

HISTORY OF THE ARLINGTON HOSPITAL

Adapted from an article by Helen E. Samuel

Efforts to establish a hospital in Arlington began in the early 1930s. Probably the first person to express publicly the need for a hospital was Mrs. Mae E. Jacobs, superintendent of public welfare. Mrs. Jacobs, a member of the County Board and a member of the School Board presented ideas for projects at a meeting of five Federated Women's Clubs of Arlington November 19, 1933. Since establishment of a hospital appealed to club members, Mrs. N.D. Mitchell, the presiding officer, appointed Mrs. Bertha S. Kelly chairman of a committee to investigate the possibility.

After several meetings, this committee, known as the Central Committee of Federated Women's Clubs of Arlington, explained the plan to establish a hospital to twenty county organizations and requested that each contribute \$5 to defray the cost of incorporation. A nominating committee of the central group named twenty persons to a Board of Trustees for the proposed hospital. On June 29, 1934, this board of twenty citizens met to formulate and execute plans to establish a hospital in Arlington County.

The Arlington Hospital Association was incorporated July 14, 1934, and the state granted a hospital charter August 1, 1934. This was recorded in the office of the County Clerk September 15, 1934.

The association decided the most appropriate hospital for Arlington would be a non-profit, voluntary community facility to serve all persons regardless of race, creed or ability to pay. Members of the Board of Trustees were to serve without compensation or hospital privileges, and membership was to include all segments of the county.

The original Articles of Incorporation provided for a Board of Trustees of twenty-five members. In 1967 this number was changed to thirty. To date over 140 citizens have served the Board. Trustees may now serve three consecutive terms of three years each. Any member serving three consecutive terms must go off the Board for at least one year before being eligible for election again. With a continuously developing and expanding institution as large and as important as a hospital, it is essential to retain some continuity in board membership.

Five citizens have served as President of the Board: Gilbert L. Hall, 1934-54; William S. Hoge III, 1954-62; Louis C. Carl, 1962-1966; Miss Helen E. Samuel, 1966-1975; and Kenneth M. Haggerty, D.D.S., 1975 to present.

Building support for a hospital during the depression years was not easy. Gilbert L. Hall, however, was a guiding, persistent spirit, and the Arlington Hospital might very well be considered a monument to his indomitable will and quiet determination to provide first-class hospital care for Arlington County

residents. A glimpse at the early frustrating years provides an understanding of why Mr. Hall was asked to serve as President of the Board of Trustees for twenty years.

Exploring the county to locate a suitable tract of land took considerable time. The present site, the old Sealock farm, was chosen because of its size (15½ acres), location and price. On December 31, 1935, the property was purchased from W.W. Sealock for \$15,000, with a \$3,000 down payment and a provision of \$1,000 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 for a building. The Washington Community Chest was approached unsuccessfully to run a joint campaign. In 1935 however, the Arlington County Board of Public Welfare ran a joint campaign with the Arlington Hospital Association. The hospital would receive any amount over \$7,500 pledged or contributed — and \$4,000 was eventually realized from this source.

During the early years, the Woman's Auxiliary, founded in 1934 and led by Mrs. Lillie K. Boss, raised a considerable portion of the money for the ground purchase. Mrs. Mae E. Jacobs, who had first promoted the idea of a hospital, sought and received many contributions. The Woman's Auxiliary has been an amazing organization over the years. To this day, these dedicated women continue their frequent and generous contributions of funds and work time in the hospital.

After the purchase of the property, the old home was renovated and water installed. In 1936 and 1937, the Board of Public Welfare used 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; later it became a home for some of the nurses. It was eventually torn down.

As early as 1938, plans were drawn for a 55-bed hospital to cost \$125,000. In 1939, the Hockenberry Corporation conducted a drive to raise \$170,000, but less than \$33,000 resulted. Since that unsuccessful effort, the Board of Trustees has conducted its own successful fund campaigns.

In 1941, the Board of Trustees made final payment on the property, and that May the Health Security Administration completed a master plan for hospital expansion and development in the metropolitan area. It provided for an additional 800 beds and included a hospital for Arlington as one of three top priorities.

