The Memorial Hospital of William F. & Gertrude F. Jones

The History of Jones Memorial Hospital
Est. 1921
Like the medical industry itself, Jones Memorial Hospital has come a long way since the first patients were admitted on June 27, 1921. In the early years, Jones was a 30-bed facility, serving some 450 patients and delivering 25 babies each year with a staff of about 17 people. Today, Jones Memorial Hospital is a 70-bed private, not-for-profit acute care facility serving the healthcare needs of over 50,000 community residents. Jones Memorial employs over 400 people and the area served includes Allegany County, western Steuben County and northern Potter County, PA. Add up the number of patients admitted to the hospital and outpatients seen in the emergency room, rehabilitation services, laboratory tests and at the four Jones Memorial Medical Practices offices, the number of people using the services at Jones Memorial Hospital reaches well over 180,000 a year.

On the day Jones Memorial Hospital was dedicated – July 1, 1921 - throngs passed through the refurbished Jones mansion. What they saw was one of the finest community hospitals in New York State. What they saw was one of the finest community hospitals in New York State. Soon after the Hospital opened, the village remodeled the adjacent barn, turning it into the hospital laundry and a home for the nursing staff.

The first patient admitted to the new hospital was Mrs. Adelaide Foland. Her physician, Dr. F. E. Comstock, is also credited with performing the first surgery at the new hospital. Dr. Comstock was the first of three generations of the Comstock
family to serve on the JMH Medical Staff. When Dr. Comstock began his practice in Wellsville in 1896, surgeries took place in the patient’s home. In 1910, he was instrumental in establishing Wellsville’s first private hospital on Jefferson Street. He furnished the operating room with needed equipment and local businessmen provided flooring, bedding and linens free of charge. Anticipating the opening of the new Jones Memorial, that facility closed in May 1921.

For two months, Wellsville was without a hospital.

Within seven years, it was obvious that the 30-bed hospital was not large enough to meet the needs of the growing Wellsville community. The first major expansion to the Hospital occurred in 1928, when the Tullar Memorial Maternity Annex was built through a generous gift from Mrs. Angie C. Tullar. One of the designers of the new maternity area was Dr. G.W. Roos, a general practitioner with a special interest in obstetrics. He was assisted by Hospital Superintendent Miss Florence Spicer. The wing was furnished through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. George Rosa, who donated $10,000 for that purpose. The 10-bed maternity annex was attached to the rear of the main building in place of the porch and conservatory. This additional space alleviated the deficiencies of the original hospital.


In 1942, the Harry Bradley family deeded the old Samuel Carpenter property to the village, connecting the Hospital grounds with West Genesee Street. A new home for the nurses was built there and the furnishings were provided by members of the Hospital Board.

In 1949, a public survey revealed the need for a larger hospital; the hospital and community had outgrown the existing structure. Within a few months, an intense three-year fundraising campaign began. Major memorial donations came from Dr. Edwin Comstock and Dr. Irwin Felsen, as well as Lillian Barnes, whose family founded the Wellsville Daily Reporter, and the Thornton family. Because of the tremendous support from all the local businesses, towns and villages, a modern 75-bed hospital was built around the former Jones mansion. Very soon afterwards, the original hospital buildings were torn down and the front parking lot was placed where the Jones house had stood facing Main Street. People from all over the area donated over $200,000 to offset the cost of the
$1.3 million building. The hospital was also granted funds under the federal Hill-Burton Act, which was enacted to encourage hospital construction in rural areas like Allegany County. Jones Memorial was the 50th hospital constructed and financed through this program.

A crowd of 1,600 people turned out to see the new building when it was dedicated on August 3, 1952. However, according to news reports at the time, the new building didn’t open for business until two weeks later because a “strike condition” delayed the completion of the finish work. As a result, the old hospital continued to provide health services until the big move to the new building.

Four infants were born in the old building on Dedication Day. The first patient was Alida Cratsley. The final transfer of patients and equipment to the new building took place on August 13, 1952.

Jones Memorial Hospital – and the community - continued to grow. In 1968, a third floor was built between the existing stairways and a two-and-a-half story “west wing” was built. A $600,000 Capital Campaign kicked off in late 1965. One of the major donations came from the family of George W. Holbrook. The project was helped with a grant from the Hill-Burton Act and an Appalachian Anti-Poverty Grant. The approval notice for the Appalachian grant was personally delivered to Wellsville in October 1965 by Senator Robert Kennedy. All this construction increased the size of the Hospital to 120 beds, including long-term care beds.

