Thousands turned out in 1961 to inspect new hospital

The Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital was renamed last year to the William Osler Health Centre Georgetown Hospital campus.

Photo by Ted Brown

The doors of Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital were opened to accept patients on June 27, 1961.

At that time the million-dollar facility had a total of 64 beds— 42 medical/surgical, 14 obstetric and eight pediatric.

The first patient to arrive in the emergency department was 12-year-old Ed Roodzant and the first in-patient was Pauline Moore followed by Norene Marchand— who gave birth to the first baby born at the hospital, a son, Ron.

Prior to the opening, John Gunn, the hospital's first chair of the hospital board and a driving force in establishing the hospital, said in The Georgetown Herald "our hospital is a reality today as a result of the support given to the fundraising campaign early in 1960."

On the eve of the hospital opening, Gunn said that more than $318,000 had been raised for the hospital from the community. That was combined with funding from the federal and provincial governments— $2,000 per bed each and Halton County council which provided $6,000 per bed.

In The Herald, Gunn said the "reality of today marks the culmination of a suggestion made some six and one half years ago at a Chamber of Commerce meeting."

After looking at several sites for the hospital the Georgetown Hospital board decided on a 17-acre parcel on the Cleave farm which was adjacent to the new Park School.

Thousands of area residents turned out to inspect the new facility at an open house the weekend before the first patient was admitted to the hospital. Several dignitaries were also on hand for the official opening.

MP Sandy Best cut the ribbon across the main door and Dr. M.B. Dymond, provincial minister of health was the main speaker. MPP Stan Hall officiated at the opening.

Before the hospital opened, the town's few doctors sent patients to already overcrowded hospitals in Brampton and more often, Guelph.

Dr. Alan Thompson, who began practising in Georgetown in 1956, said the doctors at the time had to travel to Guelph at least once a day to check on patients and sometimes two and three times a day if there was a baby to be delivered.

He said, at the time, there wasn't even an X-ray facility in town.

The Herald reported when the hospital opened the best possible equipment had been acquired but more items were needed.

The newspaper reported for some time certain surgical procedures would have to be referred to larger centres until the hospital can afford "proper equipment for their performance locally."

When the hospital opened it was predicted that about 60 new jobs would always be open for workers each year at the hospital.

In 1998 as part of Ontario's hospital restructuring plan the Georgetown hospital became part of the William Osler Health Centre along with Brampton Memorial Hospital (formerly Peel Memorial) and Etobicoke Hospital.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer