

REMEMBERING THE PAST...CELEBRATING THE FUTURE

The story of St. Mary-Corwin Medical Center is the story of more than a century of caring in Southern Colorado by the Sisters of Charity, who have rendered medical and spiritual services through hospitals functioning under four different names: St. Mary, Corwin, Minnequa and St. Mary-Corwin.

The Sisters of Charity established St. Mary Hospital in an old, two-story boarding house in the summer of 1882. By the end of that year, the need for larger accommodations was clear and in 1883 the first unit of the new St. Mary Hospital was built. In subsequent years, the hospital continued to grow – first in increments of add-ons, then in the form of new construction of a 90-bed, four-story building at Quincy and Grant streets. St. Mary Hospital was in operation until the mid 1950's.

In 1880, the Colorado Coal and Iron Company (forerunner of the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company, CF&I) hired Dr. R.W. Corwin to come to Pueblo and set up a medical department. The first CF&I hospital was built on the grounds of the company's Minnequa Plant and acquired that name. A typhoid epidemic among steelworkers in 1882 overwhelmed the small facility and led to construction of a new, 30-bed hospital. In 1902, Minnequa Hospital was reborn in the form of a new, 200-bed facility located near Lake Minnequa. Upon the death of its founding physician in 1929, the hospital changed its name to Corwin.

By the late 1940's, CF&I was ready to get out of the hospital business while St. Mary Hospital was desperately trying to raise funds to expand. Convinced of the Sisters' good work, CF&I board of directors voted to transfer ownership of Corwin Hospital to them.

In 1950, Corwin Hospital was comprised of three wings with two floors each and a total of 200 beds. By 1953, the Sisters of Charity decided to consolidate the two hospitals. St. Mary would be razed, and Corwin Hospital would expand with construction of a new hospital around and over the existing institution, a first in American construction history. In 1957, the new St. Mary-Corwin Hospital, with nearly 500 beds, was dedicated. St. Mary-Corwin offered state of the art equipment and resources, full internal communications systems and other features new to the hospital world which drew new specialists and interest to the area.

A Medical Arts building, pharmacy annex, new EEG lab, cafeteria and dining room further complimented the larger, modernized hospital. A contemporary chapel, Catholic in concept, was dedicated in May 1958. A psychiatric unit opened in January 1960 and later that year, medical staff voted in favor of making the hospital library a memorial to Dr. Royal H. Finney, who had died following more than 50 years of medical service, most of it devoted to Corwin and St. Mary-Corwin Hospitals. An on-site blood bank opened in 1961, and the following year saw the establishment of the hospital's first Intensive Care Unit. In 1962, SMC admitted 15,884 patients and orchestrated the birth of nearly 2,000 babies.

The 1970's brought more changes to SMC. A heliport was constructed and Flight-for-Life service implemented; the Southern Colorado Family Medicine resident program was established; Lab, ER, Admitting and Radiology all expanded; and a new circular-designed ICU was built. In the mid-1980's, an \$8.4 million addition to St. Mary-Corwin began.

The 1990's continued St. Mary-Corwin's legacy of excellent care. The hospital opened an outpatient rehabilitation center, created One-Stop outpatient services and built an off-site clinic in north Pueblo. In 1995, the Sisters of Charity joined with others to form Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI). SMC and other mountain region CHI hospitals then signed a joint operating agreement with Porter Adventist Health System to form the management company today known as Centura Health.

Patient care reached a new level of sophistication when St. Mary-Corwin's new bed tower opened in the winter of 2005. The project included a new emergency department; a comprehensive, one-stop cancer center; new patient rooms with the latest in patient comfort and nursing convenience; enhanced diagnostic services; a warm, welcoming lobby; and a new registration and admissions system. This project came on the heels of the opening of a new medical and technology pavilion in 2003.