

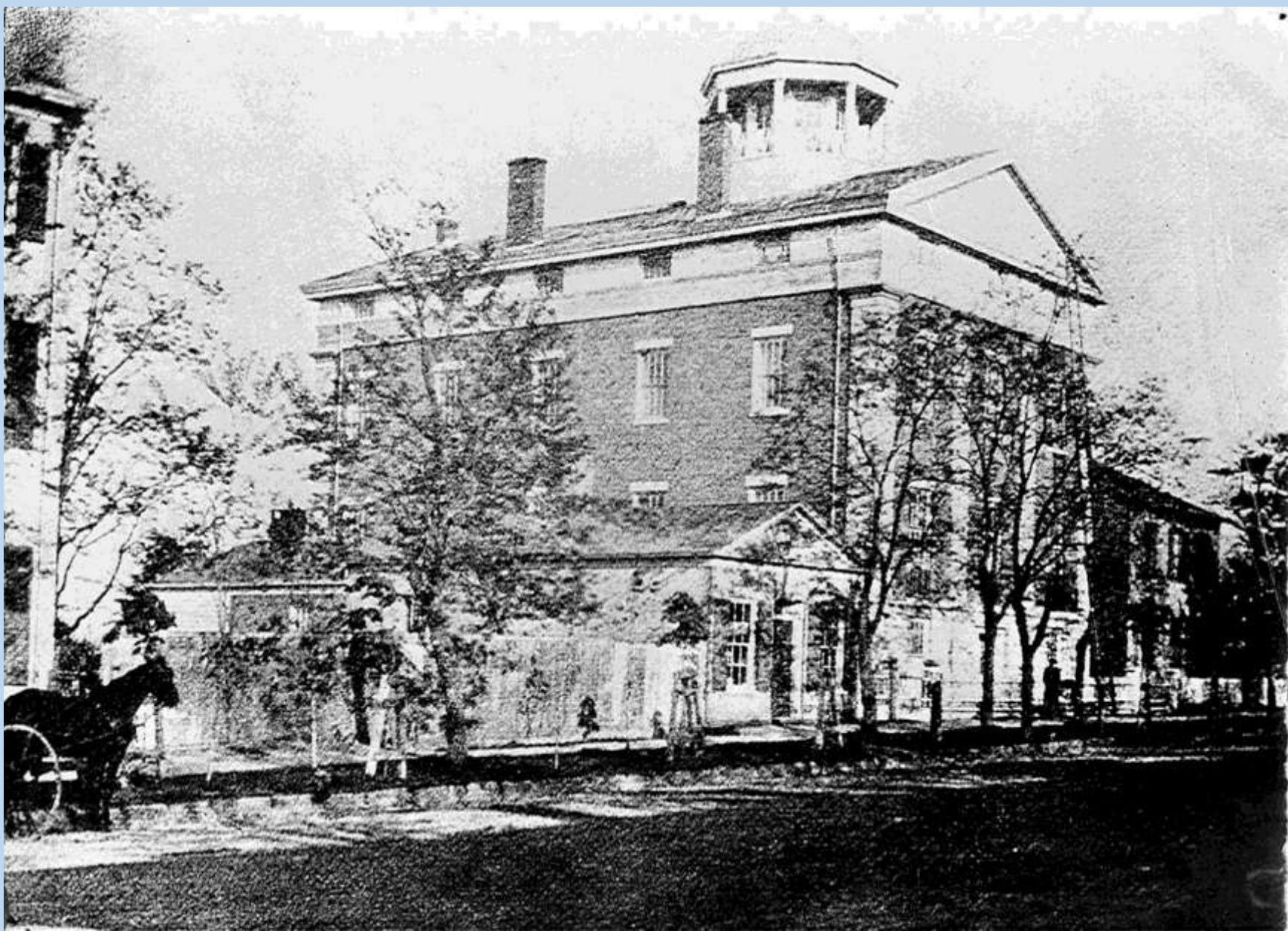
Medicine and Illness: Health Care in Geneva

The development of health care in Geneva followed national trends and the growth of the village. In the 19th century, physicians made home visits but with few medicines at hand. Residents struggled with the mysteries of contagious diseases in the 19th and 20th centuries that brought fear and death. Geneva was unusual in having a medical college and, indeed, in graduating the first woman in America to earn a medical degree. Though Geneva lagged behind other communities in establishing a hospital, today there is access to state of the art health care.



This 1798 illustration shows Geneva in its early years. The village center and many early streets were located on the hill above the lake. People believed the air was healthier than down by the lakeshore where residents often contracted “Genesee fever” which was malaria.

In the 19th century medical colleges were centered in urban areas. An exception was Fairfield Medical College (1812-1840) in Herkimer County, New York. It awarded over 600 medical degrees and many of the first teachers at Geneva Medical College (right) had studied at Fairfield.



Today the Finger Lakes Health System’s services include surgery, acute illness care, physical rehabilitation, and long-term care. Specialist practices include nephrology, podiatry, pediatrics, cardiology, orthopedics, and many more.

I'll Be There: Nursing Schools in Geneva

From 1898-1934 the Geneva Hospital ran a training school for professional nurses. It addressed the need for trained nurses but ended when administrators thought it was too expensive. Two decades later the Geneva Adult Education Program and Geneva General Hospital began a practical nursing school. Marion S. Whelan was the school's first teacher, administrator and director of admissions. Upon her retirement in 1975 the program was named in her honor as the Marion S. Whelan School of Practical Nursing (MSWSPN).

Since 1898 the nursing field has changed from taking temperatures to being important members of a patient care team. While licensed practical nursing is an entry level many MSWSPN graduates have gone on to registered nursing degrees and supervisory positions.



The Geneva City Hospital School of Professional Nurses (1898-1934) was a two and one-half year apprenticeship-based program. Students graduated with the equivalency of a Registered Nurse degree.