Consequently, in July, 1941, the Board of Trustees applied to the Federal Works Agency for a construction loan under the Lanham Act. In November, the regional director of the Federal Works Agency offered to help the board secure a loan of \$881,000 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 the 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, coordinator of defense plans for the metropolitan area, wanted to build a 500-bed evacuation facility of temporary construction on the Arlington Hospital site. The Board of Trustees remained firm in its opposition however, and continued to press for Lanham Act funds to build its own hospital.

Finally, in August, 1942, the Federal Works Agency reconsidered the application and agreed to build a 100-bed hospital, with an additional 50-bed area for nurses on the second floor. The cost would be \$587,000, and no critical war materials could be used in the construction. This, of course, meant no steel could be used. Although the federal government was to own the hospital temporarily, the hospital would be operated entirely by the Board of Trustees of the Arlington Hospital Association.

The Board of Trustees deeded Arlington County slightly more than an acre of land for a county health center, and in 1943, added a 60-foot strip to that gift. The only stipulation stated that the lands would revert to the hospital if the health center ceased to operate as such.

Ground was broken April 5, 1943, and the hospital admitted its first patient less than a year later, March 15, 1944. The first baby was born in the hospital the next day.

Early administrators included B.W. Wright, from April to September, 1943; Charles H. Dabbs, September, 1943 to September, 1944; and Karl York, September 1944 to May 1948. John J. Anderson, named administrator in May, 1948, gave more than 25 years of dedicated service until his retirement February 11, 1974. Frank D. Whalen succeeded Anderson and, in 1975, John P. Sverha became the Hospital's sixth administrator.

Though the Board of Trustees received a \$139,250 federal grant to operate and maintain the hospital, the early years were frustrating and debt-ridden. When Mr. Anderson became administrator, the hospital was deeply in debt. Through his administration and policies set by the Board of Trustees, the hospital became financially secure. In addition to giving unstintingly of his time and energy, he became the hospital's public relations officer by speaking to service and community organizations to interest them in supporting the hospital financially.

In December, 1948, the Board of Trustees offered the federal government \$100,000 for the building. The government asked \$125,000, which the board agreed to, provided that a \$30,000 down payment could be followed by 10 equal annual payments. The final agreement came October 12, 1949, when the Board paid \$25,000 down and agreed to pay the \$100,000 balance in four annual payments of \$15,000 and a final one of \$40,000. The interest was 3 percent. This was not a bad bargain for a building which had cost \$661,000 to

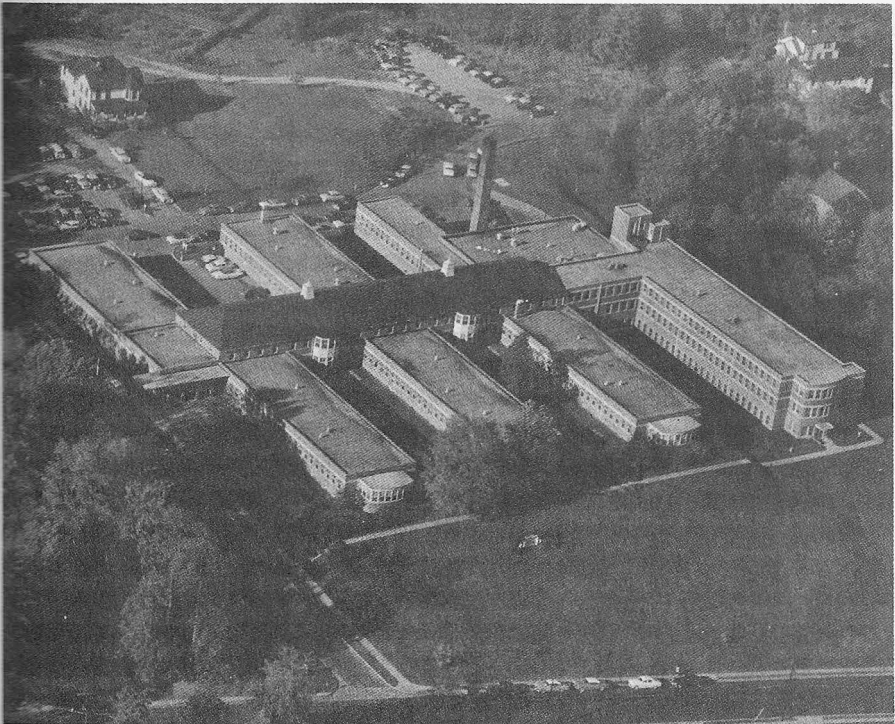
complete. Final payment was made ahead of schedule in October, 1953.

