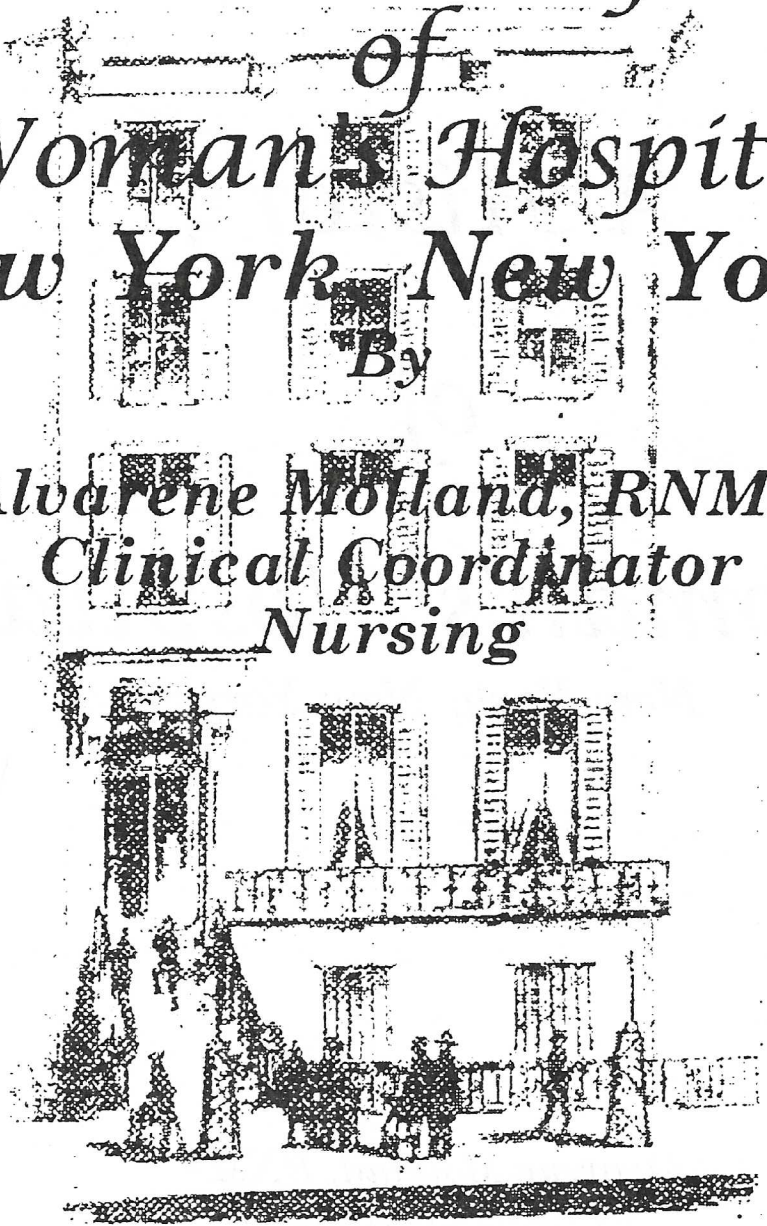


A History
of
Woman's Hospital
New York, New York
By

Alvarene Mollana, RNMA
Clinical Coordinator
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Original Woman's Hospital
opened in 1855

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Revised Edition - April 1992