Originally from Auburn, Marion Whelan was a Franciscan nun for 17 years. She served in Geneva for nine years as a visiting nurse (in center of photo to the left) before starting the nursing school in 1956.

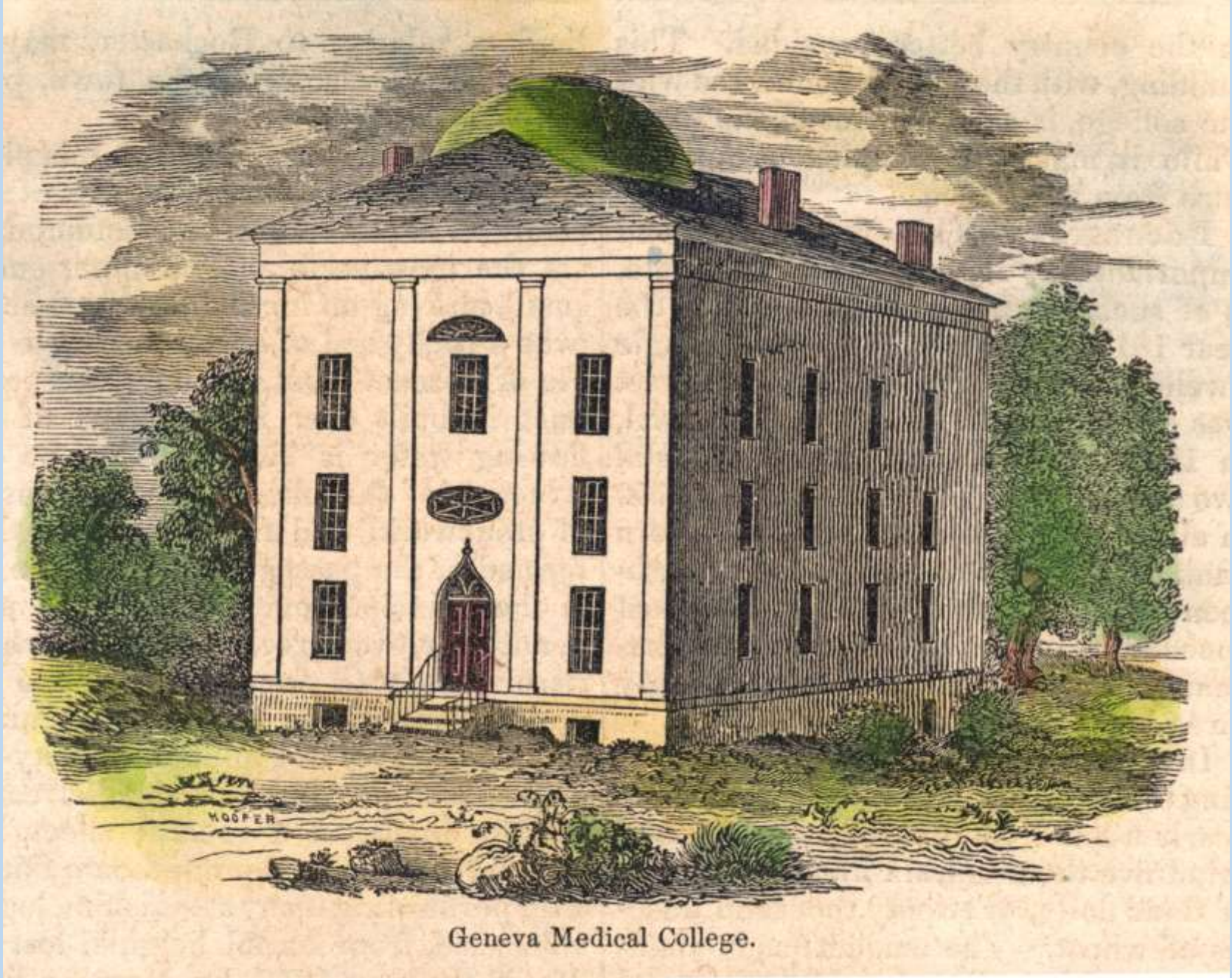
“Great school, they turned out great nurses and Miss Whelan would not tolerate anything different!!”
- 1971 graduate



