

Cornerstone Ceremony, 1923



St. Cloud VA Medical Center
1924-2014

90 Years Young, Going Strong

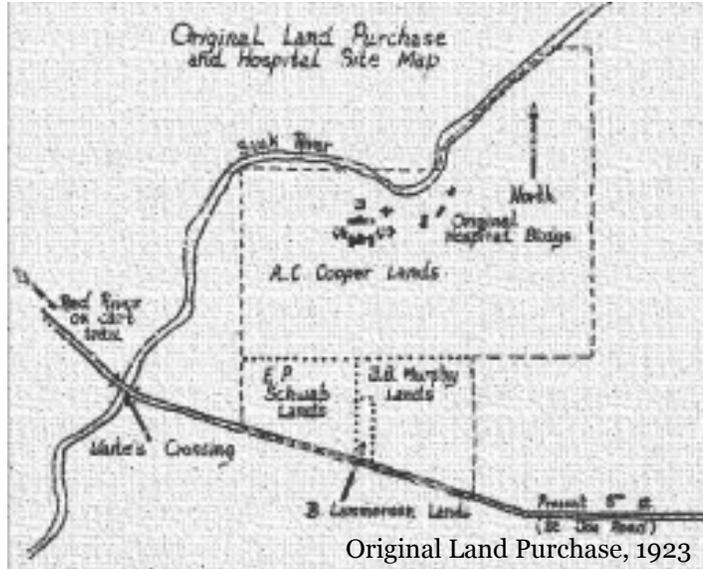


Building 1, 1924



Building 1, 2009

On May 4, 1922, word reached St. Cloud, Minnesota, residents about a bill put before the House of Representatives calling for an appropriation of \$12,000,000 for the construction of twelve Veterans hospitals, including a 500-bed neuropsychiatric facility for District No. 10, which included the states of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana. The appropriation was Public Act 194, also referred to as the second Langley Bill, and was approved by Congress on April 20, 1922. Local efforts to secure land near St. Cloud for the proposed Tenth District hospital, led by boosters Mr. and Mrs. J.P. McDowell, soon commenced. The St. Cloud Commercial Club staged a pledge drive in the summer of 1922



<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">1923</p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em; margin: 0;">Construction Begins</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">September 25, 1923</p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em; margin: 0;">Cornerstone Dedication</p>
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and raised upwards of \$60,000 for the acquisition of 310 acres of farmland on the Sauk River. Deeds for the property, comprised of tracts owned by A.C. Cooper, E.P. Schwab, J.B. Murphy, and B. Lammerson, were obtained and forwarded to the Veterans Bureau by the end of September.

Prior to the creation of the Veterans Bureau, the Supervising Architect's Office of the Treasury designed the hospital buildings and campuses for World War I Veterans that received appropriations from the first Langley Bill (Public Act No. 384, enacted March 4, 1921). The Supervising Architect's Office of the Treasury received guidance from a committee of medical experts created by the United States Treasury

Department. This committee, the Consultants on Hospitalization, interviewed numerous interested parties and in partnership with the Supervising Architect's Office of the Treasury developed standardized plans for Veterans hospital buildings. These plans were published in their 1923 report entitled "Report of the Consultants on Hospitalization Appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury to Provide Additional Hospital Facilities Under Public Act 384 (Approved March 4, 1921)."

The initial neuropsychiatric hospitals built after the creation of the Veterans Bureau and specifically under control of the Veterans Bureau were designed and constructed under the supervision of the Construction Service, Quartermaster Corps of the Army, and the Bureau of Yards and Docks of the Navy. These hospitals were constructed with funds appropriated under the second Langley Bill (Public Act 194, passed April 20, 1922). According to the 1922 "Annual Report of the Director United States Veterans Bureau," "there was considerable delay in carrying out the program for additional hospital facilities" under the first Langley Bill, as after ten months "the Supervising Architect's Office had expended only \$437,682 out of the \$12,240,000 finally allotted to this service for construction purposes." Because of these delays, Veterans Bureau Director Charles Forbes decided to utilize the Quartermaster Corps of the Army and the Bureau of Yards and Docks of the Navy to design and supervise construction of hospitals under the second Langley Bill rather than the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury.

