A History of Berkshire Medical Center

A tradition of caring since 1875.

We share our history with you in conjunction with the 250th Anniversary of the city of Pittsfield.

Timeline researched and compiled by Martha Prescott, Jessica Martin, Colleen Boyle and Deirdre McKenna, October 2011.
Berkshire Medical Center: A Look Back
1872: Moving Sermon
On Thanksgiving Day, Rev. John Todd called for need of a refuge for the sick and poor; “A House of Mercy.” That evening, the first donor, Mrs. Mary Sullivan, gave $100.

1875: House of Mercy Opens
Opened by Dr. Henry H. Childs on January 1, the House of Mercy was the 1st cottage hospital in the US. An ordinary house or cottage adapted for hospital use, the House of Mercy had 8 beds and was located at 214 Francis Avenue. Mrs. John Todd served as the first President and Miss Martha Goodrich, an Army nurse, served as matron. House of Mercy served 22 patients in the first year.

1876: Mrs. Plunkett becomes President of the Corporation and remains President until 1906.

1877: House of Mercy Moves to New Building
A new 13 bed building was erected on the “Gore,” the triangle bound by First, North and Tyler Streets. The cost of the new building was $10,600. That year the House of Mercy cared for 34 patients and was run through donations raised from local churches and community.

1879: Telephone Installed

1874: Funds Raised
Churches, sewing societies and other civic organizations raised $5,874.22 at a days-long bazaar. Other fundraisers included concerts and teas.
1880: Goodrich Retires
After serving as the hospital's matron for 5 years, Miss Goodrich retired. She was replaced by Mrs. Lucy Creemer, a graduate of the New Haven Training School for Nurses.

1882: Hospital Sunday
2nd Sunday in August was designated as Hospital Sunday, all money raised was donated to the hospital.

1884-1885: New Additions
A Mortuary Chapel was dedicated in memory of John Coffing. The Pittsfield Training School for Nurses was established.

1883-1884: Matrons Replaced
Miss Field, another graduate of the New Haven Training School, replaced Mrs. Creemer. Miss Anna Clement replaced Miss Field one year later. Miss Anna Clement remained the matron until 1913.

1889: Henry W. Bishop 3rd Memorial Building Erected
This building doubled the capacity of the hospital and the name of the nursing school was changed to the Henry W. Bishop 3rd Memorial Training School for Nurses.
1890

1891: Horse-drawn Ambulance
A horse-drawn ambulance was donated to the hospital by Mrs. L. Tuckerman.

1893: East House and Laflin Surgical Buildings Opened
An impressive 84 cases of “surgical interference” were performed in the Laflin Surgical Building (shotgun wounds, fractured bones, tumors, farm accidents, railroad accidents and many other injuries).

1899: Milestone Met
The 25th Anniversary of the House of Mercy was celebrated; 4,090 patients treated since opening.

1899: The Russell Elms
The land between North and Wahconah Streets was donated by Mr. Solomon Russell.

1899: House of Mercy Board of Directors was all women and remained so until 1966.

1894: First Housekeeper Hired
To ease some of the Superintendent of Nurses’ duties, a housekeeper was hired for cooking and cleaning.

1891: The Milton Isolation Cottage Opened
1901: Donations
An unknown donor gives $25,000 for the construction of the new main hospital building, consequently paying for half of the sum needed to erect the building.

1903: Operating Room Completed
The Paddock Memorial Operating Room was finished and opened.

1908: BVNA Founded
Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association was formed and employed Miss Annie Osborne as nurse.

1908: Graduate Nurses Home
A home was built for graduates of the Henry Bishop Memorial Training School on Russell Terrace.

Dr. Franklin Kittredge Paddock, Surgeon 1874-1901

1913: 1st Dietitian Hired
A dietitian was appointed in charge of food and preparing menus in a scientific way.

OR circa 1906

1914: Technology Advances
An electric motor was installed to run the hospital’s various machinery.

1911: Buildings Named
The main brick building became known as the Warriner Building after Miss Maria R. Warriner donated $25,000 towards the building and also donated a similar sum at the time of her death.
1917: More Advances
The horse-drawn ambulance was replaced by a motor ambulance. A central diet kitchen and serving room were also installed.

1920: Ward Opens
The Sampson Ward was opened for communicable diseases.

1921-1923: Hospital Firsts
The first “Bargain Shop” was started as a fundraising project and realized $5,200 for one week. Additionally, National Hospital Day was proclaimed for the first time and was celebrated with an open house.

1922: Record Room
Hospital record room was established.

1928: New Treasurer
Mr. C.W. Power was elected treasurer. This marked the first time a man was elected to the governing body of the hospital.

