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History

1839 The year was 1839 when a gentleman from Buffalo broke a leg on Fulton Street, near Brooklyn City Hall. It soon became clear that there was no place to take the stranger, except the infamous almshouse four miles away. Mayor Cyrus P. Smith, who witnessed the accident, had the man taken to a private house nearby and cared for at his own expense.

1845 Six years later, Mayor Smith convened a public meeting to discuss the establishment of a hospital in Brooklyn. The meeting was held in February, 1845, and in May of that year, Brooklyn City Hospital (later renamed The Brooklyn Hospital) was incorporated by the state legislature. Smith would later become the president of the first board of trustees.

Raising funds for the hospital was not encouraged. Newspaper accounts of the time described how hardly anyone attended those early fundraising meetings. One account tells of a meeting at the Brooklyn Institute where only $95 was collected.

1846 The need for a hospital in the growing city became so acute that the board of trustees moved to secure a temporary facility. Aided by generous contributions from Augustus Graham and other trustees, a two-story frame house was purchased for $2,600 from Thomas Litus on what is now Hudson Avenue.

1847 On December 10, 1847, the Brooklyn City Dispensary admitted its first patient. Inadequate as it was, this frame house would serve as a hospital for the sick and the poor until 1852, when the first building on the present site opened.

1848 By 1848, there was enough money collected through private contributions to begin in earnest the search for land for a hospital. In December of that year, the Committee of Lands reported with much fanfare and happiness the purchase from Kings County of a plot of 74 lots at $200 per lot. This land was located in an area bounded by Raymond Street, DeKalb Avenue and Canton Street . During Revolutionary times, the land was known as Cowenhaven's Woods and, because of its strategic location on a hill, it served as a fort for the forces of General Putnam. Later, in the War of 1812, the land was again fortified and renamed Fort Greene.

The first medical staff consisted of Doctors T. L. Mason, J. S. Thorne and D. Ayres., who were the attending surgeons. Doctors H.I. Cullen, Purcell Cook, C. R. McClellan and C. L. Mitchell assumed the care of medical cases.

Still in its infancy, the hospital acquired from various sources a medical library ? one of the first public medical libraries in New York. A medical student had access to the library for the nominal fee of $2.50 a year with the understanding that "profane swearing would be sufficient to deprive him of its privileges."

Ninety patients were treated in the hospital during its first year of operation (1848-1849). Sixty of those patients received medical attention, and the rest required surgery. The early difficulties faced in the small frame house that served as Brooklyn's only hospital were described by Dr. Ayres in his first report: "During the year several capital operations have been performed, and at times the surgeons have found themselves much embarrassed to provide the necessary accommodations for all their patients; thus when all the rooms are occupied, it has become necessary to perform bloody operations in a ward before several sick patients."

1851 On June 11, 1851, more than six years after Mayor Smith had convened the public hearing for the purpose of

establishing a hospital, the first cornerstone was laid by Mrs. Augustus Graham, whose husband, by then deceased, had contributed a total of $38,000. The first building opened a year later and was hailed immediately as "the last word" in hospital construction. It initially housed 160 patients.

1858 Pathological Hall was built in 1858 and quickly recognized by the medical profession as a place where theorizing and conjecture were superseded by the study of facts. The building, entirely separated from the main hospital building, was designed as a place for the study of pathological anatomy. The first floor was devoted to the study of pathology, and on the second floor, there were a lecture room, a museum and a library. In this building, autopsies were conducted, coroners' inquests held, and lectures delivered. The Brooklyn Hospital was the second hospital in the country to have a separate building to be used exclusively for the study of pathology.

When the Civil War broke out, The Brooklyn Hospital took on the role of caring for the sick and wounded soldiers of the Union Army ? a role it would assume again during the Spanish-American War, World War I and World War II. In World War I, a floor of the West Pavilion with its 60 beds was set aside for the care of sick and disabled sailors.

