

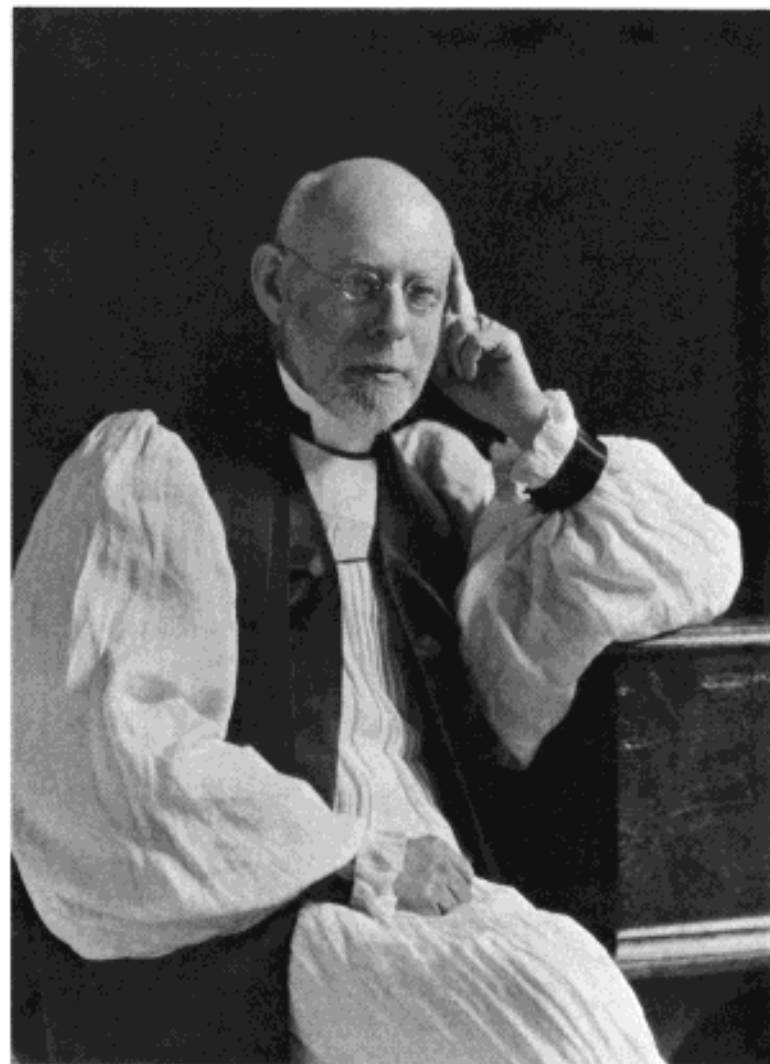


THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

OF

ST. LUKE'S-IN-THE-DESERT





The Right Reverend Julius W. Atwood

## THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF ST. LUKE'S-IN-THE-DESERT

### *EARLY YEARS*

St. Luke's-in-the-Desert tubercular sanitarium opened on February 5, 1918, in answer to an acute need in the Tucson community — to provide hospital and convalescent care for men of limited means, who desperately needed an opportunity to regain their health in the warm, dry climate of Arizona. Undertaken as a project in 1916, more than two years of effort preceded the opening of the modest new facility.

St. Luke's was the humanitarian dream of a practical man, the Right Reverend Julius W. Atwood, D.D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Missionary District of Arizona. He had been consecrated in Trinity Church, Columbus, Ohio, on January 18, 1911. Shortly thereafter he moved



to Arizona Territory, on account of his wife's health. In his new position he proved an indefatigable worker and fund raiser.

In the early years of Arizona statehood, several tragic cases of penniless and lonely men, afflicted with tuberculosis, came to Bishop Atwood's attention. One was that of a sick stranger who, although desperately in need of help, could find no shelter, and later died on the desert. The Bishop recognized the serious lack of convalescent hospital facilities and social welfare help, and saw the urgent need for tubercular sanitariums. At that time the only four beds available to charity patients in Tucson were at St. Mary's Hospital. They were always full, however, for the institution was seriously overcrowded.

