Expectations for nurses were different in the old days. To apply for the Galt Nursing School, young women had to have a perfect stature (average height and weight), be between the ages of 20 and 35, have spent at least two years in high school, have a clergyman statement testifying to moral character and one from a physician certifying to sound health and unimpaired faculties. A physical examination was conducted and teeth were examined.

**Health Care After the Galt**

While plans called for an expansion of the Galt Hospital at its present site, for various reasons the decision was made to construct a new hospital. In March 1953, A.G. Virtue, chairman of the hospital board, turned the first sod for the new facility and, in May 1955, Margaret Hamilton, a 1914 graduate of the Galt School of Nursing, cut the ribbon to open the new Lethbridge Municipal Hospital. In 1988, the Lethbridge Municipal Hospital was replaced by the Lethbridge Regional Hospital, which was constructed on the same site (now Chinook Regional Hospital). The Galt building continued to serve the community. The Galt was (at different times) a senior citizen’s home, the Rehabilitation Centre and the Health Unit. In 1966, the Sir Alexander Galt Museum moved from the Bowman Arts Centre into the Galt Hospital and occupied the top and bottom floors. In 1979, the Galt Museum & Archives took over the entire building; in 1985, the Galt Museum underwent its first expansion.

**Fun Facts About the Galt**

Many southern Albertan residents were born here and died here. Some of these deaths have led to the Galt being one of the most renowned haunted places in Alberta. What’s an old hospital without a few ghosts?

The best known is “George.” Though no one knows exactly who George is, he may be the spirit of George Bailey, a 60 year old farmer. In the early 1930s, George came to the Galt to have his appendix removed. George was wheeled to the elevator to go upstairs to the operating room. That’s when everything went wrong. With the doors open on the main floor, someone pushed for the elevator upstairs and the floor started to rise. The nurse pushing George’s gurney wasn’t paying attention and didn’t see the floor rising with the bed halfway onto the elevator. The wheels of the gurney got caught and George and the bed dangled above the elevator shaft until George was dropped onto his head at the bottom of the shaft. Downstairs, George was actually up and joking about the accident, but he died later of head injuries.

The children’s ward is said to have 2 spirits, Sarah and Alexander. They are said to wave out the window to people after the museum is closed and lights have been known to turn on and off in the empty building. Other ghostly sightings include overhearing conversations in empty rooms, blue lights floating down hallways, and black shadows standing and watching people work.

www.galtmuseum.com
Healthcare in Coalbanks

From Coalbanks’ inception in 1882 until Dr. Mewburn’s arrival in 1886, the closest doctor was in Fort Macleod, though “Dr.” Byers, a medical student at the time, assisted during the 1883 typhoid epidemic. In 1886, the NWMP built the “Terrace Infirmary.” This was a medical emergency centre built to house 3 patients and with only an orderly on site. People only went to the hospital for the direst emergencies. Hospitals were thought of primarily as places in which to die.

Most people were treated at home by family members using “folk medicine.” Below are some home remedies collected by the Galt. We don’t endorse their use.

For head lice the recommended course of action was to wash the head and scalp with turpentine. This remedy was actually suggested by the school for parents in need. If you didn’t have turpentine, coal oil could also be used.

The treatment for a stuffed nasal passage is so unique that Marg Truscott has to tell it in her own words. “The most unusual remedy we had to endure was the ‘tobacco treatment.’ Tobacco was put into a cigarette paper and then blown up our nose. This was meant to make you sneeze and thus clear the nose of anything and everything possible. The next treatment for clearing out the nasal passages was the infamous ‘nose wash.’ If you had a bleeding nose, etc., you had a piece of tubing, attached to a tin can, inserted up your nostril. The can was filled with warm salt water and the result was everything blocking the airway was removed.”

The 1891 Hospital

This 1st Galt Hospital was built to accommodate six patients, but soon increased to fifteen. If there were too many patients, patients were housed outside in tents (only in summertime). This building was considered modern for the time, with sewer and hot water systems. The water had to be pumped by hand into upstairs tanks.

The hospital was run by the Galt family with Dr. Mewburn as superintendent. A staff of four nurses and 3 lay people were hired to care for the sick. The top floor of the hospital was reserved to accommodate the staff. Being so conveniently located, nurses were on call 24 hours a day.

The Galt Hospital had 4 sources of income: (1) a twenty-five cent deduction per month from employees of Alberta Railway and Coal Company and the Great Falls and Canada Railway, (2) government grant of 29 cents per free patient per day, (3) a Town of Lethbridge grant of $400 per year, and (4) pay patients – meaning those who could pay.

All that remains of this building is an old wall that stands south of the present Galt Museum & Archives.

The 1910 and 1930 Additions

In 1907 Elliott Galt donated $30,000 to the city. The city contributed the same amount and a solid, red-brick structure was joined by a corridor to the original Galt Hospital. With this addition, the hospital now had 65 beds. At the same time a nurses’ residence was built just to the south of the 1891 building and was also linked by a corridor.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Prime Minister of Canada, came to the opening of the hospital. Things didn’t go as planned. In the excitement of having the Prime Minister attend the auspicious function, the coordinator of proceedings mislaid the key to the front door. Red faced and shaken, he finally produced it. Sir Wilfrid Laurier turned the key in the lock and declared the Galt Hospital officially opened. This 1910 structure later became the Galt Museum & Archives.

The 1930 addition was added to the south and west of the 1910 addition. Nothing is left of this building. Also in 1930, an elevator was installed into the 1910 part of the building. Prior to 1930, there was often only one nurse on duty at night. If a patient died, she had to get another patient to help her carry the body down into the morgue in the basement.

Health Care Professionals

Lethbridge’s first doctor was Frank Hamilton Mewburn, who arrived in Lethbridge in 1886 and worked for the North Western Coal & Navigation Company. In 1893, Dr. Mewburn performed the 1st successful appendectomy west of Winnipeg. When World War I broke out, Dr. Mewburn enlisted. After the war, he taught surgery at the University of Alberta. While in Lethbridge, he was regularly called out on home visits and the nurse was left in charge of the hospital. His order to her would be “Use your common sense and don’t let the patient die.”