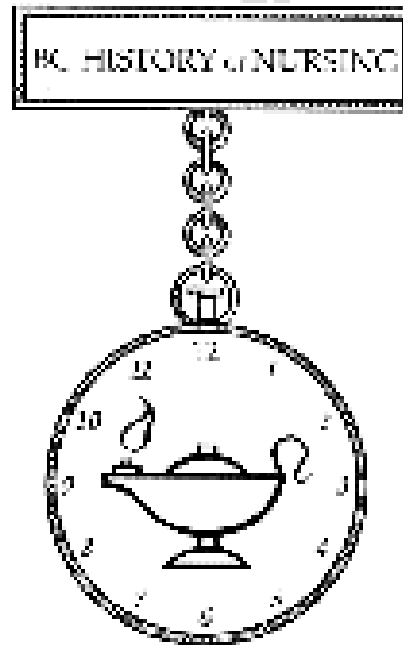


# Vancouver's Monuments To Nurses



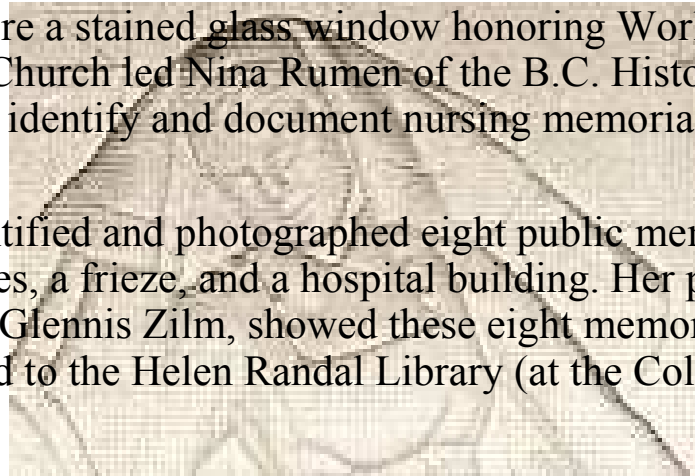
By Nina Rumen, RN, BScN  
RNABC History of Nursing Group

# Vancouver's Nursing Monuments

Public monuments honoring nurses exist in various cities, including a famous statue of Florence Nightingale in central London and a well-known monument to Jeanne Mance in the centre of Montreal.

A request for funds to restore a stained glass window honoring World War I Nursing Sisters in Vancouver's Canadian Memorial Church led Nina Rumen of the B.C. History of Nursing Group to start a project, in mid-1991, to begin to identify and document nursing memorials in Vancouver.

By May 1992, she had identified and photographed eight public memorials to nurses – three stained glass windows, three statues, a frieze, and a hospital building. Her photographs, originally compiled into a booklet album by Glennis Zilm, showed these eight memorials. Copies of the album were presented to Nina Rumen and to the Helen Randal Library (at the College of Registered Nurses of B.C.)