September 17,

1924

Hospital Dedicated

July,

1924

Hans Hansen
Becomes Medical Officer



The initial twelve buildings of the St. Cloud campus were designed and construction was supervised by the Department of the Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks for the Veterans Bureau. Construction of the first hospital buildings was underway by the following summer. It was expected the total cost of the hospital would reach \$1.25 million. On September 25, 1923, the cornerstone was laid during a ceremony attended by a number of dignitaries, such as the State Legion Commander, the State Auxiliary President, State Commander of the Disabled American Veterans, President of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary, State Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Congressman Harold Knutson of St. Cloud, among others. The St. Cloud facility was the first federal hospital for disabled Veterans to be constructed in the Veterans Bureau's tenth district. The Veterans hospital at St. Cloud was officially dedicated on September 17, 1924. Upwards of 1,000 people were in attendance for the ceremonies, including General Frank T. Hines, director of the Veterans Bureau. On September 24, 1924, Eddie Lomacks was admitted as the hospital's first patient. Lomacks resided at the hospital until his death on January 21, 1964.

Dr. Hans Hansen, the hospital's first medical officer in charge, was hired in July 1924. Hansen was largely responsible for the development of the hospital's occupational therapy programs, most notably the hospital farm. The chief aim of the agricultural program was to teach practical skills from which the patients, including many that were from agricultural communities, could benefit upon their discharge

1931

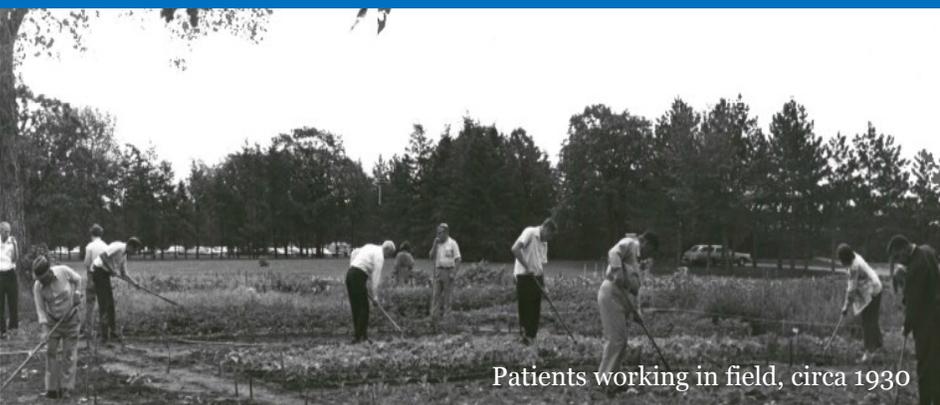
267 Additional Acres
Acquired

1932

Building 28 Added



Hans Hansen



Patients working in field, circa 1930

from the facility. The program was highly successful providing hospital patients with both trade skills and locally-produced food, including fresh garden crops and milk. The products of the farm operations were utilized in the hospital's kitchen, while the excess produce was sold at a slight profit. Agricultural activities ceased at the hospital in 1965. Patients were also engaged in landscaping the hospital grounds as a form of occupational therapy. Landscaping projects included the construction of gardens, arbors, grottoes, and pathways.

By February 1928, 336 patients were receiving treatment at the St. Cloud neuropsychiatric facility. The institution employed 115 people, including six medical officers, a dentist, thirteen nurses, a laboratorian, six occupational and physical therapists, a dietician, and forty-three attendants. The hospital's gross cost of



VA Medical Center Barn, 1926



VA Medical Center Garden circa 1970

1936

Buildings 48 & 49
300 Beds Added

1939

Roger Hentz
Becomes Medical Director

operation the previous December was \$29,501.90. Between its opening in 1924 and July 1929, 47.5 percent of patients receiving treatment at the St. Cloud facility were discharged as cured, earning the institution the highest ranking among the Veterans Bureau's neuropsychiatric hospitals.

