and the money of the poor spent," her letter read. "Our very leniency towards the city authorities causes us to suffer now. On their part no effort is made to help us, while we have not ceased to care for the poor and destitute and in many other ways advance the interests of the city. Our present request, hon. sir, is that you give us credit on our taxes now due and reduce the debt at least that much."

Mother Madeleine was at least partially successful in her effort. The city eventually deducted some of what it owed from the hospital tax bill.

Sisters of Mercy
Aurora, Illinois

In 1884, Aurora, Illinois, became the first city in the United States to light its streets with electricity.

In 1910, six Sisters of Mercy moved from Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Aurora at the invitation of the bishop. They had come to open homes for the aged and for businessmen, they explained to physicians who wanted them to open a maternity hospital. Sometime in the future, they told the doctors, they planned to open a hospital.

On March 16, 1911, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital admitted its first patient, a woman, but not a maternity patient. When this fact was pointed out to one of the physicians, he grinned, prompting one of the founding sisters to comment later “This, we then knew, was the start of a general, not a special, hospital.”

Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Lumber was the industry in Tomahawk, Wisconsin, in the 1880s. Lumber was dangerous, however, and when accidents occurred, the nearest hospital was 100 miles away. When the priest in Tomahawk learned that the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother were going to start a hospital in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, he asked them to start one in his town. They agreed.
On October 19, 1893, four sisters arrived in Tomahawk. They had their first patient and opened a hospital in an abandoned saloon the day they arrived. A curtain drawn through the middle of the barroom created two rooms. The beds and stove were in the front room, the kitchen in the back. "The old saloon was poorly suited for a hospital," stated a history, so the sisters rented a two-story residence. Still, a larger facility was needed.

To raise money, the sisters hired ticket agents to go to the lumberjack camps. A $5 ticket entitled the holder to medical and surgical treatment in the hospital at any time during one year from the date on the ticket. The sisters also made collection trips, bringing with them medical supplies. They trekked miles across snow-covered woods and lakes or rode in open sleighs and logging trains, enduring sub-zero temperatures.

Work on the new facility began in 1894, although the sisters had no money or credit. Laborers worked a day or week at a time because of the financial uncertainties. People from the community volunteered their services to create the new structure. Sacred Heart Hospital was dedicated on July 20, 1894.

Too poor to hire help, the sisters continued to do all the work themselves. They begged for worn-out sheets and pillowcases so they could pull the threads apart and use the lint instead of purchasing cotton batting. They gathered their own firewood. And all laundry from the hospital was done on washboards and boiled in two large canning kettles, because the sisters could not afford a boiler.

CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. AGNES
ST. AGNES HOSPITAL, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin
ST. ANTHONY HOSPITAL, Hays, Kansas

In 1896 the Sisters of St. Agnes opened their first hospital, St. Agnes Hospital, in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Earlier in the century, in 1879, they had branched out from Wisconsin to Hays, Kansas, to teach. In 1909, in response to pleas