

HILLCREST HOSPITAL

. . . A HISTORY

TOR COURT

Hillcrest Hospital occupies a very historic site. During the times of this country's earliest settlers, a fort occupied this ground where settlers sought protection from Indians.

The "hill" was purchased by William C. Allen (NY) who built a residence here in 1856 called Taconic Lodge.

His heirs sold it to a varnish manufacturing tycoon, Henry C. Valentine (NY) who owned 385 acres including the south shore where many residences have been built. He called his property Taconic Farm.

In the summer of 1907 the lodge was rented to Col. and Mrs. E. Parmalee Prentice (Chicago). Mrs. Prentice was the daughter of John D. Rockefeller, Standard Oil millionaire.

That summer, Taconic Farm became the scene of the "greatest manhunt in history." John D. hid here to escape service of a subpoena on an indictment returned by the U.S. Circuit Court against the oil company for accepting rebates from railroads on oil shipments.

John D. was served the subpoena here and the trial resulted in a \$29 million fine for the company. It was later remitted.

As a result of the manhunt, it was theorized that Mrs. Prentice abandoned plans to buy Taconic Farm. Instead she and her husband bought Mount Hope Farm in Williamstown.

In 1908 Warren M. Salisbury (Chicago) bought the estate with 160 acres and a half mile of lakefront property. He was head of W. H. Salisbury Co., a manufacturer of rubber goods in Chicago. He also was the president of Kimball Piano and Organ Co. through marriage to Evelyn Kimball. (They named their son Kimball Salisbury.)

In 1909 the property was renamed Tor Court. Tor means "hill" in Scottish and translated the name means hill overlooking a lake. [This is a somewhat broad translation according to Douglas Craighead, native Scotsman.]

The mansion is of the Old English (Robert Adam) period of 1700. Constructed in stucco and stone, the building's most striking feature is the columned front entrance. The house cost \$800,000 and took two years to complete.

Artisans from all over the world decorated the ornate home for the Salisburys.

There were a total of 67 rooms but only seven were bedrooms, each with a marble bath. The bedrooms were extremely large. The "white" bedroom had a white enamel bedroom set, Boston rockers, yellow-flowered upholstered chaise lounge and chairs, and many Currier & Ives prints.

The Kimball bedroom was decorated with mahogany pieces; bedroom set, tables, chairs and chests. Brass and enamel lamps were used to brighten the room. The pair of mahogany four-post beds had bonnet tops and an Adam drape with pineapple finials.

The Salisbury bedroom combined caned furniture with oak, mahogany, and rosewood pieces. A huge fireplace, in marble, kept the room cozy.

The boudoir with green, yellow and blue bedrooms, had combinations of old and new pieces.

None of the bedrooms had double beds. Mrs. Salisbury invited guests, usually six at a time, and used the third floor as a dormitory for male guests. It is not certain what that meant for married couples.

Rooms were usually 30 square feet. The living room was a grand exception, it measured 25 x 50 feet. The walls were of carved Italian walnut, the 14-foot ceiling had plaster sculptures, the fireplace was Italian marble and the floors were solid teakwood.

The room which ran the length of the entire West side of the mansion had a imported rug from Africa to cover the floor. It took three years to make and was described as "so soft it was like stepping on air."

The 30 square-foot dining room had hand carved English paneling, 14-foot ceilings, an African parkay teakwood floor, and a Papanosa marble fireplace. The furnishings were mahogany. A 1770 Chippendale two-drawer commode with carved scroll feet was a showpiece in the room.

The house was filled with plaster embossed ceilings. Some of these ceilings still exist in the admitting and nursing administration offices.

A \$60,000 pipe organ (Kimball, of course) with 1,200 pipes, operated electrically. Also equipped with harp and chimes, the organ was housed in the two-story music room on the second floor overlooking the main hall from the balcony.

Garden works and 18th century tapestries of Angelica Kauffman (a contemporary of Robert Adam) embellished the balcony.

The breakfast room overlooked the tennis courts. It was decorated with inlaid Moravian tile.

