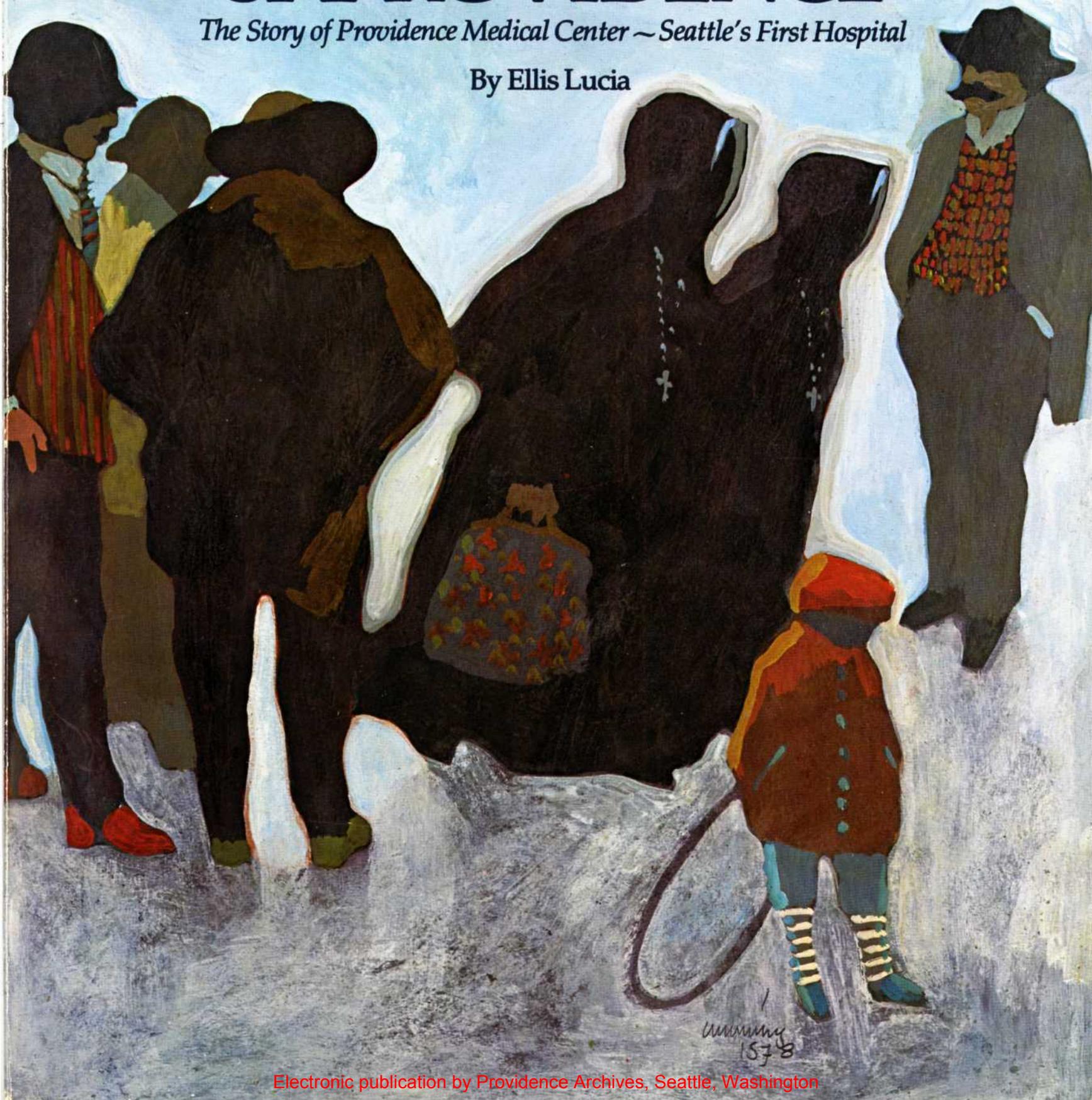


SEATTLE'S SISTERS of PROVIDENCE

The Story of Providence Medical Center ~ Seattle's First Hospital

By Ellis Lucia







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By Ellis Lucia

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by Bill Cumming



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"Love's not love until love's vulnerable."

Theodore Roethke

*This book is dedicated to
Mother Joseph
1823-1902*

It is appropriate that the State of Washington is honoring Mother Joseph, founder of Providence Medical Center, Seattle, in 1877.

In 1976, the governor of Washington State signed into law a bill which states: "Mother Joseph of the Sisters of Providence is hereby designated as an historic leader of national renown. The legislature hereby deems it appropriate to erect a statue of Mother Joseph in Statuary Hall...in our national capitol (Washington, D.C.) to commemorate her fame and historic service as a great Washingtonian and a great American."

The statue of Mother Joseph will be erected in May, 1980, joining the statue of Marcus Whitman, as Washington State's two most distinguished citizens.

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present Ellis Lucia's account, *Seattle's Sisters of Providence*, into which has been woven the formative years of Providence Medical Center. A versatile historian, Lucia has entered into the lives of Mother Joseph Pariseau and her companions, resolute pioneer women who faced and conquered adversities, supported by no other means than their faith in Divine Providence. The history of the Sisters of Providence in Seattle is a valorous struggle to provide health care with compassion.

Seattle's Sisters of Providence offers us the opportunity to experience the panorama of events connected with the settlement and development of Seattle one hundred years ago. The Sisters, operating in the Oregon Territory since 1856, had already established a number of hospitals, schools, and Indian missions throughout the Northwest. In 1876 they came by boat to Seattle and took possession of the Poor Farm, located in the area presently called Georgetown.

While the logging industry flourished, and a healthy economy emerged in the Puget Sound country, the spiritual and physical needs were all but ignored and forgotten. The Sisters arrived practically

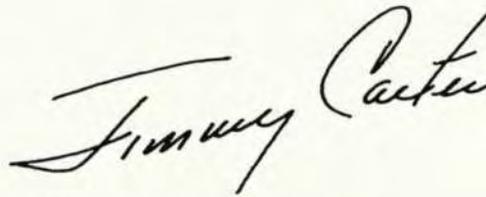
unnoticed, and quietly pursued their non-profitable venture amid skepticism and indifference. In the first hundred years a successful foundation of continuous service was laid, making it possible to carry on a vital, beneficent work into its second century.

As the Sisters persisted, the humble beginnings of the Poor Farm metamorphosized into the permanent institution of Providence Hospital, now the Medical Center, located on Seattle's First Hill. *Seattle's Sisters of Providence* gives a fresh perspective on familiar personalities and events. The author brings forth anecdotes and stories not published heretofore in any historical narratives or references, and prompts us to more deeply appreciate the living heritage that is ours in the Pacific Northwest—the people whose vision and spirit of compassion have extended into the Providence Medical Center that we know today.

Sister Louise Gleason, SP
Provincial
Seattle, Washington

January, 1979

"Yours is a proud and distinguished tradition of healing and compassionate concern for others, of dedicated service to the sick and poor.... Since the founding of your Center of Seattle, you have provided the finest kind of medical care for individuals throughout the western United States. You have played a major role in bringing your city and state to their present enviable position in health planning and services. You have a grateful nation's deep appreciation for a job well done."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jimmy Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "C" at the end.

President of the United States.
During the 100th Anniversary Celebration
of Providence Medical Center, May 4, 1977.

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PROLOGUE:

From the high ridges of West Seattle, on a bright, clear day when you can see forever, as the song goes, the spectacle of a gleaming, moving and changing city sprawls along one of the historic reaches of Puget Sound.

As with many of this nation's key population centers, Seattle, which was named for a local Indian chief, has undergone vast changes in the past few decades, symbolized by its tall and sparkling business buildings, its freeways, huge domed sports stadium, a magnificent cultural center, modern library, little theaters, museums, a leading university, malls and shopping centers, and overseeing it all a towering, stilt-like lookout crowned by a flying saucer and called the Space Needle. Most everyone who comes calling wants to see this unique landmark, and to enjoy the view from its revolving topside, a permanent reminder of Seattle's successful and exotic World's Fair of 1962, themed on man's future in science and space—seven years before Americans landed on the moon.

In its early stages, many people felt that Seattle's fair theme was "a little way out". But those who did the planning exhibited a remarkable vision for the mid-twentieth century, the kind of forward-looking vision that has long been an important characteristic of this city, together with a frontier daring that has turned a once second-rate and backward logging camp of the Pacific Northwest into the promise of tomorrow in the twenty-first century.

From historic Elliott Bay, the gleaming white ferries reach out across 700-square-mile Puget Sound, their foaming wakes leaving long silver trails as they head for ports near and far, on both sides of the Canadian-America border, and even onward into southern Alaska. On their upper decks young business executives fly gayly-colored kites in the breezes created by the commuter ferries, for much of the world of fun and work of this metropolis has always revolved around this sprawling Sound. The ocean-going ships, the naval vessels, the ferries, and the many thousands of small craft make Puget Sound one of the world's great harbors; and the scene

reminds me of the San Francisco I knew over forty years ago as a boy, when what we called The City was the hub for everything around that great Bay. It is a comparison that makes Seattlites wince, I know, but I cannot understand why, for this grand town has its own unique heritage, its own romance, and its own cultural strength and potential that is every bit as rich and robust as that of its neighbor to the south.

Seattle got a late, slow start which put it well behind other key centers of the West Coast, most notably Portland, Oregon. By 1880 Portland boasted 17,000 people against Seattle's 3,553, and not until 1910 did the so-called Gateway to the North surpass Oregon's river city. The California gold rush and then the Comstock Lode built and financed the glories of early San Francisco. Portland had rich agricultural valleys, gold strikes east of the Cascade Mountains, and the hard-nosed, aggressive, although sometimes shady, wheelings and dealings of a forceful Yankee business community. Seattle's gold rush came much later, and its founders weren't always certain in what direction they were heading, for Seattle had little more to offer than timber—the green gold of the Pacific Northwest. While this was sufficient in supply, other communities fronting on Puget Sound were also working this particular Mother Lode.

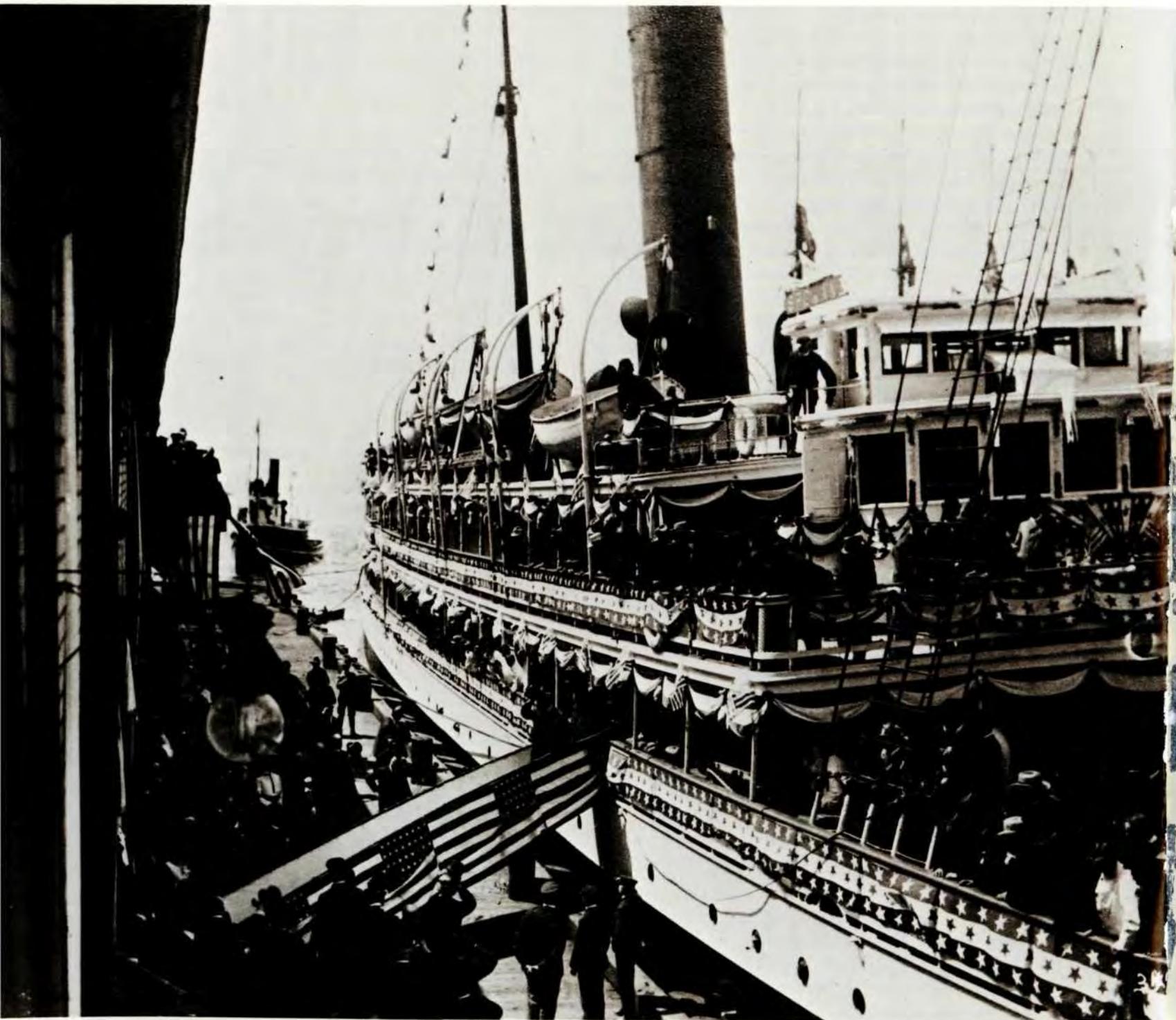
Still, the rain-soaked village stuck it out, continuing to grow steadily as more and more people began to "think Seattle". The town agonized through its own devastating fire, its own gold rush, its own frightening riots over the Chinese, its rough and tumble times as a brawling timber harvesting and shipping port. And amazingly, sponsored not one but two world's fairs! However, timber long remained the mainstay which molded the personality of most all of Puget Sound. It gave Seattle its first industry on the mudflats of Elliott Bay, where the big timber could ride the original skid road down to splash for loading rough lumber onto the square riggers and steam schooners bound across the world. This single-minded enterprise led to great things for Seattle and Puget Sound, with the world's largest airline manufacturer, the world's largest timber company, and

"firsts" in everything from the western terminus of major railroads to nationally-recognized health care. Early in the game Seattle and its people learned to "think big" like the tall timber around them. Nothing would hold them back, even in this "far corner", and thereby the city spawned talented authors, artists, musicians, and theatrical giants such as Alexander Pantages and John Considine, and super stars of today like Carol Channing and Pat Suzuki. Now Seattle ball clubs are coming into national focus with King Dome Stadium. It's the latest of Seattle's outstanding landmarks, while its oldest and most distinguished is a hospital called Providence, observing its first century this year. Other institutions and businesses have come and gone, but since Seattle's raw-boned early days this hospital has been an integral

and influential part of community life.

All of which makes Seattle a city of vision, often ahead of its time. But when Teddy Roosevelt visited the city in the spring of 1902, Seattle was once again in turbulence, emerging from the Klondike years of its own past. It was part raw frontier, part Victorian, part barbershop quartet turn-of-the-century, built from post-fire brick and stone and uninspired buildings, but approaching new beginnings with the initial flowering of more graceful structures. Unimpressive might be the word, but the energetic and dynamic President of the United States wasn't bothered. The town gave him a rousing welcome. His stay was brief, but he left a permanent memory on one segment of the envious local population that would linger long and be a tribute forever....

*President Theodore Roosevelt strides down
the gangplank of the Spokane on his first
visit to Seattle.*



Providence Welcomes Teddy Roosevelt

On a brilliantly sunny day of late May 1903, excitement unlike anything since the first "ton of gold" arrived from the Klondike swept through Seattle. The President of the United States was coming, the second ever to visit the growing port on Puget Sound. There was little time to prepare, but in unison merchants and the citizenry hauled out their flags, banners, and parade bunting to festoon the city's buildings along a hastily conceived line of march.

Seattle outdid herself in this welcome to a highly popular President, for Theodore Roosevelt was both liked for his genuine warmth and respected by people in all walks of life, especially in the West where he came to hunt and voice great concern over the future of the western wonderlands. Crowds followed him everywhere; an estimated 150,000 turned out in a cheering welcome unlike anything the Cowboy President, as he was called, had ever seen, outdoing receptions in Tacoma and Everett. From the time he stepped ashore off the *Spokane*, proudly decorated with flags and banners, and made his way to the Washington Hotel, then later to speak on the campus at the University of Washington, Roosevelt was in constant demand. Excitement in all Seattle spread like an epidemic.

"The graceful steamers of the reception fleet, dressed in holiday attire, their decks crowded with masses of men and women, gave him first intimation of the Seattle spirit," wrote one newspaper reporter. "Packed along the streets in solid masses, tens of thousands made glad the route of march." And Roosevelt remarked that he "had been gathering new inspiration from the time he arrived on Puget Sound."

At Providence Hospital, the city's first bonafide medical center, the Sisters of Providence, staff, personnel and patients were caught up in the fever of the city. Being in the town's central area, they joined the celebration by hanging out welcome banners and flags, for this was indeed a once-in-a-lifetime occasion.

Suddenly everything changed. Word sped through the hospital in shock waves. The President

was coming *here!* He had a friend who was convalescing in the hospital. Michael A. Meyendorff, an agent for the Department of the Interior, sent a message to the hotel, asking if he might be permitted to call upon Teddy. Roosevelt replied with characteristic gusto. He would visit his friend of many years at the hospital.

Meyendorff was a Polish nobleman by birth who had been exiled to Siberia for participating in the 1863 revolution against the Russian government. Later, his half brother, an officer with General Sherman during the Civil War, brought the case to the attention of U.S. authorities. Meyendorff was liberated and admitted to the United States, later becoming a naturalized citizen. He had been a comrade-in-arms with Roosevelt.

