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History of St. Luke's Medical Center

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The history of St. Luke's Medical Center began in 1903 when Dr. William F. Malone added a private hospital and office to a large castle-like residence on the corner of Madison and Hanover (now South 3rd Street) in 1903. The hospital was named Malone Hospital; and Dr. Malone remained there as head of surgery for fifteen years.

By 1920 the facility had expanded to 40 beds, and was renamed Hanover General Hospital under new ownership. A nurses training school was developed in the early 1920s. In 1925 a new structure was added to the existing hospital, adding 65 beds.

In 1928, the 105-bed Hanover General Hospital was purchased by the Lutheran Hospital Association and was renamed St. Luke's Hospital. In 1940 St. Luke's participated in organizing Blue Cross and in the spring of 1941 St. Luke's was accepted into the American Hospital Association. World War II-induced prosperity led to more additions in 1946.

By 1941 St. Luke's found the Madison site constraining and arranged to buy the Oklahoma Avenue site from the city and John Schneider estate for $25,000. The original architect Gauett De Gelleke was retained to draw up the plans. Wartime restrictions and material shortages, however, prevented immediate building. In June 1950, construction began on the new site and the building was previewed in October of 1952. As the departments began to move into the new building, the old building became exclusively a maternity unit.

St. Luke's Medical Center's medical procedures advanced as quickly as its physical property. In December 1955 the first heart pump in the state, a forerunner of today's heart-lung machine, was purchased by St. Luke's. It was used during the first open heart procedure done in a private Milwaukee area hospital. On July 28, 1957, the heart-lung machine was successfully used for the first time. Cardiac catheterization also was being experimented with.
After two additional wings were completed in late 1957 and early 1958, the Madison street facility was closed and sold to Allen-Bradley. It was razed in 1958.

A major cardiac catheterization program was begun in 1960. It included two fully equipped catheterization rooms. Dr. Derward Lepley implanted the first pacemaker in the Milwaukee area at St. Luke's in 1961. Plans to install a hyperbaric chamber were presented in 1963 and completed in November of 1965.

Coronary medicine became a growing area of expertise at St. Luke's Hospital. The first coronary catheterizations were done in 1966. Dr. Dudley Johnson joined the medical staff and began working with coronary reconstruction techniques and the Yineberg techniques in 1967. By 1968, Dr. Johnson had executed the first bypass to the back side of the heart and the first multiple (double) bypass surgery. Drs. Johnson and Lepley made city history October 21, 1968, performing the first heart transplant in the Midwest for Mrs. Elizabeth Anick of West Allis.

Expansion was the key word for the 1970's. A neonatal intensive care unit was added in 1970. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held for the Knisely building in 1972. It was named for Merton Elihu Knisely who served the hospital from 1943 through 1976 in various capacities including administrator, president and vice-chairman of the board of directors. Specialty intensive care units and cardiac care units were placed in this building. It opened in late 1975. Obstetrics and Neonatal units were closed in 1976 to allow the hospital to focus on other specialty services. A multi-level parking structure was in the process of being completed to provide adequate parking space at the hospital. While celebrating its 50th anniversary in 1978, St. Luke's broke ground on the Walter Schroeder Pavilion. Services scheduled to be housed in the Pavilion included Emergency Care, Surgical units and Radiation Therapy. A dedication was also held for the new 169-seat Walter H. Stiemke auditorium.
On November 26, 1979, the Schroeder Pavilion was dedicated. A 34 X 14 foot mosaic of St. Luke's namesake against the north facade of the Pavilion was also unveiled. Created by internationally known artist Edmund Lewandowski, the mosaic was fully underwritten by a $25,000 grant from the Margaret and Fred Loock Foundation. With glass and stone chips coming from 10 countries, the mosaic contained about 780 of these pieces per square foot. To our knowledge, this is the largest rendering of St. Luke ever created. It also could well be the most authentic, in that it was created in the style of the Byzantine era of the fourth century which saw the birth of mosaic decoration in early Christian churches.

Each of the four circles surrounding St. Luke represents a facet of the hospital. Knowledge: the hospital's broad range of specialized care; Service and Dedication: the close relationship of the hospital to the family unit; Strength: the winged ox, the biblical symbol of St. Luke; and Worldwide: the hospital's global scope of care and St. Luke's spiritual influence.