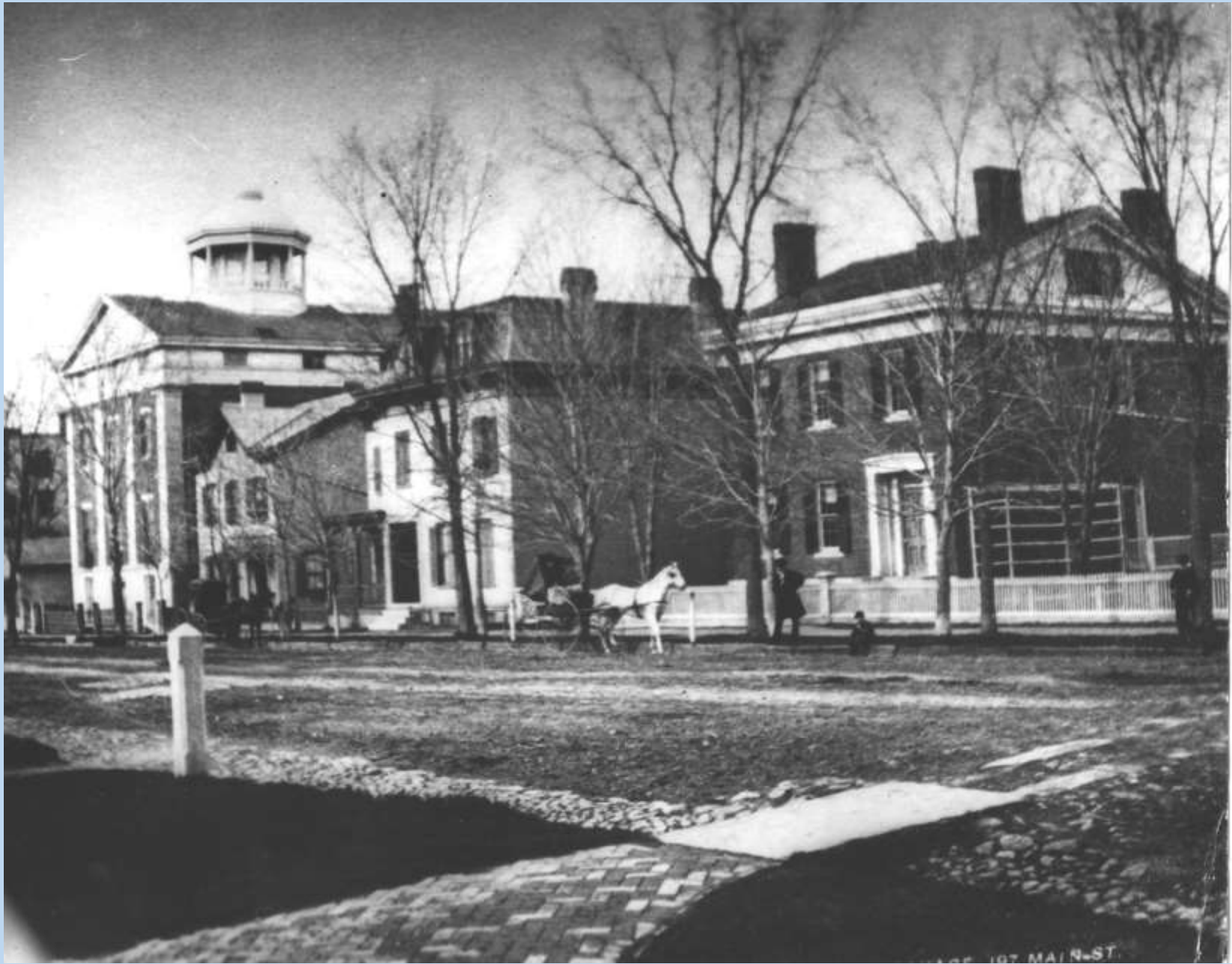
Since 1988 MSWSPN has been affiliated with Finger Lakes Community College and students earn 20 college credits which can set them on the path to becoming registered nurses.

Geneva Medical College

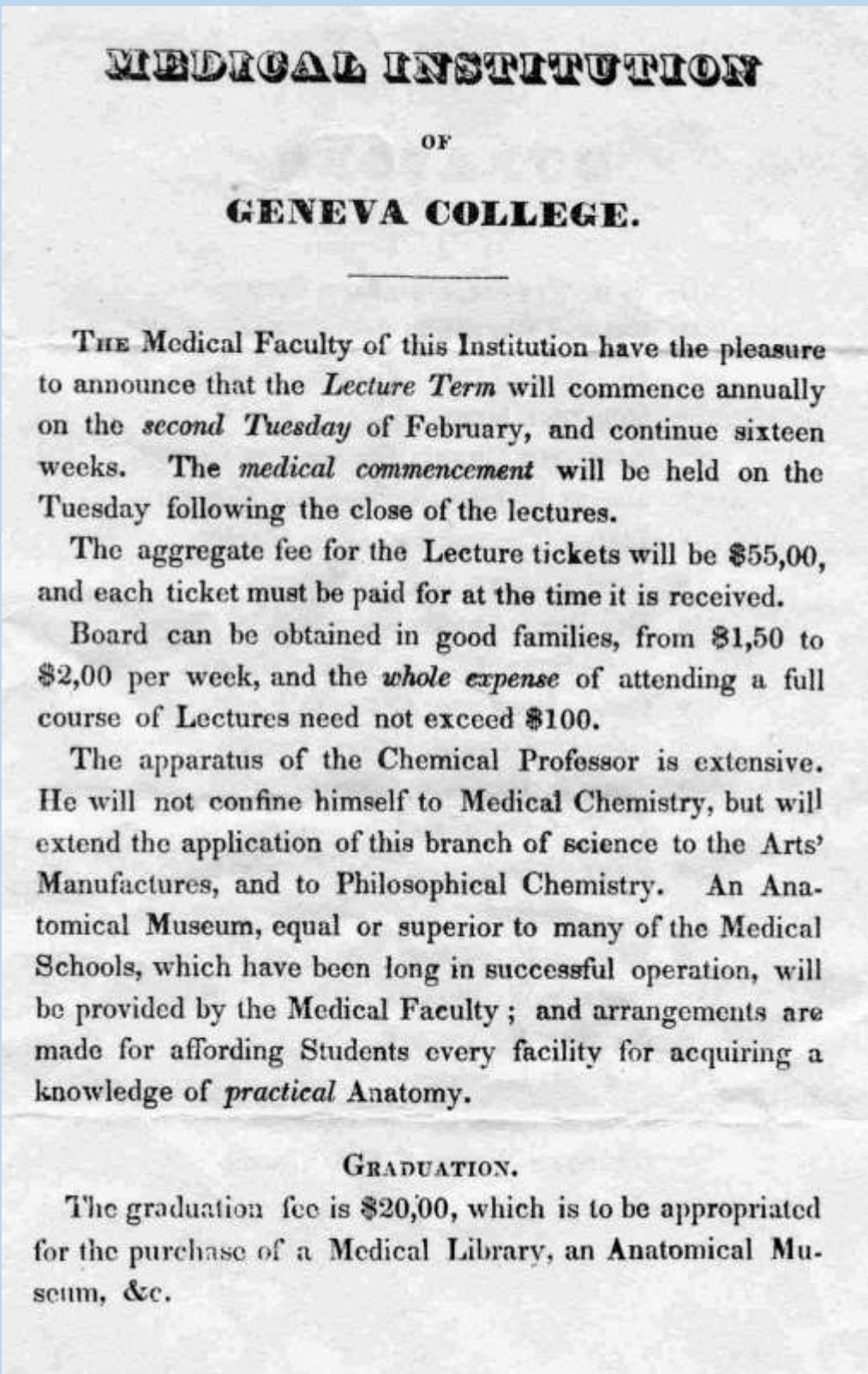
Geneva Medical College was organized in 1834 under the Geneva (now Hobart) College charter. Medical education was in its infancy and was usually a department of an established college in larger cities. Of almost 700 graduates Geneva’s claim to fame was Elizabeth Blackwell who, in 1849, became the first woman in America to receive a medical degree. In the 1850s medical schools in larger towns with teaching hospitals drew away students and faculty. In 1871 the medical faculty, books, and equipment moved to Syracuse University and became the foundation for The State University of New York Upstate Medical University. The medical college building burned in 1877.



