

**A BRIEF, HIGHLIGHT HISTORY
of
THE GREENVILLE HOSPITAL SYSTEM**

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The beginnings of what we know today as the Greenville Hospital System have their roots in the Greenville of the mid 1880's. With its healthy springs and mountain-cooled climate, Greenville was an upcountry resort community, a place to which the rich people of the Lowcountry retreated during the sweltering days of summer along the coast.

But Greenville was also rather primitive. The railroad did not arrive until the 1850's. Roads were few and muddy. Services were minimal. There was no hospital. Small clinics opened for a while and then closed.

The first civilian hospital in Greenville opened in 1872. Fifty-two year old Dr. George Trescott and twenty-five year old Dr. James M. McClanahan, a recent graduate of the South Carolina Medical College, started what they called The Greenville Infirmary over Dr. Baylis Earle's drugstore at Main and Coffee Streets. It was reasonably successful but closed after just a year when Dr. McClanahan decided to "move to the country." In the years following there would be an occasional doctor's infirmary in business; but it would be a long time before a community hospital would open its doors in Greenville.

By the mid-1890's, Greenville was welcoming a new industry, textiles. Enterprising South Carolina business executives were investing in textiles. In 1885, the F. W. Poe Manufacturing Company built a plant with 10,000 spindles. Business was so good that 5,000 more spindles were added within two years. During the next seven years, between 1895 and 1902, several large textile mills were built. Greenville was growing; but there was still no community hospital.

In 1895 several cases of typhoid fever were reported in the city. Two itinerant workmen contracted the dread disease and

had to be cared for in the boarding houses where they lived. One of them died. Their plight raised public concerns. Greenvillians feared an epidemic. Rowena Lodge of the Knights of Pythias started a drive for a hospital, asking every organization in the city to appoint a delegate to a central committee. In December of 1895, the editor of the *Greenville Mountaineer* declared, "A charity that has become an absolute necessity is a city hospital with a casualty ward." That committee of citizens met on February 5, 1896. At that meeting, the Greenville Hospital Association was formed with George W. Sirrine as president. Just two months later, a group of prominent women met and formed The Ladies' Auxiliary Board of the Hospital Association. At their first meeting on March 18, 1896, Mrs. E. B. L. Taylor was elected President, Mrs. J. L. Orr, Vice-president, and Mrs. J. C. Woodside, Secretary-treasurer.

The ladies immediately began fundraising. A festival on the lawn of Central Public School raised \$40. A special women's edition of *The Greenville News* sold 2500 copies and cleared \$512. Despite these successes, however, the minutes of those ladies' auxiliary meetings reveal how difficult was the effort to enlist public commitment for a new hospital. Even the auxiliary members themselves frequently had difficulty attending meetings. Greenville streets were still unpaved in the 1890's and rainy days would turn the red clay streets into quagmires. Many a meeting was recorded in the minutes with the simple statement "So few, no business" (October 27, 1896), "Very few members present and very little business transacted" (March 2, 1897). Yet there were high points like the bazaar held in November 1896 which netted \$602.

In the fall of 1896, the ladies turned down their first offer for a hospital property. They had been offered the Christ Church Home property; but they regarded the price as too high and the property "not useable for hospital purposes."

By the end of the decade, The Ladies Auxiliary had raised \$2,238.26. Nevertheless, Dr. Curran Earle told the group he "did not think it practical for us to begin work on our hospital without a much larger sum than we have on hand at present." Dr. Earle's opinion was based on experience. He knew

something about the cost of running a hospital. For several years, he and his father, Dr. Thomas T. Earle, and a cousin, Dr. Joseph Earle, operated the Earle Sanitorium.

At the October 22, 1900 meeting of The Ladies' Auxiliary, President Mrs. C. F. Dill announced that "the Doctors Earle in charge of the Sanitorium have offered us one ward to accommodate two charity patients for \$10 a week." The ladies approved the offer. It wasn't until the November meeting that the ladies realized that the doctors' offer had been misunderstood. The offer was one charity patient for \$10 a week. If an extra bed were needed for a second patient in the room, the Earles would charge an extra \$8. The ladies signed a deal for a four month trial period. They had already raised \$200 to help underwrite the arrangement.

While the ladies worked hard and proved to be innovative and successful money raisers, the men of the Hospital Association had not raised much and were not effective. Realizing that they were an Auxiliary to a virtually inoperative association, the ladies wrote a new constitution, dropped the word "Auxiliary" and recognized themselves as "The Women's Hospital Board of Greenville." The twenty-four women represented many different churches. They set their annual dues at twenty-five cents and elected Mrs. C. F. Dill as president, Mrs. J. F. Mackey as vice-president, Mrs. Kate Sloan as secretary and Mrs. John T. Woodside as treasurer.

