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**Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History**

*presents*

# Hospitals and Sanitariums



**of Santa Clara County**



By Michael Hurley

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## Acknowledgements

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The discovery of gold in California ignited a sudden and massive increase in the territory's population, going from fewer than 2000 non-native inhabitants to over 300,000 in less than seven years. With little infrastructure in place to support so many new arrivals, housing and sanitation quickly became acute problems. In the first years following California statehood (1850), counties were charged with addressing the welfare of their citizens, including health care, in the wake of numerous outbreaks of serious diseases.

With only a handful of doctors, no hospitals, and limited access to medical supplies, Santa Clara County made various arrangements to provide care, regardless of ability to pay, including rented premises, contracted medical services, and unsuccessful efforts to partner with the City of San José. By 1860, with the need for a public hospital urgent, the county purchased and improved buildings on a twelve-acre site along Los Gatos Creek just south of what is now Park Avenue. They also appointed a county physician. Although these facilities soon proved inadequate, they remained in use until 1871, when a new site on Bascom Avenue was purchased, a site that has remained a health care facility, currently occupied by Valley Medical Center. This image from the 1876 Thompson & West historical atlas shows the hospital, designed by local architects Lenzen & Nash.

## *County Hospital 1871*



The original County Hospital buildings were seriously damaged in the April 1906 earthquake but were quickly rebuilt. Guided by recommendations from county physician Dr. Howard Gates, who had been touring modern hospitals on the East Coast and Europe, the Board of Supervisors approved plans for a new County Hospital, designed by architects Wolfe & McKenzie, in September 1906. Using funds from a bond referendum, the new facility was completed in 1907. Demand for services continued to grow with outpatient visits tripling following World War II. In 1955, another bond referendum funded the addition of a new seven-story hospital structure on the site. The official ground breaking followed in 1956. During the interim, former employee quarters were converted into general and specialized outpatient clinics in order to meet community needs. This image from 1960 shows the new medical facility next to the old 1906 County Hospital.

## *County Hospital 1906-1960*



In July 1961, the county demolished those portions of the original 1876 hospital, which had remained in use after the 1906 earthquake. In 1965, the Board of Supervisors approved a plan to replace the 1906 County Hospital with a new wing. Funded by a 1964 bond issue, along with state and county support, a new four-story building replaced the old County Hospital. The entire complex, located at the southwest corner of Bascom and Moorpark Avenues, was renamed Santa Clara Valley Medical Center and has continued to expand ever since.

## *Valley Medical Center*



In 1885, due to overcrowding in the state's existing hospitals in Napa and Stockton, the California legislature authorized an additional facility. A special commission selected Agnew Station as the site for the California Hospital for the Chronic Insane.

Designed by San José architect Jacob Lenzen, the Agnews facility opened in October 1888. Built at a cost of \$750,000 on a two hundred seventy-six-acre tract purchased for \$55,200, the hospital complex encompassed forty-one buildings, including a four-story main building with two three-story wings, and had a capacity for 2,000 patients. Surrounded by beautiful grounds, the hospital was supported, in part, by its own farmland and livestock.

## *Agnews Hospital for the Chronic Insane*



In 1901, Amaury Mars, a French visitor to Agnews, observed that, “The style of architecture of the principal buildings is severe, but elegant. The imposing façade of the structure overlooks a beautiful park, and the interior appears to be remarkably comfortable and can accommodate about 1,025 patients. But we will abandon this sorrowful topic, for the weaknesses of humanity are not matters of publicity: especially when there is but little hope for help or remedy.”

From its beginnings, in spite of its name, the hospital’s patient population included many who today would not be considered “insane,” including those with developmental disabilities and also those suffering from alcoholism, drug addiction, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, or senility. In keeping with common 19<sup>th</sup> century practice, patients were institutionally confined and received no therapeutic services.

