

Founding of Hamot Hospital

The history of Hamot Health Foundation began on February 7, 1881 with the founding of Hamot Hospital Association.

The hospital was named for Pierre Simon Vincent Hamot, a Frenchman who settled in Erie in 1805. P.S.V. Hamot was a successful businessman and an active member of the Erie community. In the early 1800s, he built a homestead for his family at the foot of State Street, overlooking the bay and Presque Isle on the south shore of Lake Erie.

After his death in 1846, his children and grandchildren continued his legacy of community involvement. One of their greatest gifts to Erie community was the donation of the Hamot Homestead for use as a general hospital to be called “Hamot.” The Hospital Association worked quickly to divide the building into five private rooms and three wards for men, women and sailors.

Once renovations were complete, the Hospital Association secured the services of a nurse named Irene Suttleff. In addition to her nursing duties, she was the hospital’s first superintendent, in charge of managing the hospital.

Hamot invited all local physicians to treat their patients at the new hospital, which opened its doors to the public on July 1, 1881.

Dr. David Hayes Strickland treated the hospital’s first patient, who was admitted on July 10, 1881.

Hamot’s Buildings and Grounds

With an initial capacity for 25 patients, the hospital quickly outgrew the original Hamot Homestead, due to the high demand for hospital-based healthcare in the late 1800s. In response, the hospital undertook the first of many expansion projects.

As Erie has grown through the years, so, too, has Hamot—from an 1800s family homestead to a modern healthcare facility fit for the 21st century.

Today, UPMC Hamot continues to expand to meet the growing needs of a growing community, signaling its ongoing commitment to the future of Erie.

Time Line of Buildings and Grounds Projects at Hamot:

Hamot’s First Major Addition 1888

Seldon-Scott Memorial Sections 1895

Hamot Hospital School of Nursing 1913

Private Pavilion 1914

Ward Wing – “Connecting Link” 1933

South Wing 1944

West Wing 1954

Main Wing 1960

North Complex 1960

Mental Health Center 1972
Professional Condominium 1974
South Complex 1977
Hamot House (renovated 1990-1991)
Surgery Center 2001
Heart Institute 2003
Women's Hospital 2011

Medical Staff and Services

Hamot's First Doctors 1881-1901

In July 1881, Hamot Hospital secured the services of four doctors:

- House Physician Dr. J.M. Lewis
- Consulting Physicians: Dr. Charles Brandes and Dr. Henry Andris Spencer
- Marine Hospital Service: Dr. David Hayes Strickland

There was no specialization within the small medical staff when the hospital opened in 1881. Treatment was given for all types of illness and disease, with or without the presence of a specialist.

Marine Hospital Service 1881-1901

Hamot provided medical treatment to the area's sailors through the Marine Hospital Service, a system in which the state reimbursed the hospital for their care. Beginning in 1881, the system continued throughout the 1910s.

Medical Education

Hamot began offering internship and residency programs at the hospital in the early 1900s. Throughout the years, Hamot has offered residencies in the areas of medicine, orthopaedic surgery, pathology, radiology, general surgery, urology, plastic surgery, family practice, colon-rectal surgery, psychiatry, clinical pharmacology, obstetrics and gynecology. Today, UPMC Hamot continues this tradition of education with residency programs in the areas of orthopaedics, neurology, emergency medicine and pharmacy, as well as an osteopathic internship.

Time Line of Medical Specialization at Hamot:

Eye and Ear 1883
Pathology 1902
Nose and Throat 1907
Obstetrics 1907
Oral Surgery 1907
Anesthesiology 1910
Radiology 1910
Pediatrics 1911
Orthopaedics 1919
Dermatology 1921
Psychiatry and Neurology 1921
Pulmonary Medicine 1925

Urology 1927
Gynecology 1931
Proctology and Colon & Rectal Surgery 1937
Neurosurgery 1947
Cardiovascular-Thoracic Surgery 1947
Cardiology 1949
Family Practice Department 1957
Plastic Surgery 1965
Emergency Medicine 1966
Gastroenterology 1975
Hematology and Oncology 1975
Infectious Diseases 1975
Nephrology 1975
Endocrinology 1979
Allergy 1983
Rheumatology 1983
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 1986
Palliative care 1998
Critical care 2001
Bariatric 2003
Hospitalist 2004

Nursing at Hamot

Irene Sutleff was Hamot's first trained nurse. In addition to managing the hospital as superintendent, she was also responsible for providing nursing care to all of its patients.

In the beginning, she did this with the help of only one assistant and the aid of volunteers from the hospital's Ladies Union Auxiliary Society.

In years to come, Hamot's superintendents hired local women to assist them in providing patient care.

Hamot Hospital Nursing School 1890-1976

To meet the growing demand for nurses in the hospital and in private homes throughout the region, Hamot Hospital established a training school for nurses in 1890.

Graduates of the school supplied the demand for trained nurses in the local hospitals and private physician offices, as well as in private homes, for many years.

The School of Nursing continued to be a vital part of Hamot until it closed in 1976. During its 86 years of operation, the school proudly graduated 1,674 students.

Hamot School of Anesthesia

The close of the School of Nursing in 1976 did not mean the end of nursing education at the hospital. Hamot established a school for nurse anesthetists in 1965. The school

continues to be a vital source for nurse anesthetists at Hamot and throughout the region.

Hamot Leadership

Hamot has also benefited from the work of many adept leaders throughout the last 125 years. In turn, administrators and board members alike have led the hospital through the various stages of its transition from a 25-bed facility based in a converted family Homestead to the nationally recognized medical center it is today.

From 1881 until 1916, trained nurses held the position of hospital superintendent and managed the operation of the hospital. After 1917, the hospital's superintendents were no longer nurses. Instead the position was filled by individuals trained specifically in hospital administration. This trend continued as the position continued to evolve into that of hospital director in 1930.

Through periods of war and peace, recession and prosperity, the hospital's administrators and board members continued to guide Hamot into the future.

By 1971, Hamot Hospital had outgrown the term "hospital." At that time, the organization assumed the name Hamot Medical Center as a more apt representation of the multiple and varied services provided.

In 1981, on the advent of its 100th anniversary, Hamot Health Systems became the parent organization for the medical center and its affiliates. At this time, the administrative position of director evolved to become president of the medical center. Several years later, Hamot Health Systems became Hamot Health Foundation, as it remains today.

Fundraising and Community Support

The historical record shows that members of the Erie community have always stepped up to the plate and done what was necessary to help ensure access to the best healthcare for themselves and their loved ones by providing financial support to Hamot.

The first demonstration of community support for the hospital occurred early in 1881, with the donation of two-thirds interest in the Hamot property from the heirs of P.S.V. Hamot. From there, local support for the hospital's founding and continued growth and improvement escalated through the years.

Local businesses donated generously to fundraising campaigns with the knowledge that investing in Hamot meant investing in the health of their own employees.

Hamot's employees also donated to these campaigns, a demonstration of their support for the hospital's mission and vision to best serve its patients. Other philanthropic members of the Erie community have also stepped forward again and again to help the medical center in times of need.

In addition, several groups have aided the medical center through their fundraising and volunteering efforts. The Ladies Union Auxiliary Society formed in the months before the hospital opened in 1881 and continued into the 1910s.

The Hamot Aid Society was founded in 1906. For the last 100 years, this group of local women has served Hamot through major fundraising campaigns and invaluable volunteer work. For 25 years, Second Century Fund has guided community support of the hospital and enabled the funding of many valuable projects and programs. Much credit is due to these groups for Hamot's success.