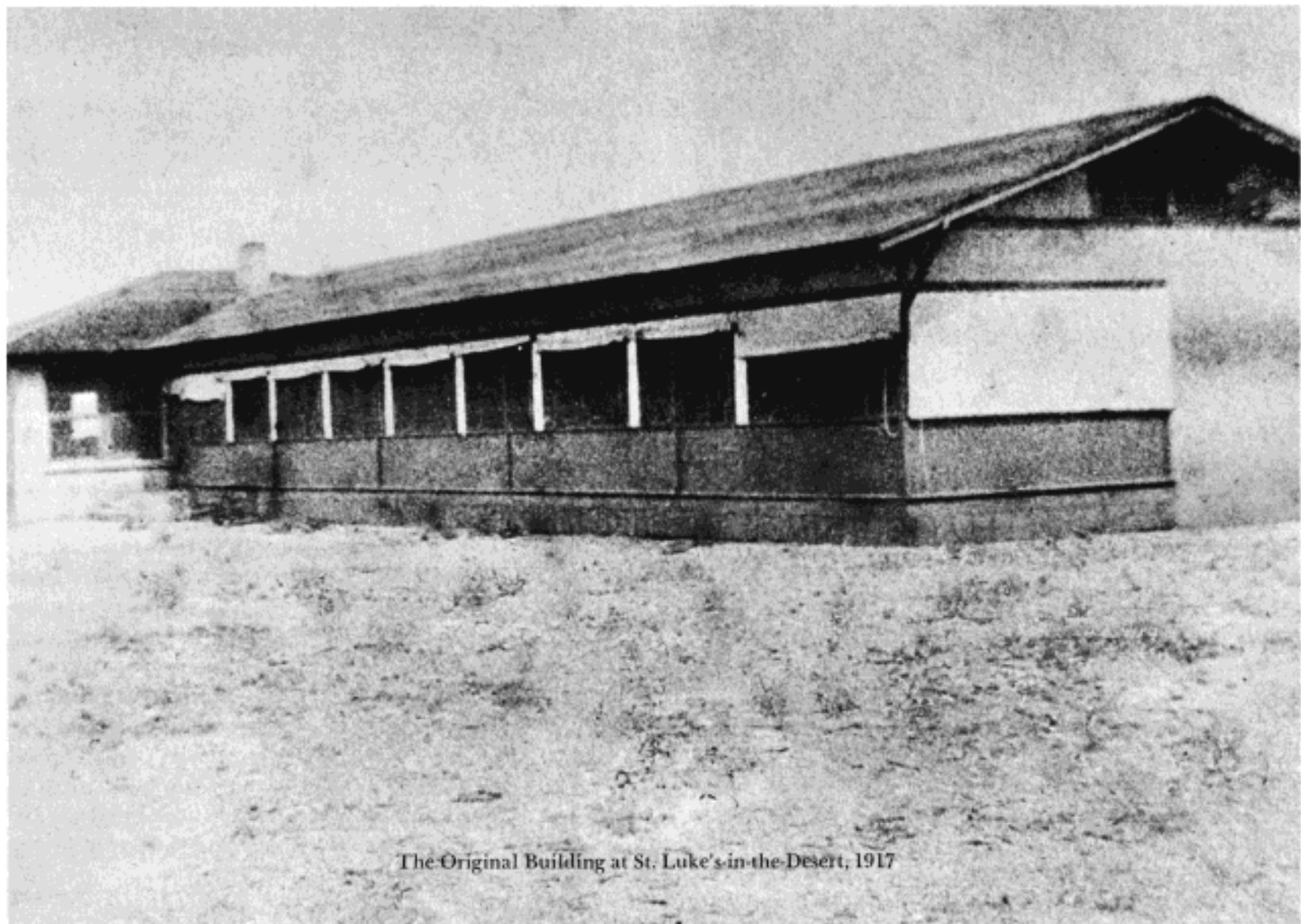
The White Plague, as tuberculosis was then known, was one of the most common, and at the same time the most dangerous, diseases of the time. Sufferers came to the Southwest from all over the country in the hope that the dry desert climate would cure, or at least arrest, their illnesses. In some Eastern states, convalescent care had been found to be remarkably beneficial. Bishop Atwood determined to make such care available in Arizona, at modest cost, to men in both Tucson and Phoenix. His first efforts in Phoenix achieved success with the establishment of a small but thriving facility named St. Luke's Home.

