



LICKING COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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The History of the Price Road Campus 1928-2018

Tuberculosis (TB) is the oldest known disease, dating back to 2400-3400 BC. In the late 19th century, TB killed one out of every seven people living in the United States and Europe. In 1882, Dr. Robert Koch discovered the bacteria that causes TB, helping to convince the medical community that the disease was contagious. Preventing the spread of tuberculosis became the motivation for some of the first large-scale public health campaigns. In Licking County, discussions about educating residents began in 1927 by the City Federation of Women's clubs, following reports of residents who did not understand the seriousness of the disease.ⁱ The City Federation would play a large part in the development of a local tuberculosis sanatorium, six years after this discussion began.

In 1928, the City Federation led Licking County in planning a tuberculosis sanatorium to serve local residents. Prior to this, residents would be sent to neighboring counties for treatment. At the time, there were 208 active cases of TB. In November 1928, 70% of Licking County voters supported a 1 mill tax levy to build and maintain a sanatorium for three years.ⁱⁱ Locally, the building would be known as the "TB San" because it was built with the sole purpose of housing tuberculosis patients, keeping them separate from the general population, and thus controlling the spread of disease.

By 1929, the search for a suitable location had begun. In January 1930, the Licking County Health League endorsed a site located just north of Newark, the county seat. The land was used for farming at the time, but the location was important due to the proximity of the city and access to its sewer lines. However, the location was rural enough to provide rest, fresh air, food, and exercise for patients – the main factors used to treat tuberculosis at the time. The League adopted a resolution approving the building plans of the county commissioners and the hospital commission.ⁱⁱⁱ By April 1931, the county commissioners posted notices to contractors to elicit construction bids. Hawkins Construction was selected at an expense of \$137,340. They began work on July 19, 1931. By August 1, 1932, construction was complete and furnishing began. The final structure was 300 feet long and around 60 feet wide, with 90 rooms.^{iv} The total expense of the building and its furnishings was approximately \$250,000.

On September 13, 1932, the Licking County Tuberculosis Sanatorium officially opened its doors to patients with a staff of 25 employees. The building was described as “commodious” and “constructed in the most modern manner, fitted with all the necessary equipment for the restoration to health of those who will be admitted to it.”^v When the sanatorium opened, there were 176 active cases of tuberculosis, 58 suspicious ones, 159 arrested cases, 1,222 contact cases, 71 post cases, and 9 bone cases.^{vi} The sanatorium would provide beds for 50 patients at a time, with many more being treated by the agency nurses.^{vii}

As part of an employee-led project in 2014-2015, the Licking County Health Department solicited information about the building from the Licking County community. Bruce Axline shared the following story: “One of my earliest memories as a small child was of my mother as a patient in the T.B. Sanatorium on Price Road in Newark. Children were not permitted inside “The San,” as it was casually referred to. However, adults were allowed inside to visit with patients ... Each Sunday, my father or grandmother would take me to the San for a visit with my mother. She would come out onto a balcony on the east side of the building, and while I stood on the ground below the balcony, we would visit. My mother, Mary Margaret, was a patient at the San from 1947 until the fall of 1953 at which time she was finally discharged.”^{viii}

Sharon Koppert also contributed a story of her aunt: “Ruth Koppert was head nurse in charge of the TB Sanatorium during WWII. One of the perks was that she had a car with extra gas ration cards. One of her duties was to pick up some of the employees of the San and take them to and from work. She lived in an apartment on the ground floor. There was a doctor and his wife who lived in a home on the grounds but Ruth was in charge when he was not there. At that time it was full of patients with wards for men and wards for women with lots of open air and sunlight when the windows were opened. She worked there until her marriage in 1949. His name was Ed Roderick and he was a patient at the TB Sanatorium. He always said when he first saw her she looked like an angel from heaven. Later he kidded that she caught him when he couldn’t run away.”^{ix}

In 1946, the development of the antibiotic streptomycin made effective treatment a reality, and death rates in the US dropped dramatically. In 1965 and 1966, the need for TB sanatoriums was waning and the State of Ohio cut state subsidies to several smaller sanatoriums in the state.^x Many community conversations were held on whether the Licking County sanatorium should remain open, with less than 20 patients remaining and funding cuts indicating the “handwriting on the wall.”^{xi} On January 10, 1966, the Licking County Commissioners passed a resolution authorizing the Licking County Health Department to use a wing of the sanatorium as an office space for 11 employees.^{xii} Prior to this, the health department operated out of Health

