

THE FORTIES

1945

- August 16—**Oscar Ditmanson**, commander of Lodi Chapter 59 of the Disabled American Veterans asked fellow member **Vincent Webb**, a local public accountant, to study the need in Lodi for a new hospital. Figures showed 60 beds in two private hospitals, 11 doctors and a growing population of 25,000. The only accredited hospital in the area was the public San Joaquin General in Stockton.
- September 28—Ditmanson, Webb, **L. K. Marshall**, **E. J. Mettler**, **Anthony Perovich**, **Robert Rinn**, **Anthony Sala**, **Melvin Sanguinetti** and **F. S. Van Arsdale** met at Lodi's El Charro Cafe to determine how to best build a hospital for Lodi. Their conclusion: form a non-profit organization funded by public subscription. Each member was entitled to one vote. The building would be financed by large gifts and donations from the public. Webb was appointed chair, and Van Arsdale was appointed secretary of the group.



Board Officers: (1 to r) Vincent C. Webb, Secretary-Manager; E. J. Mettler, Vice-President; James Prentice, President; Alice Towne, Vice-President; Anthony Sala, Treasurer.

- October—The group invited several prominent community members to its second meeting. Rinn and Perovich were appointed to draw up articles of incorporation for the Lodi Memorial Hospital Association. The committee was broadened to include **Walt Loewen**, **Lewis Bridge**, **Dr. A. C. Boehmer** and elected Webb as its president, **Alice Towne** as its vice president, Sala as its treasurer and Van Arsdale its secretary. They then appointed a board of 20 directors. Directors were **Emil Bender**, Boehmer, Bridge, **Mrs. J. E. Devine**, Ditmanson, **Mrs. E. F. Handel**, **Ed Kurtz**, Loewen, Marshall, Mettler, **Lloyd Patton**, Perovich, **Ed Preszler**, Rinn, Sala, Sanguinetti, Towne, Van Arsdale, Webb and **C. C. Woodworth**.
- December 7—**Articles of incorporation for the Lodi Memorial Hospital Association completed.** The association would become the non-profit owner of the hospital and would be operated by community members for community members. This date, Pearl Harbor Day, was chosen purposefully to recognize the 4,000 men and women from the greater Lodi area—44 who perished—serving in the armed forces during World War II. The “memorial” in the hospital name is in their honor.
- A quiet fund drive of about 500 residents **raised \$65,000** and encouraged members to believe the public would subscribe generously.
- Kurtz, chair of the site-selection committee, **purchased for \$15,000 the property known as the Beckman property**, comprising 4.3 acres just outside the city limits. He offered it to the association on a three-year option, at that price, without interest, taking the crops that might be raised to cover taxes and other expenses. The offer was gratefully accepted.

1946

- January 29—**First annual meeting** of the Lodi Memorial Hospital Association held.
- Fund raising for building the hospital continued through 1952. To pay for the campaigns, support came from the Lions' gumball machine (\$900), county fairs, midget auto races and more. Some hospital directors donated their earnings (\$70) from bets won on world-series baseball games.
- Campaigns themselves included veritable armies of volunteers **walking from door to door** in Lodi and the surrounding areas to ask for donations. Several gifts of \$25,000 were made; as were gifts of \$5,000, for which rooms were dedicated; \$12,000, for which operating suites were dedicated; and \$9,000 for which an elevator was dedicated.

1947

- June—**Daniel Brown**, a former naval officer and registered nurse, was chosen as the hospital's first administrator.
- 3,500 donors had contributed to the hospital campaign. All their names were listed in the local newspaper.
- Ground was broken on the Ham Lane site for soil tests, and **Louis Singer** was awarded the contract to build the first structure: a temporary garage-type building for office space. It was later moved to the Fairmont Avenue side of the site. It's been moved several times and is now known as the cottage at the hospital's main campus.

- Costs zoom—Original 1945 costs of \$6,000 a bed zoomed to \$15,000, and the Ham Lane site was deemed too small. It sold for \$32,500 and paid for 14.9 acres known as the **Barbera Tract**, about 900 yards south-east on Fairmont Avenue. Complaints were many: Neither doctors nor patients would be willing to travel so far from the center of town.

1948

- Another unofficial ground breaking took place in summer on the present site for soil tests. **Al Preszler** of Victor donated the first labor by digging a trench for the water supply, and Emil Bender, with a few friends, disced the weeds.
- June—Towne forms the **first women's auxiliary** and organized branches. Their first major effort was directed toward raising money for furnishing a nursery on the obstetrics floor.
- October 1—A gift of at least \$10 on or before this date, earned a charter-life membership in the association.



1948, Lodi Memorial Hospital Association dinner meeting at Hotel Lodi.

1949

- January—Construction bids confirmed the board's fears about escalating building costs. The lowest bids came in over \$1 million. Directors were forced to seek a half-million dollar loan to augment the donated funds. They were turned down and sought instead a federal grant. By this time building **costs were nearing \$17,121 a bed.**
- December 6—With **Robert Mullen** as their spokesman, 16 members of the association went to San Francisco to plead their case for grant monies. Upon returning to Lodi a telegram awaited them: A federal award of \$329,217 was granted if the local association could come up with \$838,007. That meant another fund-raising push was needed for \$250,000.
- Construction bids were sought. The firm of **Moore and Roberts** made the low bid to become the general contractor.



March 1948, taking earth-core samples for foundation tests.