## *Agnews Hospital in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*



On April 18, 1906, a massive earthquake struck the Bay Area, resulting in the death of at least one hundred-seventeen patients and staff at Agnews Hospital. Many more were injured. All of the hospital's buildings, constructed of unreinforced masonry, were severely damaged. The hospital was rebuilt and reopened in 1911 as the Agnews State Mental Hospital. Under the leadership of Dr. Leonard Stocking, a more progressive treatment approach was pursued. Patients were provided with the advantages of abundant light and air in less confining cottage-like settings with attention to their particular needs, including vocational training where appropriate. By 1926, patients with developmental disabilities were separately housed.

## *Earthquake Demolishes Agnews Hospital*



The Lanterman Act, passed by the California Legislature in 1969, recognized that disabled people have legal rights to services and support. The Act has allowed the disabled to live independent and normal lives, in keeping with their individual needs and wishes. In 1972, nearly all programs for the mentally ill at Agnews were discontinued, with only programs for the developmentally disabled remaining. By 2009, the last residential patient had moved out. After the Agnews Developmental Center closed in the mid-1990s, Sun Microsystems bought ninety acres of the premises for its corporate headquarters, and agreed to invest \$10 million to restore and preserve the clock tower, administration building, superintendent's residence, and auditorium. In 2010, Sun was acquired by Oracle Corporation, which has used the site, located northeast of Lafayette Street and Montague Expressway, as a research and conference center. Agnews Insane Asylum was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1997.

## *Agnews Developmental Center*



In 1889, the San José Sanitarium, the first private hospital in Santa Clara County, was established. It was built on a beautifully landscaped fourteen-acre site at Race and San Carlos Streets through the philanthropy of Myles and Amanda O'Connor, Irish immigrants and California pioneers. The O'Connors transferred the sanitarium to the archdiocese of San Francisco to be operated by the Sisters of Charity. By 1906, it was commonly referred to as O'Connor Sanitarium, but for many years was also called San José Sanitarium or Sisters' Hospital. The main building had two wings and the latest equipment for its surgical, obstetric, laboratory, and radiography departments. Its support facilities included kitchens, a laundry, a powerhouse, and stables. In 1907, along with the Garden City Sanitarium, the San José Mercury named O'Connor Sanitarium one of the best-equipped hospitals in the state.

## *Sisters of Charity Hospital*



In 1944, O'Connor Sanitarium was officially renamed O'Connor Hospital. It was moved to modern facilities on Forrest Avenue in 1954, and became a part of Daughters of Charity Health System in 2002. After a century of the hospital's mission to serve the poor, a booming local economy and changing medical economics presented serious challenges. Facing financial difficulties for years and losing up to \$10 million a month, Daughters of Charity put O'Connor and its other hospitals on the market in 2014. After the California Attorney General raised objections, an agreement to sell the hospitals to a group owned by a hedge fund fell through the following year. Over further protests by the Attorney General, a bankruptcy court approved a \$235 million one-bid sale of O'Connor and St. Louise Hospitals to Santa Clara County, and a federal court approved the deal in February 2019.

## *O'Connor Hospital*



By the time a new San José City Hall building was completed in 1889, delays in transferring patients to county facilities made it clear that a downtown medical emergency facility was needed. But it wasn't until 1894 that the City Physician and Chief of Police were able to establish a receiving hospital in the basement of City Hall, which was located in the center of what is now Plaza de Cesar Chavez Plaza. From the start the medical community felt these facilities were inadequate. Nonetheless, for decades, this was the first stop for hundreds of accident, crime, and medical crisis cases each year. After City Hall was damaged in the 1906 earthquake, the city directed a committee to consider finding or building better quarters for the receiving hospital, but it continued until a downtown emergency aid station, funded jointly by the city and county, was established in 1949. In 1958, the old 1889 City Hall building was demolished and replaced with a new City Hall on Mission Street.

