

PREFACE

DURING the summer of 1956 while a member of a planning committee for a Hospital Benefit, the writer compiled an account of the Embudo Presbyterian Hospital. That account, with one or two minor changes, forms the substance of this little booklet. The purpose of the original account was to supply authentic factual material for the local newspapers on the history, development and present status of the hospital.

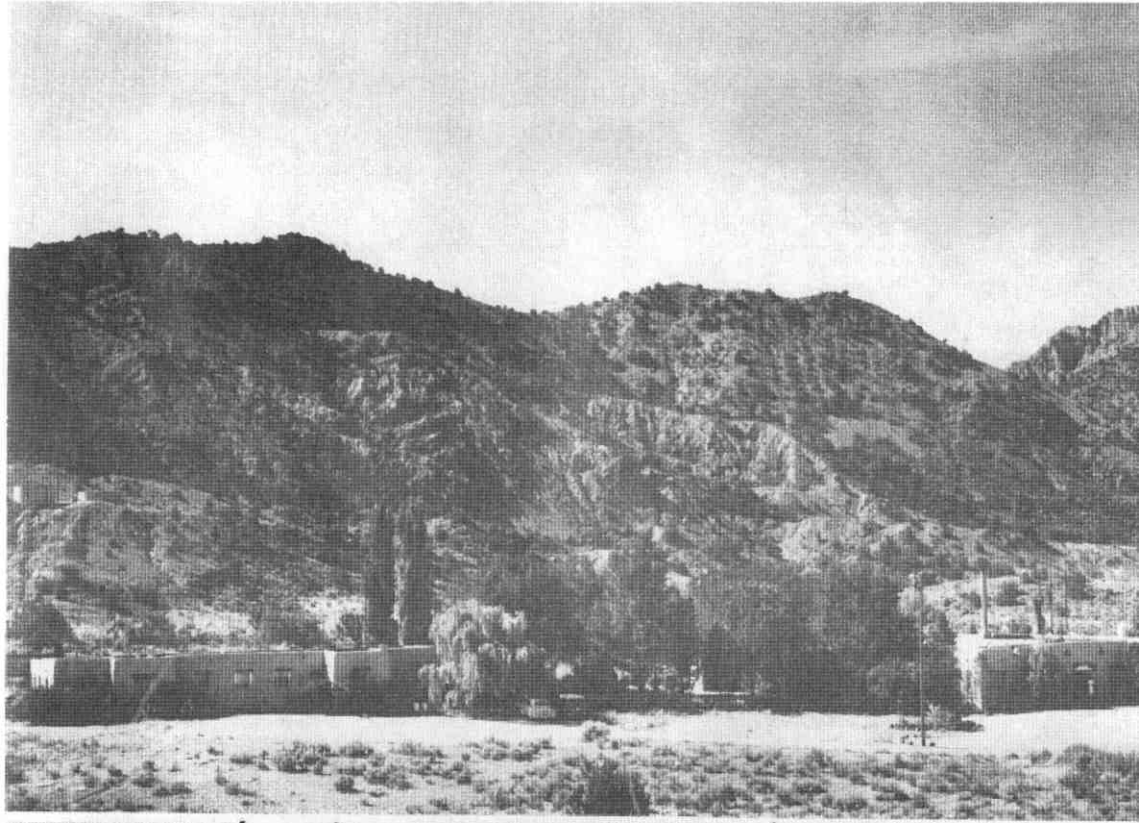
I have been a friend and neighbor of the Embudo Hospital for fifteen years. I am not a Presbyterian and my occupation, mining geology, has no connection with the work of the hospital. This has helped to make the account an impartial one with a broad-scale impersonal perspective. Much of what is written, however, has been personally seen or verified in the records.

This booklet is addressed chiefly to those who have never been to Embudo. Only a personal visit can truly capture something of the sounds, sights, activities and very essence of this small institution which has come to occupy such a great place in the hearts of the people of north-central New Mexico.

ARTHUR MONTGOMERY

Dixon, New Mexico—April, 1957

Photographs by
LAURA GILPIN



The Embudo Hospital

EARLY HISTORY

THE Embudo Hospital was built seventeen years ago, in 1940, but its early beginnings go far back beyond that time. It was an outgrowth of the Presbyterian Missionary work that commenced in near-by Dixon long before 1900 with the establishment of a church and school. In 1909 the attractive present-day Dixon Mission School was built. One of the school's teachers took back with her to Brooklyn, N. Y., the story of the educational and religious work in Dixon, and also word of the complete lack of medical facilities throughout the wide region north of Santa Fe. It was in this way, together with the blessing and support of the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church, that the women of the Brooklyn-Nassau Presbyterial donated funds for the establishment of the tiny Brooklyn Cottage Hospital in Dixon in 1914.

