In the mid-1800's, Paterson's locomotive, textile, and silk mills employed many immigrants from Ireland, England, Germany, Scotland, and France - among other countries - who thronged to this manufacturing city. In this setting, amidst the crashing sound of the Great Falls, the chatter of different languages on the streets, and the smoke from the local industries, laborers and poor people often had nowhere to turn when they were ill or injured. On September 8, 1867, at the request of Dean McNulty, a Paterson Priest, Sister Ann Cecilia Hartnett and four other Sisters of Charity - whose identities were not recorded - created St. Joseph's Hospital in a small frame house on Church Street, Paterson.

The only hospital in Paterson and one of four Catholic hospitals in the state, St. Joseph's had just 12 beds, and the Sisters maintained this facility by taking in laundry, farming, and begging at factory gates. A year later, they purchased the Fonda house on Main Street, where St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center still stands. The intervening years have brought vast expansion to St. Joseph's.

Now a 651-bed medical center, St. Joseph's encompasses additional facilities in Passaic, Essex and Bergen Counties. For over 140 years, whether the task was to aid those who were hurt in the natural disasters and other emergencies that struck Paterson, to heal the afflicted during epidemics, or to deliver babies and provide maternal care, the hospital has remained committed to the fundamental values of the Sisters of Charity: dignity, justice, excellence and stewardship.

St. Joseph's has, in fact, been administered by nine Sisters of Charity in all, but detailed information was not available on five of these sisters: Sr. Ann Cecilia Hartnett (1867 - 1868), Sr. Mary Margaret Clark (1868 - 1874), Sr. Mary Assissium Crolty (1874 - 1875), Sister Helen Teresa Lawless (1919 - 1924), and Sr. Anna Rita McHugh (1939 - 1953). Mother Elizabeth Ann

Seton and Mother Mary Xavier were instrumental in the growth of the Sisters of Charity community.

For many years, the Sisters of Charity were too modest to maintain a history of their accomplishments; they felt that only God need be witness to their deeds. Nevertheless, we wish to pay homage to these less-well known sisters, too. While leadership is most evident among CEOs and board chairmen, St. Joseph's could not have evolved into one of the largest and most highly regarded hospitals in New Jersey without the devoted involvement of its thousands of employees, friends, donors, volunteers, auxilians, students, vendors and especially the millions of patients who have entrusted their lives to our care.