the north elevation being two stories. The first building design allowed for the existing programs of the Hospital, but did not provide any capacity for expansion other than by an addition. The Mattawa Board decided that the basement crawl space should be converted to usable, shelled-in space.<sup>40</sup>

As a result, the final building design was to occupy 42,519 square feet of operable space including 16 acute care and three complex care beds at a construction cost of approximately \$20 million. Shortly after the new hospital was opened Laroque Elder Architects won the *2009 Ontario WoodWORKS! Northern Ontario Excellence Award*. In presenting the award it was noted, “Conscious that the fabric of the town was built around the logging industry, the Mattawa General Hospital pays tribute to the city’s rich logging history by the varied use of structural and non-structural wood components.”<sup>41</sup>

Tenders were released in October 2006 and four bids were received. The contract for construction of the new hospital was finally awarded to Bonfield Construction





in December 2006. Construction began in January 2007 and substantial completion of the building was met in June 2008. The move from the old hospital to the new occurred between September 2008 and October 2008. Final cost of the hospital building was \$18,005,000.

In keeping with its goal to build a strong and healthy community, the new Mattawa Hospital became smoke-free inside its buildings and on its property with the exception of one designated smoking area.

The official Opening Ceremony and Open House occurred on October 25, 2008. Over 850 past and present residents as well as dignitaries toured the new state-of-the-art facility. Representatives of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa were also present for the occasion. The ribbon cutting was conducted by Mrs. Isabelle Rainville (1919-2012) who was 89 years old at the time, and the mother of the CFO Paul Rainville. She was also a founding member of the Hospital Ladies Auxiliary and a supporter of the hospital for many years.



## Program for Grand Opening of the Mattawa Hospital, Saturday October 2, 2008

- 10:00 AM Tours of the New Hospital begin!
- 11:00 AM Live Music begins!
- 1:00 PM Tours of the New Hospital end!
- 1:30 PM Official Grand Opening Ceremony begins!

Piping in of special guests, and raising of the National Flag. The National Anthem was sung by Danielle Perreault

Remarks by:

Vala Monestime-Belter, Master of Ceremony

Laura Pierce, Board Chair, Mattawa Hospital

Hon. George Smitherman, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure

Dr. Mark Wilkins, Chief of Staff, Mattawa Hospital

Dean Backer, Mayor of Mattawa (on behalf of all the area Mayors)





Sister Lorraine Desjardins, General Superior of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa

Mathilde Gravelle-Bazinet, President and CEO of the North East Local Health Integration Network (NELHIN)

Hon. Monique Smith, MPP for Nipissing

Guy Chartrand, President and CEO of Mattawa General Hospital

2:20 PM Ceremony for the “Transferral of the Lantern”

2:30 PM Blessing by Bishop Mulhall, Father Moyle and Father McElligott

2:40 PM Hospital Raffle Draws

- 2:45 PM Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
- 3:00 PM Tours of the hospital and live music resume! Snacks and beverages are served, viewing of health displays in the front foyer!
- 4:00 PM Meet and Greet for guests at the Golden Age Club (464 Poplar St.)
- 5:00 PM Mass celebrated by Bishop Mulhall at Ste. Anne's Church
- 6:00 PM Roast Beef Dinner at the Golden Age Club
- 8:00 PM followed by the Grand Opening Dance.

### Transferring “The Lantern”

A significant moments in the day's celebrations was the transfer of the lantern ceremony which signified the long-standing involvement of the Sisters of Charity with the Mattawa Hospital from its very beginnings in 1878.

When sponsorship of the Mattawa Hospital was transferred from the Sisters of Charity to the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario in 2003 a lantern, a symbol of its Gospel mission, was presented to the hospital. As part of the Grand Opening, Sisters Ginette, Noella Pitre and Carmelle Laframboise carried this lantern from the old hospital building into the new building.

Proudly the Sisters proclaimed the words: “Today, the building or body of our hospital has been built. It is now up to us to build the soul of our facility. Let us keep that same spirit of compassion burning in our community. Let us live the values transmitted to us by our founders. Together we can keep the flame of our mission burning for all generations.”

The opening of the new hospital became a testament to the fact that a small community can have big dreams. There would be more dreams to come!



Sœur Ginette Duguay, sco

## Pastoral Care Sœur Ginette Duguay, sco

My Name is Sister Ginette Duguay. I entered the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa on September 8 1985. After completing my studies I was assigned to the Elizabeth Bruyère Center in Ottawa, ministering to the long-term Palliative care patients. I took courses at Algonquin College to complete my studies for working with the terminally ill. The Élisabeth Bruyère Palliative care unit offered me a position where I did my apprenticeship. I enjoyed my work and learned a lot about caring for the terminally ill. The patients taught me how to get through their many loses and to live life to the fullest each day.

Saint Vincent's Hospital in Ottawa was my next assignment. This was a challenge since the patients live there much longer, many with severe brain trauma. Many could not communicate. Those that were able had to overcome many challenges. I learned so much from them.

I arrived in Mattawa in October of 1996. Algonquin Nursing Home became my next assignment along with visiting people in their homes. Much of the work involved listening to the many loses— physical, social, psychological, and spiritual. The courage of people I came into contact with gave me the strength needed to go through my own little loses. Many of the people I visited had wonderful full lives. I began to see them as persons, and not just as people who were elderly or waiting to die. Their stories were full

of life and commitment. Some had to learn to forgive and teach others to do the same.

I have ministered at the Mattawa Hospital for twelve years now. This move complements the work I have done. I am able to prepare elderly patients for their transition to the nursing home. Families also need support during this time.

Pastoral Care is very rewarding. We receive more than we give. I have come to see that the Spiritual often comes after the other needs are met.



**Sr. Ginette and John Babbikian.**

On November 25, 2009 the unveiling of the Donor Recognition Board occurred in the main entrance way of the hospital. The artistic vision for the board came from local artist Clermont Duval.<sup>42</sup> It recognized the many people who donated to make the new hospital a reality.



### Ambulance Service

The Ambulance Service is funded by the Ministry of Health (the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division) and administered by the Hospital as a separate budget. Mattawa Hospital has been operating the Ambulance Service in Mattawa since 1969.<sup>43</sup> The EMS paramedics are employees of the Hospital.

The location of the Ambulance vehicles has varied over the years. In the 1970's the ambulances were housed across the street from the prefab hospital at the old hospital site. Then in the mid 1980's a new one-bay garage was built there. In addition a garage space was rented off site for the second ambulance. However, by the mid 1990's a one-bay garage and office space was leased offsite at Bissett Street for EMS staff and vehicles.

Then on January 1, 2001 the ambulance station was relocated to a 1,600 square-foot "Base Station" at 1250

John Street (Highway 17). It had two bays for ambulances, an office and quarters for seven ambulance attendants.<sup>44</sup> It employed 3 full-time and a roster of about 8 part-time paramedics. Ken Cowie was the ambulance supervisor at the time. The operating budget was about \$500,000 per year.<sup>45</sup> It was officially opened on January 22, 2001.

With the construction of the new hospital on Turcotte Park Road a new two-bay garage and office space was built as part of the design of the hospital to accommodate the ambulance services close to the emergency entrance. Staff and vehicles were moved into this new space attached to the hospital in November 2008.

### Helipad

Mattawa Hospital's first helipad was located in Mattawan Township next to the lagoon site, about a five minute drive from the site of the original hospital. The site was owned by Tembec but it was not considered an ideal site because of the distance from the hospital and because of nearby telephone and hydro lines. At one point there was also talk of situating the helipad on Mattawa Island, however, this suggestion was rejected because, on occasion, the island was prone to flooding.

Sudbury Air Ambulance initiated the discussion about building a helipad which would be on the hospital grounds. Prior to that time patients had to be transferred to the North Bay airport where they would be flown to Ottawa, Toronto, Sudbury or wherever the patient had to be treated. On average up to 12 calls per year for this service were registered.

In order to move forward in the construction of the helipad on the hospital grounds approvals needed to be obtained from various agencies: Transport Canada

regarding licensing; the Town of Mattawa for approval of site location; and the Emergency Measures Service (EMS) for funding. Ongoing discussions also took place between the hospital and St. Victor's School because of the proposed helipad's proximity to the school property. Finally, the Hospital board of directors had to approve the operation and maintenance of this new venture.

The plan for a helipad providing helicopter ambulance service had always been part of the site plan for the new hospital construction. By April 2011 it was agreed to build the helipad on the site of the new hospital between the school and the hospital. Initially there were a series of delays in moving forward with this project, mostly around acquiring the proper surveys for the helipad site and its closeness to the school. However, by November 2013 it was constructed and soon ready to be used.

### Élisabeth Bruyère Compassion and Excellence Award

The *Élisabeth Bruyère Compassion & Excellence Award* was established in 2016 as a peer-nominated staff award for employees of both the hospital and the nursing home. It is presented yearly to one staff member from each organization who exemplifies the values of caring in their professional capacity. It represents a Legacy Award building on the charitable work of the founder of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa, Sœur Élisabeth Bruyère.