A bill presented before the Senate in February 1931 called for an appropriation of \$370,000 for the construction of an additional infirmary building on the St. Cloud campus. In April of that same year, Dr. Hansen received approval from Veterans Administration (VA) authorities in Washington, D.C., for the purchase of additional

farmland and for the construction of two-story porches on the hospital's existing buildings. Approximately \$35,000 in federal funding was allocated in 1931 for the aforementioned real estate transaction and other improvements to the hospital campus, including a new greenhouse. VA records indicate that in addition to the 247-acre tract acquired in 1931, approximately 20 acres were purchased the previous year at a cost of \$3,671.25.

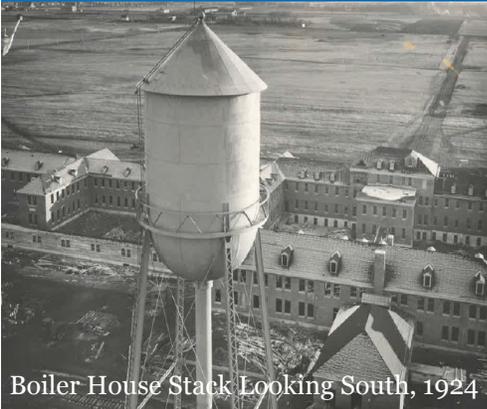
By the end of 1932, forty-four buildings comprised the St. Cloud campus, with construction of the newest infirmary building nearing completion. That year, hospital employees reconstructed St. Cloud's first golf course, which had been located on the property prior to its acquisition for the Veterans' facility. Those interested in the project formed a club and went to work recreating the course's original greens and fairways.

In August 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized an appropriation of \$140,000 in Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds for improvements at the St. Cloud facility, including grounds repairs, construction of an additional spur track, painting, repairing sidewalks, construction of a tunnel between two of the hospital's buildings, construction of a garage, and the completion of a sewage system. Approximately one-eighth of the allotted funds had been spent by the end of the year, facilitating the employment of 102 WPA workers.



Original Greenhouse, 1924

<h1 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">1943</h1> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; margin: 0;">John Pringle Becomes Medical Director</p>	<h1 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">1947</h1> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; margin: 0;">Construction on Laundry Facility Begins</p>
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Boiler House Stack Looking South, 1924

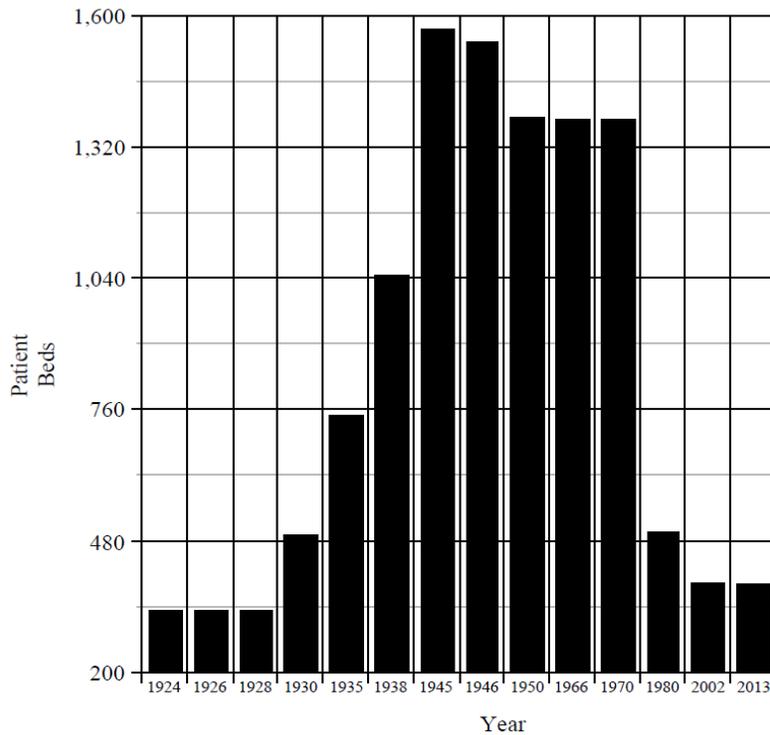
That same year, Congress also allocated funds for the construction of additional ward facilities. The VA announced plans for the construction of two buildings with a combined capacity of approximately 300 beds in April 1936, and in July the contract for the new acute and infirmary wards was awarded to A.G. Wahl in the amount of \$458,766. The St. Cloud contractor turned the buildings over to hospital director Dr. Hugo Mella in late 1937.