If ever hospital routine was upset, it was at this particular moment. Sister Marie Eugene, the Mother Superior, was beside herself. It was all she could do to hold herself under control, let alone the other Sisters and the staff. This had never happened before; indeed, few are the cases where a U.S. President came calling at a private hospital, and especially on short notice. Such visits were confined mostly to federal military and veteran institutions. How would the Sisters receive him? What would they say and do?

The hours passed swiftly. Next thing they



All Seattle, evidenced by this newspaper ad in the Post-Intelligencer, honored Roosevelt on his visit. Shop owners closed their shops to enjoy the festivities.

knew, on the morning of May 24, the burly and energetic Chief Executive was striding up the walk and stairs and through the main entrance, while a large crowd gathered, blocking the street before the hospital. Sister Marie Eugene was put at ease, for Roosevelt was that kind of man. He was escorted quickly to Meyendorff's room. While they were talking alone, all patients who could walk came quietly from their rooms to greet the President as he moved along the corridor. He smiled broadly and shook hands.

But now he paused, asking if he might visit with the Mother Superior and the Sisters. A signal was given, and the nuns gathered in the reception hall. Generously, Roosevelt took time to shake the hand of each.



Hail to Roosevelt

IN honor of our President's visit our store will close at noon today, instead of 9 p. m., the usual Saturday closing hour. An important sale of SIDEBOARDS starts Monday. See Sunday papers for details.

**G. L. HOLMES
FURNITURE CO.**
1101-1103-1105 SECOND AVE.



As thousands curiously looked on, Roosevelt parades through the business district in his horse-drawn carriage.

This was only the second time, said the husky President who was world-known for his physical prowess and as an advocate of physical exercise for good health, that he had ever entered a hospital.

"The first time," Roosevelt declared, "was in the East, when I went to a Sisters' hospital on account of a wound I had received. Coincidentally, that institution also was known as Providence Hospital."

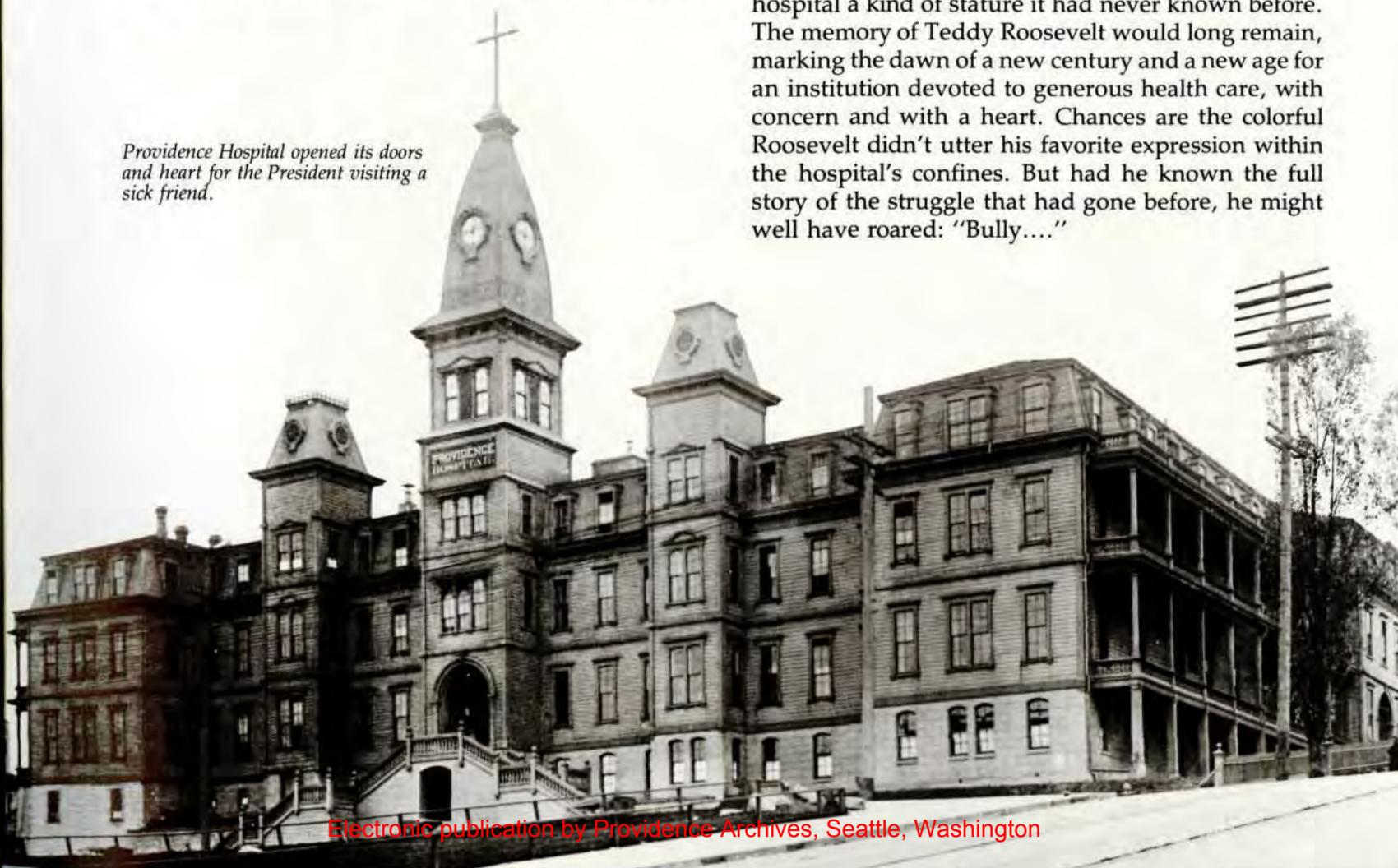
"He was only with us for a few minutes, but his visit greatly honored us," wrote Sister Alexander, the chronicler who kept a running yearly log of hospital happenings for its permanent records.

Then he was gone, a man of boundless vitality and enthusiasm, to keep other appointments, during one of several tours of the Pacific Northwest which still stand out in the memories of oldsters. And

although he didn't realize it, this chance appearance in Providence Hospital's Silver Anniversary year focused special attention on this struggling institution, born in frontier times, as nothing else might have done. Roosevelt's visit was a press agent's dream. While the hospital had long been a part of this rough, brawling community, Seattle was most reluctant to recognize the fact. Anti-Catholic feelings often ran rampant, and the Sisters of Providence in their long black habits were shunned, misunderstood and ridiculed. Only when the need was intense as during the great fire, the gold rush, the epidemics, the Chinese riots, and when times were so hard that people were starving did eyes turn to the Sisters of Providence.

The President changed all that. He gave the hospital a kind of stature it had never known before. The memory of Teddy Roosevelt would long remain, marking the dawn of a new century and a new age for an institution devoted to generous health care, with concern and with a heart. Chances are the colorful Roosevelt didn't utter his favorite expression within the hospital's confines. But had he known the full story of the struggle that had gone before, he might well have roared: "Bully...."

Providence Hospital opened its doors and heart for the President visiting a sick friend.





The Sisters of Providence struggled to win the confidence of Seattle area residents like the loggers shown in this bunkhouse.

Mission To Seattle

The trails...the roads...the pathways which culminated in this remarkably different hospital stretched thousands of miles and many decades back across the wild frontier of the 19th century West. Even after the decision was made just a century ago, in 1877, to be a part of Seattle and the Puget Sound country, the adversities and reversals toward becoming permanently established, and accepted, would go hard with the gentle Sisters of Providence, who would turn to prayer rather than "blowing their cool" against the cruelties of their adversaries, and particularly those of power in public life. The latter simply wasn't the Sisters' style, save for Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart who was so startlingly different from all the rest. She often would resort to whatever human tactics were necessary to get the job done. Later she would ask forgiveness of the Lord, and then turn right around to do it all over again.

Local financial support, and even the receiving of patients, went against the Sisters, despite the fact that they were operating the only true hospital in the area—a hospital which was direly needed in this dangerous logging-lumbering community. Many lurid tales were spread as to the kind of care a defenseless sick person might receive within the strange confines of Providence Hospital. The Sisters, who conferred "mysteriously" among themselves in French, were far more interested (it was claimed) in saving souls than in saving lives; and it was said that they, like the witches of medieval times, mixed a potion that would assist the patient quickly over the threshold into the after-life. Untrue, of course, but very damaging.

Seattle was a tough village, predominantly Protestant and non-believing, and a logging-lumbering center and seaport. Many of its male population were transient and uneducated, drifting from one logging camp to another, or shipping out to the ports of the world. Saloons, gambling and bawdy houses interested them far more than developing any kind of a permanent settlement. So far as a hospital was concerned, this kind of trimming you never thought about—until you needed one.

The early loggers and the more permanent settlers showed interest in the legendary Mercer Girls, brought to Seattle to become wives of lonely males. But the "Ladies of Mercy" were something else again. And it was no wonder the Sisters were viewed with suspicion and misunderstanding, not only because of their religion. Many of the Sisters, from eastern Canada via Fort Vancouver, suffered the additional handicap of being able to speak only in French, or at very best, in broken English. This characteristic plus their long habits set them apart from the community, much as does any uniform. But the lack of acceptance and the invisible lines faded in time of need. Human beings, as the strange paradoxes that they are, wanted the hospital, yet didn't. Often, it was the common people who saved the day—the wives, mothers and loggers in their dangerous work, and public officials who wished to push responsibility for the poverty-stricken and diseased away from themselves. The timber industry had a very high mortality rate; loggers and mill hands lived hourly with sudden death and critical injury, to themselves or to a buddy. They also found skull-cracking danger in their off-hours, unwinding and vacationing in the saloons and fancy places of the nation's first skid road. The loggers were a hard-drinking, hard-talking lot, but to the Sisters they were human beings and God's children, and therefore never turned away. This close association with the area's timber industry also led to the first industrial insurance system ever developed. The loggers and lumbermen helped the Sisters with their struggling hospital, and in turn the Sisters were always there to help the loggers.

Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, the bold and powerful Mother Superior of Fort Vancouver, over a hundred rugged wilderness miles south of Seattle, for a long while had her doubts about the wisdom of expanding her mission into Seattle. Not that she feared the community; Mother Joseph and her Sisters were frontier-hardened to the dangers of this kind of life, in what was called the "Work of the West", and always expected a certain amount of struggle, both physical and mental. Nevertheless,

Mother Joseph was protective of her Sisters, especially the young and inexperienced. There were also the practicalities of establishing any new mission. You had to be convinced of both the need and the potential support for such a project. You just didn't raise a mission anywhere, although Mother Joseph came close to doing so in the dangerous and undeveloped Yakima Valley, her second attempt away from home base at Fort Vancouver. Portland had been the first, but with good potential there.* But Yakima had been a hard and risky experience into which she was forced largely by a stubborn and determined priest. It seemed, mused Mother Joseph, that priests were forever backing her against the wall, forcing her into decisions over which she had strong doubts. She didn't realize that it was about to happen again.

The Sisters of Providence were rapidly gaining a region-wide reputation for their success in hospital operations. The hospitals at Vancouver and Portland drew patients from near and far, over much of the Pacific Northwest. But you needed the support of the local priest and also a basic Catholic community to be successful, for one could count upon antagonism and bigotry from the non-Catholic portion of the population. Mother Joseph had been through it all before, but she also recognized that this was God's destiny for the work of the Sisters of Providence on the frontier. Especially, it was true on this so-called Far Corner which was part-British, part-American, and finally to evolve into a territory of the United States.

The Sisters of Charity of Providence (later they dropped "Charity" from their name but not from their deeds) had very early turned their eyes westward, since the times of the French fur trappers and voyageurs, and the establishment of frontier forts and outposts. The frontier spelled excitement, and the nuns were game, eager for the combination of adventure and service in these remote outposts. They had heard of the good works in California of Father

Junipero Serra, establishing a string of missions along the coast which became the first settlements and agricultural centers of the Golden Shore. And there were many successful early missions in the Southwest, among the native Americans. The priests, including the Blanchet brothers, spoke before the nuns at Montreal, further stirring their enthusiasm and their dreams. But the Pacific Northwest, through which the Black Robes had traveled to mingle with the Indians, was a far more forceful country than California with its mild climate and open land. The terrain, the tall timber, the expanse and rugged landscape, and the scattered isolation presented a different kind of challenge.

Yet while the young nuns at Montreal chattered about the possibilities of working in the West, the Catholic priests were following the trails, and blazing new ones as an important and oftimes ignored part of the westward movement. The fur trade drew the priests to the plains and the Rocky Mountains, since many of the buckskinned trappers and happy-go-lucky *voyageurs* were of the Catholic faith. Then, too, the Indians were fascinated by the priests and their long robes, and their symbolisms of true faith, trusting them far more than the average American frontiersman with his broken promises, who was viewed as talking with a forked tongue. The priests thereby became envoys and peacemakers between the tribes and the whites.

A permanent settlement was in the making around Fort Vancouver, the British Hudson's Bay Company outpost. Following much debate and discussion, Father Frances Norbert Blanchet was assigned the Oregon mission in 1838, with Father Modeste Demers, a young priest, as his assistant. Fortunately, Father Blanchet had a staunch supporter in Dr. John McLoughlin, the silver-haired patriarch of legend who reigned over Fort Vancouver and helped Oregon become an established fact. Dr. McLoughlin had been raised in the Catholic faith in eastern Canada; he was delighted once again to be able to attend Mass. It also gave him a strong natural tie with his homeland.

*See *Cornerstone: The Formative Years of St. Vincent—Oregon's First Hospital*, published 1975; and *Magic Valley: The Story of St. Joseph's Academy and the Blossoming of Yakima*, published 1976, both by this author.

The founders of the Catholic church in the Pacific Northwest in the 1840's who encouraged Mother Joseph to come to the Northwest, then a harsh wilderness. (l. to r.) Bishop A.M.A. Blanchet of Nisqually, Washington; his brother F.N. Blanchet, Archbishop of Oregon; and Bishop Modeste Demers, Bishop of Vancouver Island, Canada.



Then, there were the French batteaux-men who, becoming weary of the mountains, wanted to settle down. They were beginning to take up farmland claims in French Prairie, an offshoot of the Willamette Valley south of Fort Vancouver. They pleaded for, and then demanded, the services of a priest for their families and themselves. Quite naturally, Fort Vancouver became the "cradle of Catholicism" in the Pacific Northwest, working among Indians and whites, and helping shape the individual communities. And before long, too, Father Blanchet's brother,

Father A.M.A. Blanchet, shifted from Walla Walla to Nisqually, with his headquarters also at Fort Vancouver.

The next step was a much-needed school for the Vancouver Catholic community. This sounded far easier than it proved to be. Nuns were needed to run such a school, and they could be a skittish lot. The first attempt proved a dismal failure, the country being generally unstable from the California gold rush which drained off much of the male population. No plans had been formulated to receive the Sisters who

arrived ill, and bone-weary, from a harrowing crossing of the Columbia bar as climax to an arduous trip west across Panama, to land at Oregon City rather than at Fort Vancouver in storm and flood. Confused and frightened by this inhospitable land, the Sisters of Providence joined with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, who had taken them in. Shortly, even though it meant another crossing of that terrible bar, they all fled to San Francisco in fear and helplessness, eventually settling in Chile to establish a mission at Valparaiso, with or without full sanction of the Mother House.

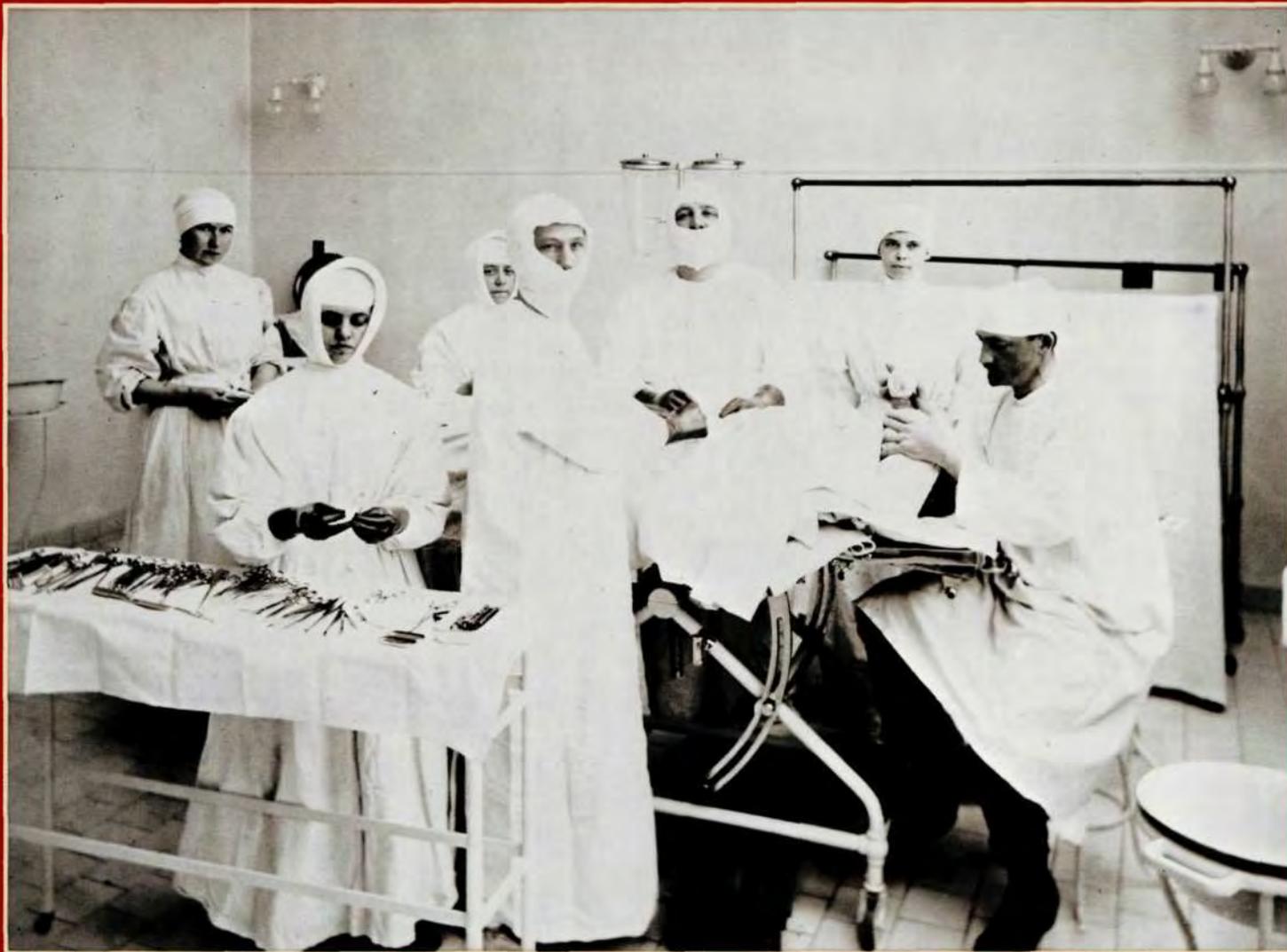
But neither Father Blanchet nor the Catholic communities at Vancouver and French Prairie could rest, and therefore would try again. Father Blanchet returned to Montreal temporarily after several years, and his talk fired the young nuns with renewed interest. Among them was Mother Joseph who had long dreamed of work in the West, and especially the Oregon Country. She felt that her destiny lay there, a strong commission from God Himself, a feeling that had enveloped her upon first making the decision as Esther Pariseau, daughter of a carriage maker, to become a nun. That her life lay with the American frontier was right and sure, for she had the strength of character, ability, energy and training which would make her one of the most unusual personalities of all the West.



