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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

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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.

Inventory

Box	Folder	Item
		S1. TOLEDO STATE HOSPITAL
46	-	Aerial Photograph, grounds.
50		Agricultural Map, 1936.
16		Building #1, "phase2",
1	-	Building Plan for the Industrial Bldg. Aug 9,1887
21		Coal Handling Facility, renovation, 1974.
1	-	Chapel Bldg. Plans, Jan 12, 1884
51	-	Dairy barn
47		Demolition Site Plan, 1977.
38		Door Frame Detail, 1977.
18		Electrical System Renovation, 1981.
47		Elevated Water Storage Tank.
25		Elevated Water Storage Tank, 1965.
38		Floor Plans, ground, 1 st ,2 nd , n.d. (1of 3)
38		Floor Plans, ground, 1 st ,2 nd , n.d. (2of 3)
38		Floor Plans, ground, 1 st ,2 nd , n.d. (3of 3)
22		Food Service Bldg., addition, 1979.
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (1of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (2of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (3of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (4of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (5of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (6of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (7of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (8of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (9of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (10of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (11of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (12of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (13of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (14of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (15of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (16of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (17of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (18of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (19of 29)

49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (20of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (21of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (22of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (23of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (24of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (25of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (26of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (27of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (28of 29)
49		Food Service Unit, 1960. (29of 29)
47		Food service unit, roof plan, n.d
47		Food Service Unit, "typical details"
1	-	Foundation Plan for Dining and Employees Bldg.
1	-	Gas Works Bldg., May 9, 1884
50		Horse Barn, 1939. (1of 5)
50		Horse Barn, 1939. (2of 5)
50		Horse Barn, 1939. (3of 5)
50		Horse Barn, 1939. (4of 5)
50		Horse Barn, 1939. (5of 5)
1	-	Ice House, Aug. 11, 1886
25		Installation of Relief Storm Sewer, n.d.
47		Laundry Sorting Room, 1976.
8		Maintenance Building, original construction, 1954.
9		New Heating Plant, 1959.
47		New Primary Electric Service, 1974.
9		New Stores Bldg., original construction, 1954.
25		Ohio Bell Telephone, n.d.
50		Pig Barn, completion, 1950. (1of 2)
50		Pig Barn, completion, 1950. (2of 2)
50		Piggery Alterations, 1950.
47		Proposed New Sewer Line, 1959.
25		"RB" Boiler, setting plan, 1959.
20		Receiving Hospital. N.d.
1		Receiving Hospital, additions to, 1951-52.
38		Receiving Hospital, additions to heating system, medical/surgical/therapy unit, 1958, (1of 8)
38		Receiving Hospital, additions to heating system, medical/surgical/therapy unit, 1958, (2of 8)
38		Receiving Hospital, additions to heating system, medical/surgical/therapy unit, 1958, (3of 8)
38		Receiving Hospital, additions to heating system, medical/surgical/therapy unit, 1958, (4of 8)
38		Receiving Hospital, additions to heating system, medical/surgical/therapy unit, 1958, (5of 8)
38		Receiving Hospital, additions to heating system,

		medical/surgical/therapy unit, 1958, (6of 8)
38		Receiving Hospital, additions to heating system, medical/surgical/therapy unit, 1958, (7of 8)
38		Receiving Hospital, additions to heating system, medical/surgical/therapy unit, 1958, (8of 8)
38		Receiving Hospital, additions to heating system, 1960. (1of 2)
38		Receiving Hospital, additions to heating system, 1960. (2of 2)
10		Receiving Hospital, additions to medical and surgical unit, 1958.
1		Receiving Hospital, floor plans, n.d.
38		Receiving Hospital, ground floor, n.d.
38		Receiving Hospital, plan of pharmacy, medical/surgical wing, 1976.
15		Receiving Hospital, rehab work, 1974.
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 1of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 2of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 3of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 4of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 5of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 6of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 7of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 8of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 9of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 10of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 11of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 12of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 13of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 14of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 15of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 16of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 17of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 18of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 19of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 20of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 21of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 22of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 23of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 24of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 25of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 26of 27
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1980-83, 27of 27
14		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1983.
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1983. (1of 5)
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1983. (2of 5)
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1983. (3of 5)
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1983. (4of 5)
38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1983. (5of 5)

