

# The Mother of Montefiore Hospital

## HER OWN STORY OF THE HOSPITAL

Washington was the "father of his country" and the country had no "mother".

On the surface a group of Pittsburgh's splendid Jewish business men are father, big brother and "more than a mother" to the new Montefiore Hospital, but back of the scenes, far back through all the mirage of years has been that wonderful woman, Mrs. Barnett Davis, the "mother of Montefiore Hospital".

Were this writer to pen a fitting epitaph for Mrs. Davis when she has gone on to Heaven to make it the perfect place it is because of the mother's selig there, he would inscribe on the tablet of love and memory, "She was truly a mother in Israel". That would mean more than most of us can comprehend for "truly a mother in Israel" means a world of devotion to a world of people and causes.

It was my golden privilege to sit with Mrs. Davis as she reminisced over the first struggling years of Montefiore Hospital. I thought as I followed her story of the days of childhood, when another devoted Jewish mother of sacred personal memory worked day and night, week in and week out for Jewish institutions, Jewish causes and "unsere leut" who needed a helping hand.

So if I may say of Mrs. Davis that she deserves the love and respect of every good Jew in Pittsburgh I will let the woman who gave Montefiore Hospital its life and laid the cornerstone of its palatial home tell her story:

"Back in 1898, a group of Jewish women of which I afterward became the president and remained such for twenty years conceived the idea that Pittsburgh needed a Jewish hospital. We organized then the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society to care for the sick, regardless of color or creed," said Mrs. Davis. "We had been doing work in other hospitals for the deserving sick.

"We paid regular dues and finally after accumulating a balance within five years, found ourselves able to buy a lot from the Passavant Estate on Reed Street. We paid \$10,000 for the property and soon realized that the lot was not large enough for a hospital.

"Not to be outdone by the women, the Jewish men of Pittsburgh displayed a prompt interest in our work and organized the Montefiore Hospital Association.

"With their help we bought the present site on Center Avenue for \$65,000 turning our Reed Street property over to the contractor as part payment for the improvement of the building located thereon.

"Henry Jackson headed the first hospital association of men, who paid from ten dollars a year up, as they could afford. The women gave \$15,000 in cash and the Reed Street prop-

erty, as their initial investment in the present hospital, from which we are about to move.

"Abraham Lippman and I were the



Mrs. Barnett Davis  
vice-presidents and Mr. Davis was treasurer, with Herman Ferguson, financial secretary.

"The Hospital, Aid Society gave \$5,000 each year for maintenance work, over a period of ten years. The old Moorehead homestead was remodeled, added to and enlarged to its present size. We added a section 30 by 40 feet in the rear and a top floor 40 by 70 feet.

"The capacity was sixty beds, with one men's ward and two wards for women. There was a semi-private ward for men also and ten private rooms. For the first three years we went it alone, and after that were given state aid, which has been increased from year to year.

"The hospital was filled to capacity the first thirty days. We found it necessary to take over sun parlor and sitting room space for hospital work.

"Never once from the first day that Montefiore Hospital opened its doors until this late date, on the eve of the dedication of our fine new institution has sectarianism ever entered our minds.

"We had but one duty in mind—the care of the sick—and we have never

failed to have non-Jews on our board. The doors have been open to all.

"After seven years with a 65 bed hospital we found our quarters again too small, despite addition of a modern laundry and quarters for help.

"Discouraged and almost prohibited from asking funds for a larger institution we determined to go forward, despite protests and so we bought our Fifth Avenue lot and through the efforts of the people of Pittsburgh raised a fund of \$2,265,000 and proceeded with the construction of the present \$2,500,000 building, the last word in hospital efficiency.

"When in the middle of July the new hospital is dedicated it will be as a monument to charity, for since the doors of our first hospital were opened our records show an average of sixty-five per cent. charity patients for every year.

"Just as the Jewish women of Pittsburgh have worked in the past for Montefiore they will work again. During dedication week they will be found as hostesses, with their daughters and younger women folk assisting.

"The Young Ladies' Relief Society gave Montefiore its first horsedrawn ambulance. Later they substituted for this a motor driven ambulance and they stand ready today to do whatever may be expected of them.

"The Young Ladies' Montefiore Aid Society has and will take an active interest in the children's ward work.

"When the new hospital opens it will be a tribute to the sterling loyalty to their fellow men of Bennie Neiman, I. Seder and J. H. Frank who gave the first \$100,000 towards the new building fund.

"It will be a monument as well to those who in a "silent drive" gave \$865,000 and it was my good fortune to have signed the first pledge.

"A. C. Lehman was chairman of the open drive and how well he and his co-workers did their work is demonstrated by the fact that before the drive became public they had in their possession \$1,500,000.

"The workers were so encouraged that a new and higher goal was set and within a few days with additional subscriptions of \$100,000, others of \$70,000 and \$50,000 we were soon over the top.

"The new Montefiore Hospital rises a tribute to Pittsburgh Jewry's sympathetic heart. The women who have worked for its interest are proud of what they have accomplished and proud of the men who have worked with them to make a finer and a greater Montefiore over a period of many years.

"The dedication exercises will be a benediction to the sacred memory of Dr. K. I. Sanes, who was a leader in making possible the new institution and in the remarkable work accomplished in the old."

## HE LIVED FOR MONTEFIORE



The Late Dr. K. I. Sanes

No history of Montefiore Hospital could be written without paying tribute to the master physician and surgeon, Dr. K. I. Sanes, of sacred memory.

Dr. Sanes died May 9th, 1925, and over his grave thousands wept tears of sincere grief that a truly great and good man, a benefactor of his fellow-men, had gone to his earthly reward.

Those who were active in the drive for funds for the new and greater Montefiore tell with pride how Dr. Sanes gave to them his valued leadership and made a success the first "silent drive" and took it over the top.

When the new hospital opens there will be an appropriate bass relief to the memory of this master surgeon and great humanitarian.