Fort Vancouver, the dominant settlement in the Washington territory in 1854.

Late in 1856, Mother Joseph and four Sisters arrived without fanfare at Fort Vancouver. Once again preparations for receiving them were nil. The priests seemed most negligent in this department. But, this time, there would be no turning back, and despite a haphazard and doubtful beginning, the fibre of Mother Joseph shone through. She was here to stay. She was awed by the beauty of the country during the boat trip up the Columbia River, even in the rain. The Northwest didn't let her down; it was all she had envisioned in far-off Montreal. This enthusiasm and strong belief in the Pacific Northwest, and the work ahead were instilled in her Sisters down across the years. Vancouver would be the hub for the work they would accomplish, and Mother Joseph herself would become renowned as "The Builder" along the Pacific Slope.

Despite the kindness and sanction of Dr. McLoughlin and others at Fort Vancouver, establishing the first mission was no simple task. Often the mission was in dire financial straits, requiring begging tours of solicitation to Portland and the surrounding frontier communities, even into southern Oregon's gold country and the mines of eastern Oregon, Idaho and Montana. If Mother Joseph were wise and talented in matters of architectural design and sound construction, she was something less in handling finances. Nevertheless, she emerged as a towering figure to be reckoned with, within and without the Catholic world of the Northwest, and someone who couldn't be pushed around by the greedy local business interests of Portland. Her determined ways, unusual for a woman in her time, gave her a widespread reputation for getting things done. She found herself a legend in her own time who ripped out faulty construction with her hands, then personally rebuilt it correctly. She would emerge in full regalia of her habit from beneath a building where she'd been checking the foundation; or she might be found bouncing dangerously on a high beam to test its strength. The stories grew about her skill as a builder, woodcarver and artist, so that when a cow was shipped downriver as a gift, the deckhand merely hung a tag around the



Advanced asepsis in an early 1900's operating room at Providence Hospital. A surgeon and his assistant, an anestheologist (far right), two Sisters and one student pause briefly for history. Note the wooden riser should the doctor need more heighth to work inside a patient's abdomen. Eventually wood was outlawed from operating rooms.



Mother Joseph, the founder of the Sisters of Providence in the Northwest. A self-taught architect, she was known as "The Builder" and has been honored by the American Institute of Architects as the first architect in the Northwest.

animal's neck, "For Mother Joseph." He was certain it would reach her, for "everybody knows the old Mother."

The original purpose of the Vancouver mission had been to establish a school, but shortly it became apparent that facilities were fearfully needed to care for the sick, the ailing and the elderly. St. Joseph's thereby became the first true hospital established in the Pacific Northwest, and to this well-run institution (a fact that surprised many Catholic critics) came

patients from throughout the territory. Yet it was almost two decades before the Sisters gave thought to expanding their hospital services beyond the boundaries of Fort Vancouver, for mission schools for Catholic children and orphans seemed to remain their principal forte.

In 1874, on suggestion of the parish priest, Father J. F. Fierens and the Oregon Archbishop, F. N. Blanchet, the Sisters were urged to establish a hospital within Portland. Both priests recognized a critical need, since Portland was rapidly developing into one of two major centers of the West Coast, the other being San Francisco. There was also a swell in population and passing-through traffic, what with the bonanza gold strikes to the east. Business interests and even benevolent clubs and organizations weren't anxious to sponsor hospitals, since they were costly, complicated operations. But the Sisters not only had more experience than anyone else, they would work without pay—a fact that oftentimes surprised and upset those of the business world. Yet the Sisters' own basic beliefs involving need and service made such projects possible.

Oregon's first hospital was established the following year, 1875, and word spread about the accomplished skills of the Sisters of Providence. The general citizenry was impressed, but so were the priests who began viewing the Sisters in a different light to establish schools and hospitals in their own communities, and to assist with local charities for the poor. Not that the Sisters were opposed to such expansion, for theirs was a world of service; but by the same token Mother Joseph recognized that, to use a trite phrase, discretion is the better part of valor. She wasn't about to recommend to the Mother House at Montreal that her Sisters be put down just anywhere, merely to satisfy the whims of a local priest. She came hard against this the following year in the primitive Yakima Valley. Only her own stubborn determination kept them there during dangerous years of the Indian wars, but that insecure mission school of 1875 led eventually to the founding of St. Elizabeth's Hospital in 1891, enhancing life in the Yakima Valley.

And now there was Seattle, the third hospital project by the Sisters in the Pacific Northwest, and but the second beyond Fort Vancouver. Why the Sisters selected this doubtful lumber port, after exhibiting so much caution, can only be answered in one way: the opportunity and the need presented themselves. And, another priest gave them a substantial push in that direction. Still, there was nothing appealing about frontier Seattle, little more than a glorified logging camp founded by a handful of dollar-ambitious local promoters around a deep-water inlet of the sprawling Sea in the Forest, as Archie Binns called it.

Indeed, the place was first known as "New York Alki", Chinook jargon meaning "New York by and by". Later, it was renamed Seattle for a local Indian chief and friend of the founders, Chief Sealth,



Chief Sealth in a rare pose. His daughter Princess Angeline attended annual spiritual renewals at St. Peter's in Olympia, the Sisters of Providence facility in that city.

since the guttural pronunciation of his name sounded like "Sea-at-tell". And, in an interesting aside, Chief Sealth accepted Christianity and Catholicism from Father Blanchet in 1840, during his early travels in the Pacific Northwest.

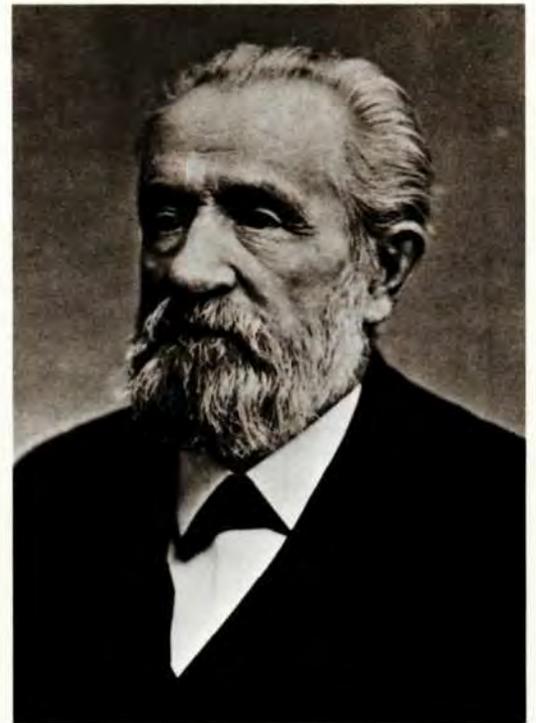
Like all the other Puget Sound villages, Seattle was built on sawdust foundations. A handful of settlers had pioneered on this particular spot, attracted by the bay and by each other, hoping that they might one day have a town worthy of some profit from the surrounding land. Among the founders, significantly, was a physician, Dr. David Swinson Maynard, who was involved in many enterprises, but certainly put Seattle into the health business long before many frontier communities—a heritage that has been handed down to the present. Doc Maynard was an active leader in community development, but he was controversial, since he enjoyed tipping and became an alcoholic. He was also quite unconventional in his marital relationships, at least for the times. But giving credit where it is due, he and his wife established Seattle's first hospital in their home, operating it in off-again, on-again style over many years. The trouble was that while Dr. Maynard enjoyed helping his patients, he didn't like to bill them. This placed him continually in a financial strait-jacket, even though he was described as "being a better doctor drunk than any other is cold sober."

The Vermont-born physician who bypassed the California gold rush might well have been a founder of Olympia, but then he threw in with the settlers at Alki Point and until his death in 1876, the year before the Sisters arrived, he enjoyed many "firsts": first physician, first hospital operator, first fisherman, first merchant, first blacksmith, first justice of the peace, first notary public, first Indian agent, and first to be admitted to practice law. It was a wonder that he found time for his bouts with John Barleycorn.

However, the hero of the hour was Henry Yesler, an itinerant sawmill man who inquired of Maynard and the others whether they would mind if he established a steam sawmill on this bay. Mind? The

Dr. David Maynard, a prominent pioneer physician who cared for the infirm until his death in 1876, a year before the Sisters of Providence arrived.

Henry Yesler, the founder of Yesler Mill, Seattle's first industry. Logging accidents were common; patients were treated at Providence.



The Yesler Mill cookhouse (right) in 1886. It was the gathering place for Seattle's first Catholic service.

founders were ecstatic; this was what they had in view. There were dreams that a fishing industry might develop, that this would become a great seaport, and some of the founders had even sounded the bay by attaching horseshoe weights to a cotton line to check the deep water. The sawmill would become New York by-and-by's first industry, and would bring people, if only hard-living loggers and mill workers. So the founders presented Yesler with a chunk of valuable waterfront land, plus a huge stand of Douglas fir behind the village as further inducement toward Seattle's first payroll; and along a right-of-way to the waterfront Yesler could skid those heavy fir logs with bawling bull teams. In return, Yesler collected a few firsts himself, not only for the first sawmill and the first skid road, but also the town's first restaurant and meeting hall.

Near the sawmill Yesler constructed a giant cookhouse for his workers. It became the town's first landmark. In its first restaurant and community center, near today's Pioneer Square, the first Catholic religious service was held in 1852, just about a month after Yesler established his mill. Father Demers who had come to Oregon with Father Blanchet stepped ashore from an Indian canoe to inquire if there were any Catholics in the vicinity. None that anyone knew about, but the settlers said they would welcome a Sunday service anyway by the priest. Father Demers nodded in understanding. The cookhouse was cleaned and scoured, swept and aired out, and Arthur Denny built an altar, his wife dressing it in white linens and greens. On Sunday morning the first Holy Mass marked the beginning of the Seattle parish and formal religion, the service attended by nearly every person in the village.

"Charity, my friends, charity...always charity," Father Demers preached as his sermon theme. Charity had long been the watchword of early pioneers, but although some of those in attendance at this historic service long remembered Father Demers' sermon, the time came when words were largely forgotten in rough and tumble Seattle.

The following year, 1853, Seattle's founders

filed the city plat legally with the Oregon Territory at Oregon City, as had also San Francisco, placing the King County Seat "on the land claim of David S. Maynard". However, the village's destiny wasn't to be that simple and serene, for all of Puget Sound and much of the western slopes of the Cascades to the sea were soon caught up in a rush to mine the green gold that was thick as bristles of a porcupine wherever the roving eye turned. California was booming on the gold rush, while Washington's leading town was a place called Oysterville over on Shoalwater Bay where the bivalves were being shipped south like fortune cookies, making traders wealthy overnight. Timber was in demand for far more than ships' spars. It was ironic, since early settlers rated all those trees a plagued nuisance when turning the land to farming. Only early ships' captains delighted in them for masts, tall and straight.

Then some big sticks were hauled to San Francisco for piling. In the gold rush lumber shortage, speculators tried learning from where the sticks came. Skippers avoided a specific answer, but the word leaked out to New England lumbermen who were, if you can believe it, hauling pre-fabricated lumber around Cape Horn to construct the first houses, among them one for Nathaniel Crosby, grandfather of the entertainer. Soon they were probing the Northwest coastline where they cast eyes upon more rich timber in thick supply than they believed could exist anywhere on the planet.

Other lumbermen were spotting themselves at various locations rimming Puget Sound. The axe and the saw were the music of industrial progress, American style, and nowhere did it become more pronounced than in burgeoning Seattle. The town's founders realized they had done a wise thing in courting Henry Yesler. For crude though logging operations were, they brought the workers and the economy to make the population grow, and also the lumber schooners of the coast and the world right into Elliott Bay. Still, if Seattle's founders had visions of a great metropolis, that time was well into the future, for the place remained a slow-growing village of a

couple of hundred. Most of the men worked for Yesler and this lack of balance between the sexes became of concern to a young social reformer who presented Seattle with its second milestone and a western legend when he imported young eastern women to become wives of these lonely males. He ended up not only helping to found the University of Washington, but in marrying one of the maidens himself. Certainly, Asa Mercer had moved things from dead-center, assuring Seattle a second generation to carry events forward.

Clapboard and unpainted houses and log shanties rose against the hills where Henry Yesler's timber beasts had stripped off the trees. That was the way; timber was the only thing of value on this land, and when it was gone, much of what was left wasn't even good for farming. Still, for unexplained reasons the town continued growing in both population and importance. Doc Maynard carried on his practice, with his wife Catherine—who had no formal training

whatsoever—placed in charge of the lying-in ward in his home. Two small rooms were devoted to hospital care in the two-story small frame building. Another room was used as a "drugstore" and "notions counter".

The need for a hospital was very apparent. Someone was forever getting crushed by a rolling log, or his fingers sliced off in the sawmill. By all rights, Maynard should have taken the lead, but he took to the bottle instead. Some people said his hospital failed because he insisted on treating Indians as well as whites, among them his good friend Chief Sealth. But that wasn't necessarily true; Doc Maynard simply couldn't keep on target.

Thus, Seattle drifted along until the matter became of very deep concern to community leaders. Even doctors were scarce, let alone hospitals.... More than ever envious eyes turned toward St. Joseph Hospital operated at Fort Vancouver by Mother Joseph, and also the one established in Portland. Both



A postcard of the first Catholic church in Seattle, "Our Lady of Good Help." Established by its first pastor, Father F. X. Prefontaine, the church was completed in 1869 and was located at Third Avenue and Washington Street.

were some distance away, but those in need of care would travel that far in desperation. Among those voicing such concern was Father F. X. Prefontaine who arrived by canoe in 1867 to find a primitive village of 600, ten of whom were Catholic. Two years later, showing faith in Seattle's future, Father Prefontaine began clearing land for a church at what became Third and Washington streets, uncovering relics from the Indian attack of 1856. Three months of hard labor went into the project, for "ever foot of it was covered with monster trees and dense underbrush. One giant of the forest that we cut down, I remember, measured eight feet thick at the butt, and had roots that extended from one side of the block to the other."

By the following year, 1870, Father Prefontaine dedicated his 30 × 60-foot church which could seat one hundred worshippers. He admitted that the church, beautiful in its rustic ways, was rather pretentious for the time and place. Nevertheless, he named it "Our Lady of Good Help" which seemed to forecast things to come.

Meanwhile, Mother Joseph was keeping a watchful eye on Seattle's development, and its need for schools, hospitals, and care of the poor and elderly. The town, now around 1,500, was poor, and its



wobbly economy quite fluctuating. The people appeared to offer little of the kind of backing that such missions required, even though the need was there. Seattle wasn't Portland, which was a much larger place, and Mother Joseph was remembering the long struggle to become established there, despite the funds that were available, just in terms of population. Seattle had other drawbacks, and it was a gamble whether Seattle could survive as a key port. Mother Joseph felt there would always be struggle on this sparsely-settled, rainy frontier, as she had warned her Sisters when first arriving at Vancouver:

"Beginnings are always trying, and here the devil is so enraged he frightens me."

However, one needed to use wisdom and judgment until there was a definite sign from the Lord, for the Sisters were far from being wonder workers who waved magical wands to achieve results. Now, gradually, events were occurring within the Washington territory as it broke from Oregon. More people were taking up land claims north of the Columbia, and Father A. M. A. Blanchet had established his mission on the Cowlitz River. He had also been considering hospital possibilities in or near Seattle, as a great many people were now rimming Puget Sound. He discussed the picture with Mother Joseph. There was further hesitation. The Yakima mission wasn't going well because of similar scattered settlement and lack of Catholic support. The situation around Seattle sounded all too familiar, and Mother Joseph realized there was only so much money that could be "mined" from the gold fields to the East.

Meanwhile, Father Prefontaine had acquired a young assistant pastor, Father Emil Kauten, a native of Belgium who had served for a time as assistant priest at Fort Vancouver, when only 23 years of age. Father Kauten possessed the vigor and enthusiasm of youth, if not always good judgment, and the daring to turn the card which brought the Sisters of Providence to Seattle. He also put Mother Joseph in an embarrassing position with the Seattle proposal.



Seattle continued to grow from its many logging operations; so did its need for a hospital. Looking south from Marion Street down Fourth Avenue, circa 1875.

