

## MRS. PHILLIPS' MATERNITY NURSING HOME

The profession of nursing fortunately opened the way for what was later to be the livelihood of Mrs. A. M. Phillips and her five children. In the early 1900s the Kootenay Lake General Hospital in Nelson was a training school for nurses. It was here in January 1911 that Miss Alice Harrison received her diploma and immediately moved to the Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops, then on Lorne Street, where staff were badly needed.

She was later joined by her nurse friend, Miss Connie Scott, also from Nelson. Together they enjoyed the social life provided by the surveying crew of the Canadian Northern Railway, who were constructing the new roadbed and laying the tracks from Tranquille to Blue River, a route still used today by the Canadian National Railway. The accompanying photo of these two ladies in the horse-drawn Democrat was taken in front of the old hospital on Lorne Street in 1912 by civil engineer Mr. Archie Phillips. After a short courtship he and Alice Harrison were married in August of the same year here in Kamloops.

By now the base camp had moved from Tranquille to Mad River, 48 kilometres north of Vavenby. Construction was progressing at a good rate and housing and tents were ready at 100 Mile. The tracks were laid as far as 91 Mile. The newlyweds were the first to travel by car all the way to the camp, a bumpy ride over a wagon trail. They made their first home in one of the company log cabins. A cozy home full of excitement and happiness.

Three years and two babies later they returned to Kamloops where Archie found work as surveyor with the Dominion Water Rights Department. In 1921 Alice was tragically left a widow with four children and the fifth born a month later. This necessitated a change in lifestyle for the whole family as Alice now turned to her nursing profession for the needed income. There was no government help in those days for a widow with a growing family. Thus the establishment of Mrs. Phillips' Maternity Nursing Home began in 1924 with the help of Dr. Irving and continued for 10 years.

Over 400 babies were born in this small house which was at that time on the very eastern edge of town at 952 Dominion Street. Empty lots on each side provided ample parking space for doctors from the competing clinics of Irving and Burris. They were spared the embarrassment of having to park next to each other. The home provided three beds for patients, a case room and a semi-private. In those days mothers remained in bed for a week to 10 days after their confinement with all care provided, including trays of nourishing food carried in by the older Phillips girls.

The vegetable and fruit gardens were well tended and everyone had to work. Also a chicken coop provided fresh eggs and meat. Milk, bread, groceries, fish and meat were all delivered to the door in those days. Such a boon to the family with no car. The milk, bread and ice were delivered by horse and cart. There was no refrigerator, just an ice box. Eggs were preserved in a "water glass solution" through the winter.

Following the stock crash of 1929, the Great Depression set in and the barter system returned. Many babies were paid for with a hog, beef, chickens, garden produce or labour. Rural patients stayed before and after their confinement until strong enough to return home to

their hard grind. This meant mothers and babies were in close proximity to each other, which lent itself to the natural setting so sought after today.

The Phillips also kept foster children. All the girls and boys were never idle carrying in fuel, cooking, dishwashing, laundry and ironing kept everyone busy. To help with ironing sheets, pillowslips, etc. mother bought a "Conglin" ironer; a cabinet affair with a long roller and heated shoe, rarely seen in a home.

There was no furnace, the house was heated with coal burning stoves and a wood burning range in the kitchen, although there was also an electric range. This range was confidently used for sterilizing drapes and sheets for the case room. They would be steamed for an hour and then dried in the oven - a long tedious business. The stretcher to carry patients from the case room to the semi-private was another invention and featured the kitchen table on casters. The trays were set with mother's beautiful gifts, sterling silver and fine Limoges china which came to a sad end. Mother believed in putting everything to use.

When a patient was in labour, mother's biggest worry was "is the doctor in town?" Some of the doctors, especially Dr. Irving, made house calls in the country. This meant there were times when mother delivered the baby with one hand and administered chloroform with the other. However, there were no deaths of mothers or babies in those 10 long years. There were some premature births and these babies were fed their mother's milk through an eye-dropper. I can remember doing this in my early teens and being so delighted when the baby was strong enough to breastfeed normally. The healthy lifestyle of the mothers had much to do with the lack of infant mortality. Some of these babies are still living in the Kamloops area today.

Throughout the long, hard years mother never lost her Christian faith and brought up her children with the same teaching. The Phillips children were: Helen, Jean, Alice, George and Archie. Miss Connie Scott married Mr. Tom Clark and their daughter Mrs. Connie Vicars resides here in Kamloops.

(Mrs. Jean Drummond is the daughter of Mrs. Alice Phillips and grew up in the maternity nursing home).

Photo: Miss Alice Harrison and Miss Connie Scott are seated in a Democrat in front of the Lorne Street Hospital, 1912.