In 1913, Michael Hoke, M.D., cured Mrs. William C. “Bertie” Wardlaw’s young nephew of a serious bone infection. To honor Dr. Hoke, Wardlaw started raising money to open a crippled children’s hospital. With the aid of longtime friend and financier Forrest Adair, she approached the Scottish Rite Masons for their help in underwriting the proposed hospital. To honor the Masons’ contributions, Wardlaw added “Scottish Rite” to the facility’s name.

In 1915, the hospital opened as Scottish Rite Convalescent Hospital for Crippled Children. Located in Decatur, Ga., it included two rented cottages that gave indigent, crippled children a place to recover after surgery at no charge to their families. In 1919, a much larger, 50-bed building opened as an orthopaedic surgical facility. From there, Scottish Rite continued to expand.

The next major growth occurred in 1966 when the hospital began admitting paying patients. Changing its name to Scottish Rite Children’s Hospital, the facility moved to its current site in 1976. The hospital founded its reputation for high-quality emergency care with the opening of the Emergency Department in 1985. Treating 5,000 children in that first year, it soon grew to be the first full-size Emergency Department for children in the region. In 1987, Scottish Rite became one of Georgia’s first hospitals to be designated a pediatric trauma center. Two years later, its name changed to Scottish Rite Children’s Medical Center. Next, the Callaway Acute Care Center opened in 1991, greatly expanding the hospital’s intensive care, emergency and surgical services.

Scottish Rite’s prominent and influential programs brought national distinction to the hospital and advanced treatment for its patients. In 1986, the Pediatric Pulmonary Program was created, joined a few years later by the Center for Craniofacial Disorders, the Dorsal Rhizotomy Surgery Program and the Sleep Disorders Program.

Later, the hospital opened a large outpatient surgical unit and developed the nation’s first computerized diagnostic system for pediatric emergency care.

In 1991, as part of its commitment to improving the community, the hospital launched a statewide coalition to increase immunization rates for children age 2 and younger. The following year, the Child Advocacy Center opened to care for children who were suspected victims of child abuse. The School Outreach Program also launched that year, helping to educate more than 84,000 children in only two years.

Scottish Rite Masons throughout Georgia supported the formation and upkeep of the hospital, and many Masons continue to be donors today.