In Appreciation . . . .

of the SISTERS of ST. JOSEPH for fifty YEARS Service to the Elmira Area . . .

The warm consideration and interest in the welfare of those under their care have won for the Sisters of St. Joseph and their capable nursing staff, a cherished spot in the hearts of the people and Elmira and vicinity. May God continue to reward their ministrations with many blessings!

This message of appreciation has been sponsored by the following merchants and individuals of the Elmira area and is sincerely acknowledged in gratitude by the Sisters of St. Joseph.

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History

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good to us. Some of the nurses waited for months for their pay and were very patient about it.

The first year we did our own laundry, except for the sheets and nurses uniforms. We would get up at three o'clock in the morning and do the wash in the kitchen; then in the afternoon when our work in the hospital was done, we would go down and do the ironing.

Straightened circumstances compelled the Sisters to look for assistance and they made their first appeal to the citizens of Elmira in June, 1909. Through the courtesy of Lee Breese, president of the Elmira Baseball Association the proceeds of a game between Wilkesbarre and Elmira were given to the hospital. About forty business places in the city were closed to give the clerks and other employees an opportunity to attend the game, and the "Ladies Circle of Mercy" under the direction of Mrs. John M. Connelly, president undertook the sale of tickets and achieved a measure of success.

The net proceeds which amounted to $1,350 were used to buy surgical instruments, to make improvements and to furnish a number of items which increased the efficiency of the hospital.

DURING THE FIRST YEAR of operation, 385 patients were admitted, of whom 125 were surgical cases. Only fourteen deaths occurred and thirty-one babies were born. In those days, for twenty-four hours following surgery, the patients were not left alone. This meant extra work for the Sisters and nurses, including Sister Rose Alice. Her duties of Superintendent called for long hours without material recompense, and her entire day and a large part of the night was spent at her desk or in the sickroom.

The first important addition to the hospital was made in 1910 with the erection of a laundry building.

With Sister Rose Alice at the helm, the hospital struggled through its early years and embarked upon a major expansion project in 1911. A slow beginning subsequently gave way to a rapid growth and within a few years the original facilities proved inadequate. An appeal was made to the public for financial aid to help pay for the property acquired on High Street, which was to be used for the building of an annex.

Under the chairmanship of Alexander Eustace, a local attorney, and Edward J. Dunn, treasurer, a campaign for funds was launched. The drive began on March 17, 1911. The committees canvassed every ward and district in the city and the response of the people in Elmira was gratifying.

The campaign ultimately netted approximately $15,000.

With the purchase of the additional property, plans were made for the construction of an annex. Long hours of labor became the lot of the administrator as she combined consultation with architects and contractors with other routine duties of purchasing hospital supplies, supervising collections, and keeping books.

In response to another appeal for aid in 1913, additional funds were provided from the proceeds of a baseball game between Elmira and Syracuse held on July 30. Daniel Kennedy, Jr. served as general chairman of the event and devoted his energy to making the benefit a financial success. Elmirans again proved their generosity by donating over $5,000.

On July 10, 1914, the annex was opened and with it came additional responsibilities for the Sisters. The new addition consisted of private rooms and wards for medical and surgical patients on the first floor, and a maternity section, nursery, delivery room, and sterilizing room on the second floor. A chart room, medicine closet, and utility room completed the facilities.

THE OPENING OF the annex increased the bed capacity to seventy-five and relieved temporarily the over-crowded condition of the hospital. It was not long before further expansion was envisioned.

Historic milestone of progress occurred in 1931 when clergy, architects, and medical staff members took part in cornerstone ceremony for new medical building.

Before the plans for additional facilities had materialized, the hospital acquired its first ambulance. The purchase price of $700 was secured through an entertainment under the direction of Miss Marie Connelly. Dr. Arthur Booth, a member of the staff, was the featured speaker for the event.

The problem of caring for a daily average of one hundred patients, when facilities existed for only seventy-five, was a trying one. Sacrifices, long hours of labor, and a struggle to make ends meet faced the Sisters each day as they cared for God's afflicted ones.