Then came Hurricane Agnes. In 1972, the rain-swollen Genesee River overflowed its banks and undermined the “new” wing. While this did get the Hospital national newspaper headlines, it also caused the collapse of the west wing. No life was lost and much equipment was saved, but the new wing was gone. A two-year rebuilding project began right away on the north side of the Hospital to replace those areas affected by the flood, including the Intensive Care Unit, patient care rooms, administration offices, and medical staff areas. It was completed in 1974.

The Hospital remained a village entity until January 1988, when it divested from the Village of Wellsville and became a private, not-for-profit hospital. Once JMH successfully separated its operation from the Village, the Hospital was eligible for grants and funding that would not have been available were it still a village entity.

In 1991, the Hospital broke ground on a 44,000-foot addition on the east side of the building. With the concept of realigning outpatient services in a centralized core area, this area...
Jones Memorial Medical Practices employs 11 physicians and healthcare providers with specialties including obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, internal medicine and family practice. Offices are located in Belmont, Andover and Wellsville. The Women & Children’s Health office on Main Street in Wellsville now offers on-site digital ultrasound services.

A community partnership which has worked out very well is the establishment of the Wellsville Lions Club Diabetes Center at Jones Memorial Hospital, located on the first floor of the hospital. With widespread support from other Lions Clubs and a $54,000 grant from the Lions Clubs International Foundation, the Diabetes Center provides diabetics with a variety of services, including counseling, supplies and on-site testing, including Hemoglobin A1C, lipids profiles, urine microalbumin and retinal screening for diabetic retinopathy. Staffed by a Diabetes Nurse Educator who is also a certified insulin pump trainer, the Diabetes Center has been certified by the American Diabetes Association.

After a very successful $1.2 million Wonderful Beginnings Capital Campaign, the maternity department — which was virtually unchanged since the 1950s — was renovated into a state of the art birthing unit. The new rooms reflect the LDRP concept in which labor, delivery, recovery and postpartum occurs in the same room. The rooms feature custom woodwork...
and individual bathrooms, several with bubble tubs. This new space also includes an outpatient assessment area, a new nursery with infant warmers, and an enhanced infant security system.

The Emergency Department—which was outgrowing its space—was the focus of the 2007 fundraising campaign. By moving the vestibule outside the building and expanding the waiting area, the triage room, and the registration area into that space, patient safety, patient confidentiality, and patient flow were enhanced.

In response to community and medical staff interest, a Sleep Disorder Center was opened on the third floor in early 2009. The Center is managed by Respitech, a sleep study company which provides the staff and equipment needed to do the sleep studies. Two rooms on the third floor were renovated to reflect a home-like atmosphere meant to encourage a typical night’s sleep.

For 90 years, Jones Memorial Hospital has been taking care of this community. For that same 90 years, the community has taken care of Jones Memorial Hospital. When the hospital needed to expand, add services, or new equipment, the community has continued to support that each improvement and renovation. In every sense of the word, JMH is a community hospital and will continue to provide the latest healthcare services for generations to come.
It’s hard to imagine Jones Memorial Hospital without the Jones Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, but this group of dedicated volunteers has only been around for 60 years. On June 29, 1950, Lillian Barnes opened her home to an organizational tea. The first slate of officers included Mrs. George Passmore, Mrs. E.W. Briggs, Mrs. Edwin Comstock and Mrs. William Yerrick. By 1952, there were 25 very busy Twigs volunteering their time to raise funds and providing various patient care services, such as feeding patients and making surgical dressings. In the first five years, the 87 members of the Auxiliary raised money for the snack bar, the minor OR, the paging system, the ice machine, 12 beds and mattresses and various other pieces of medical equipment.

The first Country Fair was held in October 1952 and it is still one of the major fundraisers. The number of activities have expanded to include a golf tournament, jewelry sales, uniform sales, and used and new book sales. In 1990, the first Gala & Silent Auction was held and it has proven to be a popular—and profitable—event.

Although the faces have changed, the primary focus of the group has remained constant: to raise money for Jones Memorial Hospital. In 2010, the Auxiliary purchased new chairs for the cafeteria, infant warmers for OB, several defibrillators located throughout the facility, an exam chair for the Emergency Department, and new chairs for the ER reception area. Especially in the tough economic times, the impact of the Auxiliary cannot be underestimated.

ABOVE: When HANYS named the Jones Memorial Auxiliary as the Small Hospital Auxiliary of the Year, it was wonderful news—but not a surprise. Those of who work with the auxiliary see what these dedicated individuals do for this facility every day. Auxiliary President Kay Eicher, Membership Chair Sylvia Masin, Vice President Ruth Kling, and Maple Twig member Kathryn Gilbert were in Albany to accept the award. It is now on display in the main lobby.
The more things change, the more they stay the same.

This history was compiled by the JMH Community Relations Department
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