

Saint John's Health System

Founded: 1894

Location: Originally bounded by Jackson Street on the east and Brown Street on the west and by Twentieth Street on the north, 2015 Jackson Street, Anderson (1894–)

Sister Victoria, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Cross and head of St. Mary's School in Anderson, and Katherine Norton, wife of noted local businessman T. M. Norton, had long discussed the possibility of founding a hospital in the city. In the winter of 1893, as they cared for Maria Hickey, the wife of local businessman John Hickey who had come down with pneumonia, Katherine suggested that the Hickeys might provide land for a hospital. John Hickey was an Irish immigrant who had lived in Anderson with his wife since 1853. He had prospered, having established a successful restaurant and grocery and bought a farm, which in 1887 became the site of Anderson's first natural gas well. Hickey donated a ten-acre portion of his farm, including his homestead and large red barn, to the Sisters of the Holy Cross after Maria died in January 1894. He became the benefactor of Saint John's Hospital, named in honor of his patron saint. A familiar and beloved local character, called "Uncle" John, he lived in the hospital the last ten years of his life and before he died burned all the mortgages, bills, and notes due him.

Sister Victoria, a tall and imposing woman who commanded respect, had nursed Union troops in Louisville during the Civil War. Within sixty-nine days she transformed the homestead, which was located between Jackson and Brown Streets and south of Twentieth Street, into a hospital. After finishing their duties at St. Mary's School, she and Sister Giovanni supervised the work, including the addition of water and sewage lines. They were joined by Sisters Leonine and Gonzague from the motherhouse in

South Bend. The refurbished farmhouse was ready for occupancy on 9 June 1894. Early patients brought their own beds and other items to the fledgling hospital. The first operation, an amputation of the leg of a man injured in a railroad accident, was performed on an army cot that summer. A two-story brick addition was built in 1895 at a cost of \$9,000, all but \$580 of which was supplied by Hickey. In 1900 a \$23,600, three-story addition was completed, once again almost completely financed by Hickey. In its first five years Saint John's Hospital cared for more than 1,500 patients but was chronically short of funds. The Sisters of the Holy Cross relied on donations for equipment and furnishings; the city furnished free light and water.

By 1904 Saint John's had a staff of eleven sisters, one paid night nurse, one maid, and three workmen. Costs for patients ranged from \$5.00 to \$15.00 per week. The Sisters of the Holy Cross provided all of the hospital's staff from its founding, but in 1909 Saint John's opened a nursing school to help fill future staffing needs. Between 1909 and 1952, 343 nurses graduated from Saint John's School of Nursing. In 1950 the Holy Cross Central School of Nursing in South Bend absorbed Saint John's School of Nursing. In 1915 a center wing was added to the hospital; the wing cost \$100,000 and left Saint John's staggering under debt. The hospital's struggles were complicated when many doctors joined the armed forces during World War I. Furthermore, Saint John's faced the rival Home Hospital after the war. Saint John's distress was only relieved in the 1920s. Affiliation with the American College of Surgeons and the American Hospital Association in 1921 was important in providing stability, and reorganization of the medical staff the same year further improved the hospital's fortunes. In 1931 the hospital was renamed Saint John's Hickey Memorial Hospital.

In 1944 Saint John's increased its capacity to 250 beds with the opening of north and west wings, which were funded by \$150,000 in public donations and a \$150,000 grant from General Motors. In the 1960s the hospital opened orthopedic and intensive care units. In 1965 the old center wing, which had been built in 1900, was razed to make way for a seven-story addition, which was completed in 1968. Saint John's opened a children's clinic to provide care to underprivileged children in 1973. In 1980 the hospital became the Saint John's Medical Center and over the next fifteen years opened two outreach centers in Pendleton and Alexandria, a clinic for the treatment of chemical dependency and mental health, an outpatient surgery center, a woman's center, the Archway Adult Day Care Center, an Alzheimer's resource center, and a sports medicine center. Sisters of the Holy Cross had administered the hospital for 102 years, but in 1986 James H. Stephens became the administrator of what after 1984 was Saint John's Health Corporation. In 1993 it became Saint John's Health System.