



# MCHS News

Mar 2020

Opening Doors to Madison County History

Vol. 8 No. 2

**Historical Museum**  
715 N Main Street  
Edwardsville, IL 62025

**Hours:**  
The museum is currently closed for renovation.

**Archival Library**  
801 N Main Street  
**Hours:**  
Wed-Fri 9 am - 4 pm  
Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm

**Phone:**  
618-656-7569

**Web Address:**  
madcohistory.org

**E-mail:**  
info@madcohistory.org

**About Us:**  
The MCHS museum complex, consisting of a modern archival library, a museum in the 1836 Weir House and the Helms Collection Center, is owned by the nonprofit Madison County Historical Society and operated jointly with Madison County.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

## DEFEATING THE WHITE PLAGUE IN MADISON COUNTY

by Cindy Reinhardt

A century ago, a patient diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB) had less than a 50% chance of surviving five years. To make matters worse, the disease was contagious, the cause of more than 10 percent of all deaths in Madison County prior to World War I. *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacteria that caused TB, was primarily spread from person to person through the air, that is, from spitting, coughing and/or sneezing.

Often called the white plague because patients became so pale, TB was also known as consumption. Although TB commonly settled in the lungs, it could also invade the spine or bones. It was a disease that often led to a long and painful death. TB could be active or latent. When latent, the patient tests positive for the disease, but is not contagious and doesn't develop symptoms. It isn't known why some latent TB becomes active and others remain inactive.

The Madison County Anti-Tuberculosis Board, a committee formed from the county's medical association, was organized to raise funds to cover the medical expenses related to TB care, provide medical relief for patients, and reduce the spread of the disease. The work of the organization was primarily funded through the sale of Christmas seals, but eventually this was not enough to cover the expenses of caring for Madison County's TB patients.

In 1918, by a vote of six to one, voters showed their support for a Madison County sanitarium, a hospital devoted to TB patients. The new tax was allowed to accumulate so that a sanitarium could eventually be built without a bond issue.

Two years later, the county purchased 50.5 acres of ground adjoining Troy Road from the William S. Giese estate for \$40,000.



*The Madison County Tuberculosis Sanitarium was located approximately where Dierberg's Market at Edwardsville Crossing stands today. (MCHS)*

In May 1926, a three-story brick sanitarium, designed by L. Pfeifferberger's Sons of Alton, opened for patients. It would be dedicated to TB patients for 42 years.

### The Sanitarium Complex

There were several buildings already in existence when the county bought the property. The Giese family's beautiful Victorian farmhouse, located approximately in the center of the property, would become a nurses residence and later a home and office for the sanitarium's director/doctor. There was also a small residence for the farm manager, a barn and several outbuildings.

In 1939, the county agreed to build a new residence for nurses on the south side of the Giese house. In making a case for the nurses' residence, the County Board was informed that nurses were taking up beds in the sanitarium that were needed for patients, and in addition, two of the nurses had since come down with TB. The new two-story brick residence opened in 1940.

The three-story brick sanitarium building was constructed north of the house. The plans originally called for offices, kitchens, meeting rooms, laundry, etc. all on the first floor and basement with patient rooms on the upper floors. The basement also had a "mattress sanitizer." The roof provided space for sun treatments, and there were solarium rooms on the south side to provide additional exposure to sunshine and fresh air.

The most contagious patients were placed in private



*The residences used by the doctor (left) and nurses were located south of the sanitarium building. (MCHS)*

*continued page 4*

## ABOUT US

### MCHS BOARD

Candace Ladd, Pres  
Stephen Hansen, V-Pres  
Arnold Meyer, Treas  
Tallin Curran, Sec  
Norma Asadorian  
Leslie Bednar  
Robert Clouse  
Joann Condellone  
Arno Ellis  
Lynn Engelman  
Fred Faust  
Lacy McDonald  
Stephen Mudge  
Jeff Pauk  
Cindy Reinhardt

### STAFF

Jon Parkin  
Museum Superintendent

Carol Frisse  
Archival Research Asst.

Jenn VanBibber  
Curator

Mary Z. Rose  
Asst. Curator

### VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the Museum or the Archival Library. If interested, please call 618-656-7569.

### MEMBERSHIPS

Several membership levels are available to those interested in supporting the work of preserving Madison County history through an MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on our website, or at the Archival Library.