A Seattle mission had been "the ardent desire of our Mother in Vancouver," observed Sister-Chronicler. "For a long time it seemed to be an impossibility. The pastor, Father Prefontaine, could help us neither with funds nor his influence." And Seattle was a difficult town. "We had to struggle against fanatical Protestantism, unbelief, atheism, unpiety, and unhappily, not a single notable Catholic here to encourage works of charity. Most of those who form the congregation approach the sacraments rarely, if ever...."

Doubts over the Seattle mission continued, without a decisive answer; and at the Vancouver House of Providence, Mother Praxedes of Providence (the Mother Provincial), one of the original five founders of the Vancouver mission, heaped "prayers upon prayers" in hope that a way would be found to settle the matter once and for all. One day she placed a letter at the feet of St. Joseph, the likeness Mother Joseph had so skillfully carved, "pressuring him to let her know the will of God".

Perhaps even to her own surprise, that act and the prayers seemingly worked a miracle. The following day of February 1877, a telegram arrived at the fort:

*Do you wish to take over the county patients?
Respond immediately. Father Kauten. (Father F. X.
Prefontaine, pastor)*

The wire placed Mother Joseph, Mother Praxedes and the others in a quandry, coming as it did from the assistant pastor, in the absence of Father Prefontaine. Was Father Kauten overstepping his bounds? It would seem so; only later would he explain that under the circumstances of time, he had little choice.

Just what was Father Kauten trying to do, taking off like this on his own? To accept might incur the wrath of the pastor, and the Sisters had enjoyed good relations with the Seattle priest. Father Kauten had placed himself in a difficult and risky position. Yet there appeared to be a pressing demand for an immediate answer to public officials who made the suggestion, affording the priest a rare opportunity.

Furthermore—in what appeared an almost high-handed political maneuver—Father Kauten warned that if the Sisters refused, he would find lay nurses who could run the little county hospital outside Seattle, known as the "Workhouse" or "Poor Farm".

Father Kauten was forced to take action, making the decision "on such an important question by himself," or facing the possibility of turning care of the sick over to others who had no hospital system. Caring for the sick, poor and destitute was a constant headache for the King County commissioners, M. R. Maddocks, acting chairman, Rufus Stearns, and Terrence O'Brien. The county picked up the tab for maintenance, but beyond that the unfortunate were caught in a maze of exploitation and neglect. That February, the commissioners advertised in the *Intelligencer* for sealed bids to lease the county farm for a year's time to "board, nurse and care for the county poor"; the county to furnish medical treatment, medicinal and surgical aid plus suitable quarters and clothing, and the patient, when able to work, to contribute his time and labors to the hospital.

Commissioner O'Brien had urged Father Kauten to make the bid of \$300 per annum rent and care of the poor at seventy-five cents per day for each patient. His bid was accepted, along with two others: Drs. S. and H. B. Bagley for medical and surgical attendance at \$300 for one year, and Walter Harmon and George Walker for construction of a workhouse, costing \$1,400 and to be completed in May.

Now Father Kauten was committed to furnish the service. The commissioners would likely be angry if he couldn't do so, and Catholicism in the territory would suffer. He fired off an urgent telegram to Mother Praxedes:

For how much per day could you support poor sick patients? Do you accept the charge of our sick people for two years? Doctors and building furnished... respond immediately.

Respond indeed! Still, Mother Praxedes and Mother Joseph reasoned this might well be the sign they were awaiting, from the timing and also the fact that it was a Protestant leader who had urged Father

eted and and d— ery red. orce de-	EVENINGS. Tom Smith. Seattle, February 2, 1877. fe2-dtf	Wagons and Carria of Eastern lum All Kind Done HORSE By an experienced work done. All w faction. Orders so
	Notice.	
	SEALED PROPOSALS WILL BE RECEIVED by the Kitsap county Commissioners at their regular meeting. February 5, 1877, for keeping the indigent sick of the county for one year, said proposals to include board, care, lodgings, medi- cal and surgical attendance. By order of the Board. j20-3w-w NELSON McCOLLOM, Auditor.	d16tf P. C



Belgium born Father Emil Kauten responded to the above newspaper notice. His bid to care for the county poor at 75 cents a day was accepted.

Kauten to prepare a bid. But at best, their position was "difficult".

"Thank God up to now," wrote Sister-Chronicler, "we had always been on good terms with the pastor who always welcomed us when we came to Seattle. As for Father Kauten, we have always considered him the founder of the hospital, our benefactor and devoted friend...."

Time was of the essence, while the Mother Vicar of the Western Province was powerless to reply. Acceptance must come from the Mother General and her council at Montreal. And then only after due deliberation. This must have appeared to the commissioners and an anxious Father Kauten as so much red tape. Distances were long and things moved very slowly on the frontier. Mother Praxedes, trying to soothe his feelings, invited Father Kauten to Vancouver for further discussions. He accepted within a few days. There is no record of their "discussions", but he was told that there would likely be no word from Montreal for at least three weeks. A harried and utterly frustrated Father Kauten returned to Seattle to learn that he'd been given the ultimatum of a single day. Frantically, he again wired Mother Praxedes:

One day to deliberate. Necessary to accept or reject.

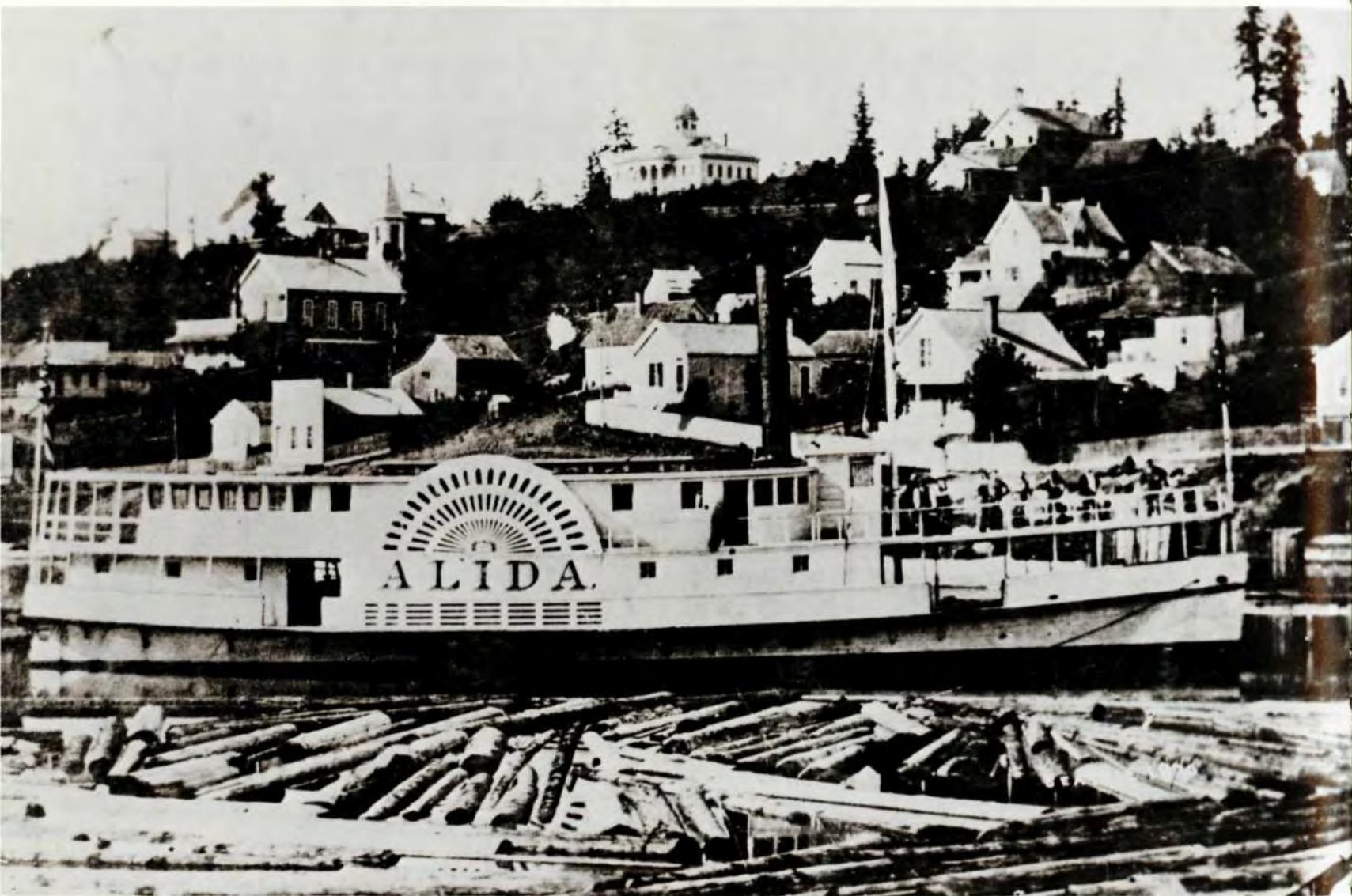
But Mother Praxedes must still await word from Montreal. She couldn't override her superiors. She realized, too, if the Sister's didn't accept this opportunity, they might be shut out of Seattle for years to come. She may have sent a telegram to Montreal, urging an immediate answer. Meanwhile, the bold Father Kauten gambled by closing the deal with the county and informing Mother Praxedes:

Obliged to accept the contract for one year.

If the Sisters turned him down, he would have to go it alone, by whatever means of service he could provide. There seemed no other choice.

But Father Kauten hadn't long to pray and pace the floor. Providence was with him, and the Sisters. The following morning the long-awaited wire from Montreal was delivered:

Seattle mission accepted.



The first Sisters of Charity of Providence, as they were then known, arrived at Seattle on this side-wheeler, the Alida. The original University of Washington is on the top of the hill.

The Hospital's Birth

Now the Sisters moved quickly, with Sister Blandine of the Angels as Mother Superior. She had been assigned to the Yakima project as Superior, but complained bitterly about it. She had little faith in that particular mission and the rawness of the land.

"It is my impression that the time has not come for these people to have Sisters here," she wrote Mother Joseph. "I am like a fish out of water, and I sigh for the day when an Indian mission will open to take me out of this place."

Sister Blandine was urged to "be patient" and she would be transferred to another assignment. But what Sister Blandine, who was one of the original five foundresses at Vancouver, thought when she first laid eyes upon Seattle goes unrecorded. Certainly the village on Elliott Bay could hardly be considered a Heaven on Earth and indeed neither was it the Indian mission for which Sister Blandine had prayed.

No matter; the Sisters went where they were assigned. Accompanying her were Sister Peter Claver as assistant and Sister Aegedius who would soon be exchanged for Sister Benedict. Both Sister Blandine and Sister Peter Claver knew that it wouldn't be easy. From past experience they were headed into rough seas and heartbreaking times, for both had been with the Vancouver mission since its inception.

Shortly, they were aboard the steamship *Alida* for the overnight run to Puget Sound from Portland. On the evening of May 3 they landed in darkness in Elliott Bay where black, ghostly shadows and noise from the sawmill greeted them, giving only slight impression about the town. The ship docked alongside the mill and the Sisters picked their way cautiously in their long black habits, with a coal-oil lamp, through the tidal sawdust, slab and woodchips of the skid road (Mill Street, later Yesler Way), in what must have appeared to be a scene from one of Shakespeare's plays. Surrounding them was the clatter and bang of Yesler's mill, and the fragrance of freshly cut Douglas fir lumber. Not that this was altogether strange to them, for the Portland hospital was located on the fringes of the sawmill district. It would appear



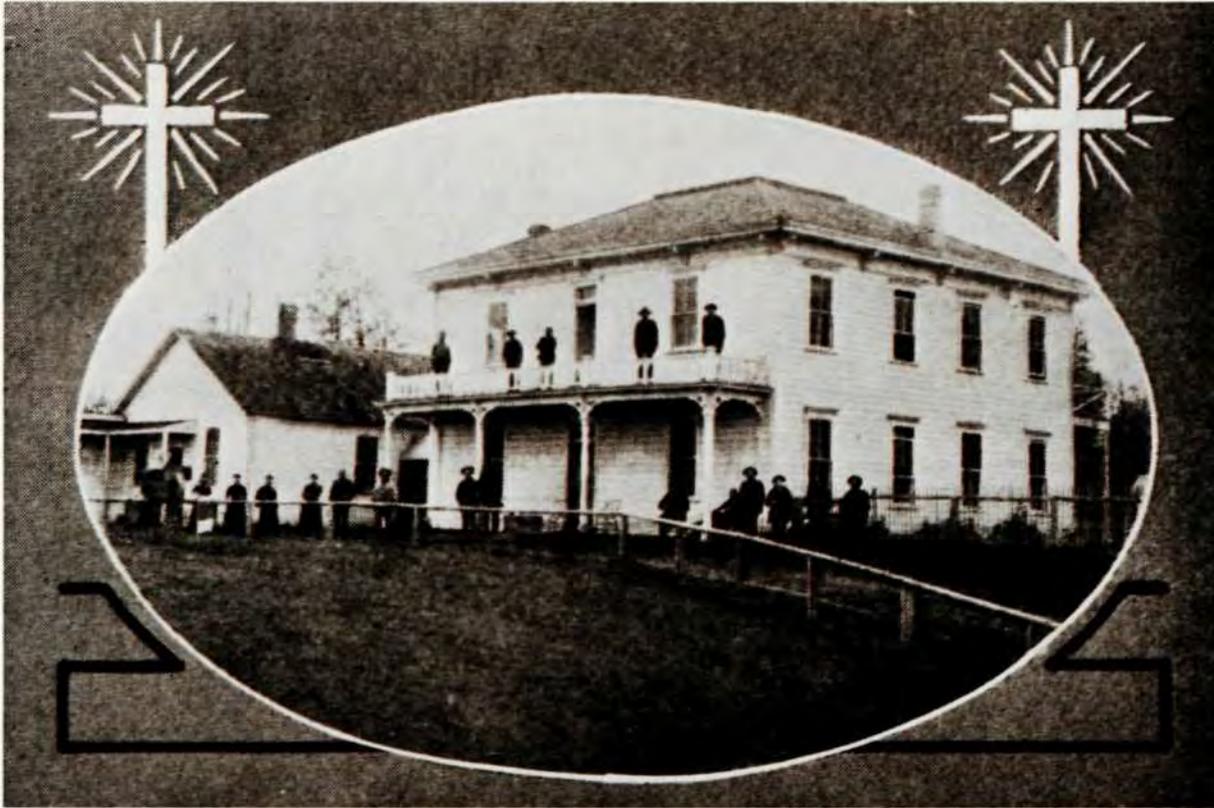
they were beginning once again, in a fashion that seemed becoming the normal to them; but this time was different, or they soon discovered that the hospital was several miles away at a place called Georgetown on the banks of the Duwamish River.

The Sisters were welcomed as houseguests of Mrs. Mary McDonald at Fifth and Jefferson Streets. They spent over a week there, conferring with Father Kauten, and preparing linens and other supplies for the hospital. This done, on May 11 they at last took full possession of "our humble little hospital" on the farm five miles away. It was a two-story frame building on an eighty-acre tract, unattractive in its rough boards from the outside, but to their delight "clean and pretty" on the inside. Small but adequate, the nuns concluded, for the time being at least. But the single bedroom was too tiny for three, so each evening one of them, probably Sister Aegedius, dragged her straw mattress into the kitchen.

Actually the farmhouse contained twelve rooms, equally divided between the two floors. On the ground level were the kitchen, parlour and dining room, while above were six rooms for patients. The Sisters judged they could accommodate ten patients fairly easily, and luckily, that proved the average load the first year. A chapel, necessary to their spiritual well-being, was established on the ground level. The farm also included a nearby barn and shed, and all this was separated from the river by the county road.

Still, it wasn't simply all laid out for them. Scraping, cleaning and painting must be done before

"The Workhouse", commonly called "The Poor House", was the first county hospital. Located in Georgetown, it accommodated ten patients. The Sisters of Providence began their work at the Poor House on May 11, 1877.



The three founders of Providence Hospital (l. to r.) Sister Blandine of the Angels, the Superior; her companions, Sister Mary Aegedius and Sister Peter Claver. (Peter Claver was a saint, an apostle of the negro slave. During their religious profession of vows, nuns were free to assume the name of any person they identified with, regardless of sex.)

the Sisters could begin receiving any patients. Father Kauten and George M. Horton, who would later become the hospital's first Chief of Staff, were swinging the brushes. Horton had a special interest. This was his home place, named Georgetown in his honor by his father Julius Horton, one of the area's first settlers.

The painting and general clean-up changed the "poor-looking" appearance of the exterior, as only paint will do. Before they were hardly done, on May 19 and 24, the first two patients were accepted. The first was "a poor Protestant" named Powell who died three months later, while the second was described in the hospital Chronicles as "a Canadian...a drunkard and immoral man". And ironically, among the early patients was the man who had submitted the second highest bid for county patient care.

At the outset were at least three other deaths, for these early patients were generally very ill by the time they were given to public care. This was an unfortunate beginning, however, making people nod their heads affirmatively over the stories they'd heard, thus placing the Sisters of Providence at a disadvantage from the outset. The name "Poor House" also turned away many would-be patients.

"At our arrival," wrote the Sister-Chronicler, "the people were so prejudiced that they prevented the sick from coming to us. Three who we had promised to admit left for California. The name Poor Farm prevented some from coming, as they regarded poverty as a disgrace."

Yet gradually, despite the strong opposition, the Sisters began making inroads into community life. By autumn the county commissioners appeared convinced, extending their temporary six months' lease for five years, until 1883, a firm demonstration that the Sisters were not only here to stay, but had shown that they knew what it was all about when it came to operating hospitals. The Sisters agreed to furnish medicine and liquors for \$150 annually, while three doctors—C. A. Weed, E. L. Smith and K. A. Gale—would furnish medical and surgical aid without cost to the county poor—at this hospital.



Mrs. Mary V. McDonald received the Sisters of Providence in her home, graciously entertaining them for eight days.

"The officials and the doctors have given us all praise," recorded Sister-Chronicler. Not without rough sailing, however. They ran hard against local politics with self-ambitious critics. "There are those who under the pretext of saving the county money and to make a name for themselves, and be elected to an office have no use for us, so we must trust in Providence. All patients, without exception, have been satisfied...."

