HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

of

THE SISTERS OF THE SORROWFUL MOTHER

of

THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

Edited by

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Volume I

Convent of the Sorrowful Mother
6618 N. Teutonia Avenue
Milwaukee 9, Wisconsin

September, 1960
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY

of

THE SERVANT OF GOD, MOTHER FRANCES STREITEL
Foundress of the Community,

and of

THE PIONEERING SISTERS,

Who, with Mother Foundress, laid the
foundations of the early institutions of the Community
PREFACE

This book on the history of the Community of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother has been prepared for private use for the Sisters of the Community. Since it is not for publication, that is, it is not for sale, the imprimatur of the Bishop is not required by Canon Law.

Volume I of the Community's history will supply a long-felt need in the education of the young Sisters, novices, and candidates. The Sacred Congregation of Religious and others interested in the development of the young Sisters urgently recommend that the history of one's respective religious community be studied during the novitiate. This study should help to arouse in the mind and soul of the zealous novice loyalty, love, respect, and gratitude toward her own community.

Every religious community, no matter when and where founded, has been established on the rock foundation of humility and unspeakable difficulties, if the community has survived through the ages. Divine Providence has guided the Community of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother and has showered abundant graces and blessings upon it because of the heroic prayer-life and humble self-abnegation of the Servant of God, Mother Frances Streitel, and her pioneering spiritual daughters.

May the study of the life and the works of Mother Frances effect that the true spirit of the Community of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother be renewed and preserved and that love and devotion to the Foundress be increased in the hearts of her spiritual daughters.

Editor
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Chapter XIII

MERCY HOSPITAL, OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN

1918

(Continuation of St. Mary's Hospital)

Note: In order to understand the early history of Mercy Hospital it is recommended to read first the historical sketch of St. Mary's Hospital.

* * *

In the summer of 1917 Doctors M. E. Corbett and H. W. Morgenroth paid a visit to Sister M. Wendelina Bauer, who at that time was Mother General's vicaress and acting superior at St. Mary's Hospital, Oshkosh, to inform her that the privately owned Lakeside Hospital was for sale and that the doctors greatly desired the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother to take it over. Sister M. Wendelina, who had already heard rumors that things did not go well at Lakeside, showed herself cold and disinterested regarding this offer. Sister M. Boniface Goetz smilingly said, "Yes, doctor, you want to take the rope from your neck and hang it around ours." Because they were losing money, the doctors who were stockholders of Lakeside Hospital were determined to sell in a hurry and continued to press their cause that the Community take over the hospital as soon as possible.

Many priests in Oshkosh advised the Sisters to buy the hospital. The Bishop of the Green Bay Diocese, the Most Reverend Paul P. Rhode, made a special trip to St. Mary's Hospital in order to discuss the Lakeside Hospital situation with Sister M. Wendelina. He earnestly urged that the Community take Lakeside, suggesting that they might use it as a maternity hospital.

In April, 1918, after considerable negotiations, Lakeside Hospital was bought for about half the amount of the
building cost. At the suggestion of Bishop Rhode the name of the hospital was changed to Mercy Hospital.

On that memorable April day on which the Sisters officially took charge of Mercy Hospital, they transferred the few patients to St. Mary's Hospital in order to give the institution a thorough cleaning and make the necessary changes and modifications. When the institution was ready for occupancy, Bishop Rhode blessed the hospital from top to bottom in the presence of Sisters M. Wendelina Bauer and M. Sebastiana Hoerling. In June patients were again admitted, only medical cases, however; all major surgical cases were taken to St. Mary's.

Dr. M. E. Corbett had started his school of nursing as early as 1906 in his frame building, the Lakeside Hospital. His first class was graduated in 1908. This school of nursing, functioning at Lakeside Hospital, was continued by the Sisters, who engaged a lay teacher for the first few years. The class of 1918 consisted of nine students.

For the first few years the two hospitals, Mercy and St. Mary's, supplemented each other, which required the student nurses to go back and forth from one hospital to the other for their practical duties in the different departments. Since St. Mary's remained the Sisters' residence until a convent addition could be completed at Mercy, the Sisters engaged at Mercy had to commute each morning and evening.

