

Salt Lake County Hospital History

Compiled by Jeff Hatch, Salt Lake County Auditor and Larry Decker, Assistant Internal Audit Director. Access at: www.archives.slco.org

The County Hospital occupied the site of the current Salt Lake County Government Center at 2001 South State Street. Over the years, various buildings were constructed on the site for the hospital and “infirmiry,” an early term used in reference to a hospital. The County purchased this property on October 17, 1885 from a Louisa Ferguson of New York for \$3,500. Shortly thereafter, the County built an “infirmiry and asylum” on the site of the current Government Center south building.

A new “County Infirmiry Hospital” with a bed capacity for 25 patients and 100 “inmates” was built in 1911-1912, at a cost of \$200,000, and dedicated May 12, 1912. In addition to serving the public at large, it was used to serve the medical needs of the poor. Prior to this time, the poor were directed to St. Mark’s Hospital, under an agreement with the County. An “isolation hospital” for tubercular patients was built in 1917.

Another “County Infirmiry” opened on the property in early 1923 to replace the old County infirmiry hospital. The older facility was then devoted strictly to “medical, surgical and obstetrical cases,” and renamed the “County General Hospital.” The removal of the infirmiry from this older facility allowed for an expanded medical bed capacity for 125 patients. A new isolation hospital was completed in 1934. The County Hospital also served the mentally-ill, and as therapy included electrical shock treatment, a practice that has since been replaced by more effective methods, including medications.

A school for nurses was opened in 1913. The first class, numbering six students, graduated in 1916. From 1942 to 1965, the County Hospital was also a clinical training facility for University of Utah medical students. The County Hospital filled roles in many ways similar to today’s University Medical Center. The University Hospital (Medical Center) opened in 1965, by which time the County Hospital essentially ceased operations. The buildings remained until 1985 and were used as County offices, and one building served for a short time as the office for FHP, a private health care provider.