Built in 1836 between Trinity and Geneva Halls of Geneva College, the Middle Building was the medical college’s first permanent home.



Geneva College became uncomfortable with the medical college and its cadavers in the center of campus. In 1841 a separate building was constructed near 493 South Main Street complete with domed skylight to illuminate the operating theater.



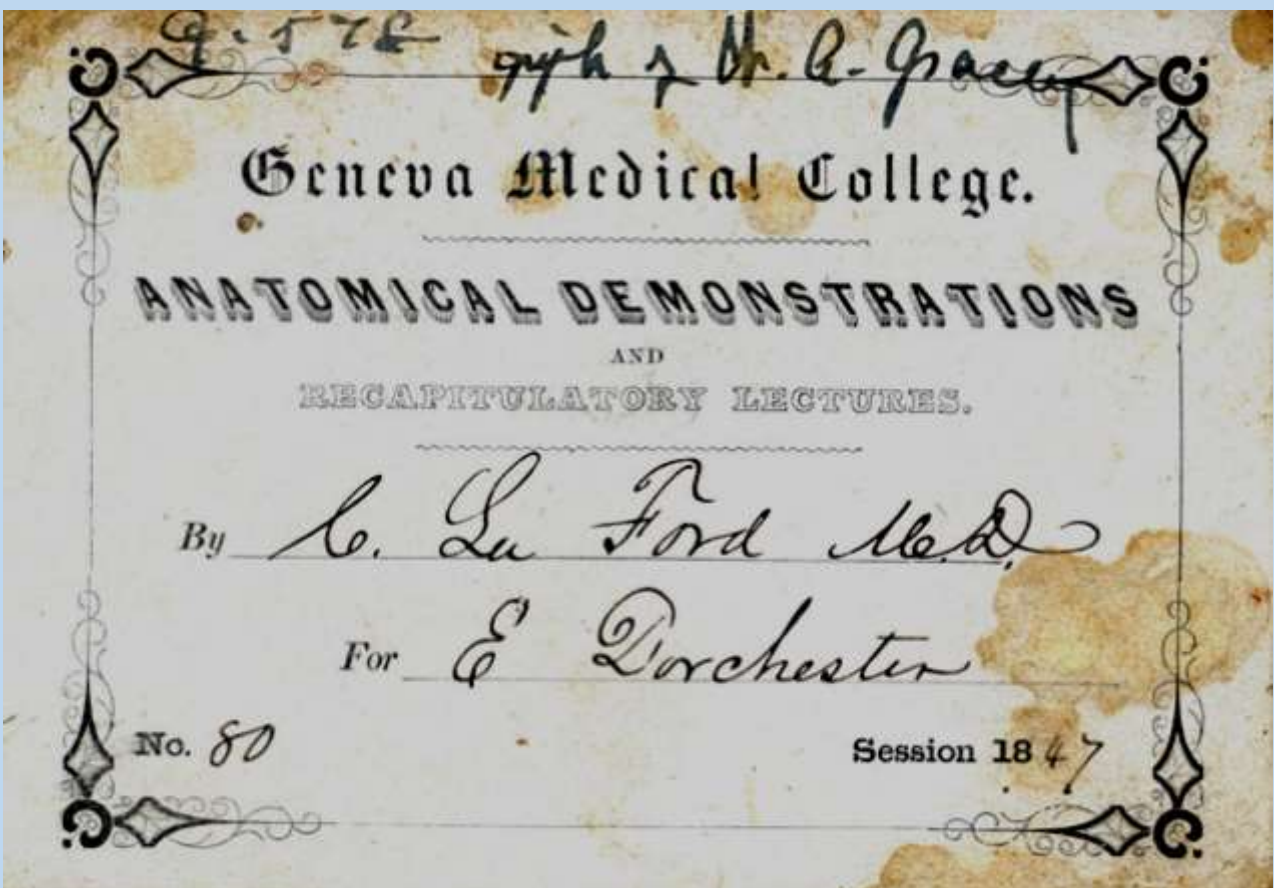
A 19th-century medical degree required completing two 16-week semesters, a thesis, and a three-year apprenticeship with a physician.



Born in England in 1821, Elizabeth Blackwell was a teacher and privately studied medicine before applying to medical schools. She was rejected by many schools before being accepted at Geneva in 1847. This commemorative statue by A.E. Ted Aub is on the quadrangle of Hobart & William Smith Colleges.

Sir, by the help of the Most High, it shall be the effort of my life to shed honor on this diploma.