The Sisters, having chosen one of the sun parlors for chapel purposes, equipped it for their Divine Bridegroom's residence. On September 8, 1918, the chaplain of St. Mary's Hospital, the Reverend J. M. Wicker, blessed the chapel, offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and gave solemn benediction—a significant hour indeed, for from now on the God-Man lived among His brides at Mercy Hospital. Rev. J. Wicker offered holy Mass at Mercy each Sunday until December 14, 1918, when Reverend W. J. Rice, having been appointed chaplain by the Most Reverend Bishop Rhode, came
to the hospital as permanent chaplain. How happy the Sisters were that holy Mass would now be offered daily in their chapel.

Some of the Sisters active at Mercy during the beginning months were the following: Sister M. Meinrada Gehring was in charge of the student nurses and of second floor; Sister M. Bucharia Langold, of the operating room and the chapel; Sister M. Rosalinda Schreiber, of the first floor and the drug room; Sister M. Arsenia Schramski, of the dressing room. Sister M. Thomasina Hepp was in charge of the kitchen department. She cooked for everybody—Sisters, nurses, patients—and fixed the trays for all the patients.

Sister M. Meinrada Gehring stated: "Everybody helped all over—in the chapel, in the laundry, in the laboratory, and with giving proper care to the patients—we all were technicians!"

In 1939 Reverend William Rice retired from his office as chaplain and made his home with the Sisters until his death on March 16, 1940. During that time the Sisters always had a second Mass in their chapel. Reverend Rice, who refused to take a salary for his work as chaplain, will always be remembered by the Sisters for his saintliness and unselfishness.

In the fall of 1918, just a few months after the Sisters had taken over Mercy Hospital, the flu epidemic spread so rapidly that the two hospitals, St. Mary's and Mercy, were unable to accommodate the patients. The city authorities changed a saloon outside the city limits into an emergency hospital, of which, at the request of the city authorities, the Sisters took charge. Reverend Mother M. Johanna Ankenbrand appointed several Sisters for this charitable work and gave the responsibility to Sister M. Cyriaca Goetz.

The following is a quotation from the recollections of Sister M. Meinrada:
"The city police and ambulance took out beds and other things needed to this 'hospital.' We Sisters went back and forth by ambulance or patrol wagon. These same vehicles were used to convey the sick and the dead, of which there were many. On the first day that this emergency hospital was opened the house was filled, and every patient was seriously sick. When the police and the ambulance men had Sisters in their wagons, they would blow their sirens extra loud, making everyone get out of the way."

In June, 1922, four years after the Sisters had taken over Mercy Hospital, work was begun on the much-needed expansion of the institution. In the middle of August of the same year ground was broken for the chapel and convent. When the building was completed to the first floor level, the cornerstone laying took place without any celebrations. Into the cornerstone, which was blessed by Reverend A. Bastian, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul's Parish of Oshkosh, were put medals, a small statue of St. Peter, the apostle, an Agnus Dei, various pieces of money, and a list of the Sisters' names. In December, 1922, the chapel was under roof; and the building of the interior of the wing continued during the winter.

In June, 1923, the Sisters moved into the new convent. On July 9, in the presence of sixteen priests and two hundred people, Bishop Rhode blessed and dedicated the chapel and convent. On September 2, 1925, the first holy retreat began at Mercy Hospital, given by the Reverend Joseph Potham, an Oblate Father.

During 1923 building continued on a new north wing, containing a new powerhouse and a laundry, which was blessed by Bishop Rhode on November 2, 1924. With this enlargement, the hospital was able to widen the extent of its services, and the surgical department was transferred from St. Mary's to Mercy.
On January 1, 1925, the first patient for surgery was admitted at Mercy, and on the following day the first operation was performed. From that time on, all operations were discontinued at St. Mary's Hospital and performed at Mercy.

It was indeed a great blessing when Reverend Mother and her council in Rome approved the building of the nurses' home, the erection of which was begun in 1931. The edifice, a very imposing building, was a five-story structure with eighty private rooms for the nurses, besides lecture and demonstration rooms, a large auditorium, gymnasium, and lobby. The opening of this spacious building greatly facilitated the instruction and supervision of the nurses, who had heretofore been housed in three different places, the fourth floor of the hospital and two nearby cottages.

Today, Mercy Hospital School of Nursing is fully accredited by the State Board of Nursing and the Accrediting Service of the National League for Nursing.