### PUBLICATIONS

#### MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually  
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor

## ARCHIVAL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

By Mary Westerhold

### TWENTY YEARS IN THE ARCHIVAL LIBRARY

In the Fall of 1999, I was at loose ends. I had quit my fulltime job several months before and my daughter had just started kindergarten. I always had an interest in history and genealogy so I decided to volunteer in the Library at the Madison County Historical Museum until I found another job.

Over 20 years later, I retired from the Archival Library, part of the Madison County Historical Museum complex. When I began as a volunteer, the complex consisted of the Weir house (Museum) and a newly acquired property that was in the planning stages for a library building. Now the complex has grown to include the Weir house, the Archival Library, and a storage building.

I loved the museum building, but was thrilled when we moved into the one level Archival Library building in March 2002. (I had bumped my head too many times in the attic of the museum where we stored our overflow archives.) The new building made it easier to serve our patrons and gave the staff room to spread out collections that had been stored creatively in every nook and cranny in the tightly packed museum. (My favorite location

that I found on one of our catalog cards was "under the polar bear rug in the Indian room!")

Many memories flood my thoughts as I look back, and they all revolve around the people - staff, dedicated volunteers, MCHS board members, and interesting researchers. We had a lot of fun and learned a lot together. Our volunteers and our "regular" visitors became like family and we rejoiced in the good times and mourned when we lost someone.

I want to thank all of those who encouraged me and patiently answered my questions, especially in the early years. And I cannot forget everyone who has put up with my obvious obsession with cemeteries and agreed to join me tromping through head high weeds to take photos, following a helpful landowner down a muddy path to a little known cemetery, taking

many, many photographs of the tombstones to be sure to capture not only the name and dates but also the symbols and inscriptions, and researching all of the stories of the cemetery "residents". I know my retirement has not ended that obsession, and I hope others enjoyed our adventures.

I could go on, but I will close with the words Carol Burnett sang at the end of her show: "I'm so glad we had this time together..."



Mary Westerhold

## MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

By Jenn VanBibber

### MUSEUM WORK CONTINUES - NEW ON-LINE EXHIBITS AND MORE

While the museum remains under renovation, the staff continues their preservation and research efforts. In addition to new donations that have come in (Thank you to all who donated items in 2019), the staff has been photographing and adding researched information to the records of previously donated items. The goal is to make the current information more consistent so that images and information can be searched easily. The curatorial staff has also been researching music in Madison County for a new online exhibit featuring instruments and musicians in the collection. Interested persons can view the exhibit at [madcohistory.org](http://madcohistory.org).



*This photograph of the Schwarz Sisters Orchestra in 1899 is featured in one of ten musical stories in the new online exhibit "Musical Madison County." (The orchestra was lead by Will Thomas, the husband of Jessie Schwarz Thomas who is seated at the far left and played trombone. (MCHS)*



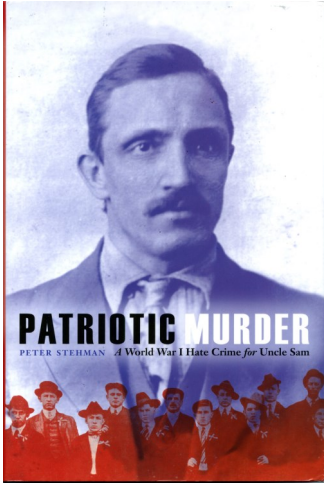
## 2020 MCHS SPEAKER SERIES

**SUNDAY, APRIL 19 - 2 P.M.**

### The Lynching of Robert Praeger:

#### A World War I Hate Crime for Uncle Sam

Peter Stehman will discuss his book, "Patriotic Murder," a fascinating look at the anti-German frenzy, fueled by government propaganda, which led to the lynching of Robert Praeger at Collinsville, Illinois, on April 5, 1918. Stehman discusses how civil liberties were hijacked in the name of patriotism during World War I. There are lessons for today in this story of a crime where intolerance and hate against immigrants led to a suspension of civility. There were two crimes against Robert Praeger. Not only was he an innocent man murdered for his nationality, but the leaders of the mob who committed the crime were exonerated.



Speaker Series lectures are held in the fellowship hall of Immanuel United Methodist Church

at 800 N. Main Street in Edwardsville, directly across the street from the Madison County Archival Library. Lectures are free and open to the public. No reservations are required, but seating is limited.