DEDICATED TO MY FRIEND, ELLEN WILGUS-BELL

A ST. LUKE'S NURSE

WHO WAS WONDERFUL TO THE FOREIGN

NURSES WHO STAFFED WOMAN'S HOSPITAL

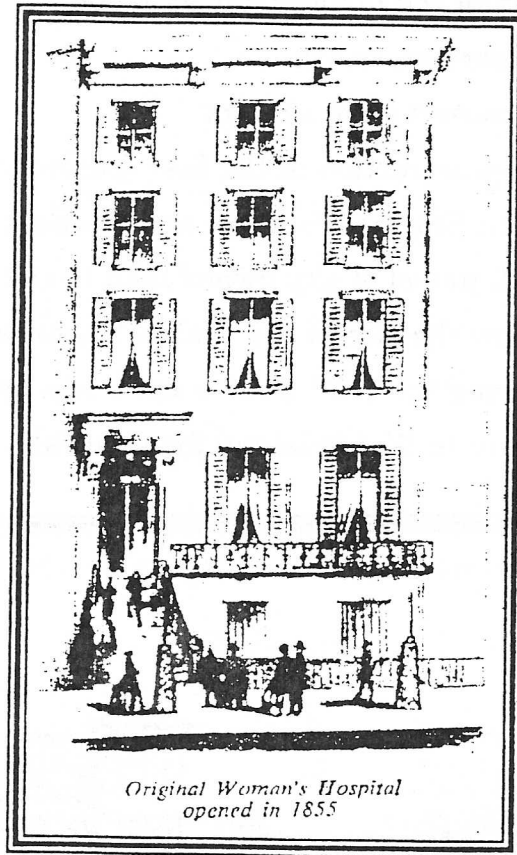
A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF WOMAN'S HOSPITAL

The original Woman's Hospital opened on May 4, 1855, as the first hospital in the World for the exclusive care of women. Woman's was founded by Dr. James Marion Sims who came to New York from Alabama, where he had perfected a surgical procedure for the correction of Vesico-vaginal fistula.



He enlisted the aid of Henri L. Stuart, a champion of the abolitionist movement, (and also the first to propose the development of Central Park) and began the plans for a hospital to do surgery on women with GYN problems.

With the help and support of other civic leaders, a group of leading women of New York and a grant of \$2,500 from the city council, Woman's Hospital came into being and received its first patients in a rented four story building on Madison Avenue and twenty-ninth street on May 4, 1855.



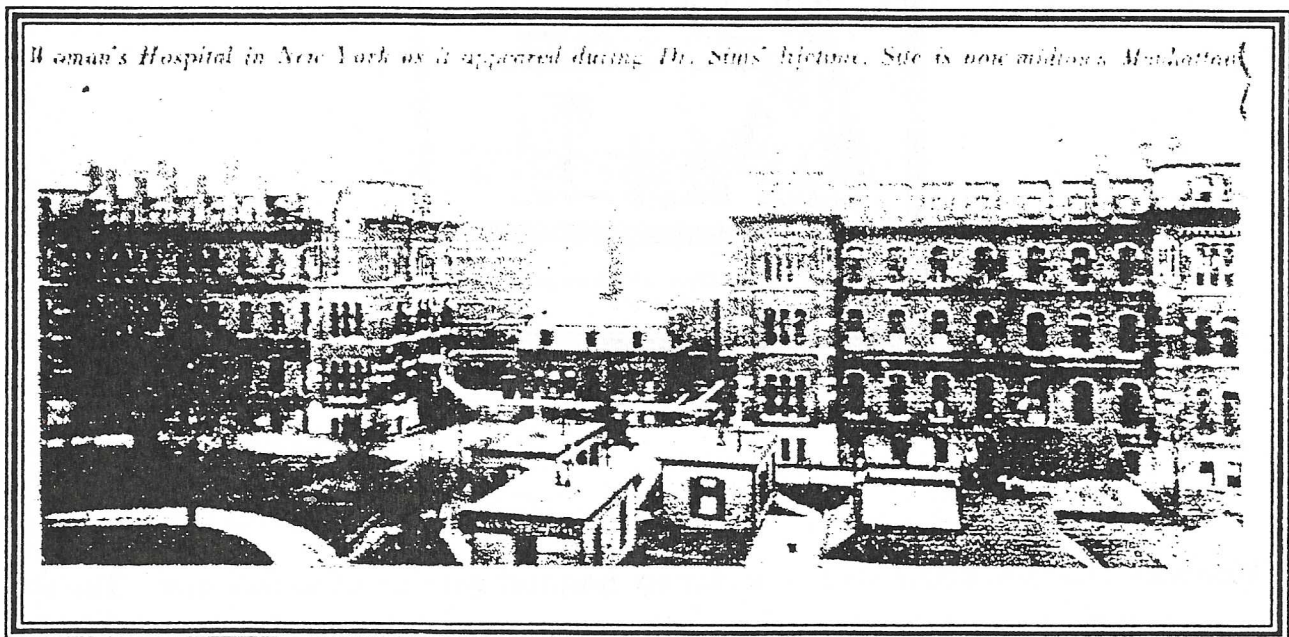
Woman's Hospital originated as a charity hospital with no OPD facilities. The four story building contained about 40 beds, rented for \$125/month. The need for this hospital became evident since it was quickly filled to capacity and Dr. Sims found himself doing one or more Vesico-vaginal fistula repairs per day.