Despite the political maneuvering, the little Georgetown center averaged eight to ten patients—all they could comfortably handle—and sometimes as high as 17. That first year they cared for thirty-one patients, twenty-five county and six private. There were three or four permanent boarders, since the Sisters' common policy was to turn away no one in dire need, even though he might not be ill. Some patients stayed ten or eleven months, having no place to go nor any way of fending for themselves. The summary for the year, contained in the chronicles, tells the story: 18 Protestant patients, 13 Catholics, 9 deaths, 5 baptisms, 1 marriage "a couple living together", 2 operations, 1 leg amputation, 1 ill baby, 131 night watches, and "one deranged Negro." Scant though they were, these were the only medical records of the time.

The Poor Farm certainly wasn't the proper setting for a Sisters' hospital, nor their kind of mission. Mother Joseph and Mother Praxedes quickly recognized this, beyond the bigotry, constant criticism and surveillance under "the public's right to know". The hospital was far removed from the mainstream of Seattle, where such an institution should be located, especially if the Sisters were ever to grow beyond the uncertain care of the county's poor.

Father Kauten and Father Prefontaine, who by now had expressed his happiness that the Sisters were in the area, were on the lookout for a proper site. Larger quarters were certainly needed, something the Sisters could call their own which would be out from under public jurisdiction and scrutiny. Several sites were considered—Father Prefontaine enjoyed dealing in real estate—but the most attractive was the

Moss residence at Fifth and Jefferson near where the Sisters had stayed their first nights in the town. The owner was reluctant to sell at first, and this again may have been local prejudice. Then suddenly he changed his mind and the Sisters were able to make a deal, with Mother Joseph and Mother Praxedes up from Vancouver on their annual visitation and inspection of the mission.

"Mother Praxedes and Mother Joseph came to look it over, and found it so beautiful that they bought it," wrote Sister-Chronicler. Actually, the home wasn't a thing of great beauty, but the Sisters were attracted by the space for their current needs, and also the excellent location. The 40 × 40-foot story-and-a-half frame house had a 20 × 60-foot attached extension, ample to accommodate an estimated thirty-five patients, which would "give sufficient comfort for several years to come."

However, if the Sisters hoped to escape the stigma of being known as the County Hospital and/or "The Poor Farm", even in this fine new location, they were sadly disappointed. That name persisted, and by implication would still turn away private patients. Another name must be found. Considerable debate followed over its mere selection. Some suggested one of the saints. But which one? Then, a name too closely identified with Catholicism might defeat its very purpose, feelings being what they were in the Seattle area. Ironically, it took a Protestant and Free Mason to settle the matter.

"Why not call the hospital Providence?" asked Judge Amasa Miller. "Surely it has been Providence that has guided the Sisters through all the difficulties with which they have had to contend."

The point was well taken and the Sisters responded. Shortly, helpers Tim and Joe Lynch were nailing the new nameplate "Providence Hospital" above the front door. And, although some folks may have concluded otherwise, the name came about not to honor the Sisters who had been the hospital's sponsors and prime movers, but from survival in the struggle for existence that had become their lot in frontier Seattle....



*Elliott Bay, alive with logs, seen from the foot
of Seneca Street in 1878.*



The Sisters transferred their work from the Duwamish farm to the newly-renovated Moss residence at Fifth Avenue and Madison in 1878, establishing the first Providence Hospital. Finances were so critical that for three weeks, Sister Blandine, the Superior, carried 25 cents in her purse, "the sum total of the house's finances." Outstanding debts were \$1452.

1881 ledger. A typical Providence charity billing.

99

44

1881 Mr. E. J. Jaderholm.

Mar. 23	To 24 days		Jan 6/82 Pqz de duction	\$	12 50
April 16	Board & Attendance				
	@ \$ 8.50				
	Medicines	2 8 50			
	per week	1 50			
	Liquor	2 50			
		<hr/>			
	\$.	3 2 50			

Charity Case

Mother Joseph's Hammer

While the larger quarters and centralized location were most desirable, the move had been extremely costly in outlay of funds, energy and time lost. The treasury was down to bedrock, the patient count low, and it would take considerable time to begin breaking even again. To help make up the deficit, the Sisters decided upon a "begging tour" of the area's sawmills, an action which had been successful when establishing the Portland and Vancouver hospitals. This kind of fund soliciting from door to door was a common practice of the time, in contrast to the broadside bulk mailings of today. Bazaars and bake sales of donated goods were other ways of raising money. The decision on the begging tour was further evidence of the frontier experience the Sisters had gained in the operation and financing of their earlier hospitals. And the begging tour was reasonably successful for a first attempt—with \$100 contributed by the sawmill workers who had a special interest because of their high-risk work.

Returning, the Sisters on tour found things in turmoil.

"God is trying us, and the devil was unleashed," wrote Sister-Chronicler.

For several weeks in 1878, Sister John of Calvary had been giving "attentive care" around the clock to a typhoid patient. A second badly injured sawmill worker also had the disease, requiring the same intensive care. Over four long weeks, the Sisters had been staying up nights, "not leaving them alone for five minutes". At best, hospital care of the times was primitive, relying on cleanliness, a few drugs and pain killers, efforts to make the patient comfortable, and to see that he had much rest, and for the Sisters, continued prayer. Among the leading "drugs" was whiskey; and many are the stories of men who upon learning this, were eager to check into the hospital, sick or well.

The Sisters didn't realize the potency of typhoid and the danger from continued exposure. Three nuns came down with the disease. For a week two of them hung between life and death. Word was sent to Vancouver for emergency help, but it failed to

reach Mother Joseph, for this was a hard winter and the rivers were frozen over. The situation grew more critical from the lack of aid. When a woman recovering from surgery—one of the hospital's major backers—required a Sister to stay with her at home during convalescence, they turned her down, although "we hated to do so". Word spread through Seattle "that we had the fever" and that the place was infected. Some doctors among the hospital's critics declared the center unsafe, and that it should be closed. The county commissioners stuck by the Sisters, refusing to listen to those doctors. But surely the Sisters were facing the devil's trident—illness, fatigue and debt.

At last the neighboring Sisters of Tulalip sent another Sister Benedict to give assistance; and then good Mother Joseph, despite all she had to do but realizing that the hospital was in much trouble, arrived with Sister Florence to keep the place running. However, the illnesses of the nuns had been very critical. Sister John of Calvary was away for eight months, recuperating at Tulalip and Vancouver, Sister Barnaby was also off for a long while, and Sister Cleophus for seven weeks.

Yet even in this time of crisis, the hospital continued growing in the demand for care and the bed patient load. Among the early patients was an Idaho territorial governor, who died there in poverty. He was once a wealthy and powerful man but was now poverty-stricken. People from all walks of life came to the door for help: the victim of a stabbing "in a house of ill repute"...a 15-year-old orphan of mixed blood in the last stages of consumption...a Protestant mother, only 30 and with a terminal illness...the poor and the suffering...or perhaps only the hungry seeking a hot meal and a bed for the night—although sometimes they stayed for weeks and even months... all found sympathetic understanding through the door marked "Providence Hospital"....

Despite the periodic criticism, confidence was growing within Seattle as to the nuns' abilities in health care. The hospital was again becoming overcrowded. Mother Joseph and Sister Peter of Alcantara, who replaced Sister Blandine as Superior,

recognized the need for expansion, but they couldn't easily move again. Besides, land was available next door, if only the stubborn mayor of Seattle, Judge Orange Jacobs, would sell to them. Mrs. Jacobs appeared the main stumbling block; she was opposed to selling, perhaps a reaction to the Catholics. Her reason was simply that they wished to build a new home on the property. That much was probably true, for lumber had been stacked on the grounds.

Mother Joseph was determined, as only she could be. Again and again she tried to convince the Jacobs, but was turned down. She resorted to prayer, which had worked wonders for her in these situations. The nuns also quietly buried a St. Joseph medal in the property, indirectly staking their claim. Suddenly Judge Jacobs and his wife changed their minds.

The sale of the 120 × 120-foot lot was made in April 1879 to the Sisters of Providence, and at a reasonable price of \$2,000. The nuns were overjoyed, for this gave them most of the block and ample room for expansion. Mother Joseph immediately began laying out plans and specifications for a new patients' wing. Financing was needed for the expansion, and also for general expenses. The Sisters organized a bazaar. Many people who weren't Catholics offered their help, believing in the hospital and its overall good for Seattle. But their ministers forbade their participation, and talked from the pulpit against the facility. It was a blow to the nuns' plans, putting the full weight of the bazaar upon the Sisters and the few people who volunteered to help or donate items to sell.

For over two months the Sisters worked hard,



Seattle in 1882. Population 3,533, including 5 blacksmiths, 24 lawyers, and 6 barbers. The town boasted 30 saloons, 3 dealers in hides and furs, 14 groceries, 1 ice company, 9 hotels, and 3 theatres.

collecting saleable items. They made a special trek to Tacoma hoping to acquire some table linens and also to make a collection at the local mills. They secured the linens, but the sawmills were shut down by poor times, money was scarce, and they returned with only \$33.

Still, this was better than nothing at all. But opposition to the bazaar was mounting. And the influence was widespread. The chronicles describe Seattle as "that little city of eight religious sects, four or five secret societies, not always in favor of the works of God."

As the date neared in 1879, the Sisters were suddenly told by "false friends" that territorial law forbade bazaars and raffles. There were dangers, they were warned, if they went ahead with their plans. It

was extremely late in the game to issue such an edict. Many contributions had been made, even by members of the business community, and interest in the bazaar was high because these activities were far from a common occurrence in Seattle. The event had been widely publicized. There was no turning back. The Sisters decided to stage the bazaar anyway, ignoring the threats.

The bazaar was a rousing success, well beyond the expectations of the nuns. Extending over three days, huge crowds surged to the sales area. The Sisters were pleased and rather amazed to see so many of Seattle's so-called "elite" in the crowd, including Catholic Bishop Aegidius Junger among them. Former patients and friends of the hospital helped throughout the affair. It seemed that many





*Kitchen staff (l. to r.)
Sister Nadeau, unidentified,
Joe, unidentified,
and Sister Boniface in
front of the copper-
hooded brick and iron
wood stove. Note
special diet needs on far
left for patients.*



*Compassionate care in
the wards of Providence
helped the hospital
grow and lay nurses
became increasingly
important.*

people were trying to demonstrate how much they really appreciated the hospital and the Sisters' good works as a recognized need of the community, and that some civic leaders and their own pastors didn't speak for common citizens with their relentless opposition. Well enough, for the bazaar was an "unexpected success", raising \$1,047.50, with only \$150 in expenses—a much-welcomed bonanza for the hard-pressed hospital.

Still, the nuns were continually reminded of the strange quirks in man's thinking, and of his or her inhumanity to other human beings. It was difficult at time to adhere to a belief in love, gentleness and non-violence. One morning in November 1879, a policeman appeared at the door with a filthy box covered with rags, which he placed near the warm stove.

"It's a baby," he said. "I think the poor little tyke is dead. He was tossed down the hole of an out-house."

The attending Sisters shuddered at the thought. Gently they opened the box to examine the child. He had fallen some eight feet down the black hole into muck and filth. Several buckets of water had been poured on him "to wash it down". If not dead, he surely should be. Just how or who discovered him wasn't explained.

By some miracle, they felt a faint heartbeat; the baby was breathing! But his body was like ice. For two hours the nuns washed the rigid little form gently with warm water, accompanied by many prayers. And gradually he revived....

News of this kind travels fast, and spread throughout the village. Folks began streaming toward the hospital, hoping to view the child whom the Sisters called Joseph. They brought infant clothing and other things that might be useful. The baby became an emotional issue, a *cause celebre* with the village. A search for the mother was made. She was traced at last, a servant girl of the house from where the baby was rescued. Evidently nobody suspected her pregnancy.



Hot heads turned against the girl, and tempers were barely controlled. Authorities and calmer citizens realized she was in imminent danger. Quickly she was spirited to the hospital for her own safety, and also so she could be with her baby. The Sisters were hopeful of changing her attitude toward her infant son. For three weeks the girl remained with the Sisters who taught her the care and feeding of her baby. She quickly came to love the infant. One morning when a nun went to check, the girl and the baby were gone. The nuns were frantic, calling in the police. The girl and baby were located again, but by now city officials were weary of the touchy situation which might bring on violence against both the girl and baby, and injury to both sides. Since the baby had recovered, no longer needing hospital care, officials felt that the girl and child should leave Seattle. They were sent by ship to California for their own good, perhaps permanently reunited. They were never heard from again....

The Sisters of the Holy Names were planning to open a school for girls in a two-story building not far from the hospital. While the building was being made ready, the Sisters of Providence gave them board and room. After moving to their own quarters, some of the Sisters of Providence went visiting. Suddenly there was a pounding at the door and cries for help. A baby was dying next door. Would the nuns come? The Sisters of Providence responded immediately. But sadly, the baby couldn't be saved....

The willingness to be of help in any emergency and under any conditions spread the good name of

It was common for goods, property or services to be accepted by the Sisters of Providence as payment for hospital care from people with little or no money. Rates were adjusted according to the patient's ability to pay.

the Sisters of Providence throughout the Puget Sound area. More and more the nuns found themselves endeared to the hearts of the common people, if not the politicians and pastors of other faiths. The barriers were beginning to break down in the 1880's, if ever so slowly; more people were coming to the hospital, and there seemed less doubt and suspicion over the kind of care the five Sisters were giving. It is interesting to note that in their attention to the spiritual as well as the physical side of their patients, the Sisters were far ahead of their time; in the current all-wise, scientific Twentieth Century, doctors and hospital personnel have become well aware of the patient's spiritual side as most important to the recovery, if not the survival, of the individual, and the peace of mind of his family and friends.

The number of missionary priests in the West was diminishing—an indication that the frontier age was fading. Now Father Kauten, who the Sisters felt was their beloved founder, was transferred to a college position elsewhere. Father Prefontaine remained, helpful as always with carpentry work and visiting the growing number of patients. And the variety was astounding: a Japanese man found half dead on the beach, an Irish sailor, a miner, a Canadian from the Sisters' home area of Montreal, an Indian woman, many sawmill workers and loggers, and people from every strata of the social ladder. Significant, too, was that there were more Protestant than Catholic patients. The year's total grew to 95, with 37 county patients and 58 private, and 55 Protestant and 40 Catholic. There had been 22 deaths, 5 baptisms, 7 operations, and 5 broken bones. The following year the patient load reached 130, with 41 county patients and 89 private. And now the Sisters were reaching out, offering care to patients from other counties, namely Kitsap across the Sound.

"Our hospital," writes Sister-Chronicler in 1882-83, "is not only the refuge of the sick, but also those suffering from all kinds of evils. It is the hope of the worst sinners. We are grateful for the progress we have made here."

But the handwriting was plainly on the wall.

Once more conditions were becoming overcrowded, and hospitals must retain a certain flexibility to meet with emergencies in unusual and unforeseen situations. Many more beds and more overall facilities were direly needed, and at the moment economic conditions around the Sound were very bad. The number of Sisters had also been reduced. Four and sometimes five nuns were handling the twenty-four patients currently in the hospital, with only a small number of lay helpers. The hard work, the long hours were telling on them, for not all the nuns were as robust as Mother Joseph.

"By winter it looks like our house will be too small," commented the Sister-Chronicler in 1881-82. "We have asked our superiors to let us build. They wish to wait till spring, as the weather is better for building. In the meantime, we have converted our drying room into a room for ten patients, increasing the bed capacity to thirty-five."

The Sisters had always been able to adapt, but not this time. The many sick people of the touchy winter season, when health is at an annual low, kept flowing to them. In what was disheartening and most disturbing to these nuns dedicated to the Lord's work, "we had to refuse quite a few patients for lack of beds. We need to build...."

Mother Joseph recognized that the walls were bursting in Seattle, and was hunched over her desk at



1849

Mr. Thomas Smith

\$ 15 00	Oct. 29		Nov. 2		
	Dec. 9	To 41 days	By Cash	\$.	20 00
		Board &	" "		8 00
		Attendance	Dec. 8	" "	20 00
		@ \$10.50	" 31	" "	16 50
		per week			
		\$ 61 50			
\$ 15 00		Medicine			
		3 00			
		\$ 64 50			\$ 64 50

Mary Butler & Child

\$ 8 50	Nov. 7	To 19	Apr 8		
19 00	Nov. 26	days Board			
		and Atter			
		dance @			
		\$10.50			
		per week			
		28 50			
		For Baby (2 days)			
		5 00			
\$ 27 00		Baby's Blanket			
		1 75			
		\$ 35 25			\$ 22 75

Paid by the County

Mrs. J. Schonbacher

7 00	Nov. 11		Nov. 22	To vegetables	\$ 4 00
	Nov. 18	To 7 days	Dec 6	" "	4 50
		Board &			
		Attendance			
		@ \$8.50			
		per week			
		\$ 8 50			\$ 8 50

Fort Vancouver in 1881, drafting plans for another building. This wouldn't be patchwork, but a formidable structure which with easily-attached additions could last a long while. Meanwhile, the King County commissioners made a thorough inspection of the hospital, its grounds and the outbuildings. If the Sisters were worried, they had little cause, for at the monthly meeting of February 1881, the commissioners gave the hospital a "clean bill of health." They found everything Grade A and most satisfactory. The county patients were being well cared-for, and the premises were neat, clean and healthful. There were no grounds for charges that the county wards were being neglected in favor of private patients, and especially Catholics. The politicians had lost another round, but they would keep trying, and a few years hence, succeed in removing temporarily the county patients.