## *City Receiving Hospital*



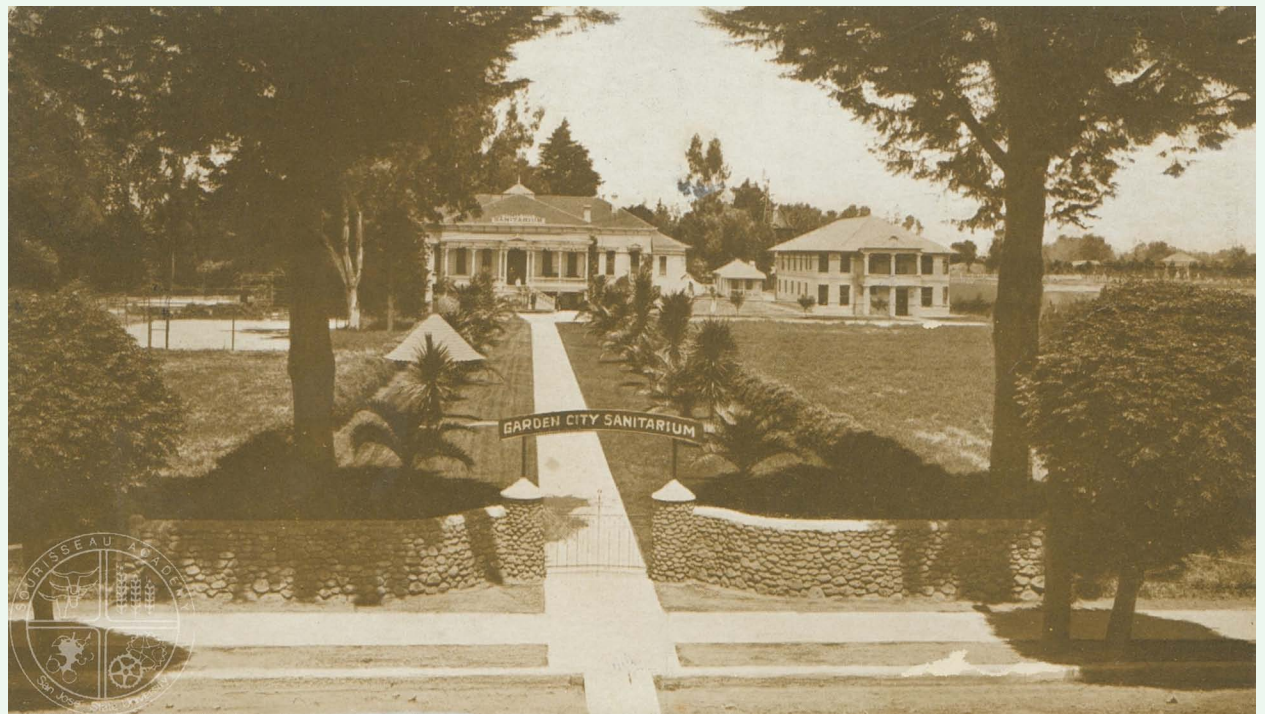
In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Linda Vista Sanitarium operated in the foothills below Alum Rock Park. Today, it is remembered, if at all, because the building was used between 1911 and 1913 as the original clubhouse for the San José Golf and Country Club. The Linda Vista Sanitarium was located at the terminus of Alum Rock Avenue.

## *Linda Vista Sanitarium*



In 1897, Lewis J. Belknap, M.D. came to San José from the Midwest and established the Garden City Sanitarium in the Lagarde/Carey residence in East San José. Although the term “sanitarium” customarily indicated a specialty in serving tuberculosis patients, Garden City offered general medical and surgical services. In 1907, the Garden City Sanitarium added a new fully electrified 40 x 80 foot building of steel and concrete construction, with fresh water and salt water pools for a complete system of water treatment, as well as x-ray, massage, and other popular therapies. In 1907, along with O’Connor Sanitarium, the San José Mercury named Garden City Sanitarium one of the best-equipped hospitals in the state.

## *Garden City Sanitarium*



Garden City Sanitarium thrived under the direction of Dr. L. J. Belknap but by 1920 he was ready to retire. As a result of population growth following World War I and the 1918 influenza epidemic, the San José medical community struggled with the limited capacity of the existing hospitals. When Dr. Belknap announced his decision to retire, Dr. Frank H. Paterson saw an opportunity to address the strained resources at Columbia Hospital—he purchased Garden City Sanitarium for \$80,000 and merged it with Columbia Hospital. Renamed East Columbia Hospital, it remained in operation after the 1921 closure of Columbia Hospital. In 1924, the city purchased the site for Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School, today located between Coyote Creek and 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