The total cost of construction for the new facilities, which increased the total capacity of the institution to 1,050 beds, was \$649,414.

Approximately \$10,000 was spent in 1939 on improvements to the hospital campus, including a hollow-tile silo, an addition to the station garage, additional landscaping in the area in front of the hospital, and a shed in which to manufacture concrete blocks. Produced by patients employed in the facility's occupational therapy program, the concrete blocks were used in the construction

of a new \$25,000 garage in 1941. Additions and alterations were made to the main kitchen and dining facilities that same year at an approximate cost of \$35,000.

Bed Capacity 1924-2013



1956

275 Acres Sold

1948

Claude Lewis
Becomes Medical Director

In December 1942, the VA requested bids for the construction of two new infirmary buildings and an addition to the administrative building. The additional ward facilities were initially scheduled to be built in 1945, but due to a heightened influx of patients during World War II, the project was expedited. Plans for the construction of the infirmary buildings were confirmed in early 1943; however, erection of the administrative building annex (Resource 1, main building, 1923) was postponed due to the increased costs of construction during wartime.

Approximately 1,300 Veterans were receiving care at the St. Cloud hospital in May 1947. At that time, the facility consisted of forty-seven buildings and employed a work force of 860. In July, work began on a new laundry facility. The general contract

for the building's construction was awarded to St. Cloud contractor Edward G. Hirt in the amount of \$242,000.

Two hundred and seventy five acres of the hospital reservation were declared excess to VA needs in January 1956, effectively reducing the area of the reservation to 302 acres. In July 1959, the General Services Administration (GSA) announced plans to sell 182 acres at public auction. That same month,



Laundry Facility, 1949

an ordinance annexing the hospital reservation was approved by the St. Cloud City Council in July 1959, increasing the population of the city by 1,300.

In January 1967, the VA approved the installation of a forty-four bed nursing home care unit in one of the hospital's psychiatric units. The project was funded through a congressional appropriation of \$85,000. The GSA announced plans to sell an additional 9 acres of excess property to the City of St. Cloud for \$3,510 in November 1968.

1957

Stanley Lindley
Becomes Medical Director

1970

Raymond Reinert
Becomes Medical Director

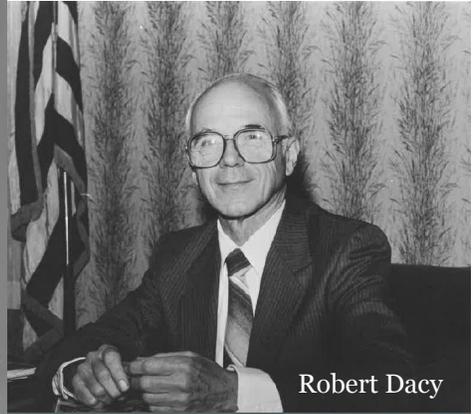
Groundbreaking ceremonies for the construction of a \$4.2 million, 22,000 square foot addition to the main building (Building 1) took place in October 2004. The primary and specialty care services building was erected in response to record increases in the number of patients seeking care at the medical center. In the 2004 fiscal year, 28,152 patients received treatment at the facility.



