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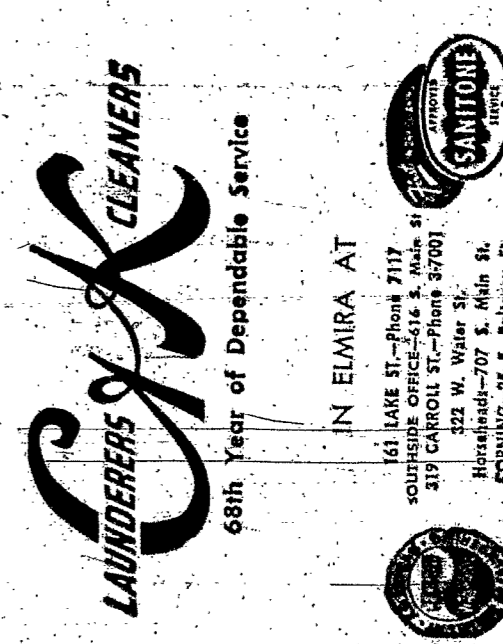


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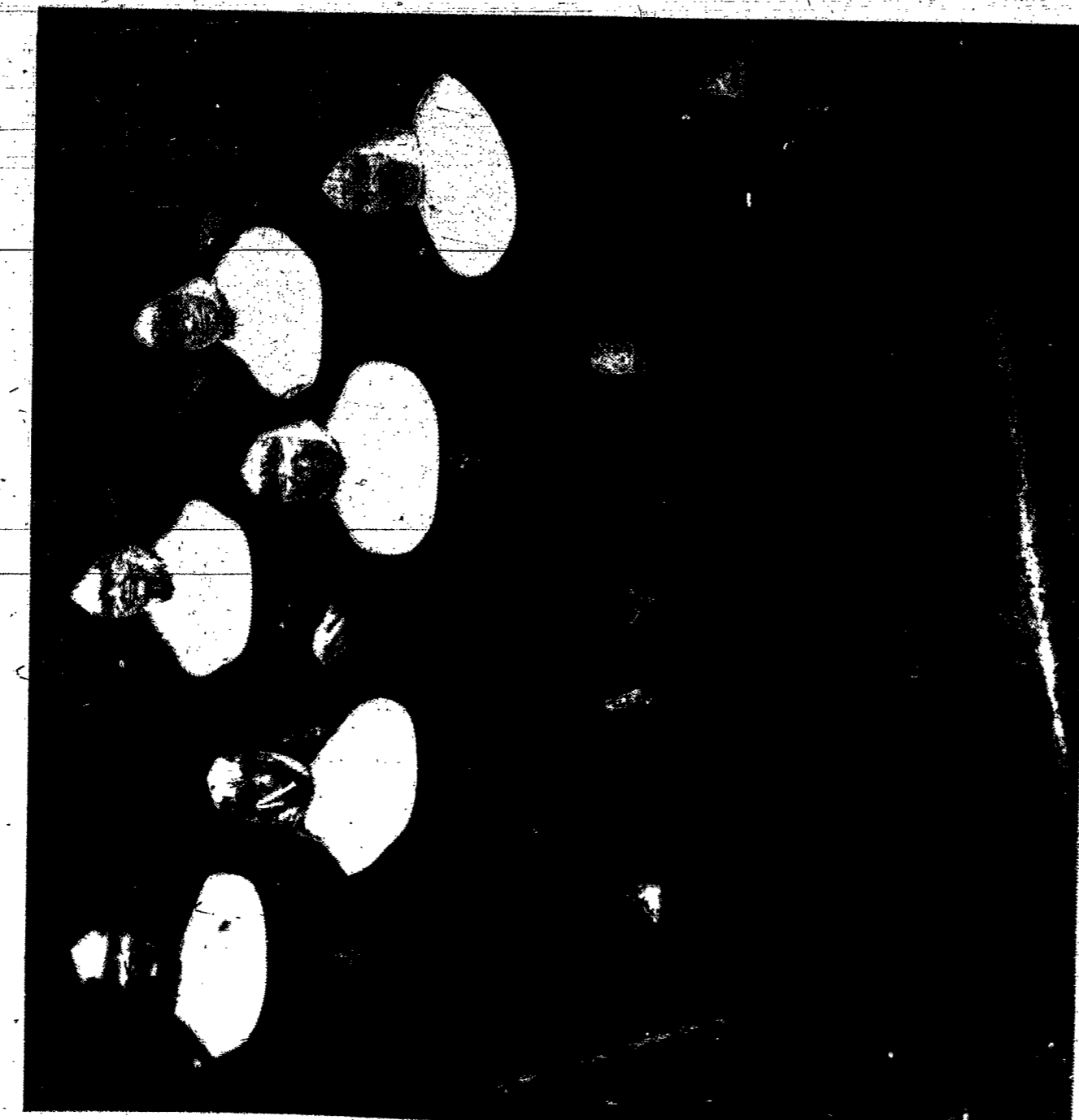
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Sisters of St. Joseph Hospital, Elmira, A Story Of Fifty Years Of Medical Progress

Diocesan Sisterhood Staffs Southern Tier Hospital,
 Health Center For Thousands In Elmira Area



The pioneer band of nuns who launched St. Joseph's Hospital in 1908. They are shown on the steps of the original building. From left, in front, Sister Ruth, Sister Rose Alice, Sister Mary John, in rear, Sister Hedwiga, Sister St. Ann, and Sister Jerome.

