



Calumet County Historical Society Museum

**Open Sundays June-September 1:00 to 4:00
or by appointment**

Calumet Memorial Hospital Opening

By Ray Mueller

Calumet County Historical Society

Chilton and the surrounding area celebrated the opening of the Calumet Memorial Hospital (Ascension Calumet Medical Center today) in a big way during June of 1956.

On a 5-acre site donated by area farmer Theodore Christoph, the facility was at the corner of the then Market Street (Memorial Drive today) and Brooklyn Street. The 40-room facility was constructed and equipped over a period of 14 months for an estimated \$511,940.

To anticipate the grand opening 10 weeks later, a cornerstone laying ceremony was held on April 15 in 1956. That program, which was emceed by building committee vice chairman William D. Engler, included music played by the high school bands from Chilton and Hilbert and singing by the Calumet County Homemakers chorus, an invocation by Rev. Gordon R. Core of the Evangelical United Brethren churches at Rantoul and Brillion, and a benediction by the Rev. Lambert Scanlan of Holy Rosary Catholic Church in New Holstein.

A poster for a dedication ceremony on the afternoon of Saturday, June 30 to mark completion of the facility invited "everybody in Calumet County" to take part in a "gigantic hospital parade" featuring bands, horses, convertible autos, and floats from North State Street down Main



Street to the then railroad depot, and then south to Market Street and the hospital. Children were encouraged to compete for cash prizes (total of \$18) for entries of decorated bicycles, tricycles, or doll buggies in the parade. Area organizations, businesses, and industries were welcome to enter floats in the parade, for which Alpheus W. Larson (a Chilton mayor) was chosen as the marshal.

The occasion also prompted the Chilton Times Journal to publish a 4 section, 32 page edition on Thursday, June 28. This was the largest single edition in the newspaper's 99-year history.

The dedication program, emceed by Armin Hernke of Hilbert, included music by the Chilton city band and the homemakers chorus, an invocation by Rev. Henry J. Schmitt of Sacred Heart Catholic Church at Sherwood, a welcome by Chilton mayor Carl W. Hofmeister, a ribbon cutting led by medical staff president Dr. Nicholas J. Knauf, and a benediction by Rev. Edmund R. Webster of St. Boniface Episcopal Church in Chilton. The facility was open for tours on the following day before beginning to admit patients later in the first week of July.

Community support for the hospital was indicated in part by the July 31, 1956 listing of the charter members – 18 Life, 58 Associate, and 465 Active – of the Calumet Memorial Hospital auxiliary. These women, some of whom are alive today, had their names listed as Mrs., followed by their husband's first name and surname. The only exceptions – with their first name listed – were the 22 Misses in the group.

Although many organizations, businesses, individuals, and the federal taxpayers contributed to the hospital's fund drive, the initial push for a hospital in the county started with the executive board of the women in the Calumet County Farm Bureau. Led by chairwoman Mrs. Herbert Schoen, the group decided in late 1953 to make the acquisition of a local hospital their main item of business in 1954.

To manage the hospital, the local board of directors chose I. Joseph Shyne to be its



administrator with a 25-month contract that started on December 1, 1955. A native of a farm near Frankfort, Kansas, Shyne made his way to Chilton at age 38 after a professional career that included assignments at hospitals in St. Louis and Madison.

At the hospital's opening, patients were charged \$17 per day for a private room or \$11 for a semi-private room, \$10 for a full chest x-ray, basal metabolism test, or EKG test, \$3 per day for a baby kept in the nursery, \$15 for a minor operation, and \$25 for a major operation not taking more than one hour.

Prizes totaling more than \$600 in cash and merchandise were to be awarded for the first boy and first girl born at the hospital along with the first birth in each of the last five months of 1956 and any multiple birth before January 1, 1957. The first set of twins were Lyle Hoerth and Linda Hoerth Thielman (children of Clarence and the late Colleen), born there in 1958.

The documents, including a copy of the June 28, 1956 Chilton Times Journal, from which the information was obtained for this memoir on the origin of what is a major institution in the city and area today, will be available from the Calumet County Historical Society in 2023 by appointment. Its museum at the corner of Irish Road and Highway 32/57 will be open on Sunday afternoons from June through September.



AFTER VIEWING sites which civic minded individuals and firms had offered to donate to Calumet Memorial Hospital association, the site offered by Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Christoph, Route 4, Chilton, was chosen. The site on Market St., is indicated by an arrow. The site was chosen Oct. 5, 1954.