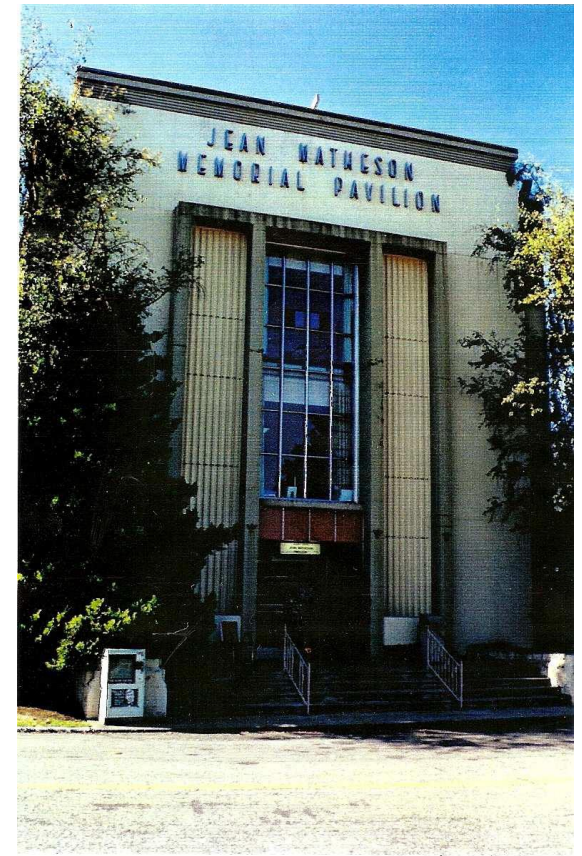


In 1996, Nina Rumen was joined in the project by E. Brenda Flynn and the two continued to identify and document other monuments. A poster version of the monuments was made by Brenda Flynn to show at the International Conference on Nursing History held in Vancouver June 12-15, 1997. This Conference was hosted jointly by the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing (CAHN) and the B.C. History of Nursing Group.

Another version of the album was prepared by Glennis Zilm at the request of Lt. Col. (Rt'd) Harriet ("Hallie") Sloan, Honorary Chair of the Nursing Sisters' Association of Canada, for a project involving the history of nursing sisters in Canada. This smaller version of the album merely showed the monuments that were specifically dedicated to the Nursing Sister.



*1946 Jean Matheson Memorial Pavilion, at Shaughnessy Hospital)*



*1946 Entrance to Jean Matheson Hospital*

*""""site (now UBC Memorial Pavilion*

## **Jean Matheson Memorial Pavilion**

This pavilion, built in 1946 at Shaughnessy Hospital, originally was a 100-bed unit for patients suffering from tuberculosis who returned from World War II. The building was named in honour of Jean Matheson the second matron of Shaughnessy Hospital and an early expert in the nursing of tuberculosis patients. In recognition of Matheson's role in caring for tuberculosis veterans, it was named the Jean Matheson Memorial Pavilion and an oil portrait of Miss Matheson in uniform was hung in the entrance lobby.

The building, whose exterior shell was designated a city heritage building, was closed in 1994 and in 2008 was remodeled to become the Mental Health Unit of BC Women's and Children's Hospital/Health Centre. Despite protests Matheson's name was removed from the building.





## Nursing Sister Jean Matheson (1872-1938)

Jean Matheson was a dedicated Canadian career nurse of the early 1900s, whose roles as a nursing leader and particularly as a Nursing Sister during and following the First World War deserve recognition. She received the Mons Medal, the Victory Medal, the Royal Red Cross and the King George Jubilee Medal for her wartime service. Following her service overseas as matron of World War I's No. 5 General Hospital, she became the second matron of Shaughnessy Hospital serving from 1919 to 1937.

After World War I, Miss Matheson began work at the Fairmont Military Hospital at 33rd and Heather. In 1920, when the main Shaughnessy hospital building opened, she moved there; since senior staff lived in the hospital in those days, she had a small suite in the hospital and was available almost all the time for patients and staff who had deep affection for her. She retired in 1937 and died in Winnipeg in 1938. Her body was brought back to Vancouver for burial in Mountain View Cemetery near the graves of "her boys" – the veterans who had died at Shaughnessy.

Following an initiative by the BC History of Nursing Society the portrait of Miss Matheson, which originally hung in the Pavilion, now hangs in the nearby Brock Fajtni Pavilion, which still has some long-term care beds for Veterans.

*Jean Matheson Oil Portrait*

*Colour Reproduction by Steffens Colmer Studio Vancouver BC, noted photographers of the twenties*