- Elizabeth Blackwell,
Geneva Medical College
commencement, January 1849



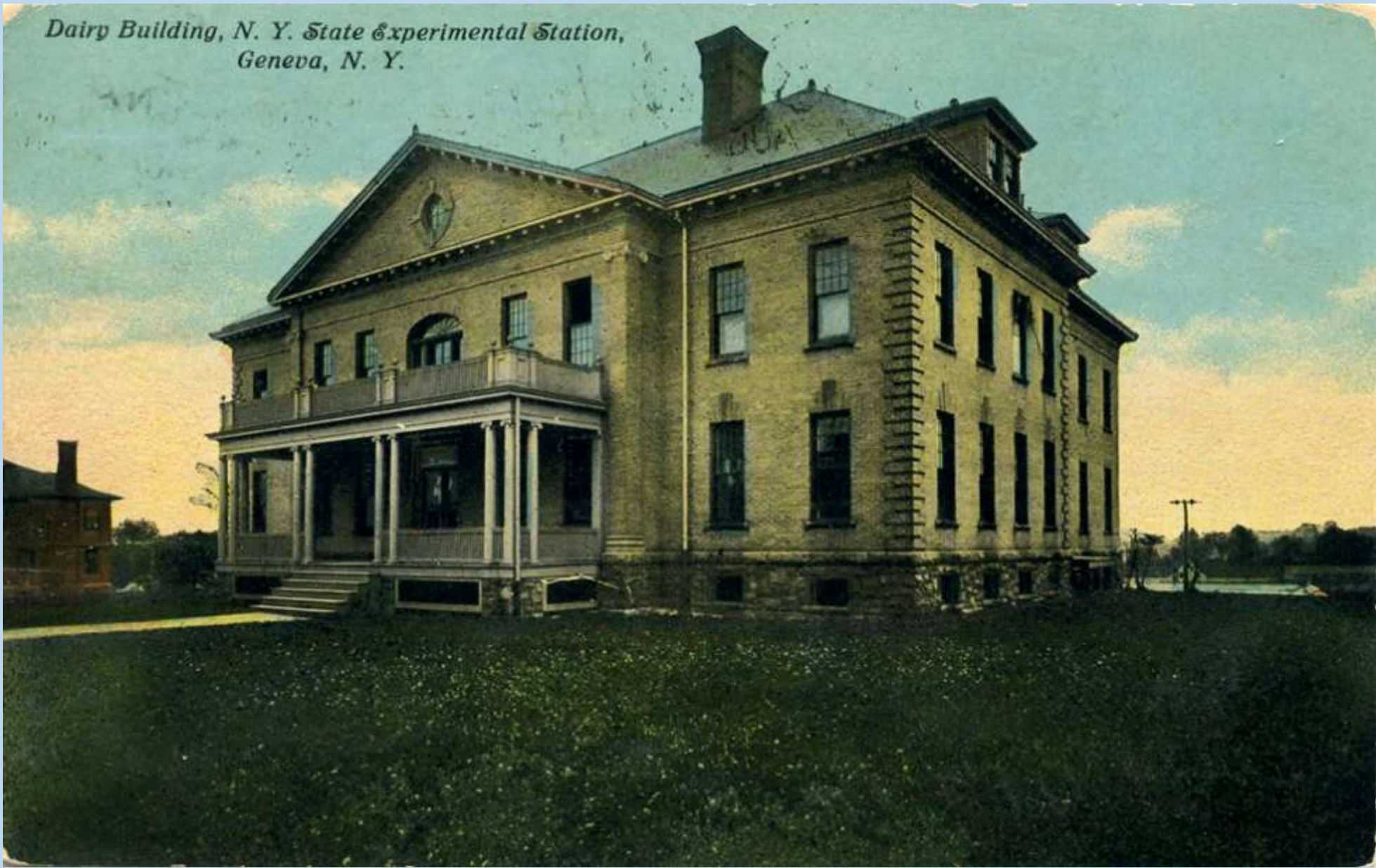
Students purchased tickets for each class lecture with the fees going directly to the teaching doctors.

For the Preservation of the Public Health

In 1832 the New York State Legislature passed “an act for the preservation of public health.” The law’s focus was preventing the entrance and spread of cholera in the state and was renewed in 1849. Established in 1877, Geneva’s board of health was concerned with “any pestilential or infectious diseases in the village.” As the understanding of how diseases were spread increased, so did the board’s oversight. Water, milk, and food were tested for bacteria and clinics were presented to treat diseases. Local businesses from plumbing to nursing homes were regulated for uniform quality.

Bacteriologists at the Agricultural Experiment Station helped discover how diseases such as tuberculosis and strep throat were transmitted in milk. In 1915 they began grading milk for the city of Geneva by counting bacteria in samples from each dairy farm. Dr. Robert Breed directed this effort and eventually convinced the city to hire a bacteriologist.

“The Breed procedure...helped to change milk from one of the most dangerous foods to one of the safest.”
- Dr. Don Splittstoesser, Cornell University



**The Killing and Maiming of
Children in Geneva by
DIPHTHERIA
Must Stop**

Practically ALL CHILDREN between the ages of six months and twelve years of age are susceptible to and are LIABLE to have that DREAD disease DIPHTHERIA and ALL these CHILDREN SHOULD have the three injections of TOXIN-ANTITOXIN on three different days, just one week apart.

**Diphtheria Is Still A Very
Fatal Disease**

HUNDREDS of THOUSANDS of CHILDREN have already been treated with TOXIN-ANTITOXIN. TOXIN-ANTITOXIN has proved itself safe.
TOXIN-ANTITOXIN, a few months after its use, gives

PROTECTION
that LASTS, probably, FOR LIFE

As a PARENT or GUARDIAN of one or more CHILDREN, their welfare, health and LIFE is your responsibility and for this reason it is YOUR DUTY to have your physician give your CHILDREN the THREE PROTECTIVE INJECTIONS against DIPHTHERIA or take YOUR CHILDREN to the public CLINICS that will be held for that purpose at