Bishop Atwood appointed a committee to seek funds, obtain a suitable site, and work towards beginning a sanitarium in Tucson. The group comprised Reverend Ernest C. Tuthill, Rector of Grace Church; Mr. Edward C. Clark, a lay reader in that parish; and the Bishop himself, who

served as chairman. He named the new facility St. Luke's-in-the-Desert. During periodic visits to the East, Bishop Atwood personally led the effort to raise funds from Episcopalians in New England. In Arizona he sought financial contributions from church members all over the state. His first plea for the Tucson sanitarium was made in November of 1916, at the Castle Hot Springs Hotel near Wickenburg, Arizona, at which time he raised three thousand dollars. A short time later Miss Lavina Steward of Oracle, Arizona, made a gift of four thousand dollars. The sum of these initial gifts financed the first structures of St. Luke's-in-the-Desert. Both the Tucson and the Phoenix facilities received other privately donated funds as well.

In the fall of 1917, after more than a year of preparation, fund raising, and planning, construction began on the first building at the Tucson sanitarium, located at 615 East Adams Street, on the north side of town. A few months later St. Luke's-in-the-Desert opened its doors. Although an Episcopal institution, operated almost entirely on funds solicited by successive bishops and other clergy and laity of the church, St. Luke's from the beginning adopted the policy of serving men of all creeds and races whose means were limited, and who had come to Arizona to make their fight against tuberculosis. For the first fifty years, the sanitarium accomplished the purpose of its founder.

The first unit of the hospital was a rectangular frame building, which forms the oldest portion of the present east wing. The structure included patient areas, as well as a living room, dining room, kitchen, and nurse's room. The earliest staff consisted of a superintendent, one orderly, and a matron who served as cook and day nurse.



The Original Building at St. Luke's in the Desert, 1917

In February of 1918, the sanitarium opened with seven patients; the total capacity then was nine. During the first years charges were nine dollars per week, a fee which included board, nursing, professional medical services, and medication. Minimum costs per patient were about six hundred dollars a year. There were no "all charity" beds, but patients often entered the sanitarium without being able to pay for care, and invariably they were allowed to stay as long as their conditions required. St. Luke's simply sought and obtained operating funds elsewhere.

The National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, at the request of the Missionary Bishop of Arizona, often made up the bulk of the deficits in operating costs. Among the many individuals who contributed funds to defray expenses were Mrs. Guy Berry of Oklahoma, who also made possible the first enlargement of the building: the extension of the east wing, by construction of screened porches and rooms on the north side of the structure.

Not long thereafter, Miss Kate B. Sturges gave funds for the erection of the first unit of the west wing, which she designated as a memorial for her brother, Lathrop B. Sturges. She completed the wing and continued her gifts, which totalled more than eighty thousand dollars.

The first "endowment" to the hospital was twelve thousand nine hundred dollars, made in 1925 by Miss Nellie Pomeroy, a member of the Lady Board of Visitors, the women's auxiliary for St. Luke's. Her additional gifts more than doubled this original sum. Other members



St. Luke's-in-the-Desert, 1923

of the Lady Board of Visitors, together with many donors from all over the United States, added to these initial hospital endowment funds.