## *Garden City/East Columbia Hospital*



San José physicians Abraham and John McMahon, father and son, established the McMahon Hospital in this building at 195 Reed Street after younger son Frank McMahon received his medical license in 1898. The building served only briefly as McMahon Hospital, with Frank McMahon as superintendent. Following Frank McMahon's departure and the death of Abraham McMahon in 1904, the building was leased to Mary J. Hartman, a trained nurse who had been operating the Irving Hospital on South 8<sup>th</sup> Street since 1905. Reopening on Reed Street in 1907, Irving Hospital was well equipped for surgical and obstetrical cases. Mrs. Hartman died in 1910 and the building was sold to Olive Walton and Mabel McTernan, owners of a downtown stationery store. They ran the facility as the Women and Children's Hospital until 1913. They both continued on to medical school, and as physicians, went to the California Home for Girls in Ventura. By 1915, the building had become the Palm Apartments.


### *McMahon/Irving/Women and Children's Hospital*



In May 1906, Dr. Otto H. Dogge, a gynecologist, opened the Belvedere Hospital at 152 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in San José, facing St. James Park and next to the First Unitarian Church. Rates for confinement cases started at \$35 for ten days of “first-class board and nursing,” with physicians and nurses in attendance day and night. In April 1907, shortly before Dr. Dogge’s death, the hospital was sold to nurses Albina Phelps and Letha Bell, who expanded the hospital with a fourteen-room, three-story annex in October 1908. The hospital is listed in the 1912-1913 city directory at 117 North 5<sup>th</sup> Street, showing pharmacist Cornelius Dore as president, with Albina Phelps and Anna Reseburg as superintendents.


## *Belvedere Hospital*

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In May 1910, the Oaks Sanitarium, a tuberculosis hospital, was opened by Dr. Mary C. MacInnis in the hills above Los Gatos on Montevina Avenue. In January 1914, the sanitarium was taken over by William C. Voorsanger, M.D., a founder and early president of the first San Francisco tuberculosis association. The site was appealing and attracted interest from several other counties over the years. In 1920, San Francisco considered purchasing the sanitarium for \$98,750, but the sale never went through. After Dr. Voorsanger added a twenty-room hospital building in 1924, Santa Cruz County considered renting the Oaks, but instead built a sixteen-bed tuberculosis unit at the county hospital. After his appointment to the San Francisco Board of Health and his election as president of the San Francisco medical society, Dr. Voorsanger closed the sanitarium in December 1939 and put the property on the market.

## *Oaks Sanitarium*



Established at 1355 The Alameda in 1912, the Stice Sanitarium was the private psychiatric hospital of Tyre H. Stice, MD. Something of a prodigy, Dr. Stice was the third assistant physician at Napa State Hospital before he was thirty years of age. He had advanced to second assistant by 1908 when the hospital's governing board dismissed him and installed a political crony of Governor James Gillett (1907–1911). Stice relocated to San José in 1909, where he had a psychiatric practice. He operated the Stice Sanitarium until 1916, when he sold the building as a private residence and retired to Napa. After serving ten years on the Napa city council Dr. Stice was appointed superintendent of Napa State Hospital in 1931 by Governor James Rolph (1931–1934) and remained in that position until his death in 1935.

## *Stice Sanitarium*



Dr. Frank H. Paterson's Columbia Hospital, on the corner of South Market and Auzerais Streets in San José, operated from January 1912 until June 1921. During Dr. Paterson's World War I military service, the hospital was managed by his wife, Mary B. Paterson. In March 1920, Columbia Hospital purchased Garden City Sanitarium for \$80,000 and renamed it East Columbia Hospital. In May 1921, Columbia Hospital announced that it would close its original Market Street facility, with East Columbia continuing as a "closed" hospital, for patients treated only by the hospital's staff physicians. Within days, an association was formed seeking funding and a site for a new "open" hospital. By 1922, in spite of Dr. Paterson's strong objections, the eighty-five-bed San José Hospital was under construction. Although remaining on staff, Dr. Paterson relinquished control of East Columbia, and the original Columbia building was converted to apartments. By 1924, the Patersons had left San José.

