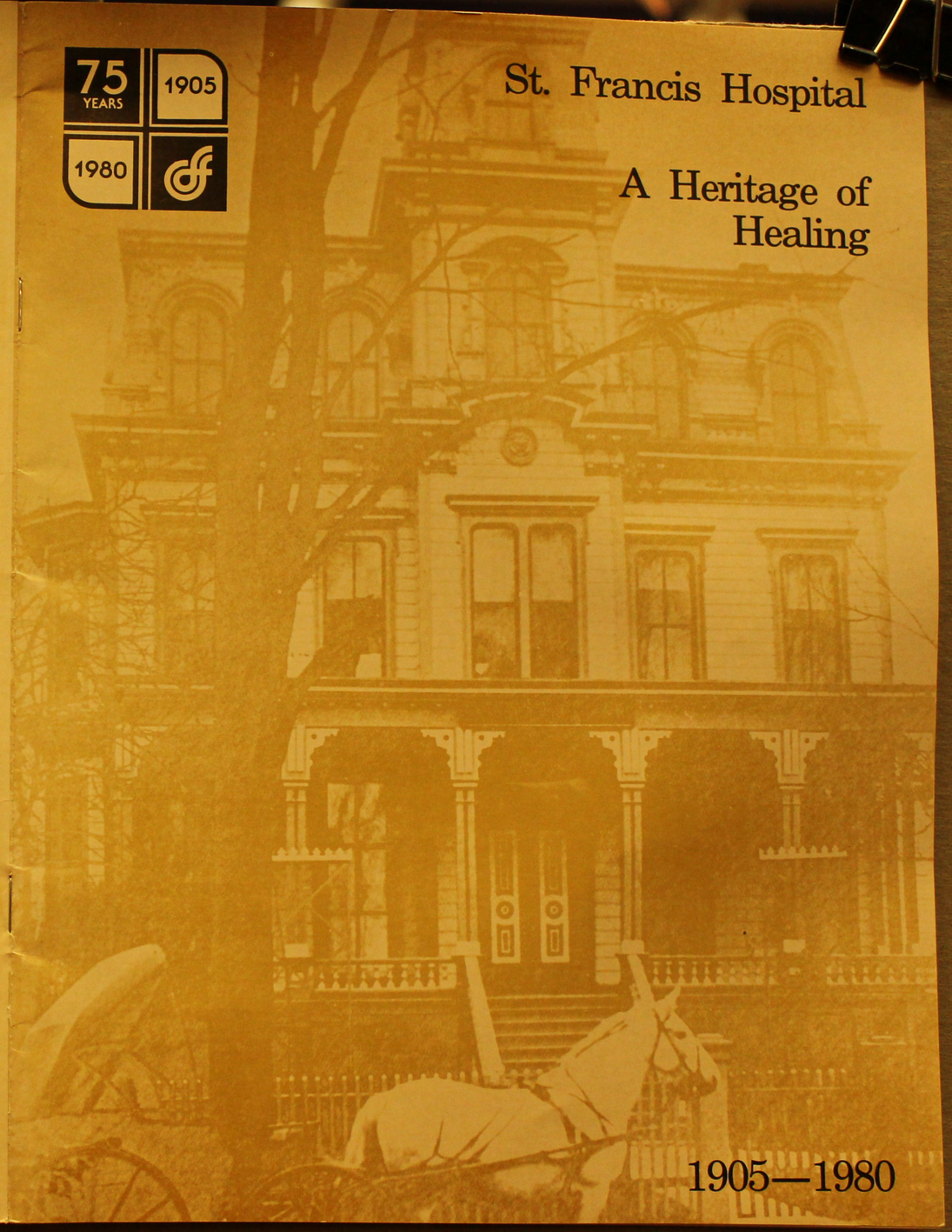
75 YEARS 1905 1980

St. Francis Hospital

A Heritage of Healing



1905—1980

75 YEARS 1905 1980

ST. FRANCIS HOSPITAL
12935 South Gregory Street, Blue Island, Illinois 60406 312-597-2000
"A HERITAGE OF HEALING"

The chronicle of 75 years, a "Heritage of Healing", is a microcosm of history. From action to serve the industrial Blue Island area in 1905, through the reaction of population shifts, wars, and the Great Depression, St. Francis Hospital has stood and served whenever called, with insight into health care trends.