On January 19, 1916, Bishop Hickey launched a campaign in Elmira to raise funds to meet the growing needs of the hospital. In his appeal to a representative gathering of Catholic priests and laymen, after outlining the splendid work that had been accomplished by Sister Rose Alice and her co-workers since the foundation of the hospital, he described the current needs in concrete detail.

St. Joseph's most noteworthy benefactor Edward J. Dunn, came to the rescue. Realizing the great need of immediate action to relieve the bed shortage, he interested a committee of volunteer workers in October, 1920, to canvass the city for funds required for another proposed extension. As a result of this effort, $125,000 was added to the Building Fund and on July 16, 1922, another step forward was taken when ground was broken for a new surgical building. Bishop Hickey blessed the cornerstone on October 8, 1922.

Harry M. Haskell, architect, and Sister Rose Alice worked untiringly for many weeks on plans for the new hospital; and all the Sisters who had worked faithfully under somewhat unsatisfactory conditions in the adjoining old building, looked forward to the opening of the new one.

IN THE MIDST OF plans for the the new building and almost a year before it was ultimately erected, Reverend Mother Agnes, General Superior of the Sisters of Saint Joseph and chairman of the board of trustees of the hospital, died after a brief illness. More than half a century of her life had been consecrated to God, and thirty-nine of those years were spent in the office of General Superior. The love and confidence of the Sisters, as well as the general public, were always hers and her loss was regretted and deeply mourned by all.

The following July, the community elected Mother Sylvester Tindell third Superior General of the Congregation. Her motherhood rested naturally upon her, and her spiritual daughters knew that it was unchanging. No matter when the conference or what the problem, she was always the same; a well of quiet, a rock of peace, a waiting patience before which the important sifted itself from the trivial. As God's humble servant, for eighteen years she directed the community.

MOTHER AGNES
Mother General of St. Joseph Nuns in 1908

The first important incident, which marked Mother Sylvester's position as chairman of the board of trustees was the opening of the surgical building. The big front doors swung open for public inspection on December 17, 1923. The day which started with the formal dedication at nine o'clock by Bishop Hickey was followed by the graduation exercises for eight nurses held in the beautiful chapel on the first floor of the new hospital.

The new L-shaped building, with a 150 foot frontage on Dewitt Avenue and 82 feet on Market Street, was entirely fire resistant. Accommodating 150 patients, it contained all the essentials of a thoroughly modern building. Some of the important features included the latest X-Ray laboratory, and dietary equipment.

The annex, which had been completed in 1914, was now devoted exclusively to maternity cases; while the old hospital, the former Academy of Our Lady of the Angels, was used for general medical cases. An underground tunnel was constructed which connected the annex with the surgical building, and an elevator was installed in the annex.

With the continued growth of the hospital, the nursing staff grew to such an extent that the available provisions for housing the nurses were inadequate. In addition to this scattered arrangement, twenty students lived at home. With twenty-two Sisters on the staff and an enrollment of approximately seventy students, the congestion made it necessary to utilize the former operating rooms in the old medical building as the living quarters.

In 1927 another expansion program was launched, this time under the leadership of Edward J. Dunn. Spearheading the campaign was Mr. Dunn's personal donation of $100,000.

An appeal to the "Hearts and purse strings of the people of Elmira and vicinity" by the "Elmira Star-Gazette" gave impetus to the drive.

The spontaneous response netted in excess of $370,000, and on June 2, 1930, Sister Rose Alice realized a great ambition of her hospital career when ground was broken for a medical building and nurses' home, structures which were needed to give the hospital a Class A rating.

In the midst of the fund raising drive, Mr. Dunn, St. Joseph's benefactor and beloved friend, and Elmira's foremost citizen, financier, and philanthropist, passed into eternity.

The beautiful nine-story structure, has a frontage of 180 feet and was designed by Harry Haskell and Leo Considine, local architects. The rooms for the Sisters were located on the third and fourth floors, and the fifth to eighth floors, contained the students living quarters. Other important features of the building were a beautiful chapel, classrooms, library, and a large auditorium. An added convenience was a covered passageway between the nurses' home and the surgical building which permitted the Sisters and nurses to go from one building to another without going outside.

Although ground for the medical building was broken at the same time as the Dunn Memorial, actual

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