The mansion study -- now the hospital's library -- has been maintained in its original state. Adjacent to the hospital's switchboard is the original walk-in safe used to store the Salisbury silver collection.

There were 30 servants on staff in the summer. Mrs. Salisbury hired five Swedish maids to keep the house immaculate. It was said that she felt Swedish to be the cleanliest of nationalities.

The grounds were covered with a variety of formal gardens, Italian, French, etc. There were five greenhouses, one of which now belongs to Follwell Greenhouses on North Street. Flowers grown on the property adorned the household. In the winter, Mrs. Salisbury had flowers sent by train to her Chicago residence.

There was an Italian garden with a pool overlooking the lakeside. A marble path went around the pool through the flowers and shrubbery. Down the hills toward the lake were planted wheat and rye.

Trees from all over the world were imported for the property. Some of them still exist. Poplars lined the long drive to the mansion and gorgeous white lilacs covered the garage area.

The acreage was also a farm. They had 15 head of cattle, 2,000 chickens, and horses. Fresh milk, eggs, and butter were also sent to Chicago in the winter.

A fire on the estate destroyed the barns and many of the animals. The mansion and gardens remained intact.

The Salisburys always had a fresh supply of fruit from their apple, plum and pear orchards.

The mansion was used only in the summer, sometimes only on the weekends. But Tor Court was considered the showplace of the Berkshires.

The estate was not reopened following Mrs. Salisbury's death in 1945. In perfect condition when placed on the market, the property was considered prime real estate.

In 1948 Hillcrest Hospital bought the estate for \$145,000 including the furnishings. An auction was held for the extraneous furnishings and realized \$79,000 for the hospital. Auctioneer, O. Rundle Gilbert said the furnishings went for 20 to 30 percent of their original value.

Some of the valuable pieces at the auction were: Wedgewood doorknobs (on every door on the second floor), chandeliers, silver, marble fireplaces, mirrors, rugs, prints, lamps, and Wedgewood paneling.

HILLCREST HOSPITAL, Inc.

. . . A CHRONOLOGY

Hillcrest Hospital was founded in 1908 by Dr. Charles Harper Richardson, a surgeon who saw the need for a surgical hospital in this community. Dr. Richardson set up the voluntary, non~profit hospital in a rented house on the corner of North Street and Springside Avenue, the site of the former Maplewood School dormitory. It was established to care for industrial and surgical cases only.

~ 1908 ~

Hillcrest Hospital opened its doors on the corner of North Street and Springside Avenue, in the former Maplewood School dormitory. The second hospital in Pittsfield, Hillcrest treated only surgical patients.

~ 1909 ~

Renamed "Hillcrest Surgical Hospital" by its Board of Directors, Hillcrest focused on the care and treatment of cancer patients.

Under a contractual agreement with the General Electric Company, Hillcrest provided pre - employment examinations and care for G. E. employees involved in major accidents.

A full-course nurses' training school was organized.

~ 1911 ~

Resuming its original name, "Hillcrest Hospital" extended its services to medical as well as surgical patients.

~ 1919 ~

Hillcrest purchased the property from which the hospital operated, including the Annex behind the main building on Springside Avenue.

~ 1922 ~

A nurses' residence was purchased.

~ 1926 ~

A maternity department was opened.

~ 1938 ~

The 42-bed hospital received \$350,000 from the estate of Edward Benedict Cobb. It was the second largest legacy received by any Berkshire institution in history. Mr. Cobb was a 30-year summer resident of Pittsfield and a good friend of Arthur Plum, President of the hospital corporation and proprietor of the Maplewood Hotel where he resided.

Cobb also gave Dr. William Tracy \$40,000 and Miss Miriam Caldwell, his private nurse, received \$250,000. Cobb's alma mater, Yale, received only \$200,000 of the \$3,000,000 estate.

~ 1944 ~

The hospital received an anonymous donation of 37½ acres near Springside Park.

