

I: The Beginning

Bishop Clarkson Memorial Hospital, now a prestigious institution well-equipped to care for patients with the most severe and complicated problems and dedicated to a high quality of medical education (including nursing), had an unpretentious beginning. The forerunner of the hospital was known as the Good Samaritan which opened in 1870 on 24th and Webster streets.¹ It was the first hospital to be built in Omaha, Neb. It was administered by a committee organized in 1869 of dedicated women representing several religious denominations who were led in the endeavor by Mrs. J.J.L.C. Jewett and Mrs. E. Wakeley. They maintained the six-room hospital and provided nursing to the patients who were predominantly indigent. Volunteer physicians contributed medical care.

The financial and administrative demands proliferated to the point at which the good women applied to the Rt. Rev. Robert Harper Clarkson, the first Episcopal Bishop of Nebraska, to accept management of the hospital, which he did in October 1871. It remained a diocesan institution until 1965, when it was turned over to the Clarkson Hospital Board of Trustees.²

Bishop Robert H. Clarkson, born Nov. 19, 1826, in Gettysburg, Penn., became the first Episcopal Bishop in Nebraska in 1870. His dedication to the care of children and the support of the hospital was first stimulated when he visited St. Luke's Hospital in New York, which had a well equipped children's ward. He willingly accepted the responsibility of the direction of the hospital, which he continued until his death in 1884. He was survived by his wife, Meliora M. Clarkson, and daughter, Nellie, who later became the wife of F.H. Davis, for many years a leader of the Trustees.



Bishop Robert H. Clarkson

Records of the early years reflect the regard and respect felt for him by all who knew him. Among the honors bestowed upon him was an honorary doctor of law degree from the University of Nebraska in 1872.

Upon his death, Bishop Clarkson was replaced by Bishop George Worthington as president of the Board of Trustees.

In 1877, the hospital was demolished by

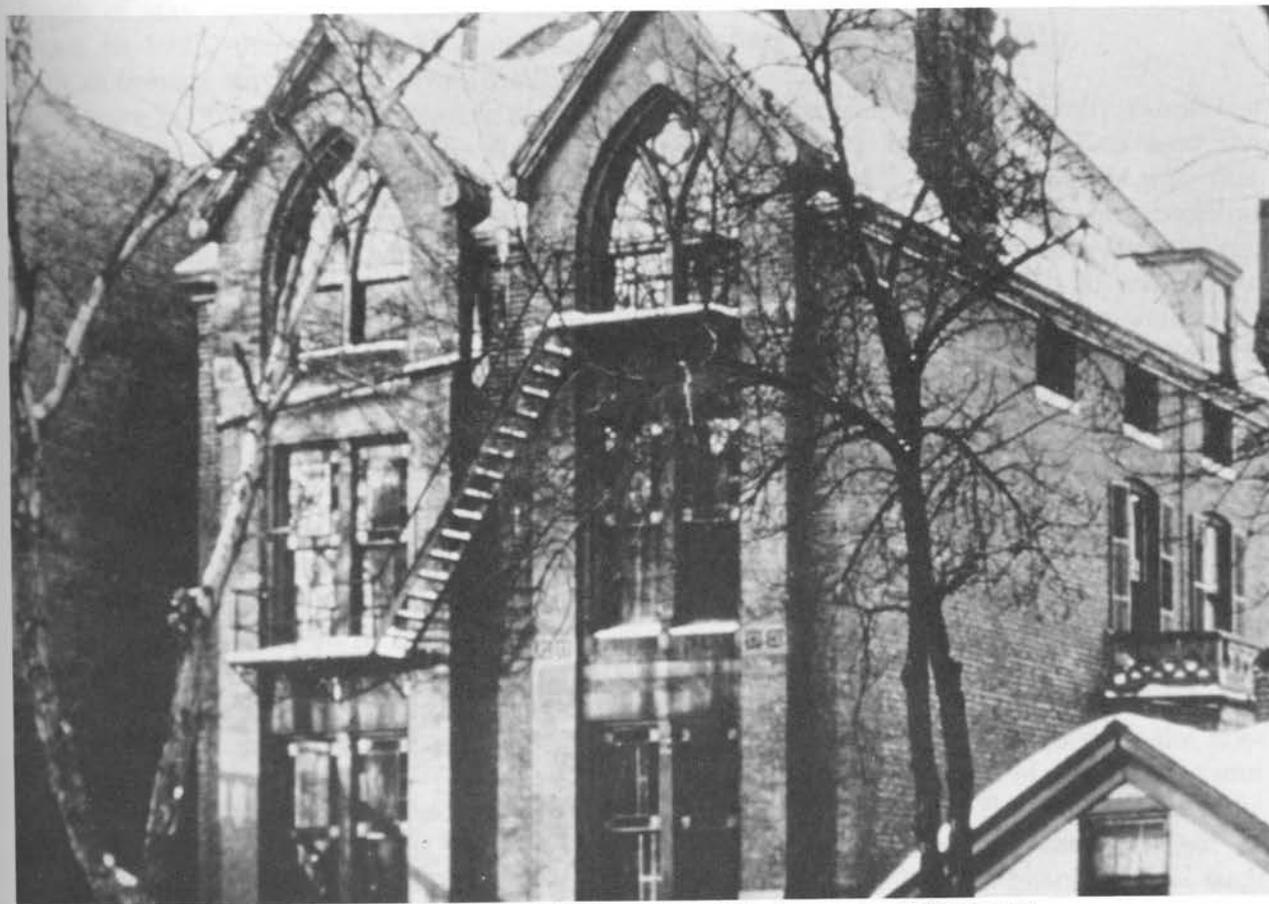
fire and operations ceased temporarily. Nevertheless, due to the dedication and perseverance of Bishop Clarkson, along with the Board of Managers (all women and all members of the Episcopal Church), Ladies Hospital was established in a small building adjacent to Trinity Cathedral on 17th and Dodge streets in 1880. It was inadequate in size and facilities and replaced in 1883 by a somewhat larger structure with modern conveniences, including gas heating. The cost was \$14,000; its name, Child's Hospital and Home. In 1902, an elevator was installed, prior to which nurses and doctors carried patients up and down stairs.

A nurse was hired as "matron" who acted as chief nurse and administrator. A housemaid was also hired. This was the non-medical staff.

Considerable help was given to the hospital by L.A. Merriam, M.D., a well-respected practitioner of that era.

On Dec. 13, 1883, the new building was completed and dedicated by Bishop Clarkson. It was intended essentially for children, but adults could be admitted if there was available room.³

Determination to meet the health needs of children resulted in changing the hospital's name in 1892 from Child's to Bishop Clarkson Memorial Hospital for Children. Later, as adults were admitted and became a major portion of the hospital census, the name was modified to Bishop Clarkson Memorial Hospital. That fifth and final name has persisted.



The Child's Hospital and Home, 17th and Dodge streets (1882-1909)