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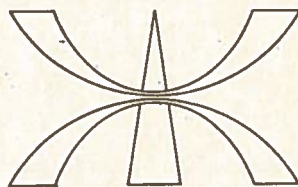
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West Allis Memorial Hospital: A History, 1986

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WEST ALLIS
MEMORIAL HOSPITAL:
A HISTORY



Produced by the Public Relations
Department of West Allis Memorial
Hospital in cooperation with the
West Allis Star-Post Newspapers.

The beginnings of West Allis Memorial Hospital date back to the turn of the century in response to an epidemic.

Mid-19th century health care was crisis oriented. The West Allis-Milwaukee area had swamps, sub-standard housing, poor sanitation practices, primitive health protection and rapid growth. Cholera epidemics from 1849 to 1853 became so severe that people dropped dead in the streets. They were picked up and put into boxes or loaded into wagons to be dumped into common graves without benefit of a church service or proper burial.

The first mention of a doctor in the West Allis area is found in the diary of William Wallace Johnson: "March 17, 1843... My wife confined. Had son born 12 M. Paid Dr. Ellsworth \$3." The infant was Alvan Johnson, who later fought in the Civil War and is buried in Honey Creek Cemetery.

Dr. Price Sawtell came to Milwaukee in 1845 and purchased land near West Allis on what is now South 112th Street and West Beloit Road in 1848. Trained as a Botanical Physician, Dr. Sawtell made his calls on horseback, traveling as far as Muskego and Big Bend.

Epidemics could wipe out entire families during this period. Infant mortality was high with frequent post partum deaths of the mother due to infection and lack of adequate care.

Veterinarians were often called on to diagnose and treat human illnesses since there was often more concern for the registration and health of an animal than that of a human. Early druggists such as

Carl J. Conrad, Edward Jones and Theodore Mueller often served as "physicians."

At the time West Allis became a Village, Dr. James Rassmusen, Dr. Frank Wright, Dr. Sam McCorkle, Dr. James Malone and Dr. Henry T. Brogan practiced medicine with Dr. Thomas Willet and Dr. Hugh Mount arriving later. Dr. Richard A. Sullivan had an active veterinarian practice in North Greenfield.

Dr. McCorkle was named Health Officer for the Village, and on August 1, 1902, a Board of Health was formed.

The Board went into action on November 20, 1902 when a case of smallpox was reported in the Village. A writ of mandamus was served by the State of Wisconsin and Charles Cupple to compel the Village Board to provide a hospital and pest house for smallpox and other contagious diseases.

The Board of Health decided to convert a newly authorized election booth into a "pest house" located on land west of the Soldier's Home. The bids for the building ranged from \$320 by Christ Hanson to \$489 by John Schiffman. Hanson's bid was accepted, the building was completed within ten days and placed on the land belonging to the Central Improvement Company.

The pest house burned to the ground on December 17, 1902.

A second election booth was then put to use, but it was stolen by persons unknown in 1905 and used for housing. The theft was understandable since the rapid population growth of West Allis in that period saw many people living in railroad cars, shacks, tents and boarding houses. The Village had no water system, and people

depended on shallow wells, inside cisterns and outside rain barrels, which collected rain water. Some families had windmills. Referendums for water and sewers were not approved until March 5, 1905, and even that plan covered only the central city. As late as 1937, there remained some outhouses in West Allis.

The West Allis General Hospital was established in late 1914 by Dr. Everett Maechtle and Dr. George Hoffman. It was managed by Benjamin A. Tibbits of Milwaukee for at least two years. This hospital was located at 7005 W. National Avenue, at what is now the site of the Y.M.C.A. This land in the Town of Kinnickinnic (later the town of Greenfield) had been purchased from the government in 1837 by Zebulon Baxter. Located on Mequonigo Plank Road, the original building was known as the Kinnickinnic House where travelers could stop for rest and refreshment on their way to Milwaukee.

By 1875, William Davis had purchased 40 acres of the land. Later, the Gray family purchased the land and built a 20 room summer home, called "Lauderdale." The caretaker's home was occupied in 1902 by the Jacob Schiess family.

Early settlers recall that the house was painted white with brown trim. South 70th Street was not yet cut through, so there was a large expanse of lawn and out buildings behind the home.

By 1910, the house was run as a boarding house by Mrs. Hattie Sharkey, and the 1913 City Directory lists Mike Turkofsky as living there. He was a gardener for Allis-Chalmers. The owner of Turk's Auto Body is a descendent, as is Ralph Elliott of Elliott Movers.

The earliest record of the house being used as a hospital was on December 5, 1914.

By 1917, the building had returned to its rooming house status and apparently was torn down about 1932. The Great Idea, published and edited by H. J. Parmley, West Allis, 1924, had an article by Dr. McCorkle stressing the need for a hospital.

