St. Alexis Hospital

St. Michael Hospital, the second Catholic hospital in Cleveland, was founded in 1884 as St. Alexis. Sisters M. Leonarda and M. Alexia of the Order of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration established St. Alexis to serve workers and manufacturing concerns in Newburgh and the Cuyahoga Industrial Valley.

Sister Leonarda

With the aid of the Franciscans, the hospital opened at Broadway and McBride avenues in a brick, eight-room house. In 1885, the sisters raised

original hospital

$5,500 toward the construction of a main building and a new wing, which added 32 beds. An addition to the main building, the Leonarda Memorial Building, was completed in 1925. A building

1925 addition

for the school of NURSING, established in 1918, was erected in 1930. The first maternity ward was constructed as an addition to the

Leonarda building in 1945. The next major expansion program was

1955 addition

completed in 1955, when the 10-story main building was erected at a cost of $3.5 million. A new service wing with an x-ray department, enlarged surgical division, new maternity ward, modern emergency room, and office space was added in 1959.

cornerstone

Among the physicians on the medical staff of St. Alexis have been Drs. Frank E. Bunts, George W. Crile, and William E. Lower, 3 of the 4 founders of the Cleevland Clinic Foundation. In 1906, Dr. Crile performed the world's first direct blood transfusion between humans at St. Alexis. The child, Arthur Niedbalski, injured in the tornado that destroyed St. Stanislaus Church, died here in 1909.

St. Alexis first primarily served area industry; victims of industrial accidents comprised most of its emergency cases. The hospital also served the families of workers. By the late 1890s, 75% of its patients were charity cases, and fewer than 25% were Catholic. Special wards were

maintained for employees of certain companies, especially those of the railroads. Sisters comprised almost the entire nursing staff at this time. In

Hospital chapel

the early 1920s, the hospital's out-patient department became the first such department in the country to offer chemotherapy. The hospital established an inhalation therapy department, later known as Pulmonary Disease Services, in 1954; the coronary-care unit in 1968; and a respiratory-care unit in 1980. St. Alexis branched into the suburbs in the 1980s, with an urgent-care center in Broadview Heights. It changed its name to St. Alexis Hospital Medical Center in 1986.

In September 1994, Pennsylvania-based Primary Health Systems (PHS) acquired the hospital and renamed it St. Michael Hospital. Although no longer owned by a Catholic religious order, the hospital maintained its Catholic identity and close relationship with the Diocese of Cleveland. In 1995, the 220-bed hospital offered a full range of services, including respiratory care, skilled nursing, senior services, women's services, rehabilitation services, and occupational health.

Faced with mounting debts, PHS filed for bankruptcy in 1999, leaving the

future of St. Michael in serious doubt.

St. Francis

As local politicians and neighborhood groups in Slavic Village rallied to save the venerable hospital from closing, the University Hospitals Health System purchased St. Michael in a public auction in 2000. Saved from the brink, the hospital became known as the "Miracle on Broadway." The following year, the emergency department at St. Michael

the vacant building

underwent a $2.2 million renovation that included 12 private treatment rooms, new medical equipment, and increased staffing. The "Miracle on Broadway" did not last too long, however. In 2003, University Hospitals announced its intention to close the 250-bed hospital once and for all, citing declining patient volume, mounting operation costs, and failure to attract private insurance contracts. After 119 years of medical service, St. Michael Hospital closed its doors on 19 December 2003.