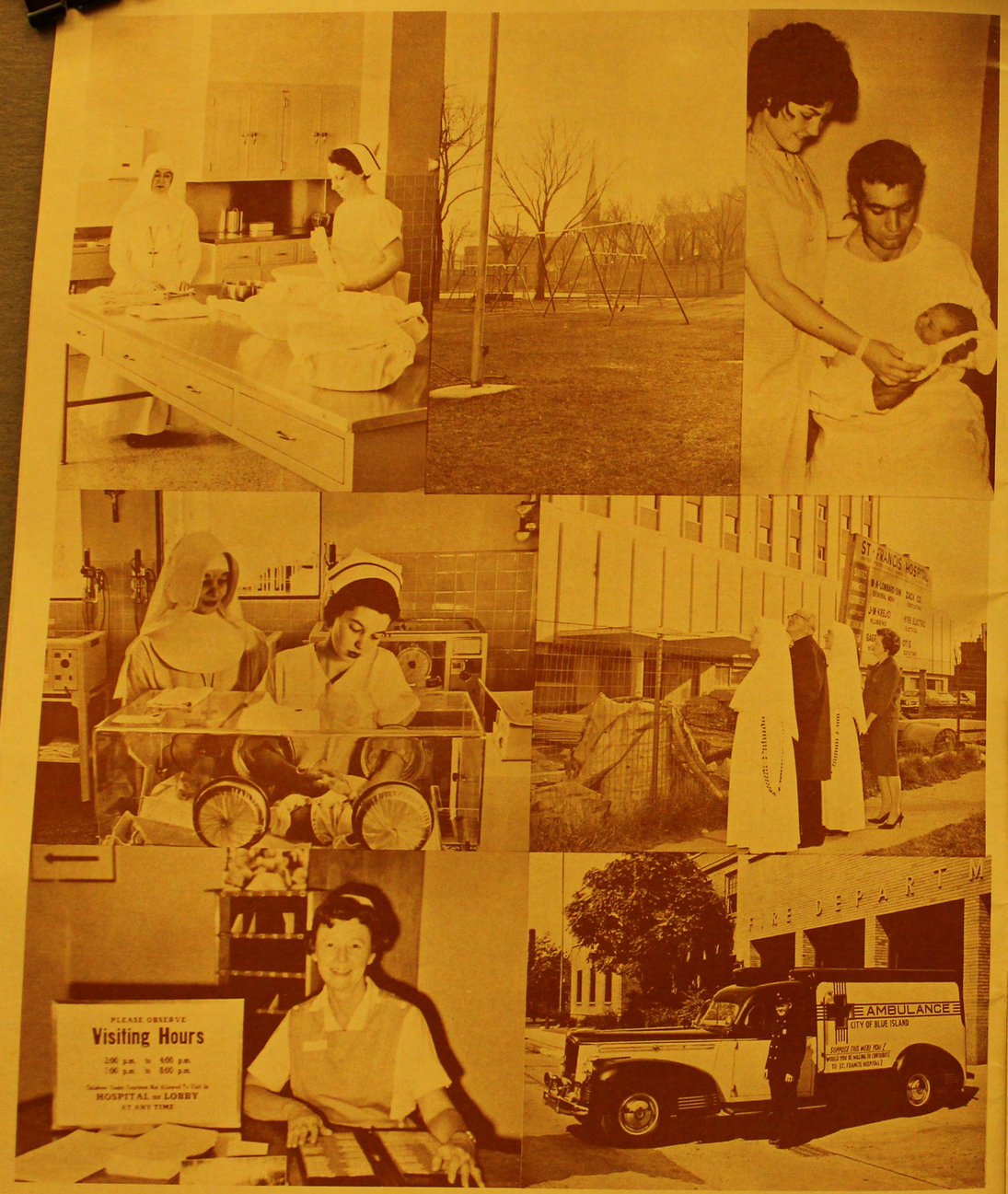
Starting from a three-story frame residence with a handful of beds, St. Francis now boasts over 400 beds, modern facilities and technology, and a combined in-patient and out-patient annual service of over 50,000.

