1846 – St. Luke’s Hospital is founded October 18 by the Reverend William Augustus Muhlenberg, DD, pastor of the Church of the Holy Communion.

1847 – Muhlenberg lights the first Christmas tree for poor children in New York City at the Church of the Holy Communion.

1849 – Muhlenberg begins a Fresh Air Fund. Said by his biographer (Ayres) to have been the first of such funds “in name and fact,” it remains active through at least the late 1870s.

1850 – St. Luke’s Hospital incorporates, April 25.

1855 – The Woman’s Hospital in the State of New York is founded and opens, with J. Marion Sims, MD, its Gynecological Surgeon. The first American institution of its kind, Woman’s Hospital merges with St. Luke’s in 1952.

1857 – St. Luke’s Hospital’s chapel opens to the public for Sunday services on May 21.

1858 – St. Luke’s opens to patients, May 13; its location is Fifth Avenue on the land between 54th and 55th Streets.

1859 – A policy of accepting tuberculosis patients is established (at the time, ‘consumptives’ often had limited or no access to hospital care).

1861 – St. Luke’s devotes nearly half its capacity—100 beds—to sick and wounded Civil War soldiers.

1869 – The Century Fund is established to help prevent an accumulation of annual debt.

1874 – Hospital Sunday, a fund-raising program, is established.

1877 – Muhlenberg dies, April 8.

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1880 – Initiated by St. Luke’s Hospital, the Hospital Saturday and Sunday Association, a citywide fund-raising group, is formed. Out of this body eventually grows the Greater New York Hospital Association and the United Hospital Fund.

1884 – Robert Abbe, MD, joins the staff. Surgeon, radiologist, colleague and friend of Mme. Curie, Abbe is widely credited with founding radium therapy in the United States. He pioneers in many types of surgical procedures, in particular plastic surgery, and including the use of catgut sutures in surgery. He remains at St. Luke’s until his death in 1928.

1888 – St. Luke’s School of Nursing is founded and opens. For 86 years, the school provides training for professional nursing.

1893 – Former members of the house staff form an Alumni Association; it is eventually renamed, The Society of the Alumni of St. Luke’s Hospital of New York City.

1896 – The hospital is relocated to 113th Street between Amsterdam Avenue and Morningside Drive.
  – St. Luke’s purchases its first X-ray equipment, just a short time after Röntgen discovers X-ray.


1898 – St. Luke’s opens and sets aside 30 beds for the use of soldiers and sailors during the Spanish-American War.

1906 – The Plant Pavilion opens, the gift of Margaret J. Plant.

1910 – Hans Zinsser, MD, co-authors a textbook of bacteriology. In subsequent editions retitled Zinsser Microbiology, it remains the classic text in the field for decades.
  – St. Luke’s enters into an agreement with Columbia University for bedside teaching of its medical students in the hospital’s wards.

1911 – The Travers Pavilion opens, the gift of Mrs. John G. Heckscher.

1912 – St. Luke’s turns over an entire ward to the care of Titanic survivors, who arrived in New York City on April 18. It also commits four ambulances, doctors and nurses directly to Pier 54, where the survivors disembarked.

1914 – The Social Service Department opens.
  – The Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Wards open.
1917 – Following America’s entry into World War I, St. Luke’s opens a “Military Ward” for the care of recruits, soldiers and sailors. It also conducts routine physical examinations of recruits, provides clinical instruction for newly enlisted naval surgeons, and instructs Army and Navy medical officers in roentgen techniques. Over 200 of its staff enlist for active duty.

St. Luke’s attending surgeon Dr. Henry H.M. Lyle serves as Chief Medical Officer of American Ambulance Hospital B in Juilly, France and later as Chief Surgeon of Ambulance d’Annel, Longueil, France. He also organizes Evacuation Hospital No. 2, which serves in several locations in France. He later is appointed chief consulting surgeon to the 77th Division and then Director of Ambulances and Evacuation of the Wounded for the First Army. In 1918, having achieved the rank of colonel, he is decorated with the Distinguished Service Medal.

1922 – St. Luke’s institutes radio reception for patients; it is among the first hospitals in New York City to do so.

