

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY MARCH 12



Wheeling Hospital was incorporated on March 12, 1850.

CSO: SS.8.22, SS.8.23, ELA.8.1

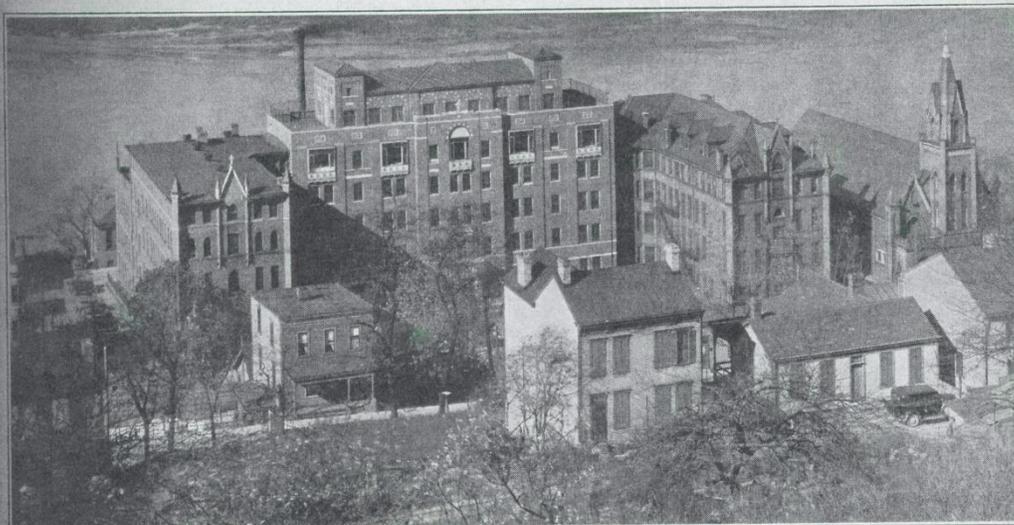
Investigate the Document: (*West Virginia Review*, October 1935)

1. What was significant about the incorporation of the Wheeling Hospital between Cincinnati and Pittsburgh?
2. What body made the Wheeling Hospital possible by granting its charter?
3. The hospital's charter was amended in 1856 to allow for the addition of what?
4. What role did the Wheeling Hospital serve during the Civil War? Did they take care of Union or Confederate soldiers?
5. What creature was said to frequently visit the Orphanage Asylum, keeping it supplied with new babies?

Think Critically: Why do you think Wheeling was a suitable location to attract physicians during the mid-nineteenth century? What do you think life was like in a children's orphanage during the mid-1800s?

October, 1935

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NORTH WHEELING HOSPITAL

—A. S. UPSON

The Oldest Hospital in West Virginia

by Ethel Clark Lewis

ONE HUNDRED YEARS ago there was no hospital in the Ohio River Valley between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati—a distance of four hundred miles. In 1835, there came to Wheeling, Virginia, a young surgeon, Dr. Simon P. Hullihen, who became an influential citizen of the town. An interesting biographical sketch of this remarkable man, published in the *Medico-Chronical Review* of Philadelphia, in 1857, recounts the efforts he made to advance medical science, and his activities in relieving patients coming to him from a wide area. As a dentist and oculist he advanced beyond his contemporaries by originating methods and inventing instruments to assist him in his practice. So strongly did he realize the need of a hospital that he zealously endeavored for years to interest others in founding such an institution in the frontier town. He established an infirmary where his own patients were treated.

Finally, Richard Vincent Whelan, then Catholic Bishop of Wheeling diocese and a man of deep benevolent spirit, undertook to make come true the dream of Dr. Hullihen, and steps were taken to establish a hospital. A charter for "The Wheeling Hospital" was granted by the General

Assembly of Virginia on March 12, 1850. Two years later an organization was effected. Bishop Whelan, Rev. John Brasil and Mr. John Moore were appointed trustees, and the hospital was formally opened on April 13, 1853.

The Medical Board for the first year consisted of Dr. M. H. Houston, physician; Dr. S. P. Hullihen and Dr. John Frissell, surgeons; and two sons of Dr. Hullihen as assistant surgeons. At first, nurses were employed, but soon Sisters of the Order of St. Joseph were placed in charge. Sister Agatha, with five assistants, capably carried on the work of this first hospital in Wheeling, a city of many first things in our State. The first hospital in western Virginia opened for patients ten years before the birth of West Virginia.

The hospital was located in different buildings the first few years. From its earliest days, one of the duties falling to the good Sisters was the care of orphan children. In 1856, an amended charter was sought and obtained to carry on an orphan asylum in connection with the hospital. More commodious quarters being needed for the increasing number of patients and the additional institution, the spacious Sweeny Mansion,

beautifully situated on the bank of the river in north Wheeling, was purchased for this purpose.

As the years passed the records of this pioneer hospital provided an historical pageant of the Ohio Valley, for it drew patients from Ohio and Pennsylvania as well as from the Virginias. During the Civil War it became a military hospital where wounded soldiers of both the northern and southern armies were cared for by skilled doctors and nurses. It was also used as a Naval Hospital.