With change comes joy and pain, good and bad, a farewell to old and trusted way and a welcoming of new goals and ideals.

To the friends, family and all those associated with the hospital during the past 75 years, we offer our thanks. For our new friends, we count on your support for years to come.

George S. Macko
Executive Director

SISTERS OF ST. MARY



December 19, 1979

Dear Friends of St. Francis Hospital,

History records for us that memorable day in 1904 when five of the one-hundred and sixty-six Sisters of Saint Mary arrived in Blue Island in response to a call to create a much-needed hospital. When the debt for its new beginnings was incurred, the spiritual director of the Congregation reminded them to "Trust in God and be kind to the poor and all will be well." There is much evidence that for seventy-five years this promise has been kept. During those first struggling days, the hospital was sustained through the kind generosity of the poeple of Blue Island who provided for the most basic needs of the patients and the sisters who ministered to them. The healing ministry at St. Francis Hospital was sparked in the hearts of many of those people who have since become members of the St. Francis family -- employees, medical staff, auxiliary, volunteers, advisory board. And as the hospital has grown in its capacity to care for God's people by means of ultra modern methods and equipment, the challenge to do so in a loving way has been tested by increased pressures and demands. We recognize that while the struggle to maintain the healing ministry is very different from 1904, they are non-the-less challenging. We congratulate you, one and all, for the progress you have made in meeting this challenge through loving service and ministry.

Our gratitude for your partnership in this ministry is mingled with much joy as we begin the celebration of our 100th year as an officially recognized Congregation within the Church. This occured in 1880 when Mother Odilia and sixteen companions were first permitted to publicly commit themselves to God through religious vows. The journey since then has been increasingly lightened as more of you have cast your lot with us to minister to the sick and suffering. As we look back on these seventy-five years of healing heritage lived out at St. Francis Hospital, we know that it is the Divine Physician with whom we have all cast our lot together -- He has provided through so many of you who have bonded with us in this mission. We know with certainty that "He will continue the work He has begun in you" and so with confidence, we mission you to continue to be a living testimony of Christ's love and concern for the suffering. We look forward to celebrating the 100th anniversary of St. Francis Hospital.

Gratefully in Christ,

Sister Mary Ellen

Sister Mary Ellen Sloan, S.S.M.
Superior General

Ty Cobb signs on with Tigers

March 25, 1905. Saint Francis Hospital, Blue Island, was formally opened and blessed, with the capacity to accommodate a dozen patients. A year earlier a team of five Sisters of St. Mary took the trip from St. Louis to Blue Island and converted a three-story frame mansion to serve the health needs of the community.

$30,000 was paid for the house that would become the cornerstone of St. Francis Hospital. The first patient served in the new quarters was William Thoemind, a 32-year old grocer from Blue Island, who suffered from an injured knee.

Growth was rampant during this period, with the Sisters adding an operating room, a laundry and an additional bed complement, bringing the total to 25 to 30. But yet, with World War I on the horizon, and the industrialization of Blue Island causing greater growth and still greater demands on the hospital, a new building was needed to meet that increase. The plans were set in motion.

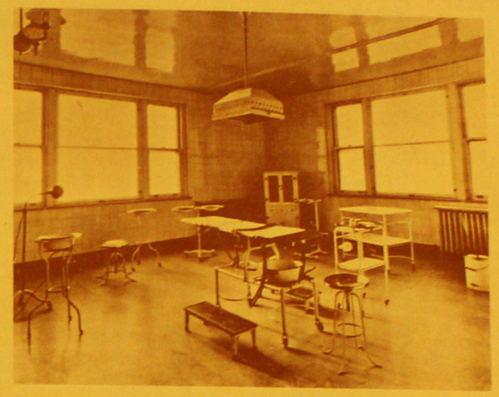
Germany declares war on Russia and France