1925: Sprinkler Installed
An automatic sprinkler system was set up in all buildings.

1926: Jump in Numbers
At the end of the year, 2,960 patients were treated along with 1,929 operations performed.

1927: Anniversary Celebrated
The 50th Anniversary of the hospital was recognized.

1928: Pharmacy
1929: Record Room
A Hospital Auxiliary was started.

1924: Auxiliary
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1930: Anniversary Celebrated
The 50th Anniversary of the hospital was recognized.

1924: Sprinkler Installed
An automatic sprinkler system was set up in all buildings.

1929: Auxiliary
A Hospital Auxiliary was started.
1930: Growth
The Outpatient Department clinics and main diet kitchen areas were enlarged as the Great Depression began.

1933: Salary Cut
All salaries were cut by 10% due to the influence of the Great Depression and economic measures.

1931: Upgrades
Electric clocks were installed in the operating room and the lobby area. An electrocardiograph machine, the first in the area, was also added to the hospital’s equipment.

1931-1932: New Building
The Edward A. Jones Memorial Building was opened.

1934: Doctor’s Lounge
A doctor’s lounge was built from an enclosed porch in memory of Dr. Colt.

1937: New Clinics
Dental extraction and venereal disease clinics were organized and opened.

1941: War Help
75 members of personnel left for military services or to enter war industries. The hospital was also readied for war blackouts. Red Cross Grey Lady and Nurses Aide courses began.

1941-1942: Plasma Banks
The first plasma banks were started. They expanded under Dr. Scoville after a federal grant provided a Blood Bank Center for Western MA.

1939 House of Mercy Bargain Shop

1944: Nursing Practice Classroom

1945
1945: Decorations Banned
The Fire Department banned indoor Christmas decorations in the hospital, as well as all public buildings.

1946: Decorating Banned
The hospital, as well as all public indoor Christmas decorations in buildings.

1947: Upgrades
The X-Ray Department was expanded to include deep x-ray therapy.

1948: Emergency Room Added
A room in Jones was converted into an emergency room.

1949: Unit Added
West II was renovated as a modern pediatric unit.

1950: Name Change
The name of the hospital was changed from House of Mercy to Pittsfield General Hospital.

A provision was made in the main hospital for the care of communicable diseases. The Sampson building was closed.

1952: First Million Dollar Budget Passed
For the first time in history, a budget over one million dollars was accepted by the board.

1953: Medical Records
Medical Records – Dr. Stanley Simkin
1953: Remodeling
The main lobby of the hospital was reconfigured to include space for a Gift Shop, operated as a volunteer project of the Hospital Auxiliary.

1954: Work Week Set
The 5-day, 40-hour work week went into effect throughout the hospital.

1954: Openings and Firsts
A Physiotherapy Department was opened. The first annual Recognition Dinner was held to honor all employees with more than 10 years of service.

1955: Approved
The hospital was approved for teaching of X-ray technicians.

1956: Expansions
An intravenous therapy service was established under the Anesthesia Department. A fundraising campaign was also started for the proposed hospital expansion.

1957: Degree-Granting Courses
With Bennington College for Medical Technologists, the hospital was approved for degree-granting courses.

1958: Affiliations
The Vocational Practical Nurse School became affiliated with Pittsfield General Hospital.

1959: New Department
A Department of Inhalation Therapy was established under the Anesthesia Department.

1959: New Hospital Development
Sampson building was demolished to make way for a new, modern hospital. The new Pittsfield General Hospital would cost about $2.9 million.

1959: New Position
Mrs. Vera Fielding was appointed as the first Public Relations Director.
1960: New Position
Mrs. Marjorie Dallmeyer, RN, was named first Director of the Hospital Volunteers.

1960: Pittsfield Affiliated Hospitals Education Program Established
An integrated graduate education program was created between St. Luke’s and Pittsfield General. Residency training programs were developed in surgery, medicine, obstetrics-gynecology, pathology and anesthesiology.

1960: New Position
Mrs. Marjorie Dallmeyer, RN, was named first Director of the Hospital Volunteers.

1961: Approved
The second phase of building (completion of the top three floors of the new building) began. Total cost was about $4.25 million, with 245 beds.

1964: New Openings
Berkshire Rehabilitation Center opens in Jones building. The Medical Science Library opened in the area formerly used as surgical suite.

1962: Firsts
Pittsfield hospitals participate in the first mock disaster drill. Medical staffs of Pittsfield General and St. Luke’s have first joint staff dinner. The first group of patients also move to new hospital on March 12 as other departments and units follow.

1962: Approval
American Medical Association approves Pittsfield Affiliated Hospital’s teaching program in anesthesia.

1964: Furnishings
Pittsfield Area Council of United Church Women furnishes new hospital chapel.