1925 – Mary Breckinridge, a 1910 graduate of the School of Nursing, establishes the now world-famous Frontier Nursing Service. Begun as a means of bringing nursing care to isolated areas of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Appalachia, the nurses initially travel on horseback. The service currently provides comprehensive family-centered health care.


1928 – The Scrymser Pavilion opens, the gift of Mrs. James (Mary Catherine Prime) Scrymser.

1930 – Mather Cleveland, MD, joins the staff and establishes the first orthopedic department incorporated in a general hospital in New York City.

1934 – Morris K. Smith, MD, an intern at St. Luke’s in 1911, joins the staff. Surgeon, member of multiple professional societies, and generous contributor to the literature, he is acclaimed for his service during World Wars I and II. Among other work, he serves as Surgical Consultant to the 3rd Army in France and Germany. He is awarded the Bronze Star.


1937 – The 13-story art deco Nurses’ Residence opens, the gift of Mary Ann White Fitzgerald in memory of her late father, Eli White.

1938 – Pediatric patients are assigned a full-time teacher by the New York City Board of Education; the program lasts into the 1980s.

1939 – Morris K. Smith, MD, is awarded the Distinguished Service Medal.

1940 – St. Luke’s surgeons Henry Lyle, MD, and Alexander Ada, MD, examine the first patient who is to receive a bone plate for a diaphyseal fracture.

1946 – Metropolitan Life Insurance Company provides extensive coverage for the medical care of World War II veterans.

1947 – David Bosworth, MD, first describes internal splinting as a method of treating metacarpal fractures. He goes on to design Bosworth screws for acromioclavicular separation and the Bosworth technique for insertion of bone pegs. In 1947, he describes a specific type of fracture of the distal fibula named the Bosworth
fracture. In 1949, he pioneers in the surgical treatment, including spinal fusion, for tuberculosis of the spine. (This takes place before anti-tubercular drugs become available.)

1938 – Urology Department opens with 24 beds.

1939 – St. Luke’s acquires a laminagraph, an X-ray machine that makes radiography of body tissue possible at any desired depth. At the time, it is the first and only unit in New York State, one of only nine in the USA, and one of only 14 in the world.

– The Board of Managers establishes the position of Director of Religious Activities and subsequently appoints Rev. Otis Radcliffe Rice as director. Under his direction, the department is said to have become a model for planning hospital religious departments throughout the country.

1940 – By request of the surgeon general, St. Luke’s begins assembling the Second Evacuation Hospital for service in World War II. Staffed by St. Luke’s MDs and nurses, the mobile unit serves abroad in seven different countries.

– A new state-of-the-art Physical Therapy Department opens. Serving all medical divisions, it registers 20,000 patient visits by the end of its first year.

1942 – The Blood and Plasma Bank opens; the suite of rooms includes blood testing and plasma processing facilities.

1947 – Columbia affiliation signed. The formal agreement provides for St. Luke’s to give clinical instruction and practice to senior medical students, while Columbia is to provide advanced instruction in the basic sciences to St. Luke’s house officers pursuing advanced training.

1949 – Poliomyelitis service inaugurated. When New York City’s two contagious diseases hospitals (Willard Parker and Kingston Avenue) become overwhelmed with patients, St. Luke’s—unique among the city’s voluntary hospitals—accepts and treats the overflow.

1951 – Frederick Thompson, MD, develops the Thompson prosthesis. Initially used to treat arthritic hips and later fractures, it replaces the femoral head with a metal alloy and is the precursor of the modern total hip replacement.

1952 – St. Luke’s merges with the Woman’s Hospital, forming St. Luke’s Hospital Center.

1953 – A.L. Loomis Bell, Jr., MD, becomes director of the cardiopulmonary laboratory.

1954 – The Clark Building opens, the gift of Mrs. J. Ambrose (Florence Stokes) Clark.
1955 – Richard B. Stark, MD, joins the staff of St. Luke’s and establishes the Division of Plastic Surgery as well as the internationally renowned Cleft Palate Clinic.

1956 – Hugh Fitzpatrick, MD, performs the first open heart repair of a septal defect in New York City.

1957 – Theodore VanItallie, MD, returns to St. Luke’s Hospital to chair the Department of Medicine and to advance St. Luke’s basic and clinical research.
– The Stuyvesant Pavilion opens, the gift of Augustus Van Horne Stuyvesant, Jr.