The compassionate healing ministry of the Sisters continues when staff members live out the mission and values of the hospital and nursing home by responding to the needs of residents, patients, volunteers, visitors and fellow employees at the two organizations. The winners of the award have demonstrated these values

and exemplified the healing mission of Christ both with those they serve and those with whom they work.

To date the recipients of the *Élisabeth Bruyère Compassion & Excellence Award* are as follows.

#### **Hôpital Mattawa Hospital**

|      |                   |
|------|-------------------|
| 2016 | Gilles Sivret     |
| 2017 | Lisette Dumont    |
| 2018 | Joanne Bouchard   |
| 2019 | Colleen Lalonde   |
| 2020 | Francine Charette |

#### **Algonquin Nuring Home**

|      |                      |
|------|----------------------|
| 2016 | Rachelle Nadeau      |
| 2017 | Carole Labreche      |
| 2018 | Lise Jones           |
| 2019 | Jeanne D'Arc Jodouin |
| 2020 | Rathish Mohan        |

### The Old Hospital Becomes a Memory

The Sisters of Charity of Ottawa who owned the land and building of the old hospital approved its sale to Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord (CSCFN) in July 2009. Lions Demolition of Toronto began work on April 7, 2010 to tear down the old building and make room for a new Catholic French-language Secondary School.

An era had come to an end. Citizens of Mattawa watched as a large hoe ripped away at the familiar red-brick building. They reflected on the many people who had been born and died within its walls, the hours of service provided by the Sisters, the dedication of countless

## A Vision of Community Care Becomes a Reality

physicians and nurses, the healing and compassionate care extended to those in need.

To mark this place with memory a bronze historical plaque was erected at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in 2013 by



the Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord with the assistance of the Ontario Heritage Trust.



## Paul Rainville

*Paul Rainville's worked at Mattawa Hospital as Director of Administrative Services & Director of Finance (Purchasing and Personnel) from August 16, 1976 to March 1, 2013.*



I have many fond memories during my 36.5 years career at the Mattawa Hospital.

When I first started, eleven Sisters worked in various departments of the hospital, but when I retired there was only 1 Sister working in pastoral care.

I remember when:

- Manual typewriters became computers and word processors for all departments.
- Accounting reporting changed from HIS (Hospital Information system) to MIS (Management Information system) to Meditech software implementation.
- Hospital Accreditation became a reality in the 90's and is still maintained today to very high standards.
- Y2K (Year 2000) was not the end of the world but much preparation went into preparing to rectify possible digital/computer bugs/malfunctions.
- An unexpected visit from the Ministry of Labour

which resulted in our application to the MOH Capital Division for a new Hospital. Infrastructure funding of \$1.377 million was granted to address the structural, electrical, mechanical, mould and asbestos issues.

- The 2001 approval to build a new Hospital and the coordination with the Architects in the functional, schematic and design of the new facility.
- Pay Equity. The implementation and maintenance is ongoing
- An electrical panel failure in January 2005 resulted in the evacuation of 19 in-patients to St Ann's Church where they were housed and cared for.

Now, on the Not-So-Serious side:

- Drinking Blue Nun wine with our Sister at various events and asking for a refill.
- Wearing 2 different coloured shoes the day after an eventful evening and staff bringing it to my attention.
- Rescuing a staff member from a stalled elevator stuck between 2 floors. Say a prayer...
- Doctors checking in periodically inquiring about the finances of the Hospital.
- Being the Finance guy, every year someone from my staff would mount the Ebenizer Scrooge door knocker... Humm Bug... Merry Christmas.

Finally, having devoted much of my working life to the Hospital, I will always recognize the Hospital as MY Hospital, a proud feeling of being a part of a wonderful, caring organization.



## Colleen Lalonde, RN

I began my career as an RN in the spring of 1985. Being raised in Mattawa I came to the Mattawa hospital for an interview after experiencing a rather intensive interview at the Ottawa Civic Hospital. I was greeted by the CFO at that time, who welcomed me into his office. After a few questions like “when did you graduate?” and “who are your parents?” the next question was “so when can you start?” And I had the job. Back when I started 35 years ago the “junior” nurse went to ER on evenings and nights. Not thinking anything of it, off I went, learning quickly that it was “sink or swim”. That scares the heck out of me now! Working in a small hospital brings its advantages and disadvantages. As new hires it wasn’t long before you became “part of the family” which for the most part is great, but then when these people quickly become “family” it makes it extra hard when you start to lose some of these co-workers much too young to have horrible diseases. Being a care giver to these special people is an honour but also difficult. The same is true that every time the ambulance goes out you have to wonder who is coming in. Is it someone I know, or worse yet, family?

I was offered a change in my career about nine years ago, moving from staff nurse to nurse leader. This turned out to be a great experience and made the last years of my career very enjoyable, but a different challenge that I took on in the best way that I knew. During these last 9 years I also had a change in my immediate supervisor. Initially I thought “wow I’m getting old”. “This boss is young enough to be my

kid.” Turned out to be some of the greatest years of my career being guided by someone so caring, kind and fair and here for all the right reasons. Most definitely two of the very most difficult times of my career have been having my elderly parents as patients on the unit that I lead. Specially my father as he was a chronic patient from August of one year to the June of the next, when he passed away. Even though I couldn’t have asked for more excellent care it is difficult coming in every day and hearing reports about your close loved one. When my mother was admitted with cancer that took her life quite quickly, I got to experience our hospice suite as a family member and I must say coming from a small town and a small hospital sure made things easier. She was treated with the best care , like she was their mother or grandmother. Couldn’t have asked for better.



(l to r) Tiffany Bittner; Laurelle Dimick; and Colleen Lalonde.



The original Algonquin Nursing Home owned and operated by the Monestime family, 231 Tenth St., Mattawa, Ontario



The new Algonquin Nursing Home opened next to the Mattawa Hospital on Turcotte Road in 2019

## CHAPTER 5

# Algonquin Nursing Home

As early as 1964 Dr. Monestime began to dream about a long term facility to care for the elderly patients he was so fondly caring for in his medical practice and at the hospital.<sup>46</sup> At the time, if seniors could not be cared for at home, then they had to leave the community and their family and friends to receive the care they required. This did not sit well with Dr. Monestime. He consulted with his wife Zena, with other doctors in the community, with the Sisters and board at the hospital, and of course, as mayor, with the town council. In time, community representatives Annie Lamont and Marjorie Wall accompanied Dr. Monestime to Toronto to seek formal support from Premier Bill Davis at the time.

In November 1973, there were exploratory negotiations with two other nursing home groups as possible partners—the Ottawa Valley Nursing Home group and Laurentian Nursing Homes. However, in the end, Dr. Monestime and Zena decided to proceed on their own. They established Algonquin Nursing Home Limited (ANH) and submitted proposals for the home to the Ministry of Health.

Property was purchased at 231 Tenth Street in Mattawa, and architectural plan was set in motion. The million dollar project between Ninth and Tenth Streets in Mattawa's Rosemount section provided Mattawa and the surrounding townships with 60 extended care beds.

The Algonquin Nursing Home (ANH) was officially opened on October 7, 1976 with Premier Bill Davis

cutting the ribbon along with Lorne Maeck MPP. Staffing and training soon fell into place as Zena Monestime took on the role as the first Administrator of the home.

When Dr. Monestime died in October 1977, there was a concern about whether or not the home would remain in the family. The support of family, staff and residents was so overwhelming that it was finally decided by the Monestime family to continue to own and operate the home. Zena Monestime accomplished a great deal, coping with the death of her husband, while raising her children with the help of her mother Valentine. She combined a gift for nurturing staff as well as management skills. Zena's daughter Vala joined her mother in the spring of 1978 as Director of Nursing, having graduated with



**Dr. Monestime, Premier Davis and MPP Lorne Maeck at the official opening of Algonquin Nursing Home in 1976**

a Bachelor of Nursing Science from the University of Ottawa. In 1985 a new addition was officially opened which raised the capacity to 72 providing 12 more beds, along with a chapel, a second lounge, physiotherapy room and activity rooms.

In 1996, the dining room and lounge were expanded, a staff area was built and service delivery areas were rearranged to improve resident care efficiency.



**Zena Monestime, First Administrator of  
Algonquin Nursing Home**

When Zena Monestime died in 2005, her daughter Valla Monestime-Belter became the Algonquin Nursing Home's second Administrator.

### **Mattawa Hospital Purchases Algonquin Nursing Home**<sup>47</sup>

The Mattawa hospital and Algonquin Nursing Home had always shared many services along with a particular vision that encompassed a sense of community, partnership and common encouragement. For example, at one point, when the existing hospital site was unable to fully support its needs, the hospital's planners strategized for the Nursing Home to provide laundry and food services for the hospital. Although, this concept never actually materialized, it did illustrate the willingness of both organizations to work together and also helped foster the idea of further partnerships.

