

# HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF ARLINGTON HOSPITAL — 1934-1970

By HELEN E. SAMUEL \*

Effort to establish a hospital in Arlington began in the early 1930's. Probably the first person to express publicly the need for a hospital in Arlington County was Mrs. Mae E. Jacobs who was serving at that time as Superintendent of Public Welfare. Mrs. Bertha S. Kelly also promoted the idea. It was Mr. Gilbert L. Hall, a member of the Board of Public Welfare, however, who called together on June 29, 1934 a group of twenty citizens to formulate plans for the establishment of a hospital.

This group formed the Arlington Hospital Association which was incorporated on July 14, 1934. Application was made to the State for a hospital charter. The State granted such a charter on August 1, 1934. It was admitted to record in the office of the County Clerk on September 15, 1934.

It was decided that a non-profit, voluntary community hospital, the purpose of which would be to serve all persons regardless of race, creed or ability to pay, would be the most appropriate kind for the County. Members of the Board of Trustees were to serve always without compensation, receiving no hospital privileges of any sort as a result of their membership on the Board of Trustees. All areas of the County were to be represented in the membership of the Board with representation as broad as possible from various fields of endeavor. Present membership represents the fields of medicine, education, law, nursing, homemaking, pharmacy, ministry, business, banking, public utilities, etc. Since 1938 there has been representation from the Arlington County Medical Society. Dr. W. C. Welburn served in this capacity for a number of years as have Dr. Alfred M. Palmer and more recently Dr. Lloyd B. Burk, Jr. Since 1967, the Chief of Staff, at present Dr. Stephen J. Sheehy, has served as a member bringing to three the total number of physicians on the Board of Trustees.

The original *Articles of Incorporation* provided for a Board of Trustees of twenty-five members. In 1967, this number was changed legally to thirty. The present president is the only remaining charter member. To date, about one hundred citizens have served on the Board. That it has not been self-perpetuating is evidenced by the fact that there was a turnover of seventy-six percent in the ten-year period prior to 1967 when the membership was increased. With a continuously developing and expanding institution as large and as important as the hospital, it is very necessary to retain some continuity in the membership of the Board of Trustees.

Four citizens have served as President of the Board: Mr. Gilbert L. Hall, 1934-1954; Mr. William S. Hoge, III, 1954-1962; Mr. Louis C. Carl, 1962-1965 and Miss Helen E. Samuel, 1965-present.

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\* Miss Samuel is the only remaining member of the original Board of Trustees for Arlington Hospital Association and has served as the President of the Board since 1965.

It was not easy to build support for a hospital in the 1930's, the depression years. Mr. Gilbert L. Hall, however, was a guiding spirit who never gave up. Arlington Hospital might very well be considered a monument to his indomitable will and quiet determination to provide first-class hospital care for the citizens of Arlington County. A knowledge of the activities of those early frustrating years will provide an understanding of the reason why Mr. Hall was prevailed upon to serve as President of the Board of Trustees for twenty years.

Considerable time was spent exploring the County to locate a tract of land sufficiently large and properly located on which to build a hospital. The present site, the old Sealock farm, was chosen because it contained fifteen and one-half acres, was just about in the center of the County, and the price was right. On December 31, 1935, a contract was signed purchasing the property from Mr. W. W. Sealock for \$15,000.00 with a down payment of \$3,000.00 and an additional \$1,000.00 worth of hospitalization for Mr. Sealock and his immediate family.

Then came the struggle to raise the balance of the purchase price and additional funds to build a hospital. The Washington Community Chest was approached unsuccessfully to run a joint campaign. In 1935, however, the Arlington County Board of Public Welfare agreed to run a joint campaign with the Arlington Hospital Association with the hospital to receive whatever amount over \$7,500.00 which would be pledged or contributed. A total of approximately \$4,000.00 was eventually realized from this source.

During the early years, the Women's Auxiliary, which was organized immediately after the granting of the charter for the hospital, under the leadership of Mrs. Lillie K. Boss raised a considerable portion of the money to pay for the ground. Mrs. Mae E. Jacobs, too, sought and received many contributions. The Women's Auxiliary has been an amazing organization over the years. To this day these dedicated women continue to astound the Board of Trustees by their frequent and generous contributions of money to the Building Fund and by their continuous work in the hospital.

After the purchase of the property, the old home was renovated and water was installed. During the summers of 1936 and 1937, the Board of Public Welfare was permitted to use it as a summer home for undernourished children. In 1938, the Cherrydale Boys Club used the grounds for football. Before the hospital was built the house was moved farther back on the grounds and was used subsequently as a home for some of the nurses.

As early as 1938, plans were drawn for a 55-bed hospital to cost \$125,000. In 1939, the Hockenberry Corporation was engaged to conduct a drive to raise \$170,000, but less than \$33,000.00 resulted. Ever since that unsuccessful drive, the Board of Trustees has refused to employ a fund-raising organization. Instead it has conducted successfully its own campaigns for funds.