For clinical instruction of the nurses, both Mercy and St. Mary's Hospital were in use for several years. After the surgical department had been transferred to Mercy in 1924, the obstetrical cases were accepted only in St. Mary's. This arrangement proved to be impracticable for the teaching and supervision of the nurses, and the maternity department was opened at Mercy Hospital in 1934. From that time on no more patients were accepted at St. Mary's Hospital, which now was used exclusively as a home for the aged.

In 1936 preparations were made to add a four-story wing to the south side of Mercy Hospital. On the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, July 22, ground was broken and the work begun. In the following year, on May 18, the new addition was dedicated by the Most Reverend Paul P. Rhode in a simple but impressive ceremony. With this new addition the capacity of Mercy Hospital was raised to 225. Thus from a forty-five bed institution in 1918, Mercy had grown into a large hospital, modern in every regard, conducting special
In 1918 the Community of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother bought Dr. Corbett's Lakeside Hospital, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, which then became known as Mercy Hospital.
In 1924 a north wing, chapel, convent, powerhouse, and laundry were completed.
Mercy Hospital chapel which was built in 1924.
In 1931 the erection of a five-story nurses' home and school was begun.
In 1939 a new four-story maternity wing was added to Mercy Hospital.

Air view of Mercy Hospital taken in 1958: The one-story rehabilitation center is on the extreme left, and the nurses' home on the extreme right.
Administration wing addition of Mercy Hospital, Oshkosh.

In 1957 three new wings, including modern operating rooms, additional patients' rooms, administration facilities, and a rehabilitation center were completed.
A view of some of the many activities in Mercy Hospital, Oshkosh. (Picture was taken in 1960.)
clinics, pediatric, physio-therapy, outpatient, and X-ray departments. The hospital was approved as a class "A" hospital by the American College of Surgeons and the American Medical Association.

The private room accommodation of the Nurses' Home was raised to 120 persons, when in April, 1943, a sixth-floor addition which provided thirty more rooms was added to the building. Soon after this addition was completed, between 1944 and 1945, new classrooms, a new library, a conference room, and their facilities were added to the School of Nursing. Year by year installation of the latest and the best of everything for hospital procedures has been added. Hospitals have become institutions of scientific research and study; and to keep up with the times, every year calls for new and improved equipment and better specialized education for nurses and technicians.

Let us here quote from Sister M. Capistrana Uhl's report on "Nursing Education at Mercy Hospital, Oshkosh, Wisconsin," concerning the modern nursing profession.

"Following World War II nation-wide studies were conducted about programs in nursing. These were made to upgrade nursing education and prepare nurses to meet the modern demands of the nursing profession. The first study, known as the Interim Classification of Schools of Nursing, was made in 1949. The report listed schools in Class I, II, III, according to the merits of the school. Mercy Hospital School participated in this study and was ranked in the middle 50% of the Nation's Basic Programs in Nursing.

"In 1952 the National Nursing Accrediting Service was organized to accredit programs in nursing nation-wide. A twofold program was offered by this organization. In order to receive valuable assistance from this service, Mercy Hospital School of Nursing applied for Tempo-
rary Accreditation. This was received in 1952. The years between 1952 and 1955 were spent in preparation for Full Accreditation by the National Nursing Accrediting Service. Application for Full Accreditation was made in 1955 and was received on July 2, 1956.

"To be able to admit foreign students to the school the necessary approval was obtained from the U.S. Department of Justice in 1955. Thus far one Chinese student studied at Mercy Hospital School of Nursing. The School also received approval from the Government to train Veterans under the Public Law 550. The School holds Institutional Membership in the Conference of Catholic Schools of Nursing and the Department of Diploma and Associate Degree Program on the National League for Nursing.

"The School now has an enrollment of over 100 students (in 1960). It has granted more than 950 diplomas to graduates who are active in all the states of the Union and in several foreign countries. During World War II and the Korean War eighty-five graduates served their Country in all the various military installations. Two of them gave their life for their Country. Another joined the Medical Missionaries and died of malignant malaria in India at the age of thirty-nine. Still another one was executed by the Japenese for aiding Filipino and American soldiers. Eighteen girls enrolled in the school entered various religious orders. Many of them continued their education to the Bachelor's and Master's level. Each diploma granted is a proof that the school has tried to develop the recipient as a Christian person. The School's standards throughout the year's of growth have not changed: still can it be said, in the words of the Bulletin, that education aims to prepare man for what he must do
here below in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created." (Sister M. Capistrana Uhl's report on "Mercy Hospital School of Nursing, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, 1913-1960.")