Valla Monestime-Belter, part owner and administrator of Algonquin Nursing Home recalls, "There was a definite synergy with the hospital, and both the CEO Guy Chartrand and I felt there was an opportunity that needed to be explored. We both knew that it would be of benefit to the people of Mattawa, that it would keep the Nursing Home in Mattawa, that it would continue the dream that Dr. and Mrs. Monestime had for ensuring that people needing long-term care would receive that care in Mattawa, by staff from the Mattawa area, and that the Home would continue to be an economic driver for the community."

Valla Monestime-Belter was no stranger to the Mattawa Hospital having served in various positions on the board over many years. She was a board member of the Mattawa Hospital from 1998 to 2008; Vice Chair from

2003-2008; Chair of the Mattawa Hospital Building Committee from 2005-2009; she served on the Mattawa Hospital Golf Tournament committee, 2000-2010, the Old Hospital Task Force from 2007-2009, was Chair of the new Mattawa Hospital Grand Opening Committee, 2007-2008 and co-chair of the Mattawa Hospital “A Place Called Home” Campaign from 2017-2019.

The initial feasibility study, seeking a memorandum of agreement about the hospital purchasing Algonquin Nursing Home, was completed in August 2010. However, as early as September 2008 “Mr. Chartrand reiterated on the possibility of merging Algonquin Nursing Home and the Mattawa General Hospital.”<sup>48</sup> Through the direction of Mr. Guy Chartrand, President and CEO of Mattawa Hospital at the time, and the full support of the Board of Directors, the vision to move into long term care was seen as a great advantage to the citizens of Mattawa and an extension of the mandate and legacy of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa.

In June of 2011, the Monestime and Belter families announced that they had reached an agreement to sell Algonquin Nursing Home, to Mattawa Senior Living, a not-for-profit corporation established with the support and endorsement of the Hospital Mattawa Board and under its auspices.

At the time, Vala Monestime-Belter commented, “The Home was established by our parents and has been owned and operated by family members for over 35 years. The decision to sell the Home was not taken lightly. Our goal was to ensure that the chosen purchaser would continue to deliver the same high quality of care to our residents and be committed to the needs of the residents, families, staff and surrounding community. We are confident

that we have achieved this goal.” In the press release, she hoped that the Nursing Home would ultimately be redeveloped within a state-of-the-art site attached to the new hospital and would include acute care, complex continuing care, long-term care, rehabilitation, and outpatient services to support the local communities.

The purchase of Algonquin Nursing Home was finalized on April 30, 2013 for the amount of \$2,844,000. Because Mattawa Hospital (as a public hospital) could not purchase the shares of the former Algonquin Nursing Home and its subsidiary (which were privately run corporations) a new entity called Mattawa Seniors Living was set up as an independent not-for-profit corporation to make the purchase and keep the beds in Mattawa. With the support of the Hospital, Mattawa Seniors Living made the purchase and undertook corporate restructuring. The for-profit components of Algonquin Nursing Home were changed to not-for-profit entities and ultimately amalgamated into one not-for-profit organization that successfully received charitable status under the name of Algonquin Nursing Home of Mattawa. As a result, Algonquin Nursing Home has become part of the living legacy of Catholic health care in Mattawa.

In the end the Ministry approved a management contract on July 27, 2017 which allowed Hôpital de Mattawa Hospital to manage Algonquin Nursing Home.



## Algonquin Nursing Home Redevelopment and the Fulfillment of the “Mattawa Health Hub” Dream

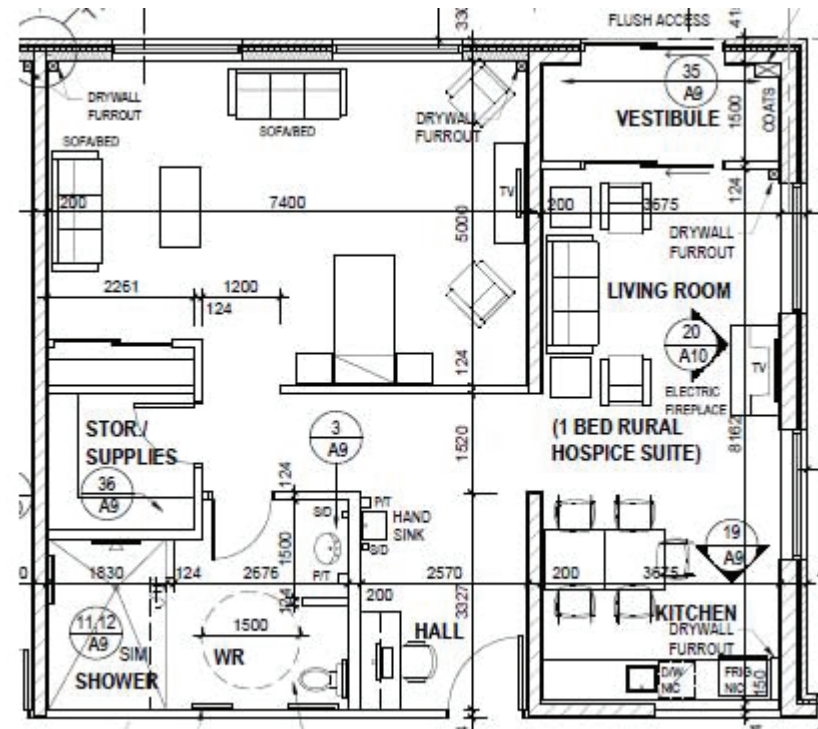
The tender for Architectural Services for the redevelopment of the Algonquin Nursing Home was issued in May 2012. It was awarded to Sam Iser, Architect on September 10, 2012 who was a specialist in long term care design. The design was for a 61,000 square foot building that would create a 73-bed home-like atmosphere for residents.

The new nursing home would be attached to the hospital on Turcotte Park Road and would include a Chapel space opening up into a multi-purpose room. As well, a Hospice Suite (with a separate outside entrance) would be incorporated along the corridor connecting the new nursing home to the hospital. Space was also set aside for Indigenous Health Services and an Indigenous Healing Room.

Mr. Jérémy Stevenson, the President and CEO of Mattawa Hospital at the time, recalls a meeting with the Nursing Home’s Resident Council and how the future residents took such pride in the possibility of a new home. “We all learned early in the process,” remembers Mr. Stevenson, “that we were not the experts, but the resident’s themselves, who lived in the older home and looked at its walls every day, they were the experts. As a result, the decision was made that they should be the ones to decide on paint colours, patterns, furniture, designs etc. The new nursing home would become their home and so they should be engaged in the process. Drawings and designs would hang on the walls so the residents could review them. We often caught a few of them, pen

in hand, already choosing their rooms and marking their names in the rooms on the designs.”

Community fund-raising was an essential part of bringing the dream of a new home to realization. The Sisters of Charity of Ottawa and their General Superior, Sister Lorraine Desjardins, continued to show generosity to the people of Mattawa. Their health care legacy continued with a substantial gift of \$1 Million dollars. Ongoing annual Golf Tournaments and the Christmas Tree of



Algonquin Nursing Home Hospice Suite

Lights campaign also added to the fundraising. Finally, the “A Place Called Home” Campaign was launched, raising \$1,708,571 including a \$1 Million grant from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC). Many local businesses and citizens contributed to the Fund, including a \$75,000 donation from the Caisse Alliance. The Ministry of Health’s portion of the funding assured that the dream of a new nursing home in Mattawa became a reality.

By October 2015 final approval was received from the Ministry of Health to build the new Algonquin

Nursing Home. Tenders were issued November 14, 2016 and closed December 13, 2016. Seven bids were received and the tender was awarded on April 6, 2017 to Frecon Construction Limited from Pembroke, Ontario. Construction began February 2017 with substantial completion occurring on March 13, 2019.

Moving day from the old Algonquin Nursing Home on Tenth Street across the Mattawa River to the new location at 207 Turcotte Park Road which was attached to the hospital happened all on one day, June 22, 2019. It was a successful and well-coordinated single day move.



Ground breaking ceremony with Board Directors and staff on a cold wet autumn day to initiate land preparation.



## The Grand Opening

The Official Opening Ceremony happened on a warm and sunny autumn day, Friday September 20, 2019. What a sight it was to see citizens and dignitaries walking from all directions into the parking lot where the ceremonies would take place at the front entrance of the Home.

Nestled in the foothills of the Laurentian mountains not far from the mouth of the Mattawa River flowing into the Ottawa River, a vision that began so many years ago had not only come to fulfillment, but had also initiated a new and creative chapter in the care provided to the

citizens of Mattawa and its surrounding communities. Mattawa Mayor, Dean Backer put it best when he said, “When you see this kind of investment in health care in our community it is a wonderful thing. Thanks to the Monestime family, and the people who are visionaries of the home itself, it is a huge asset for this small but magical town.”<sup>49</sup>

Dignitaries present to provide congratulations for this achievement were: the Honourable Vic Fedeli MPP, Minister of Economic Development and Member for Nipissing; Mattawa Mayor, Dean Backer; Mrs. Anne Asselin, representing the Catholic Health Sponsors of



Grand Opening of the new Algonquin Nursing Home.