—1914

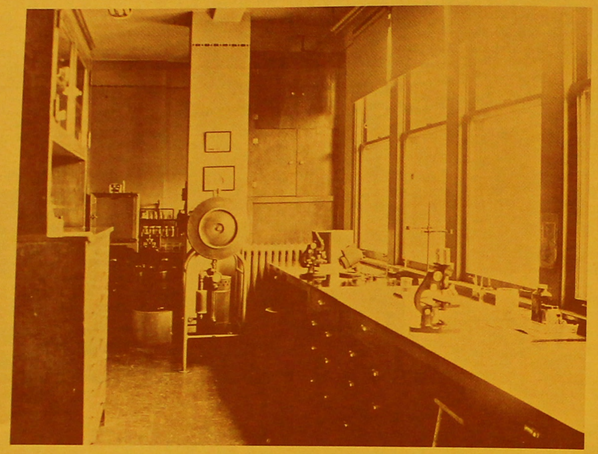
1915—

1st transcontinental call between N.Y.–S.F.

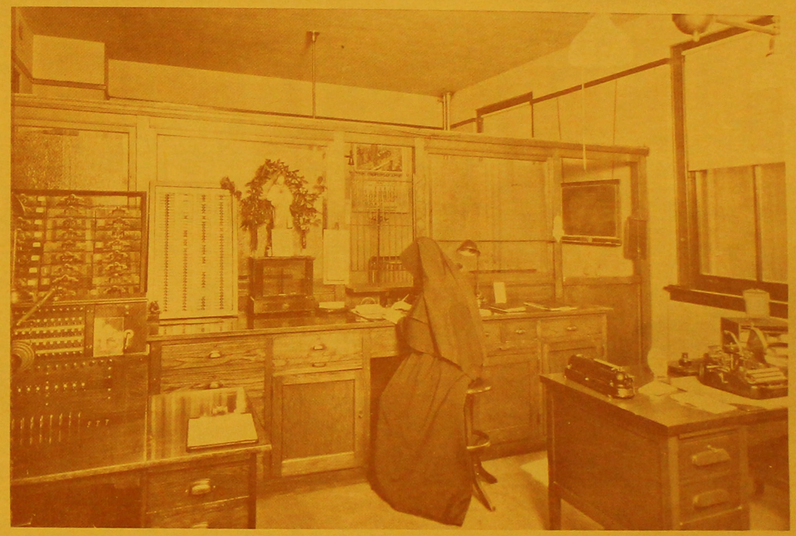
In 1915, ground was broken for the new hospital, a modern four-story structure with a bed capacity of 115, almost as if anticipating the world wide Spanish flu epidemic of 1918-19. Over half a million Americans lost their lives due to the flu and its complications. Medicine reacted by paving the way for developments of antibiotics to combat pneumonia and secondary symptoms of the flu.



With this increased technology came pride and professionalism. An increased recognition of medicine and its importance to man resulted from both World War I and the influenza outbreak. St. Francis' medical staff formally organized, with committees and by-laws to govern and assure quality care. In 1921, the hospital received full approval from the American College of Surgeons.



The need of mobility equipment to deal with ever-increasing patient loads brought another innovation, bed-side radiography, purchased by the hospital to complement the X-ray equipment. An additional response to change, a fourth floor obstetrics unit, was opened to handle the post-war "baby-boom."



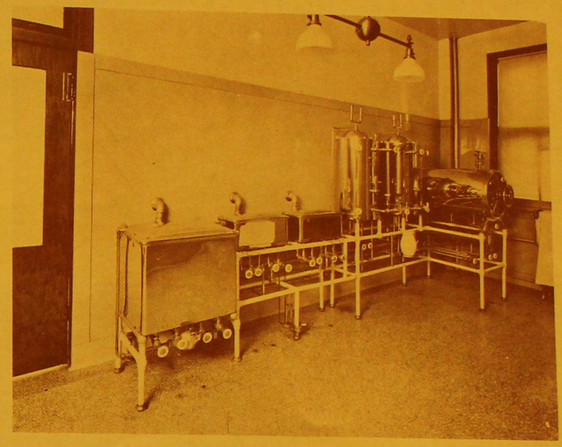
Will Rogers wows 'em on stage

—1924

Scopes convicted in evolution trial

The Depression years did not mar the jubilant celebration of St. Francis's silver anniversary. The timing of the two events was fateful.

St. Francis staff looked long and hard at the past 25 years, reflecting on the changes in medicine and society, while thanking God for the good fortune of serving for a quarter of a century. Outreach programs were introduced as focus fell on the poor in need of care.



