

Union Hospital

Founded: 1892

Location: Corner of Seventh Street and Eighth Avenue, Terre Haute (1892–)

Doctors Benjamin F. Swafford and Leo J. Weinstein opened the Terre Haute Sanitarium on 11 August 1892. Swafford was one of the oldest and most respected physicians then practicing in the area, a man who, interestingly, never subscribed to the germ theory. A North Carolina native, born in 1833, he had graduated from the Rush Medical College of Chicago and had served as a doctor in the Union army during the Civil War. He continued to practice medicine until his death in 1901. Weinstein had been born in Ohio in 1848 and had practiced several trades before deciding upon the medical profession. After attending Miami University of Ohio he settled in Terre Haute. He served on the board of health and was elected to both the city and county councils. He practiced privately before 1892 and made extra money as the examiner for the New England Life Insurance Company.

Weinstein dreamed up the idea of founding a second hospital in Terre Haute. The city's only medical facility in 1891, St. Anthony Hospital, could not take in all the people who needed aid and did not have a maternity ward. When Weinstein approached Swafford about the idea, Swafford scoffed, but after he had to house and care for a pregnant patient a few days later because she had nowhere else to go, he became committed to the idea. Swafford and Weinstein bought a two-story wooden frame building at the northwest corner of what was then Seventh and Scott Streets. A short time later they appointed five other doctors to the twenty-bed hospital as assistant staff members.

In 1895 Weinstein and Swafford donated one half of their holdings in the sanitarium to a group of interested citizens representing several Protestant denominations and the Jewish faith. The name of the medical facility was then changed to Union Home for Invalids, to signify the collaboration between religious groups for the care of the sick. A short time later, after a bequest by C. W. Williams, the designation was altered to Williams's Union Hospital. It was shortened to its present appellation sometime later.

Sister Johanna M. Baur, a nurse with Bethesda Deaconess Hospital of Cincinnati, was hired as the superintendent of the building and constituted the entire nursing staff in 1896. She remained with the hospital until 1903. In 1900 Baur organized the Training School for Nurses, a center that remained open until 1965 and graduated more than nine hundred nurses throughout its lifetime. In the beginning the nurses were taught by the doctors on staff, but eventually the school served as a training ground for nursing students at nearby Indiana State University.

In 1902 a new twenty-five-bed wing, north of the original building, was completed at a cost of \$20,000. Seven years later the original wooden frame edifice was razed and a \$40,000 three-story brick structure rose in its place. The new building included seventy-five beds, an operating room, and wards for men and women. Along with the new section of the hospital, a power plant and laundry center was constructed in 1909. The upper two stories of the power plant housed nurses. At the time, many of the employees were not paid well, but they were given housing and sometimes board to make up for the low salary and for the long twelve-hour shifts. In 1937 most of the nonmedical staff went on strike. The strike ended peacefully three days later, with higher wages and an eight-hour workday in place.

During World War I, several doctors and nineteen nurses traveled to Europe to help the Allied forces. After their return in 1918 the staff of Union Hospital faced a massive influenza outbreak. By the winter of 1918 no hospital in Terre Haute had any space left to house the sick. The city and county councils were so distressed by the rate of infection and the unavailability of space that they appropriated money to build an influenza hospital on the grounds of Union Hospital. The American Red Cross provided equipment to the new one-story wooden frame building, which was completed in December 1918. When the emergency subsided after 1919, Union Hospital bought the building from the city and county governments and used it for general patients, later refurbishing it into a nurses' home.

As Terre Haute expanded, the hospital grew in size. In 1922 a new addition provided the hospital with six floors, a basement, and a seventh-floor solarium. At first only the first two floors and the basement could be completely prepared for patients with the money raised for the project, but over the next several years the rest of the hospital was filled, raising the number of beds to 188 by the end of 1931. Gifts in 1923 allowed the maternity floor to be completed, and in 1924 the surgical ward was finished. As the hospital grew materially, its administrative structure changed to a more modern format. The position of superintendent was eliminated, and several divisions were created, each with its own director who reported to a central administrator. By the end of the 1920s the hospital was admitting more than twice the number of patients than it did in 1900.

During World War II, many of the doctors and forty-seven of the nurses at the hospital traveled with the armed forces, helping to set up military hospitals and mend the wounded. After the war the number of patients coming to the hospital increased

significantly, rising from 4,817 in 1940 to 7,520 in 1950. By the end of the 1950s the medical staff at the center was treating more than 11,000 cases a year. As with most of America, Terre Haute and the city's second oldest hospital grew with the prosperity brought about by the post-World War II economic boom.

In 1953 renovations and a new wing brought the total number of beds to an even two hundred. The new rooms were made to accommodate the latest equipment, enabling Union Hospital to open one of the state's first intensive care nurseries in 1968. During the early 1950s the hospital benefited from the Hill-Burton Act of 1951, which gave the medical center \$600,000 in matching funds and allowed the hospital to erect a \$1.2 million addition that displaced the 1902 and 1909 wings of the complex. The new facility contained lobby space, offices, a beauty shop, a coffee shop, an operating wing, recovery rooms, an obstetric department, and autopsy rooms. Also built in the 1950s were a residence hall for nurses and a laundry center. After 1957, with the help of the Ford Foundation, a fourth floor was added to the newest building, which held the psychiatric ward. By the end of the 1950s the hospital had added several new services and had a 250-bed capacity.

The heavy growth of the 1940s and 1950s slowed in the 1960s, but it did not disappear altogether. In 1969 Indiana State University opened the Nursing Clinical Education Building at the hospital, once again filling the halls with students. Six years later Union Hospital and the Indiana University School of Medicine reached an agreement that sent medical students to the institution, making it a teaching hospital for both nurses and doctors. In conjunction with the new agreement with Indiana University,

the Family Practice Center opened to provide residency placement and training for future family physicians.

In 1965 Ellen Church, the nation's first airline stewardess and a captain in the Army Nurse Corps in World War II, retired as the hospital's administrator after fourteen years of service. Frank Shelton took the post in 1971 and guided the medical center through its longest period of sustained growth. Beginning in the early 1970s and stretching into the early 1990s, Union Hospital underwent a four-phase building expansion program. At the end of the new construction all administrative functions were transferred to the 1922 building, and all patient care took place in the new complex. The new space and the agreements that allowed it to become a teaching hospital meant that the institution could develop into a center for experimental research and specialized training. In 1976 the hospital launched a residency program in family medicine. In 1983 the area's only chronic renal dialysis center opened at the hospital, as did a child development program and an employee day-care facility.

More specialized treatment areas opened on the hospital campus in the years after 1983. In 1989 the Hux Cancer Center, the Transitional Care Unit, and the Sports Medicine and Outpatient Physical Therapy Center opened. Three years later medical care was extended to the east side of Terre Haute through the construction of an off-site professional plaza, which housed the Center for Occupational Health and HealthCheck, a convenient short-term medical care facility. In order to keep up with the demands of new technology, a foundation was set up to cover the rising costs of equipment and research.

In the 1990s the hospital developed into the largest medical center between Indianapolis and St. Louis, a regional referral center that served a fifteen-county area in

Indiana and Illinois. By 1991 Union Hospital was serving 11,000 inpatients per year and more than 150,000 outpatients. Six years later the hospital joined with Clarian Health Partners, Incorporated, to form a statewide nonprofit health network to compete for managed care contracts.