



A History Lesson – Part 3

The March of Mecklenburg Medicine

By Janice E. Huff, MD, President

I admit to a love/hate relationship with my editorial board. All is well when they agree with my manuscript, but when they want to edit, I am baffled by their obtuseness. Are they unable to recognize the polished gem before them?

But with the medical history saga, they were correct. In particular, it was the wisdom of Neil Howell, MD, that organized the material into four sections. What follows is a brief history of the hospitals in Mecklenburg County. Much more can be found in the references noted. Part 4 of the series will deal with medical education, which has been going on longer than many of you may know.



Mrs. Jane Wilkes and Charles Fox, MD, founded one of the first hospitals in Charlotte.

During the Civil War, North Carolina had no general hospitals. Nonetheless, Charlotte found itself a final transportation stop for wounded soldiers. In order to care for them, a Wayside Hospital and a Confederate hospital were built, and Charlotte citizens gained their first hands-on experience with large-scale patient care. Mrs. Jane Wilkes, originally from New York, helped found another hospital, along with Charles Fox, MD. The hospital was located in the North Carolina Military Academy building at East Morehead Street and South Boulevard. All three hospitals closed in 1865.

After the Civil War, under the leadership of Mrs. Wilkes, and with the help of the Episcopal churches, The Charlotte Home and Hospital was established in 1876 in two rented rooms on East Seventh Street. The city of Charlotte made its first contribution



Charlotte Memorial Hospital opened in 1940 and changed its name to Carolinas Medical Center in 1990.

to the hospital in the sum of \$200 in 1885. In 1896, a lot was purchased at Sixth and Poplar streets for relocation. The name was changed to St. Peter's Hospital, it had beds for 20 paying patients and 10 free patients. This was the first North Carolina hospital with an X-ray machine. St. Peter's continued to function until the opening of Charlotte Memorial Hospital (CMH) in 1940, when all patients and assets were transferred to CMH. The name was changed to Carolinas Medical Center in 1990 (the same year it was designated an "Academic Medical Center Teaching Hospital"), then to Carolinas HealthCare System (CMC-Main) in 1996 and now has 874 beds. The first patient admitted to CMH was Sarah Clarkson on October 10, 1940. She underwent an appendectomy performed by E. R. Hipp, Sr., MD.

The Charlotte Sanatorium was built at Seventh and Church streets in 1908 and was the finest medical building in this region. It stood for 34 years until the patients and staff moved to CMH in 1942, due to crowding in downtown Charlotte.

Encouraged by the success of St. Peter's Hospital for white patients, Mrs. Wilkes and the women of the Episcopal Churches of Charlotte ventured to build a hospital for African-American patients.

They advertised in a national Episcopal magazine and received donations from all over the country.

In 1883, \$400 was used to purchase an old school building and a neighboring lot. In December 1888, the cornerstone was laid, and in September 1891, the building was completed with room for 20 patients at a total cost of \$4,400. It was the first hospital in America for black patients only. Named The Good Samaritan Hospital of Charlotte, it functioned until 1982.

By then, it was owned by CMH and was called Charlotte Community Hospital. While Charlotte Memorial and Mercy Hospital had some beds for African-American patients by 1960, the hospital staffs were not integrated until 1963. In 1982, Charlotte Community Hospital was reorganized as a nursing home called The Magnolias (where I saw patients on my geriatric rotation as a resident). In 1990, it was demolished for construction of the Panthers football stadium.

In 1897, the Charlotte Medical and Surgical Institute opened as a private for-profit hospital owned by physicians. It



In 1891, the first hospital in America for African-American patients opened in Charlotte.

transferred to the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond. In 1966, UNC-Chapel Hill designated CMH as a teaching hospital for students in internal medicine. In 1990, Carolinas Medical Center was designated an Academic Medical Center Teaching Hospital and was the only teaching hospital in the state not based at a university. Another educational milestone was achieved in October 2010 when CMC-Main formally was designated as the Charlotte campus of the University of North Carolina School of Medicine.

Johnny on the Spot — A Leader in Preparedness

In 1997, various Charlotte-Mecklenburg agencies founded ALERT (Advanced Local Emergency Response Team). The team, comprised of law enforcement, fire and emergency medical personnel, holds regularly scheduled training. After 9/11, with threats of biochemical agents, SARS and bird flu pandemics, it became apparent that preparedness needed to go beyond transport of casualties to existing facilities. Thus, the Carolinas MED-1 Project was initiated in 2003. The idea was to have a mobile hospital capable of providing medical care when hospital resources were not available due to proximity, damage, quarantine or surge capacity. The project was supported by a grant from the Department of Homeland Security; the mobile unit was completed in April 2004. It was the first of its kind in this country, and has been demonstrated at numerous medical and disaster response conferences. Carolinas MED-1 officially was called to action in

the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, where over a seven-week period while located in Bay St. Louis, Miss., the staff cared for more than 7,500 patients and performed 15 onsite surgeries.

The 250-year history of medicine in Mecklenburg County has been colorful at times and always fascinating. What has remained consistent is the impetus to place the patient as the primary focus, provide the best care possible and ensure the next generation of physicians are trained not just to carry our lessons forward, but to improve upon them. With eight hospitals, 2,924 physicians, 471 physician assistants and 267 residents and fellows, we stand at the forefront of medicine in North Carolina.

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