38		Receiving Hospital, renovation, 1985.
38		Receiving Hospital, roof renovations, 1988, (1of 3)
38		Receiving Hospital, roof renovations, 1988. (2of 3)
38		Receiving Hospital, roof renovations, 1988. (3of 3)
47		Removal of Trees and Stumps, 1958.
46		Renovations, 1971.
46		Replacement of Bridge, 1958.
25		Replacement of Sanitary Sewers, 1965, 1of 2
25		Replacement of Sanitary Sewers, 1965, 2of 2
46		Replacement of Utilities to Cottage #14, 1961.
47		Revisions to Low Temperature Room in Stores Bldg., 1963.
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (1of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (2of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (3of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (4of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (5of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (6of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (7of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (8of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (9of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (10of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (11of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (12of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (13of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (14of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (15of 16)
48		Road Project, reroute of Arlington Ave., n.d. (16of 16)
25		Roadways and services. N.d.
38		Sheet Metal Enclosure for Sprinkler Pipe, 1984.
7		Strong Wards, steam heating plan, 1884.
42		Survey with Maps, 1884-1966, (1of 4)
43		Survey with Maps, 1884-1966, (2of 4)
44		Survey with Maps, 1884-1966, (3of 4)
45		Survey with Maps, 1884-1966, (4of 4)
46		Toledo Planning Commission, map showing state and county bldgs. And property, 1965.
48		Topography, n.d. (1of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (2of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (3of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (4of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (5of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (6of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (7of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (8of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (9of 14)

48		Topography, n.d. (10of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (11of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (12of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (13of 14)
48		Topography, n.d. (14of 14)
25		Toledo-Lucas County Planning Commission, (1 of 2)
25		Toledo-Lucas County Planning Commission, (2 of 2)
17		Tunnel Renovation, 1982.
47		United States Reserve, survey of section 16 3, 1980.
47		Water/Gas Lines, site plan, all structures, n.d
47		Water/Gas Lines, site plan, sheet 5, n.d
47		Water/Gas Lines, site plan, sheet 7, n.d
47		Water/Gas Lines, site plan, sheet m1, n.d
47		Water/Gas Lines, site plan, sheet e1, n.d
47		Water/Gas Lines, site plan, sheet 9, n.d
47		Water/Gas Lines, site plan, sheet 6, n.d
47		Water/Gas Lines, site plan, sheet 2, n.d
26		Water/Gas, site plan, n.d.,
51	-	Water supply
47		Water Supply System, 34-a-1, n.d.
47		Water Supply System, 34-a-2, n.d.
47		Water Supply System, 34-a, n.d.
47		Water Supply System, 34-c, n.d.
47		Water Supply System, Columbia gas lines., n.d.
47		Water Supply System, key to bldg layout., n.d.
46		Westwood Corridor, aerials, n.d.
19		Women's Hospital Remodel, 1968.
46		Works Progress Administration Survey, 1938.
		S2. LUCAS COUNTY INFIRMARY
2		Boiler/ Power House, alterations and additions, n.d.
37		Douglas Bldg (bldg "D")
35		Grounds, n.d.
23		Housekeeping, Dietary, Linen Depts., "B" bldg., 1974.
36		Lab Annex (bldg "E")
29		Laboratory (bldg. "L"), n.d.
31		Laundry, (bldg. "I"), n.d.
2		Laundry Bldg., alterations and additions, n.d.
6		Lucas County Home, floor plan, basement, n.d.
6		Lucas County Home, floor plan, 1 st floor, n.d.
40		Lucas County Home, floor plan, 2 nd floor, 1974.
6		Lucas County Home, floor plan, 3 rd floor, n.d.
40		Lucas County Home, HVAC layout, 3 rd floor, n.d.
40		Lucas County Home, additions (1of 5)

