

Hospital Opened in 1908

Luther Swayed by Area's Needs

By BEVERLY BOETTCHER

Luther Hospital opened its doors March 30, 1908, 13 years after the Rev. Peder Tangjerd and several far-sighted civic planners believed there was a need for added facilities in which to care for Eau Claire's citizens.

Accommodations were available for 45 patients. Ida Isaacson, nurse, registered pharmacist and graduate lawyer, served as the hospital's first director and superintendent of nurses.

Today, Luther Hospital is a 310 bed, non-profit community hospital, owned by the community and operated by a local Board of Directors. It has a medical staff of 125 physicians, 34 dentists and, all together, employs more than 800 people.

In 1908 the Glimt Society was formed. It was recognized as the first hospital auxiliary in the state. In 1913 it became the Hospital Guild and later the Luther Hospital Auxiliary.

The first school of nursing at Luther was admitted in 1908 and graduated in 1910. Nurses worked 12 to 16 hours a day. Some 2,070 nurses later, in 1967, the hospital phased out its school in behalf of the local university program of nursing.

Sister Amalia Olson, a Lutheran Deaconess, arrived in 1909 and remained for 13 years as superintendent of the hospital and nurses.

In 1912 the first x-ray machine was installed, and the west wing was completed in 1917, raising the capacity to 100 beds, 3 sunparlors, 4 operating rooms.

The electromedical field was in its infancy in 1918. Vaccines had been developed against smallpox, diphtheria and typhoid fever. Doctors arrived in autos instead of horse-drawn carriages and the Dietetic Department was opened under the supervision of Miss Edna Ullric.

The flu epidemic of 1918-19 required setting up an isolation hospital in the old Montgomery Building.

In 1920, Luther won accreditation from the American College of Surgeons and the American Hospital Association and for many years was the only hospital in this part of the state to receive this recognition. By this time Luther served approximately 1,000 patients per year.

The first advisory board composed of three members, Rev. Syrdal, Rev. Weed, and Ed Johnson, was formed in 1921.

In 1928 Nels Hanshus was installed as hospital administrator and served 37 years. In spite of the economic crash of 1929, the Nurses' Home (East Wing

was built. A library for interns was established as required by the American Medical Association and, the first intern program began in 1931.

Free cancer clinics were started in 1937, and the purchase of an iron lung was considered at the request of the public. The community was beginning to feel a responsibility toward the hospital. Interest in the hospital's growth was evidenced by a demand for enlarged and updated facilities.

Three lots directly west of the hospital were purchased from 1938-42. An addition was built to the west wing permitting a new and modern obstetrical department and 14 rooms were added to the second floor. Federal funds were received to add a top floor and construct a new lobby and entrance. Laundry and powerhouse facilities were increased 100 per cent.

The early 40's found many nurses and doctors leaving for service in World War II. This led to the advent of the Volunteer Nurse Aide Corps sponsored by the American Red Cross. Eight Red Cross Volunteer Aides were trained to help alleviate the shortage of nurses due to the war. The hospital's school of nursing was one of three in the state approved by the U.S. Surgeon General in Washington to train nurses for national defense.

A blood bank for civilian defense was organized, one of two in the state. Penicillin was used here in 1943. Streptomycin was released to the hospital for use in 1946.

In 1947 Peter Parisi joined the hospital staff as a full-time registered physical therapist. Both men are still at Luther.

Eau Claire was beginning to be recognized as a true health center. With action in full swing, plans were made for a 100-bed extension of the west wing at an estimated cost of nearly \$1 million.

In 1951 another addition with four floors and a psychiatric unit was opened.

The Board of Directors then visioned expanding and modernizing the kitchen, pharmacy, physical therapy, and lobby. By now the hospital had a 226 bed capacity, 32 bassinets, and 56 doctors on the medical staff. A School of Anesthesia was started to aid in eliminating the shortage of registered nurses in anesthesia.

In 1952 Miss Sigrid Esval, a graduate from the 1911 Luther School of Nursing, retired after more than 40 years of service. A Luther Hospital Memorial Chapel Fund was started with the

theme, "May you find here the peace you seek and the joy of belonging."

In 1958 the new west wing was completed, followed by installation of an emergency lighting system, air conditioning in the kitchen area, oxygen piped to patient rooms, conversion to a bulk oxygen supply system, and modernized passenger elevators. In 1961 the hospital's most modern addition opened. It included a six-bed intensive care unit, an orthopedic unit, a psychiatric ward with special accommodations for patients and parents, and a four-bed student nurse infirmary. Each room in the new unit was equipped with remote control television, an intercom system, and telephones.

Open house was held in October of 1962, for the underground radiation therapy unit. Increased automation brought an Auto-Analyzer to the laboratory capable of running routine examinations at the rate of 40 per hour; and a Kodak-Processor permitted x-rays to be completely processed and ready to view in seven minutes instead of 45. (A later modification of the same unit reduced the time to 90 seconds.)

By 1963 the hospital was serving 29,705 patients. About 500 people were employed. Luther offered a three-year residency in pathology, a school of x-ray technology, a school of nursing affiliated with the local college, a school of laboratory technology, and a residency in hospital administration. The highlight of 1964 was the beginning of a new concept in hospital care, a self care unit was opened.

Air conditioning throughout the hospital was completed in 1965. Nels Hanshus retired after 37 years as administrator and Arne Sorlien became administrator in November of 1965.

Pediatric orientation programs to prepare children for hospitalization were started in 1966 along with a coronary care unit, a suicide prevention center; telephone conferences, TV programs in management development, psychiatric training programs, and those relating to the 160 other types of jobs at Luther.

Tele-Care originated at Luther Hospital in 1967 extending Luther's concern for people beyond the hospital walls. Preparations were made for the opening of the Red Carpet, an auxiliary sponsored next-to-new shop. A new blood analyzer was installed along with a scanner in the x-ray department, and computer in the business office.