By 1948, it had become evident that more 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 securing Hill-Burton funds and matching such funds.

The first phase of the expansion program, the three-story South Wing, opened in spring 1953. Built at a cost of \$500,000, it provided 77 additional beds and expanded laboratory facilities. 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-story North Wing, provided 70 more beds, new and larger emergency, x-ray and out-patient facilities plus a separate laundry, and boiler plant. When the addition opened July, 1957, at a cost of \$1.7 million but free of debt, it expanded the hospital to 250 beds.

The third phase, at the suggestion of the medical staff, was built to provide for new and larger operating and delivery rooms, doctors' residence quarters, dietary, kitchen and cafeteria facilities and stock rooms. It opened debt-free in 1963 at a cost of \$1.3 million. Soon afterwards, the accrediting officer of the



View of the Arlington Hospital, 1953

American Hospital Association called the hospital one of the finest units of its kind anywhere.

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

Many other additions to the hospital have updated the quality of medical care. In 1964, the cardiac intensive care unit — the first in the area and third in the country — was installed for \$120,000. By 1968, new electronic equipment costing \$25,000 replaced that which was fast becoming obsolete. The chapel was built in 1964, and in 1969, closed circuit television, financed by the United Church Women of Arlington was installed. This permitted clergy to conduct services to all patients.

A Surgical Intensive Care Unit and new x-ray equipment were added in 1968 at a cost of \$125,000. A Medical Intensive Care Unit was installed in 1969. During all these years out-dated equipment was continually replaced.

The Board hired a firm of hospital consultants, James Hamilton Associates, in 1965 to survey the hospital service area and make recommendations for hospital expansion. The report, issued in February, 1966, projected an expansion program to 1985 at a cost then of \$9,085,000.

Later, Fred McNamara, who prepared the Hamilton report, recommended the purchase of land adjoining the parking lot, and the Board gave its approval February 12, 1968. The county requested a right-of-way to widen George Mason Drive. In addition, arrangements were made to purchase residences on the hospital side of Edison Street to meet county ordinances for parking and green space.

On June 12, 1967, the Board of Trustees approved a \$6 million expansion but changed this October 9, 1967, to \$7.5 million. Three million would be obtained from Hill-Burton funds, \$1 million from the hospital's building fund and \$3.5 million to be borrowed and raised in the community. The request for Hill-Burton funds was denied.

Numerous conferences and meetings were held with the trustees, doctors, nurses, department heads and staff personnel to discuss the expansion plans. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare (now the Department of Health and Human Services) officially approved the project.

By the time construction started, the cost of the building had increased greatly. The campaign to raise \$3.5 million from the community achieved just over \$1 million. It therefore became necessary to borrow \$9.5 million for the building and \$2 million for equipment.

The new building, which opened December 26, 1973, has 225 beds, bringing the hospital's total to 350. It has four floors above ground, a structural steel foundation strong enough for the addition of three more floors, and ancillary facilities sufficient for a 500-bed hospital. In July of 1978, the hospital property was appraised for \$30,671,500.



View of the Arlington Hospital, 1973

For more than thirty years, the Arlington Hospital has maintained a teaching affiliation with the Georgetown University School of Medicine. The association provides the hospital with 24-hour doctor coverage and keeps the staff informed about the latest in medical procedures and care through conferences, lectures, etc. The hospital also has teaching affiliations with Northern Virginia Community College, Marymount College and George Mason University. Through the latter program, registered nurses may pursue advanced courses and degrees. The hospital has an affiliation for licensed practical nurses with the Arlington County Public Schools.

Today, the Arlington Hospital offers a 24-hour Emergency Department and Poison Control Center, Family-Centered Maternity Unit, including Birthing Rooms, Outpatient Clinics, Outpatient Surgery Suite, Alcoholism Treatment Unit, Psychiatric Treatment Unit, Cardiac Rehabilitation Program and a Young Adult-Pediatrics Unit.

The hospital offers a full range of diagnostic services including a CT Scanner, radiation therapy, other radiological services and full-service Pathology and Physical Medicine departments. Each year, the Arlington Hospital averages approximately 12,000 patients admitted, nearly 30,000 Emergency Department visits, 1½ million laboratory tests, 50,000 x-rays and 1,200 births.

Efforts to raise funds from the community continue.