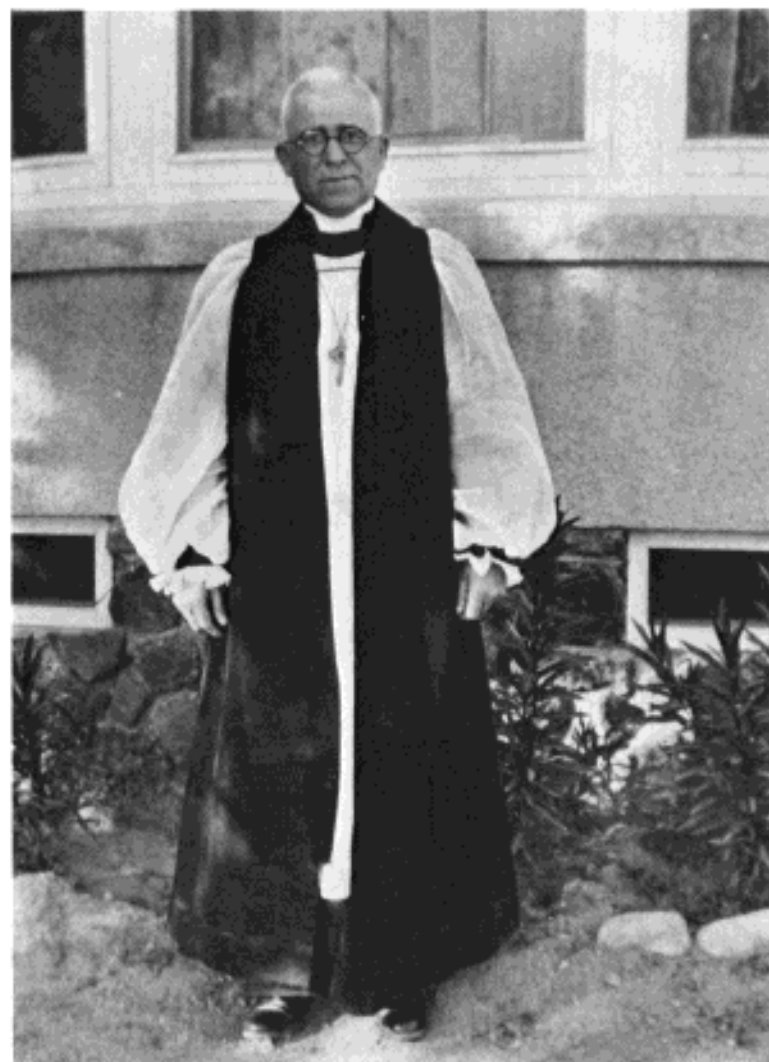
The Arizona Health League was formed as a holding company to own St. Luke's-in-the-Desert, St. Luke's Home in Phoenix, and St. Luke's-in-the-Mountains, a summer health facility in Prescott. The League also raised and held funds for all three institutions. Money from the Arizona Health League was mainly responsible for the construction of the next two buildings at St. Luke's-in-the-Desert. One, on the southwest corner of the hospital square, was designed for use by the doctor and superintendent; the other, also a residence, and located on the southeast corner of the block, became the home of the chaplain and his family.

During the early years, the Tucson and Phoenix sanitariums closed during the hot summer months between the beginning of June and the end of September. Patients traveled by railroad to Prescott, where they received good care amid cool and healthful surroundings at St. Luke's-in-the-Mountains.