On the strength of this report, Mother Joseph, and Sister Peter, the Superior of the hospital, moved immediately toward the much-needed expansion. The building contract was let in April 1882 and ground broken, with appropriate blessings and ceremonies, on May 3. The "wing" was impressive, costing some \$25,000, a considerable amount for the times and the organization. As often in the past, the Sisters were too eager, and so was the contractor. The structure was to be finished at high speed by October, but building and labor problems and delays were constant, much like today. The new unit wouldn't be completed until the following February, a full year from that glowing report by the county commission. The Sisters had hoped for quick construction, too, because of the disturbance. It was a bad time to be hospitalized, due to the noise. Yet the Sisters were surprised that, despite this drawback, the patient load was heavy.

"The noise of the hammers disturbed the patients for weeks," wrote Sister-Chronicler. "But the patient load remained high, and we were able to pay the workmen every Saturday."

At last Mother Joseph, hammer swinging from her belt and sawdust flecking her habit, made a final inspection, and on February 2, Ground Hog Day by

legend, Father Prefontaine said the first Mass in the new hospital, with Mother Joseph and Mother Praxedes in attendance.

Providence Hospital, starting from first that tiny place in the country and then this small house, was now a stable institution, a permanent landmark of the city. Two additional lots in the block had been purchased for \$1,200 to accommodate this and anticipated future expansion. The wooden frame building resting on a brick foundation was four stories plus, 100 × 90 feet facing on Spring Street with a 90-foot depth along Fifth. There was a bell-less tower in the center, surmounted by a small cross, and running across the entire front in two tiers were sheltered balconies where patients could rest or walk and enjoy the fresh air, and a view of the city. Mother Joseph was clever in her design of these buildings, in that they stood apart as landmarks, which could be quickly spotted anywhere in the Northwest; and also, in the convenient adding of late extensions which could be attached so that they all seemed part of the main structure. From Spring Street, Providence Hospital appeared far larger than it was, but now with almost the entire block under its command, the hospital at last had full breathing room. Later additions would come along Fifth Avenue in 1887, and then on Madison in 1888, 1893 and 1901. The Moss Residence was finally moved to Seventh and Seneca, then torn down in 1946. A laundry was built on the far side of the property near Sixth Avenue, and an isolation ward was established in time within the secluded open space of the U-shaped hospital.

This new section would handle seventy-five patients, and with the thirty in the older part, the total bed capacity reached one hundred five. Among its major features were gas lights, Providence being among the first large public buildings in the city to have a complete gas lighting system. Later, also, Providence would boast the city's first steam elevator to carry patients and workers from one floor to another. The elevator was considered more modern and efficient than that of Portland's St. Vincent Hospital, installed earlier as the first in the Pacific



Overcrowded conditions led Mother Joseph to design a new hospital building at Fifth and Spring.

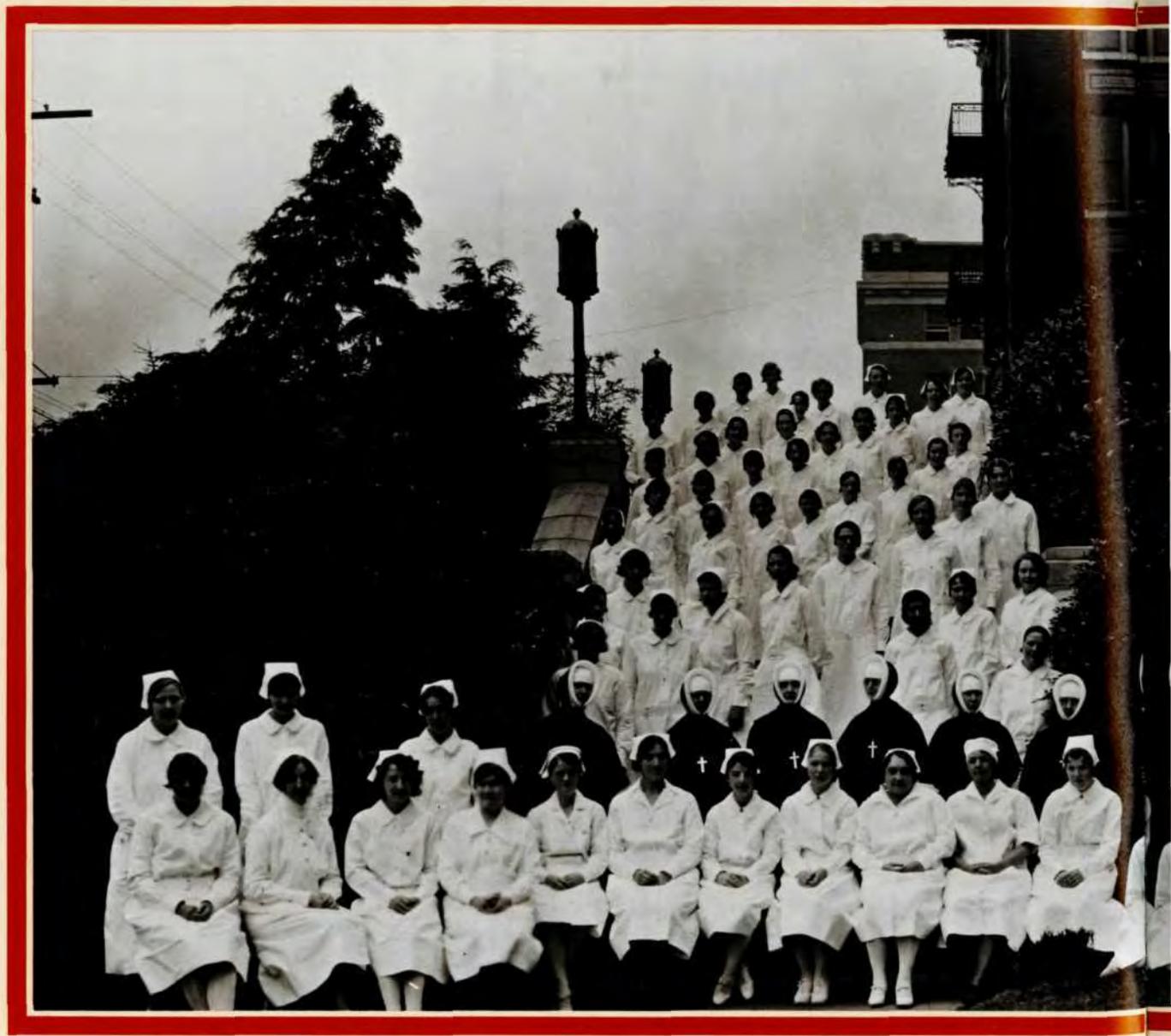
Northwest. Gas lights and an elevator were solid indications that the Sisters of Providence leaders were well aware of the progress being made in a changing America and that these women of the West were willing to move with it, in both their buildings and in health care.

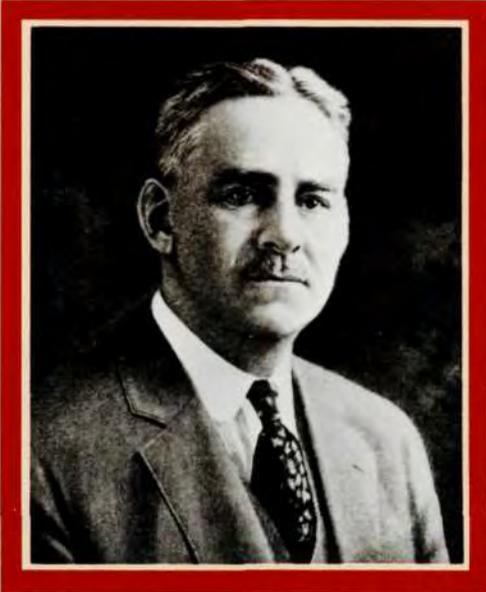
Yet while Sister Peter and the others welcomed this new "wing", called the "New Providence Hospital", they were hardpressed making ends meet financially from the huge building costs, the furnishings, and the current devaluation of money. The present debt was \$1,452 for wages and expenditures—and the county only paid three times a year. The situation was critical; for one three-week period, the Sister Superior went about carrying only a quarter in her purse. But her strength of purpose and her faith carried her forward, as it had Mother Joseph, Mother Praxedes, Mother Mary Theresa, Sister Marie Eugene, and others during times of financial crisis,

which often happened when these hospitals were pressed into expansion, forced by what we now describe as "popular demand". Once again, the Mother resorted to prayer, leaving her purse with that single quarter against the door of the tabernacle, and appealing to Jesus. The next day two patients paid their bills, a total of \$207; and from that time forward, even under the stress of later construction programs, Providence Hospital was always able to pay on demand, or sufficiently to satisfy its creditors.

Still, there was little time to draw one's breath, or even take a holiday. The region had the railroad fever, with prospects that the town would boom. The Sisters knew that before long, from necessity, the section along Fifth must be completed. But other events were in the making, too, which would change growing Seattle for all time, and shape the town and the hospital into a future that could never have been envisioned in the past.

The 1930 Providence Hospital School of Nursing Student Body, Sisters of Providence, and lay nursing staff. Up until 1907 the nursing in Providence Hospital had been done by the Sisters trained for the service. The ever increasing number of patients required more help. Since the first graduating class of the School of Nursing in 1910, thousands of young women have joined the ranks of graduated nurses.





Rich and poor found a generous friend in Dr. George Monroe Horton, first president of Providence Hospital Medical Staff in 1920. He was one of the best known and most highly respected physician-surgeons in Seattle and in the Northwest.





Providence Hospital, now a stable institution, became a prominent landmark on Seattle's skyline. The large structure behind Providence Hospital is the Sixth Street School which later burned.

Through The Fire

Seattle remained wild, woolly and lawless as it emerged from the frontier age. The population stood at 3,500, with lumbering and the waterfront still dominating local life. Its skid road was as tough as San Francisco's celebrated Barbary Coast; and something of a reflection of the town's character could be found in the fact that there were thirty saloons and nearly as many lawyers.

Yet in the turbulence of the times, the newly-expanded Providence Hospital was more than ever a primary need of the people, whether or not they were willing to admit it. The Sisters found themselves reacting to the stresses and strains of this active city on the Sound, for the hospital was becoming an integrated part of life in Seattle and King County, helping in ways that by now were legendary throughout the Pacific Northwest.

The hospital also served as a barometer of Seattle's development. In 1882-83 care was given 602 patients—a new high—including 47 surgeries, 49 broken bones, and 75 deaths. The work force now consisted of eight Sisters and one tertiary Sister, with need for many more than these and therefore a glad welcoming of "three new Sisters, fresh from Canada".

Mill accidents...a terrorizing nighttime fire... logging tragedies...a badly-maimed 16-year-old Irish miner...fishing mishaps...the diseased, the elderly, the poverty stricken...the hungry...all found their way to Spring Street. The coming of the railroads in the 1880's brought strange new influxes of population, but also bitter conflict among the races. Henry Villard, the powerful railroad builder and financial genius, imported large contingents of Chinese to build the Northern Pacific, as had Ben Holladay and the tycoons of the Central Pacific before him. The Orientals were originally found to be the best railroad builders in the business, hard working, methodical, willing to labor long hours for low wages, and to take risks. But when the railroad building boom was done, Seattle and other Northwest communities were against the wall, in financial straits with unemployed white workers looking for scapegoats. Accusing

fingers were pointed at the Chinese who were allegedly "taking white men's jobs". The Chinese must go—be run out of town—cried the Caucasians in a movement fostered by the Knights of Labor.

The financial crisis worsened. The job market hit bottom. Many banks failed. Sawmills were down, or operating only half time, and shipyards were "almost deserted". Local coal mines were crammed with mountains of the fuel, with little export sale in prospect. More and more people were seeking work, among them the hated Orientals. Bitter feelings against the Chinese were stirred up by radicals, who always take advantage of times of stress. The Sisters of Providence themselves could readily identify with the Orientals, since they had so often, particularly here in Seattle, felt the ugliness of bigotry and prejudice from their religion, even their blood strain, since they spoke in a broken language.

"Everywhere we've seen misery and poverty as never before in Seattle," wrote Sister-Chronicler. "Times are critical, with little hope in the near future for a change."

But despite the times and failure of patients to pay bills, the hospital doors remained open to "people of all ages and conditions—rich and poor, old and young, Christian and renegade...."

"A sad and deplorable thing happened here in Seattle on February 8, 1886, when the Chinese were expelled," wrote Sister-Chronicler. "After several meetings of working men under the name Knights of Labor, several committees were formed here and in neighboring cities to help decide on a way to get rid of this class of people who worked for low wages. On a fixed day all the organizations surrounded the cabins of the frightened Chinese, forcing them to pack up quickly. Then whites en masse accompanied them to the steamboat that was to take them to San Francisco. A collection was made to pay the price of the trip, enough to send all the Chinese. However, the boat (*Queen of the Pacific*), although largest on that line, was too small to accommodate all, so a good number had to go back."

The ship took 196 aboard—the absolute limit



Anti-Catholic sentiment was behind the competition provided by short-lived Grace Hospital (1886-1893).

Fighting during the anti-Chinese riot on a downtown street. Five of the wounded men were brought to Providence.

ruled by the skipper. That left 185 Chinese on the dock. It would be almost a week before another ship would arrive. Some white workers wanted to hold the Orientals on the dock until that time, but this was ridiculous, only creating additional problems. Instead, the decision was made to return them temporarily to the shanties, under control of the Home Guard or militia. The workers, feeling victorious at this moment, didn't understand why the Chinese were being returned to the town. Violence erupted; a burly logger, Charles G. Stewart, grabbed a Guard's rifle. Another Guard member clubbed him, and the shooting began.

"The crowd," wrote Sister-Chronicler, "not knowing the cause of this happening, formed a line to stop them. The police intervened, but the crowd resisted the authorities, who opened fire. Seven men were wounded, five of them brought to our hospital. One of them died." The dead man was Stewart who

had started the shooting.

Now the tense and edgy city became virtually an armed camp, with martial law proclaimed by Governor Watson Squire. Whether he had the authority was a moot question, but it managed to restore order against the "threats of vengeance, assassination, hanging, revolt....Gradually calm returned...."

It was inevitable, of course, that sooner or later another hospital would be built, strongly backed by Protestant factions of the town. Ever since their arrival by lantern light, the Sisters had felt the lies told about them. Now that they were successful, people viewing that growing building believed the Sisters had "a good thing going", that they were making huge profits to be poured into the coffers of the Pope in Rome. It was a hurt that couldn't be easily cast aside, for people failed to consider that the Sisters held down the expenses of hospital operation because



they labored without pay.

Grace Hospital was successful for a time beginning in 1886, as are all new ventures, and was supported actively by a number of local doctors. The Sisters were concerned, since the hospital was in direct competition to their own. To woo would-be patients, the new hospital's administrators undertook a program of selling bonds in exchange for possible future hospital care, a pioneer form of "hospital insurance", similar to that pioneered by the Sisters in their other hospitals, principally with industrial workers in dangerous jobs. Under the arrangement, the bonds or "tickets" could be purchased for \$5 or \$10 a year, authorizing the purchaser in case of illness or injury, full and complete "free" hospital care, without any additional costs. It was indeed a welcome arrangement for sawmill and woods workers.

Now agents for the new hospital were out in force, "soliciting customers in the mines, the woods,

cities, villages and other remote places," observed Sister-Chronicler. "Our opponent is meeting with success with the workmen. We regretfully see ourselves losing this class of workmen who are usually poor even in this country where wages are high. It is this class of people who are our bread and butter...."

From the workers' point of view, that care plus board and room and doctor's services was bargain-basement. The Sisters had no choice but to offer the same arrangement and at the same fee. And times were hard for their hospital, with even county and marine patients transferred to the new facility. They appealed to Bishop Junger, who had been hesitant, and after much deliberation, he gave the Sisters permission to sell tickets for hospital care on the same basis as Grace Hospital. That first year Providence Hospital realized \$3,500 from its ticket payments, with much of the credit going to Sister Benedict Joseph who, taking a younger nun along, spent long

PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL,

OWNED BY AND UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY.

This Hospital is beautifully located in a very healthy and easily accessible part of the city, and will comfortably accommodate one hundred and twenty-five patients.

Providence Hospital was founded in 1876, but the present commodious building was not ready for occupancy until 1882, since which time over five hundred patients have been cared for annually. It is perfectly non-sectarian in its management. No one, whether Jew or Gentile, Catholic or Protestant, has ever been turned from its doors, but all have been welcomed, whether or not they have had the means wherewith to pay.

In response, now, to what seems to be the popular demand, the Sisters will furnish tickets to any persons in health who desire them, at \$10 each, the holders of which shall be entitled to admission to the Hospital, whenever incapacitated from any cause whatever, during the year for which the ticket is issued. Holders of tickets will be furnished with a pleasant room, board, skilled nurses, tender care of the sisters, medicines and competent medical and surgical treatment, without any further expense to them whatever.

hours making contacts. Her sales pitch must have been quite effective, for Grace Hospital representatives had been out in force several months ahead of them. And the second year, these advanced sums doubled to around \$7,000.

"For eight months now our tickets have been in circulation, and we are doing well, even in the territory of our adversary," wrote Sister-Chronicler. "A good number of patients left his hospital dissatisfied, while ours leave happy. Today Mr. Carmen's hospital is luxuriously furnished with turkish carpets, furniture with marble tops, and so forth. Ours is simply furnished, but our Sisters are so devoted that they aptly compensate for the lack of wealth."

One of the closest relationships developed by the Sisters was with the Port Blakely Mill Company, operating purportedly the largest sawmill on the Pacific Coast, if not the world, on Bainbridge Island near Seattle. The mill, founded by Captain William Renton and his partner, Daniel S. Howard, began cutting in April 1864 with an initial daily capacity of 50,000 board feet of lumber and a yearly average of nineteen million board feet until 1880 when it was substantially enlarged.

Renton had wisely chosen his site, with caution, using a clothesline and weights to be certain he had deep water navigation at his doorstep. This single factor was one of the distinct advantages of Puget Sound to all early lumbermen. By the mid-seventies, when the Sisters came on the scene, the Blakely Mill was running day and night, even in depressed times, doing \$1,500,000 business annually. Its docks and adjacent harbor were jammed with tall ships, while over a hundred men turned out some 90,000 board feet of lumber every twenty-four hours. From January 1 to August 1, 1875 the big mill sliced some seventeen million board feet, some of it to fill a large contract for a South American railroad. But the West Coast trade proved even more profitable, especially that of the booming San Francisco Bay area and the Comstock Lode where inflationary prices prevailed. The following year the mill cut thirty million board feet and ten million laths, loading seventy

An old Providence advertisement edited by a meticulous Sister.