*2009 BC History of Nursing Society Members at Brock Fahrni Pavilion*

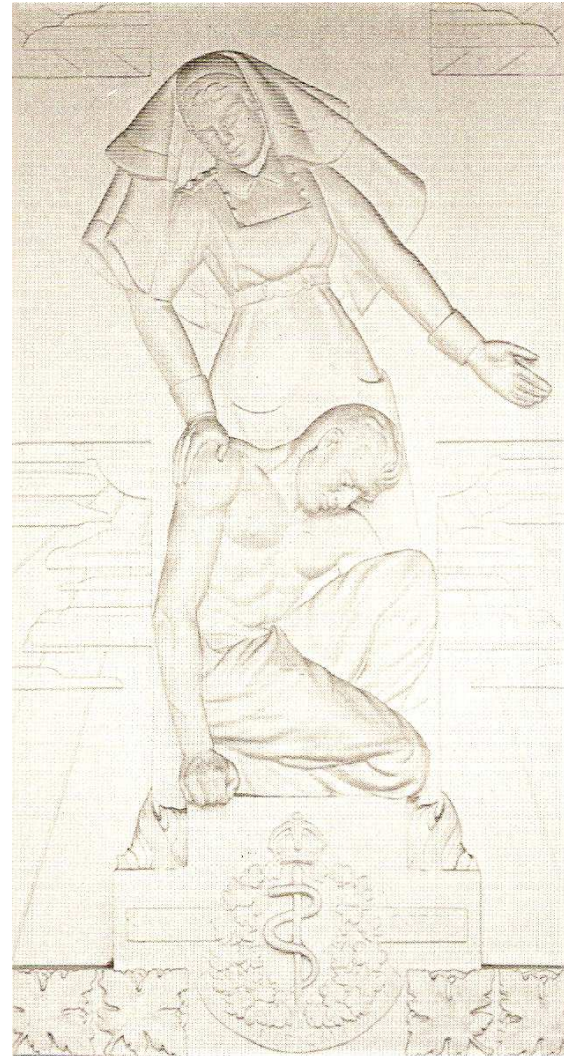


# Frieze Depicting Nursing Sister and Injured Soldier

Shaughnessy Hospital (now UBC Hospital, Shaughnessy Site)

This two-panel marble sculpture, by Beatrice Lennie, one of Canada's top sculptors of the 1940s, was commissioned for the original Main Entrance of the 1940 Shaughnessy Military Hospital building, erected by the federal government. The inscription reads: Canadian Medical Corp. The cornerstone was laid by Ian MacKenzie, P.C., K.C., Minister Pensions and National Health, 17 Oct. 1940.

Edith Beatrice Catharine Lennie (1905 - 1987) studied at the Vancouver School of Art under various great Canadian artists and at the California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco. As a sculptor, she also executed significant commissions for the Hotel Vancouver lobby, the exterior of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Vancouver, the exterior of the Lipsett Indian Museum in Hastings Park, Vancouver, and the pylons of the Patullo Bridge in New Westminster



