

**Sandwiching in History**  
**Trinity Hospital**  
**Friday, January 8, 2010**  
**By: Rachel Silva**



### **Intro**

Hello, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Welcome to the first Sandwiching in History tour of 2010! Before we get started, I want to thank Mark Jernigan, Cynthia Stone, and Steve Hitt for allowing us to tour the old Trinity Hospital (now Trinity Court Apartments). Trinity Hospital was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998 for its association with architect Max F. Mayer and because it instituted the first prepayment medical plan in Arkansas (which was a forerunner of today's HMOs or Health Maintenance Organizations).

### **Block 427 of Duval's Addition**

Trinity Hospital is located on the northeastern corner of block 427 of Duval's Addition. This land [from Louisiana over to Commerce and 18<sup>th</sup> St. down to 25<sup>th</sup> St.] was acquired in 1834-1835 by William Field, and he deeded it to his son-in-law, Charley Rapley in 1837. But then as a result of the Panic of 1837 and the subsequent failure of the Real Estate Bank of Arkansas, the land was tied up in litigation for several years. The land was eventually deeded back to Charles Rapley, who was to serve as trustee for the heirs of original landowner William Field--Ben T. Duval and his wife Ellen, Ben Johnson Field, and Ann B. Rapley. After the death of Charles Rapley in 1866, the estate was subdivided and the largest portion given to Ellen Duval and Ben Johnson Field and platted in 1872 as Duval's Addition.

Even though it was platted in 1872, the 1897 Sanborn map only goes as far south as Main and 18<sup>th</sup> Street, omitting most of the area. The next Sanborn maps, which

were drawn in 1913, show a small house and a few ancillary structures on the western edge of the current building site as well as two houses on the south end of the 2000 block of Main St. (one of which is still there at the NW corner of Main & 21<sup>st</sup> St.).

### **Trinity Hospital Incorporated**

Trinity Hospital was incorporated in 1923 by Little Rock doctors Orange King Judd, Mahlon Dickerson Ogden, Augustine Mathias Zell, James Isaac Scarborough, and Robert Booth Moore. However, the original three members of the Trinity Medical Group—Drs. Judd, Ogden, and Zell—actually began practicing together as early as 1916 in the Bankers Trust Building at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Main (now gone). And then by 1921, Drs. Scarborough and Moore had joined the group. In 1923, the newly formed corporation proposed to “buy, sell, own, erect, construct, control and operate a private hospital.”

### **Max Mayer**

The doctors hired respected architect Maximilian F. Mayer to design the hospital building at 20<sup>th</sup> & Main at a reported construction cost of \$200,000. Max Mayer was born in 1887 in San Antonio, TX, and graduated with a degree in architectural engineering from Texas A & M before studying in Europe. The time he spent in Paris and Rome gave him a profound knowledge and appreciation for the classical style of architecture. Throughout his career, Mayer remained a traditionalist, insisting that ornamentation was essential to a building’s design. Mayer came to Arkansas in 1914 and worked for the well-known architectural firm of Mann and Stern until 1921. After establishing his own practice, Mayer became famous for his residential designs in the Pulaski Heights neighborhood. Described by his peers as a Bohemian and a very fine artist, Max Mayer was extremely dedicated to each project. He drew all of his plans himself, never employing an assistant or draftsman. [Mayer died in 1947.]

### **Architecture**

In keeping with his preference for the Neoclassical style, Max Mayer incorporated Classically-inspired details on this otherwise standard brick commercial building. Notice the decorative carved limestone front door surround with scroll brackets and dentil molding, the engraved panel above the door, and the carved limestone planters flanking the front entrance. Mayer’s influence is also apparent in the lobby’s concrete floor with copper inlay and the interior courtyard.

## **Trinity Hospital Opens**

Less than one year after its incorporation, Trinity Hospital was viewed by the public at an open house in late June 1924. The first floor contained the business offices, a lobby and reception room, five doctors' suites, the library, laboratory, X-ray and therapy departments, the nurses' quarters, dining room, the main kitchen, and the servants' room. The second floor had 23 patient rooms (most with 2 beds), the operating rooms, chart and scrub rooms, an obstetric room and 12-bassinets nursery, and the diet kitchen. Patient rooms were decorated in white and gray with rose or blue upholstered chairs, bedside tables with telephones, electric fans, iced water jugs, "dimmer" lamps, and a copy of the *Arkansas Gazette*. The quality of Trinity Hospital was, without a doubt, superior to the other hospitals in Little Rock at that time.

Trinity Hospital tried very hard to establish a good relationship between its staff and the patients, even hosting annual events like "Babies Day" where every child born there was invited to visit the hospital for ice cream, cake, and balloons.

## **Trinity's Prepayment Medical Plan**

When Trinity Hospital opened, it was a fee-for-service hospital like other Little Rock hospitals. But in 1931, Trinity began its prepayment medical program called the "Agreement for Annual Medical Services." This was a new approach to medical care delivery in Arkansas and was intended to protect people with a small or moderate income from financial disaster as a result of high or unforeseen medical bills. In order to make necessary services affordable to this moderate income group, Trinity's plan eliminated all nonessential expenses like private rooms and special nurses. Rates were \$2 per month for individuals in groups, \$2.50 a month for group families, and \$5 a month for non-group families. The plan covered internal medicine, surgery (except for brain surgery), obstetrics, pediatrics, eye, ear, nose & throat, laboratory tests, X-rays, and physiotherapy. However, benefits did not extend to include drugs, medicines, or orthopedic appliances. Subscribers could receive treatment at the clinic, hospital, or at home.

