



RACHEL FILLEBROWN NURSES' HOSTEL / HOME

Rachel Fillebrown Nurses' Hostel was the very first home for staff and student nurses, built and dedicated in 1922 in the main hospital campus.



This much needed building was founded by a very generous donation received from Mr. Herbert Martin and Mrs. Lora Fillebrown of USA. The donation of 10,000 dollars was the entire amount of money, received as gifts for their daughter, Rachel's wedding. Rachel married Professor Allan Thomas Diebert on 19th June 1920. The hostel was named after her as, 'Rachel Fillebrown Nurses' Hostel'.

(The image on the left shows Rachel standing with her grandson at a marketplace in Washington DC, in the early 1960s.)

The covering letter that came with the gift had the following very touching statement :

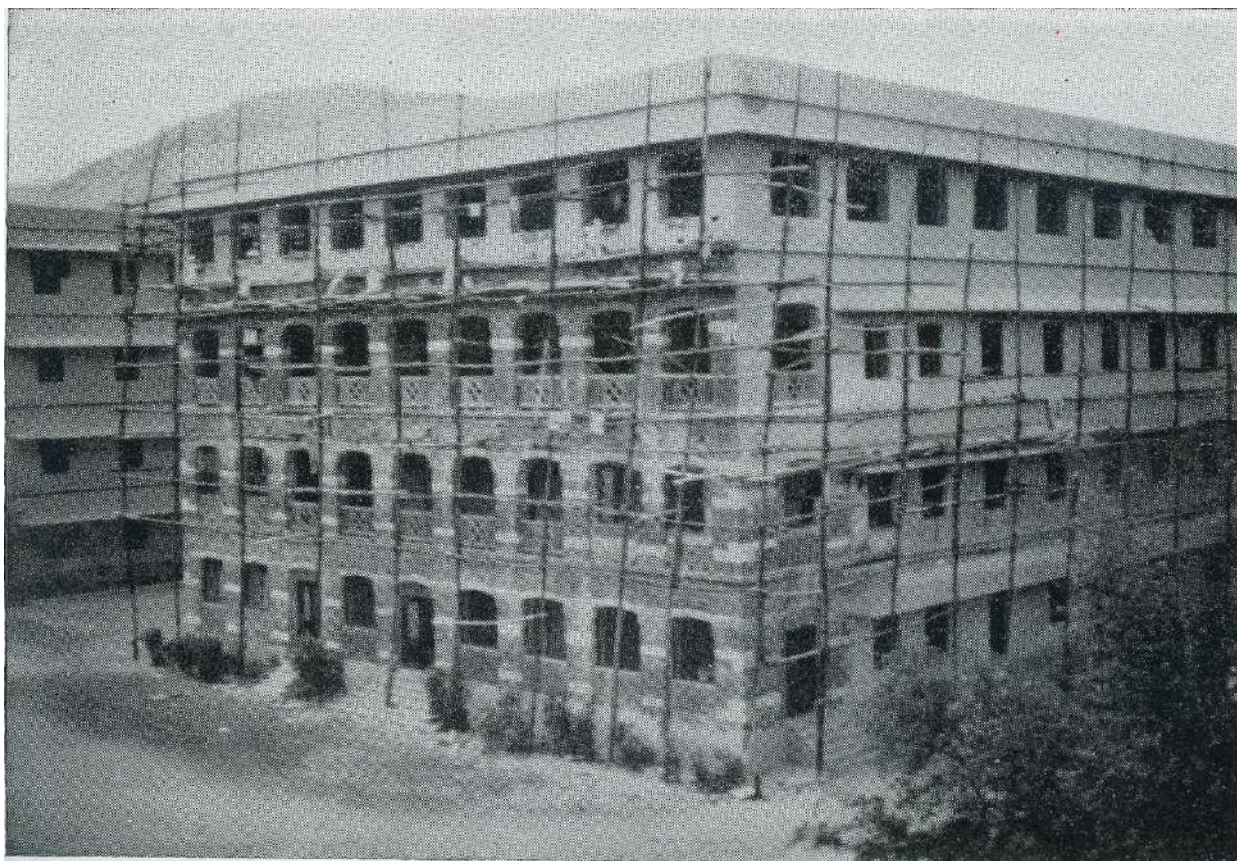
"Though Rachel may never go to India to see her own wedding gift, she will have the joy of seeing it in her enriched consciousness, and she will gain unlimited pleasure out of the thought of what that nurses' home is doing for the young women of India and through them for the suffering women and children of India."