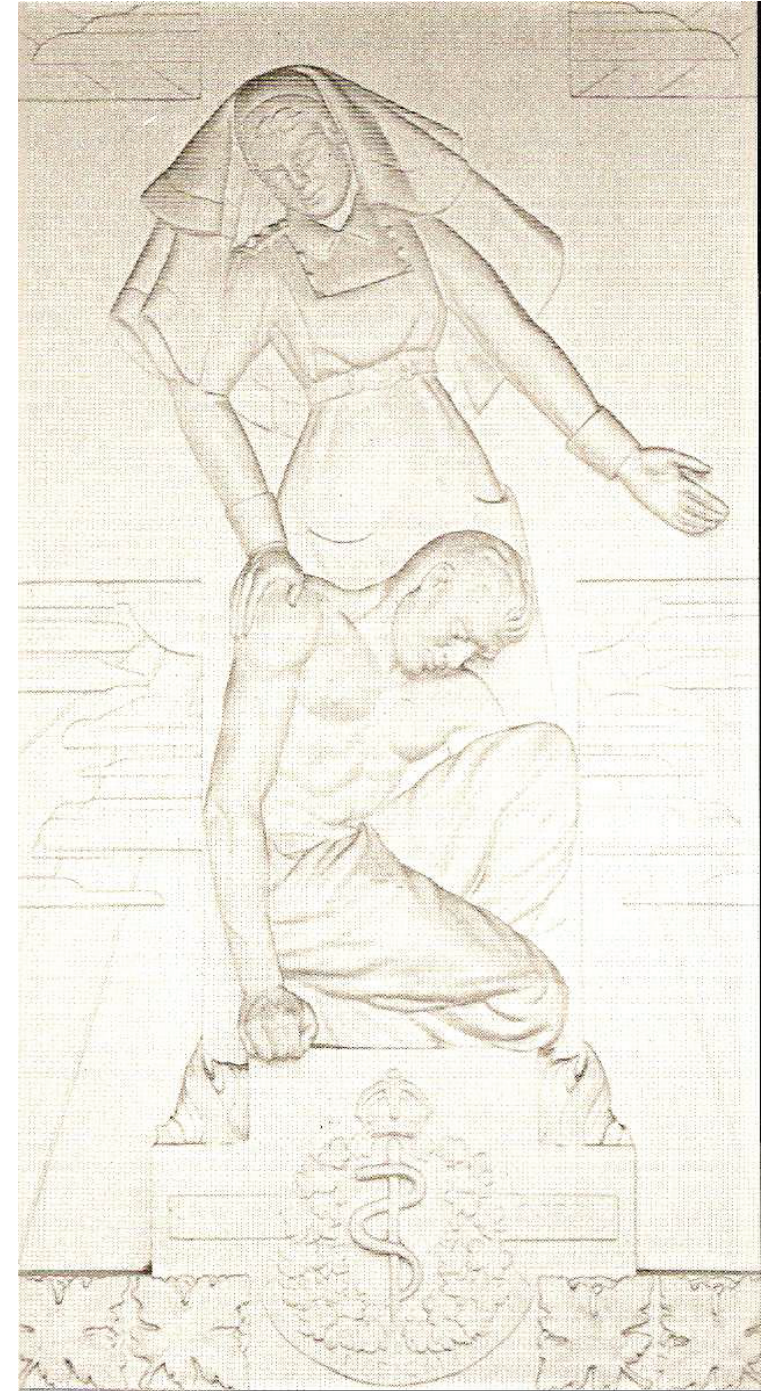


# Continued

One of the two panels showed a nursing sister assisting a wounded soldier; the other depicts a surgeon lifting a wounded soldier. The man who posed for the wounded soldier was apparently a Leagh Fraser; Mr. Fraser visited the hospital site in November 1996 and told Alison Osbourne, Community Liaison Officer of Children's Hospital that he had posed.

The 1940 Shaughnessy Military Hospital was closed in 1992 and the buildings integrated into the Oak Street campus of Children's & Women's Health Centre site. The building with the original entrance is now named the Shaughnessy Building. Beatrice Lennie's sculptures can still be found at the sides of that original entrance; now overlooking the outdoor courtyard of the cafeteria.

In 1999, the B.C. History of Nursing Group established a note card showing the Nursing Sister panel to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Canadian Nursing Sisters who accompanied troops to the South African (Boer) War in 1899; the card was dedicated to future nurses who will face the challenges of the next millennium.



# Corner Statues Cathedral Place (1990)

Cathedral Place Office Tower, Georgia and Howe Streets.

In 1929, the Vancouver Medical-Dental building, an art deco-style skyscraper of the era designed by McCarter Nairne and Partners, was built on the corners of Georgia and Hornby Streets in downtown Vancouver. At about the 10<sup>th</sup>-storey level, the building was graced with 11-foot-high, terra cotta statues depicting a Nursing Sister of World War I, one on each of the building's three visible corners.

Architects John Young McCarter (1886-1981) and George Colvil Nairne (1884-1953) had both served overseas during World War I. McCarter was seriously wounded and credited the Nursing Sisters with saving his life. They founded their architectural firm in 1921, and when they obtained the contract for the Medical Dental Building, they decided to honor the Nursing Sisters. The sculptures were designed by Joseph Francis Watson. A local joke among the medical users of the building was that the statues represented the Rhea Sisters – Gono, Dia, and Pyo.





# Terra Cotta Statue Head (1928)

Formerly Medical Dental Building, Burrard and Georgia Streets

In 1989, the aging, but still striking, building was imploded to make way for a new 23-storey office tower. The Shaw Tower at Cathedral Place is a dramatic post-modern structure designed by Vancouver architect Paul Merrick. Cathedral Place was developed through a joint venture with Sir Run Run Shaw of Hong Kong to realize a long-time dream of Charles Shon to redevelop the Georgia Medical-Dental Building site creating an enduring architectural landmark. A public campaign was raised to save the original statues for the new building. However, as these proved both extremely heavy and difficult to remove from the original building, replicas had to be made. When the new tower opened in 1991, the replicas were mounted at about the third-storey level, easily visible from the streets.

