

## History of Jasper Memorial Hospital

In 1944, at a local program of the Monticello Kiwanis Club, a survey was made among the members as to the most-needed improvements in our community. A large majority of the members voted that a hospital should be Jasper County's number one post-war project.

In response to this need, the Public Affairs Committee of the Kiwanis Club chartered the Jasper Memorial Hospital on December 22, 1945. The incorporators were G.S. Ballard, J. Fred Benton, J.L. Benton, Jr., L.O. Benton, Jr., Troy Ellis, J.E. Hecht, O.F. Holland, W.H. Key, E.M. Lancaster, and S.J. Smith, Jr. Herschel Allen and E.C. Kelly were named co-treasurers of the hospital funds. This group, assisted by many others, started soliciting gifts to the Jasper Memorial Hospital. By December 31, 1945 they had received \$6,700 in donations. The solicitation of gifts continued all during 1945 and by December 30, 1946 Jasper Memorial Hospital had \$21,700 in its treasury.

This amount fell short of the original goal of \$50,000, and the solicitors had become wary of their task of begging. Early in 1947, Mr. James T. Benton offered to donate \$10,000 to the Hospital, provided other interested citizens would secure additional donations of \$20,000. This, with the money in the treasury, would reach the \$50,000 goal originally set for funds to build the Hospital. By December 31, 1947, the people of the County, former residents, and friends had raised approximately \$25,000, more than enough to secure the offer made by "Uncle Jimmy Benton."

While we had been slowly raising the money to build the hospital, construction costs had increased by leaps and bounds, and the original goal of \$50,000 now seemed inadequate. Other communities were finding the same difficulties of high construction costs and there was talk of federal and state aid to build rural hospitals. Incorporators of Jasper Memorial Hospital decided wisely to postpone any construction until it became clear that we could receive federal and state aid. The Hill-Burton Act was passed by Congress, granting federal aid in the construction of rural hospitals, and similar aid was proposed by the State of Georgia.

The Georgia Legislature met in January 1949 and adopted legislation providing for state aid in construction of rural hospitals. To comply with the provisions of this legislation, it was necessary to change the form of the organization from a chartered organization known as "Jasper Memorial Hospital, Inc.," to the "Jasper County Hospital Authority." The Board of Commissioners of Jasper County, composed of E.F. Perry, Exell Goolsby and M.L. Clay, created the Jasper County Hospital Authority by proper resolution on June 29, 1949, and on that same date we were assured of sufficient aid from the state and federal governments to construct a hospital.

Early in the fall of 1949, architects were employed, and the site was selected for the hospital. The plans were completed in the early months of 1950 and bids for the construction of the hospital were opened on October 31, 1950, with a total expenditure for building and equipment of approximately \$265,000. On December 30, 1951 Jasper Memorial Hospital was dedicated and opened its doors to the community.

Never in the history of the county has any public improvement received such unanimous support from so large a part of our population. This facility has incurred no bonded indebtedness on the county, as the local share of the cost has been donated by the residents of the county, former residents, and friends.

The members of Jasper County Hospital Authority are grateful to everyone that has had a part in building this needed facility for our community.