During the 1980's outreach programs became a focus for the hospital. The Franklin Medical Center was created in 1984 to satisfy the needs of residents on the far southwest side of the city. In April of 1986 an affiliation was formed with Good Samaritan Medical Center which is located in the downtown area. It has allowed both hospitals to operate more efficiently and effectively for their consumers. A non-profit parent corporation was formed, and named initially St. Luke's Samaritan Corporation. St. Luke's Hospital was renamed St. Luke's Medical Center. Outpatient hemodialysis was transferred to a new facility at 38th Street and Wisconsin Ave. This freestanding center is one of the first of its kind in Milwaukee. A more comfortable and efficient atmosphere was created for patients requiring dialysis.

Heart care was again advanced when heart transplants were resumed in 1984. St. Luke's received FDA approval to use the Jarvik-7 artificial heart in April of 1986. Drs. Alfred J. Tector and Terence M. Schmahl successfully implanted the Jarvik-7 into Ronald Smith of Gary, Indiana on November 21, 1986. It sustained Mr. Smith successfully while a suitable donor heart was located for him. Since this incredible event, several more Jarvik surgeries have taken place. Dr. Gerald Dorros was also making strides in heart care with new angioplasty, valvuloplasty and drug therapy techniques.
Advancements within the hospital included a number of important areas. In 1980, the Health Science Building was constructed to house physicians offices. The condominium office building was designed to offer easy access to the hospital for physicians. The Brian Cervenka Memorial Library of St. Luke's Hospital was dedicated on December 18, 1985 to the memory of Mr. Brian Cervenka, a former patient on the Oncology unit. Early 1987 saw the opening of two new areas for St. Luke's. The Kidney Stone Center provides a revolutionary treatment that shatters kidney stones without major surgery. Here, a lithotripter is used to bombard kidney stones with high-energy sound waves which pass through body tissue and break the stones into tiny pieces which pass through the urine. The Endocrine Diabetes Center also opened in 1987 to provide diabetes education and testing in a central location.

In an effort to make services more convenient for both patients and doctors, rehabilitation services were expanded at St. Luke's Medical Center in 1987 and made available at two freestanding clinics. A third clinic featuring work injury therapy opened in 1988, and a fourth opened in November of 1989. In August 1987, St. Luke's reopened its Obstetrics Center. It brought the latest concept in maternity care to Milwaukee - LDRP. All phases of obstetrical care - Labor, Delivery, Recovery and Postpartum - take place in a beautifully furnished, homelike setting.

A new umbrella corporation, Aurora Health Care, was formed as a result of the merger in 1987 between Good Samaritan and Mount Sinai Medical Center. Aurora Health Care now encompasses merged Sinai Samaritan Medical Center as well as St. Luke's Medical Center, and numerous other health care affiliates.

Early in 1988, St. Luke's built a new laboratory on the oncology unit for cancer research and treatment. Based on the pioneering work of Dr. Steven Rosenberg of the National Center Institute, the first new therapy uses the body's own immune system, boosted by the powerful drug Interleukin-2, to fight cancer.

Growth in patient care in St. Luke's traditionally high volume area of cardiology was restricted only by the physical limits of its capacity in 1988. By June of that year, St. Luke's completed renovation on four of its six existing cath labs. Two additional labs opened early in 1989 to enable St. Luke's to meet the continually growing demand for its cardiology services.
In recognition of its outstanding patient care services, the outpatient oncology center at St. Luke's was selected as the site of the Vince Lombardi Cancer Clinic in February 1989. The clinic was dedicated in April of this year. In June, the clinic opened a statewide cancer hotline on which nurses who specialize in oncology answer questions about cancer and the latest treatments available in the area.

St. Luke's also made nationwide headlines in June when cardiologist Frank E. Cummins used an investigational atherectomy device to shave away layers of plaque from the inside of a patient's painfully clogged heart vein graft. A new angioplasty procedure that opened the principal artery of the neck of a Wisconsin man, was pioneered by cardiologist Gerald Dorros that same month.

In the spring and summer of 1988, St. Luke's Board of Directors, management staff and more than 100 physicians participated in facilities planning for the medical center. The first phase of the plan, which will begin in late 1989, will address three objectives. It will include significant expansion of the outpatient care area, a new entrance and circulation system, and better physical grouping of the components of the cancer treatment program. The long-range plan is designed to guide St. Luke's development over the next 15 to 20 years.