Mario Tinucci of Ital-Decor arranged to make the castings so that new fibre-glass figures could be made. Ital-Decor took one of the originals (the one least damaged) and re-molded it to make it “whole,” then made fibre-glass replicas for the building. The patched original now is on display at their premises on Hastings Street.





# Nursing Sister Head (1990)

Cathedral Place Office Tower, Georgia and Howe Streets.

In 1992, the Vancouver Museum took the least-damaged head from one of the broken statues for safe-keeping; this was also patched and repaired and is held for display by the Museum. A fibre-glass replica of the head also is on display in the lobby of Cathedral Place.

In June 2003, replicas of the same statues were made to adorn the new Technology Enterprises Facility (TEF) III on the University of British Columbia campus. This building was designed by Chernoff Thompson Architects, who apparently liked the statues. TEF is a commercial venture for the University, and is associated with the University-Industry Liaison Office (UILO) at the University of British Columbia (UBC); this office is responsible for licensing technology and assisting spin-off companies in various aspects of formation and financing. The UBC School of Nursing has a few of its offices in this building as well.



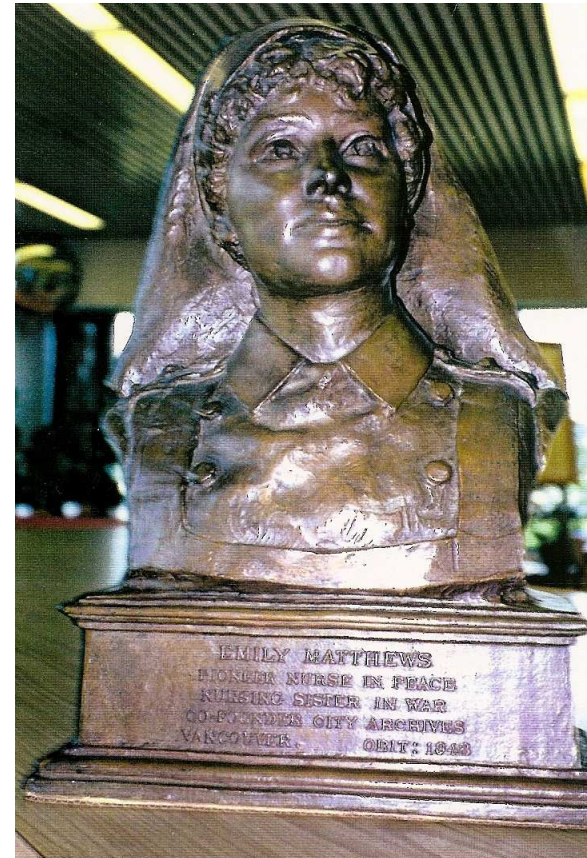
# Bronze Sculpture Emily Eliza Edwardes Mathews (1952)

Vancouver City Archives, 1050 Chestnut Street

This 21-inch bronze head of Nursing Sister Emily Eliza Edwardes Mathews, by British Sculptor Sydney March, honors her as co-founder, with her husband, Major James S. Mathews, of the City Archives of Vancouver.

Emily Eliza Edwardes was a 1902 graduate of the Vancouver General Hospital. She served as a nursing sister in England during World War I and was mentioned in dispatches for her services. She had her own business as a nurse therapist prior to her marriage in 1920. Following her marriage, she assisted and supported her husband in collecting, cataloguing, and preserving Vancouver documents, memorabilia, and artifacts of Vancouver – the start of the City's Archival collection.

Although she is credited for her work in supporting her husband in the development of the Vancouver Archives, little is known about her.





# Marble Sculpture, Student Nurse (1960's)

University of B.C. Woodward Memorial Library

This marble, life-size statue of a student nurse was made by well-known Vancouver sculptor Herbert Apt. The story goes that this statue was in front of St. Paul's Hospital but, because of some re-building, the statue had to be moved. The statue was to be given to the University of B.C. School of Nursing, to be erected in front of its proposed new building, but this was not happening, so Dr. William Gibson said that he would arrange for it to be kept in the UBC Library until the School of Nursing could find a home for it. This information came to light during research for a book on the history of the UBC School of Nursing for its 75th anniversary (1994) and the statue was located. Further information is being sought.



