



Timelines of
Point
Pleasant
History

Point Pleasant Hospital

Did you know...

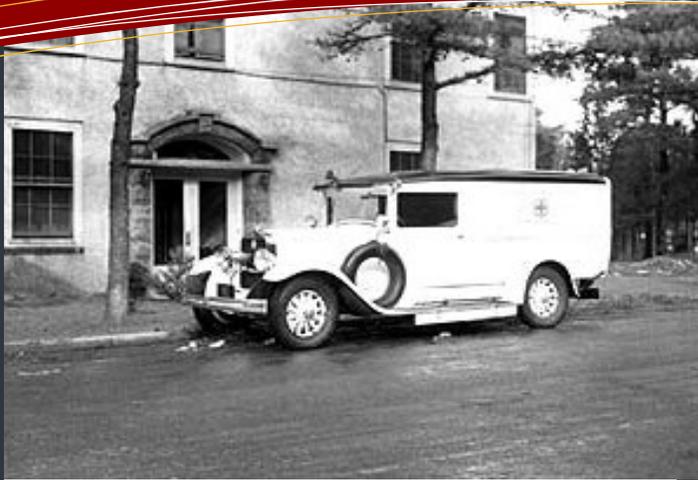
Point Pleasant Hospital started as a four-bed facility on the top floor of Dr. Frank Denniston's home and grew into a major medical institution that provided comfort, treatment, compassion and care to locals and visitors alike.



Point Pleasant Historical Society & Museum

416 New Jersey Avenue
PO Box 1273
Pt. Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742
(732) 892-3091

Web: www.pphsm.org
Facebook: @PPHSMNJ
Twitter: @PointMuseum
Email:
ppbhistoricalsociety@gmail.com



A Long History

If you were born in Point Pleasant, you most likely were born here.

Right: Point Pleasant Hospital in 1938. The hospital's former emergency room entrance was where the door is located.

When Point Pleasant Hospital quietly marked its eightieth year of existence in 1998, the once bustling hallways of what was the area's premier medical facility for generations were quiet with few patients as entire floors and wings were closed. Downsizing controversies pitted the administrators of Meridian Health Care Systems, the hospital operators at the time, against the local community regarding the facility's future. Despite closing its doors for good in 2001, Point Pleasant Hospital was a mainstay of life at the shore with a rich history and a legacy that spans generations.

Point Pleasant Hospital got its start in 1918 when Dr. Frank Denniston opened a four-room hospital in his home at 422 River Avenue in Point Pleasant Beach, near the corner of River and Arnold Avenues. The four rooms included an operating room that doubled as a treatment room. The other key player in the hospital's past was Arnold Lane who was Doc Denniston's assistant and later hospital administrator for 33 years. As a teenager "I played hooky from high school to give anesthesia" Lane recalled of those primitive days. With no elevators, it was Lane's duty to go out on the street in search of three strong men when a patient had to be carried on a stretcher to or from his room.

There were no ambulances in the early days. Patients were transported to the hospital in hearses by local undertakers. Sensing what we would now call an appearance of a conflict of interest in the arrangement, citizens formed the Point Pleasant First Aid and Emergency squad eleven years later, in 1929, the first such organization in Ocean County.

The increasing number of patients requiring hospitalization forced Dr. Denniston to enlarge his home two years later to provide eight more hospital beds. By 1927, a larger building was needed to accommodate an ever-growing number of patients and he built an eight-room, 16-bed, facility on the hospital's current site, a seven-acre tract his family owned on the Manasquan River. The original hospital building was demolished after World War II to make way for a downtown parking lot.

Dr. Denniston turned the rapidly growing hospital over to a Board of Trustees in 1928, and it was incorporated as a non-profit medical institution the following year. Because of a renegotiation of the contract between the founder and the board in the depths of the depression, the new organization would up paying a total of only \$30,000 for the hospital and seven acres according to Lane.

Through the generous support of the local community, many additions were made to Point Pleasant Hospital. Creative (and accidental) fundraising helped on one early occasion: A woman brought in her beloved, but very sick, dog. Feeling a bit uncomfortable, but believing neither man nor beast in need should be turned away, Lane allowed X-rays. With that diagnostic help, the canine survived. It turned out the woman was wealthy and she donated \$10,000, almost enough to build a new wing in the early days, Lane remembered.