## MCHS LOOKING FOR HANDY VOLUNTEERS

Do you have skills? The Society has a complex of four buildings which are in need of a volunteer crew to help with minor repairs and yard work. Also needed is an engineer or contractor who can occasionally advise the Building Committee regarding renovations and repairs to the buildings. If you are able to help, please contact the chairperson of the MCHS Building Committee, Lynn Engelman at 618-216-2768.

## PROGRESS AT THE MUSEUM

Although there is still a long way to go, the removal of most of the scaffolding from the Weir House has greatly improved the building's appearance.

The Society originally planned to remove all the paint from the exterior of the building, but it has proved to be a difficult task. Over the years, a number of different kinds of paint were applied, each being best removed with a different application. Since the building dates to 1836, it was constructed of soft brick, a material that cannot be blasted with sand or water without significant damage.

The plan is to leave the exterior brick with some paint, which will gradually wear away over the years. The brick has all been re-tuckpointed except on the south side, where additional paint removal is waiting for warmer weather.

Next on the agenda is the restoration of the back porch in compliance with ADA standards and, now that the scaffolding is mostly down, restoration of the windows will continue. There are 32 windows and five doors on the Weir House. Please contact us at 618-656-1294 if you are interested in our "adopt a window" program. Additional information is also available on the Society's website.

The exterior landscape plan has been designed and will incorporate some of the larger outdoor items in the collections, like the Quercus Grove school bell.

While all the above is being done, the MCHS Interpretive Committee, in conjunction with designer Adam Celuch, continues to work on content and design for the building's interior exhibits.

## PHILLIPS 66 WILL DOUBLE DONATIONS FROM EMPLOYEES & RETIREES

If you are a current or past employee of Phillips 66, did you know that they will match your donations to the Madison County Historical Society? Not only that, but your membership fee counts as a donation they will match. Contact Human Resources at Phillips 66 or call MCHS at 618-656-1294 to learn how to make your donation count TWICE!

## 2020 NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

**January - February ♦ Thank you for supporting MCHS!**

### \$250 Benefactor

Bob and Sandra Schwartz

### \$200

Robert Madoux

### \$100 Patron/Corporate

Alton Landmarks Assn  
Tom & Donna Bardon  
Judy Chapman  
Mary Ruth Kettenbach  
Madison County Regional  
Office of Education  
Jeff & Melinda Pauk  
Jim & Jane Weingartner

### \$50 Family

Leslie Bednar &  
Mark Hendrickson

Sid & Jane Denny  
Robert Gibson  
Scott & Peggy Hagin  
Highland Historical Society  
Ken & Jean Hughes  
Joseph & Jean Jacober  
Jeanette Kampen  
Larry & Betty Krapf  
Ted & Joy Lotz  
Mark & Jean Luchtefeld  
Jack & Janette Minner  
Missouri Historical Society  
William Mudge  
Stephen Sands  
Carol Sporrer  
Jack Spudich  
Bob & Sue Wolf

### \$35 Individual

Diane Anderson  
Emogene Beck  
Bob Brady  
Toni Crane  
Lynn Engelman  
Viva Fisher  
Janet Foehrkolb  
Robert Frank  
Carol Peters Gocken  
Don Halbe  
David Hanser  
Dallas Harrell  
Charlotte Heerin  
Mary Heerin  
Bernard Hellmann  
Jo Ann Isleb  
Cheryl Eichar Jett  
Rosalynn Kessler

Judith Leo  
John Lindsay  
Shirley Malench  
Nelson Metz  
Joann Southard Reitz  
Ronna Ribble  
Velma Schmidt  
Vickie Sheridan  
Patti Sommerfeldt  
St. Clair County  
Historical Society  
Peter Stehman  
Sharon Whitaker  
Billie Mae Wilson  
Harry Windland

## MADISON COUNTY TB SANITARIUM (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

rooms to provide isolation, but most rooms held 2-3 patients, sometimes more, depending on the time period. Until a tax levy passed in 1936, the facility built for 90-100 patients could only accept about 65 patients. Even with the lower patient load, there were still financial difficulties. The tax referendum supporting the facility had to be passed every three years. As a result, in election years, the doctor spent much of his time travelling the county, speaking about the importance of the sanitarium to any group that would have him. The need for votes was so great that staff often discharged the healthier patients for a few days at election time so they could vote. Note that these patients were contagious!

Beginning in 1929, about half of the property was farmed to provide a cash crop to help pay expenses. The resident farmer also took care of the grounds and assisted with maintenance. In the early years, the farmer also took care of livestock and there was a large vegetable garden that helped supply the sanitarium kitchen.