# The Nurse Memorial Window (1928)

Canadian Memorial Church, 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Burrard Street

This stained glass window, erected by the Vancouver Unit of the Canadian Nursing Sisters Association, honors Nurses who served in World War I). It is one of 15 windows in the Canadian Memorial Church, was was erected as a "Memorial to Peace."

Designer of the window was Jack Ramsdon of the British Society of Master Glass Painters.

In 1989, the window needed restoration and a note card showing this picture was produced by the Nursing Sisters Association, Vancouver Unit, to raise funds to restore the window and provide for its perpetual maintenance. By 1992, sale of these cards had also provided funds for a scholarship through the Canadian Nurses Association. In 1992, the B.C. History of Nursing Group took over distribution of these cards to promote nursing history.





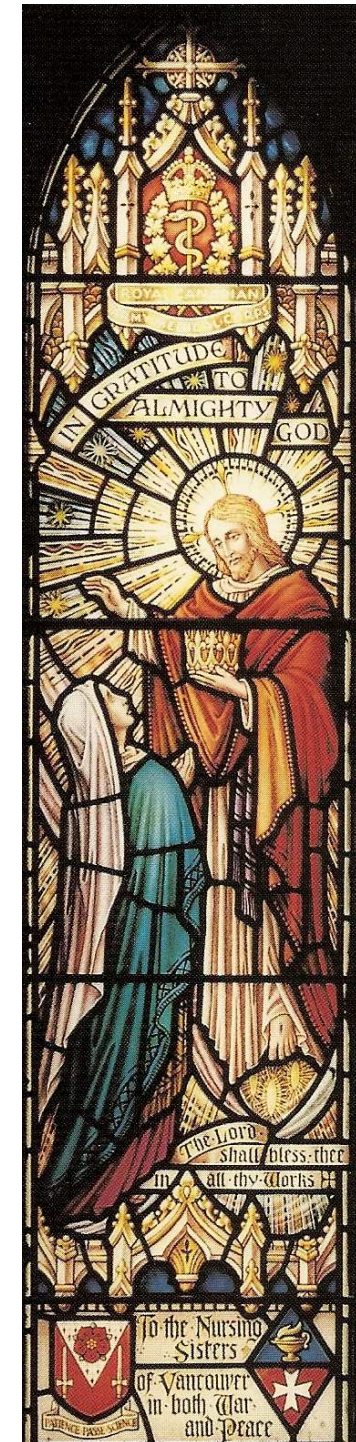
# Nurse Window (1950)

Christ Church Cathedral, Burrard and Georgia Streets

Designed and funded by Major J. Mathews, Vancouver City Archivist, as a memorial to his wife, Emily Eliza Edwardes Mathews, this stained glass window is a tribute to the nursing profession in Vancouver. Nursing in Vancouver dates back to 1873, when the first lay nurse began providing care in her home.

The Canadian Nurses Association met in Vancouver in 1950 and attended the unveiling.

In 1996, the B.C. History of Nursing Group developed a note card based on this window as part of its ongoing promotion of nursing history. The card also commemorated the History of Nursing International Conference, which held its meeting June 12-15, 1997 in Vancouver; an interdenominational evensong was held in the Cathedral on June 14, 1997.



# Florence Nightingale Window (1986)

St. Mary's Anglican Church, 2940 West 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue

This stained glass window of Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) was dedicated in 1986 by Canon Whinfield Robinson, an Anglican Rector, in memory of his wife Doris ("Dorie") Comley Robinson.

Doris Comley was born on June 21, 1907 in Ladysmith, on Vancouver Island, and met her future husband while they were students there. She graduated as a nurse from the Ladysmith General Hospital in 1929; as this was a small school of nursing, she also attended Vancouver General Hospital for pediatric and obstetric affiliations. She and Whinfield were married on June 8, 1931.

The window, made by G. Maile and Son, Canterbury, England, makes use of other stained glass windows at St. Mary's Church.

A photograph of the window was used for the fourth card in a series produced in 2000 by the B.C. History of Nursing Group to recognize nursing monuments in Vancouver. Funds raised from this card support the Archives Projects of the Group.