In April 1901, the Ladies' Board cancelled its short-lived agreement with the Doctors Earle and turned their attention to what they called "outdoor relief work." They worked with churches, drugstores, and grocery stores to provide medicine and food to needy people. They raised money through rummage sales, bazaars, teas, festivals, subscriptions, doll shows, lectures, an opera performance and personal donations.

By the spring of 1905, momentum toward establishing a hospital was picking up. The Ladies' Board had \$4000 in the bank and several physicians had pledged their support for the building of a hospital if a lot could be donated or if there were guarantees "from parties in the city that money would be

furnished to run the hospital."

When next they met in the fall, the ladies looked at a lot in Spring Park (now McPherson Park) which they considered "quite suitable" for a hospital site. So twelve ladies met at Mrs. Dill's house and signed a petition asking the city to donate the Spring Park lot. However, when they appeared before the city council in November of 1905, "there seemed to be such opposition from the residents of Main Street, it was proposed that the matter be dropped." Thereafter, a committee of men from the hospital association board met with the objectors and the city council but no solution could be reached. The Spring Park idea never developed.

During the next two or three years there were occasionally small fund raisers but the movement to establish a hospital lost momentum. In the meantime, a Charity Aid Society was established in 1909 and the ladies' "outdoor relief work" was turned over to that new group. The Society petitioned city council for an appropriation to establish an Emergency Hospital in the city to care for charity patients. The request was granted and the hospital opened in 1910 in rooms at the Salvation Army Citadel on East Broad Street. The Society paid the nurses' salaries and other costs and the Salvation Army provided food and heat. There were two 3-bed wards, an operating room, a living area for nurses, and a clinic for out-patients.

Meanwhile, three physicians, Doctor Adams Hyne, Doctor J. R. Rutledge, and Doctor L. G. Corbett, had sold \$15,000 worth of stock and had opened their private sanatorium in a building which Doctor Corbett owned on Arlington Avenue between Memminger and Mallard Streets. The physicians treated alcoholics and people with nervous and mental disorders. But the sanatorium struggled, and by January 1911, the doctors were ready to sell. After several months of negotiation, the ladies agreed to use the \$4000 which they had raised as a down payment if the men of the hospital association board would agree to raise \$16,000 to meet the asking price of \$20,000.

The Corbett home was renovated. The Emergency Hospital

on East Broad Street and its furnishings were moved to Corbett. On January 10, 1912, the new public hospital opened with eighty-four beds. The job of planning for and opening Greenville's first public hospital had taken sixteen years.

The new City Hospital sat amidst one of the most picturesque parts of Greenville. Some of the city's leading citizens lived in the neighborhood in gracious, old colonial and Victorian-era homes. Pendleton and other streets and avenues in the area were lined with majestic oaks and elms. Many of the houses had attractive private gardens.

One of the most impressive homes was the red-brick columned mansion of Martin F. Ansel. Mr. Ansel served as first chairman of the new hospital's Board of Governors which was composed of members from both the hospital association and the women's hospital board. The other original members of the hospital board were George W. Quick, Charles F. Hard, W. A. Jarrott, Milton G. Smith, Mrs. C. F. Dill, Mrs. J. T. Woodside, Mrs. Lewis W. Parker, Mrs. John Slattery, Mrs. Mary Carey and Mrs. Charles F. Hard. A Miss Larney is listed as the first Superintendent of the Hospital. Although Miss Laura Brown took over shortly after the hospital opened and stayed until 1914 when Miss Alice Agnew began a three year term as superintendent.

In its first full month, City Hospital received forty-six patients and discharged forty-one. Within eight months business had picked up to the point that the September 3 edition of the newspaper reported "August was a very busy month at the new City Hospital. Many were obliged to be turned away."

Records indicate that the first nursing student was accepted on January 13, 1912, just three days after the hospital opened. Known officially at first as the Greenville City Hospital Training School for nurses, the school that first year accepted twelve students. Only four graduated. The school offered a three year course but students who had had training in other schools of nursing were granted credit for the time spent in those schools. The first graduates to receive their full three years of training at Greenville City Hospital were Jessie Geer and

Myra Mary Young who graduated in October of 1915.

The class of 1916 had a special privilege. Those four nurses were the object of the school's first commencement program held in Greenville's famous Opera House at Laurens and Coffee Streets. The class motto was "Do and be silent."

In 1917, the city of Greenville bought the Hospital and within four years had added a building which increased bed capacity to 125 and moved the main entrance to Memminger Street.

In early 1914 a decision was made which greatly helped the nursing school and the hospital. On January 28, many of the ladies who had led the campaign for establishing the hospital met and "decided to form an 'auxiliary to the hospital board'" which would meet the first Tuesday of every month. They decided to call the auxiliary "The Hospital Aid Society." The Society found plenty of work to do in helping both the hospital and the nursing school.