Rachel was born on 21st November 1896 in Massachusetts, USA. She was active in church and charitable work and devoted much of her time to activities at the National Presbyterian Church, Washington DC, where she was treasurer of the Evangelical Missionary Society and the Community Chest. She died on 10th March 1963 in Washington DC, when she was 66 years old and as predicted by her parents, never had an opportunity to visit Vellore to see her wedding gift. Nevertheless, as wished by her parents, the very thought of the purpose her wedding gift was fulfilling, would have continued to give her a tremendous sense of joy and fulfillment.

Initially, the **Rachel Fillebrown Nurses' Hostel** was a two-storeyed building but du-



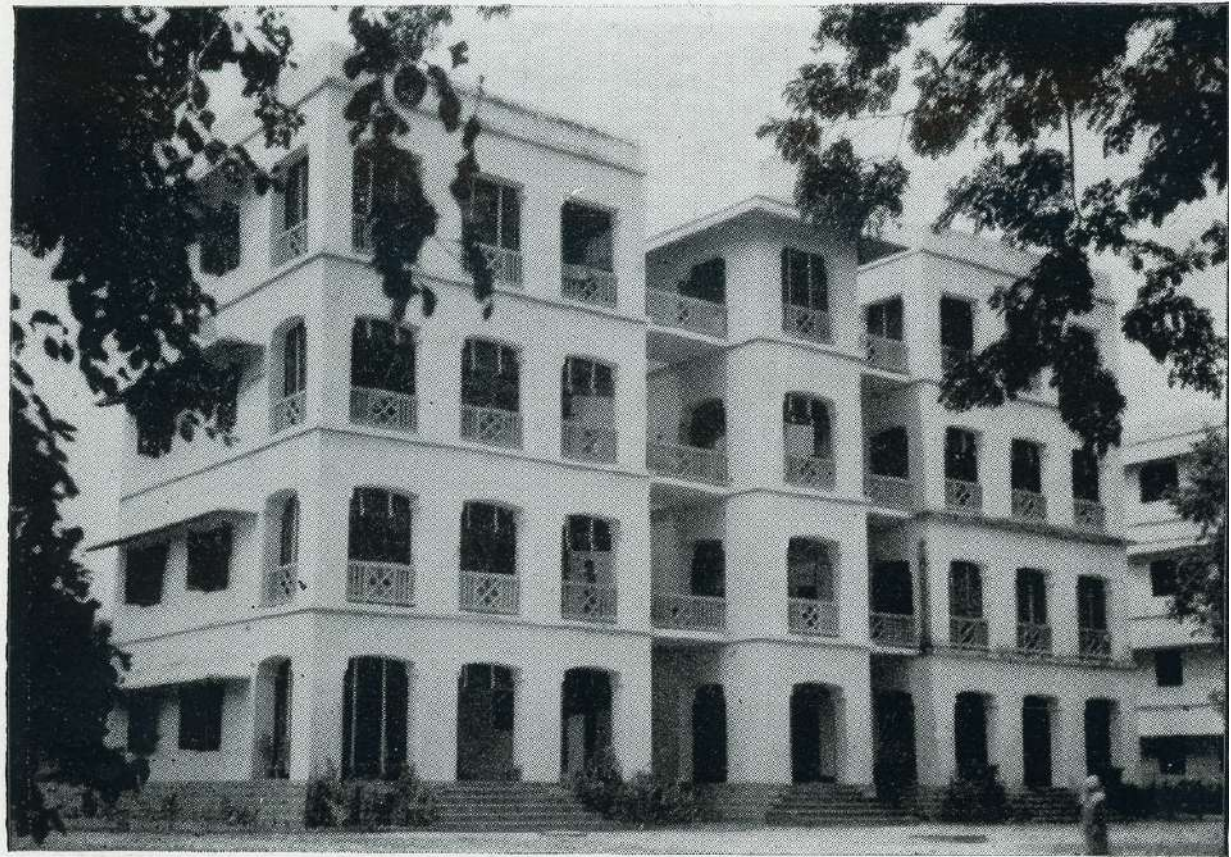
ring the course of the next 25 years and prior to the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the institution in 1950, two more floors were added.



