County Sells Barns for $500

The barns, silos and out-buildings of a former State Home farm were sold last week for bids totaling $500. Supervisors opened bids for the buildings at their session Thursday. When they bought 15 acres for a jail site, they got with it the buildings known as the Richardson Farm.

The buildings are to be torn down. A bid of $200 for the house was refused. The Board is going to look into the possibilities of remodeling the house and renting it, or selling it with a small plot of ground.

"It's an old junker," said Supervisor Tom Polk. "We ought to sell it now for $300 and be rid of it."

Supervisor George Brigham agreed with him. Supervisor George Donaldson wanted to rent it. Supervisor Harold Williams agreed.

I checked with Earl Sudden, a state man, who said: "He told me the place could be redecorated for $500 and would rent for $60 a month."

SUPervisor Lyle Ferrier thought the house and lot should be sold. He said it was all the corner of the property, and there was plenty of land remaining for a jail.

Supervisor Clare Barrett thought it should be held for now and an investigation made of what to do with it. The Board approved that suggestion.

Those successful in bidding on the remainder of the buildings and equipment were: Mrs. Henry Heal, clothes post, $3; Walter Davis, east barn, $100, silos, $100, fence, $60; George Toth, west barn, $141; Leonard Currell, cow barn, $100; Wilbur Olson, garage, $35.

Dr. Abruzzo Answers

Senators Hear Complaints About Lapeer State Home

A Royal Oak mother of five told a special Senate committee Friday in Pontiac that filth, disease and lack of proper care existed at the Lapeer State Home.

The charges were made by Mrs. Kermit Charron who has an 8-year-old son in the institution. She said she visited the home once every two weeks for two years as a volunteer worker.

"Dr. Anthony Abruzzo, superintendent of the Lapeer State Home agreed there was room for improvement. He said more personnel and money were needed to correct the existing conditions."

He disagreed with Mrs. Charron in several points. However, she told the committee unsanitary conditions had led to evidence of disabilities and disorders. She has had children returned to her.

"I have seen children so weakened in school that they look like skeletal specimens," she said.

Dr. Abruzzo, who was not present at the hearing, said there were occasional cases of dysentery but nothing of capital importance. He said he had only two cases of diarrhea in his home. He has written monthly reports on the health of each patient to make sure they are getting the proper diet.

MRS. CHARRON said unemployed children were existing in unsanitary conditions supervised only by older mentally retarded youngsters.

"It is not unusual to see children walking around with fecal mass on their hands or feet and this situation breeds disease."

Dr. Abruzzo said it was quite possible the mother had seen children in this condition.

We are as short on manpower as it is impossible to keep on top of each one of them. She was told the condition is not permanent and she has to remember the number and types of challenges we deal with, she said.

MRS. CHARRON strongly criticized the lack of trained personnel at Lapeer.

A few of the staff are trained. She said that most of the women are daughters or granddaughters of women who worked without any special training.

Sen. Lodge called her testimony State Home Page 1

OVER ONE-THIRD the way home Lapeer City Community Fund President Earl Smith points to the $6,000 mark while Executive Secretary Bob Graizer points to the $16,000 goal. Looking on, from left to right are Drive Chairman Al DeJordans, Vice President R. C. Rasmussen and Bill McDaniels, vice president of the Lapeer Optimist Club. The Optimists donated the Fund Thermometer which is on the Court House lawn.

The $6,000 is mostly from residential collections. Still to come are most of the business and industry returns. Also, this week collections are being made at the State Home and the High School. Anyone who wants to give but hasn't yet been contacted can contribute at either Lapeer bank or at the Red Cross office. The money goes to the Red Cross, the Scouts, and other local agencies to be used for charity and youth work.
Dr. Abruzzo Defends Care Of Patients at the Home

By BILL SMALL

Halloween is a perfect time for a witch hunt.

Lapeer State Home and Training School seems to be the site for the five-man interim committee headed by Senator L. Harvey Lodge, Oakland County Republican.

