

Did You Know?

Did you know . . . there used to be a 125-bed hospital on Fairburn Road for African American patients??

By Joanne Huntley, AFNA History Committee Chair

In 1943, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church (established in 1912 and located in the Sweet Auburn neighborhood) and the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries founded the Catholic Colored Clinic to provide medical care for African Americans who were financially unable to pay for medical services and who were not eligible to receive medical service at Grady Hospital because they had less than six months of residence in Atlanta or they resided outside of Fulton and DeKalb counties. The clinic was a two-story building with only four beds and space for four cots, but it held regular clinics providing medical, pre-natal, gynecology, surgical, urology and pediatrics services.

In 1962, the Medical Mission Sisters decided to build Holy Family Hospital on the 500 block of Fairburn Road to continue their vision of providing needed medical services for African Americans. At the time, Hughes Spalding was the only fully equipped hospital serving black patients in Atlanta. The Mission Sisters raised funds from white donors to help finance the construction of the new hospital. In 1964, when it opened, Holy Family Hospital became the first hospital in the Southeast to allow black and white doctors to work together.

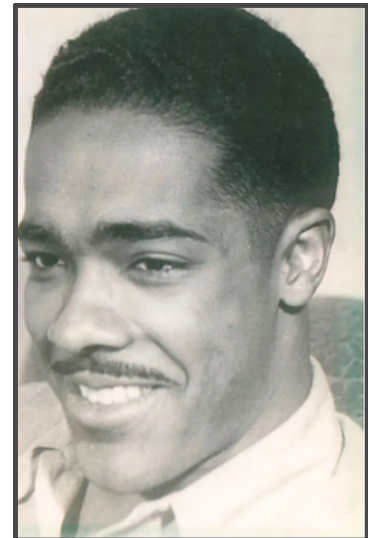
The Sister nurses lived in the historic antebellum mansion of Judge William Wilson that was used as a temporary headquarters by General W.T. Sherman and his troops during the Battle of Utoy Creek. The house was demolished in 2016, but the foundation remains visible from the street.



Judge William Wilson mansion circa 1962.
Photo courtesy of the Atlanta Journal Constitution.



To ensure that they had quick and easy access to the hospital, many of the doctors chose to live in the nearby Southwest communities. In 1962, Dr. Clinton Warner, an African American veteran, civil rights activist and founding member of the Morehouse School of Medicine, purchased a house in the previously all white subdivision of Peyton Forest from a financially strapped contractor who was unable to find a white buyer. After the sale to Dr. Warner, white residents grew fearful that more African Americans would move into their neighborhood. They asked Mayor Ivan Allen to erect a barricade along Peyton Road at Harlan Road to stop more African Americans from moving into the area.



Clinton E. Warner, Jr, MD - Photo
courtesy of The Atlanta Inquirer.

Ten of the 13 Atlanta Board of Aldermen voted in favor of the bill to build the barricade which Mayor Allen signed into law the same day, December 17, 1962. To discourage

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Did You Know? ...continued

African Americans from seeking more housing in Cascade Heights, Mayor Allen also announced that he intended to rezone about 800 acres of the commercial land north of Peyton Forest that was serving as a “racial barrier” to be a residential area for African Americans.

THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

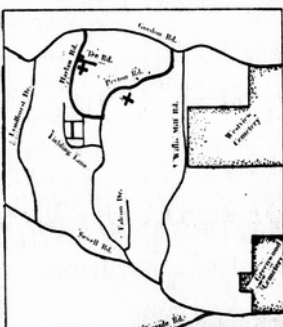
ATLANTA, GA., WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1962

Race Buffer Goes Up, Is Hit in Court

By TED SIMMONS and JACK STRONG

The City of Atlanta erected barricades across Peyton and Harlan Roads Tuesday, prompting the second court action in two days against an ordinance creating a racial buffer zone and setting off a “selective buying campaign” by Negroes against merchants who they said supported the ordinance.