Although always in charge of the Catholic Church, and operated by Sisters of St. Joseph, Wheeling Hospital has ever been non-sectarian as far as patients and doctors are concerned. Those in need of hospital care have been admitted, regardless of race, creed or financial standing. It is estimated that half of the patients throughout the eighty-two years of its history have been unable to pay in full for the care received, despite the very reasonable charges made. Multitudes have received care free of charge.

This is not an endowed hospital, yet so economically was it operated that no public request for funds was made until it had served the com-

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The Oldest Hospital in West Virginia

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munity for a period of seventy-five years. In the fall of 1928, the people of Wheeling and of the Ohio Valley section, which had been served by this institution for three quarters of a century, were asked to contribute funds to be used in enlarging, remodeling and more fully equipping the North Wheeling Hospital. The name of the hospital had been changed on account of its location, after the erection of the Ohio Valley General Hospital in another section of the city. Two generations had been born and had grown to maturity since the founding of this hospital. It was so much a part of the city that people took it for granted.

When the drive for \$350,000 was opened, people began to realize what a tremendous force North Wheeling Hospital had exerted in their community. A most enthusiastic campaign was carried on, some two thousand men, women and children assisting in the good work. Not the sum asked at first, but *over a half million dollars* were contributed! Bishop John J. Swint, as president, and all other Catholic leaders associated in operating the hospital were incapable of fully expressing their gratitude for the great appreciation shown by old and young, rich and poor, in their generous gifts to this truly beloved institution.

Changes had been made throughout the years to meet greater demands for medical care. The contributed funds have been used in enlarging the hospital for greater service, in beautifying it to cheer and comfort patients and their anxious loved ones, and in fitting it with the most modern conveniences and equipment that the best medical and surgical care and treatment may be administered.

Some 160,000 patients have been treated in this hospital. It may be interesting to note that in 1876 the greatest number of patients suffered from two diseases, ague and pleurisy. Today the surgical cases outnumber medical cases. Many patients at present suffer from accidents.

Forty years ago, the Orphan Asylum was transferred to another part of the city. Many children are treated in the hospital. It is a favorite place for the stork, and he makes frequent visits, keeping the sunny nursery constantly supplied with new babies. The birth rate for the past few years has averaged over three hundred.

A nurses training school has been in operation in North Wheeling Hospital since 1900, in which time three hundred and five nurses have been graduated. Approximately half of these have been non-Catholic.

A host of competent officials, skilled and faithful doctors, devoted and capable Sisters and nurses, and countless helpers have made possible the invaluable services rendered throughout the years. The Right Reverend Bishop Whelan, founder, was followed by Bishop John J. Kain as head of the institution, each serving some twenty years. In 1894, Bishop P. J. Donahue succeeded to this position and continued until 1922, when Bishop John J. Swint became president and is still serving in that capacity.

Mother Agnes Spencer, of Philadelphia, was the first Superior of Wheeling Hospital. Sister Immaculate Feeny held this position during the Civil War. No other served so long as Sister Xavier who, after being in charge of the operating room for twelve years, served for thirteen years as Superior. Not quite two years ago, Sister Geraldine was promoted to this superintendency after being in charge of the operating room. She had training and experience in hospitals in Clarksburg and Charleston before coming to Wheeling.

Wherever located, hospitals have brought unmeasured good to suffering humanity. The majority of such institutions in the world have been established by Christian people. The healing touch has been given by the followers of the Great Physician. The inner offices of the North Wheeling Hospital is the chapel—the shrine at which prayers to the God of Jews, Catholics and Protestants, and to Christ the Healer are daily offered for the relief of suffering and the restoration of health to those within its walls.

Mill Day in the Mountains

(Continued from Page 25)

grinds every day to market his output by truck to stores and farmers in the surrounding district, his life is an enviable one from any hard-working, office-ridden city miller's standpoint.

As one back-county West Virginia "dusty," who in his day had been head miller for a concern whose name is a byword in the industry, put it: "I like it back here in the hills. Life is good because I don't always have to be in a sweat about things."

The West Virginia Review

After the Battle of Carnifex Ferry

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"Traveller" was four years old in the autumn of 1861.

With retirement of Lee from Sewell Mountain to Virginia, during the week following October 5, the western counties of Virginia were lost to the Old Dominion forever. In the mountains of Mexico Lee had won much glory and a sound military reputation as well. In the mountains of West Virginia he won nothing. Back in Richmond the newspapers nicknamed him "Evacuating Lee."

"I am sorry, as you say, that the movements of the armies can not keep pace with the expectations of the editors of the papers," he wrote his wife. "I know they can regulate matters satisfactory to themselves on paper. I wish they could do so in the field."

What the outcome of the affair at Sewell Mountain might have been, had not the forces of nature prevailed, is left to conjecture. The battle of Carnifex Ferry decided nothing. It was *rain* that forced both armies to retire, and it is only after one has lived on Sewell Mountain that the hardships which these two armies endured can be appreciated.



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