Commissioner Dr. Geraldine Crocker's Granville home. It cost \$7,038.48 to move into the facility.^{xiii}

In July 1966, the Commissioners considered converting the remainder of the building to a 90-bed extended care home or turning operations of the sanatorium over to Licking County Memorial Hospital. The three commissioners agreed that the sanatorium should remain open as long as possible.^{xiv} In February 1967, all three Licking County Tuberculosis Sanatorium trustees resigned and the sanatorium was closed. At the time, 10 patients remained in the building and were moved to sanatoriums in other counties or were sent home.^{xv}

On April 1 of the same year, the Licking County Commissioners officially took control of the building and began operating the outpatient TB clinic in replacement of the sanatorium.^{xvi} The clinic was under the jurisdiction of Licking County Health Commissioner Dr. Crocker, although it was a separate entity than the health department.^{xvii} At the time, the clinic had 1,200 TB outpatients, 119 of which were on the active list (where they remained for five years).^{xviii} With the addition of the TB clinic, the Licking County Health Department requested use of the entire first floor of the building for shared space but was denied.^{xix} The TB clinic officially merged with the health department on January 1, 1982.^{xx}

By July 1967, discussion had again returned to converting the former sanatorium into an extended care home^{xxi} – a conversation that would last for two years. In January 1968, the commissioners proposed moving the Licking County Infirmary (also known as the County Home) into the building and moving the Licking County Health Department and TB Clinic out.^{xxii}

The Licking County Board of Health discouraged both of these actions. They presented the county commissioners with a study conducted by the building inspection department of the Ohio Department of Industrial Relations. This report concluded that the building did not meet requirements of the Ohio Building Code for a "rest home" type facility. Ultimately, the county commissioners said the health department's efforts were a "waste of time."^{xxiii} However, other local groups such as the Christian Family Movement Group and area residents also protested the proposed move due to the building's condition.^{xxiv,xxv} By May 1968, the commissioners agreed that a renovation of the building would be necessary at a cost of \$22,500.^{xxvi}

On August 15, 1969, the Licking County Commissioners closed the County Home near Granville and relocated patients to the former Sanatorium building.^{xxvii} These patients, also referred to as inmates, were impoverished, homeless, mentally ill, or otherwise in great need for care.^{xxviii} The County Home occupied 77% of the building, including the entire second floor and one-third of the first floor.^{xxix}

In September 1985, the Licking County Commissioners considered creating an advisory committee to determine the future of the County Home, which housed 42 people on the second floor of the former TB sanatorium. According to County Commissioner Philip Shipley, senior citizen foster care programs and nursing homes may have been a better option than the County Home's form of "institutionalized" care.^{xxx} The discussion would continue on for another two years.

In September 1987, the Licking County Commissioners considered completely closing the former County Home building. At the time, the commissioners noted the structure would need refurbishing before it was converted to other government uses.^{xxxi} The County Home was officially closed on September 23, 1988.^{xxxii}

In May 1989, the Licking County Commissioners attempted to auction the building. The parcel was described as a "brick building consisting of 40,776 square feet of finished living, office, and service area, and 2,100 square feet of basement area." At the time, the parcel was appraised at \$328,600.^{xxxiii} The auction was ultimately unsuccessful in eliciting appropriate bids for the building, which remained in the possession of the county. However, 63 acres of surrounding land were sold to a private developer, leaving the Price Road Campus sized at 20 acres.^{xxxiv}

By August 1989, the commissioners began preparing for a \$700,000 remodeling of the building, including the removal of asbestos. Following the renovation in September 1992, the building was valued at \$2,756,233.^{xxxv} The Licking County Health Department occupied the first floor and the Licking County Board of Education occupied the second floor. Additionally, the Coshocton-Fairfield-Licking-Perry Solid Waste District occupied the basement.^{xxxvi}

In 1993, the Newark City Building Code Department moved into the remodeled Price Road facility and expanded their services to include Licking County. In March 1994, the Newark City Health Department considered leaving City Hall in downtown Newark and moving into the facility as well. Concerns were raised over the location on the outskirts of the city, but Newark Mayor Frank Stare said co-locating the county and city health department services would reduce duplication.^{xxxvii} In May 1994, the move was approved and the two health departments were located in the same building by October.^{xxxviii}