The lack of social life was a frequent complaint of nursing students in those days. They worked long hours but they needed some relaxation, some fun time too. It was a complaint not lost on the ladies of the new Society. So the ladies bought the students nurses tickets "to the morning picture shows" and generally helped to make life as comfortable and pleasant as possible for the students. The Society also led the effort to build a nurses' residence on a lot next to the City Hospital.

The Volunteer ladies not only led the effort to establish the nurses' residence but also worked hard to help the nursing school students improve and expand their social lives. They even organized and chaperoned dances. But a note in the minutes for The Hospital Aid Society for the October 5, 1920 meeting indicates some of the ladies were not pleased with what they saw at the dances: "The manner of dancing of certain young ladies present at the last dance was discussed and it was decided that Miss Webster (the new superintendent) should tell those girls that the ladies of the board disapproved of their way of dancing and if they attend another dance, their objectionable manner must be changed." And apparently graduate nurses were

perceived by some as being a bad influence on the pupil nurses. A note in the minutes of the December 7, 1920 meeting indicated that the ladies of the Hospital Society Board sent this message to the Board of Governors: "The Women's Board thinks the influence of the graduate nurses in this building (the nurses' residence) is not best for the pupil nurses and recommends that the nurses' home be reserved for the pupil nurses and the officers of the hospital."

During the 1930's and '40's there were two people who were the most influential in the life of the Hospital. One was an administrator, the other a board member. The Board member was Roger Huntington, co-owner of Huntington and Guerry Electrical Contractors, who served as chairman from 1929 to 1939. Years later, Mr. Huntington was to have had a long term nursing home named after him when it was built next to Allen Bennett Memorial Hospital.

The Administrator who led the Hospital through years of growth during the 1930's and the early 1940's was Byrd B. Holmes. Mrs. Holmes had come to Greenville from her native Cape Girardeau, Missouri. As Miss Byrd Boehringer, she was hired as the administrator of Shriners Hospital. However, two years later she married well-known Greenvillian Uncle Johnny Holmes who was the chairman of the Shriners Hospital board. Since she was married to the Chairman, she could no longer be the Administrator so she resigned and on July 15, 1930, as Byrd Holmes, became the administrator of City Hospital. There were several expansions during her thirteen years as administrator, years in which the hospital grew from 125 to 343 beds and changed its name from City Hospital to Greenville General Hospital. The Sims Wing was built in 1935. A 4-floor surgical wing was constructed in 1938 along with an addition to the Nurses Residence. In 1940, the Sirrine Ward was added. Two more floors were added to the rear of the annex in 1944; but by that time Mrs. Holmes had left, and the new administrator was Jacque Norman, the former administrator of Spartanburg General Hospital.

Mr. Norman faced new challenges. Greenville was growing, and Greenville General Hospital's facilities were being

overtaxed. In the fall of 1945, forty leading citizens toured the hospital and discussed the need for more space. A five member Citizen's Committee was appointed to study hospital needs and methods of financing an expansion. The members of that committee were R. E. Henry, R. W. Arrington, Ernest Patton, Roger Peace, and Fred Symmes. Dean Rainey was appointed the attorney for the group. The Committee worked for eighteen months before making its recommendation: a joint city/county hospital. However, the city and county could not agree on a plan, so state legislation was proposed and passed in 1947 - Act 432 - creating a new seven member board which would run the Hospital. Three members were appointed from the county, three from the city, and one was an at-large member. The trustees elected their own chairman. The new Board immediately began working on plans for a major expansion to Greenville General Hospital. Construction began in 1949 when P. C. Gregory took over as board chairman from Roger Huntington and as Frank Haythorn replaced Jacque Norman as administrator. The major expansion project lasted until 1953 and saw the building of a laundry, an energy plant, and several new floors and wings of Greenville General. By the time the program ended in the fall of 1953, the hospital had a new front entrance - on Mallard Street and a total of 620 beds.

The years of the expansion project also included some significant changes in Administration. In 1952, Frank Haythorn was replaced as head of the hospital staff by Peter B. Terenzio, a Yale educated lawyer and hospital administrator who was coaxed to Greenville from Roosevelt in New York City by board chairman P. C. Gregory and vice-chairman Gordon McCabe. Terenzio came to Greenville in November of 1952 but stayed only ten months because of an offer to take over as head of Roosevelt Hospital in New York. However, during those ten months, Terenzio made a major decision which had long lasting effects. He hired a thirty-six year old former assistant administrator from Roosevelt Hospital by the name of Robert E. Toomey. Toomey was a graduate of Harvard, held graduate degrees from Boston University and Columbia University and was a former teacher. He had been director of what amounted to a small hospital system in rural New York State. So when Terenzio left suddenly in the fall of 1953, Bob Toomey was

appointed to take his place and he became the visionary of the multi-hospital system which was developed during the 1950's, '60's and 70's. In turn, Toomey searched for and found at Duke University a good assistant administrator: Jack Skarupa, a graduate of the University of Connecticut, who became Hospital System President in 1978.