Facsimile of a Providence "ticket," one of the first forms of medical insurance in the Northwest. In 1886, sales netted \$3,500. The following year sales almost doubled.



Port Blakely Mill Company, Bainbridge Island, was the largest sawmill on the West Coast. Its injured workers were treated at Providence.

windjammers to the gunwales, until the cargoes sagged the ships to their waterlines.

"You'll sink me," cried the skippers.

"It's only lumber," growled the super, "and lumber floats."

In this highball and dangerous activity, Providence Hospital was a welcome backup for the men, and the prepaid hospital plan was very popular as a wise investment. Much correspondence between the Mother Superior and John S. Campbell, the mill superintendent, remains on file in the archives of the University of Washington library: handwritten letters acknowledging payment of hospital bills, the filling of ticket orders, reports on patients' progress, concern for Captain Renton, the mill founder, who at times seemed hard-pressed with labor troubles and "being always so good and kind to all his men ought not to be treated that way. I hope that a change will soon take place. With best wishes I remain as ever, respectfully, Sister Pierre d'Alcantara, Sup." (The underscoring is Sister Peter's.)

Sometimes the brief letters acknowledged receiving bulk orders for tickets from workers in both logging camps and sawmill, plus a report on a patient or two:

"Dear Sir: Please find the enclosed order from Mr. Gifford for fifty dollars (\$50) for hospital tickets sold at his camp. Your little patient is doing nicely. The doctor took off the stitches today, which relieved him considerable [sic]. The wound in his side is much improved."

This prepaid plan was also a boon to the hospital in building up its operating capital by several thousand dollars annually, and in helping finance future expansion. The patient load topped six hundred by mid-1887 and the following year was over a thousand, now with fourteen nuns and fourteen employees plus "several old people who help where they can." The patient influx gave no signs of leveling off, continuing to grow at a faster rate than Sisters, tertiaries, and other workers could be added, taxing their energies to the very limits. And help seemed slow in coming from Montreal, despite the pleadings



of Mother Joseph and Sister Peter.

"To tell the truth," wrote the Sister-Chronicler, "our Sisters here are overworked and can scarcely make ends meet."

It was no wonder, since the hospital was attracting "the poor and the rich, learned and ignorant, Catholic and infidel, patients from terrible accidents, even murder...." And, the Sister-Chronicler was in a reflective mood at the beginning of 1888-89:

"I, the Chronicler, have lived here eleven years and I notice that although the hospital today seems prosperous, it was not always so. There were times when we did not know where to turn for help. In 1878—ten years ago—for three weeks once the house had only twenty-five cents to go on, and our debt was \$1,452. What would happen if one of our creditors would have asked the young corporation for a few dollars that he really needed? We could not give it to him. Happily, we had an account with the grocer that we paid by the trimesters when the county paid us."

But now the hospital couldn't depend upon the very account which had originally brought the Sisters to Seattle. Anti-Catholic factions were once again attempting to choke off Providence by opening other hospitals, which generally weren't successful, and through manipulating civic and county officials. For some three years a threat hung over the hospital that

Providence Hospital
Seattle, Wash.

Oct. 29, 1894

Mr. J. Campbell
Blakely, Wn.

Dear Sir:—

A permit
not yet been seen.
My N. Papalina
sent here last w.
the "Blakely Mill"
badly injured, and
be here for some
time. Will you

try to procure
from the Com.
you always
this matter betw.

Yours
Sister Eugene

Sister Eugene, the Superior in 1901, identified the rising costs of hospital care.

Providence Hospital,
Seattle, Wn., Feb. 26, 1901

Mr. J. A. Campbell,

Port-Blakely, Wn.

Dear Sir:—

Herewith please find receipted
bills with my thanks for prompt
remittance.

Our prices are really as low as
we can make them compared with
the present cost of living and of hospital
supplies. Medicines, dressings, etc.
have advanced doubtly and even trebled
in value within the last year.

Your people receive the best of care
and treatment here, and we shall
always do our utmost to merit
your valued patronage.

Yours truly

Sister Eugene



The luxury of a private room was, finally, available at the Fifth Avenue and Madison location, for an "extra \$1 a day paid in advance."

county patients would be transferred elsewhere.

"Envious of our success, there are those who try to take our county patients from us," declared Sister-Chronicler.

A large building was erected on the site of the old county Poor Farm, and after three years the decision was made to move all the county patients, twenty-eight at a time, to these new quarters. The move shook the elderly poor and helpless, much to the nuns' regret, for they didn't wish to be uprooted from familiar surroundings which had become home. On February 1 wagons arrived at the hospital. Several trips were necessary to handle all the county patients (the total number here isn't specific). There were moments of drama, heartbreak and tears. One elderly man suffered an attack of apoplexy, expiring within minutes. The Sisters and the hospital administration were concerned not only over the former patients, but how the hospital would survive without this county contract. However, "the places vacated by these patients were quickly filled by others...."

Fears of strong competition from other hospitals quickly subsided when these were forced into bankruptcy, and Providence remained the single shining beacon for health care in the Seattle area. Then Judge Amasa Miller, the man who named the hospital, presented the institution in 1887 with a fine bell for its eighty-foot steeple, to be blessed in appropriate ceremonies by Bishop Junger. Judge Miller explained that he "wanted to leave his descendents a remembrance in loud powerful tones that would recall to them their duty if ever they were wondering to deny it." And indeed, the bell's clear voice could be heard over a wide distance of town and harbor.

A chapel was added under Mother Joseph's skilled architectural pencil, and her artistic imagination. With Mother Joseph's talents, the Sisters of Providence held a distinct advantage over other missionary movements, in that they weren't required to employ highly-paid architects from outside. The building continued expanding; it was now 210 feet in length, 45 feet deep, with 100-foot wings, 35 feet in depth. Only shortly after the chapel dedication,

however, the hospital almost lost this addition, and perhaps much more. Another of many nighttime fires raged through a four-story frame public school "that was burning rapidly" a block away. Flaming embers shot into the sky, showering surrounding buildings. The hospital was threatened; evacuation considered. Eight men climbed to the roof, armed with brooms and pails of water, trying to douse the sparks and flaming debris. The hospital's water supply was limited, insufficient to quell any major outbreak. At times the heat was so intense that the men were forced to retreat from the roof, but in the end they were able to save the hospital from any appreciable damage.

This was but a passing thing—Seattle it seemed was always catching fire, or on the verge of it. But another kind of unforeseen disaster dealt the hospital a staggering blow, closing its doors for weeks.

Smallpox, the dread disease of the Old West, struck Seattle and the outlying areas, and in characteristic fashion, spread rapidly since many people who were ill or carrying the germ failed to recognize



its symptoms, and were circulating about. And, early-day vaccinations were feared almost as much as the disease. Many doctors didn't even recognize the symptoms, despite the terror felt over this killer.

An oculist sent a young man, complaining of feeling ill, to Providence Hospital without realizing his patient had the first symptoms of smallpox. The Sisters, usually alert to such matters, were somewhat ignorant on this score. He was accepted, and then his nurse came down with the disease. Fortunately, neither died; but another patient came to the hospital at night, the nurse admitting him without question. Later realizing that the patient was suspect, she couldn't send him into the winter's night, so he wasn't transferred to the isolation "smallpox house" until the following morning. Then in a twenty-bed ward, another patient broke out with the disease. Informing the authorities, the Sisters quickly moved out other patients and washed beds, furniture, "walls and all" with disinfectant, and "no one, thank God, caught the disease".

This wasn't the end of it. Another man arrived at the door, obviously a victim and nowhere to turn. The kind-hearted Sisters ran the risk by isolating him. But rumors were spreading that the place was infected and that "a great number of cases had been brought into the hospital". Frightened relatives wanted other patients quickly removed. Sixty-eight were able to leave ahead of the yellow flag of quarantine. Then police were assigned to guard the entryways against any flow of traffic, in or out. To make matters worse, Sister Mary Jules had contracted the disease.

Some one hundred fifty patients and hospital personnel were trapped by the quarantine, suffering the fear of exposure even though there were only the two cases. The lone lay patient was isolated on the second floor near the laundry room, and a social nurse assigned to him. Still, rumors of widespread illness within the hospital continued to multiply.

The Sisters appealed to the city council to lift the ban, allowing other patients to leave, but were coldly turned aside. They felt—and perhaps rightly so

—that the lack of help, understanding and consideration was further extension of the harsh religious prejudice that had haunted them since founding days.

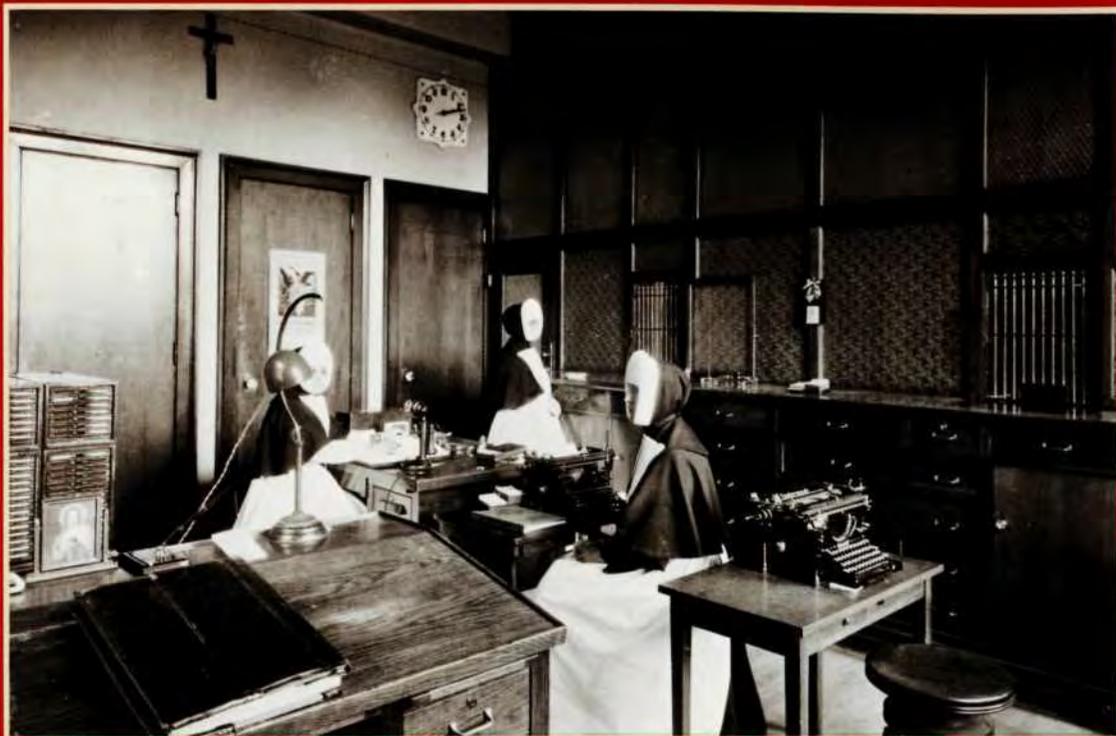
"It was useless," wrote the Sister-Chronicler, "for those who suppress the Church in communities do a praiseworthy thing, according to some, and the council wished to stand in well with these people."

To protect the other patients from possible exposure, the Sisters and friends set up tents on the grounds, away from the building. Even the Sisters were held outside like prisoners, making daily contact only through a window at a safe distance to furnish supplies to those inside. Even so, twelve patients sneaked by the guard and got away.

The one case dragged on day after day, but finally the patient died. Now some sixty patients could be released, but then suddenly there was a new worry. Sister Mary Hilda contracted the disease. All the nuns had now been exposed, and the quarantine continued. The Sisters spent their time fumigating all the rooms, and after two weeks the yellow flag was lifted. Authorities were finally forced also to remove the tents, for there had been much public disapproval of the way the council had handled the situation. Still, the nuns were hesitant, fearing to admit any new patients until they were absolutely certain that the disease had gone its way. Therefore, it wasn't until April that "calm returned...."

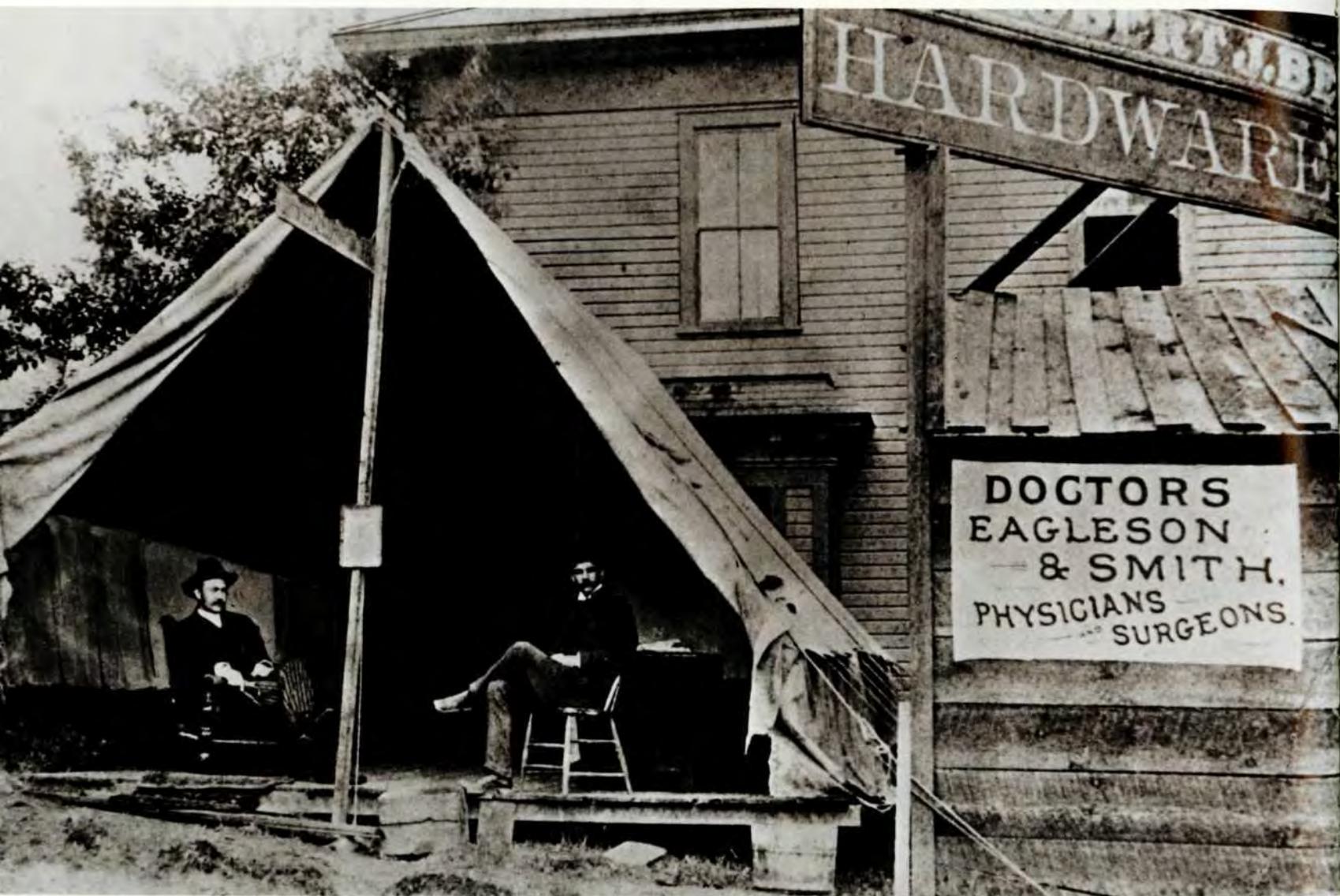
That the year had been a strenuous, yet very busy, one was clearly indicated by the records. Care had been given 1,200 patients, with 643 special cases demanding night attendance. There were 39 home visits "to those who needed it most", and 8,106 meals served to the poor and hungry, probably many of them from the great Seattle fire which gutted the downtown area in June 1889. Yet if there were an overall bright spot in this time of upheaval, it came from the fact that the tragic fire didn't even scorch this formidable institution which lived up to its name in hours of greatest need. Providence had provided on this occasion not only for the hospital, but for all of Seattle....

An atypical lull in the business office. Hand-written ledgers were being replaced by typewriters and card files.



Glad patients greeted by Santa Claus during the holidays.





Following the fire of 1889, Drs. Clarence A. Smith and James Eagleson treated patients in this tent on the southeast corner of Third Avenue and Columbia Street. These men, along with Drs. Lewis Dawson and Frantz Coe, leased Grace Hospital. Eventually becoming so desperate for patients, they offered free medical care.

Gold Fever

The devastating fire which swept Seattle's core area on June 6-7, 1889, destroyed some thirty key business blocks, but also turned the city in new directions. Still young and vigorous, its frontier spirit intact, the face of the Gateway to the North was changed in a rapid rebuilding, this time with brick and mortar rather than wood structures which began reaching for the sky instead in low-slung sprawling form across the land. This gave the city a feeling of permanence, that the people were here to stay which hadn't been indicated clearly when the town resembled a fly-by-night logging camp.

Seattle now had pride and potential for competing with nearby Tacoma and, even more important, with Portland. It was catching up with the Oregon town which had always been far the larger and more advanced. In 1890 the population stood at

42,837 compared to Tacoma's 36,006 and Portland's 46,385; and now it appeared the town's complexion of trade—its multi-purpose—was moving in two directions rather than just in exports. Part of this was the vision of James J. Hill, the great railroad builder of the great Northern who hated hauling empty boxcars east after carrying Midwest goods to the ports, bound for the Orient, and therefore arranged that products flow in both directions.