Shortly after the opening of the hospital, Dr. Sims brought in a conscientious young surgeon, Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, to assist him with the work load at the

institution for a salary of \$4/day! Dr. Emmet made only \$500 the first year. Sims was interested in Emmet's tabulations of case histories, physical exams, and record keeping of case histories, also colored hand drawings. As a matter of interest, Emmet can be credited for:

1. Advocating proper care of the perineum during delivery
2. Catheterization of the bladder during labor
3. Repairing of lacerated cervix
4. Advocation of conservative surgery

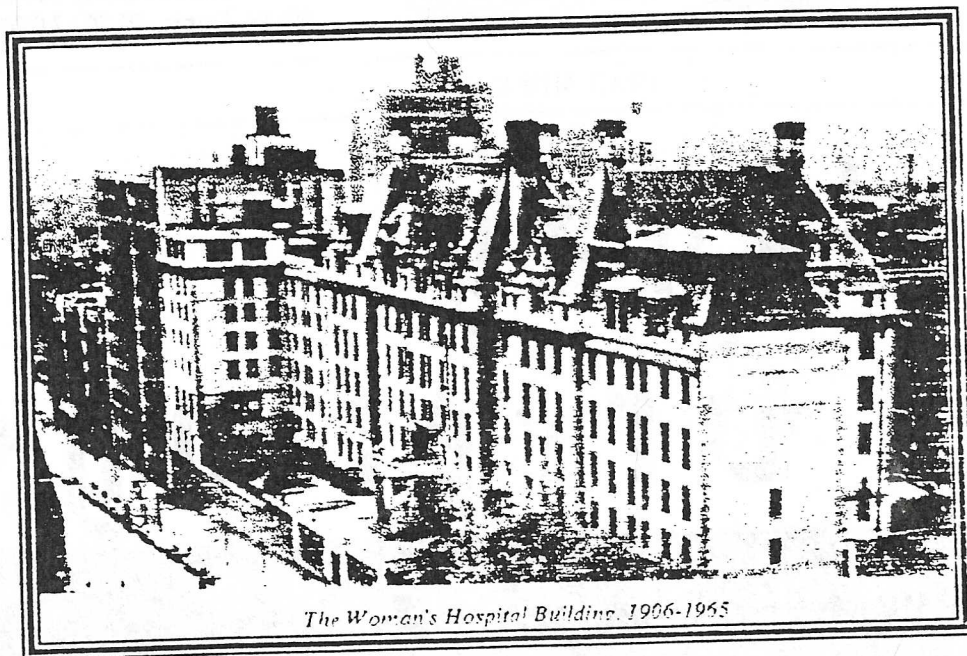
In 1857 work began on the construction of the first (permanent) home for Woman's Hospital. In cooperation with State Legislature and the Board of Alderman, the city agreed to donate a one-block parcel of city owned land to the hospital - - i.e. at 49th Street and Park Avenue, now the site of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel! This land had served as a potter's field during the 1832 cholera epidemic, and 47,000 bodies had to be removed from the property to Wards Island for reburial.



Because the then Mayor opposed the donation of city property, Dr. Sims promised to reserve 25 beds in the new building for the poor of New York, at all times, and this broke the Mayor's resistance.

John W. Rich, architect, drew up plans for Woman's Hospital and actual construction started in 1863

Woman's Hospital remained at that site for 59 years until 1906 when it was moved to Cathedral Parkway and 110th Street.

