

Mid-century doctors founded walk-in clinic post-hospital care



*Mesa Development Services at 10th and Grand was built as the Mesa Memorial Hospital.
Teddy Jordan Photo*

By Kathy Jordan

Some time ago, a reader e-mailed to ask if I knew of a hospital that had been in the 700 block of Main. She said she could remember it from when she was a little girl and lived in the neighborhood. I e-mailed back and told her I would see what I could find out.

After a little searching, we found that indeed there had been a hospital in the 700 block of Main. It was Mesa Memorial Hospital..

Drs. Owen Taylor, an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist, and Roy Dorwart, a specialist in proctology and varicose veins formed the original Mesa Clinical Group that was located on North Sixth Street.

In 1943 they were joined by Drs. G.R. Simpson and R.O. Hinkle, general surgeons and the four purchased the Antlers Apartment building at 740 Main Street and began the process of turning the 15 room apartment house into the first Osteopathic hospital in Grand Junction. The second osteopathic hospital was called Lincoln Park. It was

originally located across 12th Street from Mesa College and later moved to 10th and Orchard Ave.

The ground floor of the Main Street hospital housed the business offices, laboratory, X-ray department and doctors offices. The second floor consisted of 10 beds and four bassinets.

Within three years the hospital had outgrown the 740 Main Street location. The cornerstone for the Mesa Memorial Hospital at 10th Street and Grand Avenue was laid in 1950 by the Masonic Lodge, of which the doctors were members. The 22-bed hospital was completed in 1951.

Dr. Leigh Sullivan an Internist, Dr. O.P. Gabelman, an ears, nose and throat specialist, Dr. D.C. Clark, a family practitioner and Dr. Sam Kelly a Dentist later joined the staff.

Ann Taylor Boyd, daughter of Dr. Owen Taylor, said the hospital was founded as a non-profit corporation, supported by the general public and local businessmen. Successful fund drives raised enough money to complete the first phase of the construction. A 20-bed addition was completed in 1970, and in 1978 a new surgical unit was added. Over 100 people were employed by the hospital.

Fran Simpson, Dr. Simpson's widow, said that the new hospital became extremely popular because patients didn't have to go all over town from one doctor's office to another. The fact that each doctor at the hospital was a specialist in his field was on the cutting edge for Grand Junction. All the patients' needs could be met in one stop at the new hospital, she said.

Fran characterized her husband and the other partners as forward-thinking doctors, who started two medical services that have continued in the valley.

The first service was a walk-in clinic.

The second service, started in 1960, was the Grand Junction Medicenter, at 12th and Patterson, for people who needed care after being released from the hospital. It then became Hilltop Rehabilitation Center and is now the location of the St. Mary's Wellness Center.

With the decline in the economic climate after the oil shale bust in 1980, Mesa Memorial Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital merged in February 1981. After the merger, Mesa Memorial operated as a general hospital for three more years then became an outpatient facility.

The building that was Mesa Memorial Hospital still stands at the corner of 10th Street and Grand Avenue and is used today by Mesa Developmental Services.

In 1951 after the hospital moved to its new location at 10th and Grand Avenue, the Main Street location was renamed the Carpenter Building. Strout Realty Co. had an office there, along with Hazel Thomson, a masseuse, and two osteopathic doctors, Herbert L. Sanders and Ben C. Maynard.

From 1953 to 1957, when it was again renamed and became the Edmondson Building, several mining and petroleum companies had offices there, along with insurance companies, attorneys and doctors.

After 1960, there is no mention of the building at 740 Main Street in the Polk City Directory, However, by 1962 the Public Service Company had moved its Grand Junction office to a new building at the southwest corner of Eighth and Main Streets, and it can be assumed that the former hospital was demolished to make way. Some Mesa County offices are now housed in the building at Eighth and Main Streets.