After World War II, the county added a new power plant to the complex and built a 10-car garage.



*Stabilization efforts of the sanitarium building in 1926-27 included inserting over 1,500 jacks, some which can be seen here. When the building was torn down, the jacks were still in place. (MCHS)*

### Major Problems Arise

Even as the new sanitarium opened its doors, cracks in the walls and floor were beginning to appear as the ground beneath it began to shift. The building was located above the Donk Mine and subsidence was so severe that parts of the building dropped by more than a foot. Some gaps in the floor provided a clear view of the basement below, and, as the northern portion of the building sank, the southern solarium wing began to break away. Parts of the building were moving at a rate of  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch per week, but engineers had to wait for movement to slow before beginning permanent repairs.

Some initial stabilization efforts began in August and during that time period the roughly 40 patients already admitted were moved out of the building to a "tent colony." Tents were borrowed from the military and wood plank floors installed. Since fresh air had long been part of prescribed treatment for TB, this was not considered radical. All but one of the patients were willing to move into tents where they remained for eight weeks, during all of August and September. It was later reported that none of the patients were adversely affected by the outdoor living.

By late September, the subsidence had slowed. Patients moved back in and engineers began the work of moving the building back together, using a system of 1,500 jacks that slowly closed the cracks and gaps in the building. After the building was leveled, plaster repair was needed in every room and the basement and foundation were replaced. The cost to repair the building was close to \$60,000 and took over a year. Many consider it a miraculous feat of engineering.

### Treatment of Patients

Madison County's TB Sanitarium was one of 536 such facilities in the United States at one time, all offering similar treatment in the fight against *mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacteria that causes TB. Keys for general care in the early years (1880s-1940s) of sanitarium treatment was bedrest, fresh air, sunshine and good nutrition.

Although these measures met with some success, there were two other treatments that were not passive. The first involved using a hypodermic needle to insert air between one of the lungs and the chest wall. The resulting pressure would cause the lung to collapse. Doctors reasoned that the lack of oxygen in the lung would slow or stop the growth of *M. tuberculosis*, and the lung could always be re-inflated later. This was a common method of treatment in the 1930s.

Although a 1937 Edwardsville newspaper article said this was a "painless procedure," many find it difficult to accept that assurance. In any case, the same could not be said of the other regular treatment, removal of a lung.

By 1946, doctors began using the drug Streptomycin for TB patients, but, unfortunately, the drug didn't go into serious production until 1949. Even then, with seven manufacturers, the demand for Streptomycin far surpassed the supply for several years.

In the decade following, production increased and research led to improved medications that became very effective in the treatment of TB. Before successful medications were available, patients would spend months, even years, in sanitariums where they could be treated, but more importantly, where they were isolated from the general population to prevent the spread of disease. With these new treatments, in most cases, the disease was rendered inactive in a short time. The Madison County TB Sanitarium closed Dec. 31, 1968, after several years of declining population. The few remaining patients were sent to sanitariums elsewhere.