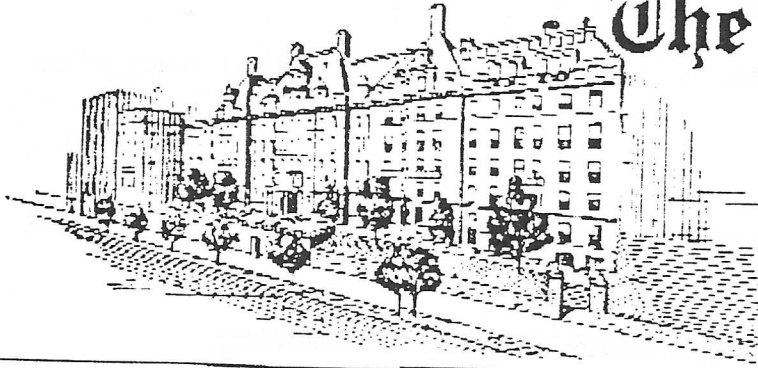


Work continued and expanded over the years and in 1965 Woman's moved to its present site after corporate merger with St. Luke's.



1906-1965

The Times



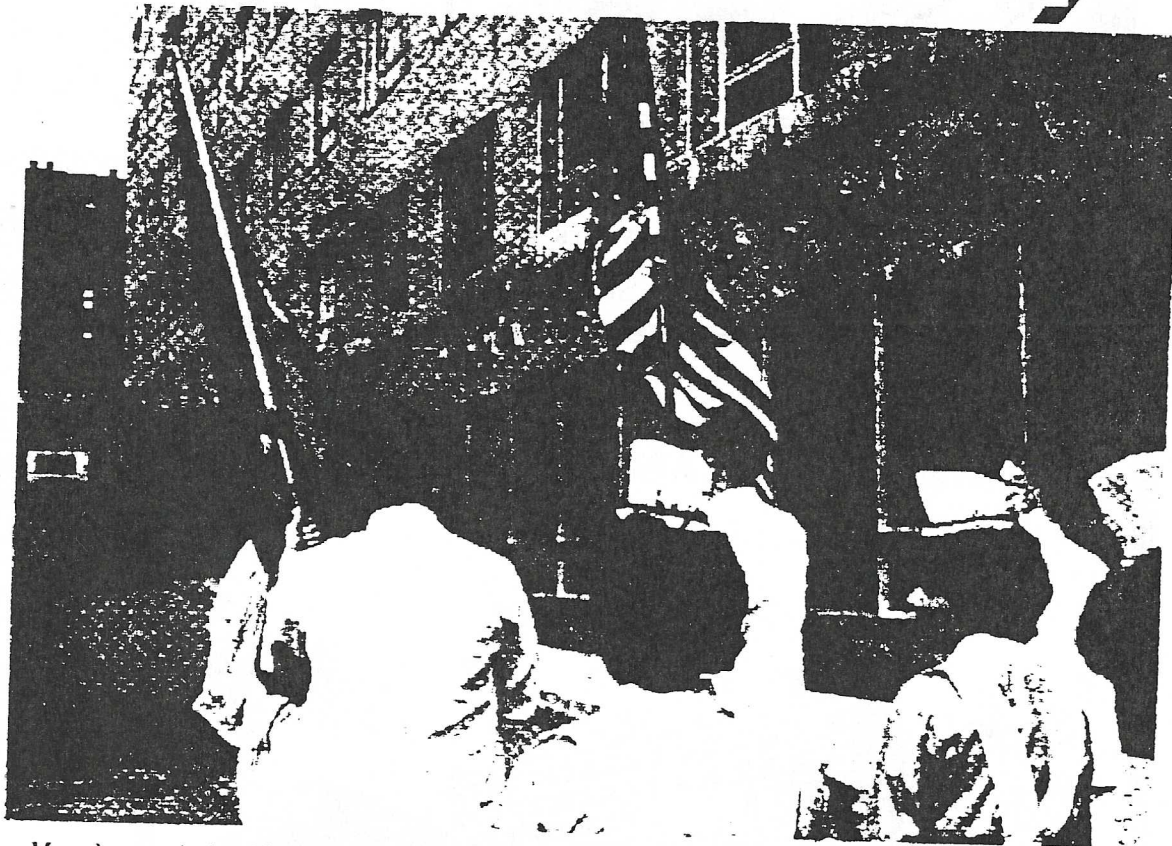
NEWS OF THE WOMAN'S HOSPITAL
St. Luke's Hospital Center
1111 Amsterdam Avenue
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Holiday Greetings



Members of the House Staff representing the four major services, formed a color guard to lead the procession from the Cathedral of St. John the Divine to the Dedication Services held at the new Woman's Hospital building on May 25th. The color guard was followed by a group of students from St. Luke's School of Nursing and distinguished guests.