West Allis residents in the intervening years, until the time of the completion of the present West Allis Memorial Hospital, used other hospitals in the Milwaukee area.

On August 2, 1943, Dr. E. Carl Friedbacher, Dr. George Hoffman, and City Attorney John Doerfer met on the subject of a hospital for the city.

Sensing the widespread interest, Mayor Delbert Miller of West Allis called a general meeting of civic minded citizens on August 15, 1943 to discuss the need for a local hospital. Named to a steering committee were Doctors Friedbacher and Hoffman, City Attorney Doerfer, Sam Fulton, a manufacturer, and Arnold H. Klentz, then editor of the West Allis Star and Secretary of the West Allis Civic Alliance. Klentz later became Mayor.

The committee visited hospitals in the state to get ideas of financing, operation, equipment, and services to be offered. Its first major action was a decision to engage the services of a consultant. The Common Council authorized the committee to hire Dr. Charles Edward Remey Consultant and Associates of Chicago to make a hospital survey to establish the need and to suggest a location for the contemplated

structure. This action was taken on May 17, 1944, when the Common Council approved an expenditure of \$1,600 to cover the fees charged by the consultants.

On November 16, 1944, Dr. Remey submitted a 150 page report in which he stated that there was a shortage of at least 100 hospital beds in Milwaukee County and that the need would become greater in the immediate future. His report strongly recommended a hospital for West Allis.

Dr. Remey's contract with West Allis also included a provision that he select a site for the hospital in the city. He submitted five locations. His recommended site was the one on which the hospital is now located. This site on West Lincoln Avenue between South 88th and South 90th Streets, embracing 12 acres, was purchased by the city at a cost of \$34,500 in October 1945.

Additional land adjacent to the original site was acquired by the city at a later date to give the hospital a total of 19.3 acres.

After taking that big step, the city, through its committee, invited existing hospital organizations or other groups interested in providing good hospital care, to come forward.

Several groups did voice interest, but none was successful in raising the necessary capital to build and develop a hospital on the site.

Despite several more non-productive, frustrating efforts in succeeding years, those interested in securing a hospital for West Allis continued their labors. Lack of capital continued to be the major obstacle to the proposed project.

On September 19, 1953, the city made an application to the federal government for hospital construction funds under the Hill-Burton Act. This federal grant-in-aid program was administered by the Wisconsin Division of Hospital and Related Services under the State Board of Health to establish priorities for applicants.

On June 21, 1954 a committee of citizens headed by the late Carroll Benson, publisher of the West Allis Star, cooperated with the city's committee to obtain a hospital. These merged committees then were incorporated under State law on June 9, 1955. The following persons made up the first West Allis Memorial Hospital Corporation:

Mayor Arnold H. Klentz, Chairman; Carroll T. Benson, Vice-Chairman; City Attorney George A. Schmus, Secretary; City Comptroller Irvin F. Knoebel, Treasurer; Alderman Joseph M. Kopp; Alderman LeRoy P. Farness; Alderman James Blask; Alderman Matthew Sterzinger; Alderman Fred Rust; Walter F. Cappel; John Gach; Dr. Delbert Miner; Chester J. Mikolajek; Mrs. Helen Martin; Mrs. Arnette Yager.

Others who served as vacancies occurred were:

Alderman Joseph Aschenbrenner, Alderman Lloyd Tappa, Alderman David Lers, Alderman Albert Hohler, Alderman Herbert Mair, City Attorney William Schmid, Mrs. Howard Specht, Joseph Schalk, Peter Price and Roger Wangemann.

On February 6, 1958 the committee hired William Claypool as the Administrator of the proposed hospital. He had been the assistant administrator of a large hospital in Columbus, Ohio. After twelve years at West Allis Memorial Hospital, he resigned his position on February 9, 1970.

While in the area of acquiring professional help, the committee enlisted the services of Joseph Norby, former administrator of Columbia Hospital in Milwaukee, and John Hatfield, a consultant in Chicago. Both men served in advisory capacities until the hospital was opened.

On May 12, 1958, the hospital corporation voted to name Mayor Arnold H. Klentz, City Attorney George A. Schmus and City Comptroller Irvin F. Knoebel as the Hospital Construction Committee.

On August 8, 1958 the committee decided to recommend that the City of West Allis float an obligation bond issue to cover the costs of a new hospital. An additional one million dollars was added to the City's request from the federal government, which brought the total to two million dollars.

Good news came from Madison at this time from Vincent F. Otis, Director of the State Health Department's Division of Hospitals and Related Services. He stated that Milwaukee County had been divided into two segments -- North and South.