Strengthened by these challenges, the hospital continued on the course set in 1905, to serve mankind, and fought back with the area at the hard times.

Perhaps to signal a new growth, the period ended with a first for the hospital, the first set of triplets born at St. Francis.

Quints born to Ontario couple

—1934

—1935—

FDR signs Social Security Act

Back on its feet after the Depression, the country was brought into World War II, creating shortages of supplies and personnel into the already struggling health care field.

In support of the hospital during these shortages, the Ladies' Auxiliary was organized to help raise funds, provide community input and feedback, and further crystallize the hospital's goals and objectives. A volunteer training program, to add extra hands where necessary, was soon to take place, a forerunner of the current in-house program.

D-Day: Landing at Normandy

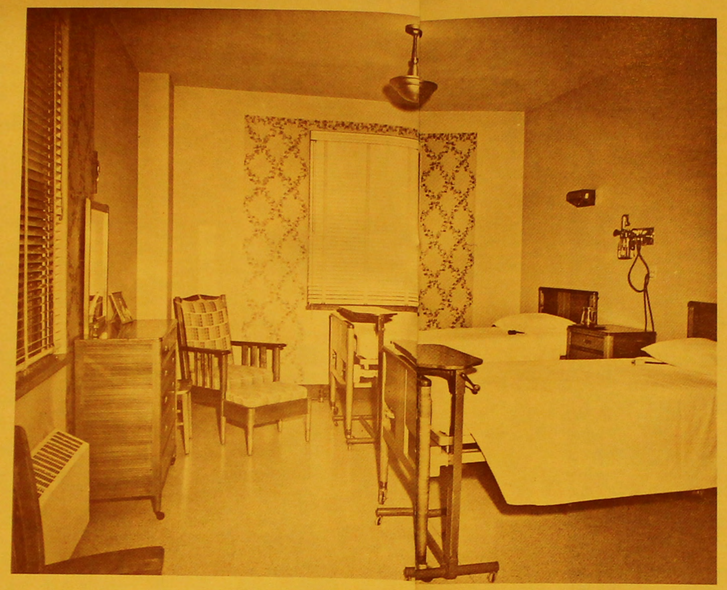
—1944

1945—

Japan surrenders!

With the increased emphasis on religious attaining advanced education and specialization in fields, the number of Sisters missioned to the hospital grew, realizing the potential of this previously untapped expertise. A four-story Convent was added to help accommodate this growth and house the Sisters.

Education was not restricted to staff, as the hospital opened a School of Radiological Technology.



The community was further served with the addition of a new hospital wing, bringing the total patient complement to 145 beds and 30 bassinets, with formalized areas for blood bank, housekeeping, pharmacy and other support and ancillary services. An organization of a dental staff, nursing staff, and a Lay Advisory Board followed this response to community need.

These changes in further service to the patient and community were commended as the hospital received accreditation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals and approval of internship from the American Medical Association.

Joe McCarthy continues 'witch-hunt'

—1954

Montgomery blacks block bus bias

While St. Francis showed strong growth and innovation during the past 50 years, the post anniversary period was used for further refinement of services.

Installation of services and facilities for increased utilization of existing programs began, including a public address system, addressographs, central dictating system, and other.

In tandem with these changes, the hospital responded to further needs of the community, testing its own disaster plan for such a highly industrial area, developing a full in-house volunteer services department and opening a School of Medical Technology to further train students in health care delivery.

But with these services came a familiar story . . . cramped quarters. A renovation in pediatrics, priest's quarters and additional beds, although needed, strained the West building. Three beds were at times put in two-bed rooms. Expansion, this time to the tune of $10 million, would be needed.

Designs were laid for a building across Gregory street to house new and expanded services, an additional 240 beds, and meet current and future space requirements. A valiant fund-raising effort was made throughout the early Sixties to pave the way for progress.

Cassius Clay trounces Liston

—1964

1965—

Gemini crew 'walk' 21 minutes in space

An era of specialization and increased visibility by the medical profession was noted at St. Francis.

