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The University of Toledo

Finding Aid

➤ Toledo State Hospital, Lucas County Infirmary, & Maumee Valley Hospital ◀
Architectural and Survey Drawings
MSS-221

Size: 50 Linear Feet

Provenance: Maintenance personnel from the Health Science Campus of the University of Toledo

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Completed by: Timothy J. Fritz & Kimberly Brownlee, Summer 2009.

Historical Sketch

In Toledo, early care for the mentally ill fell to the Lucas County Poor Farm, later renamed the Lucas County Infirmary. The [Lucas] County Poor Farm was established in 1838 and located at the southeast corner of Detroit and Arlington Ave. The farm sustained many of society's outcasts, including the mentally ill, the infirm, the disabled, elderly, epileptics, and others that were unable to support themselves. In 1861 the Lucas County Commissioners voted to construct an asylum on the poor farm to handle the mentally ill that were being housed in jails. It was also at this time that the name of the institution was changed from the "Poor Farm" to the "County Infirmary."

In 1869 the Ohio Board of State Charities (OBSC) deemed the county infirmary to be inadequate and need of improvement. Along with improvements to existing structures being made, a new building to replace the previous asylum and house the growing numbers of mentally ill was constructed and completed in 1871. This building was named the Northwestern Hospital for the Insane. This three-story structure accommodated up to 100 patients and was in operation until 1888 when many of the patients were transferred to the newly constructed Toledo Asylum for the Insane located on the southwest corner of Detroit and Arlington. The Toledo Asylum for the Insane was initially capable of accommodating the growing number of mentally ill that were otherwise being placed in jails.

Designed by prominent Toledo architect, Edward O. Fallis, the Toledo Asylum for the Insane opened for occupancy in 1888, with Dr. Henry A. Tobey as superintendent. It was constructed on 150 acres of land donated by the county. Its design was based upon the detached ward or "cottage system", a revolutionary concept at the time. There were thirty four buildings, twenty of which were pavilions or "cottages" that housed the "less extreme cases" of insane individuals, while six buildings--two infirm wards, two hospitals, and two strong wards--housed those considered more "critically insane" or "incurable." The grounds also featured man-made lagoons, an administration building, a working farm, a library, an auditorium, a greenhouse, a chapel and various other structures. The maximum capacity of the entire project could house 1,800 patients. In 1894 the Toledo Asylum for the Insane officially changed its name to the Toledo State Hospital.

The cottage system was conceived by General Roehlf Brinkerhoff, the founder of the Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, who believed in abolishing the use of mechanical restraints in the treatment of the insane, and housing them in cottages to allow them the feelings of self-worth and independence while under the care of the state. The Mission Statement and Philosophy of the Asylum read, "To many the subject of caring for the insane is...a mystery. The secret of their care and keeping them contented is to have them lead as normal a life as possible, with good clean, healthy surroundings, plenty of nourishing food, and fresh air."

The Asylum began moving patients off of the property in the early 1970s, and the buildings were destroyed in 1973. Northwest Ohio Psychiatric Hospital, located on the same site, is the current treatment center and psychiatric hospital in Toledo and is owned and operated by the state of Ohio.

Scope and Content Note

Aside from two letters and a Bill of Quantities (the first three items on the Folder List), this collection consists entirely of architectural and related drawings.

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