Before Sister M. Laurentina's appointment as administrator of Mercy Hospital in the summer of 1951, it had become evident that within the near future the institution would be in need of expansion and extensive repair, chiefly to eliminate the fire hazards of early constructions.

Sister M. Laurentina Thimm, studying the situation and formulating various plans, discussed the prevailing conditions and needs of the institution with the higher superiors. Eventually she received approval to execute the plan which she had presented, and the building was begun in 1955. Since more was needed than had been planned, the extensive building and remodeling project lasted for two years until May, 1957.

In the spring of 1957 three new wings, which included modern operating rooms, additional patients' rooms, an administration facility, and a rehabilitation center, were completed. Patients' beds were increased to 260.

In the $500,000 Cleveland Street wing five new operating rooms are housed on the fifth floor together with a sterilizing room and a scrub-up alcove. Four other surgery rooms have been remodeled and modernized, and space was found for a recovery ward. Twenty-four new rooms, equipped with lavatories, toilets, telephone connections, and tele-talk communication, were added.

On the first floor are the following conveniences: a new cafeteria accommodating ninety persons; the hospital pharmacy, a doctors' library, and the morgue, replacing older facilities; the central supply room, which is a central station for a pneumatic tube system carrying messages and requests from all nursing stations throughout the institution, and two dumb-waiters of shining steel which carry supplies from the pharmacy and central supply directly to other floors.
Across the front of the hospital a new $750,000 five-story administration wing replaces the former two-story entrance. The hospital now presents a recessed entrance directly off the sidewalk on Hazel Street. A second-floor lobby affords a pleasant view of Menominee Park. On this same floor is the information desk, the switchboard with twenty-four hour service, and various administrative offices. New elevators are located in the administration wing.

Five private rooms and four double rooms are available on each of the third and fourth floors of the administration unit. The showers installed in the maternity rooms are new features.

The fifth floor of this wing, air-conditioned throughout, houses a radiologist’s office, X-ray and film room, deep therapy facilities, tissue room, pathologist’s offices, bacteriology laboratory, and a large waiting room.

Food, hot from the stove or iced from the refrigerator, is delivered by the central food service directly to every floor in the hospital. This $68,000 service utilizes waste space on the first floor and a small addition at the rear of the hospital. Two dumb-waiters are replaced with tray-conveyors, which carry filled trays ready for service from the kitchen to floors above. Trays ride endless belts as they are filled according to the dietician’s order from steam and cold tables.

**Rehabilitation Center:** Since the rehabilitation center is an entirely new department added to the hospital, a detailed description of it follows:

The Oshkosh Curative Workshop, to which doctors of seven counties referred their patients, was housed in a condemned building until the beginning of May, 1957. When a fund-raising campaign initiated to raise money for a new building proved unsuccessful, the matter was referred to the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, with the hope that Mercy Hospital might be able to provide for these patients.
According to convent procedure, Sister M. Laurentina consulted the higher superiors of the Community, receiving the permission to go ahead with the plans of adding the rehabilitation center to Mercy.

The building of a new wing for the patients of this workshop was completed in the spring of 1957. The Curative Workshop of Oshkosh ceased to operate on May 3, and on May 6 the Rehabilitation Center in Mercy Hospital began to take in patients. This center serves the doctors in the seven counties of Winnebago, Fond du Lac, Outagamie, Waukesha, Green Lake, Milwaukee, and Dane. With new and improved facilities, more patients can be expected to find assistance here.

The services of Mercy Hospital, which have no age restrictions, are available to both adults and children. Patients to be admitted must have references from physicians in the community and surrounding area. All physical restoration treatments are provided under the prescription and direction of the patient's private or clinic physician, who is required to keep in close contact with his patient and the rehabilitation staff members.

Physical therapy facilities occupy 3,500 square feet on the ground floor of the center. For the beginning, three full-time physical therapists are staffing the facility. Under medical prescription, the department is able to provide all forms of physical therapy treatment, including ultrasonic, short wave, indoctortherm and microtherm, radiant heat, ultraviolet ray, electric stimulation, paraffin, hot packs, whirlpool, massage, weight resistance exercise, muscle re-education, posture training, muscle testing, and the like. Limited facilities are provided for speech therapy, which is available primarily for brain-injured patients and aphasic adults.