1960 – Drs. VanItallie and Sami Hashim discover and publish use of cholestyramine in the treatment of hypercholesterolemia and primary biliary cirrhosis. This is the first such drug developed to lower cholesterol.

1965 – The Woman’s Hospital Division is relocated to Amsterdam Avenue at 114th Street, its fourth and final location.

1967 – Robert Zickel, MD, describes a new fixation device for subtrochanteric femur fracture. This “Zickel nail” is the precursor of the intramedullary devices in use today.

1968 – John Bertles, MD, director of the Division of Hematology, and another investigator are first to describe red cells from individuals with sickle cell disease that remain sickled even when oxygen levels are restored. Those cells are termed “irreversibly sickled cells.”

1969 – Lajos von Micsky, MD, becomes chief of the Ultrasonic Division. An obstetrician/gynecologist by training, Dr. von Micsky pioneers in the development and use of ultrasound and ultrasound equipment, in particular devising a number of abdominal scanners. In 1963, he establishes St. Luke’s bioacoustical laboratory.
– J. William Fielding, MD, and George Van B. Cochran, MD, perform biomechanical studies on instability of the upper cervical spine that lead to understanding the role of the ligaments in that area. As a result, Dr. Fielding popularizes and improves surgical techniques for cervical spine fusion.

1970 – Richard McCray, MD, performs what is thought to be the first endoscopic gastric biopsy in the United States.
– The first successful machine preservation of a kidney in New York for transplantation is done at St. Luke’s
– George Green, MD, begins the coronary surgery program; two years earlier, he develops and performs the first coronary artery bypass surgery using the internal thoracic artery (ITA).
1971 – Columbia University affiliation expands. The new “full affiliation agreement” gives Columbia the opportunity “to broaden [the] clinical and research training of students” and allows St. Luke’s “the further development of the highest possible standards of patient care, community service and research which will result from the achievement of university hospital status.”

– Robert McCabe, MD, describes the successful sequence of cadaver kidneys obtained at one hospital, preserved at a second, and subsequently transplanted at a third. He thus describes modern renal transplant programs involving multiple medical institutions.

1974 – Robert Neuwirth, MD, chair of obstetrics and gynecology, performs the first hysteroscopic resection of uterine submucus myomas in the world.

– A modern neonatal unit is established under Farrokh Shahrivar, MD.

1975 – The first NIH-funded obesity research center in the United States is founded at St. Luke’s by Theodore VanItallie, MD

– St. Luke’s establishes the first hospital-based hospice program in the United States under the direction of Chaplain Carlton Sweetser and Samuel Klagsbrun, MD.

1976 – The Patient Representative program is established.

1977 – The rape intervention program, which later grows into the Crime Victims Treatment Center, is established and goes on to serve as a model for other programs around the country.

1979 – St. Luke’s Hospital Center merges with the Roosevelt Hospital, forming St. Luke’s-Roosevelt Hospital Center.

– The Sickle Cell Center opens under the direction of Doris Weathers, MD. It becomes an important referral center for the Harlem community.


1982 – Michael Grieco, MD, and Michael Lange, MD, publish the first recognition of an unexplained immunological deficit in homosexual men, later discovered to be HIV.

1983 – St. Luke’s is designated a 911 Trauma Center, one of only four in Manhattan.

1985 – Robert B. Case, MD, publishes a landmark study on Type A behavior vis-à-vis survival after acute myocardial infarction.
– Airlie Cameron, MD, presents a 15-year follow-up study on bypass surgery using the internal thoracic artery graft. The first of its kind, the study is published in 1986. A 20-year follow-up study is published in 1995.

1990 – Global endometrial ablation with thermal balloons for the treatment of menstrual bleeding is developed by Robert Neuwirth, MD.

1992 – A new main hospital, the Babcock Building, opens.

1997 – St. Luke’s-Roosevelt enters into a partnership with Beth Israel Medical Center, forming Continuum Health Partners.


2000 – The Morningside Clinic, the new home for HIV outpatient services at St. Luke’s Hospital, opens.

2008 – St. Luke’s celebrates its 150th anniversary of service to patients. (The hospital is founded in 1846 and opens to patients in 1858.)