Ontario; numerous Sisters of Charity of Ottawa; Mr. Robert Simmonds, Board Chair, Mattawa Hospital; and Fr Scott Murray, St-Anne's Parish Priest.

At the opening ceremonies Pierre Noel, President and CEO of Mattawa Hospital and Algonquin Nursing Home, underscored the legacy which brought the community to this day. He remarked, "But embedded in success and progress came a constancy of purpose and a deep and abiding commitment to faith-based and compassionate care in our community. While the Sisters (of Charity of Ottawa) are no longer involved in the governance and oversight of the hospital, they have provided us with both moral support and financial support in recent years to seed the great things that we are celebrating today."

Although the old Algonquin Nursing Home building on Tenth Street would no longer be used as a long term care facility for frail and aging seniors, the chapter did not end for the building's use. The municipality of Mattawa purchased the building and began converting the space to affordable housing for seniors. Overall, the building will have 30 newly renovated suites with proposed rents ranging from \$498 to \$806 depending on the apartment size—studio to two-bedroom units.<sup>50</sup>

### **Mattawa Health Hub**

During Guy Chartrand's tenure as President and CEO a new concept developed around bringing all of the health care services in Mattawa together onto one health care "campus." Thus the idea of a Mattawa Health Hub emerged. It reflected recent changes to Ministry of Health and Long Term Care legislation and became a vital part of the Health Hub Model that puts the patient at the centre of care. At the Grand Opening, Robert Simmonds, Chair of the Board stated, "With the redevelopment of

the Algonquin Nursing Home on this particular site we have done much more than build a new modern building, which of itself is a great achievement, but we've also put in place a big piece of the puzzle in establishing what we call our Mattawa Health Hub."

When Jérémy Stevenson, President and CEO of Mattawa, accepted a position with the North East Local Health Integration Network (NELHIN) it provided an opportunity for the board at Mattawa to look at different leadership models. Their sponsor, the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario, encouraged the board to explore the possibility of sharing leadership with Pembroke Regional Hospital, also part of the family of organizations of the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario. In 2017 an agreement was made with the board of the Pembroke Regional Hospital to share their CEO Pierre Noel, with the Mattawa Hospital and Algonquin Nursing Home. Pierre Noel had been President and CEO of Pembroke Regional since 2006 and would now oversee both organizations in Mattawa and Pembroke. As a result, Amy Morrison would become VP Corporate Services & CFO/Administrator; Kayla Michaud would be Director of Care at Algonquin Nursing Home; and Tanya Bélanger was named VP Clinical Services & Chief Nursing Officer. Dr. Mark Wilkins would remain Chief of Staff for the hospital and Medical Director for the nursing home.

The redevelopment of the Algonquin Nursing Home building was the final piece needed in the creation of the Mattawa Health Hub. The health campus on Turcotte Park Drive housed the hospital, the nursing home, the hospice suite, the Family Health Team, ambulance services, physio therapy and laboratory services.

Mae Huard baking with Ashleigh Shotter

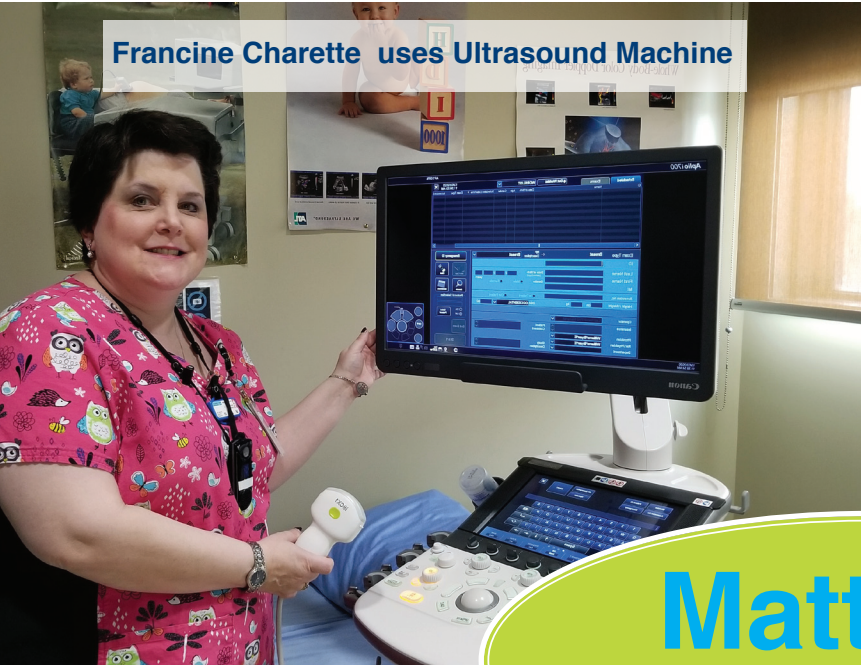
Madeleine Doucette totally enjoying getting her hair done by Activity aide Wendy McGuinty and getting a manicure by Activity Aide Sophie Bellehumeur

# Algonquin Nursing Home

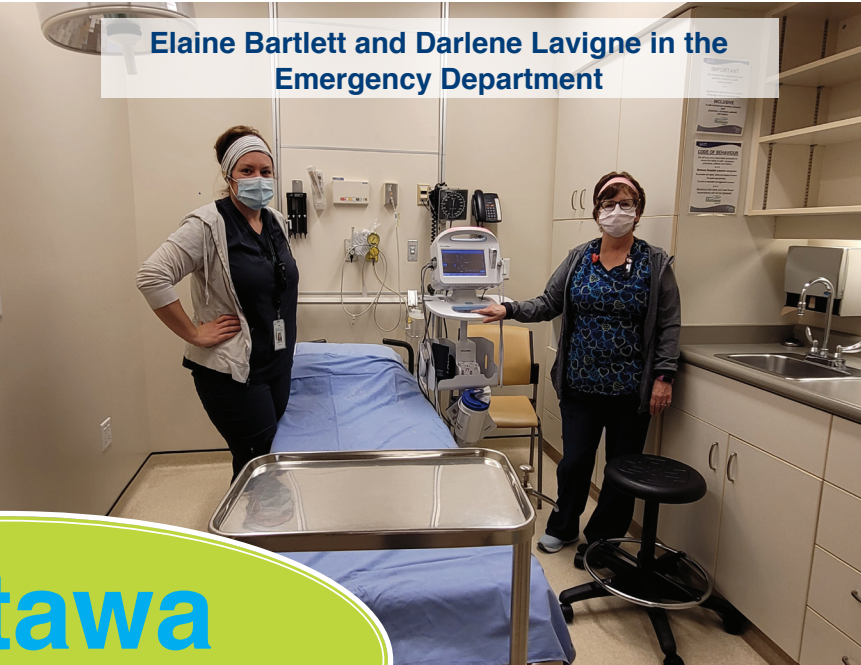
Robert Mongeon spray-paint artist.

Gertrude Chenier playing one of her favourite songs.

Francine Charette uses Ultrasound Machine



Elaine Bartlett and Darlene Lavigne in the Emergency Department



**Mattawa  
Hospital**

Len Burger in the Laboratory



Monique Therrien-Bellaire in Health Records



# CHAPTER 7

## Family Health Team

Prior to being established as a Family Health Team the doctors moved into a new medical clinic in the lower level of the Mattawa Hospital on March 6, 2014. This was accomplished by retrofitting 4,180 square feet of unfinished space in the new hospital's lower level. The work was completed in October 2013 providing offices for five physicians and 12 treatment rooms. The architectural RFP was issued jointly for the lower level hospital retrofit and the redevelopment of Algonquin Nursing Home attached to the hospital, and was awarded on September 10, 2012 to Sam Iser, Architect.

A separate RFP was issued to bidders for the renovation of the medical clinic space on September 21, 2012. Seven proposals were received and the retrofit capital construction project was awarded to Monteith Building Group Ltd on July 5, 2013. The cost to renovate this space was \$700,000. The design created room for future program additions including the addition of nurse practitioners and other health care professionals that will meet the specific needs of the community.

Mattawa Hospital President and CEO at the time, Guy Chartrand noted that the clinic was a multi-year project that required the efforts of the doctors, the hospital board and staff and the community. This new partnership created an arrangement where the Family Health Team become tenants of the hospital who is their landlord. The hospital owns the space occupied by the clinic and was responsible for the redevelopment of the

space from file and equipment storage to the modern, state-of-the-art suite of doctor's offices and examination rooms. Except for clinic staff, the hospital provides all necessary supports from Information Technology (I.T.) to cleaning to administrative services.

