

WOOD'S CHRISTIAN HOME SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENTS

01/01/1916

- The opening of Innisfail Orphan Home.
- Rev. George Wood, assisted by his sister Janet Wood, establishes what later becomes the Wood's Christian Home.

05/10/1917

- A local newspaper reports that the orphan family arrived at Olds, Alberta.
- Over the following months, the family homesteads on 90 acres, just north of the town centre.

18/10/1916

- George Wood and Annie Jarvie marry.
- Annie was a childhood acquaintance of George in Scotland who had earlier, and independently, risen to social work leadership in Vancouver.

12/02/1926

- George Wood breaks his back after a horse team bolts.
- He decides to move the home closer to medical and other facilities.

29/10/1926

- The orphan family, with 32 children leaves Olds for Bowness, just West of Calgary.
- George had recently purchased the vacant Hextall mansion house.

WOOD'S CHRISTIAN HOME SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENTS

27/11/1928

- Reverend George Wood dies in Holy Cross Hospital, Calgary, from pneumonia.
- He had never fully recovered after the disastrous accident, having spent 14 weeks in a full body cast.

04/11/1939

- Annie Wood dies at the Wood's Christian Home.
- Her life-long motto had been faith, hope and charity.

1947

- Commission of Inquiry visits (chair Dr. Charlotte Whitton) as part of investigation into charges against the child welfare system.
- This visit is a seminal event in the evolution of the W.C.H., indeed of child welfare in Alberta, so meriting context and fuller explanation. **see note# 1 at the end of this timeline.**

1948

- School principal Henry Gerlitz steps down.
- Linton Gaetz appointed principal of the Wood's in-house school. It had been operating - with nine grades in the basement ballroom of the grand old mansion for many years.

1950

- A new three-room school opens on the property, which includes a gymnasium.
- This is likely the year in which the Wood's school amalgamated with the Bowness public school district.

WOOD'S CHRISTIAN HOME SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENTS

1955

- Art Jeal arrives as the new manager. His wife Jean serves as nurse and, later, as matron.
- There is evidence in this year, and over the few subsequent ones of intense conflict. The forces of change met resistance from the old line staff.
- (Regards the above, the author has substantial recorded evidence of the conflicts described. **See NOTE # 2 at end of this timeline.**)

1962

- Former boys' supervisor William Engelke convicted of crimes (gross indecencies) against Wood's Christian Home boys.
- He is sentenced to one year in Lethbridge Penitentiary. (**See NOTE # 3 at the end of this timeline.**)

1966

- Three new residential cottages are completed.
- Dormitory life for boys is ended. Most remaining children are wards of the province.
- The old annex building housing boys's dormitories is demolished.