The new board of trustees had begun to meet its challenge of providing hospital services for all the people of Greenville County. Even in the midst of its 5 million dollar expansion program at Greenville General, the board began to hear requests from other parts of the county.

Greer was growing and citizens wanted a hospital. So Allen Bennett Hospital was built and opened in 1952 on land given by Mr. and Mrs. B. A. Bennett in memory of their son. Doctor Allen Bennett had lost his life during World War II when the destroyer on which he was serving as surgeon was torpedoed off the Philippines. That hospital was built for \$500,000. It has been added to several times and is now in the midst of a rebuilding and expansion project that will convert it into a seventy bed all private room hospital.

The early 60's witnessed more growth and expansion. A new emergency room and more clinic space was provided at Greenville General Hospital and in the growing southeastern part of the County, Hillcrest Hospital was built in Simpsonville in 1963.

By the mid-1960's major decisions were being faced again concerning growth. The Board had to decide whether to expand further the Greenville General Hospital facilities or look for another location. A design was proposed that would have expanded the property on Mallard Street and converted that location into a multi-building complex. However, when all of the proposals were considered, the Board decided to look for another location. It considered several sites and explored seriously one on Pelham Road on the city's Eastside. However, the Federal Aviation Administration said 'no' to the building of any hospital on that site because property was in the airport's flight pattern. The Board was also working under a restriction

imposed by the 1947 legislation which mandated that the site must be within the city or at a location which could be annexed to the city. That is why on June 28, 1966, Chairman J. I. Smith announced that the Board of Trustees had purchased property on Grove Road for \$715,443.

In the 1970's and '80's, the Hospital System improved and enlarged its facilities and expanded its services to become a truly regional medical center. In the early 1970's, the System began developing its 12-acre Grove Road site which the board had bought in 1966. In 1971, Marshall I. Pickens Hospital was the first building on the site offering to the Upstate its first psychiatric facility. Greenville Memorial Hospital opened a year later. Then came the Cancer Treatment Center, Out-Patient Clinics, and Roger Peace Rehabilitation Hospital. In the meantime, the System built North Greenville Hospital at Travelers Rest to meet the needs of those in northern Greenville County.

Communities grow, demands change, and healthcare needs adjust. Technology improved, increasing diagnostic and treatment capabilities. Insurance funding pushed doctors and hospitals toward more out-patient treatment. More procedures were developed for more maladies. The System had to keep pace. Doctors and patients grew weary of older facilities. They demanded newer, more convenient and efficient buildings. In 1982 and '83, the venerable, old Greenville General Hospital was phased out as an acute care institution and replaced by an enlarged Greenville Memorial Hospital. Greenville General remained but in a new role as a facility for administrative support services and for special programs such as Medical Weight Management, Pain Therapy, and Medical Day Care. Some of it was also rented to the Veteran's Administration and other organizations.

In the meantime North Greenville Hospital was converted from a general hospital to a successful Alcohol and Drug Treatment Center and the Grove Road complex continued to broaden its scope of services. By the late 1980's Greenville Memorial housed such sophisticated machines as lithotripters and magnetic resonance imaging and lasers. Its emergency room

had been designated a regional trauma center. The Cancer Treatment Center had been doubled in size. The Shriners were building their new hospital on the complex and even a Ronald McDonald House was added to care for the parents of hospitalized children in the Children's Hospital at Greenville Memorial. The Grove Road complex had legitimately been dubbed The Greenville Memorial Medical Center.

In the eight decades since the first hospital opened in 1912, Greenville had made up for lost time in its hospital growth. That small, simple hospital on Arlington Avenue had evolved into a regional medical center on a par with the best in the southeast. In the process it had become not only an important network of healthcare facilities and services but also a major business force providing the community with more than five thousand jobs and pumping millions of dollars into the economy.

The eighty-four beds of 1912 had grown to more than twelve hundred beds in 1989. The simplicity of 1912 had developed into the sophistication of 1989 as the Hospital System board and staff worked on a new plan of expansion designed to prepare the System not only for a new decade but a new century.

Extra Note

It is interesting to note the Greenville Hospital System is self-supporting operationally. That is a fact that many county residents do not realize. During the 1970's and '80's a small tax levy retired debt service on County general obligation bonds which had been sold to pay for construction of the original Greenville Memorial Hospital. Since then, virtually all construction has been paid for through the issuance of revenue bonds with some help from federal government funding and from other special sources. However, the day-to-day operations of the System's facilities have been underwritten by patient revenues.