Yet in the hard times following the fire, Providence Hospital had emerged unscathed from the holocaust to stand stead-fast, a link with both the past and the future. And its importance was underscored by the Sisters, now numbering fourteen, who served some 7,543 meals to hungry people. Indeed, the feeding of the poor was done consistently in Seattle, Portland and other mission centers; and over a seven-year



A "tent city" sprang up immediately after the fire to carry on business as usual, as seen from City Hall looking down Yesler Way. Within two weeks, 138 new buildings were under construction and within a year a new city arose.

period from 1888 to 1895, the Seattle Sisters doled out 60,792 meals, for from their earliest beginnings in Montreal, the poor had always been of first concern and a basic part of the Sisters' creed.

"God and the poor; that suffices," reminded their foundress, Mother Gamelin. And Mother Theresa had echoed her by observing in the Northwest: "The poor and miserable are always with us. They will bring us Heaven's blessing."

Still, their critics and enemies in and beyond religious circles continued attempts to dislodge the Sisters. It seems ironic that many times anti-Catholic doctors and lay people tried to establish hospitals, only to fail. Even the strongest of the lot, Grace Hospital, was in trouble, its staff doctors so desperate for patients that they were offering free medical care. But in the end these doctors who leased the institution—Clarence A. Smith, James Eagleson, Lewis Dawson and Frantz Coe—found they couldn't survive. Grace Hospital was forced to close forever, its last five patients transferred to Providence, while two others were dismissed.

But the continued harassment made Providence administrators uneasy, since city officials were constantly undermining the hospital.

"They try to harm our work," wrote Sister Oliver in the chronicles. "They publish things in the newspapers about us that are not true. They try to influence new doctors in the city against us. We worry that we would lose our poor. They say that if there were a hospital for the poor, it would be less expensive."

How this could be accomplished was a puzzlement, since the Sisters labored unheard-of hours without compensation beyond board and room. One visitor was typical. Seeing Sister Alphonse flushed, down on her knees scrubbing the floor, he inquired what her pay was, and couldn't believe the answer.

In 1890 a Seattle Chief of Police got into the act by declaring that he would build a hospital, that "he preferred having patients in a hospital that he controlled where he could give prisoners needed care

rather than have them go to the Sisters. He claimed that they would be better treated with him."

The Chief's new receiving hospital, opened in March 1891, was short-lived. Friends of Providence Hospital "decided to respond to his lies. Many who had been patients declared publicly that the Chief hadn't told the truth—and just wanted to oppose Providence Hospital that did much for the city."

Critics discovered that the hospital also had some powerful supporters. The city health officer managed to negotiate a new contract for Providence in the caring of the poor and indigent, and "we heard no more about the receiving hospital."

In still another harassment, sailors and poverty patients were removed from Providence for six months, the contract awarded to Grace Hospital, only to be returned to Providence when Grace closed its doors. And Providence paced Seattle growth, with the patient load reaching a thousand in 1891 and 10,000 meals being served the hungry. The Sisters also ranged throughout the city visiting the ill and homebound, much of this the work of Sister Mary Olive and a Sister companion. During a seven-year period of the 1890s over 15,000 such visitations were made.

Seattle remained a hotbed of anti-Catholicism; all this kindness, all this filling of a need, failed to curb Catholic hate activities, not only among Protestant factions but with "bad priests" who had left the Church. A Protestant-backed association known as the A.P.A. was organized, having a "considerable membership", with each person who joined pledging solemnly "never in any manner to help Catholics", and as a primary aim "to put the Sisters out of business". The American Protective Association was a nation-wide secret prescriptive society which ran rampant in the 1890s and was anti-Catholic by its very nature, a primary aim to restrict all government positions to Protestants. In Seattle it stirred up bigotry by circulating lies and propaganda against the hospital and its founders. Such organizations were products of an age when this style of hated emotion swept the nation. In Oregon, for example, Ku Klux Klan groups

A CARD TO THE PUBLIC.

SYNOPSIS OF THE LECTURE BY REV. J. F. ELLIS.

Providence Hospital makes its appeal on the score of charity.

Mr. Ellis showed from the records that the claim of charity is a blind.

No matter what the county paid formerly, it now pays 87½ cents per patient per day for service that is done elsewhere for 25 cents by contract.

And there are those in the community who can testify that in counties east, where they are acquainted, the care of the county wards is so managed as to put money into the county treasury, instead of taking money out. And men right here, of business capacity and experience, have assured Mr. Ellis that what Providence Hospital gets 87½ cents for, can be done for from 30 to 40 cents.

And the point is that the Hospital is not a charitable institution, and to get money on that plea is getting it upon a false pretense.

This is further evident from the sums which the Hospital receives quarterly from the county. For the present year these quarterly sums amount to \$3248 36. For the five years of the contract this will swell to the fair proportions of \$16,241 80, an amount of money sufficient to pay for their Hospital grounds and buildings, and put a handsome balance in the Church coffers. And if in addition our citizens contribute \$1000 annually to the Fair, at the end of the five years the Hospital piles up more than \$21,000, exclusive of all that come in from private patients.

Mr. Ellis showed that these Hospital bills were by far the largest of the regular quarterly bills which the county has to pay, and that from 15 to 20 cents of every dollar paid into the county the county is obliged to pay over to the Hospital.

It all goes to show that Providence Hospital is not a charitable institution, and has no right to go to the public in that garb—it is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Mr. Ellis has no personalities to indulge in any direction. His pulpit is neither too sanctimonious to discuss any matter of public concern and welfare, nor so profane as to attempt to speculate at the county's expense. He simply insists that Providence Hospital is not a charitable institution, and should not receive public patronage on that plea to the amount of a single cent.

BY MEMBERS OF HIS CHURCH
AND CONGREGATION.



LAURENCE 78

The constant suspicion and criticism of the Sisters of Providence's work is reflected in "A Card to the Public" printed in a local newspaper. Father F. X. Prefontaine powerfully rebuffed the charges.

A CARD.

TO REV. MR. ELLIS:

I understand that you have turned your pulpit into a rastrum, where you parade political subjects, worldly topics and sensational matters of all descriptions from the ridiculous to the criminal. Of such a profanation I say nothing. Your motive is generally understood. But when you have the impudence to villify from what should be your place of worship the good, honest, devoted and self-sacrificing Sisters of Charity, then it becomes my duty to show you out in your true color, as a falsifier of the truth, and a bigot of the first water; animated with the most bitter hatred of Catholics and their institutions, no matter how good they may be—a dangerous man sowing the seed of discord in a community where harmony exists. When, last Saturday, you haunted the Auditor's Office and found it beyond your power to discover any dishonesty on the part of the Sisters of Charity in regard to their contract with King County, had you had a little common sense you would have desisted in your wicked purpose of villification. But no, you must come before a respectable congregation and charge the County Commissioners with a complicity in robbing the county. Did you not know that this contract was given to the Sisters of Charity because they were the lowest bidders? Did you but make the proper inquiry you would have found out that, previous to that the county had to pay \$1 25, not in scrip, but in greenbacks, a day for every patient. Why were you not there to bid and take care of them for forty cents? Ah, I pity the patients that would be under your care, even were you to receive one dollar a day. Your philanthropy is too well known in this community. Every one that has visited Providence Hospital and seen its management knows well enough that 87½ cents would no more than

give the patient the proper aliment. Now let us see these Sisters of Charity at work. They are up every morning at five o'clock. You find them, some in the kitchen, some in the wards breathing the atmosphere of the sick room, doing all sorts of menial work, attending to the most hideous wounds; and others in the laundry washing and ironing from morning till night. At least one would suppose them to be entitled to their night's rest, but no, whenever any patient becomes so weak that he is unable to help himself, a sister sits by his bedside. And yet you have the effrontery to tell to an enlightened audience that 87½ cents is too much. Where is the business man in Seattle that would undertake to fulfill the conditions of that contract for the petty sum of 87½ cents a day? No, not for double that amount, unless, like the Sisters of Charity, they be animated by true Christian charity. If then, what they receive from the county no more than pays expenses, leaving them without any remuneration, who can blame the Catholic ladies for trying to raise a little money for them with a fair? I consider, Mr. Ellis, that is none of your business. We do not ask you to come near us; we would rather see you some few thousand miles off.

But I see now that in your overbearing bigotry you are afraid that some sensible, liberal and charitable members of this community might possibly patronize such a Fair. Your fears are well grounded, thanks be to God! The prosperity of this city is due to the liberality and charity of its people, and our liberal citizens, of whatever creed, are far from sanctioning with their approbation the attacks that came out from your pulpit. Mr. Ellis, mind your own business, and you will be a better man.

• F. X. PREFONTAINE.

were formed against Catholics instead of blacks, with crosses burned on lawns.

"A road to that hospital was a road to the cemetery," the A.P.A.'s warned. "The priests and Sisters are dangerous people."

Others knew differently, among them some of the wealthiest and most influential people in Seattle who were aware of the true need for this hospital, and its attention not only to the sick but the poverty-stricken and hungry, when other groups dodged responsibility. By now this work had spread in special contracts over several other counties, including Kitsap, Skagit and Snohomish.

"(They) are constantly at war with us," wrote Sister Daniel. "The prejudiced commissioners prefer giving the contract to a secular."

Another maneuver was tried, charging in 1896 that the hospital hadn't paid its taxes of \$1,000 for 1892. The Sisters were under the impression that the hospital was exempt. Suddenly they were faced with this huge bill, and if authorities made it stick, they could very well be owing, also, for other years. Unforeseen bills of this magnitude were made all the more staggering by the hospital's hand-to-mouth existence, where every penny was spent.

An attorney was contacted, but he held scant hope that the tax payment could be averted. Nevertheless, he appealed to the commissioners, but was turned down. The nuns' backs were once more to the wall; the Sisters prayed to the Blessed Virgin and made a pilgrimage to the Church of Our Lady of Good Help, since the situation was very critical. This could permanently close the hospital, leaving Seattle without care, and the work of three decades could be lost forever. Then, eight days before the deadline, and for some unexplained reason, the tax debt was cancelled....

Another expansion was demanded, a twenty-four-foot extension to one wing, plus a 46-foot chapel wing, and Seattle's first elevator, long pending and needed, yet always pushed aside from a lack of funds. Then the chaplain, Father J. Frenchken, organized a benefit concert that realized \$555 which was turned

over to the hospital, so that at last the lift could become a reality.

Seattle was a point of embarkation and shipping during the Spanish-American War, once again having an impact on at least temporary local growth, but it also brought on inflationary prices and poverty among the workers especially. The hospital shared in the hardships.

"We feel the effects," wrote Sister-Chronicler. "The price of food and drygoods has risen considerably, and poverty is experienced among the working classes."

But this was mild as compared with another explosion that happened just before the turn of the century. Gold was discovered in the Klondike; overnight on the arrival of the first "tone of gold" from the Yukon, Seattle was turned to frenzy. The turmoil broke loose on all sides, and also the excitement, the price-gouging, the racketeering, gambling and prostitution, for "Seattle is a central departure point for Alaska". It spilled over quickly into the hospital; Providence was often jammed to capacity with miners and camp followers hitting the golden trail of Robert Service, coming and going. The Sisters, too, were already eyeing the Frozen North for extension of their services to the latest, and probably the last, frontier. In time they would be on the road, too, establishing another mission to add to their growing string along the Pacific Slope.

"Among our patients these days," noted Sister Mary Eugene, "we have quite a few miners who went to the Klondike in search of gold and returned with their strength and money exhausted. Many came to die at the hospital where they found spiritual gold here before they died."

The story had a familiar ring. When gold was discovered at Nome, Sister Mary Eugene gave a graphic picture of the aftermath:

"The mad rush for gold continues unabated, as new fields constantly are discovered. Cape Nome on the Bering Sea has yielded new wealth, to be had simply by digging on the seashore. Those flock to the north return laden with gold dust. Other thousands

In contrast to the many miners who returned from Alaska penniless and ill, these lucky prospectors stepped off the ship with their "gold pokes" slung over their shoulders. Those less fortunate found refuge at Providence Hospital.



who bartered all their earthly treasures to go north found themselves the dupes of swindlers and unscrupulous agents. They became penniless in a land of plenty. Some returned to Seattle the prey of sickness and loathsome diseases. No medical skill can help. At the close of the summer season when the miners return, the hospital was crowded to capacity. Beds were in every available nook and corner. For nine months, the Sisters worked day and night to nurse the victims back to health. In their race for a few ounces of gold, many had lost homes, friends and health."

During that time of crisis, the hospital admitted 1,856 patients, handled by 23 Sisters and 17 tertiaries. They served 1,856 meals, stood 1,844 night watches, made 73 visits to the poor, 34 sick at home with 214 visits, and attended 152 deaths.

Other Seattle hospitals were being established, needed because of the gold rush influx, and the Sisters welcomed them, save for one maneuvered by the A.P.A.'s who are "doing their utmost to crush the Catholics". They purchased land directly across from Providence in what was a direct result of the gold rush. Securing the backing of a Klondiker who had made it big in the Yukon, they erected "a handsome brick and stone building equipped with the latest hospital improvements. The millionaire miner donated the building to the A.P.A.'s, to be known as Seattle General Hospital. For a time the hospital

prospered, then began to flounder and was taken over by the Methodists, to be run by their deaconesses. Once again others learned that you didn't acquire the expertise to operate a hospital overnight, for General Hospital failed.

"They had all the machinery, but not the steam to make them go," commented a friend of Providence.

And now the Sisters of Providence were celebrating their Silver Anniversary and looking ahead to a new century. It was 1902, a quarter century since those first Sisters worked their way over the trail of sawdust and wood chips to launch a new institution within the confines of a rough town which couldn't make up its mind what it was, or what it wanted. They had survived, in ways known only to God, those turbulent formative years. It was indeed a time of jubilation and celebration, but of sadness, too, with the death of Mother Joseph who seemingly would go on forever. Yet in many ways she would, for she blazed the trails and set the strong foundations for the Sisters of Seattle, and all along the Pacific Slope. As that hospital friend had observed, in terms easily understood, she had provided the steam that made them go....

In a way, it's too bad she wasn't around the day President Teddy Roosevelt dropped by to visit a sick friend. You have the feeling they would have had much in common....

EPILOGUE

The rich heritage handed down by Mother Joseph and the other frontier Sisters of Providence is the cherished roots of Providence Medical Center of Seattle. The past as well as the future has always been a part of this venerable institution which in 1977 began its second century of watching over the health of Seattle and Puget Sound.

Providence Medical Center is no longer located on the Spring Street site where occurred the turbulent and sometimes weary struggle to keep open the doors of "our humble little hospital". In the early 1900s, the hospital was once again suffering growing pains, making another expansion necessary. It was to be the final addition for this familiar landmark, bringing the bed capacity to 150, to become the largest hospital in the Pacific Northwest. Now the land had run out; the town was creeping closer and closer, pressing upon the hospital.

By 1906, for the first time since the Sisters arrived in 1856, the architectural skills of Mother Joseph were missing. In that year plans for an all-new center were completed, and a new site was selected in the Squire Addition, bounded by Seventeenth and Jefferson Streets, a 256 × 600 foot tract purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Kelleher. The transaction began a new age for Providence Hospital and for Seattle medical care, with the building completed in 1910 and the historic old structure closed the following year.

Today, Seattle's oldest hospital remains on this 1910 location, which was wisely chosen by these people of vision. It is a far distance, in space and time, from the tiny institution at Georgetown and later in the Moss House, run by three tireless Sisters with an average patient load of about ten. Providence today has a personnel complement of 1,394, and a bed capacity of 375. A mere corner would hold the tiny hospital where it all began, for today's center staunchly contains eight levels plus a tower, another large hall and an annex, in some 111,111 square feet of space.

Yet while Providence is Seattle's oldest hospital, it is also its youngest. As has always been the case, established by the forward-looking early Sisters, the hospital has kept pace with the latest advances in medical care. The huge center, virtually a self-sustaining city within a city, has more than seventy separate departments and services. As the loggers used to say when they came to town, you can even get your teeth fixed there. It is significant to note that between 600 and 700 open heart surgeries are performed each year, in three special operating rooms.

With the twentieth century, Seattle's once intense opposition to Catholics seemed to have run its course. In 1903 Bishop Edward J. O'Dea of the historic Nisqually diocese decided to move headquarters from Fort Vancouver to Seattle, to become known as the Diocese of Seattle for Washington State. Some twenty years later, in January 1924, the Sisters of Providence



5,000 persons visited the new Providence Hospital which formally opened September 24, 1911. The Right Reverend Edward J. O'Dea, Bishop of Seattle, speaking to the large crowd from the second story balcony told of the sacrifice and devotion on the part of the Sisters of Providence that made possible the superb \$1,000,000 institution. The "notable features" included 4 stairways, 2 elevators, 3 main fire escapes, and 6 individual operating rooms.

who were becoming pressed for space at Vancouver, and on the urging of Bishop O'Dea, established their Pacific Coast headquarters in West Seattle, considered a more centralized and prestigious location.

"Yours is a proud and distinguished tradition of healing and compassionate concern for others," declared President Jimmy Carter on the hospital's 100th anniversary *"of dedicated service to the sick and poor....Since the founding of your Center of Seattle, you have provided*

the finest kind of medical care for individuals throughout the western United States. You have played a major role in bringing your city and state to their present enviable position in health planning and services. You have a grateful nation's deep appreciation for a job well done."

Many events began that black night when three doubting nuns made their way cautiously along Yesler's skid road to begin a new life, and a meeting with destiny....



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Materials from the archives of the Sisters of Providence were used, including the Hospital's Chronicles, translated onto cassettes from French to English by Sister Dorothy Lentz. Copies of early Seattle newspapers were utilized.

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THE BIG WOODS
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THIS LAND AROUND US
MR. FOOTBALL: AMOS ALONZO STAGG
CONSCIENCE OF A CITY
THE SAGA OF BEN HOLLADAY
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HEAD RIG
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DON'T CALL IT OR-E-GAWN
WILD WATER
SEA WALL

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