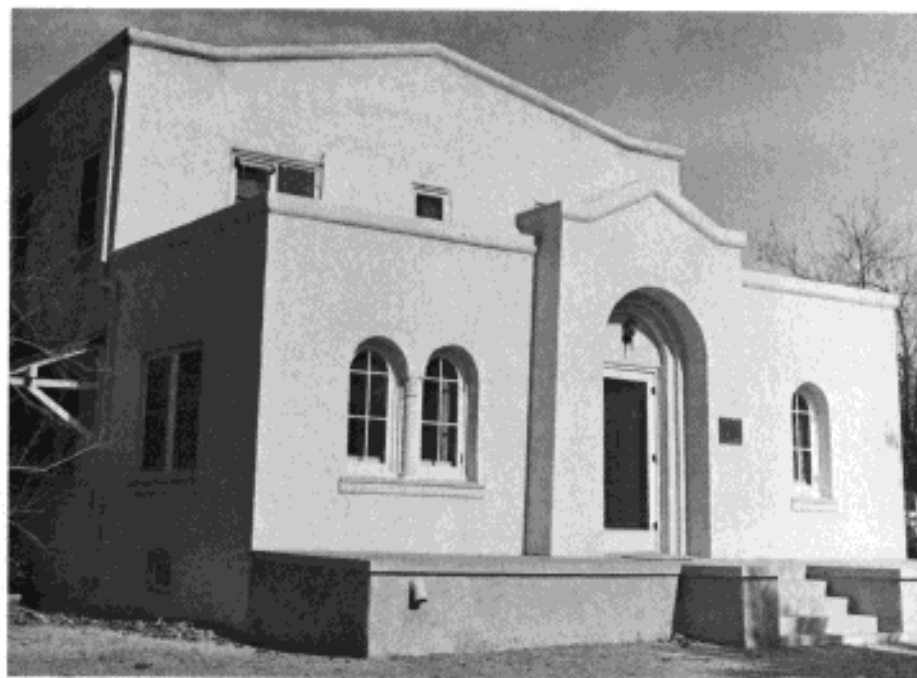
Bishop Atwood retired in 1925, although he continued to raise funds for St. Luke's-in-the-Desert for many more years. The House of Bishops, meeting in New Orleans on October 24, 1925, elected the Right Reverend Walter Mitchell to be Missionary Bishop of Arizona.

Bishop Mitchell was born September 13, 1876, in Harts-ville, Missouri, and attended schools in his native state. Later he studied at the Missouri School of Mines; George Washington University, in Washington, D. C.; The University of the South, at Sewanee, Tennessee; and the General Theological Seminary, in New York City. He was ordained in 1902 by Bishop Gailor, the Bishop of Tennessee. Father Mitchell became rector of Porter Military Academy, in Charleston, South Carolina, where he served for sixteen years before becoming Executive Secretary of the Field Department of the Diocese of New Jersey. He remained at that position until his election as Missionary Bishop of Arizona. After his consecration in South Carolina on January 5, 1926, he served Arizona with great vigor for nineteen years.

In the summer of 1929, with eight thousand dollars from the Arizona Health League, one thousand dollars which Bishop Mitchell had raised, four thousand dollars given by the Lady Board of Visitors, and a number of individual gifts, a new central building was constructed



The Right Reverend Walter Mitchell



The New Main Building, 1929

at the Tucson sanitarium to replace the original main structure. Bishop Mitchell dedicated the unit on November 29, 1929. The new building increased patient capacity to thirty-one, and added much-needed facilities: a reception room for the patients and their visiting families, offices for the doctor and superintendent, a staff dining room, two nurses' rooms and two aides' rooms with connecting baths, and a new kitchen. Steam heat and cooling were installed, while the Board of Visitors added new furnishings and decor. The cost of one new bed was par-

tially underwritten for a year by each of the following: the Church of Epiphany at Urbana, Illinois; the Pi Beta Phi sorority, University of Arizona; and the family of Ernest Sam Kohn, Columbia, South Carolina.

In its first decades of operation, the fame of St. Luke's in-the-Desert spread nationally, not only through the channels of the Church, but also through those of the medical profession. Citizens of Tucson gave the sanitarium fine support, their efforts resulting in referrals which created a constant waiting list.