Now a little about J. Marion Sims (1813 - 1883), founder of Woman's Hospital, and in effect the father of modern Gynecology. In 1813 James Marion Sims, whose statue stands on Fifth Avenue across from the New York Academy of Medicine, was born to a Scots-English family in Lancaster County, South Carolina.

He attended high school in Lancaster then went on to college in Columbia, South Carolina to be prepared for a career in law. At age 23, and over the protest of his parents, Sims apprenticed himself to a local physician, Dr. Churchill Jones. He later attended a course of lectures at the Medical College in Charleston for 14 weeks and finally studied at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia for 6 months, where he earned his MD in 1835. Sims' father, upset that he did not go into the practice of law said ... "There is no science in it, there is no honor to be achieved in it, no reputation to be made"! But Sims stuck with medicine.

In a speech Dr. Sims said ... "When I graduated from Medical College I felt absolutely incompetent to assume the duties of a practitioner. I had no clinical advantage, no hospital experience, and very little knowledge of medicine." However, after returning home from Philadelphia his first patients were two children suffering from diarrhea, and he tried to treat them with medicines he brought from Philadelphia, but became disillusioned when both died under his care.

Sims practiced in Lancaster and then in Alabama after marrying Theresa Jones, daughter of a local physician. In Alabama he gained clinical experience by making rounds with a local physician, Dr. Childers, who bled all patients who had a fever! Sims said ... "This practice was murderous! I know nothing about medicine, but I had enough sense to see that doctors were killing patients, that Medicine was not an exact Science"! Dr. Sims then moved to Montgomery in 1840 because of poor health brought on by malaria. He performed the first operation in the South for clubbed foot and later ventured into plastic surgery.



In 1845 - Sims encountered the first case of Vesico-vaginal fistula on a 17 year old slave girl - Anarcha - in her third day of labor! Delivery was a success but she was found to have a rupture in the bladder. Two other slave girls, Betsy and Lucy, went to Sims with similar problems. He felt nothing could be done to help these women and they would be invalids for life. (In those days doctors used to feel under the sheet - for modesty - and did not examine patients as we do now. Women with problems were cast off by husbands as no good).

Sims later was called to see another woman, who had fallen from a horse and complained of pressure on the bladder and rectum. After examination he thought of a new approach to help these women. He decided to LOOK! He examined Lucy with a pewter spoon to afford a better view of the fistula. His speculum was later fashioned off that spoon.

In a small private hospital, in his backyard, he maintained 16 beds: 12 beds for patients and 4 beds for servants to care for them. Sims operated on Lucy, Anarcha and Betsy, however, the surgery failed to produce an effective repair. Anarcha underwent 29 operations with only opium as a sedative.

After years of trial and error, Sims finally changed the suture material from silk thread to fine silver wire and after the 30th operative procedure Anarcha's fistula was healed. This was 1849 when at last he had perfected a new technique to correct the problem of vesico-vaginal fistula. After this success with Anarcha he became ill with chronic diarrhea and decided to move to New York City where the "pure city water" would afford him a better chance of survival.

In 1853, Sims gained fame in New York following the publication of his article on the treatment of vesico-vaginal fistula. He gave successful demonstrations of the procedure to his colleagues who subsequently utilized his technique, however, professional jealousies prevented them from inviting him into their practices or from sending him referrals. In 1855, with the support of laymen and newspaper reporters,

this institution, Woman's Hospital, was founded by Dr. Sims. He wrote: "The Woman's Hospital, from the day it opened, had no friends among the leaders, among hospital men. I was called a quack and a humbug and the hospital pronounced a fraud. Still it went on with its work. Dr. David M. Reese, an outspoken antagonist of Sims said: "It was easy enough to apply silver nitrate through a cylindrical speculum in any cases of ulceration; an infusion of red oak for leucorrhoea; anyone could insert a Meig's ring pessary for prolapse; it is ridiculous to speak of the necessity for a Woman's Hospital and it would be impossible to find enough sick women to fill it". But, Sims proved them to be wrong and his hospital was soon filled with women with the illnesses of women.