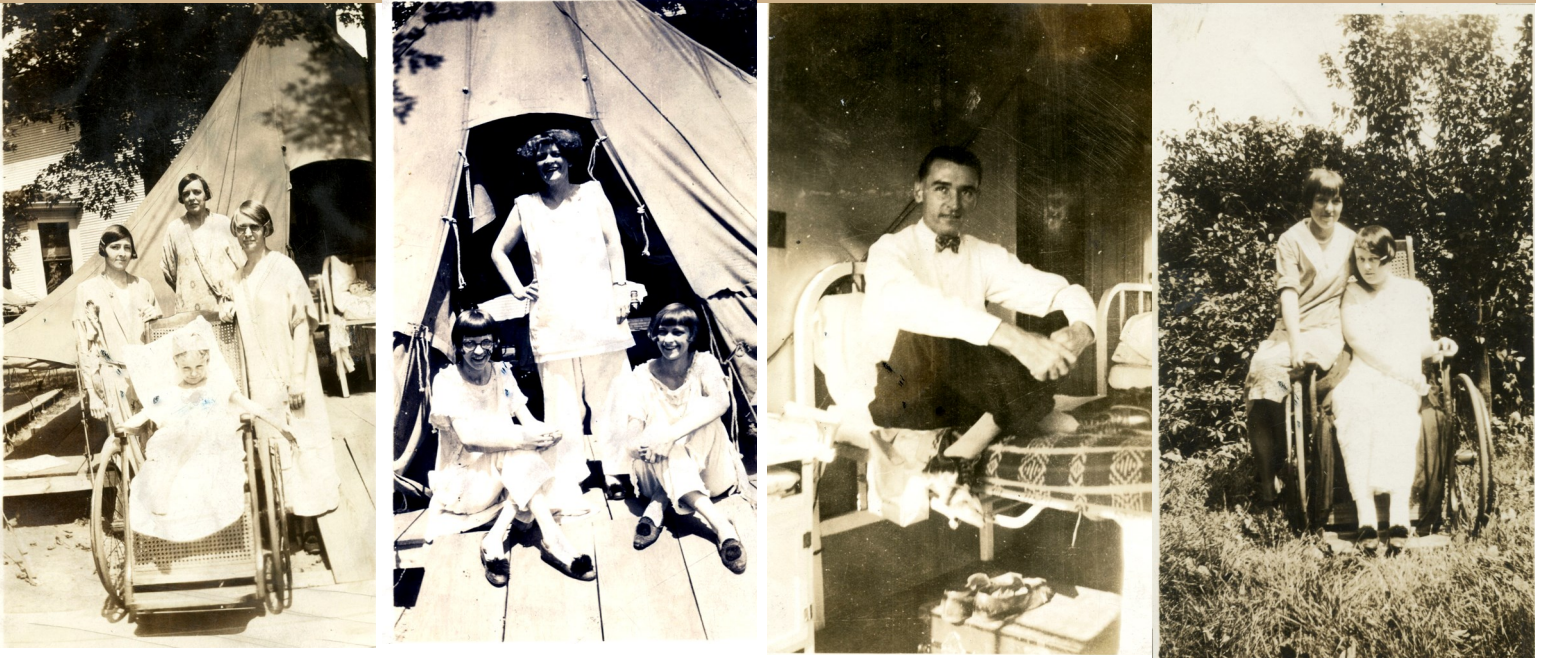
The Madison County Health Department still monitors cases of TB, but Madison County is a low risk county and on average there are only one or two cases annually. New cases are often immigrants, since the disease has not been eradicated in other parts of the world where approximately 1.5 million people die of TB annually (latest statistics 2018).

### Screening for TB

A skin test can determine if a patient has the TB bacterium in their system, but does not reveal if the bacteria was latent or active. An x-ray or sputum test is needed to make that diagnosis. However, the sputum test was not available in the early years. When TB was still active in Madison County, the sanitarium's outreach staff visited schools and even large employers to test everyone for TB. Dense populations created a great incubator for TB which is why the Alton and Granite City areas had a larger proportion of TB patients at the sanitarium than the rural areas of Madison County. There is no question that the zealous work of the doctors and nurses of Madison County who screened for TB and treated Madison County TB patients, especially in those early years, saved thousands of lives.



## A GIFT OF PHOTOGRAPHS FROM JULIA (SPINDLER) RIDER



Above from left: #1 Patients Beulah Jackson, Wilma Hile, Lena Kombrink and Perry Corrine in the tent colony. Perry spent 7 years of his childhood at the Sanitarium. #2 Sisters Lulu and Marie Amrhein of Alton and May Goodin of Edwardsville. The Amrhein sisters both died of TB, a few years apart, but each at the age of 29. This picture was also taken in the tent colony in the fall of 1926. #3 Harry Shafer is pictured sitting on his bed at the sanitarium in August 1928. Shafer died at the sanitarium on February 28, 1929. #4 An undated photograph of Julia Rider with Iona Hurry of Granite City. Iona survived the disease, but Julia died of TB in 1935. (From Julia Spindler Rider Collection at MCHS)



Above from left: #1 Until 1938, the sanitarium was a stop on the streetcar line than ran down the center of Troy Road. The streetcar was how many employees travelled to work. After the streetcar was removed, the County built a large nurses' residence south of the sanitarium. Most nurses at that time were single and would not otherwise have transportation. #2. These four young local women all worked at the sanitarium as maids when it first opened. They are from left to right, Julia Spindler (Edwardsville), Agnes Pitonak (Edwardsville), Florence Bowman (Glen Carbon) and Agnes Jackymac (Collinsville). Julia and Agnes both had sisters who also worked as maids at the sanitarium. Below is a view of the tent colony. All photographs are from Julia Spindler Rider's collection.. (From Julia Spindler Rider Collection at MCHS)



MCHS is grateful for the gift of these photographs to MCHS. Emily Timpe, Julia's great niece, saw the value of these photographs and held on to them until she could find a safe place to archive them. The photos, which came with genealogical information on the Rider family, are a valuable addition to the photographic history of Madison County's tuberculosis sanitarium.