The Brooklyn Hospital began with a small cottage, two beds, and a single nurse. It is hard to appreciate now how inaccessible the Dixon area was in 1914. Roads were few and far between, and rocky and hazardous even for horse and buggy. Living conditions in Dixon and the surrounding mountain villages were primitive in the extreme. There was hardly any sanitation, as we know it today; typhoid, malaria and smallpox went unchecked; child-bearing in particular took a heavy toll in lives of infants and mothers due to the inadequate methods of local midwives. Superstition played an essential role in the treatment of much sickness and disease.



Doctor Sarah Bowen

In addition to the services performed by the Brooklyn Cottage Hospital in Dixon, a Medical Mission was opened in the mountain village of Penasco, 15 miles east of Dixon, by a Presbyterian Missionary doctor, Horace B. Taylor. In order to serve the Dixon hospital as well as other Mission centers in a number of neighboring mountain villages, the doctor had to travel on horseback great distances over winding, precipitous roads. Dr. Taylor remained for five years, helping to strengthen the work of the Brooklyn Hospital and extending medical services to the villages of Penasco, Chamisal, Truchas, Chimayo, and others. When he departed and gave up the Penasco Medical Mission in 1920, the Brooklyn Hospital remained as the single outpost of medical care north of Santa Fe in north-central New Mexico.

In 1931 Dr. Sarah Bowen was sent to Dixon by the Presbyterian Board to survey the regional medical situation. Despite earlier plans for medical missionary work in China, the problems presented to her were so challenging that she took up residence at the Brooklyn Hospital and has remained in the Dixon-Embudo area ever since.

Under Dr. Bowen's administration the little cottage hospital grew from two to eleven beds. Clinics were set up and kept operating in nine mountain villages, and school and community health classes and examinations were held at the various Mission centers. Weekly prayer meetings were held in the hospital by the minister and elder of the Dixon Presbyterian Church. In this way the hospital reached out beyond health and human bodies to help nourish the growth of religion and moral education in the community.

By 1936 the demands upon the facilities of the Brooklyn Hospital had become so great that the Presbyterian Board of National Missions recognized the vital necessity of larger and better quarters and began to raise funds for expansion. At this time there were three nurses, two resident doctors, and still just a tiny cottage with eleven beds and a minimum of space and medical equipment, to cope with the tremendous influx of patients. The kitchen became dining room, doctor's office and laboratory; the examining room served also as operating room; and babies actually overflowed into laundry baskets and apple boxes. Over the next several years Presbyterian groups all over the United States contributed wholeheartedly to make the fund-raising campaign a success. A new hospital site was chosen in Embudo, two miles below Dixon on the Espanola-Taos Highway and close to the banks of the Rio Grande. Although remote from any town, this place was centrally located with respect to the extensive area served by the hospital and its village clinics.

When the actual building of the new hospital commenced, much of the labor and materials were donated by local Spanish-Americans. As one example, a group of men from Chimayo camped on the site for two weeks in order to make adobe bricks. On October 7th, 1940, the Embudo Presbyterian Hospital was finally dedicated—a completely modern hospital with 25 beds, 12 bassinets, operating room, X-ray facilities and a medical laboratory. In that year there were no other hospitals or health clinics in all that vast region of north-central New Mexico lying north of Santa Fe and west of Raton.

RECENT HISTORY

The Embudo Hospital has grown over the past seventeen years: slowly, with respect to staff, buildings and equipment; swiftly, in number of patients served and accomplishments performed. Together with its village clinics, the hospital probably now serves ten thousand patients each year. Of these a third are maternity, another third pediatric, and the remainder run-of-the-mill medical-surgical cases. The staff consists of two resident doctors, six nurses, seven ward aides, one laboratory technician, three office workers, two dieticians, one house mother, four kitchen and hospital helpers, one maintenance man and janitor. The original hospital hallway with two short end wings has expanded in the south wing to accommodate operating rooms and a new dining room; there is an enlarged office in the north wing; and an up-to-date X-ray laboratory off the hallway. The separate staff house east of the hospital has been enlarged into a nurses' wing. A doctor's home and a janitor's house have been erected west of the hospital.

The whole existence and growth of this little hospital, and the Brooklyn Cottage Hospital before it, have depended upon the gifts of generous friends. Many of these are from countless nameless individuals; a few very important ones have come from various Presbyterian groups and private donors to make possible such notable building and equipment additions as the doctor's home, the dental clinic, X-ray laboratories, a 30-foot deep freeze, and the fine new dining room. The hospital knows no way in which to adequately thank all of these friends and donors except to point to the whole of its work performed and say, "Your help has made this possible."



Eighteen Years of Service: Old Timers Cole, Maisch, and Walker

AIMS AND SERVICES

The work of the Embudo Hospital cannot be measured purely in terms of numbers and kinds of patients served, nor of size of buildings and staff. Behind the medical care lies a central core of religious purpose and unselfish human service that transforms every facet of the hospital's operation and make-up, every duty performed by each hospital worker, however small. It is the performance of Christian service in the truest sense, administering to human needs with utmost devotion and wholly removed from consideration of dogma, race or creed. It is this spirit, expressed quietly and without fanfare in numberless small acts of patient duty over a period of forty-three years, which has healed and strengthened not alone bodies of many thousands of folk in northern New Mexico, but minds and hearts as well. And because of it the whole region has become a happier, more fruitful place for all who live in it.

