



# Department of Veterans Services

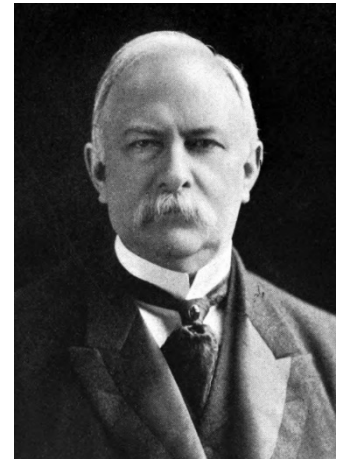
Ohio Veterans Homes

## History of the Homes

In 1886, a group of citizens led by I. F. Mack of Sandusky successfully petitioned the state legislature to establish a home for Ohio's honorably discharged Civil War veterans who, because of incapacitating disease, wounds, or other cause, were unable to earn a living. Governor J. B. Foraker appointed a commission charged with the duty of selecting a site and arranging for construction of the home.

This commission became the first Board of Trustees. Members I. F. Mack, Sandusky; P. I. Brown, Zanesville; W. P. Orr, Piqua; Thomas Dill, Mansfield; and Thomas Paxton, Cincinnati met on June 3, 1886 and elected Mr. Mack chairman and Mr. Brown secretary. Proposals were received from various Ohio cities willing to offer land for the home. The board visited 14 of these communities, finally selecting the present site three miles south of Sandusky.

A contract was entered into with the City of Sandusky deeding approximately 99 acres to the State. The city agreed to build water and gas mains, lines for electricity, street car tracks to the home site and to furnish an ample supply of water at a cost of \$25.00 per year for 13 years, after which time the home would be charged the standard rate for industries in Sandusky.



Gov. Joseph Foraker



On November 19, 1888, under the supervision of General Manning F. Force, the first 17 men were admitted to the Ohio Soldiers and Sailors Home, later named the Ohio Veterans Home (OVH). Since that day, more than 50,000 veterans have been admitted to residency. Resident eligibility has been expanded to include honorably discharged veterans from all military branches and National Guard who served during the Mexican Border War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam Conflict and Operation Desert Storm. In 1969, the Ohio legislature revised admission requirements to permit female veterans to become residents. On October 10, 1969, Bernice M. DuFour, a WWII Navy veteran, was the first woman admitted to OVH.



On June 25, 1950, the home broadened its services to include nursing home care. On that date, a new building was opened providing 50 intermediate care beds for residents who required a greater level of care than previously available.

By 1970, it became apparent that a larger, more up-to-date facility was needed to meet the needs of an aging veteran population. Through the combined efforts of the Board of Trustees, veterans organizations and the Veterans Administration, construction began on a new 300-bed facility and, on Memorial Day 1979, Secret Nursing Home was dedicated in honor of Senator Robert Secret, a staunch veterans' advocate. Seven years later, on Memorial Day 1986, the renovated original nursing home was dedicated in memory of long-time Board of Trustees Member, J. Ernest Giffin.

At the same time the number of beds was being increased, the quality of care was being improved. In 1983, the Secret Nursing Home was granted licensure and certification by the State of Ohio. At this time, it became legally necessary that a licensed nursing home administrator be hired to oversee operation of the nursing home and to ensure continuation of licensure and certification. In 1986, this licensure and certification was extended to include the renovated building and the two sections became the Secret-Giffin Care Facility.



During this period of establishing quality care and accommodations for nursing home residents, the domiciliary residents, who are able to pursue a more independent life-style were not overlooked. Their residences, commonly known as cottages, were maintained and modernized throughout the years.

However, each year it became more difficult to keep pace with the effects of time on the cottages. After giving serious consideration to renovation of the existing structures, it was decided the needs of the domiciliary residents would be better met through construction of a new building designed with their comfort and safety as its focus. On June 14, 1992, this domiciliary, appropriately named Veterans Hall, was dedicated, linking all living and service areas for the convenience of residents.

Today, the Ohio Veterans Homes - Sandusky Home maintains 427 nursing home beds. Sandusky also maintains 293 independent living beds in a domiciliary setting. In 2003, the Ohio Veterans Homes - Georgetown Home opened, serving southern Ohio. Georgetown offers 168 beds for nursing home care. Both the Sandusky and Georgetown homes became part of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services in 2008.

Two levels of care are offered at the homes: standard care for those veterans in need of any intermediate level of care, and special care for veterans with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia. Most residents receive a pension and benefits of some type—Social Security, disability, VA or other retirement subsidy. To supplement their regular monthly income, many residents are employed by OVH as resident workers. The Ohio Veterans Homes are funded by the State and also receive a per diem rate from the Department of Veterans Affairs for each resident. The resident pays an income-based assessment. This money is deposited in the Resident Benefit Fund. A small percentage of residents do not have any income at all. They are not subject to the assessment fee and local service organizations donate funds to enable them to purchase sundry items for their personal use.