**The New York State Armory Main St.
City of Geneva**

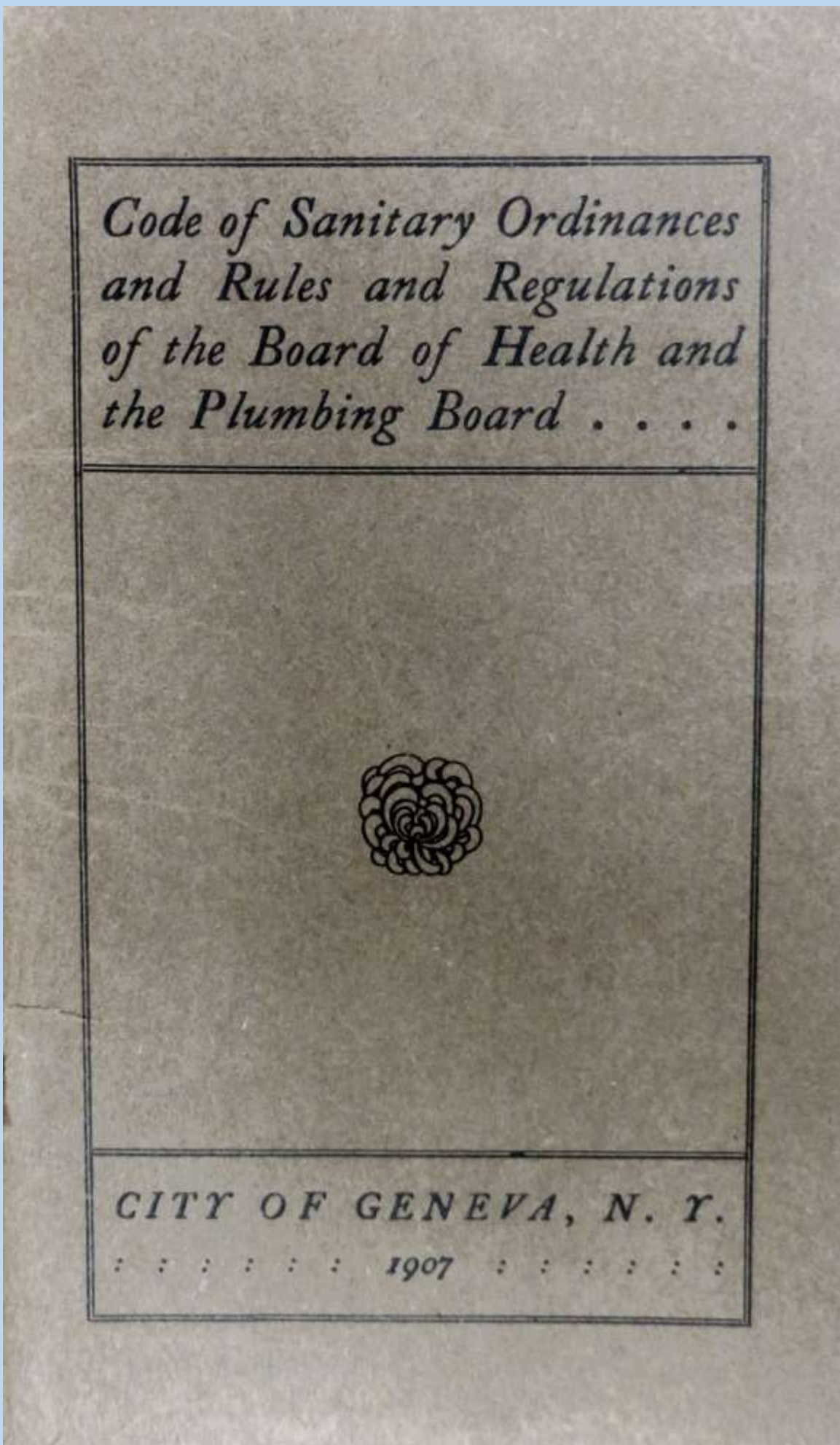
Wed. May 11 Wed. May 18 Wed. May 25

Between the hours of One and Five o'clock on the above afternoons
Secure a permit card from your SCHOOL NURSE or from the DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
YOUR DOCTOR WILL BE at the CLINIC to GIVE the PROTECTIVE INJECTIONS
YOUR CITY has given the MONEY to PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN from a FATAL DI-
SEASE

YOU CAN NOW STOP HAVING DIPHTHERIA IN GENEVA. DO YOUR DUTY
Have your CHILDREN GIVEN the THREE PROTECTIVE INJECTIONS of TOXIN-ANTI-
TOXIN DON'T GAMBLE WITH THEIR LIVES

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
of YOUR CITY

This dramatic flyer from 1927 illustrated the need to educate parents about the importance of vaccinations.



The Plumbing Code of 1907 required master plumbers to register with the Board of Health as well as approval of plans and inspection of work by the Plumbing Inspector.

Don't Fear the Reaper: Disease in America

In the 1700s and 1800s illness was frightening. People saw and experienced the effects of cholera, dysentery, and smallpox but did not know what caused them. Theories ranged from common sense to fantastic but basic hygiene and sanitation had yet to be linked to the spread of illness.

Local newspapers carried national and regional news of infectious outbreaks and there was a sense of dread as illnesses drew closer to Geneva. Articles counseling prevention appeared next to ads for patent medicines that promised to cure every illness and discomfort.

When I went off all were in good health and good heart. On my return find all sick except my wife...they have got a kind of billious intermittent fever, which is so prevalent that 3/4 of Geneva have it. Indeed it seems epidemic over the whole country with the ague and I am afraid it will always be so.

– Alexander Coventry, July 25, 1792

“Genesee fever” and ague were regional terms for malaria that plagued low-lying areas of the Finger Lakes.



Although smallpox vaccine was discovered in 1798, the disease did not disappear and was contagious. In 1898 the Joshua Simpkins theater company arrived in Geneva by train and were found to have smallpox. After being confined to the train they were transferred to a steamboat that was anchored away from the city.



Poliovirus is highly contagious and causes muscle weakness. In the 1950s vaccines were developed that largely eradicated the disease in America. A 1955 elementary school clinic included Stephen Sheets (young boy) and Beverly Sabin (with crutches).