FOR FIFTY YEARS the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of Rochester have been engaged in caring for the sick in the City of Elmira, New York.

The present 222 bed hospital bears little resemblance to the original building which housed the first patients entrusted to the care of the Sisters. The expansion from an antiquated academy building to the modern structure of today is a story of struggle for survival, of diligent efforts repeatedly renewed, and of fervent prayers that span a half century.

On September 24, 1908, the Sisters of St. Joseph launched their first hospital endeavor in the Diocese of Rochester when the West Rev. Fr. John J. McQuaid, second Bishop of Rochester, died and bequeathed the property which had been reserved as quarters for a private home for higher education, conducted by the Sisters of Saint Mary, now of Kenmore, New York, whose Motherhouse at that time was in Lockport, New York.

Catholics of Elmira had long desired a hospital in that City. When Mr. J. John Bissett knew that the Academy of Our Lady of the Angels was offered for sale, he thought it was the opportunity to approach Bishop McQuaid, first Bishop of Rochester. With the suggestion that the building might be converted into a hospital, Dr. John A. Weyl also supported this plan and did much to further it.

Bishop McQuaid consulted Mother Alice soon after she made a visit to this city. Sister Peter and Paul, then next to the Academy on Abbott Street. She had been there a few hours when a visitor was announced — Dr. Daniel Murphy, whom she had never met before. Some of his colleagues had urged him to present not only their petition for Sisters for the hospital but also their promise to support the project to the best of their ability. The Sisters of St. Joseph, Sister Mother Agnes as well as the urgent need which he so eloquently pleaded, and she consented to undertake the work.

The task of operating a hospital — a completely "foreign" field for the Sisters — created a need for a capable person to assume its immediate direction.

WHEN SISTER ROSE ALICE Conway entered the chapel of the old Nazareth one day in 1907, she did not know that she was hearing the answer to Mother Agnes' prayer for someone who, in the Providence of God, might be the founder of the new work in the community. She was chosen with six other members of the Congregation to open St. Joseph's Hospital.

A native of Lima, New York, Margaret Conway had graduated from Genesee Wesleyan Seminary and had entered the Congregation in 1885. At the reception ceremony the following year, she was given the name Sister Rose Alice; and at the same time of her assignment to the hospital, she had completed her thirteenth year of teaching French and Mathematics at Nazareth Academy. Appointed with Sister Rose Alice on the original hospital staff were Sister St. Ann Murphy, Sister Mary John Monaghan, Sister M. Jerome Owen, Sister M. Ruth Sollicher, Sister M. Caroline Guster, and Sister M. Hedwiga Eyobner. None of this

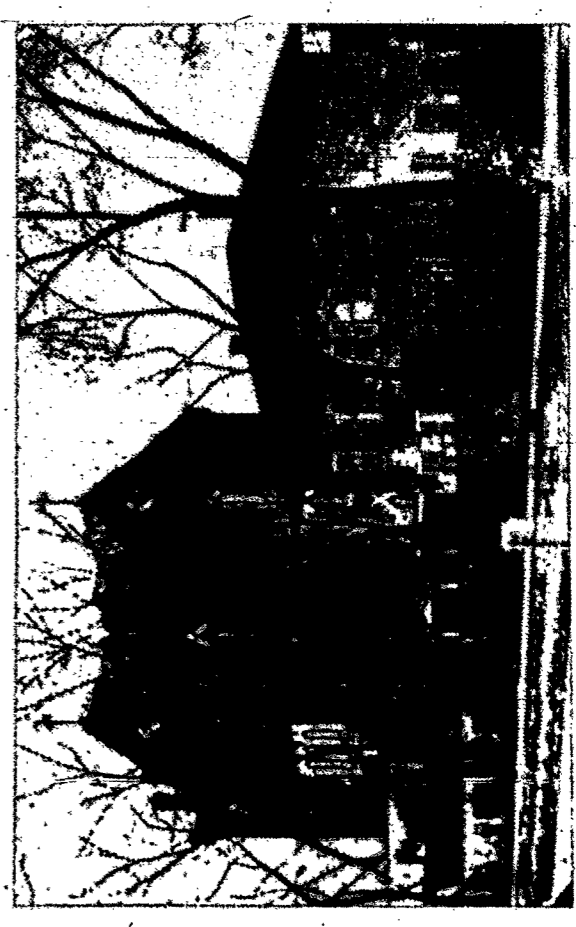
The reconstruction of the building proceeded according to the plan opened for the public inspection on September 24, 1908. It bore little resemblance to its former appearance and all who visited the hospital were impressed with the transformation.

DURING THE FIRST months of operation, activity lagged considerably. Educating the public to use the hospital facilities was an additional task for the administrators. The work was entirely too meager and expenses too high. Only thirty-two patients and twenty-five operations were performed during the first thirty days.

The ensuing months were especially busy for the little community of six Sisters working under the hardship. This can be vouched for by one of the Sisters who in later years wrote:

The first year was the hardest, struggles were bitter. We had to depend on our own strength. We often did not come until nine o'clock in the evening. When it was cold, we washed the babies in a corner of the kitchen. If the electricity did not come on in the few rooms we had it, we merely placed a lighted candle in a paraffin which served as a holder, thus preventing our problem in this extreme poverty.

We were very poor; all the money that Sister Rose Alice had was fifty dollars. We had no money to pay our help, but the people were very kind.



The first St. Joseph's Hospital, at left, opened in 1908. Nuns lived in convent at right.