At the opening ceremony, Guy Chartrand stated "The clinic means that Mattawa can provide doctors with a turn-key operation to move in to, and that's what they want today. It's critical to doctor retention and recruitment." He continued, "Young physicians are looking for a clean, modern, convenient setting they can work in, and this is just that. They are going to be able to walk in here and have staff and equipment in place as opposed to having to build an office."<sup>51</sup>



**Dr. Mark Wilkins and Mr. Guy Chartrand, President & CEO  
at opening of the Mattawa Medical Clinic**

This arrangement means that the five physicians—Doctors Mark Wilkins, Len Gushe, Clint Redhead, Bryan Williams and Patricia Makuch—are on site and can easily attend to inpatient and outpatient needs. Prior to the opening of the clinic the physicians maintained separate offices in the community and would travel to and from the hospital as needed.

Patient care was a paramount reason for building the Mattawa Medical Clinic within the Mattawa Hospital. Patients can visit their physician in the clinic and walk straight into the hospital for lab work, x-ray and other diagnostic services. Likewise, doctors can easily transition from the clinic to the hospital emergency or to admit patients.

The establishment of the Mattawa Family Health Team was announced by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care in May 2018. The goal of the “family health team” concept allowed for the healthcare needs of the community to be addressed through collaboration between family physicians, interdisciplinary healthcare providers and community partners. It includes the professional skills of family physicians, a nurse practitioner, a registered practical nurse, dietitian, social worker, social worker/safe beds and physiotherapist.

Having the physicians on site further enhances the concept of a healthcare campus and the Mattawa Health Hub.



**Family Health Team ~ July 2019**  
(l to r): Jason Ricci, Social Worker; Dr. Mark Wilkins; Jenna ChianDET, Dietitian; Ginette Champagne & Kourtney Prevost, Clerical Staff; Kerri MacKay, Nurse Practitioner; Doug Steringa, Manager, Family Health Team and Patient Services.



**Mattawa Doctors (July 2019)**  
(l to r): Dr. Mark Wilkins, Dr. Len Gushe, Dr. Clint Redhead and Dr. Bryan Williams

# CHAPTER 8

## Thorne Nursing Station

The community of Thorne, Ontario is situated 75 kilometers northwest of Mattawa, upstream on the Ottawa River and across the river from Temiskaming, Quebec. As early as 1976 the Thorne & District Golden Age Club lobbied for many years advocating that the community receive some form of medical services.

Their efforts were finally successful when Sr. Margaret Smith, CSJ, Administrator of St. Joseph's Hospital in North Bay went to her board to seek approval to create a nursing station as an outreach of the North Bay hospital.

*The Thorne Nursing Station was established February, 13, 1983 to provide medical care to an under-serviced area approximately 60 km from North Bay. This service was responsible to the Department of Nursing. The staff included an MD., RN and clerical support on a part-time basis.<sup>52</sup>*

In 1983 the Nursing Station was staffed with one full time registered nurse, Ms. Theresa Crawford, RN and one physician, Dr. Alan Aylett, who came intermittently to provide care.

At some point St. Joseph's Hospital handed staffing and administration of the Nursing Station to the North Bay General Hospital. This seemed to have occurred when St. Joseph's Hospital amalgamated with the Civic Hospital in 1995 to form the North Bay Regional Health Centre (NBRHC). However, by 2006, the NBRHC decided that the management of the Thorne Nursing Station no longer fit within the mandate of their vision.



**Initial connection with St. Joseph's Hospital, North Bay**

This presented an opportunity for Mattawa Hospital. Total budget of the clinic for the 2005-2006 fiscal year was \$83,302.

Supporting this outreach service closely aligned to the mission and values of the Mattawa Hospital as a faith-based organization. As a result, at the June 2006 Mattawa Hospital Board meeting directors moved "to authorize Administration to pursue management of the Thorne Nursing Station"<sup>53</sup> This seemed fitting and entirely appropriate since the Nursing Station was originally created as a ministry of a Catholic organization. Transferring its operation and governance

to the Mattawa Hospital meant that the Nursing Station returned to a Catholic Sponsor.

Mattawa Hospital manages the clinic with financial support coming through Underserved Area Program (UAP) of the Ministry of Health.

The Thorne Nursing Station provides health care services to approximately 1000 patients from the small communities of Thorne, Wyse and Eldee. Historically, many of these patients used to have family physicians in Temiskaming, Quebec, however, with changes in Quebec's health care system, all of the physicians in Quebec released their Ontario patients from their practice leaving citizens in Thorne, Ontario without health care. The Thorne Nursing Station provides these patients a local option for their primary health care needs.

The services have grown to include many different practitioners such as: Annual Health Exams; Episodic Visits; Diabetes Education; Chronic Disease Management; Well-Baby Visits; Prenatal Visit; Immunizations and Influenza Vaccine Clinic; Laboratory Services; Electrocardiogram; and access to the Ontario Telemedicine Network. These services have been provided by a Nurse Practitioner (increased from 1 time per month to 1 to 2 times per week) a Registered Nurse, a registration clerk, a diabetes educator on a quarterly basis, and physician support when required.

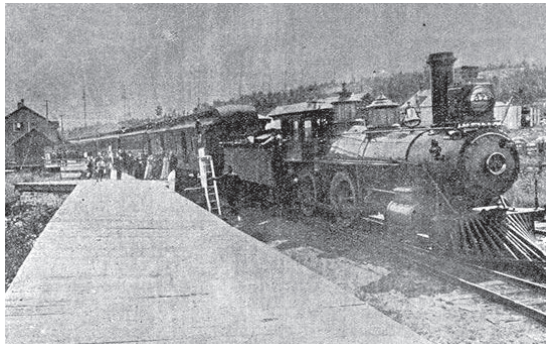
This commitment to service the health needs of the people of Thorne and surrounding area reaches to the very hallmark of Catholic health care, namely to find those people whose needs are not being met and then to find innovative ways to answer such needs. It is at the very heart of what brought the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa to Mattawa in the first place.





# CHAPTER 9

## Did you know?



**Mattawa Train Station**

Dr. Charles William Haentschel, the first doctor known to practise medicine in Mattawa was born in 1860 in Germany, arriving in Pembroke with his family on July 1, 1867 the very day that the country became the Dominion of Canada. Once educated he taught school for six years, earning enough money to put himself through medical school at McGill University. He qualified to be licensed by both the Quebec and Ontario Colleges of Physician and Surgeons. Dr. C. W. Haentschel became a well know Canadian Pacific Railway (C.P.R.) doctor who resided in Mattawa and built a large practise in the district of Nipissing and on the Ontario and Quebec sides of the Ottawa River.<sup>54</sup>



**Fr. Peter Eugene Bloem, 1861-1896**

Father Eugene Bloem, parish priest of Our Lady of the Lake Parish in North Bay from 1891-1896 (now the Pro-Cathedral of the Assumption) met with a serious accident at the CPR Station in North Bay on February 3, 1896. Carrying two valises, he was attempting to board a train as it was moving. He fell between the departing train and the station platform, his right leg was taken off below the knee, and his left leg badly crushed. First aid was applied by Dr. McMurchy at the scene. He was rushed by train to the Mattawa Hospital, the only hospital in the region at the time. Sadly, he did not survive and succumbed to his injuries and died at the hospital.<sup>55</sup> He is buried in Ste-Anne's Cemetery, Mattawa.



**Dr. Michael James, MPP, the 10<sup>th</sup> parliament of the Ontario Legislature**

### Dr. Michael James MPP

Dr. Michael James, who served as a doctor in Mattawa from 1889-1939 was also a Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) as a member of the Liberal Party for the newly established riding of Nipissing East. He remained in office for the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament from May 29, 1902 until December 13, 1904. Despite his popularity and desire to continue, he was succeeded by Mr. Charles Lamarche, MPP in 1905. It was a close race — Lamarche won by 63 votes. Besides, it became apparent to James that his political career interfered seriously with his medical practice.



### Home Sweet Home

The house that Dr. Michael James and his wife built and lived in at 530 McConnell Street later became Pinehaven Bed & Breakfast, and is now the location of Martyns Funeral Home Chapel.

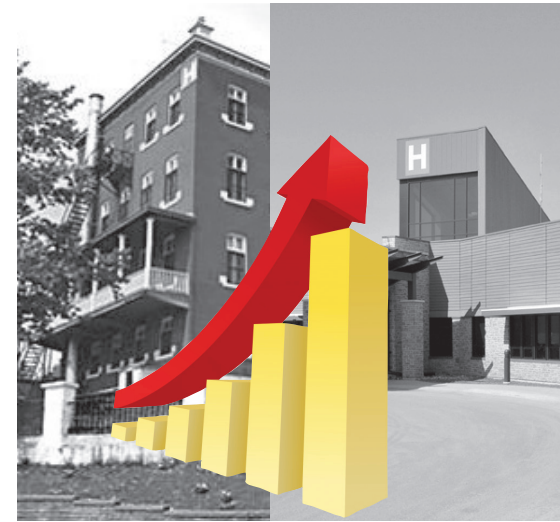
It was also owned for a time by Dr. Bryan Williams.



### His Honour Mayor Monestime

Dr. Firmin Monestime provided medical care to this community for decades while at the same time becoming active in politics. In 1962, Doctor Monestime was elected to the municipal council. In 1963 he was elected mayor. He took a year off, and was then elected again in 1965. He remained mayor until his death in 1977.

To celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his becoming Canada's first black mayor a major exhibition on Dr. Monestime was staged in the Rotunda at Toronto City Hall from February 17 to 23, 2014 organized as a Black History Month project.<sup>56</sup>



### Dollars & Cents

The budget for 1967 showed that the annual expenses for operating the hospital, including salaries, was \$297,962.00. Expenses had risen to \$3,587,758 by the year 2000. Then by 2020 the hospital's expense line in the budget was \$10,547,346.00,<sup>57</sup> with salaries accounting for almost half that amount.

In this way, Mattawa Hospital, in addition to Algonquin Nursing Home provides a great deal of economic benefit to the Town of Mattawa.



### Sister Pharmacist

Sister Ste. Rose (Sidonie Rozon), SCO was the pharmacist at Mattawa General Hospital from 1975 to 1979. She had served in Mattawa many years before, both as a teacher in the school and as a nurse at the hospital. Having already been granted a BA and MA from the University of Ottawa, she graduated as a pharmacist from the University of Toronto in 1938.<sup>58</sup>

### First Babies Born in the Present Hospital

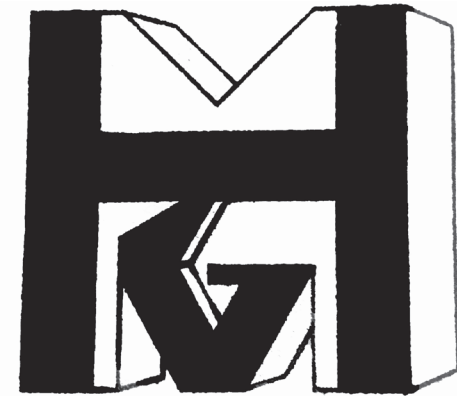
The first girl born in the present hospital was Cassie Grace Belhumeur (8 pounds and 9 ounces) on March 8, 2009, the child of proud parents Cindy Belhumeur and Robert Minor.<sup>59</sup>

On March 23, 2010 the first baby boy, Maxime Matte was born to parents Martine and Melanie Matt.

### Around the Kitchen Table



Board Meetings were more informal “back in the day.” Here Dr. Monestime and others sit around the kitchen table of Armand Ribout (left), who was the board chair at the time.



### Familiar Logo

In 1988 under the direction of Sr. Diane Albert, SCO a contest for a new logo was won by Dan Sigouin from the Radiology Department, who was a long time employee of the hospital. The new logo was designed when the new hospital was build.





### Monestime Way

January 1, 2010 was the beginning of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities for the Town of Mattawa. In recognition of one of its best known personalities, Dr. Firmin Monestime, and also recognizing the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birthday December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1909, Mattawa dedicated its Council Chamber to the memory of Dr. Firmin Monestime with a Clermont Duval portrait that would hang in the Council Chambers. The event finished with the announcement by Mattawa Mayor Dean Backer that council had approved the name of Mattawa's Main Street as Monestime Way.<sup>60</sup>



### Hall of Famer

Dr. Len Gushe, a doctor at the Mattawa Hospital since 1990 was inducted into the North Bay Sports Hall of Fame in 2020. The Winnipeg born Gushe first broke into local headlines in the 1990s by winning the North Bay Rotary Club triathlon 11 times in 16 attempts. In 2000 he won the 35+ age group in the Hawaii Ironman World Championship and in 2002 entered the Canadian long course triathlon where he finished first overall in the Pro division. In 2018 Len Gushe set a world record in the Masters 200 metre backstroke and holds 25 Canadian Masters swimming records as well as being a former provincial male pro triathlete of the year.



**Tanya Bélanger and Amy Morrison,  
Tee Off, Golf Tournament**

### Hole in One

The Fund-raising Campaign for the new hospital staged 5 successful yearly Charity Golf Tournaments which raised \$207,000. The organizing committee members were Linda McConomy, Dr. Mark Wilkins, Diane McGee, Lorelle Brazeau, Vala Monestime Belter and Paul Rainville. The Golf Tournament continued as a fund-raiser for the redevelopment of the Algonquin Nursing Home under the leadership of Glenn Morrison, with committee members: Amy Morrison, Tanya Belanger, Paul Rainville, and Linda McConomy.



### The Sky's the Limit

Dr. Mark Wilkins also has a passion for flying airplanes. He owns two planes, a Cessna 182, and a Piper on floats.



Stained glass window of St. Joseph in the hospital Chapel.

### A Rose by Any Other Name

“Mattawa Hospital” once called “Mattawa General Hospital” was previously known within the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity as St. Joseph’s Hospital. In fact, the 1926 *American Hospital Digest and Directory of US and Canada* lists St. Joseph’s Hospital as the hospital in Mattawa. As well, the *Chronologie de l’établissement des hôpitaux canadiens tenus par de communautés religieuses: 1639-1945* also listed Mattawa Hospital under the title St. Joseph’s Hospital. The name *Hôpital Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs* was another name given to the hospital officially by the Sisters, however, it was seldom used. In the end the Mattawa General Hospital became the most commonly used name.<sup>61</sup>



### Hospital Heritage

A valiant effort from a group “The Concerned Citizens for Heritage Conservation within the Region” tried unsuccessfully to get the old Mattawa Hospital designated as a Historical Building under the Ottawa Heritage Act. The group was led by Mr. Joseph Miller.

### Old Cemetery

Archeologists found human remains at the old hospital site and concluded they were part of an old cemetery that had been connected to the church next door.



Mattawa Hospital Staff ~ December 2008

## Superiors, Administrators and Presidents/CEOs

| NAME                      | DATES                             | NAME  | DATES       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------|
| Sister St-Alexis          | 1878 - 1879                       | Sister St-Firmin  | 1944 - 1947 |
| Sister St-Jean            | 1879 - 1886                       | Sister St-Tharsicius  | 1947 - 1953 |
| Sister d'Youville         | 1886 – 1890<br>(died during term) | Sister Germaine-de-Marie  | 1953 - 1959 |
| Sister St-Basile          | 1890 - 1891                       | Sister Marie-Idella   | 1959 - 1966 |
| Sister Ste-Cécile         | 1901 - 1908                       | Sister Fleur-Ange Thibault  | 1966 - 1969 |
| Sister St-Basile          | 1908 - 1912                       | Sister Camille-de-Lellis  | 1969 - 1972 |
| Sister St-Charles         | 1912 - 1915                       | Sister Marie Adam   | 1972 - 1975 |
| Sister Ste-Laure          | 1915 - 1918                       | In September 1975, the superior no longer assumed the duties of Administrator of the Hospital. An Executive Director/Administrator was appointed. |             |
| Sister Ste-Adélaïde       | 1918 - 1921                       | Sister Elisabeth Rapin  | 1975 – 1985 |
| Sister Marie Auxiliatrice | 1921 - 1924                       | Sister Thérèse Nolet  | 1985 – 1987 |
| Sister Ste-Priscille      | 1924 - 1925                       | Sister Diane Albert   | 1987 – 1988 |
| Sister St-Honoré          | 1925 - 1928                       | Mrs. Mathilde Bazinet<br>Interim Executive Director   | 1988 – 1988 |
| Sister Ste-Reine          | 1928 - 1931                       | Mrs. Huguette Leacy   | 1988 – 1996 |
| Sister Louis-Paul         | 1931 - 1933                       | Mr. Jerry Betick  | 1996 – 2004 |
| Sister St-Hermas          | 1933 - 1936                       | Mr. Edward L. Darby   | 2004 – 2007 |
| Sister St-Firmin          | 1936 - 1942                       |   |             |
| Sister Ste-Marcelline     | 1942 - 1944                       |   |             |

From 2008 the title was changed to President and CEO

Mr. Guy Chartrand 2008 – 2014

Algonquin Nursing Home was purchased April 30, 2013. The overall responsibility of both organizations fell under the President and CEO. Algonquin Nursing Home had its own Director of Care.

Mr. Jean Bartkowiak,  
Interim President & CEO 2014 – 2015  
Algonquin Nursing Home, Director of Care ~ Kayla Michaud

Mr. Jérémy Stevenson  
President & CEO, Administrator 2015 – 2017  
Algonquin Nursing Home, Director of Care ~ Kayla Michaud

Mr. Pierre Noel  
President & CEO 2017 to present  
Algonquin Nursing Home: Administrator, Amy Morrison;  
Director of Care ~ Kayla Michaud

Pierre Noel is also President and CEO of Pembroke Regional Hospital and shares that position with Mattawa Hospital.