In 1995, the Medical Center of Ocean County, Jersey Shore Medical Center, and JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute joined forces to create Shore Rehabilitation Institute at Point Pleasant Hospital to meet a long-standing need in the area for inpatient rehabilitation.

In 2004, Ocean Care Center, Ocean Medical Center's satellite emergency facility, relocated near the intersection of Routes 35 and 88 in Point Pleasant. The facility is currently an affiliate of Hackensack Meridian Health and is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



A 1970s view of Point Pleasant Hospital on the Manasquan River. The hospital's original location was on River Avenue in Point Pleasant Beach and moved to its Point Pleasant site in 1927.

A 25-bed addition that included a doctors' room, kitchen and a dining room was built in 1933. The 1940s saw two more additions bringing the capacity to 78 beds.

In 1933 Doc Denniston had a severe heart attack and moved to Florida. Doctor Bruce Henriksen, a surgeon who was to become another mainstay of the medical community, took over the practice at 422 River Road and became a staff member at the hospital.

In 1949, Mrs. Richard N. Watts and Mrs. Raymond Brandes founded the Point Pleasant Hospital Guild, a supportive fund raising group. West Wing, a 30-bed addition, was opened in 1959, and with the area population still growing, the hospital opened the 62-bed Lane Pavilion, named in honor of administrator Arnold Lane in 1963. Guild co-founder Mrs. Richard N. Watts of Brielle became the first female member of the Point Pleasant Hospital board of trustees in 1966. The opening of the Carter Pavilion brought the total number of beds to 174 in 1970.

In 1970 Lane retired, proud that during his tenure he used to walk through the halls of the hospital every day and personally speak with each patient. Richard J. Leone became the new director.

1971 saw the beginning of construction of the \$6 million five-floor North Wing, which opened in

1973, bringing capacity to 280 beds. A laboratory addition in 1977 that doubled the size of the old laboratory, was dedicated to Dr. Frederick D. Makin, a member of the original board of trustees. Ground was broken for the last major addition, the Thomas Wing, in 1978.

Being on the Manasquan Riverfront posed both special advantages and problems. Before there were beepers and cell phones, a innovative communications system was devised. Because the doctors did a lot of fishing, a flag on top of the hospital kept them in touch. In an emergency, it was be lowered to half-staff and any doctor in a boat on the Manasquan River would motor in. In 1960 an emergency dock was put up so those stricken at sea could be brought directly in for help.

Costs of hospitalization reflected the times. In the 1930s a private room cost between \$40 and \$70 per week. A room in a ward went for \$25 dollars per week for Ocean County residents and \$40 per week for others. In 1956 the semi-private room charge was between \$11.50 to \$13 per day. By 1969 the daily price had gone up to \$36.

In 1982, Point Pleasant Hospital changed its corporate name to The Northern Ocean Hospital System, Inc., and became the sponsor of the

long-proposed Brick Hospital. Brick Hospital opened as a 120-bed facility in July, 1984 and the two hospitals operated as sister institutions with the same administration. Brick hospital was expanded and eventually eclipsed Point Pleasant Hospital in size and sophistication.

The Northern Ocean Hospital System changed its name to The Medical Center of Ocean County in 1987 and, with the national trend toward consolidation, was eventually absorbed by Meridian Health Systems which operated numerous hospitals and health related businesses in New Jersey. Meridian continued a downsizing of Point Pleasant Hospital, which included moving units such as the maternity center and hyperbaric chamber to Brick. In 2001 Meridian closed the hospital, after stating the facility was losing money despite vehement community opposition. The buildings were demolished. After protracted negotiations, the property was divided with luxury housing built on the southern part. The northern section is now Riverfront Park, which offers a pavilion with picnic area and charcoal grills, walking pier, bocce court, large playground, open field area, benches to watch the boats, and the historic Bennett Cabin.

— By Jeff Heim and Jill Ocone

Copyright © 2019 Point Pleasant Historical Society and Museum (PPHSM). All rights reserved. The material published on this website is intended for general information only. The PPHSM is not responsible for the content of any third-party website to which links are provided from this website. Any links to websites are provided for your information and convenience only. The PPHSM does not endorse or control these websites and cannot guarantee that material on those sites is in all respects accurate, complete and current. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise without prior permission of the Point Pleasant Historical Society and Museum, P.O. Box 1273, Point Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742.