Two hearings conducted by Senator Lodge’s committee at Pontiac have dealt primarily with “disgraceful” conditions at the Lapeer institution.

Initial charges of filth, disease, and lack of proper care were made by Mrs. Verne M. Crotz, a county welfare worker, a few weeks ago. These were amplified at the second hearing last Thursday by Mrs. Chartron.

Dr. Anthony Abruzzo, superintendent of Lapeer State Home, spent 90 minutes testifying in regard to the charges. He admitted there were conditions that needed to be improved but said he felt Mrs. Chartron had been emotionally carried away in her statements.

Mrs. Chartron has a son in the building around which her charges were based. She did not emphasize the reference only to one particular building. This made it appear neglect was rampant in all parts of the institution.

The County Press learned, however, that Mrs. Chartron believes she is doing the Lapeer State Home a favor by painting such a bleak picture of the care given.

She hopes to shock the legislators into thinking of additional money next year which can be used in hiring more trained personnel.

Some of the leadership of the Lapeer Parents Association support her in this conviction although she has been the sole witness to the “deplorable conditions” in Lapeer.

Charles F. Wagg, director of the State Department of Mental Health, said in the first hearing that he did not disagree with her.

When asked about this by the County Press, Wagg said he did not want to get in a hale with Mrs. Chartron that he knew the situation at Lapeer.

LAST THURSDAY he told the committee, “There are some conditions of patients we are extremely concerned about. But, in the main, we have a dedicated group of employees doing the best they can, which is next to the impossible.”

The hearings are not political overtones Senator Lodge, who by his own admission has passed mental legislation for the County of Oakland than anyone, is not a candidate for Patronage Judge Nov. 8. A third hearing will be conducted Nov. 3 in Pontiac.

Dr. Abruzzo explained the site and workings of Lapeer State Home for the committee, citing the need for additional help. Lapeer has only 18 registered nurses for the 3,700-patient home. He said a volunteer program is underway but will not solve the help problem.

Lodge read Mrs. Chartron’s previous testimony of filth, disease, and improper care and then said, “We give the patients a far better care than that, don’t we, Doc?”

The superintendent g. a. n. s. while some conditions were not desirables he felt the charges had been dramatized.

AN UNIDENTIFIED woman told Dr. Abruzzo that on a visit to her son at the State Home she discovered dust in each room and cockroaches in the locker room. She said she washed out 25 closets and exhibited calloused fingernails to prove it.

Mrs. Rita Mason of Allen Park, a member of the Lapeer Parents Association, replied. “The attendants are few and so busy with patients they do not have time to do housekeeping chores.”

Dr. Abruzzo said a plan had been adopted whereby an automatic dishwashing company would wash all buildings at regular intervals. He also told of automatic dishwashers and new plumbing being installed in the building where Mrs. Chartron had leveled her criticism.

“We are not stopping dead and throwing up our hands saying nothing can be done. We are doing all we can with the funds available,” said Dr. Abruzzo.

Mrs. Chartron took the stand a second time to add more criticism of practices at the Lapeer institution.

She said many of the patients in her association are not cared for by the large amount of patient help used in caring for other patients.

She charged that regular attendants made patient workers clean up soiled children instead of doing it themselves.

Dr. Abruzzo said one attendant could not care for four or five children at the same time and that it was necessary to rely on patient help. He said he was sure the attendants did not abuse the privilege of patient workers, but would check into it.

The red-headed Mrs. Chartron flatly contradicted him, saying she had been present when this was practiced. “The attendants openly admit the children are regale to them,” she said.

She remarked about the lack of Negro help among the personnel, saying that her employees were taken from the Michigan Civil Service employment lists and that no discrimination was practiced.

“Perhaps the City of Lapeer rejects the Negroes,” commented Mrs. Chartron.

SHE SAID a long range program was needed and urged a special committee be set up to study the needs and placement of the mentally retarded.