**Guy Chartrand**  
2008-2014



**Jérémy Stevenson**  
2015-2017



**Pierre Noel**  
2017 to present



The following doctors served in Mattawa and at Mattawa Hospital from 1885 to present. Please note that hospital records from 1878 to 1885 were destroyed in the 1901 fire. A name in blue bold font followed by an asterisk (\*) denotes a doctor who has served the community for over 10 years.

| NAME  | DATES                           |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Dr. Charles William Haentschel                | 1885                            |
| Dr. Christie                                  | 1885                            |
| <b>Dr. Michael James*</b>                     | 1889 – 1939                     |
| Longest serving physician to date ~ 50 years. |                                 |
| <b>Dr. Joseph Albert Bergeron*</b>            | 1924 – 1951                     |
| Dr. Telesphore Fink                           | 1925                            |
| Dr. Mursky                                    | July 9, 1925 – Nov. 8, 1925     |
| Dr. Smith                                     | 1927                            |
| <b>Dr. A. Moore*</b>                          | Sept. 13, 1933 – Sept. 18, 1941 |
| Dr. Jean Therrien                             | Jan. 24, 1942 – May 1946        |
| Dr. Roland Marchildon                         | June 3, 1946 – Feb. 18, 1952    |
| Dr. Louis Dussault                            | Oct. 12, 1946 – June 12, 1953   |
| Dr. Belzile                                   | June 25, 1951 – July 3, 1951    |
| Dr. Dodd                                      | July 11, 1951 – Sept. 15, 1951  |

| NAME                             | DATES                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Dr. St-Firmin Monestime*</b>  | Sept. 13, 1951 – Oct. 27, 1977  |
| Dr. Thivierge                    | Sept. 15, 1951 – Sept. 21, 1951 |
| Dr. Sainé                        | 1951                            |
| Dr. Joseph Schubert              | Aug. 4, 1952 – Sept. 19, 1953   |
| <b>Dr. Jean-Marc Caron*</b>      | Sept. 17, 1952 – 1987           |
| Dr. Andrews                      | Jan. 1957 – June 1957           |
| Dr. Marc Creaghan                | 1958                            |
| Dr. E. Fournier                  | Oct. 8, 1958 – March 1960       |
| Dr. Malcolm Marks                | April 1960 – May 1965           |
| Dr. St-Marcary                   | 1964                            |
| Dr. Andrew Voitk                 | Sept. 1967                      |
| <b>Dr. Kenneth Basil Bender*</b> | Jan. 2, 1971 – 1983             |
| Dr. John Howell                  | Feb. 10, 1975 – Feb. 25, 1976   |
| Dr. Gail Hollands                | July 2, 1976 – Sept. 30, 1977   |
| Dr. R.T.A. Ginige                | Feb. 9, 1978 – June 1981        |
| <b>Dr. Mark Wilkins*</b>         | Sept 1981 to present            |
| Dr. M. Ujjainwalla               | June 1983 – June 1986           |
| Dr. P Lenz                       | August 1986 – June 1988         |

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Dr. R. Glofcheski           | June 1988 – Oct. 1988                        |
| Dr. D. Lacroix              | Sept 1987 – June 1990                        |
| Dr. I. Asbell               | Sept 1986 – Sept 1987 (Locum)                |
| <b>Dr. Clint Redhead*</b>   | Oct 1988 to present                          |
| <b>Dr. Bryan Williams*</b>  | July 1990 – Jun 2012;<br>Dec 2018 to present |
| <b>Dr. Len Gushe*</b>       | July 1990 to present                         |
| <b>Dr. Patricia Makuch*</b> | July 1995 to present                         |
| Dr. Yanick Ouellet          | Oct 2013 – 2020                              |
| Dr. Rajat Vohra             | Nov. 2012 – June 2014                        |
| Dr. Ben Lalonde             | July 2014 (Locum)                            |
| Dr. Ciara MacRory           | Nov 2014 (Locum)                             |
| Dr. Jim MacTavish           | August 2015 to present (Locum)               |
| Dr. Fred Loutfi             | August 2016 – Dec. 2018                      |

This list was created by compiling the original list in the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet (1978) and some newer information in Leo Morel's book (1980). It was updated to the present by Dr. Mark Wilkins.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the kind and generous assistance of the following people:

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Marie Hoffman, PH.D. Archiviste en chef, Sœurs de la Charité d'Ottawa/Sisters of Charity of Ottawa

Lyse Côté, Executive Assistant, Mattawa Hospital. Lyse was a constant support to me in this project and went well beyond the call of "duty" to assist me in any way she could.

Pierre Noel, President and CEO, Mattawa Hospital and Algonquin Nursing Home

Mr. Jérémy Stevenson, President and CEO, St. Joseph's Hospital, Elliot Lake, Ontario

Amy Morrison, VP Corporate Services and CFO, Administrator, Mattawa Hospital

Dr. Mark Wilkins, Physician and Chief of Staff, Mattawa Hospital

Tanya Belanger, VP Clinical Services and CNO, Mattawa Hospital

Kayla Michaud, Director of Care, Agonquin Nursing Home

Paul Rainville, former CFO, Mattawa Hospital

Monique Bangs, former Executive Assistant, Mattawa Hospital

Vala Monestime Belter

Judy Toupin, Curator, Mattawa Museum

Louise Guérin, former Board Chair and present Board Director

Sophie Bellehumeur, Resident and Family Services Coordinator, Algonquin Nursing Home

Nestor Prisco, former Sheriff of North Bay

## Photo Credits

| PAGE     | SOURCE OF PHOTO   |
|----------|---|
|          | Front Cover: Map of Upper Canada, Digital Archives Ontario. Toronto Public Library and the Government of Ontario.   |
| iv       | St. Anne's Parish Church, Mattawa   |
| vi       | Ottawa River Bay, near the Junction of Little (Mattawa) River, Ontario. WOOLFORD, JOHN ELLIOTT (1778-1866) Picture, 1821, English. Notes: A watercolour by C.R. Forrest, 1822, of this view "River View", 339 x 1127 mm., Inscribed in ink. Digital Archives Ontario. Toronto Public Library and the Government of Ontario. |
| 2        | Mattawa Nipissing Métis Historical Research Project: Final Synthesis Report. Submitted to the steering committee on May 5, 2015. Illustration on page 19.   |
| 3        | Illustration of the village of Mattawa 1876. Photo by B. Charron. <i>The French Canadian Geologist</i> . "Mattawa". <a href="https://www.tfcg.ca/history-of-mattawa">https://www.tfcg.ca/history-of-mattawa</a> .   |
| 3        | Photo of Colin Rankin. <i>The Beaver</i> , May 1921, page 18.   |
| 4        | Sœur Élisabeth Bruyère. Archives des Sœurs de la Charité d'Ottawa   |
| 5        | Illustration of the village of Mattawa 1881. <i>The French Canadian Geologist</i> . "Mattawa". <a href="https://www.tfcg.ca/history-of-mattawa">https://www.tfcg.ca/history-of-mattawa</a> .  |
| 6        | Illustration of the village of Mattawa 1896. Photo by B. Charron. <i>The French Canadian Geologist</i> . "Mattawa". <a href="https://www.tfcg.ca/history-of-mattawa">https://www.tfcg.ca/history-of-mattawa</a> .   |
| 7        | Jean-Marie Nédélec, OMI. Photo from the online <i>Canadian Encyclopaedia</i> .  |
| 8        | Sœurs Eudoxie and Mélanie, SCO. Archives des Sœurs de la Charité d'Ottawa.  |
| 9        | Sœur Saint-Alexis, SCO. Archives des Sœurs de la Charité d'Ottawa.  |
| 12       | Postcard donated to hospital by Marg Smith in 1998. Postcard published by Dr. C.W. Haentschel, the first known doctor to practice at Mattawa Hospital. Original postcard mailed in 1907.  |
|          | Photo, Mattawa Hospital.  |
| 13       | Dr. Michael James and Mrs. Mary Ann O'Meara-James. Photo: Ian Martyn, Martyns Funeral Home.   |
| 14       | Tombstone of Dr. and Mrs. James, St. Anne's Cemetery, Mattawa. Photo by Greg Humbert.   |
| 15       | Illustration of Mattawa 1894. Photo by B. Charron. <i>The French Canadian Geologist</i> . "Mattawa". <a href="https://www.tfcg.ca/history-of-mattawa">https://www.tfcg.ca/history-of-mattawa</a> .  |
| 16       | Archives des Sœurs de la Charité d'Ottawa. P-M27-002.   |
| 17       | Second Hospital on fire, 1901. Mattawa Hospital.  |
| 19       | Mattawa Hospital.   |
| 20       | Archives des Sœurs de la Charité d'Ottawa. P-M27-040  |
| 21       | Front Page, The North Bay Nugget, Saturday April 2, 1966. North Bay Public Library microfilm collection.  |
| 22       | Normand Champagne.  |
| 23 & 24: | Val Monestime-Belter and the Monestime Family Collection.   |
| 25       | Mattawa Hospital.   |
| 29       | Mattawa Hospital.   |
| 30       | Article on Mattawa in Wikipedia: <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mattawa,_Ontario">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mattawa,_Ontario</a>  |
| 32       | Greg Humbert.   |
| 33 & 34: | The photos of the Grand Opening of the hospital, Mattawa Hospital.  |
| 35       | Transferring "The Lantern". Photo Mattawa Hospital.   |
| 36       | Pastoral Care. Sr. Ginette with a patient. Photo Mattawa Hospital.  |
| 37       | Donor Recognition Board. Photo by Lyse Côté, Executive Assistant, Mattawa Hospital.   |
| 38       | Demolition of old hospital. Mattawa Hospital; Commemoration plaque, Greg Humbert.   |
| 40       | Mattawa Hospital.   |
| 41       | Mattawa Hospital.   |
| 42       | Original Algonquin Nursing Home, Val Monestime-Belter and the Monestime Family Collection. New Algonquin Nursing  |