The First Officers of the Ohio Soldiers and Sailors Home

To establish a formal system of communication between the residents and the administration, two councils were formed. All domiciliary residents are eligible to participate in the Members Council. Nursing home residents participate in the Resident Council. Each group elects its own officers and meets monthly. Residents are free to discuss problems, air grievances and make recommendations unique to their level of care. These suggestions are forwarded to the Director for consideration.

Whenever feasible, suggestions are implemented. The administration may address either council on topics pertinent to the residents.

Concurrent with the growth in living quarters was the expansion of services available to the residents. Staffed by approximately 700 civil service employees and nearly 70 resident workers, the Ohio Veterans Homes - Sandusky Home is a small city within itself, presided over by a Facility Superintendent. A home-like atmosphere is offered while providing for the special needs of domiciliary and nursing home residents.

The Dietary Department prepares and serves over 700,000 home-cooked meals annually for residents, their visitors and employees. Two full-time dietitians and one full-time dietary technician plan menus which are nourishing, appetizing and pleasing to the eye. Eight variations of each meal are available to meet all

regular and therapeutic diets. Residents are encouraged to eat in the attractive, functional dining rooms. Meals are served on the nursing units for those who are unable to go to the dining areas.

Laundry Service of linens is available for all residents. Domiciliary residents are expected to do their own personal laundry, and nursing home residents may do their personal laundry if they wish. Washers and dryers for resident use are located in all units.

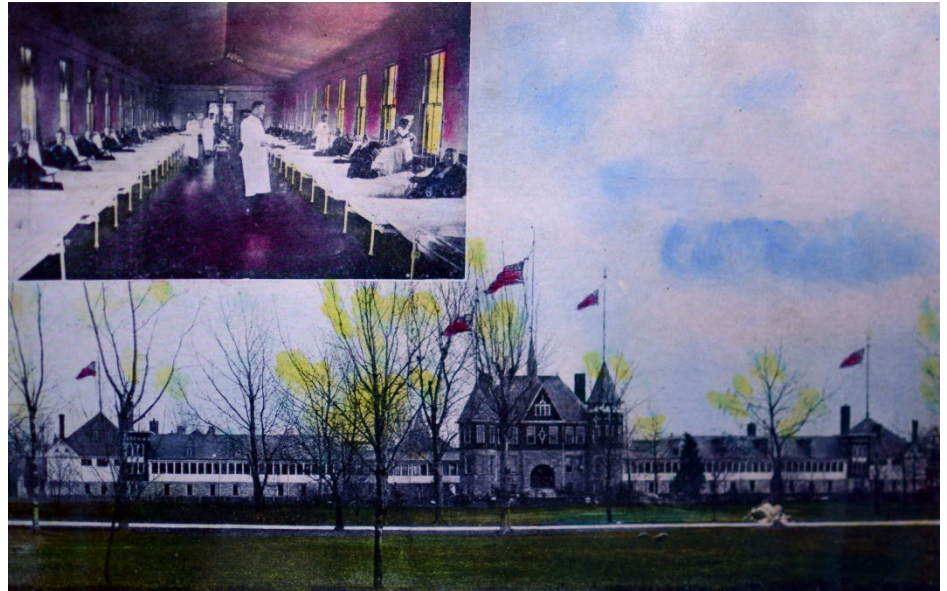
The Maintenance Department provides upkeep and repair of the entire facility. Capable, experienced employees perform duties involving carpentry, electricity, machinery, painting, vehicle repair and plumbing. A horticulturist and staff care for the beautifully groomed 99-acre campus.

The facility's Police Department is staffed by state-certified police officers assisted by resident dispatchers. The department is empowered to perform all duties of a law enforcement agency including transport and ancillary services and have facility safety responsibilities. The Chief of Police also supervises the facility's switchboard which is responsible for incoming and outgoing calls, emergency communications and the public address system.

Medical care is administered by a Medical Director who supervises a team of physicians operating on a contract basis. There is an outpatient clinic for domiciliary residents and a part-time dentist, optometrist and podiatrist. The Medical Director is also responsible for administration of an in-house pharmacy, x-ray services, and physical, occupational and speech therapies.

The Director of Nursing supervises the nursing staff comprised of registered nurses, licensed practical nurses tested by the Ohio Board of Nursing, and nurse aides tested by the Nurse Aide Registry.

Two important facets of nursing services are rehabilitative and restorative care, both focused on assisting the resident reach the highest possible level of function. In February 1990, a Special Care Unit was established to focus on the specific needs of patients with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. In 2004, two additional Special Care Units were established.



New Hospital at the Ohio Soldiers and Sailors Home, Circa 1908

Domiciliary Nursing provides nursing care for domiciliary residents. A registered nurse meets with each resident on a semi-annual basis. This nurse is part of the multi-departmental team, which evaluates the resident's care, progress and treatment.

Sick Bay is an outpatient clinic for domiciliary residents staffed by a physician and a licensed practical nurse. The physician treats the resident if outpatient care is appropriate. If the resident requires hospitalization or specialized treatment, the physician makes the proper referral.

Two chaplains, a part-time Catholic priest and a full-time Protestant minister, are available daily to provide residents with special care and counseling. Masses and non-denominational chapel services are offered each Sunday and on religious holidays.

Social Service workers are committed to preserving and/or improving a resident's self-image and dignity. They realize the important role of family and friends in this process and encourage their participation by regularly visiting residents, attending social affairs for residents and families, and participating in the team plan of care for the resident. Assistance to the resident also includes researching financial, legal or other community resources for which the resident might be eligible.

Activity Therapy is an important part of the resident's life at the homes. Two therapists in the domiciliary area and fifteen in the nursing home plan recreational activities designed to appeal to a variety of interests and levels of ability. A wide assortment of entertainment and creative opportunities such as bingo and other social games, movies, crafts, trips, etc. are offered to the resident.

"ADA" (Americans with Disabilities Act) passenger and wheel chair vans, many donated by veterans organizations, are available to transport residents to shopping malls, restaurants, concerts, fairs, festivals, veterans organization posts, professional baseball, football, and basketball games and other events throughout the year. Transportation is free to the resident and tickets are generously donated by organizations so that no resident is excluded because of financial hardship.

However, residents do not have to leave the OVH grounds to satisfy their recreational needs. Veterans organizations and other groups freely give both personal and financial support for on-campus recreational programs, offering the residents bingo (with prizes), gifts, seasonal treats, movies, dances, etc. Sports fans may watch Sandusky and St. Mary's High School sports, American Legion baseball and local amateur league softball games which are played daily on the home diamonds.

A well-equipped Recreation Center offers pool, darts, table games, a TV lounge, library and a screened patio. Television lounges are available in each wing and nursing home unit.



Each spring, the residents eagerly anticipate the re-opening of the Veterans Pavilion with its series of picnics and other outdoor festivities. Over \$225,000 was raised through donations by social, fraternal and veterans groups and other caring individuals to erect a pavilion in the scenic Mack Pond area. It was dedicated in June, 1984, and rapidly became a favorite gathering place for residents and local citizens. Reserved use of the facility for weddings, graduations, picnics, etc.

is available to residents, employees, volunteers and other interested persons from late spring through early fall. Proceeds from rental of the Pavilion help to fund programs and events for the residents.

The Craft Centers in the Giffin and Vets Hall facilities offer the opportunity to pursue an old hobby or to learn a new one. Skilled volunteers and staff assist the residents in woodworking, ceramics, leatherwork and painting. Supplies are furnished through a monthly budget allotted from the Resident Benefit Fund, which was established to enrich the lives of residents, and also through donations from interested individuals and groups. Residents may keep their completed projects or sell them through the OVH Gift Shops, with the resident retaining half of the selling price.

Volunteer Services is, in very large part, responsible for the success and diversity of the recreation program available to OVH residents. This department coordinates and utilizes the myriad of skills offered by the approximately 450 people who are registered volunteers at the Ohio Veterans Homes. Without them, and the effective direction of their talents, many recreational and service functions would not be available. A Volunteer Recognition Program has been established to show appreciation to all who volunteer their services during the year. In addition, Volunteer Services is responsible for donations and gifts from veterans groups and other groups and individuals interested in our residents. In 1983, the Volunteer Advisory Committee was established. The mission of the Volunteer Advisory Committee is to guide, support, promote, advance and assist with recruitment of volunteers and funding for special projects and programs of the Ohio Veterans Homes. The primary purpose of this committee is to provide better care for the residents of the Ohio Veterans Homes by communicating the needs of the homes to the officers and members of their represented organizations.

The Veterans Chemical Dependency Program (VCDP) is professionally staffed by Certified Alcohol Counselors and has been expanded to include other substance abuse. In keeping with the current trend, a Smoking Cessation Program for residents and staff is being offered under the auspices of VCDP and

the Education Department. It is the goal of the Ohio Veterans Homes to join other healthcare facilities in providing a smoke-free environment.

There are many more services not quite as visible as those mentioned. All work toward the well-being of the residents.

The Quality Assurance Department objectively and systematically monitors and evaluates the quality and appropriateness of resident care, pursues opportunities to improve this care, and resolves identified problems. Also under the auspices of QA are the infection control and education programs, both vital issues in health care today.

With the increase in numbers of residents and employees comes the necessity for more equipment and supplies. Materials Management, or Inventory Control, is charged with purchasing and tracking the larger items needed.

The Information Systems Department brings OVH into the computer era. Computerization began in 1990, and is steadily progressing. All of OVH is now "online," a far cry from the eleven typewriters scattered throughout the facility in 1981.

The Admissions Office processes applications beginning with the initial mailing of information and concluding with the scheduling of an admission date.



The Library at OVH Sandusky, with New Computers, Circa 2018

Since beginning in 1888, the Ohio Veterans Homes have evolved into complex, functional, efficient facilities, but our original mission remains the same today as it was then—

"Serving Those Who Served."