During the Civil War, Sims' southern sympathies cost him his practice and his popularity in New York, so he went to Europe in 1861 and stayed for 8 years. Because of brilliant contributions to medicine, he earned the French and Belgian Legions of Honor and later became President of the International Medical Congress. He became the personal physician for Europe's royalty, e.g., the Empress Eugenie of France. He also successfully sutured the fistula on a woman whom France's leading surgeon had operated on 17 times! It must be mentioned that Sims was actually recommended to receive the Belgian League of Honor, but the Belgian government withheld the award after the protest by the American Foreign Minister, because of Sims' confederate leanings. He finally received the award in 1880. Sims was entertained in royal houses and became affluent. He remained in Paris until the end of the Civil War, causing him to be called a "coward" because he had not returned to the South..

Sims later experimented in artificial insemination, shocking Victorian England, and having charges of violating female modesty and standards of decency upon himself. His later accomplishments include:

1866 - Published Clinical Notes on "Uterine Surgery" a landmark in gynecological writing.

1868 - Appointed Senior Consulting Surgeon at Woman's Hospital and a member of the Board.

1870 - Returned to Europe and became Surgeon-in-Chief of the Anglo-American Ambulance Corps, serving France in the Franco-Prussian War. He became an out-spoken leader in the raging arguments for surgery in cases of abdominal wounds where the fatality rate for wounded soldiers was high. He rebelled against the philosophy: "Let nature take its course". He implemented Lister's aseptic techniques, another major contribution by Sims to future surgery.

1872 - Returned to Woman's Hospital and left again after 2 years because the board had oppressive regulations regarding the number of doctors who could witness surgery, and because of the exclusion of cancer patients from Woman's Hospital.

1880 - Became President of the American Gynecological Society and was reinstated on staff at Woman's Hospital.

On November 13, 1883, Dr. Sims died at age 71 following a heart attack. He never stopped fighting for better conditions in the treatment of female illnesses and is remembered by medical historians as one of the Giants of modern medicine. Solving the dilemma of vesico-vaginal fistulae was his major contribution, but in addition was researcher, healer, teacher.

Though from the backwoods, he made his mark in 19th Century Science. Sims' interest in cancer in his later years, influenced the founding of Memorial Hospital in New York City. (The first Memorial Hospital was located on 106th Street and Amsterdam Avenue).

In his memoirs, Sims mentions 13 as his "lucky number": born 1813, left Alabama on the 13th, arrived in New York on the 13th. Other points of interest:

- intolerant of alcohol utilization
- offered his slaves the choice of freedom or new masters of their choice
- devoted time for indigent women
- Assisted Americans in Europe who were without funds because of the Civil War

In his own words, "Mine has been a real romance full of incident, anxiety, hope and care; Some disappointments, many successes, much sickness and sorrow. . but it has also been full of joy, contentment and real happiness. That was Marion Sims, whose goal was to establish a Woman's Hospital in every major city in the civilized world. Woman's Hospital was to be a means of dissemination throughout the world.

In 1965 Woman's Hospital had started 110 years ago. May 26, 1965 saw yet another new home for Woman's. The Ob/Gyn Division of St. Luke's, an Affiliated Hospital of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, was dedicated. The dedication ceremony marked the physical amalgamation of St. Luke's Hospital and Womans' Hospital which were joined by corporate merger in 1953. This was the 4th home of America's oldest hospital devoted to the diseases of women. It ushered in a new era in the history of the institution which J. Marion Sims brought into being. The merger agreement was that Woman's Hospital would retain its name and be housed in a separate building. Since the end of WWI, Woman's increased its size by accepting obstetrical patients. At the request of the Surgical Board a maternity service was opened for private patients and 50 patients were delivered the first of the year. Also, social service was established to follow-up on patients after discharge, Along with a full time nurse.

Easter Parade - Did you know that the parade had its origins in the carrying of flowers from the church to the St. Luke's Hospital, then located on 54th street, at the suggestion of Dr. Muhlenberg?

No anesthesia was used for the first ten years at Woman's Hospital. The medical profession was slow to adapt to antisepsis. In his writings, Dr. Marr, a Resident at Woman's Hospital states, "When time permitted, the Resident physician customarily took a full bath before the operation . . . the nurse, too, had to comply with this rule".