The second court action came in the form of a petition filed in Municipal Court. The petition seeks to remove the barriers, contending they are a public nuisance.



X MARKS INDICATE LOCATION OF BARRIERS
They Will Cause Detours on Peyton and Harlan

ALL BUSINESSES

The “selective buying campaign,” officially launched Tuesday night at a meeting of the All-Citizens Committee, is aimed at all merchants and businesses in the West End section.

The Negroes said West End merchants had financially supported the move which resulted in the creation of the buffer zone. They also said West End merchants had not lived up to an agreement to end discrimination in employment practices.

HEARING TOMORROW

Residents living just south of the barriers say that closing the streets force them into taking such longer routes to work and shopping areas, adding as much as five or six miles to travel to nearby areas. Some say they now have to travel five miles to go from the Cascade Heights area to Gordon Road.

The Municipal Court petition was filed by Negro attorney D. L. Hollowell on behalf of white and Negro clients living in the affected area. Municipal Court Judge James L. Webb set a hearing for tomorrow.

The new barricade law resulted in immediate protests including the boycotting of businesses that supported keeping the barricade. The Ku Klux Klan burned a cross on the lawn of Rodney Mims Cook Sr, one of the three Aldermen who opposed the wall and who later introduced the resolution to remove the wall. On January 7, 1963, the Aldermen voted again to keep the barrier in place.



Atlanta Wall Protest - Photo courtesy of The Atlanta Inquirer.

Litigation followed immediately and on March 1, 1963, a Fulton County Superior Court judge ruled the barrier unconstitutional and the decision to erect the barricade “unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious.” Mayor Allen immediately had the barricade removed. He later acknowledged that his decision was “completely in error”. The barricade was only in place for 72 days, but the story of the Peyton Wall (which was sometimes called the Atlanta Berlin Wall) attracted national news and focused attention on race relations in Atlanta. By July 1963, only 15 white families remained in Peyton Forest. White flight from Cascade Heights and from Atlanta as a whole increased dramatically. During the 1960s and 1970s, approximately 160,000 white residents moved outside the city limits of Atlanta.

In 1972, Holy Family Hospital ceased operation. A group of investors, including Black doctors, acquired the hospital property for the purpose of establishing a new hospital. In 1975, the Joint Commission licensed the Southwest Hospital & Medical Center as a private, not-for-profit acute-care facility with 125 beds. Sometimes referred to as the Southwest Community Hospital and located at 501 Fairburn Road, the hospital had a fully operational emergency room with a medical staff of over 200 physicians specializing in different fields of medicine. The hospital and its staff were able to service a wide range of patients because they participated in a range of managed care programs and accepted a range of private health insurance plans.



Photo courtesy of the Atlanta Journal Constitution.

By the late 1990s, however, the hospital was struggling financially. Patients with private insurance were choosing to go to other Atlanta area hospitals. The bulk of the hospital's patients were uninsured, underinsured or enrolled in Medicaid or Medicare. After experiencing low reimbursements for its services, the hospital closed in 2005. It subsequently reopened without an emergency room but without more financial success, leading to another closure as its owners declared bankruptcy. In its last reiteration, Southwest Hospital opened with a new owner and a smaller footprint. It operated an outpatient center on one floor of the six-story building with only 20 beds, down from the licensed 125 beds; but the impacts of the 2008 recession forced the owners to close Southwest Hospital for good on January 16, 2009.

The 65-acre campus was sold to the Atlanta Center for Medical Research which moved its offices from Midtown Atlanta in October 2014, after a \$25 million renovation. ACMR is a research organization that conducts clinical trials for pharmaceutical companies and medical device firms and employees about 300 people.

On November 22, 2017, Doctors Memorial Park was opened at 500 Fairburn Road SW. The park is named in honor of the doctors who provided health care for underserved African American patients at Holy Family Hospital and Southwest Hospital & Medical Center from 1964 until 2009.