The same building, twenty-five years later, when Rachel Fillebrown did not cast off her out-grown shell, but rose above it, 'the more stately mansion'

The four-storied Rachel Fillebrown Nurses' Hostel / Home, looked majestic and beautiful around a broad rectangle, consisting of a Western wing (Hostel) for student nurses and an Eastern wing (Home) for staff nurses connected by a





Nurses' Home—Graduate Wing, forming east wing of the Nurses' Quadrangle

transverse Southern segment, which had a spacious dining hall in its ground floor and rooms in the upper floors.





The rectangular space surrounded by the building was open to the north and was known as 'Nurses Quadrangle', where, all common institutional activities of the



Hospital and Medical College communities used to take place. In 1950, the Golden Jubilee year, the four-storeyed *Rachel Fillebrown Nurses' Hostel* was the tallest building in Vellore and it used to be mentioned with pride, "the Nurses have turned to **sky-scraping**, in their new four-storeyed, *Rachel Fillebrown Nurses' Hostel*". This majestic building was officially inaugurated on 7th January 1950 by Her Highness, the Maharani, wife of His Excellency, the Maharaja of Bhavnagar, then Governor of Madras. A few years later, another facility for the staff nurses - Staff Nurses' Quarters - was added to the complex and was inaugurated by Dr. Ida S. Scudder, the founder, on 3rd November 1958.

It should be mentioned specially that the Rachel Fillebrown Nurses' Hostel was also the hostel for women medical students from 1928 to 1932. In 1932, the

Women's Hostel was inaugurated in the Medical College Campus, Bagayam, seven kilometers south of Vellore town and the medical students moved over to their own hostel. This highlights the complementary roles played by the Nursing and Medical Schools / Colleges, in the origin and development of our institution.

In 1946, the School of Nursing was upgraded as College of Nursing. Prior to 1946, the class room facilities adjacent to inpatient wards seemed adequate for the School of Nursing. However, with the starting of the College of Nursing, and the increasing number of nursing students, more protocols needed to be addressed and additional facilities had to be established. To facilitate these, a tile-roofed single story building was built, close to the staff nurses' wing of the Rachel Fillebrown Hostel and the ground floor of the staff nurses wing was remodelled to accommodate basic facilities for the College of Nursing, such as offices, class rooms and library as an interim arrangement. Soon, plans were initiated for separate buildings for College of Nursing and Student Nurses' Hostel. Thus, the Rachel Fillebrown Nurses' Hostel also served as the College of Nursing till a separate College of Nursing building was built.



The new College of Nursing building was officially inaugurated in 1963 by the then President of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. However, student nurses continued to



remain in the western wing of the Rachel Fillebrown Hostel, till a separate hostel, was built for them and inaugurated in December 1967.



After the student nurses moved over to the Student Nurses' Hostel in 1967, the entire Rachel Fillebrown Hostel became the home exclusively for Staff Nurses. The tile-roofed extension, built for the College of Nursing became the visitors' waiting area (lounge) for the Student Nurses' Hostel.

The **Rachel Fillebrown Nurses' Hostel**, including the '**Nurses Quadrangle**' remained an important landmark in the Christian Medical College Hospital campus, till it was demolished in 1998 for building the Ida Sophia Scudder Centenary Centre for Women and Children. Prior to the demolition, the staff nurses moved into their newly built Staff Nurses' Hostel in May 1998.

The **Staff Nurses' Hostel**, the building of which was inaugurated on 5th July 1997 by Miss Anna Jacob, former Nursing Superintendent and the **Nursing Students' Hostel**, across the road leading to the Jubilee Gate, which was inaugurated by His Excellency Sardar Ujjal Singh, Governor of Madras on 23rd December 1967, replaced the **Rachel Fillebrown Nurses' Hostel/Home**.

The College of Nursing and the Student Nurses' Hostel moved to their present location in a separate campus, half a kilometer to the east of the main hospital, in December 2009 and January 2016 respectively. The former College of Nursing building was converted, as office spaces for departments of General and Specialty Surgery, Orthopaedics, Hand and Leprosy Reconstructive Surgery and Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and lecture halls for various Continuing Medical Education Programmes. The building was renamed as Paul Brand Building, re-dedicated and inaugurated on 11th September 2012.

Rachel Fillebrown Hostel does not exist as a visible landmark in the hospital campus today. However, this short narration on the Rachel Fillebrown Hostel for Nurses, highlights its prominent presence in the campus for nearly seven decades, during the 20th century and would serve to remind us of the pivotal role played by the hostel, in the origin and development of Nursing Education and Service, at the Christian Medical College Vellore.

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