



DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE
ARMY

PERSONAL

OTTAWA, CANADA, 25th July, 1944.

Dr. Wilder G. Penfield,
Montreal Neurological Institute,
3801 - University Street,
MONTREAL, P.Q.

Dear Doctor Penfield:

I have not yet received the plans promised by Mr. Featherstonhaugh, but take it that they are not yet ready. I have several suggestions to make, which have appealed to me strongly as I have thought about the new building.

The first is that every attempt should be made to make the rooms and corridors of the new wing more spacious than in the main building. I recall that the dimensions of the M.N.I. had to be reduced at the last minute for financial reasons, but I feel that every effort should be made to make the new space as generous as possible. I realize that the height of the ceilings would probably have to be dictated by those of the present building, but perhaps a more spacious feeling can be gained in other ways.

Second - I think that an effort should be made to have as much window area as possible, even to the extent of having practically the entire length of lateral walls of wards consisting of windows. This should be possible without disturbing the appearance of the front of the Institute, since this form of fenestration might not be used on the University Street front but rather on the north and south faces of the new wing.

Third - I think it is very important, especially in the case of offices, laboratories and semi private rooms, to have non-permanent partitions if possible. I am told that offices in the Medical Arts Building are partitioned in this way to allow of easy redesigning of space with changing needs. The partitions, apparently, keep out sound and look permanent but can be fairly easily changed. If such partitions could be incorporated in chosen parts of the building it would allow us much more fluidity and we would never have space frozen, as in the present building, where even the widening of

a doorway was a major construction job.

Fourth - I think we could well do a little experimenting on the kinds of accommodation most agreeable to the patient and most efficient for the work of doctor and nurse. I was taking to an architect friend the other day who said, "You doctors tell the people of the effect of environment on the individual, especially when he is sick, you carry out research work at the Institute, why don't you investigate various environmental factors and determine the most suitable accommodation for a patient, or for patients with different kinds of illnesses". This brings up the question of optimum number in a room, placement of beds, colour of walls and draperies, desirability of screens or cubicles, etc. I for instance would like to see a number of semi private rooms decorated in ~~this way~~ *different ways*.

The above are just a few suggestions which occur to an amateur, but I am wondering if someone like Bland, whom I have never met but who is said to be an interested student of functional architecture and the newer materials, might not have good suggestions to make. Perhaps, however, it would not be possible to bring him into it.

It was such a pleasure to have dinner with you and Mrs. Penfield the other night, I enjoyed it immensely and Corinne too was glad to hear how the Penfields' were and what they were all doing. We were saddened to hear about Norman. He was such a courageous fine fellow. I hope Daisy will have a good rest after her long vigil.

The children are blooming at the lake, and we too are enjoying it as much as is possible whilst up-rooted from old friends.

All the McEacherns' send their love.

Yours sincerely,

Don
(D. S. McEachern)