40		Lucas County Home, additions (2of 5)
40		Lucas County Home, additions (3of 5)
40		Lucas County Home, additions (4of 5)
40		Lucas County Home, additions (5of 5)
40		Lucas County Home, New Wings, n.d.
40		Lucas County Home, Nursing Office, a/c unit installation, n.d.
6		Lucas County Home, nursing office, west wing, a/c unit installation plan, (1ct), n.d.
40		Lucas County Home, transparencies, n.d.
40		Lucas County Home, water pipe plan, n.d.
51	-	Lucas County Infirmary topographic survey, 1929
23		Maumee Valley Hospital, n.d.
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, air analyzer, piping detail for 3 rd floor. 1976. (1of2)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, air analyzer, piping detail for 3 rd floor. 1976. (2of2)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, black print, ground floor, n.d. (1of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, black print, 1st floor, n.d. (2of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, black print, 2nd floor, n.d. (3of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, black print, 3rd floor, n.d. (4of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, black print, 4th floor, n.d. (5of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, black print, 5th floor, n.d. (6of 6)
		Maumee Valley Hospital, ceiling guide, "A2", n.d.
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, electrical plan, "E1" n.d. (1of 2)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, electrical plan, "E2" n.d. (2of 2)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, emergency area plan, n.d.
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, existing emergency facilities, updates, n.d. (1of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, existing emergency facilities, updates, n.d. (2of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, existing emergency facilities, updates, n.d. (3of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, existing emergency facilities, updates, n.d. (4of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, existing emergency facilities, updates, n.d. (5of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, existing emergency facilities, updates, n.d. (6of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, fireproof addition, 1929. (1of 4)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, fireproof addition, 1929. (2of 4)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, fireproof addition, 1929. (3of 4)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, fireproof addition, 1929. (4of 4)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, full size print, ground floor, (1of 4)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, full size print, 3 rd floor, (2of 4)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, full size print, 4th floor, (3of 4)

42		Maumee Valley Hospital, full size print, 5th floor, (4of 4)
4		Maumee Valley Hospital, interior floors, n.d.
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, plot plan phases: 1, 2, 3, & 4. 1968. (1of 2)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, plot plan phases: 1, 2, 3, & 4. 1968. (2of 2)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, plumbing plan, "M1", n.d.
23		Maumee Valley Hospital, site plan, n.d.
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, transparencies, ground floor, n.d. (1of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, transparencies, floor 1, n.d (2of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, transparencies, floor 2, n.d (3of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, transparencies, floor 3, n.d (4of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, transparencies, floor 4, n.d (5of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, transparencies, floor 5, n.d (6of 6)
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, update, medical, surgical, neuro wards, 1971.
42		Maumee Valley Hospital, wall plan, "A1", n.d.
6		MCO (east) and County Health Complex, 1970. (1of 2)
13		MCO (east) and County Health Complex, 1970. (2of 2)
27		Nurses Quarters (bldg "G"), ground floor, n.d.
27		Nurses Quarters (bldg "G"), 2nd floor, n.d.
27		Nurses Quarters (bldg "G"), 3 rd floor, n.d.
32		Outpatient building "C," n.d.
33		Roche, administration bldg., n.d.
7		Roche, administration building, n.d.
28		Roche, east lab, floor plan, n.d.
5		Roche, family practice center, new entrance ramp and screen wall, 1983.
7		Roche, family practice center, new entrance ramp and screen wall, 1983
7		Roche, floor plan, basement, n.d.
39		Roche, floor plan, ground floor, n.d.
7		Roche, floor plan, first floor, n.d.
7		Roche, renovations, 1967.
7		Roche, tuberculosis hospital, n.d.
11		Roche, renovations, 1967.
3		Roche, tuberculosis hospital, n.d.
23		Space Utilization, 1972
		S3. NORTHWEST OHIO PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL (previously named the Northcoast Behavioral Center)
12		Northcoast Behavioral Center, additions and alterations, 1989.
		S4. MCO (WEST)
41		Aerial Photo, n.d.

41		Cable Layout, 1979.
41		GE Modality Installation Planning, equipment layout, 1993 (1of 4)
41		GE Modality Installation Planning, structural layout, 1993 (2of 4)
41		GE Modality Installation Planning, electrical layout, 1993 (3of 4)
41		GE Modality Installation Planning, equipment details, 1993 (4of 4)
41		Master Plan, 1979.
41		Master Plan, development phase, west campus master plan study, phase 1, 1979.
41		Master Plan, development phase, west campus master plan study, phase 2, 1979.
41		Master Plan, development phase, west campus master plan study, phase 3, 1979.
41		Master Plan, development phase, west campus master plan study, phase 4, 1979.
41		Master Plan, "scheme 8", 1979.
41		Master Plan, "scheme 11A revised", 1979.
41		Master Plan Studies, scheme #9, 1979 (1of 6)
41		Master Plan Studies, scheme #10, 1979 (2of 6)
41		Master Plan Studies, scheme #12, 1979 (3of 6)
41		Master Plan Studies, scheme #11, 1979 (4of 6)
41		Master Plan Studies, scheme #11A, 1979 (5of 6)
41		Master Plan Studies, scheme #13, 1979 (6of 6)
41		West Campus Plan, 7902, scheme I-5, n.d.
41		Multipurpose Laboratory, n.d.
41		Parking Layout, n.d.
41		Site Plan, 1970, (1of 2)
41		Site Plan, 1970, (2of 2)