Up to this time, the State's Health Department used the entire Milwaukee County as a criteria for setting of priorities. The new plan would help West Allis priority because at that time only two hospitals were located south of the Menomonee Valley, which was the line of demarcation. The federal government and the State Department of Health followed a policy by which areas without hospitals or areas of dense population with a scarcity of hospitals would be given high priority. The division of Milwaukee County into two parts gave the West Allis Hospital Corporation renewed optimism.

This was followed on October 23, 1957 by another message from

Otis that West Allis was now eligible for a grant of \$500,000 which was one-fourth the amount asked by the committee from the federal government. Encouraged by this development, the committee moved boldly to construct a 250 bed hospital at an estimated cost of six million dollars. It later received another \$1,200,000 grant from the federal government.

The architectural firm of Darby-Bogner and Associates, a West Allis organization, was engaged to draw plans for the new institution. The Martin Jezo Construction Company was the successful bidder for the construction work at a later date. Also hired at this time was Louis Eulgen, as Inspector of Construction, with the title "Clerk of the Works." When the period of construction had ended, Eulgen was retained as Superintendent of Hospital Maintenance. He retired in 1975.

On July 8, 1958, a groundbreaking ceremony was held at South 89th Street and West Lincoln Avenue. Earth was turned over with shovels by city and hospital officials to the delight of hundreds of onlookers. Early the next morning, motorized ground excavating equipment moved in and construction was underway.

A large number of doctors had enrolled with the hospital and provided suggestions while the structure, equipment and other facilities were being developed. Nurses, technologists and other personnel were also ready when the final day, August 10, 1961 arrived for the grand opening. The formal dedication had been held on August 6, 1961. The first patient was admitted on September 19, 1961.

Only one year following its beginning, the hospital was designated as an accredited institution, a distinction seldom placed upon a hospital so soon after its opening. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals, which accredited the hospital, is composed of representatives of the American Medical Association, American College of Surgeons, American College of Physicians and the American Hospital Association. The coveted honor is awarded on the basis of high standards maintained by the hospital. West Allis Memorial has earned accreditation since 1962.

A change in management of the hospital occurred on May 21, 1963, when the Common Council voted to dissolve the municipal corporation then in charge, and in turn, lease the facility to a voluntary committee which included:

Rt. Rev. Msgr. Frederick P. Arnold, Raymond L. Bischoff, Rev. Darwin P. Dovemuehle, A. Lloyd Fulton, Roy A. Gruber, Joseph M. Kopp, Boyd S. Oberlink, Joseph E. Roche, Ben P. Selig, Clarence E. Stender, and City Comptroller Irvin F. Knoebel.

Others who served in those early years as vacancies occurred were:

Raymond E. Nordstrom, Rev. Phillip Rose, Acting City Comptroller Donovan Bro, City Comptroller Raymond Swinsky, Allen Brodd, Chester Schweers, and Max Simpson.

Among the numerous new facilities established in the early years was the Intensive Care Unit/Coronary Care Unit (ICU/CCU), begun in October, 1968 in a four-bed unit in Room 393 on Three-South. In 1969, the West Allis Memorial Hospital Laboratory and School of Medical Technology came into existence. The hospital annually

graduates six Medical Technologists with Bachelor of Science degrees. The Emergency Room was inaugurated on August 3, 1970 with Dr. Frederick C. Heinen as its director.

In 1970, the hospital hired Ronald W. Labott as Administrator, replacing William Claypool, who had resigned.

In 1971, the Board of Directors voted to complete the seventh floor of the hospital, adding 51 beds, to bring the capacity up to 296 beds.

In 1973, the Board of Directors decided to expand and remodel the hospital in a program titled, "Countdown '77," with construction scheduled for completion in 1977. In November 1973, approval was granted by the local Comprehensive Health Planning Agency and the State of Wisconsin, Division of Health Policy and Planning. Construction was begun in late 1974.

It was determined that the hospital should expand its ancillary departments to meet the rapidly expanding needs of inpatients and outpatients. Outpatient services had started to skyrocket and the staff and consultants forecast increased demands in that area.

The Laboratory was expanded from 5,000 to 19,500 square feet. Utilization of the Laboratory greatly increased, especially in the area of industrial toxicology testing. Laboratory medicine was the fastest growing service in the hospital.

Radiology was expanded from 6,000 to 16,997 square feet, primarily in special procedure rooms. The department was relocated to an area south of its previous site, with the Cobalt and Deep Therapy facilities remaining in their current location.

Physical Therapy was relocated to a new area between the Laboratory

and Radiology and expanded from 3,100 to 9,152 square feet. Seventy-five percent of the service rendered in that department was musculoskeletal in nature, which reflected the industrial occupations of the community. A strong growth in Physical Therapy outpatient services accounted for a pressing need for more space.