Dr. Abruzzo suggested fore-going the long range plan in favor of action now.

Mrs. Louis J. Colombo Jr., of Bloomfield Hills representing the Foundation for Emotionally Disturbed Children, said the Pontiac State Hospital needs a 96-bed unit for children.

Senator Lodge complimented her on the report and for presenting him concrete facts.

“Now that I have read this, what are you going to do about it?” asked Mrs. Colombo.

Lodge said the information would be combined into a special report to the 1961 Legislature. “People are always pressuring the Legislature for money but never give any facts to substantiate their requests,” he said. The senator “We want information on a sound basis for legislation.”

Dr. Abruzzo did not remind Lodge of the 35-page Blue Report submitted to all legislators by the Mental Health Department last January. This report indicated a number one priority—the need to bring mental care up to at least minimal levels.

Wagg, author of the report, said he felt the legislature had made a sincere effort to provide facilities and staff but was held down in fight of the state’s dwindling treasury.
Big Day for Lapeer

JUST about the biggest thing that ever happened to Lapeer was when the Legislature decided in 1893 to locate the State Home at Lapeer. It was a decision that may have had something to do with a Lapeer man, John T. Rich, being governor at the time. But, politics or not, it was a happy decision. It still ranks as the biggest, steadiest and best-paying “industry” the town ever landed.

The cornerstone for the first building, No. 18, was laid in 1894. That was cause for the big parade pictured above. The Lapeer Democrat, ancestor of The County Press, reported that the “huge parade of seven divisions” was under the command of Chief Marshal L. W. Hinman. It marched from downtown Lapeer to the State Home.

This picture was taken from the corner where the Cyclone Insurance building now stands. In the far background can be seen the White Block (Vincent’s Drug Store). Nepessing Street was still unpaved. Why the parade seems to be turning north up Mason Street is not known.
"Forgotten Child" at State Home
Now a Forgotten Phrase

The "forgotten child" at the Christmas time in an article in the papers.

There are some special groups which have gone beyond the normal response. A good example is the employees of Ordnance. For each of these amounts a small box is filled with gifts for the patients.

Gifts for the 3,000 patients began arriving. In December, according to Dr. Smith, community relations director of the home, the patients are forgotten children to the extent that because of illnesses, death, or the stress of the times they have no one to care for them. And they will never reach maturity.

But no longer are they "forgotten." Last year was the first in which all the patients received a gift. This year, the cost was a small, secret amount.

Gifts for patients have poured in like a flood of water. Gifts for each of the children's and employees' groups are still coming in. The patients will be thrilled with the gifts.

Official Opening

Mrs. Celine Antonelli's Beauty Shop
located at 3189 Bohmian Road

Thursday, Dec. 15

Well equipped
12 years experience
Free gifts thru December

The exciting gift
that opens every
door to music!
Memories in Cornerstone

Three state legislators took part in the cornerstone ceremony for the Oakdale Nursing Home. From left are: Rep. Marion L. Bell, Detroit; James D. Stevens, Tecumseh; and Raymond Winton, East Haven.
Picnic shelters will come later

$25,000 Needed

Develop Recreation Area at State Home

In the past years summer droppings in terms of picnics, recreational events and the playground activities and patients at Laper State Home took place in community parks, summer day camps and public beaches. In 1963 over 500 patients participated in this program off the premises.

This developed into a gigantic problem for the recreation staff and limited transportation facilities. In 1961 the idea of developing private facilities began. It is felt that these facilities will better serve all the patients, especially the more severe home service building.

The money for this project does not come from regular State funds but from patient benefit funds, much of which is from raffles and donations. The Laper Patriots Association contributed over $2,000 worth of playground equipment. Other groups have been equally generous.

Even though this area is in its preliminary stages of development, patients are beginning to use the facility and are expressing satisfaction.

