

“Where We’ve Been” by Sylvia Bell

Address to the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists, Annual General Meeting, Edmonton Alberta

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Summarized by Heather Neville for the 75th Anniversary of the Nova Scotia Branch, May 2, 2015

The first association of hospital pharmacists began in 1938 in Edmonton, Alberta. Unfortunately this group disbanded in 1940 due to opposition by retail pharmacists in the Alberta Pharmaceutical Association. However, the 1939 meetings of the Canadian Pharmaceutical Association in Halifax approved the formation of ‘a section on Hospital Pharmacy’ within the Association. Hospital pharmacists in Halifax had already been meeting informally and officially notified the Nova Scotia Pharmaceutical Society that the Nova Scotia unit had its first meeting on May 16, 1940. Therefore, the Nova Scotia Branch has the distinction of being the longest running Branch of CSHP.

The President of the Nova Scotia Unit was Mother M. Immaculata, from St. Martha’s Hospital. The Vice-President was Mr. A. Collins of Camp Hill Hospital, Secretary was Sister Frances de Paul, of the Halifax Infirmary, and Members were Miss. B. Archibald and Miss J. MacKnight, both of the Victoria General Hospital. Dean G. A. Burbidge offered his personal assistance to the fledgling group. At the time, CSHP was developing as a specialty under CPhA.

The Nova Scotia Unit approved a constitution and by-laws on April 18, 1941 and enquired of the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal whether hospital pharmacists were organizing in Quebec. They were told ‘women pharmacists were in a peculiar position...fully qualified graduates of the Ontario College of Pharmacy are barred from being licensed in the province’ and therefore were not able to organize.

Topics in the early meetings included a nervous condition prevalent in bombed areas, the manufacturer of glass eyes in Canada, and the permanent labelling of stock bottles. The group sent a letter to the Halifax Children’s Hospital in February 1940 urging them to consider the services of a hospital pharmacist. The Unit’s aim was to ensure that ‘all hospitals endeavor to have qualified pharmacists by 1950.’ The first financial statement was a total annual income of \$2.50 balanced neatly against an expenditure of \$2.50.

Additional bulletins from the Nova Scotia unit in 1940 to 1942 included non-support for the combined pharmacist and x-ray technicians course (how can one do both in emergency situations?), discussion of the status of pharmacists in the Army, war economics and possible substitutions for war-scarce items such as alcohol, glycerin, and sugar; and sad acknowledgement of the passing of Dean Burbidge.

In October of 1948 the NS Unit sent greetings to the newly formed Ontario Branch of CSHP. On March 26, 1949 the NS Unit voted in favor of becoming the Nova Scotia Unit of CSHP. The Maritime Branch became a reality when a tenth ‘independent’ from Newfoundland, Miss Ada

Brown, was joined by 9 hopefuls in Nova Scotia to reach the quorum of 10 active members. The Branch held a refresher course for hospital pharmacists, of which radioactive foxglove was a topic. In 1955 the branch became the Atlantic Branch.

The Atlantic Branch morphed again into the Nova Scotia Branch in 1970. The New Brunswick Branch was founded in 1967, the Newfoundland Branch in 1996 and the PEI Branch in 2007.