1962: Babies
The first baby born in new Pittsfield General building (West) is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Ducharme of Lenox. Jimmy Castle, smallest baby ever born at PGH, weighed 1 pound, 14 ounces at birth. Mr. and Mrs. John C. Austin become the parents of the 30,000 baby born at PGH.
1965: First Male President Named
Peter Vans Rice named first male president of hospital board.

1965: New Growth
Special Care United opened for critically ill patients. Jones floors are also reactivated for patient care. New by-laws are additionally adopted by the PGH Corporation.

1965: New Hours
Longer visiting hours are adopted from noon to 8:30 p.m.

1965: Electricity Sustained
PGH generates own electricity and maintains full illumination during massive power blackout in the Northeast.

1966: Milestone
PGH cracks the 10,000 mark in patient admissions for the 1965-1966 year.

1966: VNA Move
The Visiting Nurse Association moves to a larger headquarters in the Warriner Building.

1966: Health Fair
The three local hospitals cooperate in an exhibit at the Health-O-Rama, a community health fair.

1966: Joining Programs
PGH joins two medical study programs, the Professional Activities Study and the Medical Audit Program. Both programs provide national measurements of the hospital’s performance.

1966: Approvals
Pittsfield Affiliated Hospitals program in surgery is given a four-year approval by the American Medical Association. All hospitals in Berkshire County are also approved for Medicare program.

1966: Proposal
A unified hospital program for the future of Pittsfield is proposed by the Hospital Planning Council of Berkshire County.
1966

1967: Group Formed
A study group is organized to attempt the unification of the three hospitals.

1967: Money Saved
With the combining of their facilities, departments, and cooperative efforts, the hospital saved $84,000.

1966

1967: New School
School of Anesthesia opens.

1967: Mix of student uniforms now seen at Pittsfield General (Bishop, St. Luke’s and BCC).

1968

1968: New Advances
First transvenous battery-operated pacemakers installed in select cardiac patients.

1968: New Unit
An Intensive Coronary Care Unit opened at the St. Luke’s site (Sister Margaret Fay, Student, and Dr. Seager).

1968: Merger
Plans for a merger and creation of Berkshire Medical Center materialize as St. Luke’s and Pittsfield General combine maternity wards, pool hospital beds, pathology and emergency room coverage, and the schools of medical technology and nursing. A vote to merge is approved.

1968: New Beginnings
Benjamin England becomes BMC’s first president and makes new partnership proposal to Hillcrest.

1968: New Unit
An Intensive Coronary Care Unit opened at the St. Luke’s site (Sister Margaret Fay, Student, and Dr. Seager).

1968: Nursing School Closes
Bishop Memorial School of Nursing holds final graduation.

1968: New Beginning
Benjamin England becomes BMC’s first president and makes new partnership proposal to Hillcrest.
1968

1970: New Treatments
First total hip joint replacement surgery performed as well as a new treatment for cancer, radioactive cobalt therapy, introduced.

1969: Surgical Day Care Program
BMC inaugurates surgical day program with patients admitted at 7 a.m. and discharged the same day for simple operations.

1973: Fundraising Begins
A $2.5 million fundraising drive to fund the $15 million building project of St. Luke’s Pavilion begins. $2.5 million was raised in seven months for the 153 bed facility.

1975: New Project

1973: Neighborhood Health
West Side Neighborhood Health Clinic opens at 43 Francis Avenue.

1977: Pavilion Opens

1986

1985: New Center
Crane Center is opened for ambulatory surgery.

1983: Organized
Berkshire Health Systems is organized.

1975: Tumor Registry
BMC organized a tumor registry.

1976: Affiliation
BMC established an affiliation with University of MA Medical School.

1985: Merger
BVNA merged with BMC.

1986: Cancer Institute
The new Cancer Institution was the beneficiary of a fund drive that raised $3.8 million.

1986: CT Scan
The first CT scan was used.
1986

1987: Merger
Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington becomes part of Berkshire Health Systems.

1987: Upgrading
Renovations and modernization of the Radiology Department are completed and ready.

1988-1989: New Program
A hospital-based employee health program of Berkshire Health Systems, Berkshire Occupational Health, organized.

1993: New President
David E. Phelps becomes President, CEO of BHS.

1996: Hillcrest Merger
Hillcrest merges with BMC.

1997: Advocacy for Access
New service begun to help the uninsured and underinsured enroll in available programs to improve access and care.

Electronic Health Records created to efficiently store patients’ files and records on a computer.

2000

2000: New Technology
Picture Archiving and Communications System (PACS) began.

1990: New Building
The Medical Arts Complex is built.
2002-2005: Save Energy
A Master Facilities Plan included energy saving measures to make BMC more efficient. The Lab, Emergency Department, and Operating Rooms were all set to “go green.”