The total project, when completed, will cost over $50,000. It is estimated. Just a little more than half of this is currently available. Donations are gratefully accepted.
$7,000 Damage

State Home Escapee Sets House on Fire

A run-away youth from the Lapeer State Home admitted starting a house fire Sunday night, causing an estimated $7,000 damage.

Ross Vandewoode, 17, was caught in a field at the rear of the home at 1314 Inlay City Rd. He was carrying a portable radio which he had taken from the house.

The boy told deputies he walked out the main gate of the State Home Sunday, and was going to Port Huron to see his parents. Instead, he stopped at the home of Jerry Giers. He said he walked in the back door, which was open. No one was home at the time.

Vandewoode said he watched television for a while, and then set the bed on fire. He also set the living room couch on fire.

The flames were spotted by a deputy from the Wayne County Sheriff’s Department who was driving by. The Lapeer Safety Department extinguished the blaze, which gutted the inside of the house. The boy was returned to the State Home.

AUTOMATION came to the State Home last week with installation of IBM data processing equipment. The first use will be to handle bookings, fees, patient accounts. Later it will keep track of patient movement such as admissions, transfers, discharges and length of absence. Future applications are expected to be made in keeping track of employees' time, warehouse inventories, and patient statistics. In the picture, from the left are Mrs Virginia Carpenter, operator; George Bouch, project coordinator, Robert Whittan, HIM supervisor; Mrs. Iris Cars, operator and Mrs. Elizabeth Hirling, operator.

LAPPE COUNTY PRESS

STATE FAIR? Barnum and Bailey circus? No. Lapeer State Home. Installed at the Recreation Park this 40 ft. merry-go-round, with 20 moving horses, is complete with a hand organ. The merry-go-round was purchased partly from donations and the balance from the Resident Benefit Fund. Many State Home residents go on trips outside the institution; however, they seldom get to ride on a merry-go-round or similar ride. It's the hope of Home officials that eventually a complete amusement park can be built to go along with the recreation facilities they already have.
Lapeer’s Recreational Facilities Reflect Home’s Bright Atmosphere

By ALICE LEMERIGE

In 1967, when the Madison Home for the Aged Municipal and State homes opened its doors, the image of the place was seen in keeping with the surroundings. High walls and a locked gate closed its entrance.

The next few years, however, brought improvements to the facilities. In 1967, when Lapeer State Home and Training School, had the impression of it as a place for unfortunate who had been "put away," remained.

Today, the state home, with 140 rooms, is unavailable for anyone who is "put away." It has been improved and transformed into a haven for the elderly. The homes are now more comfortable and the facilities are modern.

The story is one of progress and improvement. The homes are maintained in a way that is comfortable and safe for the residents.

The homes are open to the public, and visitors are encouraged to come and see the improvements that have been made.

The homes are a place of comfort and companionship for the elderly, and they are an important part of the community.

The Flint Journal, October 1, 1967

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Oakdale in the Newspapers
The Flint Journal, October 1, 1967 (Continued)
Supt's return prevents walkout at State Home

by DON PONIATOWSKI

State Home employees were 8 hours from striking Monday. But accord was reached at 9 p.m. between Home administrators and members of Local 567, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO.

About 660 union members had threatened to strike at 5 a.m. Tuesday. They claimed Medical Supt Anthony Abruzzo disappeared last week to avoid signing an agreement.

Dr Abruzzo returned from Illinois Monday morning. He signed the agreement in a special meeting with union officials. It provides space for union meetings at the Home, and outlines procedures for meetings between union and management.

A second agreement, governing working conditions, was slated to be signed Oct. 16. Union members had authorized a strike Friday, and began picketing the Home Monday morning. The informational picket was the second within 2 weeks.

The first picket also was prompted by an unannounced agreement. A possible strike was avoided at that time when union and management renewed negotiations.

Union officials said they believed Dr Abruzzo was too busy in the talks. When he didn't show up, the strike vote was taken.