\$50,000 was spent to renovate and modernize the hospital. The building was fireproofed, ventilated and painted. New maple furnishings were bought for the patient rooms. The outside was sided with asbestos imitation brick.

~ 1947 ~

The 48-bed hospital with 10 bassinets and a medical staff of 92, reported treatment of 1510 patients, the performance of 637 operations, and the birth of 217 babies.

A fund drive was organized to raise money for a new hospital building to be located on the 38-acre tract donated in 1944. The goal was set at \$1,000,000 for a 150-bed facility. Pledges totaled \$471,000. The hospital also received \$100,000 from the General Electric Company.

~ 1948 ~

The Board of Directors approved the \$145,000 purchase of the Salisbury Estate on West Street in Pittsfield. The price was broken down to \$95,000 for real estate which included 155 acres and over a half mile of lakefront property, the mansion, five greenhouses and a gatekeeper's house. \$50,000 was for the furnishings including a two-story \$60,000 organ with 1,200 pipes. [See Tor Court History for details on the estate.]

Estimates for conversion of the mansion to an 85 to 90-bed hospital approached \$300,000. The hospital had \$265,000 in pledge receipts from the 1947 campaign, not including G.E.'s gift.

~ 1950 ~

Hillcrest Hospital held open house at its newly equipped 100-bed Tor Court facility. Total cost of the new hospital was \$644,000 (\$145,000 for mansion and property, \$362,000 for conversion, \$17,000 for a furnace, \$52,000 for water and sewer installation, \$43,000 for engineer and architect fees, and \$25,000 for equipment). The original staff of 20 was increased to 75.

The move to Tor Court saved the hospital in excess of a quarter of a million dollars over the proposed Springside facility estimated at \$1 million.

~ 1951 ~

The hospital officially opened on February 18.

~ 1961 ~

The maternity ward was closed to provide additional space for the necessary expansion of medical and surgical beds.

~ 1963 ~

An outline for a \$1.4 million addition was presented to the community. The design of the four-story addition would allow for a fifth floor to be built if further expansion was needed. The new wing would be built behind the existing hospital.

At the same time a report was filed by the American City Bureau Associates of Chicago who had performed a local survey of hospital conditions. The report concluded, contrary to certain opinions, that there was a need for Hillcrest. This opinion was based on the fact that Hillcrest treated 22,000 patients in 1962 and that the other two hospitals could not handle that additional load.

~ 1964 ~

A \$35,000 plan was announced to update equipment, services and facilities. The pediatric unit was renovated, and electrically - controlled patient beds were purchased.

~ 1966 ~

Two emergency room physicians were appointed to run the 24-hour emergency department.

Plans were announced to build a new wing.

The Board voted to sell 35 acres of land to the state for a mental health center.

~ 1967 ~

Construction started on a small building to house the doctor's dictating room and a conference room.

~ 1968 ~

A contract for \$3,286,000 was awarded to Granger Construction Company for the 144-bed addition.

~ 1970 ~

The addition was completed. The fourth floor remained an unfinished shell as funds dwindled to finance its completion.

~ 1971 ~

The new patient wing opened 20 years after the hospital's move to Tor Court.

~ 1975 ~

The new laboratory addition was completed. There were 10 laboratory employees, under the supervision of Eugene A. Dellea. The cost of the addition was \$100,000 with much of the interior work completed by the hospital's maintenance staff.

~ 1976 ~

Hillcrest Hospital entered into an agreement with Berkshire Pathology Associates for an expanded on-site pathology service.

~ 1977 ~

The Hundred Club was established to raise funds for the hospital.

Hillcrest acquired the Taconic Valley Medical Center in Stephentown, New York to provide satellite health care services to this medically underserved area.

The Family Health Center opened its doors. The guiding force behind its creation was Dr. Robert Taylor.

The Respiratory Therapy Department was expanded.

Volunteers recorded a remarkable 10,000 hours of service during the year.

~ 1978 ~

New diagnostic equipment was added in the area of nuclear medicine.

The gift shop and lobby were renovated.

Taconic Valley Medical Center reopened in Stephentown, New York.