Raymond Reinert



Stanley Lindley, right



Robert Dacy



Barry Bahl

1980

Robert Dacy
Becomes Medical Director

1990

Thomas Holthaus
Becomes Medical Director



Thomas Holthaus

Building #	Year Built	Original Use	Current Use
1	1923	Main Building , Hospital	Primary Care & Urgent Care
2	1923	Continued Treatment Building	Domiciliary Facility
3	1923	Disturbed Patient Building	Administrative Offices and Dental
4	1923	Subsistence Building and Attendants Quarters	Dining Facility and Administrative Offices
5	1923	Warehouse	Pharmacy and Administrative Offices
8	1924	Recreation Building	Recreation Facility
9	1924	Nurses Quarters	Domiciliary Facility
10	1924	Officers Quarters	Offices
28	1929	Neuropsychiatric Infirmery	Primary Care Clinic
29	1932	Continued Treatment Infirmery Building	Audiology, Optometry, Primary Care, Offices
48	1936	Acute Care Building	Adult Day Health Care, Physical Therapy, Offices
49 & 51	1936	Neuropsychiatric Infirmery	Extended Care Facility
50	1943	Neuropsychiatric Infirmery	Extended and Acute Care Facility

1996

**Barry I. Bahl
Becomes Medical Center
Director**

2004

**Addition to Building 1
Begins**

59	1948	Laundry Building	Laundry Building
88	1963	Chapel	Chapel
92	1975	Reid Recreation Building	Reid Recreation Building
95	1985	Canteen	Canteen
96	1985	Recreation Building	Recreation Building
108	1990	Pharmacy	Pharmacy

The first decade of the 21st Century saw tremendous growth and expansion, as patient workload increased from 17,159 unique Veterans in 2001 to 37,027 in 2010. To meet this demand, Community Based Outpatient Clinics aligned under the St. Cloud VA were opened in Brainerd (1999), Montevideo (2002), and Alexandria (2009).

To further meet the increased demand for services, the focus of organizational planning centered on adapting and enlarging the infrastructure of the medical center while simultaneously modernizing and expanding the health care services needed by Veterans.

Towards that objective, in 2010 a remodeled and expanded Urgent Care Clinic was opened in Bldg. 1, and Surgical and Specialty Care spaces were renovated on the second floor of Building 1. In 2011, a new state-of-the-art Ambulatory Surgery Center was opened, and the former Cannery (Building 57) was transformed into a Vocational Resources Laboratory. In 2012, the planned renovation of all Community Living Center Buildings (Buildings 48, 49, 50 and 51) commenced with the renovation of Building 49. This process will take many years to complete provided sufficient funding is available. In April, 2013, construction of a new 19,000 square foot Mental Health Building began. In September, the first on-site MRI services were offered when an addition to the basement of Building 1 was completed. In December, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to herald the start of construction on a new 19,000 square foot Rehabilitation Building.

2011

Ambulatory Surgery
Center Opens

2013

Mental Health Building
& Rehabilitation Center
Construction Begins

In February, 2014, an expanded Audiology Clinic was opened in Building 29, doubling the number of audiology booths available to Veterans. In April, construction began on a new kitchen. The new kitchen replaces the 1920s era farm kitchen and moves it closer to the Veteran it serves. Once complete, the space in Building 4 formerly occupied by the kitchen is planned for renovation and placement into service as expanded Primary Care Clinic space. In May, 2014, the expansion of the Pharmacy was completed. In July, a Walking Path, located on the front lawn, was completed and opened. Additionally, an expanded Dental Clinic, doubled in size, was nearing completion.

As 2014 drew to a close, the design to reconfigure Buildings 9 and 28 and add 23 beds to the Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Program was being finalized; a project was awarded to build a new Adult Day Health Care Building; and a plan to build a 35-unit housing project for homeless Veterans using leased VA property was nearing finalization.

Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the St. Cloud VA Medical Center has served Veterans for 90 years, and is postured to continue serving them for the next 90 years and beyond.