The Emergency/Outpatient Department was expanded from 3,400 to 8,045 square feet and from one emergency treatment room and five outpatient examining rooms to seven outpatient examining rooms, a seven-bed observation unit, a two bed orthopedic treatment room, and the capability of treating six emergency patients.

Technical services expanded from 1,600 to 3,600 square feet. That department included the following services: EEG, EKG, EMG, Respiratory Therapy and Pulmonary Functions. Facilities were also made available for screening industrial patients as necessitated by the OSHA government regulations on industrial safety.

The Administrative areas, Medical Records, Physicians' Lounge, Hospital Library, Dietary Department, Cafeteria, and Housekeeping Department were also expanded or remodeled.

The \$11.4 million dollar program was financed this way: \$1.5 million was to be raised through the hospital's Development Program, \$3 million of depreciation funds accrued by the hospital since 1961, and the balance through borrowing. The hospital sought financial support through the Development Program from local corporations, foundations, and the Medical Staff, and interested individuals. At

the kickoff luncheon, the Women's Auxiliary of the hospital made the first pledge in the amount of \$100,000.

As part of the future planning, a West Allis Medical Office Building was also constructed. The three-story structure on the South side of the hospital at 2400 South 90th Street was capable of being extended later to six floors. The building, connected to the hospital via a tunnel also provided pharmacy and laboratory facilities. Construction was begun December 16, 1974, and the building opened August 27, 1975.

Groundbreaking for the hospital construction program was held January 14, 1975, and nine days later construction began on the Southeast corner of the hospital.

During construction, no hospital services were disrupted, a tribute to careful planning and coordination between contractors and the hospital administration.

Construction was completed in the Spring of 1977, and a formal re-dedication ceremony was held September 11, 1977.

The hospital, from the beginning, developed a strong fiscal position. Financial contributions, in addition to the initial federal grant money, prior to the opening of the hospital amounted to \$24,115.

On the day of its dedication in 1961, the city, as owner of the property had a debt of \$5,750,000. The bond issue to erase that debt is scheduled to be paid by 1980.

Loans to complete the "Countdown '77" expansion program are due to be paid by 1986.

WEST ALLIS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
PAST & PRESENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Carroll T. Benson
1958-59

James J. Blask
1958-62

Walter F. Cappel
1958-59

LeRoy P. Farness
1958-59

Arnold H. Klentz
1958-63, 70-73

Joseph M. Kopp
1958-59, 63-69

Delbert Miner, M.D.
1958-62

Chester J. Mikolajek
1958-62

Fred Rust
1958-59

George A. Schmus
1958-59

Matthew Sterzinger
1958-59

Mrs. Arnette Yager
1958-62

Joseph I. Schalk
1958-62

Mrs. Dorothy Specht
1958-62

Ben P. Selig.
1963-70

Raymond J. Swinsky
1966

Roger Wagemann
1958-62

Peter Price
1959-62

Joseph Aschenbrenner
1960-62

Albert Hohler, Jr.
1960-62

David W. Lers
1960-62

Lloyd C. Tappa
1960-62

Clarence E. Stender
1960-70

Msgr. Frederick P. Arnold
1963-65

Raymond L. Bischoff
1963-70

Rev. D.P. Dovemuehle
1963 -

A. Lloyd Fulton
1963-70

Roy A. Gruber
1963-74

Boyd S. Oberlink
1963-66

Joseph E. Roche
1963-70

Rev. Phillip J. Rose
1966-70

Donovan Bro
1967-68

Chester W. Schweers
1967-68

Raymond E. Nordstrom
1969-70

William G. Longe, M.D.
1970 -

Msgr. J.E. Emmenegger
1970-74

Micheal A. Durante
1970 -

Clifford C. Carlson
1970-75

George T. Wormley
1970 -

Norbert J. Stefaniak
1974-1977

Mr. Robert M. Aslin
1975 -

Thomas L. Dineen
1977 -

Max S. Simpson
1968

Henry C. Schreve
1969 -

DeLore Williams, M.D.
1970 -

Reginald M. Hislop, Jr.
1970 -

Leonard A. Szudy, Ph.D.
1970 -

Charles G. Panosian
1970 -

Jerome J. Wimmer
1973-76

Mrs. Dorothy H. Biwer
1974 -

Mr. Norbert D. Boeder
1977 -

WEST ALLIS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

CHIEFS OF MEDICAL STAFF

1961-62	Dr. Julius Meyer
1963-64	Dr. William Longe
1965-67	Dr. Carroll R. Olson
1968-69	Dr. James Pilliod
1970-73	Dr. Thomas Jennings
1973-75	Dr. William W. Baird
1975-76	Dr. Henry Twelmeyer
1977 -	Dr. Richard P. Cramer