The aims of the hospital will always be these: To serve in its clinics and at its central point all those in need of maternity and medical care; to pass on to Spanish-American families lessons of health, hygiene and child care, especially those learned so well by the large number of local girls trained as ward aides in the hospital; to instill in all people of the region a general knowledge of sanitation; to work hand-in-hand with the Mission Churches and Schools; to carry out physical examinations and health inoculations of all school children in the area; to extend throughout the region the services of its dental and tonsil clinics.

Some have misunderstood the hospital's approach to charity cases. The truth is that no patient has ever been

treated free of some type of charge. Many people, especially in earlier days, paid in food produce or in labor. Dr. Bowen has always believed that the truest charity is never administered in the form of free service and hand-outs, but, together with the medical care, by encouragement of human dignity and self-respect and by helping even the poorest patients to help themselves. Yet in all the hospital's history, no needy case has ever been turned down. It is for this reason that the hospital each year since its early inception has operated in the red.

Other hospitals and health clinics now operate in Espanola, Taos, and elsewhere in north-central New Mexico. But the Embudo Hospital, with nearly a half-century of pioneering medical service behind it, quietly goes on its own way, meeting the same sort of human need to which the Brooklyn Cottage Hospital was originally dedicated. It is safe to say, for history, for make-up, for service and for spirit, the Embudo Hospital is like no other medical institution in the United States. If you would know it better, go within its walls, experience its sights and sounds, watch its staff at work, and find out for yourself wherein it is different.



A Typical Morning in the Waiting Room

PRESENT STAFF

Part of the staff goes back to the early days of the hospital. Dr. Edith Millican first came to help Dr. Bowen in 1941; stayed two years before doing medical missionary work in China; then returned in 1951 to be the second resident doctor and the right hand of all the hospital's administration. Charlotte Maisch, head nurse, now on leave, has served Embudo and the Brooklyn Hospital for 18 years. To her goes the credit for building up what many regard as one of the finest nursing staffs in New Mexico, and for training large numbers of young Spanish-American girls as nurse's aides. Agnes Walker has been one of the mainstays of the nursing staff for 18 years. Lucille Cole has been far more than dietician in her 18 years of service; her meals are justly famed and many local girls have learned to be excellent cooks under her guidance. Three who have been indispensable to the hospital for 12 years are Olive Bowen and Juanita Ortega, heading the office staff, and Hevila Gonzales the X-ray and laboratory technician.

More recently, Doris Schoon has been acting as second resident doctor, both during her last two years as a medical student and now as a full-fledged M. D. Younger girls make up the rest of the hospital staff, some of them staying for several years as nurses, others coming as nurses and aides during shorter periods and for summers only. Aides and kitchen and hospital workers are mainly local Spanish-American girls. The maintenance man is Eloy Duran of Dixon, who occupies the janitor's house with his family.

Not on the resident staff but of critical importance to the medical work of the hospital are a group of Santa Fe

and Albuquerque physicians and surgeons who are active members of the hospital staff and willing to come out on instant notice whenever needed. And Dr. E. Garcia of Taos does an immense service to the hospital in coming one day each week to conduct the dental clinic. The hospital can never fully express to these men its gratitude for all they do.

It is because of such a staff that the Embudo Hospital now stands fully accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals, one of the smallest hospitals in the United States to merit such top-rank medical standing.

FUTURE NEEDS AND PLANS

The Embudo Hospital is fairly bursting at the seams so far as the need for increased room for patients, staff and equipment is concerned. Thanks to a wonderfully generous grant from the Thorne Foundation, a new Pediatric Wing (to be called the Thorne Wing) is to be built at the north-west corner of the hospital. The enlarging and remodeling of the business office will be made possible through a large gift from Presbyterian Women. A vitally needed addition to the nurses' wing of the Staff House will be built shortly, thanks to two anonymous donors who since 1947 have never failed to meet many of Embudo's most pressing needs. Another most generous gift will make possible additions to and remodeling of the hospital in line with expanding needs. An outgrowth of this building program is the new medical center at Cleveland, near Mora, one of the hospital's farthest removed former clinic points. It has quarters for a permanent doctor and nurse.

Does this mean that the hospital no longer needs generous friends and future financial help? Nothing could be further from the truth. The hospital has completely outgrown itself so far as space and staff are concerned. More nurses and aides are needed, another laboratory technician and office worker, additional hospital and kitchen workers, a third resident doctor. A medical library, a small chapel, a morgue, and a housekeeping unit are all vital needs.

As long as it operates, and forever to keep it effectively operating, the Embudo Hospital will depend on the hands and hearts of its many friends.