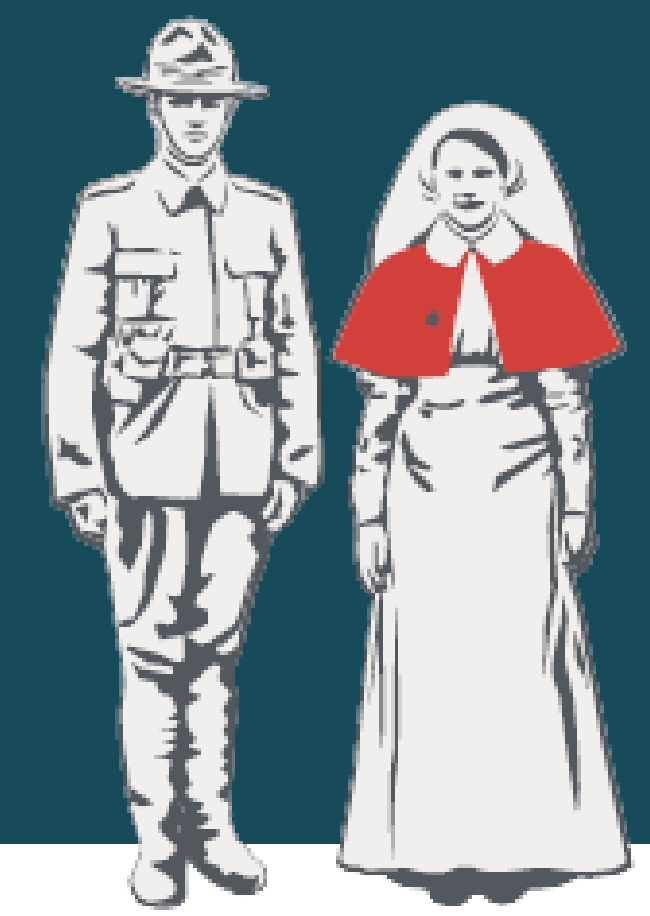


EST. 1916

SOLDIERS' BLOCK

HANMER SPRINGS



History of the site

Understanding timelines



Early History

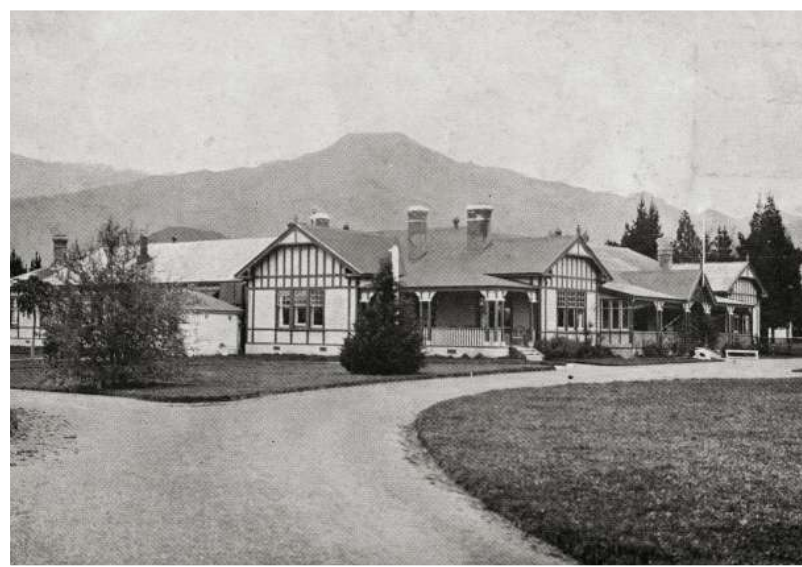
Pre-1800 – Māori discover the hot springs and link them to the famous story of fire being sent from Hawaiki to Ngātōirangi, who stood shivering on the summit of Mount Tongariro.

Māori call the area Mania Rauheia - 'Plain of Shining Tussock'.

1860 – The Nelson Provincial Government declares 1072 hectares of land around the hot springs a reserve.

1897 – A sanatorium is established by the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts.

1909 – The Tourist Department envisions a world-class spa and resort town. Hanmer Springs (population 500) becomes a town 'brimming with energy and ambition.'



World War I

4 August, 1914 – The day war breaks out, Hanmer's sanatorium is engulfed in flames.

1915 – The first wounded soldiers return to New Zealand. Some are suffering 'functional nervous disorders' such as neurasthenia, or shell shock.

1915 – Duncan Rutherford makes his hotel, The Lodge, available as a Red Cross Hospital, while a new hospital is built.

1915 – Recovering soldiers undertake occupational work, including rug making, leatherwork, basket work and wood carving.

3 June 1916 – The Soldiers' Block opens to great celebration. Local women train as nurses and volunteers rally for the cause.