"I remember that during World War I the hospital was very active," recalled Dr. Edwin P. Maynard, Jr., whose association with the hospital dates back to 1921, and whose father was treasurer and chairman of the executive committee at The Brooklyn Hospital. "I remember the Navy paid us $7 a week for each wounded man, and there were many of them."

Over one hundred years after they were written, in fine Spencerian script, bound volumes of Case Records ? the earliest dated 1867-1869 ? were found in the Hospital's library. Research disclosed that they were among the first in the country to be maintained by means of a system that utilized a standardized nomenclature of disease to describe the afflictions of patients, and cross-referenced to make them easy to locate. This presumably was for the purpose of being able to extract information and statistics for study and research to be conducted at a later date.

1869 After the Civil War, in 1869, the Orthopedic Infirmary was opened in the building that had originally housed Pathological Hall. Poor patients from all over Long Island were treated there. Many patients were referred to the hospital's wards, but minor operations were performed in the Infirmary.

1880 A training school for nurses was established in 1880, thanks to the civic-minded women of the Fruit and Flower Mission. It was the first nursing school in Brooklyn and the second one in the State. The school's management was in the hands of these ladies, with Mrs. Seth Low as their first president. The hospital paid the school for the services of its students. In 1882, the first class of four students graduated. The school was to last until 1968, when Long Island University took over the responsibility of training nurses, and the hospital provided the clinical experience for the trainees.

1883 To change the impression that Brooklyn City Hospital was a municipal hospital, in 1883 our legal name became simply The Brooklyn Hospital. A report at the time said, "This was deemed advisable because, while the hospital was a charitable institution, the name conveyed the erroneous idea that it was a municipal corporation and supported by the city proper."

1890 An ambulance service was established in 1890 to cover a district that included downtown Brooklyn, Fort Greene, the Navy Yard and Bedford-Stuyvesant. During its first year of service, the ambulance responded to 971 calls.

1893 By 1893, another building was erected to house one of the first separate maternity departments to be found in a general hospital.

1896 In 1896, an annex was constructed to the nurses' residence, and in 1912, a separate building was completed on Ashland Place and opened as an enlarged dispensary. The latter building became the first constructed during an ambitious expansion program carried out during the presidency of Harold I. Pratt. Additional work in the course of his term included

a new hospital plant centering around the maternity building and demolition of the original 1852 structure. The institution by then had 306 beds.

1923 In 1923, St. Christopher's Hospital for Babies was transferred to the hospital, where it occupied the West Pavilion. That same year, a dental clinic, the City Dental Clinic and Dispensary, also moved to The Brooklyn Hospital.

1925 A great step forward in the direction of more efficient management of patient care took place in 1925, when Doctors William H. Field and Edwin P. Maynard, Jr. introduced a unit history system for keeping permanent, easy-to-retrieve patients' records. At the time, both young men were residents at the Hospital. Dr. Maynard explained the system during an interview: "At the time I arrived at the hospital, each department kept records separately. Field and I made an effort to adopt a unit system for each patient; each patient would get a number and that way we were able to file their records properly... it made a tremendous difference. It simplified everything and made patient care that much better."

1926 In 1926, an Electrocardiograph was installed ? the second in Brooklyn ? and a Department of Electrocardiography was established.

1945 Extensive modernization of equipment and facilities took place in the years following World War II. Improvements and additions included a new cardio-pulmonary laboratory for the study of diseases of the blood and circulatory system. A specially designed post-anesthesia room was built. In it, patients would spend the important hours immediately following surgery under the constant supervision of a trained team of nurses and doctors, who checked their reactions until they awoke and could be returned to their rooms. A centrally-piped oxygen system was also installed.

1957 The Brooklyn Hospital was further strengthened as a result of a merger with the Brooklyn Thoracic Hospital. Trustees and staff members of the combined institutions brought their abilities to bear for the good of the community. Their far-sightedness led to the development of a master plan which, from the period between 1969 and 1980, led to the renovation and reconstruction of more than half the hospital. During the same period, new services and equipment were added, keeping in time with the rapidly accelerating progress being made in methods of patient care.

