

# Excerpts from the History of Cleveland County

The first five nursing graduates at Shelby Hospital – on Sept. 16, 1927 – were Misses Sara Roberts, Maggie Atkinson, Ada McCoy, Margaret Crowder and Sadie Beverly.

For the year ending Sept. 1, 1927, 661 patients had been treated for a total of 6,886 patient days. There had been 46 births at the hospital that year and 44 deaths.

In May 1927, *The Cleveland Star* reported that, according to Dr. D.F. Moore, county physicians, 34 new cases of smallpox were known in the county. Smallpox vaccinations began that month and many “sore arms” were reported.

In April 1927, *The Star* noted that the “typhoid” epidemic had been stopped in Cleveland County.

Shelby’s first hospital—a private institution—was started in 1910 by Dr. G.T. Hamrick. An advertisement in the 1911 *Cleveland Star* read “An Institution for Health – apply for Rates.” The hospital was located in the old, three-story building that had formerly been an academy and was to later be the College Inn at the site of the present City Hall.

In 1911, Dr. Harlan Shoemaker, “one of America’s most noted and successful physicians,” was chief surgeon. Shoemaker was from Philadelphia, and when he left Shelby, went to Los Angeles, Calif., where he became chief surgeon at Los Angeles General Hospital.

Miss Floy Miller was surgical nurse in 1911; Miss Novella Beam, Emma Eskridge, Lillian Elliot and Maude Jenkins were nurses. The hospital, its newspaper advertisements explained, was “situated in a grove of stately trees” where patients were taken to enjoy the sunshine. In April 1911, the Shelby Civic League organized a hospital “pounding” and presented a “deluge of good things to eat and serviceable things for sick rooms.”

The county’s first public hospital, known first as Shelby Hospital and later as Cleveland Memorial opened on Grover Street Aug. 17, 1923. A \$100,000 bond referendum for a hospital had been defeated in 1919 but, in 1926, No. 6 Township (in which Shelby is located) approved the issue.

The first trustees were Clyde R. Hoey, chairman; Dr. S.S. Royster, Mrs. W.B. Nix, O.C. Dixon, A.W. McMurry; secretary-treasurer; John Scheck Jr., William Lineberger, J.R. Dover and Coy McSwain.

Miss Ella MacNichols was superintendent for the first 17 years. Dr. William M. Scruggs of Charlotte was consulting surgeon; Dr. J.W. Harbison, resident surgeon Dr. Reuben McBrayer, director of laborites; Miss Etta Beverly, assistant director and head nurse; Miss Claudia Baker, operating room nurse; Miss Mamie Goodwin, night nurse superintendent.

The hospital’s first patient was Mrs. James L. Webb who came to attend the opening ceremonies and caught her hand in her car door. Dr. Harbison treated her hand in the emergency room. The first were 48 beds in the hospital and charge per day for a private room was \$3 and \$2.50 for ward beds. Seven patients were admitted the first week. The first baby born in the hospital was John R. Phifer Jr., on Aug. 19, 1923. The second was Sara Newton on Aug. 28, 1923.

In 1918, an epidemic of “Spanish influenza” descended on the country and in October of that year, 25 deaths had been reported in Cleveland County because of the flu. Three were dead from it in one family.

*The Cleveland Star* declared that “in the history of Shelby no such calamity as the present epidemic has befallen the town.” There were calls to Raleigh for trained nurses to assist in treating the sick. Local citizens formed a fund for stricken families.

In Nov. 1918, 57 deaths from flu were recorded in the count – 4,805 in North Carolina.

The Cleveland County Health Department was organized in 1938 (minutes do not begin until 1944). Doctors A. Pitt Beam and Ben Kendall and others helped the department from its beginning. Miss Cora Beam (who died in 1975 at the age of 92) also aided the department. (She was a public school nurse in North Carolina and a pioneer nurse on the state nursing board.)