In 1941, the Board of Trustees having made final payment on the property, owned at last the site on which to build. In May of 1941 the Health Security Administration completed a master plan for hospital expansion and development in the Metropolitan Area which provided for an additional eight hundred beds and included, as one of three top priorities, a hospital for Arlington.

Consequently, in July of 1941 the Board of Trustees voted to apply to the Federal Works Agency for a construction loan under the Lanham Act. In November of 1941 the Regional Director of the Federal Works Agency offered to help the Board in its effort to secure a loan of \$881,000.00 to build a 185-bed facility but the application was not granted. The Commissioners of the District of Columbia maintained that the District's projects should have top priority for these funds because of the concentration of defense workers in the city. In this respect Arlington was declared a non-defense area and the money was lost.

After the Declaration of War, Commissioner Young was named Coordinator of Defense Plans for the Metropolitan Area. He wanted to build on the Arlington Hospital site a 500-bed evacuation facility of very temporary construction. The Arlington Hospital Board of Trustees remained firm, however, in its opposition and continued to press for Lanham Act funds to build its own hospital.

Finally in August of 1942, there was a reconsideration of the application with the result that the Federal Works Agency agreed to build a 100-bed hospital, with an additional 50-bed area for nurses on the second floor, at a cost of \$587,000 provided no critical war materials would be used in the construction. This, of course, meant no steel could be used. Although the Federal Government was to own the hospital temporarily, there was written into the agreement, the firm proviso that the hospital would be operated entirely under the jurisdiction of the Board of Trustees of the Arlington Hospital Association.

A fact little known in Arlington is that at this same time the Board of Trustees of the hospital conveyed to Arlington County slightly more than an acre of ground on which to build a health center with Lanham Act funds for which the County had applied. In 1943 another strip 60 feet in width was conveyed to meet the Federal Government requirements. Both pieces of ground were conveyed with the stipulation that they would revert to the hospital if the Health Center ever ceased to operate as such.

On March 18, 1943, bids were opened and ground was broken on April 5th. On April 3, 1943, B. W. Wright was employed as Superintendent for the hospital in order to supervise construction and plan for the opening of the hospital. He was followed by Charles H. Dabbs in September of 1943 until September of 1944, when he was succeeded by Karl H. York who served as administrator until May of 1948. John J. Anderson, the present administrator was employed on May 1, 1948.

On February 12th and 13th of 1944 the Board of Trustees held open

house at the hospital and opened it officially for the admission of patients on March 15th. It is interesting to note that the first baby was born in the hospital on the very next day.

The Board of Trustees had obtained from the Federal Government an additional amount of \$139,250 for operation and maintenance purposes. Nevertheless, those early years were very frustrating. It was just about impossible to keep the operation of the hospital out of the red. Much credit is due Mr. Anderson, however, who had assumed the position as administrator when the hospital was deeply in debt. Through his good administration, under policy set by the Board of Trustees, he put the hospital in the black. In addition, giving unstintingly of his time and energy, he voluntarily became the hospital's public relations officer speaking to service organizations and other groups to interest them in supporting the hospital through gifts and contributions.

In December, 1948, the Board of Trustees offered to purchase the building from the Federal Government at a price of \$100,000. The Federal Government asked \$125,000 which the Board of Trustees accepted provided the money could be paid with a \$30,000 down payment and the balance in ten equal annual payments. Final agreement was reached on October 12, 1949, when the Trustees made a down payment of \$25,000 and agreed to pay the balance of \$100,000 in four annual payments of \$15,000 and a final one of \$40,000 with interest at 3%. This was not a bad bargain for a building which had cost a total of \$661,000 by the time it had been completed. Final payment was made ahead of schedule to the Federal Government in October of 1953.

By 1948 it was becoming evident that, although the hospital was doing an outstanding job in providing excellent care, more bed space would be needed. Consequently, by 1950, the Board had developed a long-range plan to expand the hospital to 350 beds with accompanying ancillary facilities. The expansion program involved the securing of Hill-Burton funds and the matching of such funds.

The first phase of the expansion program, the three-storied South Wing, built at a cost of \$500,000 and providing 77 additional beds and expanded laboratory facilities, was opened in the spring of 1953. For the first time since its organization in 1934, the hospital was completely free of debt.

The second phase of the expansion program, the three-storied North Wing, provided an additional 70 beds, new and larger emergency, x-ray and out-patient facilities in addition to a separate laundry and boiler plant. It was opened in July of 1957 at a cost of \$1,700,000. This addition, also opened free of debt, expanded the hospital to 250 beds.