The photograph was taken by Edward Trody of Vancouver.

The photograph has also been used, with credit to the Church, the B.C. History Group, and the photographer, by the Canadian Museum of Civilization in its presentation on Nursing (2004-2006). A Christmas card featuring the window was also reproduced by the School of Nursing, King's College, University of London in 2006.





# Isabelle Maude Hill Memorial Fountain June 2006

Located at the Family Respite Centre Health and Home Care Society of BC  
(formerly Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) Vancouver, BC)

Isabelle Maude Hill was born c. 1871, in Hillsborough, Ontario. She graduated from the Hamilton General Hospital, Ontario in 1900. In 1901, Isabelle went to the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) training school in Montreal to learn to practice home nursing. She came to Vancouver in 1901 to become the first permanent VON nurse.

Isabelle Hill also played a pioneer role with the anti-tuberculosis society where she was the first nurse in B C to devote herself full time to this work. She set up a free clinic, sponsored by the Rotary Club, where she did case finding and follow up visits. Her nursing and organizational abilities were recognized and she was sought as Matron for community hospitals in Sumas, Washington (1909) and Port Alberni, B. C. (1913).

Isabelle Maude Hill died in St. Mary's Hospital in New Westminster, B. C. on February 19, 1936 at 65 years of age. She is buried in a New Westminster cemetery, in a grave without a stone or marker.

The Isabelle Maude Hill Memorial Fountain was unveiled in June 2006 and stands as a lasting reminder of a nurse who helped lead the way for the VON and for the nursing profession in this province.



## Monument to British Columbia Military Medical Services Personnel (1995)

St. Vincent's Hospital has since been demolished.  
The Monument now has pride of place in the garden of Brock Fahrni Pavilion.

This monument was established by the 12 (Vancouver) Medical Company Unit Associations and dedicated in 1995. The plaque reads: "Dedicated to the Memory of Medical Personnel who served with the Canadian forces in Peace and War "Militi succurrimus".





## Memorial Fountain to Nurse Mildred Neilson

This small fountain is located in a grove of trees in the National Section at Ocean View Cemetery in Burnaby, B.C. The inscription reads:

Erected by the citizens of Trail, BC  
To the memory of  
Nurse Mildred Neilson  
1890-1925  
So greatly loved

Neilson was a young nurse, a 27-year-old graduate of the Vancouver General Hospital, who was working in the Trail Tadanac Hospital when a Nelson man, a WWI veteran and businessman, entered the nurses' home one morning and shot her to death. The story is told that the killer was known to Neilson's family and had been asked to deliver a tin of cookies to her by her mother in Vancouver. The killer then shot himself, recovered from his wound, was subsequently tried, found guilty and sentenced to death.

The town was shocked at the callous deed and smelter employees collected over \$1,300 as a memorial fund to the popular girl.



Stuart Thompson fonds, City of Vancouver Archives

## Afterword

These monuments identified by Nina Rumen represent nursing sisters honored by the public or by individuals who knew and admired the nursing profession. Ivan Sayers, former historical curator, Vancouver Museum, identified the nurses of World War I as "icons" to be emulated; his research found that the "liberated" nursing sisters who served in 1914-1918 helped change the course of history for women.

The B.C. History of Nursing Group plans to continue to identify other public "images of nursing." For information, please check the B.C. History of Nursing Group's Web site at < [www.bcnursinghistory.ca](http://www.bcnursinghistory.ca) >

Please do not copy from this booklet without permission from Nina Rumen and Glennis Zilm (at 604-535-3238 or email [gzilm@telus.net](mailto:gzilm@telus.net) ).

(Revised version 2008)



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Personal Communication by Glennis Zilm with Mario Tinucci, Ital-Decor offices, June 25, 2003.

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Research for this note was done by Glennis Zilm from various sources, including the B.C. History of Nursing Group files on Jean Matheson and the preparation carried out for a nomination of Miss Matheson for a designation as “Person of National Historic Significance” by Parks Canada.

Personal communications with Peter Cech, Communications Specialist, Public Affairs and Communications, BC Children's Hospital and Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children, BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre (Agencies of the Provincial Health Services Authority) at various times in 2007 and 2008, most recently May 8, 2008.

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