## Endnotes

- Home, Mattawa Hospital.
- 43 Val Monestime-Belter and the Monestime Family Collection.
- 44 Val Monestime-Belter and the Monestime Family Collection.
- 46 Greg Humbert.
- 47-49: Algonquin Nursing Home.
- 51: Algonquin Nursing Home.
52. Mattawa Hospital.
- 53 Mattawa Hospital.
- 55 Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie.
- 56 Thorne Nursing Station.
- 57 Mattawa train station ~ Wikipedia; Fr. Eugene Bloem ~ Archives of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie; Dr. James MPP ~ Archives of the Ontario Legislature.
- 58 530 McConnell Street ~ Ian Martyn, Martyns Funeral Home; Dr. Monestime ~ Val Monestime-Belter and the Monestime Family Collection; composite photos ~ Mattawa Hospital
- 59 Sister Ste. Rose (Sidonie Rozon), SCO ~ Archives des Sœurs de la Charité d'Ottawa; Board meeting ~ Val Monestime-Belter and the Monestime Family Collection; logos ~ Mattawa Hospital.
- 60: Monestime Way ~ Val Monestime-Belter and the Monestime Family Collection; Dr. Len Gushe ~ BJ Tremblay, Polar Studio, North Bay; Golf Tournament ~ Mattawa Hospital
- 61: Mark Wilkins, pilot ~ Dr. Mark Wilkins; Saint glass ~ Mattawa Hospital; Mattawa Hospital ~ Mattawa Hospital.
- 64: Mattawa Hospital.
- Back Cover: Lyse Côté

1. Len G. Selle was an Ontario Hydro employee stationed in Mattawa in the 1950s and 1960s. He often wrote poetry that appeared in different publications and produced two collections of poetry. The poem called *Mattawa* appeared in Leo Morel's book *The Meeting of the Waters*. Mattawa Historical Society. 1980.
2. I used a number of resources for this section: 1) *History of the Mattawa General Hospital: 1878-1978* (28 pages with illustrations) 1978. 2) *Mattawa: The Meeting of the Waters*, by Leo Morel (Mattawa Historical Society (pages 109-118) 1980. 3) Town of Mattawa website, <https://mattawa.ca/about-mattawa/>. 4) "5.2 A History of Mattawa" in *A Background Study for nomination of the Ottawa River Under the Canadian Heritage River Systems*. Publication of the Ottawa River Heritage Committee, 2005. pages 215-217.
3. "French Canadian Settlement and the CPR in the Mattawa Area," Ontario Heritage Trust. 2008. page 2.
4. De La Vergne, Jack. *From Birchcraft to Aircraft: A History of Postal Service in the Nipissing District*. Published by John N. de la Vergne, North Bay. 2021.
5. Mackey, Doug. *Where the Rivers Meet: The Story of Dr. S.F. Monestime, Canada's First Black Mayor*. Published by Past Forward Heritage Limited, Toronto. 2009. Copyright © Doug Mackey 2009. page 11.
6. *Journal of Colin Rankin: 1848-1853*. University of Waterloo Library. Special Collections & Archives. Colin Rankin fonds (Reference Code SC86-GA3-015). I was able to obtain a photocopy of the journal written in Colin Rankin's elaborate cursive handwriting which was sometimes a challenge to decipher.
7. Charbonneau, Sister Louise, sco. *The Healing Ministry of Mother Élisabeth Bruyère, Servant of God: A Mission of Service and Compassion in Bytown and Beyond 1818-1876*. Article. February, 2014. 6 pages.
8. "In 1869 Father Nédélec became resident priest in Mattawa, the capital of the lumber camps, which at that time had a fixed

- population of 50 Catholic and 25 Protestant families as well as a seasonal population of about 2,000 people. He took charge of the school, where teaching was done in French, English, and Algonkin, until the arrival in 1878 of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa, who took over educational responsibilities and founded a hospital." An excerpt from the online *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Volume XII (1891-1900). [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/nedelec\\_jean\\_marie\\_12F.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/nedelec_jean_marie_12F.html)
9. Therrien, Gerard N. *Mattawa Our Timeless Town*. Published by the Canadian Millennium Partnership Program and the Mattawa Historical Society. 1999. page 29.
  10. "French Canadian Settlement and the CPR in the Mattawa Area," Ontario Heritage Trust. 2008. pages 3-4.
  11. *Notre Œuvre Hospitalière d'Ontario: Mattawa*. Document, ASCO\_M027,SA,D1-001 - Historique Mattawa. Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa. Translation by Louise Guérin.
  12. Doug Mackey. Heritage Perspectives: *Mattawa's roots buried in history*. June 2, 2000. <http://pastforward.ca/index.htm>
  13. *History of the Mattawa General Hospital: 1878-1978* (28 pages with illustrations) 1978. page 9.
  14. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Volume XII (1891-1900) [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/nedelec\\_jean\\_marie\\_12F.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/nedelec_jean_marie_12F.html)
  15. Windle, Rev. J.R. *Saint Anne's Church, Mattawa, Ontario: 1889-1949*. Page 26.
  16. Therrien, Gerard N. *Mattawa, Our Timeless Town*. Published by the Canadian Millennium Partnership Program and the Mattawa Historical Society. 1999. page 30.
  17. "142 - Sœur Celina Roy de Saint-Alexis." in *Soeurs de la Charité d'Ottawa, Nécrologies, Tome I, 1850-1910*, Maison Mère, Ottawa, 1932. pages 293-294. The section needed was translated into English by Louise Guérin, former Board Chair of the Mattawa Hospital.
  18. *Notre Œuvre Hospitalière d'Ontario: Mattawa*. Document, ASCO\_M027,SA,D1-001 - Historique Mattawa. Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa. Translation by Louise Guérin.
  19. *A Tribute of Appreciation to Dr. Michael James from the Grey Nuns of the Cross of the Mattawa General Hospital Commemorating his Fiftieth Anniversary as a Physician*, 1937. Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa. Document # M27,SG,SS5,D01. The tribute also appeared in *The North Bay Nugget*, "Beloved Mattawa Physician Marks 50 Years of Practice" Wednesday April 28, 1937, page 7.
  20. Morel, Leo. *Mattawa: The Meeting of the Waters*, (Mattawa Historical Society, 1980) pages 195-196.
  21. *A Tribute of Appreciation to Dr. Michael James from the Grey Nuns of the Cross of the Mattawa General Hospital Commemorating his Fiftieth Anniversary as a Physician*, 1937. Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa. Document # M27,SG,SS5,D01.
  22. *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael\\_James\\_\(politician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_James_(politician))
  23. The centennial booklet prepared by the "Ladies of the Mattawa Hospital Auxiliary, *History of the Mattawa General Hospital: 1878-1978*, lists Dr. James as having practiced from 1889-1927 which is undoubtedly an error. Leo Morel's book corrects the dates to 1889-1939. As well, a tribute prepared by the Sisters of Charity and an article in the *The North Bay Nugget* celebrate Dr. James' Golden Jubilee as a physician in 1937. He continued his practice until 1939.
  24. *A Tribute of Appreciation to Dr. Michael James from the Grey Nuns of the Cross of the Mattawa General Hospital Commemorating his Fiftieth Anniversary as a Physician*, 1937. Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa. Document # M27,SG,SS5,D01.
  25. Death Register of St. Anne Parish, Mattawa.
  26. *Notre Œuvre Hospitalière d'Ontario: Mattawa*. Document, ASCO\_M027,SA,D1-001 - Historique Mattawa. Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa. Translation by Louise Guérin.
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  28. Ibid.
  29. *Community Hospitals and Health Care in Northeastern Ontario: Transforming the Patient Experience*. North East Local Integration Network, October 2014, pages 54-55.
  30. *The North Bay Nugget*, Saturday April 2, 1966. page 1.
  31. Ibid, page 1.

32. *The North Bay Nugget*, Saturday April 2, 1966. page 3.
33. Much of this material is taken from: Mackey, Doug. *Where the Rivers Meet: The Story of Dr. S.F. Monestime, Canada's First Black Mayor*. Published by Past Forward Heritage Limited, Toronto. 2009. Copyright © Doug Mackey 2009.
34. Ibid, page 11 and 28.
35. "Mattawa Hospital Ceremony Honours Three Members" in *The Mattawa Recorder*, Sunday April 19, 2009.
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47. Unless otherwise noted the material for this section came from notes provided by Vala Monestime-Belter and from the CFO of Mattawa Hospital, Amy Morrison.
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