Between October 1878 and January 1879 ten children from St. Peter's Episcopal Church died from diphtheria. This memorial window with ten lilies was funded by an Easter collection in 1879. *Courtesy of Neil Sjoblom*



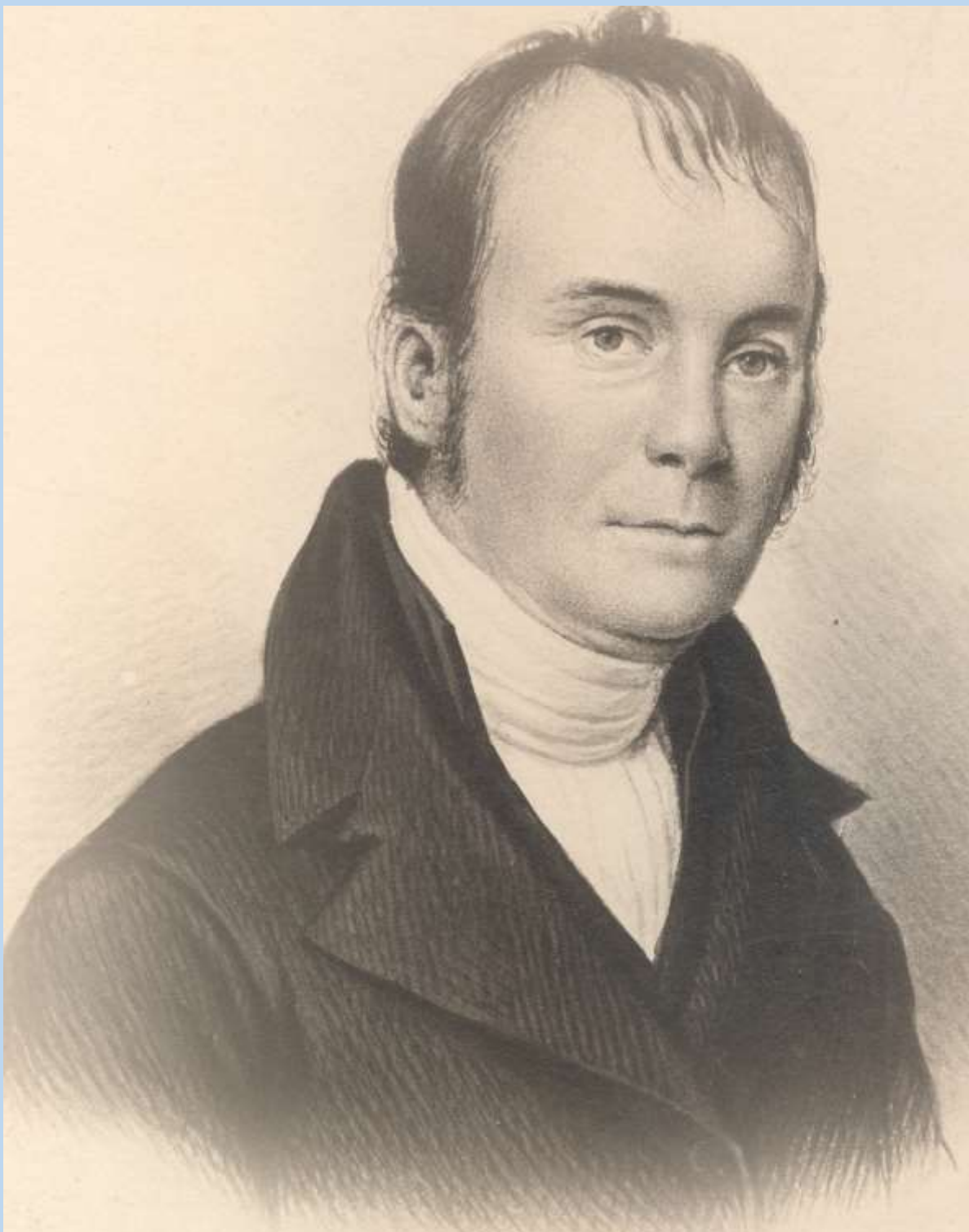
The 1918 H1N1 flu pandemic killed between 50 and 100 million people worldwide. In Geneva the worst month was October and fatalities included Frank Perry (above) who lived on Humbert Street.

Health Care in Geneva: Village to City

Physicians were among Geneva's first settlers. In 1790 Dr. William Adams came to the village of about 20 families and was soon joined by a young Dr. Andrews. They both died in 1795 during a dysentery epidemic.

Health care was in the home primarily by family members with visits from physicians. In the mid-1800s facilities began providing community care. The Geneva Water Cure and Hygienic Institute (1854 – 1914) helped invalids regain their health. The Church Home (1878 – 2001) provided elder care while the Church Home Hospital, established in 1886, brought the first trained nurses to the village.

Baby has diarrhea and looks pale—my precious little lamby—called Dr. Stevens who administered Rhubarb so have carried her all day long in my arms to quiet the pain.
- Adelaide Prouty, 1856



In 1792 Alexander Coventry purchased land on the east side of Seneca Lake that became part of Rose Hill Farm. One of the first physicians in the area, he mended injuries such as cuts and broken bones and tended to illnesses. His remedies consisted mostly of bleeding patients and prescribing laudanum which was a tincture of opium.

The Geneva Hygienic Institute on Pulteney Park was a residential spa for "the treatment of chronic disease." The program focused on proper diet, movement and massage, medicinal baths, and electricity to return health to invalids.