1916 – The Soldiers' Block is described as 'a most comfortable and airy building, painted in light shades inside and out'. It has an innovative octagonal shape, allowing staff to easily view all patients. The windows allow patients to get fresh air and view the nearby hills. Each octagonal wing has space for 100 beds, and 250 men can be seated in the hall.

1916 – Soldiers receive vocational training including gardening, carpentry, boot repairing, motor engineering, wool classing, farming, bookkeeping and poultry keeping.

1919 – Queen Mary Hospital for Sick and Wounded Soldiers is renamed Queen Mary Military Hospital. Dr Percy Chisholm joins the staff and becomes Medical Superintendent in 1920.

1919 – Edna Pengelly becomes the first matron. No females worked there during the war in accordance with military rules.

1919 – The patients form an amusement committee for sport and social events. Matron runs dancing classes for reluctant patients.

1920s and 30s

1920 – The farm, started to help rehabilitate soldiers, is no longer staffed by patients due to lack of interest.

1921 – With no special women's ward, female patients stay at Clarence House with the nurses. 24 nurses and two female patients live there with a small handbasin, a single bath, and no hot water or electric light.

1922 – Female volunteers, known as VADS, replace male orderlies.

1922 – The military pass the ownership of the hospital on to the Department of Health. It is renamed Queen Mary Hospital.

1926 – The Chisholm Ward for women was established to address the growing need for psychiatric care among women. It is named after Dr Percy Chisholm, who persuaded the government to build it.

1929 – Over 45,000 people use the Hanmer Springs baths and swimming pools this year.

1932 – The National Expenditure Commission says Queen Mary Hospital serves a 'useful national purpose' but suggests charging patients the full cost of treatment.



World War II

1939 – War breaks out. All but two WWI patients at Hanmer have left, the hospital is filled with rheumatic and general cases.

1939-1945 – Over 150 soldiers are sent to Hanmer for convalescence. Many patients suffering nervous disorders are also alcoholics. Relationships between staff and patients are encouraged and some marriages result!

1939-1945 – The hospital farm is staffed by 'Land Girls'. Nurses and VADs must sometimes milk the cows.

1940 – The farm supplies the hospital with 97% of its potato requirements.

1942 – The men's Rutheford Ward, named after Duncan Rutherford, opens. The Soldiers' Block will have many different uses in the future.

1944 – Dr Tom Maling is appointed Medical Superintendent. He will work at Hanmer until the 1970s.



1950s and 60s

1950s – The Soldiers' Block houses occupational therapy programmes. It will house youth-focused and Māori-focused programmes in the 1990s.

1960s – As alcohol and drugs become more readily available, 'booze culture' and 'drug culture' increases. So does the number of people who require treatment for addiction.

1960s – Addiction treatment is based on the Alcoholics Anonymous 12 Step Programme and group therapy.

Early 1970s – Family Week – where loved ones travel to see patients during treatment and take part in programmes - is introduced.

1970s – Queen Mary Hospital is the only New Zealand hospital offering dedicated treatment for alcoholics, which, along with drug addiction, becomes the hospital's sole focus.

1970 - Treatment for drug and alcohol addiction includes group therapy, psychodrama, art and music. Patients socialise with group activities, recreation and singalongs.

1972 – After feeding patients and townsfolk for over 50 years, the hospital farm closes.

1972 – Dr Robert Crawford joins the hospital. He becomes Medical Superintendent in 1976.

1977 – Psychodrama expert Max Pearson takes annual psychodrama training with staff. This will continue until 2003.

Late 1970s – The Māori Group is started by Hanmer postmistress Moutere Sandford. It meets once a week and is highly successful.



1980s, 1990s and beyond

1980s – As Rogernomics transforms New Zealand, Queen Mary Hospital's eight-week addiction programme gets cut to six then four weeks.

1980s – Although it is a national institution, the hospital must now be funded by the Canterbury Area Health Board, who say they can't afford it.

1989 – The Spiritual Garden – a beautiful garden featuring carved pou – is planted with native plants.

1990s – Some government officials want the hospital closed, but staff and locals prepare for a fight.

1990 – Te Aroha o te Hauangiangi, the Taha Māori Programme, opens under the leadership of Monica Stockdale. It encourages patients to celebrate their identity and incorporate their culture into their recovery journey.

1991 – 400 Māori from around Aotearoa attend the ceremony to install four pou in the Spiritual Garden.

1991 – The Canterbury Area Health Board closes the Chisholm Ward. Robert Crawford resigns in protest.

1993 – Five sculptors spend six weeks in the hospital grounds. Some of the works created are situated in the Spiritual Garden.

1997 – The addiction clinic operation is sold to a private company, which struggles financially.

2001 – A Ministry of Health background paper preferences community-based health care over residential care for treating addiction.

2003 – The Ministry of Health stops funding and the hospital closes.

2023 – The Hurunui District Council acquires the hospital site, and plans are made to turn it into a visitor experience celebrating its rich past.