Merger of the Newark City and Licking County Health Departments was discussed several times in 1987 and 1994, but the merger was never approved. However, due to city budget cuts starting in 2004, merger discussions were renewed.^{xxxix} Effective February 1, 2008, the merger

was approved and the Licking County Health Department began providing services for the entire county.^{xi}

The Licking County Health Department took ownership of the building from the County Commissioners on January 1, 2015 and assumed responsibility for caring for the 85-year-old building and 20-acre campus to continue its mission of protecting public health for Licking County residents.^{xii} Since then, several updates have been made to the grounds, including the planting of 350 trees for reforestation, the naturalization of several acres with wildflowers and native plants, the addition of a paved half-mile walking path, and the installation of a playground.^{xiii} Additionally, the building's clinic space was renovated in 2016, putting all of the department's medical services in one area.^{xiiii}

The building located at 675 Price Road, Newark, Ohio has seen its fair share of history. Sitting in the very northwest corner of the city, up on a hill, the building is well-known in our community. From its construction starting in 1931 to the present day, there have been many changes in both its physical appearance and its tenants. However, this building and its grounds have had a purpose that has always remained the same: to serve the public health of Licking County.

ⁱ "Tuberculosis Nurse Gives Federation Report of Work." *Newark Advocate and American Tribune* [Newark, OH], 1 April 1927, p. 6.

ⁱⁱ "County Women Build Hospital." *Newark Advocate and American Tribune* [Newark, OH], 12 September 1932, late ed., p. 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ "County Sanatorium Site is Endorsed by Health League." *Newark Advocate and American Tribune* [Newark, OH], 2 January 1932, p. unknown.

^{iv} "County T-B Hospital Will Be Open to Public Sept. 13." *Newark Advocate and American Tribune* [Newark, OH], 31 August 1932, p. unknown.

^v "County T-B Hospital to Receive Visitors." *Newark Advocate and American Tribune* [Newark, OH], 12 September 1932, late ed., p. 1.

^{vi} "176 Cases of Tuberculosis Are Recorded." *Newark Advocate and American Tribune* [Newark, OH], 12 September 1932, late ed., p. 1.

^{vii} "County T-B Hospital Will Be Open to Public Sept. 13." *Newark Advocate and American Tribune* [Newark, OH], 31 August 1932, p. unknown.

^{viii} Axline, Bruce. "Remembrance." 21 April 2015. Personal Letter.

^{ix} Koppert, Sharon. 16 April 2015. Personal Letter.

^x "TB Subsidies Up for Final Vote in House." *The Newark Advocate* [Newark, OH]. 9 April 1965, p. 5.

^{xi} "Hearing Set on TB San Closing." *The Newark Advocate* [Newark, OH]. 14 April 1966, p. 1.

^{xii} Licking County Commissioners. "Resolution: In the Matter of Health Department Office in Wing of TB Sanatorium." 10 January 1966, Licking County Health Department Archives, Newark, OH.

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- ^{xv} "No More TB Patients, Doctor Tells Trustees." *The Newark Advocate* [Newark, OH], 9 February 1967, p. 2.
- ^{xvi} "Commissioners to Take Over San." *The Newark Advocate* [Newark, OH], 30 March 1967, p. unknown.
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- ^{xix} "Health Department Asks First Floor of Sanitorium." *The Newark Advocate* [Newark, OH], 10 February 1967, p. 13.
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- ^{xxi} "County Home Residents May Move to Sanitorium." *The Newark Advocate* [Newark, OH], 26 July 1967, p. 1.
- ^{xxii} "County Board of Health Study Called 'Wasted Time.'" *The Newark Advocate* [Newark, OH], 11 January 1968, p. 2.
- ^{xxiii} "County Board of Health Study Called 'Wasted Time.'" *The Newark Advocate* [Newark, OH], 11 January 1968, p. 2.
- ^{xxiv} "Local Group Protests Moving County Home." *The Newark Advocate* [Newark, OH], 19 April 1968, p. 1.
- ^{xxv} "TB San Area Residents Oppose Move of Home." *The Newark Advocate* [Newark, OH], 11 January 1968, p. 2.
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