~ 1980 ~

The Patient Satisfaction Guarantee Program was initiated.

The gift shop relocated to larger quarters.

A quality assurance program was implemented to assist medical staff and personnel to identify and correct problems within their department or service.

The six-bed critical care unit was modernized.

~ 1981 ~

The 18-bed alcoholism unit, dedicated to Massachusetts Speaker of the House Thomas W. McGee, was officially opened following a two-year controversy.

Additional space was needed, and the fourth-floor shell was completed. The medical records and physical therapy departments were relocated there, and a second conference room was added.

One of the few rooms that remained in its original state was refurbished for use as an ecumenical chapel on the first floor adjacent to the medical library.

The business offices were renovated.

~ 1982 ~

Hillcrest purchased the first laser equipment in Berkshire County for the treatment of disorders and diseases of the eye.

New diagnostic equipment was added to the laboratory to enable the hospital to provide expanded testing services.

The surgical day care unit opened to provide a low cost alternative to overnight stays for minor surgical procedures.

The emergency department was renovated, expanded, and later dedicated in memory of board member Dr. Robert J. Kirvin.

The Salisbury Estate gazebo was restored, and the adjacent grounds were cleared to provide a spectacular view of the lake.

Hillcrest Hospital introduced Berkshire County's first health maintenance organization, the Hillcrest Community Health Plan (HCHP)--a low cost alternative to traditional health insurance plans.

A new Board of Directors' conference room was added on the fourth floor.

~ 1983 ~

Mammography services were introduced on November 15.

~ 1984 ~

A word processing system was installed to provide more efficient record keeping and faster service.

The cafeteria was renovated.

The Family Health Center was renovated and expanded to accommodate the growing number HCHP members.

~ 1985 ~

Following 18 months of negotiation, Hillcrest purchased the Avalon Schools.

A very successful Hillcrest Community Health Plan enlisted 3,300 members during the first year, and plans were announced to construct a new Family Health Center to accommodate this population.

In October, the Hillcrest Health Center at Lee was opened to better accommodate HCHP's south county members.

Arrangements were made for a twice weekly mobile CT scanner to visit the hospital to further enhance diagnostic capability.

A subsidiary of the Hillcrest Foundation, Berkshire Employee Support & Training (BEST) assumed management responsibility for the McGee Unit. An employee assistance program was developed.

A travel clinic was announced.

~ 1986 ~

Construction began on the \$1.6 million, 17,600-square foot Family Health Center addition and headquarters for the Hillcrest Community Health Plan.

HCHP membership expanded as it reached the end of its second year. In February, membership exceeded 5,600. The Hillcrest plan was also federally qualified as a supplement for persons covered under Medicare A and B.

A second HCHP satellite health center was opened in Great Barrington.

The proposed Salisbury Estates retirement community won the approval of the Pittsfield Planning Board following two hearings at City Hall.

The Family Health Center relocated to its newly constructed quarters.

A Thompson CGR dedicated mammography system was installed.

~ 1987 ~

The formal opening and dedication of the new Family Health Center, planned for October 4th, was cancelled because of an unpredictable, unseasonable snowstorm that crippled Berkshire County. U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy was to have been the principal speaker.

Site preparation was completed for Salisbury Estates, and construction commenced.

Renovation and modernization of the Radiology Department was completed.

Following relocation of the McGee Unit to the second floor, the east wing of the first floor was renovated and redecorated. Designated as the hospital's surgical unit, One East began receiving patients in late October.

Tender Care, a sick-child day care program, was developed, organized and implemented by Nursing Administration.

~ 1988 ~

On December 31, 1987, New Year's Eve, the Salisbury Estates retirement community was inhabited by its first resident.

The Family Health Center was dedicated in honor of Judge John A. Barry, President and Chairman of the Board. United States Senator Edward M. Kennedy was principal speaker at the June 4 event.

To accommodate a growing need the McGee Unit expanded from 18 to 30 beds.

