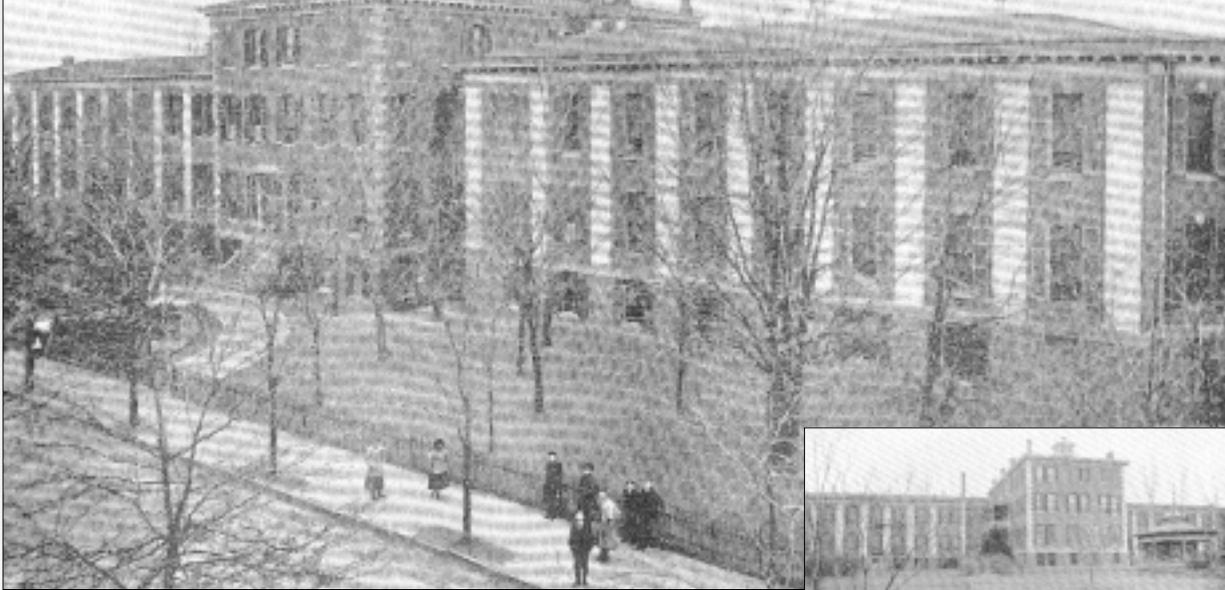


Scenes from the Past...



The Children's Hospital of Washington was incorporated in 1870, and maintained a small wood frame building at 13th and F Street until it built, in stages, this large institution facing 13th Street between V and W Street, beginning in 1878. Today the site is home to the Harrison Square townhome development.



The rear of Children's Hospital faced 12th Street between V and W Street, and included an elegant gazebo and large rear yard before additional buildings were added to the complex. Following a period of abandonment, the expanded complex was torn down in the mid 1990s.

A large and modern Children's Hospital was once located just north of the U Street corridor on what is today a whole city block of newly completed townhouses bordered by 12th, 13th, V and W Streets (Square 272). The idea for a Children's Hospital in Washington began in 1869, when Dr. S.C. Busey of the Columbia Hospital Dispensary and other doctors recognized that diseases of infancy and childhood were not being adequately addressed in the city's hospitals. Thus, on December 2, 1870, the "Children's Hospital of the District of Columbia" was incorporated and located in a small building at 13th and F Streets, with only 12 beds. In 1872, a larger facility was rented on E Street, as plans were being made to purchase a suitable site for a large facility.

In 1875, the board of directors purchased the entire Square 272 for \$15,722.88, or just 16 cents a square-foot. At the time, it was located at the edge of the city, just south of what was then known as Boundary Street, today's Florida Avenue. The directors went to work raising funds for the construction of the hospital in stages, the first building being ready for occupancy the same year of the land purchase, 1875. Just three years later, the building was expanded to the east and west, and in 1890 with larger wing expansion and an enlargement of the central building, to form its final design pictured above. The building cost a total of \$23,662.22. It was built by contractor J.G. Naylor and designed by John C. Harkness, characterized in the 1898 *Report on Charities and Reformatory Institutions in the District of Columbia* as "one of the most experienced and reliable architects and builders of this city."



Children's Hospital was open to both black and white residents of the city as specified in its charter written in 1870, although races were segregated in the hospital itself. Its surgical white ward, above, was pictured in 1898.



Children's Hospital's colored ward was photographed for an 1898 report, shown above. Opened in 1878, during the next sixteen years the Hospital provided for 20, 862 children, 70 percent of whom were "cured or improved in health."

The original directors had interested a Dr. James Crowhill Hall to serve on their board, and he would eventually give a total of \$76,395 toward the effort in an era when a four-story brick townhouse could be built in Washington for \$3,500. In fact, Dr. Hall was apparently living so well that he was subjected to a hearing by the Medical Association in 1850 for neglecting to send bills for professional services! His long career was distinguished by serving as the physician to every President from Jackson to the death of Lincoln's son Robert Todd Lincoln.

During the first 10 months of operation, the hospital served 94 patients of both black and white

racial backgrounds, as stated in their charter. Once admitted, however, the patients were separated by race, but attended to by white, rotating nurses serving both wings of the facility. In 1879, the hospital administrators determined that the actual expense of operating and maintaining the facility came out to a little less than 41 cents per day, with an average of 31 patients.

During its first 16 years, 20,862 children were treated and provided for and, according to the 1898 *Report on Charities*, "70 per cent were cured or improved in health." At the hospital's rear, facing 12th Street, was an expansive lawn featuring a large wooden gazebo for outdoor relaxation and refreshment. It also contained a small cemetery for burials of unknown, abandoned, or homeless children or other indigents of the city. By 1889, the building and land were valued at \$200,000, reflecting on the growth of the greater U Street neighborhood and of the city as a whole following the Civil War. A nurses training department was established in 1891, and an infant's ward created in 1894. In 1898, the hospital had 102 beds, 58 of which were reserved for medical and 44 for surgical cases, in addition to 12 beds for infants. In all, a team of 16 nurses was on duty at all times.



The site of Children's Hospital is occupied today by nearly 100 townhomes, known as Harrison Square, fronting V, W, 12th and 13th Streets that were completed in 2001.

Children's Hospital was expanded again in 1950, when a large building was constructed on the property along 12th Street. Other additions and improvements were added to the complex throughout the years, partially obscuring the original design of the hospital. Following the 1968 race riots that began in April of that year, Children's Hospital eventually relocated to more expansive land across from the McMillan Reservoir, just north of the Le Droit Park and Bloomingdale neighborhoods. Portions of the aging facility were rented to smaller health service agencies until the complex was completely abandoned in the 1980s. Subject to numerous fires, break-ins, and a significant homeless population, the city property languished for two decades before being torn down in 1998. Community groups and developers proposed myriad uses for the site, including a retirement village, grocery store and high-rise condominiums. The square was eventually developed by Bethesda developer Donatelli & Klein into nearly 100 individual town homes arranged in a traditional city square, being completed in late 2001.

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Photos—Charities and Reformatory Institutions in the District of Columbia 1898 Report, Author's Collection

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