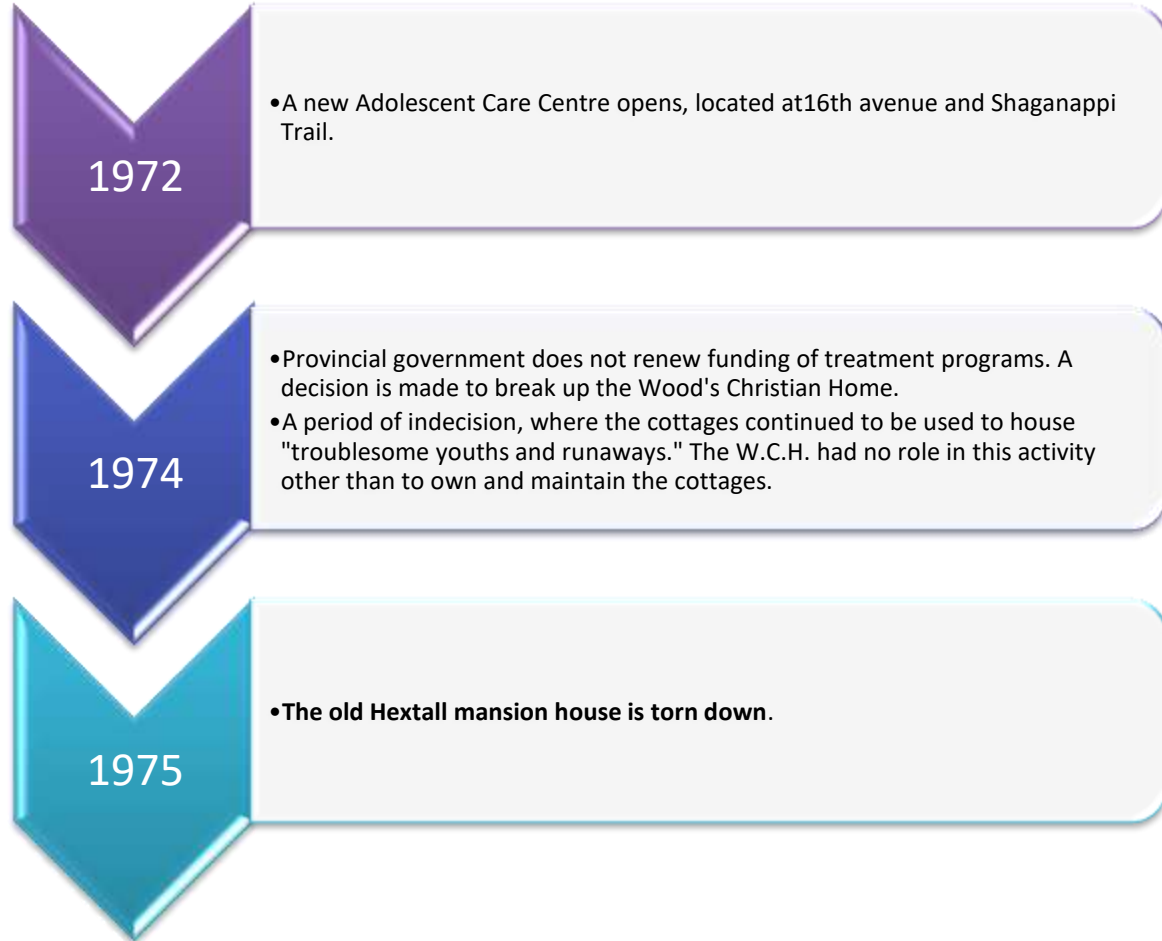
1967

- The provincial government decides that only children requiring treatment (meaning for so-called emotional disturbances) can enter the W.C.H.
- The first ever woman is appointed to the board.

1970

- W.C.H. board confirms that all children admitted will be wards of the province and fit the description of emotionally disturbed.
- (The term described children who might benefit from treatment based on new approaches in the expanding fields of social work, psychology and psychiatry.)
- The board commits to building an off-campus treatment centre.

WOOD'S CHRISTIAN HOME SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENTS



NOTE # 1 In 1947, the government of Alberta established a royal commission to investigate aspects of child welfare in the province. This followed widespread, lurid rumours of babies being sent to or sold into the United States. Also contributing was a May 1947 article in the *Calgary Herald* entitled, "*Children in Iron Cages*." The commission, headed by Dr. Charlotte Whitton, conducted a more sweeping inquiry. In the final report (1948), they found no evidence of baby trading but judged the Herald article substantially correct - particularly in the case of two detention homes, which were soon reformed. More germane to this history, the commission made twenty-two suggestions (as well as attracting national attention). The Wood's Christian Home was one of three orphan homes that the commissioners visited. The other two were the William Booth Salvation Army Memorial Home, in Calgary, and the Lacombe Catholic Home. Of the three, the W.C.H. came off by far the best winning praise for its "natural and home-like atmosphere" though the report "condemned the large, barracks-like annex for older boys." Overall, though, the report was scathing and drew national attention. (Source: "The Evolution of Woods' Christian Home" (sic), David S. Bazeley, thesis, 1948, University of Alberta, Edmonton). It took though eighteen years to see the end of barracks life for boys at the home.

WOOD'S CHRISTIAN HOME SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENTS

NOTE # 2 (Applies to the event described in 1955). On the 4th of April, 1998, I visited the late Art Jeal, (manger at the Wood's Christian Home during the events described) at his home in Sydney, Vancouver Island. I conducted a recorded interview with Art. He confirmed that intense conflict occurred during his early tenure, and he described the firing of the two supervisors. I have a copy of that recording. In 1998, I visited the late Laura Redmond at her home in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Laura was mother of three brothers, who were in the home while I was, and there also during the events of 1955. Laura describes being involved in conflict with the boy's supervisor who the Wood's Christian Home board chairman terminated that year for verbally abusing children - and for verbal abuse against her. I did not record that discussion, but I Laura sent me a detailed account, one signed by her. I have the original copy of that document.

NOTE # 3 The Wood's Christian Home would have been unlikely to escape the scourge of institutional child abuse during its length history. It did not, and no history would be complete without mention of this aspect. During my ten years at the home, one abuser took his life, while the home discharged two others, well known to me, for physical and emotional abuse. The situation became more acute in the few years that followed my departure, with a former supervisor convicted of sexual abuse against adolescent boys. I have statements from former wards that that man and another volunteer male raped and sadistically assaulted youths. I made these matters known to the current board and executive officers of the home (a C.A.O. and clinical psychologist board member) at some length, including a formal interview. To my knowledge, none of the victims received an apology or acknowledgement. Two of these, former wards of the province, are well known to me. Both suffered brutal life-long consequences from their mistreatment.