~ 1989 ~

In August phase one of the hospital's planned diagnostic imaging center materialized with the installation of a CT scanner on the ground floor of the family health center.

~ 1991 ~

Hillcrest Hospital continued to address a community need with the addition of the McGee adolescent program. The outpatient service provides counseling for youth suffering directly or indirectly from alcohol and/or substance abuse.

Advances in technology and new equipment at Hillcrest offered laparoscopic cholecystectomy -- the removal by laparoscope of gall stones or diseased gall bladders -- and a dramatic reduction in length of stay and recovery.

~ 1992 ~

On January 1 Hillcrest Hospital became a smoke-free facility.

Hillcrest affiliated with Albany Medical College for management and physician staffing of the emergency department.

Hillcrest became business partners with the Conte Community School in April under a new Chamber of Commerce project.

A new cable-ready television system, donated by the Hillcrest Auxiliary, was installed. In addition to entertainment, the system offers individual patient teaching when necessary.

In October the hospital was awarded a determination of need (DON) for construction of a nursing home.

Continued advances in laparoscopic surgery expanded to hernia repair.

~ 1993 ~

Hillcrest expanded its affiliation with Albany Medical College to include its pharmacy program.

The McGee Unit was relocated to the third floor and second floor was renovated for medical patients. New beds and patient room furniture were purchased for the first and second floors.

New radiology equipment was purchased, and computer system linking the laboratory with the nursing units was installed.

An infusion room with reclining chairs for chemotherapy and other outpatient intravenous procedures was established.

The McGee Unit entered into a dual focus program to meet the psychiatric needs of its patients.

Chief of Anesthesia Dr. Gordan Kuhar introduced a pain management clinic.

~ 1994 ~

Hillcrest Hospital's mission statement was updated to reflect current goals.

Planned expansion of the family health center moved into phase two of diagnostic imaging with new equipment for nuclear medicine, mammography and CT scanning.

Site preparation for the Ivey Companies' Salisbury Manor nursing home commenced in June.

The hospital improved communications with the installation of a new telephone system.

Artwork, to complement the newly decorated second floor, was installed in patient rooms and hallways. This was a gift from the hospital auxiliary.

~ 1995 ~

AMC affiliation for pathology and clinical laboratory services.

Pain mgmt. clinic expansion and relocation to Hillcrest Hospital

Hillcrest Hospital was among the Berkshire County sites for the filming of "Before and After", a production starring Meryl Streep and Liam Neissen.

Adolescent inpatient and intensive outpatient substance abuse program added to McGee Unit.

Hillcrest Hospital Board approved the process of exploring implications of developing collaborative efforts with Berkshire Health Systems.

Willowood opened its new nursing home facility adjacent to Hillcrest Hospital.

The hospital's heating and cooling system underwent a change from high to low pressure steam controlled by an automated computer system.

~ 1996 ~

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among Hillcrest Hospital, Berkshire Medical Center (BMC) and Berkshire Health Systems (BHS) was approved in March by the respective boards of directors to implement a merger of the two hospitals.

On June 20, 1996 the Hillcrest Hospital Board of Directors approved the Agreement for Merger effective July 1, 1996. Six Hillcrest Trustees were nominated to the BHS Board; five to the BMC Board and all twenty-four were nominated as incorporators of BHS. The agreement and nominations were also approved by the BMC and BHS Boards.

Of interest: In 1908 Warren Salisbury purchased the 160-acre Taconic Farm which was later renamed Tor Court. It was in that same year, on July 8, that Hillcrest Hospital incorporated as a non-profit community hospital.

Our thanks to the many individuals
who researched and contributed
the information herein.

Among them: Richard Happel,
Therese (McGill) Allen, Jeanne Zdanis,
members of the Board, Administration,
Medical Staff, Auxiliary, Employees
and Volunteers.

Eugene A. Dellea
President/CEO

HILLCREST HOSPITAL . . . A HISTORY

Published, 1987, by Administration.

First Printing

Coordinated and updated annually
by Jeanne M. Zdanis, Administrative Assistant