By 1937, the Trinity Plan was 6 years old and had 2,000 subscribers covering 5,000 people. The program attracted a cross section of the community, with the exception of African-Americans, which were excluded from the Trinity Plan. In 1937 contract patients made up about 55 % of Trinity's practice.

Although the development of prepaid medical plans—or today’s HMOs—began around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for employees of hazardous industries like lumbering, mining, and railroading, private clinics didn’t begin offering this type of service until the late 1920s and early 1930s. And then by the late ‘30s and early ‘40s county and state medical societies started to adopt prepayment plans as well, with California and Michigan leading the way. Despite its growing acceptance elsewhere in the U.S., prepayment medical plans became quite controversial in Arkansas...

The Pulaski County Medical Society took issue with the Trinity Plan in August 1931, saying that Trinity Hospital’s offer to conduct contract practice “would interfere with reasonable competition among the physicians of th[e] community.” This controversy led to the resignations of the Trinity group doctors from the society that same month. The conflict was not settled until 1948 when the Trinity group doctors were readmitted to the Pulaski County Medical Society with the condition that all present Trinity Group contracts be transferred over to the new statewide Arkansas Health Plan.

Although the Trinity Plan met with controversy here in Arkansas, it was commended nationwide for being more inclusive than most prepayment plans. The Trinity Plan was one of two prepayment plans studied in 1941-42 by the Bureau of Research and Statistics of the Social Security Administration for the Federal Security Agency, and *American Magazine* ran an article on Trinity Hospital’s prepayment plan in 1935, which was later condensed and published in a 1937 issue of *Readers’ Digest*.

Trinity Hospital closed its doors on Nov. 1, 1953, due to rising costs and increased competition from other healthcare providers. The clinic closed the following year, and the building was then sold to become a convalescent home. The building was used for that purpose until 1990 when it was purchased by the Arc of Arkansas.

### **The Arc Arkansas**

The Arc Arkansas provides housing and assistance for people with and without disabilities. The Trinity Hospital building initially housed their offices and a resale shop. By this time, the building had been painted white and the original wood-frame windows had been replaced by aluminum windows. The addition to the south of the original building was constructed in 1972 and around that same time dropped ceilings were installed and the floors were carpeted.

After the Vanadis Group successfully restored the Kramer School in 1997 as an artist cooperative with apartments and working space, the Arc approached the developers about doing a similar restoration of Trinity Hospital. So in 1999 the Vanadis Group used Rehabilitation Tax Credits to restore many of the building's historic elements and convert it into apartments. The drop ceilings were removed and the aluminum windows were replaced with reproduction wood windows to match the originals. Reproduction light fixtures were also installed on either side of the front entrance. A chemical peel was used to remove the white paint and reveal the original red brick exterior on the building's primary elevations, and the remaining elevations were painted red to match (the chemical peel was too expensive to do on the entire building).

The Trinity Hospital building now has 22 apartments, including both 1 and 2-bedroom units, and every unit is handicap accessible. By the way, the Arc Arkansas has also used rehabilitation tax credits to restore the East Side School and Auditorium and West Side Junior High School in Little Rock, St. Anthony's Hospital in Morrilton, and Hot Springs High School.

### **Walk through the building**

The community room was the laboratory.

Head down first hallway: the first doorways were offices for doctors and administrators.

Notice that the outlines of the original door openings were maintained to show spacing despite their enclosure.

Turn corner: Had fluoroscopes and X-rays down here.

Door to right goes down to basement where cistern is located. A spring runs underneath the building.

You can see where a very small corner addition was built onto the hospital as you turn the corner—this thicker doorway was an exterior door at one time.

Go out into courtyard area: You can see the ambulance drive-thru to your right.

Mitzy's apartment was the kitchen area, and a time capsule was put inside the enclosed stairwell.

Courtyard: The courtyard originally had a fountain and pool bordered with flowers. The cactus plants and hydrangeas may be original to the courtyard garden. The courtyard was used as a place for the patients to come out and “sun” and get some fresh air, which was thought to help them heal faster.

Reenter building & see painting on wall: The elevator opening was originally about where this painting is now, and it operated with a pulley system.

Go through stairwell door & go down to basement: The hospital did have a morgue in the basement, but it was primarily used to keep bodies for autopsy, not for long-term storage. The room to the right with the drain in the floor was used for autopsies.

See old safe & incinerator.

See old steam tunnels that go under the entire building.

See old boiler that was used to provide steam heat.

One of the maintenance men used to have an office in the basement, and he often slept down here as well. He told a story about the ghost of a nurse with a white starched hat holding a lantern and walking the hallways checking rooms at night.

When the Arc first purchased the building, the nurse call lights used to come on by themselves.

Second floor: Turn right. The room at the end of the hall was the nursery.

Mark’s apartment is in the old operating rooms. Notice the huge windows in both rooms—they used a lot of natural light in the operating rooms. See the operating room lights in the ceiling of one room. To the right side of this room there was a gallery where students could observe surgeries.

The bathroom was the sterile storage area, and the next bedroom was the sterile scrub room.

The master bedroom was the second operating room.

Exit Mark’s apartment and walk thru hallway to the 1972 addition to finish.

Thank the Arc Arkansas for allowing us to tour the building.

Are there any questions?