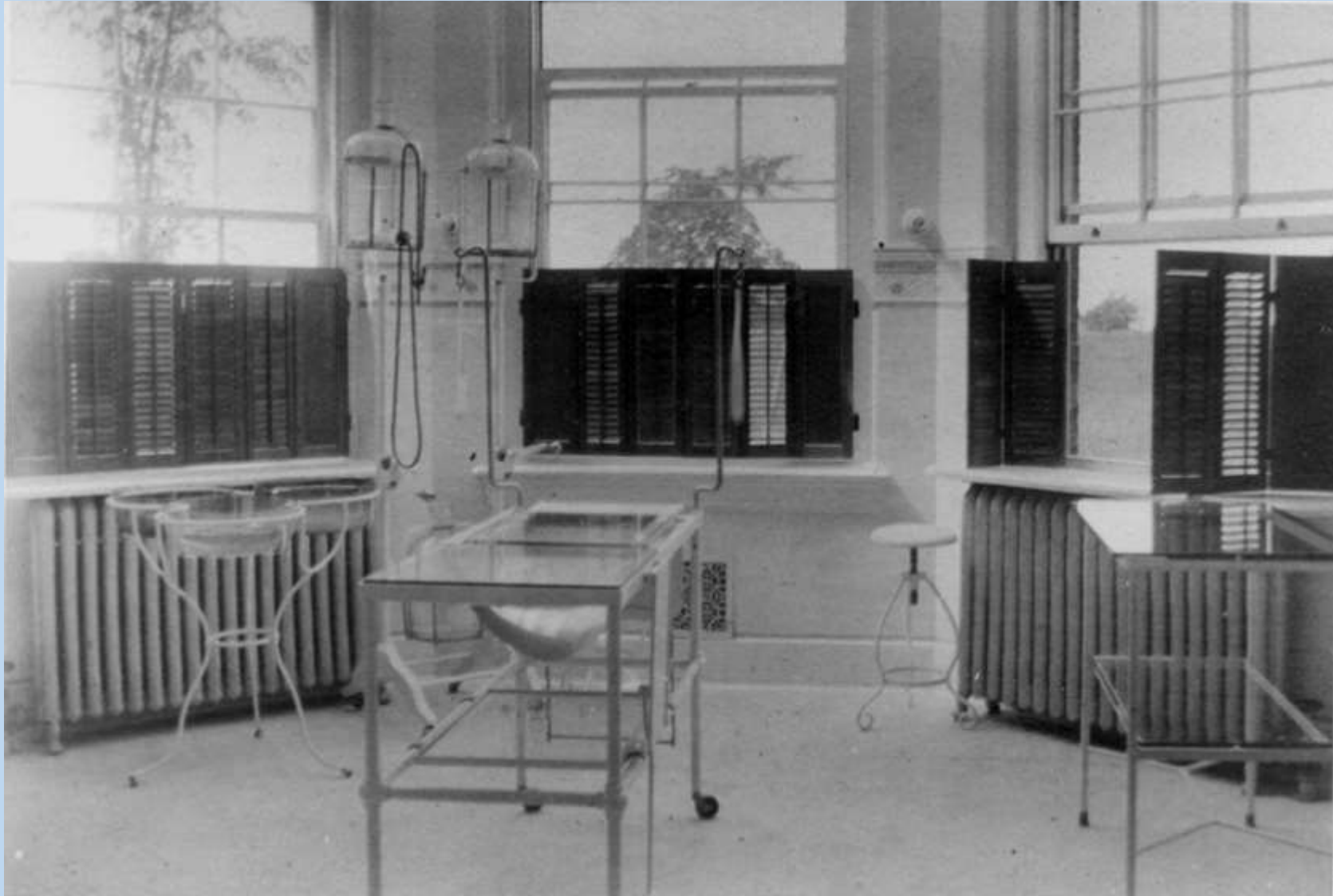


The Church Home on the Foster Swift Foundation was established "to provide maintenance for aged, infirm and indigent persons, and to carry out such other branches of charitable work as may hereafter be deemed expedient." The first building was on Pulteney Street on the present site of DeSales High School, it later moved to 600 Castle Street.

Health Care in Geneva: 20th Century and Beyond

By 1892 the Church Home Hospital was inadequate for the village’s growing population. The Medical & Surgical Hospital of Geneva was incorporated in March of that year. A community effort brought the facility to fruition. The estate of John Ditmars donated \$12,000, Arthur Rose and Francis Mason donated land, the Board of Women Managers did many fundraisers, and a house on North Main Street was auctioned, per the owner’s will, with proceeds going to the hospital.

Opened in 1898, the hospital has undergone many name changes and expansions. The Finger Lakes Health System now has facilities in Wayne, Seneca, and Yates counties and manages several nursing homes.



These are two views of the new hospital. The exterior image shows the new building with the one-story east wing. The interior photo is the first operating room—the natural light is a far cry from today’s surgical rooms.

WEEKLY BILL				
M/	ROOM OR WARD NO.		7	
TO GENEVA CITY HOSPITAL, DR.				
THIS BILL IS RENDERED TO INCLUDE SATURDAY				
BILLS ARE TO BE SETTLED SATURDAYS				
GENEVA, N. Y.,		January 12 1923		
ARRIVAL 1-7-23				
ROOM & SERVICE	5 DAYS	RATE	25.00	17 85
SPECIAL NURSE'S BOARD				
DRESSINGS				
PHARMACY				25
X-RAY				
MATERNITY ROOM				
OPERATING ROOM				5 00
TELEGRAMS & TELEPHONE				
AMBULANCE				3 00
LABORATORY				
G. U. ROOM				
TOTAL			26 10	



This 1930s view of North Street showed the recent west wing addition with the original hospital in the background. The first hospital was demolished in 1964 and the current facility has developed around the addition.

This 1923 hospital bill equaled a few weeks of groceries for a family. The patient would also have to be out of work or home for a week.

The late 20th century brought changes and challenges to the health care industry. Hospitals faced choices of growing, being merged with other institutions, or closing. Geneva General Hospital became Geneva Regional Health System and then Finger Lakes Health System. It offers specialized care as well as rural family health services.