The third phase had been planned to expand the hospital to 350 beds. As with the other two expansions, however, the desires of the doctors were adhered to and the third phase was changed to provide new and larger operating and delivery rooms, doctors' residence quarters, dietary, kitchen and cafeteria facilities and stock rooms. It was opened in 1963 at a cost

of \$1,300,000 also free of debt. Shortly after, at the time of the hospital's accreditation by the American Hospital Association, the accrediting officer stated that this is one of the finest units of its kind anywhere.

For all three expansions the Board of Trustees applied for and received grants from Hill-Burton funds and conducted campaigns to raise the matching funds.

There have been many other additions to the hospital to update the quality of medical care. In 1964, the cardiac intensive care unit, the first in the area and the third in the country, was installed at a cost of \$120,000. By 1968, the electronic equipment was fast becoming obsolete and was replaced by new equipment at a cost of \$25,000. The Chapel was also built in 1964 and in 1969 closed circuit television was installed whereby clergy may conduct services. This was made possible by the United Church Women of Arlington.

In 1965, "A Hall" was completely refurbished; in 1966 the Inhalation Therapy Department was added and the Obstetrical Wing was renovated and refurbished. In 1967, the Pediatric Wing was renovated, an Observation Room with six beds was added to the Emergency Department and a new Out Patient Unit was completed in the old kitchen area. In 1968, a Surgical Intensive Care Unit with modern equipment and seven beds was installed and new X-ray equipment added at a cost of \$125,000. In 1969, a Medical Intensive Care Unit with the latest equipment and seven beds was installed.

There has been a continuing replacement of out-dated equipment in the laboratories and elsewhere in the hospital.

For over twenty years, Arlington Hospital has contracted with the Medical College of Georgetown University for a teaching affiliation. Less than ten per cent of the hospitals throughout the country have such an affiliation which provides the hospital, among other things, with 24-hour doctor coverage and keeps its staff informed on the very latest in medical procedures and care through conferences, lectures, etc. In addition, there is a continuous in-service education program such as orientation and refresher courses for nurses and operating room technicians and a course with the local high schools to train nurses' aides.

A firm of hospital consultants, James Hamilton Associates, was engaged July 23, 1965, to conduct a survey of the area served by the hospital and to make recommendations for its expansion. In February of 1966, the Hamilton Report was received. It projected an expansion program to 1985 at a cost at that time of \$9,085,000.

Later, Mr. Fred McNamara, who prepared the Hamilton Associates Report, recommended the purchase of a piece of land near the parking lot which would be advantageous in the over-all planning. This was approved by the Board on February 12, 1968. A right-of-way involving the hospital-owned Kilmer property was requested by the County for the widening of George Mason Drive. In addition, arrangements were made to purchase

the residences on the hospital side of Edison Street, in order to satisfy County ordinances with respect to necessary parking spaces and green areas.

On June 12, 1967, the Board of Trustees approved a \$6,000,000 expansion, but changed this on October 9, 1967, to \$7,500,000 with \$3,000,000 to be obtained from Hill-Burton funds, \$1,000,000 from the hospital's building fund and \$3,500,000 to be borrowed and raised in the community.

Application was made for Hill-Burton funds, but the Board of Trustees received notice on December 5, 1968 that the request had been denied.

Many conferences and meetings have been held on the plans for the expansion which have involved not just the Trustees but doctors, nurses, heads of departments and other staff personnel who will use the facilities. In the meantime, the cost of the project has increased. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare has officially approved the project and the Federal Housing Authority will insure the amount to be borrowed by the hospital.

The estimated cost of the new addition is now \$10,000,000 and authorization to borrow up to this amount has been voted by the Board of Trustees. In the interest of keeping hospital costs as low as possible to the individual patient however, it is hoped that a large portion of this amount will be contributed by the community.

Bids which were let on August 5th will be opened on September 10th. If the low bid is within the estimate, ground-breaking will take place this fall with completion of the project within approximately eighteen months.

The new building will have space for 228 beds and will house in addition the x-ray, pathology and emergency departments, out-patient facilities and administrative offices. It will have four floors above ground and a structural steel foundation strong enough for the addition of three more floors. It will have also ancillary facilities sufficient for a 500-bed hospital.

As soon as the new building is completed, a 25-bed psychiatric unit will be installed in the renovated section of the present North Wing which will also retain 110 beds bringing the total number of beds for acute illnesses to 350.

The present pediatric unit will be moved into a renovated section of the South Wing. Other areas of the hospital will be renovated to provide larger classrooms for the teaching affiliation and for the in-service educational programs. Rather than tear down the one-storied original wings of the hospital, it has been decided to renovate them for use as an extended care unit just as soon as the beds for acute illnesses can be released.

This, then, is the Arlington Hospital's story. As the only remaining member of the original Board of Trustees the writer has welcomed the opportunity to tell it. Over the years she has been privileged to observe the selflessness and dedication of the members of the Women's Auxiliary and of the nearly one hundred citizens who have served on the Board without remuneration or hospital benefits in order to give to the community the invaluable gift of its hospital and to operate, maintain and expand it.