

More On Hospitals

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Last Sunday we discussed the hospital facilities or, rather, lack of such facilities available to Solano County and Vallejo residents from 1849. Today we will go into some detail concerning the medical and nursing care Vallejoans have had since that date.

Most early doctors had their offices in or adjacent to a drug store. Many doctors, for the first half of the century, owned the drug store; in numerous instances the physician was the store's pharmacist. Typical of these early pharmacies was a back room where treatment and minor surgery could be performed. Until about 60 years ago it was the practice for someone to sleep in the drug store around the clock. Most remedies had to be compounded and in an emergency the pharmacist had to be available by a knock on the business door. There weren't telephones in those early days.

William F. Topley remembers that his father took his turn in sleeping in the back of the store; so did his grandfather. The Topleys have been druggists in Vallejo for more than 100 years.

NURSING CARE

Volunteer nursing care was available a century ago through the generosity of many dedicated Vallejo women. Late in the 1850s there was organized in Vallejo the Good Samaritan Society which operated until the 1890s. A similar group of ladies was called St. Vincent's Benevolent Society. These women, according to the Evening Chronicle of Nov. 18, 1869, "relieved the suffering in our midst, cared for the sick, and relieved the needy." Money came from public subscriptions. The 1869 officers of the Good Samaritans included Mrs. D. W. Hildreth, as president; Mrs. I. Halsey as secretary and Mrs. E. T. Starr as treasurer. Directors included Mrs. George F. Mallett, the grandmother of Miss Henrietta Mallet and Mrs. Al Watson of this city.

Now we come to our first hospital. Dr. James J. Hogan created the Hogan Hospital in 1907 where the First Methodist Church now stands at Virginia and Sonoma streets. The building was the Wadsworth House, with rooms and board, operated by Mrs. James Bennett, aunt of Chester Sobey of 618 Tennessee street. In 1912 the hospital was sold to Thomas (Tobe) Williams.

Two local women who served as managers of the hospital were Mrs. Slater and Mrs. Ida Redden. In 1921 Tobe built the Vallejo General on its Tennessee street site. The

older building was torn down and the church erected. Incidentally, the brick in the Methodist Church was about the last to be made in Vallejo—the brickyards at the north end of Bay Terrace.

Earlier, Dr. Hogan maintained offices in the first floor of his residence on Sacramento street. Later this became the Salvation Army Corps residence, and torn down two years ago for a city parking lot.

OTHER TREATMENT OFFICES

Prior to the hospital Dr. Hogan performed minor surgery in his home office. But such practice was routine throughout town.

Dr. Rachel B. Lain—whose residence and office were located on Marin street on the site of the post office—had several “recovery beds” in the basement. She served Vallejo in this manner from about 1901 to about 1914.

Likewise, about 1911, a Dr. Downing—presumably from Suisun—opened a hospital on the second floor at 511 Marin St. This is across from the former Times-Herald office, and was later used by the American Red Cross. The site is now a parking lot. He was joined in the management in 1912 by Dr. Ream Leachman, whose widow now lives at 600 Virginia St. They operated until about 1914.

Then another well-known Vallejo surgeon, Dr. Bernard J. Klotz (also owner of a pharmacy) opened facilities in the basement of his home at 623 Georgia—still standing across the street from the Episcopal Church. He maintained “recovery beds” here for about four years, and advertised in the city directory as “Klotz’s Sanitarium.”

Dr. Dempsey (Capitol and Alameda streets) also advertised his “Sanitarium” at 944 Capitol street for the same period; this consisted of several “recovery rooms.”

About 1915 a Maternity Home and general ladies’ hospital opened at 608 Florida St. (just back of Dr. Lammel’s office on Marin St.). This building was demolished three months ago for a parking lot. The home was managed by Mrs. Leta Triplett, a registered nurse. The visiting doctor was usually Miss Rachel Lain, but apparently her sister, Dr. Nesbit of Santa Rosa, owned the institution.

Then came WWII and real problems! In 1942 the City Council sent a delegation to Washington to ask for additional hospital facilities. The Federal Housing people were authorized to build the Community Hospital. Completed in 1943, it was managed by a commission headed by Ray Nutting with Harry Mitchell (now owner of the Vallejo Steam Laundry) as secretary. Dr. John W. Green and the late Thomas J. O’Hara were

among the directors. The deficit to the city became frightening, and in 1944 the Permanente Foundation took over the operation; subsequently, this became known as the Kaiser Foundation Hospital.

Today the community continues to keep pace, and a modern Vallejo General near Lake Chabot is proposed to replace the present Tennessee street buildings.

How frequently do we hear someone talk about “the good old days?” Do any of todays ailing citizens wish to trade?

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