While trends in health care spoke to new and varied needs of the community, the move to the 388-bed East Campus became a reality. St. Francis Hospital South was dedicated in December of 1967. In 1969, a laboratory was added to the facility, with a formal Dining Room to come soon after. Newly vacated space was welcome as a physical therapy department opened to provide rehabilitative services on both an in and out-patient basis.

Utilizing the new facility as a complement to health care facilities in the area, St. Francis attracted a team of cardiac specialists in the relatively new procedure of open heart surgery. The first open heart surgery and cardiac catheterization procedures were performed at this time, marking the hospital's role in community health care. No longer would patients in need of such sophisticated services have to travel downtown.

Nixon resigns — Ford pardons —1974

1975—

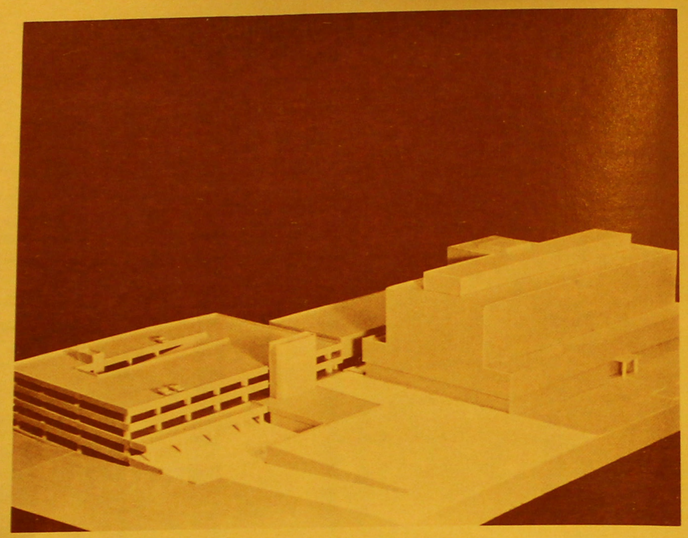
Apollo-Soyuz dock

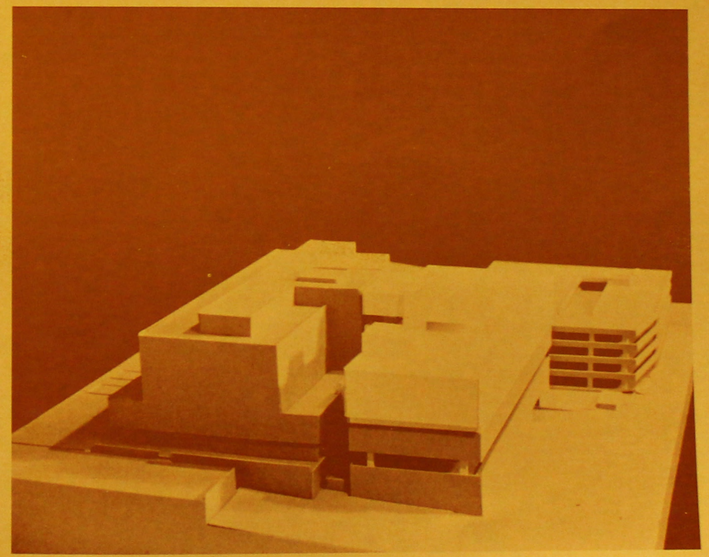
Who would have dreamed in 1905 that St. Francis Hospital, with over 400 beds and bassinets, formally organized medical departments, efficient and cost-conscious health care, would find spaces cramped and technology so drastically changed?

And yet the last few years have brought about a number of new departments, services, and ambitious building programs to continue the growth pattern set by the five original Sisters in 1905.

While the Voluntary Effort and cost containment were several years down the road, the hospital took the initiative in investing in new cost-saving services, including pre-admission testing and ambulatory surgery, saving beds for critically ill patients while curbing costs to the patients; and a clinical engineering department, designed to calibrate and maintain service contracts on hospital equipment on a 24-hour, cost-saving basis. Accountability without sacrifice of quality became the key of the decade.

Technology continued to make unpredicted gains, as the hospital purchased several pieces of equipment, including a sophisticated CT Scanner.



On the horizon, a $24 million building and renovation program promises a solid future for St. Francis with increased parking, a new emergency room, and modernization of all facilities.

We stand proud of where we were and where we're going!