## PERSONAL STORIES FROM THE SANITARIUM

### Julia Spindler Rider

Julia Spindler and her sister Agnes were young Edwardsville women who went to work at the sanitarium when it opened in 1926. Family members thought she was a nurse, but, unless circumstances changed later, she was a maid, according to city directories. Julia married one of the patients from the sanitarium, John "Clark" Rider of Granite City, who spent over two years at the sanitarium in 1926-1928. Clark was only 24 when he died in 1930. Julia then married his brother, Eugene Rider. Julia was a patient at the sanitarium when she died in 1935 at the age of 32. Whether she acquired the disease from her first husband or from her work at the sanitarium will never be known. She left behind her husband and a young son, Claude.



Julia Spindler Rider

Julia took pictures at the sanitarium of the facility, patients and employees and took the time to label many of the photographs. From Julia we also have rare photographs of the tent colony and of the sanitarium's streetcar stop.



### The Diary of Josephine Shaff

Josephine Shaff of Alton was a patient at the Madison County TB Sanitarium at least twice, in 1930-31 and again in 1933-34. The first time she was a patient for about six months and the second time for over a year. What makes her special to this story is that her Depression era diaries were donated to the Madison County Historical Society and gave an excellent picture of what daily life was like for the patients of that time.

Almost every day she listed the food they were given at each meal which appears to be hearty fare. She listed what tests were done and how often. She noted her weight at each weigh-in, and sometimes even noted the weight of her roommates and their condition, as well. TB was a wasting disease, so keeping patients weight steady or even climbing was one of the goals of doctors.

She describes having the windows open for fresh air and how patients were moved upstairs as they improved. Privileges included being able to walk to the bathroom or to the dining room. She sometimes went six months without a tub bath, because she wasn't allowed to leave her bed.

She tells us about holiday celebrations and programs, and how 11-year-old Tommy Tucker tried to run away, but was returned by Edwardsville police. In December 1933, she made a note in the margin, "beer is back," marking the end of Prohibition.

She describes patients young and old, with whom she came in contact, Hispanic, Black and Caucasian patients, Christians and Catholics, male and female. TB did not discriminate.

Josephine's treatments were successful, despite a short relapse after returning home. She died in 1949 at the age of 78.



### Ida Nicol Bonn

Mrs. Bonn of Collinsville was a wife and mother of two children who spent most of her life dealing with the effects of TB. She was a patient at the Madison County TB Sanitarium at least four times, in every decade from the 1930s until her death at the sanitarium in the 1960s. In addition, she was also, a patient at Wheat Ridge Lutheran Sanitarium near Denver, Colorado, on at least one occasion, as recalled by family members.

Bonn was one of Josephine Shaff's roommates in the 1930s, and MCHS has a copy of a letter she wrote to her niece, Lois Meier, from the sanitarium in 1958. Her letter read, in part, "The family is going on an auto vacation...and I'm spending a few days, months, and who knows, maybe years, in the sanitarium. I hope it won't be too long, but I expect to be here at least 8 months and this Dr. expects you to do just what he says. Right now we have only 12 women here. There are more men. I don't know how many, but four new patients came in, and they were all men."

Ida Bonn was resigned to spending long stretches of time at the hospital. She was in the hospital for 458 days, in this instance. Her next visit was for 613 days and ended with her death in 1962 at the age of 70. From Josephine's diaries, it is known that Ida's family and minister visited her regularly.



### Carol Brethorst

Carol was only 15 when, through a routine 1959 TB screening at school, it was discovered that she had tuberculosis. An x-ray confirmed it was an active case and, in March of her sophomore year at Edwardsville High School, she was checked into the sanitarium. Carol most likely was exposed to the disease by her mother, who had spent some time in a sanitarium earlier in Carol's life.