## *Columbia Hospital*



In 1921, the old Columbia Hospital closed, leaving San José with inadequate hospital facilities and restricting independent doctors' ability to treat patients at the remaining East Columbia Hospital. Reacting in shock, several independent doctors explored the purchase of the vacated Columbia building, but found the asking price to be several times its fair market value. The city council rejected renting the Columbia building because the rent demanded was also excessive. A new hospital association was formed. With the support of sixty-six physicians and funded by \$185,000 in public subscriptions, ground was broken in 1922. The eighty-five-bed San José Hospital at 14<sup>th</sup> and Santa Clara Streets opened in 1923.

## *San José Hospital—Origins*



In the seven decades following San José Hospital's opening in 1923, the population of the city grew from about 50,000 to around 800,000. During its early years the hospital expanded from eighty-five to three hundred twenty-four beds to meet an increasing need for services. But later medical advances and managed-care economics resulted in growing outpatient care and declining inpatient occupancy. By 1994, the hospital's occupancy rate fell to half the statewide average, leading to substantial budget and staffing cuts and converting the hospital to an outpatient service center. After losing \$45 million over three years and faced with new state requirements for seismic retrofitting and more nurses, San José Hospital closed its doors on December 9, 2004. Santa Clara County bought the site in 2010, and the building was demolished in 2011.

## *San José Hospital—Expansion and Demise*



Wheeler Hospital, located at at 651 West Sixth Street in Gilroy, began construction in January 1928 and was completed in 1929. Designed by architect William H. Weeks, the hospital was funded through the philanthropy of Lin W. Wheeler, president of the Pieters-Wheeler Seed Company. The twenty-nine-bed hospital had state-of-the art equipment. In addition to the hospital, Lin Wheeler and his wife, Leon, gave Gilroy the Wheeler Auditorium, Wheeler Field, and the Elks Building. The Wheelers were both killed in a Stockton traffic accident in June 1944. A modern fifty-bed facility was added to the site in 1962, at a cost of \$1.2 million. The original building was then used for administration. In 1989, with the opening of the new South County Hospital, the Wheeler Hospital closed. Its buildings survive as the Wheeler Manor Senior Apartments.

## *Wheeler Hospital*



Alum Rock Sanatorium was located near scenic Alum Rock Park on Crothers Road in San José's east foothills. Some sources suggest that it may have existed as early as 1922. By 1940, the sanatorium was under the management of Buford H. Wardrip, M.D., a specialist in pulmonary medicine. Widely respected in his field, Dr. Wardrip served as president of the American Trudeau Society, president of the Santa Clara County Tuberculosis Association, and as California governor of the American College of Chest Physicians. The sanatorium's independent existence came to an end in 1958 when it became the Alum Rock branch of San José Hospital. At the same time Dr. Wardrip moved his long-time downtown office from the Medico-Dental Building to a location adjacent to San José Hospital.

## *Alum Rock Sanatorium*



Kaiser Permanente, a pioneering HMO, combines hospitals owned by the not-for-profit Kaiser Foundation Health System with staff employed by the for-profit Permanente Medical Group. Arising out of industrial medical plans developed in the Bay Area's wartime shipyards, Kaiser Permanente expanded in the decade following World War II from 17,000 to 800,000 members and had more than 12 million members by 2018. The Kaiser Permanente model emphasizes using preventive care to reduce future costs, shifting services to outpatient clinics to minimize expensive hospital stays, and hiring salaried doctors to remove the main incentive for unnecessary procedures. The goals are lower costs per member, savings for Kaiser Permanente, and greater doctor attention to patients. Kaiser Santa Clara Medical Center on Kiely Boulevard, opened in 1964, at a cost of \$5.6 million. It was replaced in 2007 by a new medical center located at Lawrence Expressway and Homestead Road.

## *Kaiser Santa Clara Medical Center*



## **Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library  
Special Collections Reading Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
150 E. San Fernando St.  
San José, CA 95112

### **Mailing address:**

Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History  
San José State University  
One Washington Square  
San José, CA 95192-0147  
(408) 808-2064  
sourisseauacademy.org  
research@sourisseauacademy.org

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