The four great surgeons - Sims, Thomas, Emmett and Peasley all staffed and practiced at Woman's Hospital. Our operating rooms are named after them.

Now with yet another merger, this time with the Roosevelt Hospital, Woman's Hospital faces the possibility of another new home, according to the Hospital Center's Master Plan. But where ever she may go, the philosophy of Dr. Sims will always be present. (I hope so, anyhow, I am sentimental). Sims wished that we would have female physicians to care for women, and this has indeed happened. Not only female physicians, but midwives provide care for the OB patient.

It is quite likely that Sims would be greatly confused by our present day educational system, the roles of administrators in today's hospital and the role of nursing. Nursing has come a long way since Sims' day. When Woman's Hospital opened the doors of this present site, it was staffed by British trained nurse midwives. (myself included), who were not permitted to perform deliveries, but who have a broad base of knowledge and experience in obstetrics. It was the mid '70s before midwives were allowed to deliver babies at Woman's Hospital and now-a-days it is common practice. Sims would have been amazed to be sitting at this gathering today, with a distinguished group of well educated, articulate nursing leaders who are at the forefront in the quest for quality care for women and their newborn infants.

I am sure he would say: "Right On"

Interesting Notes:

During 1853-1854, just after Sims arrived in New York, an Episcopal Reverend, the Rev. William Augustus Muhlenberg was planning to erect a new hospital to be called St. Luke's, and recommended that a ward be set aside in this new hospital, expressly for the diseases of women, and that Dr. Sims be made physician-in-charge. Dr. Harold Tovell, a Director of Woman's Hospital said:

"The placement of the Woman's Hospital Building, as part of the main St. Luke's complex, finally honors that early request of Dr. Muhlenberg".

1883 - A nurse who had worked for seven years at the hospital was paid \$16/month and her salary was increased to \$18/month when she was promoted to OR Nurse. An Interns salary was \$10/month.

1889 - A training school for nurses was planned, organized and put into operation.

1911 - Nurses for private patients were in great demand and often as many as thirty-five (35) nurses were on duty in the hospital at a time.

1917 - The United States was in the midst of WWI which depleted nurses and doctors from the hospital.

1921 - "Babies Alumni" was organized to provide funds for the maternity services. The paid annual dues and the proceeds went to pay for the care of mothers and babies.

1950 - Nurses went on shorter work week i.e 5 day week.

1953 - New Corporation formed under title of St. Luke's Hospital to include Woman's as the Woman's Division.

ADDENDUM

In 1965 some might have thought of the merger with St. Luke's as a wedding after a lengthy courtship. Others may have seen it as the beginning of a modern version of Sims' philosophy brought into being in 1855. States Dr. Axel Arneson, President ACOG (in his remarks at the dedication of the new building uniting Woman's and St. Luke's Hospitals) but whether it was wedding or birth, it was an historic event.

Now in 1992, in the course of progress, another historic event has occurred - Woman's Hospital will have crossed yet another milestone. All inpatient services at Woman's Hospital will move to the New Roosevelt Hospital at 59th Street and 10th Avenue by the end of the year.

The out patient department has moved to the Clark building in the main St. Luke's Hospital - i.e. the OB/GYN Clinic and the Maternal-Fetal Evaluation Unit. As we leave our familiar surroundings Dr. Arnold Roufa, a graduate of Woman's Hospital, now Director of the OB/GYN clinic describes our sentiments - "the history of Woman's will live on in our new location through the superb care that our patients will continue to receive. The spirit of its physicians and nurses and their commitment to high caliber care are moving with us". And, I will say, as we move forward to new horizons we are committed to continuing our tradition of excellence through the quality of our growth, which is translated into action (for the good of our patients), thus using our knowledge and skills and sharing them with society.

THE WOMAN'S HOSPITAL

IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

110th Street, Bet. Columbus and Amsterdam Aves.

NEW YORK

_____ Appointments on the House Staff will be made at this Hospital

The term of service is one year as follows:

4 Months as Junior

4 Months as Senior

4 Months as House Surgeon

The successful candidates will go on duty _____

Application with credential letters, must be made to the Chief Surgeon. A personal interview is required.

For further information address,

GEORGE G. WARD, M.D.

Chief Surgeon

PLEASE POST THIS IN A PROMINENT PLACE

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