Carol was in one of the solarium rooms with five other girls about her age from the Alton/Wood River/Godfrey area. None had severe cases and the girls soon became friends. They all enjoyed outside visitors, regardless of whom they came to see. Carol had numerous friends who would come occasionally during visiting hours, but some of their parents were concerned they might catch TB. A few were regulars and very much appreciated by a young high school girl. The girls spent most of their time in their room, even taking meals there. They were not allowed to use the telephone, except to occasionally call home. There was no television.

A favorite time of day for Carol was 3 p.m. when a long-time friend, Paul Vernon, would come home from school. Paul was the doctor's son and Carol's window on the south side of the building overlooked the doctor's residence. When Paul got home, she would crank open the third-floor window and call out for news from school that day.



Ida Estelle Nicol Bonn

### Taking the Cure

**We sit and sit in the morning**

**We sit and sit at noon**

**We sit in the day's declining light**

**We sit in the light of the moon.**

**From early morn 'til dewey eve**

**At night when the stars are lit**

**We fold our hands across our laps**

**And sit and sit and sit.**

*The above poem was found copied into Josephine Shaff's 1933 diary. The poem, which had been around for a long time before Josephine found it, is a fair description of life as a TB patient.*

## PERSONAL STORIES FROM THE SANITARIUM

To keep up in school, assignments were brought to Carol. She saw teachers/tutors only two hours a week, an hour weekly with Ella Helms, and another hour with Bob Gregor. More importantly for Carol, Mr. Gregor served as an unofficial counselor to a girl feeling down and depressed because she was missing school and being with her friends. Both teachers left homework for her to do. It was nearly impossible to cover geometry on her own, but she was given a low passing grade, so did not fall behind in school.

Carol was discharged from the hospital in August, so only missed a few months of school. For several years, she was required to have regularly scheduled x-rays at the sanitarium, to make sure the disease did not reoccur.

Just after Christmas in 1959, Carol's mother, Mary Iva Brethorst, was admitted to the sanitarium. She died in October 1960, at the age of 38. Although some tested positive, no one else in Carol's family developed an active case of tuberculosis. Carol went on to lead a life free of TB, although she would always test positive, and no other family members developed active cases of the disease.



### Laura Minner Larrabee and Jack Minner

Laura and Jack's father, Richard Minner, was the resident farmer for the sanitarium for ten years, from 1958-1968. Jack was already grown and on his own by then, only a visitor to the farm, but his sister, Laura, lived there until she graduated from high school in 1962.

Livestock was no longer raised on the farm by the time the Minners arrived. Richard was responsible for 20-30 acres of corn, plus a large vegetable garden planted with corn, potatoes, tomatoes, green beans, peas, cucumbers, and more which supplemented food purchased for the sanitarium kitchen. Richard also was responsible for mowing the large lawn between the sanitarium and Troy Road, and assisted with maintenance. His wife, Ella, worked as an aide in the sanitarium. Laura remembers her mother sewing clothes for some of the children in the hospital.

Laura did some secretarial work for the doctor and when Dr. Ventura arrived, would often babysit for his children.

The Minner family, like others which worked at the sanitarium, were required to have regular testing to make sure they had not contracted TB.

Laura said there was a local high school girl at the sanitarium when she was in high school, but she was told never to say anything about her at school to protect her privacy. Even today, she did not break that trust, but "the girl" contacted MCHS. It was Carol Brethorst Kaufmann Sporrer (see above).



### Nurse Diane Reiter Alvis

Alvis was a nurse at the sanitarium during the final years of operation when the census was declining due to improved treatment and the actions of Madison County and other health departments which worked to contain the disease.

She worked the floor which had terminal patients. She said they were "not given false hope. These patients knew from their condition that there was little hope."

Patients ate meals in their rooms to avoid cross contamination. There was a surgical suite, but surgeries were no longer performed at the sanitarium. Most patients were treated with

a regimen of pills, 12-15 per day, in addition to whatever they needed for other ailments they might have had.

Typically, nurses wore scrubs and masks when near patients with the worst cases of TB, because a cough or sneeze could contaminate a large area. All staff were tested for TB every six months with a skin test and with an x-ray annually.

At that time, visitors were discouraged, but many church groups would come. They could sing in the halls or stairwells, offering some entertainment for the patients who had no television to help pass the time, only reading material and sometimes a radio.



### Nurse Dorothy Reynolds Cruse

Dorothy Reynolds graduated from St. Elizabeth School of Nursing in 1942 and worked at numerous places, including about ten years at Wood River Hospital, before going to work at the sanitarium in about 1964. She sometimes worked in the building, but most of the time was an outreach nurse who visited people in their homes providing medications and taking skin tests between doctor visits. Sometimes in immigrant families, the entire family would test positive. Her "territory" might be anywhere between O'Fallon and Livingston.

