

Morning light on Charity Hospital and Hutchinson Memorial, 65 years ago

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During this Homecoming weekend (Oct. 4-5) when Tulane University alumni who graduated in years ending in "3" or "8" are having their class reunions, Dr. Ralph L. Brock, medical school class of 1948, has a photo and story to share.



Hutchinson Memorial Building, left, and Charity Hospital on Tulane Avenue in downtown New Orleans are shown in this 1948 photograph. (Photo by Ralph L. Brock)

The photo is of Hutchinson Memorial Building, home of the Tulane School of Medicine, and the iconic Charity Hospital on Tulane Avenue in downtown New Orleans.

"Very few of my classmates are still living," says Brock, "but I feel those that are still with us would enjoy seeing this sight again."

Charity Hospital, looming to the right next to Hutchinson Memorial, was 10 years old when Brock took his camera to the Jung Hotel on Canal Street to the fire escape platform on the 14th floor.

"A bellboy went with me to be sure that this was not a suicide attempt on my part," recalls Brock. "I took the picture at 7:45 a.m."

Brock had become fascinated by the shadow patterns on the hospital walls as he reported for his 8 a.m. classes.

“It seemed the most interesting pattern occurred between 7:30 and 8 a.m.”

So Brock shot the photograph at the optimum time with his Argus C-3 camera, using Kodak Kodachrome film. For 65 years, he has protected the 35 mm slide of the photo from light and severe temperature changes.

“The colors have remained amazingly true,” he says.

Brock notes that, in the photo, Hutchinson Memorial Building, which was built in 1930, has only one entrance. This was before a 1959 addition ? the Libby Building ? was attached to the building.

Also, Brock points out, “The church across the street is no longer there.”

Charity Hospital is still vacant since Hurricane Katrina flooding in 2005. Latest plans call for it to be renovated for a new City Hall for New Orleans.