About 1,200 square feet of the ground floor are devoted to the occupational therapy department, providing many forms through its exercise room, activities of daily living section, woodworking project, sand, crafts, printing, and weaving equipment.
Although Mercy Hospital determines and executes the policies of the rehabilitation center, the former directors of the Curative Workshop, who act in an advisory capacity and assist in co-ordinating the work of outside agencies with the rehabilitation center, play a vital role in the work of the center.

On Tuesday, May 21, 1957, the dedication of the three new additions took place. At ten o'clock a.m. a solemn pontifical high Mass of thanksgiving was offered in the hospital chapel by the Auxiliary Bishop of the Green Bay Diocese, the Most Reverend John B. Grellinger, who was assisted by Father Dennis Worzalla, the hospital chaplain; Father Aloysius Trzebiatowski, deacon; Father Francis McKeeough, subdeacon; and Father Paul DuCharme, master of ceremonies. After high Mass Bishop Grellinger gave a fitting and forceful sermon. Then accompanied by his assistants, he went through the building to bless the newly expanded facilities of Mercy Hospital, which marked the completion of a two-year building program.

A few words from the Bishop's timely sermon after Holy Mass is quoted here as follows.

"Other cities have been forced to conduct extensive drives for hospital construction. These good Sisters have taken that burden upon their own trusting shoulders. By doing so, they have given our physicians the most necessary tool of their healing art, for a hospital with its operating rooms, its trained staff, its complicated equipment, its established routines is in itself a mammoth tool. But when the whole complex is animated with Christian spirit, it takes on the character of the hand of God's mercy."

In addition to the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing, training schools in X-ray, anesthesia, and medical technology were established in 1945, 1956, 1958, respectively. These schools were established at Mercy Hospital for the
purpose of training technologists primarily for the institution itself because of a growing shortage in these fields. All of the schools are fully approved by the various accreditation agencies. Mercy Hospital has also won full accreditation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals for top-standard patient care and facilities.

In September, 1957, Sister M. Oswaldina Nutz was welcomed to Mercy Hospital as the new Sister Superior and administrator, replacing Sister M. Laurentina Thimm, who had held the post for six years. Sister M. Oswaldina, in her generous and self-sacrificing spirit, is carrying on the ever increasing responsibilities toward progress in research and scientific medicine.

October, 1958, marks the beginning of a new manufacturing program undertaken by the Pharmacy Department of the hospital; namely, that of manufacturing intravenous solutions. The actual inception of this program began in 1957 when the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee endorsed the proposal of manufacturing intravenous solutions, which was later approved by the medical staff.

This program is designed to produce only the more commonly used intravenous solutions such as dextrose, saline, and combinations thereof. Other solutions which utilize essentially the same equipment are also prepared. These include irrigating solutions which may consist of plain distilled water or isotonic salt solutions. By means of the parenteral program it is possible to provide in parenteral form such drugs as procaine, morphine, codine, demerol, dilaudid, water for injection, and so forth.

On April 1, 1958, the Mercy Hospital Auxiliary, stemming from the Women's Auxiliary Board of the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing, was the first auxiliary ever organized for the purpose of serving the hospital. The auxiliary members are very active in raising funds to provide for the expansion of hospital facilities and in helping to maintain and foster public understanding and relations of the hospital with the people of Oshkosh.
The Gray Ladies of Mercy Hospital are also serving the hospital. The Gray Lady Service of the Red Cross Chapter was organized to serve at Mercy Hospital in 1943 and have served the institution continuously to the present.

January 1, 1960, marked the beginning of the recitation of the morning and evening prayer over the loud-speaker system. This is done for the benefit of the patients.

Chaplains of Mercy Hospital

Right Reverend Wsgr. William Rice, 1918-1935; Reverend C. Cerry, C.P.P.S., 1936; Reverend Paul Denzel, C.P.P.S., 1937; Reverend Lawrence Loecke, 1938; Reverend Lawrence Eckhart, 1939-1952; Reverend Dennis Worzalla, 1953- .

Superiors of Mercy Hospital


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