



Heritage Happenings

Archives Office
February 2024

Lest We For-

Beginnings of Holy Family Hospital 1898

Imagine Manitowoc in 1880's as lake port city second only to Milwaukee in tonnage carried. Three flourishing ship building companies along with newly built railroads were shipping tons of wheat through this port. Three coal docks to stoke the businesses could be seen along the lake front with seven switch engines busy shuttling the freight from rail to boat....but still no hospital. Photo: Manitowoc Dry Dock, Early 1900's.

After 1896 when the Sisters of Mercy attempted to carry out a plan for a hospital, being no more successful than the previous attempt by the Franciscans, did matters finally change.

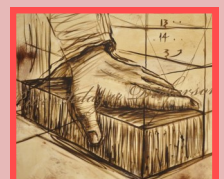


By 1897 Manitowoc citizens were beginning to say "We must have a hospital." The Manitowoc Herald News says, "The physicians of Manitowoc, citizens and clergy all undertake the project." Reverend William Peil, pastor of St. Boniface, together with some physicians and businessmen, went out to the Motherhouse and called upon Mother Alexia to induce her to **do something about it!!** On referring the matter to the Archbishop Katzer, Mother said: "The Most Reverend Prelate honored us by a short visit and we made use of the opportunity to submit the hospital question to the consideration of the Most Reverend Superior. His grace expressed himself quite favorably about it, yet in regards to its financial demands, he did not encourage us at all but left it rather to our own judgment whether or not we felt able to meet the expense." In this meeting the seeds were sown for the building of Holy Family Hospital by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity.



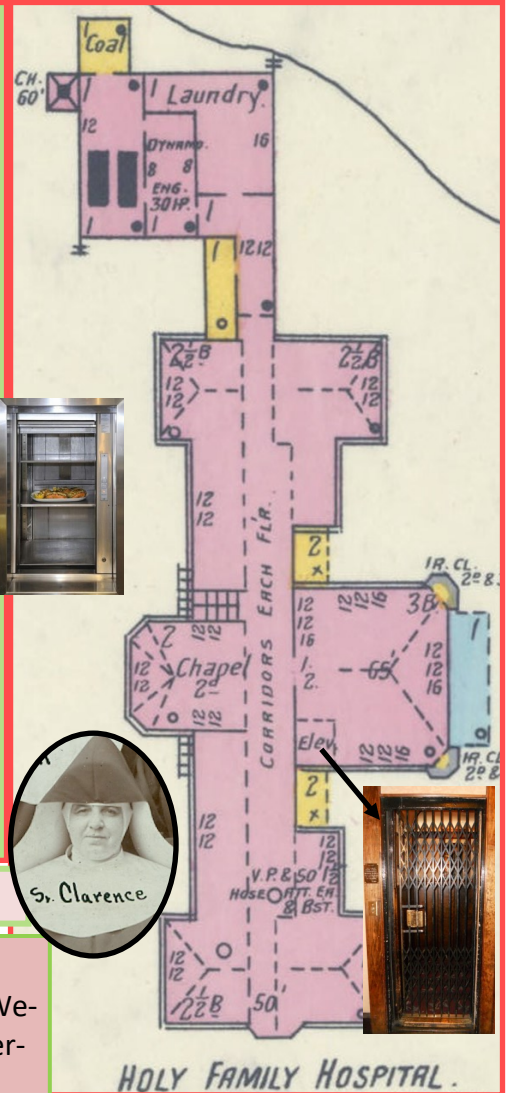
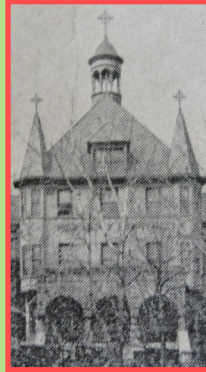
On June 14, 1898, by request of the Sisters of St. Francis, Rev. Peil met in the old parsonage with local business men and formed a committee to organize a picnic for the benefit of the new hospital to be erected on Gerphoid park grounds. The first order of business: could a license be obtained to sell beer July 4th, 1898. It was an exciting time. Suggestions poured in: Speakers both German and English, lunch,

a mirror stand, a peanut stand, a sausage stand, a doll stand, a bicycle stand, a shooting range. A license to sell beer was the first item of business. Cigars were sold along with a hot sausage bar. A wheel of fortune along with a popcorn stand was added. Mr. Rahr was asked to have his x-ray on the ground. A carousel was looked into. Even Urban's Band, a 12 piece band, was secured for the whole day for \$60.00!! Total receipts from the picnic: \$683.87 Expenditures: \$480.54 Net Proceeds: \$203.33

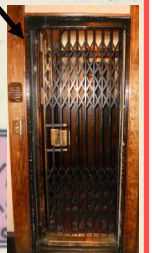


On September 22, 1898 the cornerstone for the new Holy Family Hospital was laid by Archbishop Frederick Katzer!

If the brick and mortar could speak, a long history of healing and service to the Manitowoc community would unfold. The brick and mortar would tell of the ground breaking held in the spring of 1898 on the site of what was formerly Gerpheide's Park, an area comprising 42 lots which had been acquired by trading property on Marshall Street previously owned by the Sisters. Crosses on the towers symbolized this as a place of healing.



Hardwood and oil floors and finish wood would tell of how the first floor was devoted exclusively to male patients; the second floor reserved for female patients and a chapel, and the third floor devoted to surgery. The culinary department was located in the basement with meals being distributed to the serving rooms by means of dumb waiter elevators. It had high ceilings and perfect ventilation having been constructed with special reference to hygiene, absolute cleanliness and purity in every respect. It was lighted by electricity and equipped with a first-class passenger elevator.
(Source: HTR January 27, 1973)



May God bless you in your new home

Excerpts from Sister Clarence Hennessey's "Annals"

On Tuesday, September 26, 1899, Sister Seraphica Owen, Sister Dolorose Goetzler, Sister Rosalie Hunt, Sister Magna Wegemer, and Sister Tharsilla Neuser traveled from the Motherhouse to Manitowoc and moved into the new Holy Family Hospital.

During the first winter, 1899, the hospital had no lights except for one oil lamp in chapel. For Christmas, each Sisters received an oil lamp as a gift.



During the first year, 1899 before the hill was "cut down", heavy rains brought water in through the basement windows and flooded the basement to a depth of three feet. When the water drained through a hole in the floor, it was heart breaking to see the new hospital filled with mud and dirt.



Sister Patrick Rankin, the night nurse for seven years, did the firing of the furnace at night since a night fireman could not be afforded.



The first year, there was no laundry so wash was sent to the Convent every week and Sr. Magna went with it in the white bus.



Mother Alexia received four old ladies on the 4th floor when the hospital opened. One paid \$15.00 a month; the other three paid nothing. Mother said they would bring blessings on the house.



At this time in history meat was purchased at six cents a pound, milk at five cents a quart, butter at 25 cents a pound and eggs at six cents a dozen! The Convent sent meat, bread and milk every day.