2002: New System
Medication Management System started with pharmacy automation.

2003: Recruiting
BHS supports recruitment of physicians to meet the community need. Over 150 physicians were recruited since the beginning of this process.

2003: New Center
Women’s Imaging Center opened.

2003: Bariatric Surgery
New weight loss surgery program begun to help people resolve health issues related to severe obesity.

2002-2005: Renovations
BMC completes a $40 million renovation and expansion project, resulting in the most advanced healthcare facilities in the region. This renovation included an updated Emergency Department, Lab and patient corridors. The expansion added 40,000 square feet of new space and 70,000 square feet were renovated.

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2001-2011: Heart Care Award
BMC has been recognized for ten years running by the American Heart Association Get With the Guidelines program for Coronary Artery Disease Performance Achievement and six years for Heart Failure.

2005-2011: Stroke Award
BMC is the first and only US hospital to receive the American Stroke Association Get With The Guidelines Performance Achievement Award, and has received the award each year after.
2005: New Program
A new Hospitalist Program begins at BMC.

2005: New Center Opens
BMC collaborates with Berkshire Surgical Associates to open the Center for Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine.

2005: Walk with Me
A community walking program is begun, promoting walking as a good form of exercise. Over 2,000 people participated and the program is held each year.

2006: Cardiology Boost
BHS announced the completion of a multi-million dollar investment in cardiology by revitalizing services with new physicians, technology, and opening the region’s most advanced cardiac catherization lab.

2006: New Initiative
BHS sponsors ground-breaking Pain Management Initiative to combat drug diversion and misuse.

2006: Donation
BHS donates $100,000 to the Berkshire Wireless Learning Initiative which focuses on giving middle school children in North Adams and Pittsfield laptops.

2007: BHS begins Outreach Van
BHS brings Mobile Outreach Van to the community for essential health screenings.

2006 & 2009: Cancer Award
BMC was awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer. BMC was one of only 82 cancer programs in the US so honored for 2009.

2007: Omnicell
Omnicell and Pharmacy Carousel implemented to improve medication safety.
2008-2011: 5 Star Ranks
BMC Pulmonary Services has 5-Star rating each year from HealthGrades for treatment of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and pneumonia.

2008: Bloodmobile Launched
BHS launches the Bloodmobile, a vehicle that travels to various locations in the community as a station for the public to donate blood.

2009: Excellence Award
BMC is honored by HealthGrades with a Distinguished Hospital Award for Clinical Excellence, ranked among the top 5% of US hospitals.

2009: New Heart Failure Clinic
A Heart Failure Clinic is launched at BMC. This program provides one-on-one care in the hospital, outpatient clinic as well as remote care in the patient’s home with the assistance of the Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association through a computerized monitoring system.

2009: New Residency
Psychiatry residency begins at BMC.

2008: New Technology
BMC installs a 64 Slice CT scanner, providing faster CT scans with higher resolution 3D images.

2008: New Collaboration
BHS and Elms College collaborate on new bachelors nursing education program at the Hillcrest Campus.

2009: New Program
Total Joint Replacement Program launched.

2009: New Connections
BHS launches an Employee web portal. This site provides employees with information about programs, benefits, and hospital updates.

2009-2010: Leapfrog Recognition
BMC ranked in the top 10% in Massachusetts and entire nation for quality, resource use and efficiency.
2009-2010 Worksite Wellness Award
Honorable mention 2 years in a row by the C. Everett Koop for worksite wellness.

2010: BMC Honored
Berkshire Medical Center honored among nation’s top hospitals as Hospital Value Index recognizes BMC with the Top 100 Hospital and Best in Value Awards™.

2010: Wound Care Center Honored
The Center for Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine was one of only four facilities in the entire US to be named a “Center of the Year” by Diversified Clinical Services.

2010: New System
Invested in revolutionary da Vinci Surgical System.

2010: New Office
Urology Services opened a new office practice at Fairview Hospital.

2010: Expansion
Dental Clinic is moved to 510 North Street, modified, and expanded.

2010: Funding for Patients
BHS Board of Trustees approved the purchase of Allscripts™, a clinical and practice management system, that allows for coordination of care by expanding electronic health records to physician offices.

2010-2011: Stroke Care
BMC receives HealthGrades Stroke Care Excellence Award and is ranked both years in top 10% of the nation for Stroke Care.

2011: Medication Safety
EMR-BMU medication and bedside verification implemented creating the final step in closed loop medication administration for patient safety.

2011: New Center Opens
Crane Ambulatory Surgery Center opens. It is a “green” building made of mostly recycled materials and is energy efficient.