1968 Another merger took place in 1968, and a prominently-placed plaque commemorates "The Evangelical Deaconess Hospital ? inspired in its inception by the Reverend August Daniel Post ? it served the Bushwick community for almost fifty years."

1976 A 20-story Staff Residence was completed and named in honor of Dr. Edwin P. Maynard, Jr., a man whose name has appeared several times in the course of this narrative. Dr. Maynard was associated with The Brooklyn Hospital for over sixty years. A cardiologist of note, he also served as keeper of the hospital's archives, a task he performed as a labor of love. Other programs and services that became available included a new pharmacy and a clinical association with the Arnold and Marie Schwartz College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences at Long Island University, a new clinical laboratory, a hemodialysis service, a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, a whole body C.A.T. scanner, a Speech and Hearing Center, a Diabetes and Endocrine Center, residency programs in Neurology, Rehabilitation Medicine, and Ophthalmology, a vascular surgery service, and a training program for Physicians' Assistants supported by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Nuclear Medicine, Cardiology and Oral Surgery also grew rapidly as advances occurred in their respective fields.

1980 In September of 1980, The Brooklyn Hospital celebrated the anniversary of its founding in 1845, and at that time its president, Mrs. George M. Billings, announced that the hospital had been given final approval of its application to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for a $72 million mortgage loan guarantee. This meant that Brooklyn's first voluntary hospital would be around for a great many years to come, building upon the tradition it established in its earliest days to provide modern, efficient medical and hospital care for the people of the community.

1982 One of the most dynamic periods in the history of the Brooklyn Hospital and Caledonian Hospital Merger, disaffiliation from Cumberland Hospital. The merger and disaffiliation created The Brooklyn Hospital-Caledonian Hospital. The intent of the merger with Caledonian Hospital was to create a Board and Management structure and a staff capable of providing a broader range of high-quality, cost effective health services to the Corporation's collective communities.

1986 The project to rebuild Caledonian Hospital became fully operational, after the successful MCFFA Bond sale in late 1985, and subsequent mortgage closing in January 1986.

1987 On December 28, the first patients were moved into a beautiful, new, modern Caledonian Hospital wing. One half of the physical plant at that site was now new, and the Emergency Room was five times its former size.

1990 The official name of the Hospital is changed to The Brooklyn Hospital Center.

1991 New York State implements a new requirement on annual community benefit standards, leading to the development of the first formal Community Service Report for The Brooklyn Hospital Center.

1992 Mrs. George M. Billings retires as Chairman of the Board, after serving in that position for 22 years.

1993 An Academic and Clinical Affiliation Agreement with New York University Medical Center and New York University is signed, commencing on January 1, 1994.

1995 The development of The Brooklyn Hospital Network, developed with an estimated capital requirement of approximately $50 million. The Network included five new owned/operated Article 28 extension centers, new affiliations with existing community based providers, and health services development with community-based organizations, affiliated physician practices, and School-based health centers, as well as the opening of the Rockwell Dialysis Unit in January 1996. Many of these remain in existence today, providing necessary healthcare services to varied communities served by the Hospital.

1998 On February 12, the Board of Trustees voted unanimously that The Brooklyn Hospital Center should become a Corporate Member of The New York and Presbyterian Healthcare System. On February 18, all documents were executed. This effectively terminated the affiliation with New York University Medical Center and New York University.

1997 *Modernization 2000* is launched, a $57,000,000 FHA Program. Phase I concluded in 1999.

2001 The defining moment was, of course, the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center. As we now reflect from not so great a distance, we are exceedingly proud of The Brooklyn Hospital Center and its people for their selfless response and of their abiding commitment to a Mission that was more than a century and a half old. At that time of national tragedy, when our own local community needed us more than ever, The Brooklyn Hospital Center was there. The Hospital Center, on a much brighter note, celebrated the completion of *Modernization 2000*, a construction, renovation and technology development program that placed the The Brooklyn Hospital Center among the most modern and best equipped hospitals in New York.

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