

MERC building history

By Barbara Paterson, Chair, Misericordia Heritage Collection

Originally, the “Nurses’ Home” that was to become the Misericordia Education and Resource Centre (MERC) building was designed to be a glass-fronted building, curved to face the sun and overlooking the river. The building was to house female student nurses (male students were not admitted until 1961 and were expected to live elsewhere), along with laboratories, a suite for the matron, a library, a laundry room and classrooms.

The idea of the new residence was that of Sister St. Odilon, who assumed the role of Director, Misericordia School of Nursing in 1957. She was appalled at the state of the current residence, a dilapidated apartment block situated on Sherbrook Street. She envisioned a bright, warm residence where students could walk out to balconies on each floor and enjoy fresh air.

The original design for the residence was modified to meet the demands of the hospital finance committee and the builders. It was later built on Wolseley Avenue - with Cornish Park being deemed too close to the water - solely to accommodate 135 female nursing students. The cost of building the new residence was \$766,000.



photo credit: Winnipeg Architecture Foundation



Demolition in 2020

The grand opening was held Monday, April 15, 1963. Several dignitaries were present, including the Lieutenant Governor, Errick F. Willis, the mayor, Stephen Juba, the Minister of Health, George Johnson, and representatives from the Archdiocese of Winnipeg. The guest speaker was the Premier, Duff Roblin. The opening was held in the new lounge, decorated with furniture and paintings costing \$8,700 and donated by the Misericordia Hospital Women’s Auxillary.

Over the years, the MERC building housed many nursing students (living in residence was

compulsory for female students until the 1970s), as well as new immigrants and students from St. Mary's Academy that were being supported by the Misericordia Sisters. In the 1990s, the number of students living in residence had decreased greatly, so the building became the site for the School of Nursing and Nursing Education offices - changing from the Nurses' Residence to the MERC.

In 2020 the MERC building was demolished, and construction began on Misericordia Terrace, an affordable, not-for-profit assisted living centre slated to open in 2023. The new centre will include 97 suites with rent at below market rates, including 30 on-bedroom units at a reduced rent based on income.



Artists' rendition of Misericordia Terrace