When working in the sanitarium, Cruse said the nurses opened windows often, even in cold weather, to bring fresh air into the rooms. The roof of the building had chairs, so patients could go up on the roof for fresh air. Part of the food came from gardens on the property, and patients always had hearty, nutritious meals.

Cruse described the sanitarium as "an important place where most patients responded well to treatment and were given good care."

They treated a lot of people and it was all provided free by the county. She said she met many good people there, both patients and staff.

Dorothy was tested for TB when she went to work at the sanitarium and tested negative. After she had worked there for a while, she tested positive, so Dr. Ventura had her take a regimen of

medications for a year as a precaution, but she never developed active TB.



### George Vernon

George Vernon was the son of Dr. and Mrs. George Vernon. His father was the sanitarium director from 1953-1960. The Vernon family, which included four children, lived in the doctor's residence, the former Giese home.

George, Jr. doesn't remember ever going upstairs to the patient wards in the seven years they lived there, but his family always ate Sunday dinner at the sanitarium where fried chicken was the traditional meal.

When they were there, the resident farmer, Leon Lebegue still had a small herd of cattle and some hogs. On the west side of the property was a barn and slaughterhouse.

Nurses were still living in the nurses' residence during his time there and could come and go as they pleased.

George described the doctor's residence as having four bedrooms and an office on the second floor and large public rooms on the ground floor, a living room, dining room, kitchen, and sun porch, plus a master bedroom. His father had an office at the sanitarium, but his home office was where he did consultant work, which usually meant reading x-rays.



*Dr. George Vernon came to the Madison County TB Sanitarium in 1953 after 20 years at the Palmer Sanitarium in Springfield, Illinois. (George Vernon Jr)*



# Madison County Historical Society

*Opening Doors to Madison County History*

801 N. Main Street  
Edwardsville, IL 62025

Address Service Requested

PRSR STD  
Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Permit #9  
Edwardsville, IL  
62025

## THE MADISON COUNTY TUBERCULOSIS SANITARIUM - POST 1968

The Madison County TB Sanitarium was open from 1926 until 1968 when new treatments for TB made it possible for Madison County to close the facility. After the sanitarium closed, the outpatient clinic was run from the first floor of the building until a new tuberculosis clinic was built at 2119 Troy Road. The former sanitarium building then was remodeled and opened in 1971 as the Madison County Nursing Home. The Tuberculosis Clinic building later became the Madison County Health Department, which moved to the former Wood River Hospital building in 2002. The last remaining buildings from the former sanitarium complex were torn down in 2005 in preparation for construction of Edwardsville Crossing.

## MARY'S RESEARCH TIP: KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON!

I am sure many of you have seen variations of the British World War II "Keep Calm and Carry On" poster. As with any iconic phrase, variations are quick to appear, especially on social media. While I think the original statement is especially valid for genealogists, I think one of the important variations for everyone to remember is "Keep Calm and Cite Your Sources."

Remember to include **who** created the record, **what** type of record it is, **when** the record was created, and finally, **where** the record is located. I also like to think about **why** the record was created; for example, is it a birth certificate created at the time of birth or is it a delayed birth certificate created much later?

*Editor's Note: Thank you to Mary Westerhold for providing this column of research tips for genealogists over the past eight years. We've learned a lot, and your expertise will be greatly missed!*



KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
CITE YOUR  
SOURCES

### MCHS CALENDAR

SUNDAY, APRIL 19 - 2 P.M.  
THE LYNCHING OF ROBERT PRAEGER  
Presenter: Peter Stehman

SUNDAY, JUNE 14 - 2 P.M.  
ARCHAEOLOGY AT THE GEHRING SITE  
Presenter: Julie Zimmerman

Immanuel United Methodist Church  
800 N. Main Street, Edwardsville

## IS THIS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER?

If there is a red dot on your mailing label, then you have not renewed your membership in MCHS for 2020 and, sadly, this will be your last newsletter. It breaks our heart, but to continue mailings when memberships have not been renewed, would break the bank! You can renew online at: <https://www.madcohistory.org/membership/>, in person at the Madison County Archival Library, or by mail to MCHS, P. O. Box 422, Edwardsville, IL, 62025, or for information, call 618-656-1294.