Dr Abruzzo and his trip to Illinois had been planned months in advance. He was a member of a mental evaluation team that visited the Home Oct 16 as part of a state policy on the medical superintendent.

On the same day, the superintendent signed a memorandum of understanding which shall incorporate identical language of the policy, if the director of the Department of Mental Health approves this action, said Abruzzo.

The document and policy basically refer to working conditions for resident care personnel. These are shift and transfer assignments, coffee breaks, overtime, scheduling, annual leave, sick time and tardiness, Abruzzo said.

Local 567 represents about 600 of the Home's 1,000 employees.

Labor peace remains shaky at State Home

The State Home truce between union and management will be tested within 6 days. Permanent peace may be riding on a decision now being pondered by the Department of Mental Health.

Medical Supt Anthony Abruzzo has requested state permission to sign a "memorandum of understanding" with employees. If he gets it, the union will be satisfied. If not, the dispute which nearly became a strike may be renewed.

It's been 3 weeks since union officers demanded that Dr Abruzzo sign an agreement on working conditions. He's twice been accused of trying to slip out of it. Each time the union picketed and threatened to strike. Each time they were removed by Abruzzo and withdrawn. Last week, Abruzzo said the "understanding" would be signed if the director of the Department of Mental Health approves this action.

The document is scheduled to be signed next Wednesday.

It governs shift and transfer assignments, coffee breaks, overtime, scheduling, annual leave, sick time and tardiness.

Dr Abruzzo will meet Monday with members of Local 567. He said this week he hoped to have the state's answer by that time.

Lon Dodge, union president, said he's confident the union will be successful. It represents 600 of the Home's 1,000 employees.

Dodge and union officials were accused last week of duping the local's membership.
State Home strikers win promise — no agreement

The State Home struck on Wednesday morning, Oct. 24, after the state did not reach an agreement with the State Labor Department. The State Department of Labor and Industries requested a labor board to investigate the dispute.

The State Home, located in Oakdale, is home to approximately 600 residents. Staffing issues have been a concern for years, leading to multiple strikes and labor disputes. The current strike is the third in recent history.

The State Labor Department proposed a new contract that would increase wages and improve working conditions. However, the State Home's management rejected the proposal, citing financial constraints.

At the heart of the dispute is the issue of staffing levels. The State Home argues that the increased costs of the new contract cannot be supported with the current budget. The State Labor Department counters that the current staffing levels are inadequate and that the facilities are not safe for the residents.

A mediation session was scheduled for next week to try to resolve the dispute. In the meantime, the State Home remains closed to the public.
Retarded Child's Parents Face Agonizing Decision

If it were not for the program in the school, this child would not be in school. If the school could provide the services needed, the child might be able to attend. However, the school cannot provide the necessary services and the parents are left to figure it out.
State Home union’s fate to be decided

A decision is expected June 19 on the fate of State Home Local 567. The union is accused of breaking its no-strike pledge to the state.

The State Civil Service Commission will decide if disciplinary action is warranted. The local could lose the right to represent its members in negotiations.

About 150 members of the union failed to report for work last October. The Home was picketed when Medical Supt Anthony Abruzzo refused to sign a working agreement.

The local has contended its pickets were not on strike. They were simply waiting at the main gate for Dr Abruzzo’s signature.

A hearing into the matter was completed here last January. The local had been ordered to show cause why state recognition should not be withdrawn.

Ricky Hurt in Fall At Lapeer State Home

LAPEER (AP) — Ricky Thorne, a mentally retarded boy who was not capable of speaking when he was abandoned by his mother in Miami International Airport in 1965, was injured seriously Wednesday when he fell 20 feet.

The 17-year-old youth plummeted three stories from a bathroom window to the grass below at Lapeer State Home and Training School, institution officials reported. He was operated on for abdominal complications.

Scuff marks on a ledge showed the youth crept to the window sill of the dormitory where he has lived since October, 1967, reported Fred Campbell, director of community relations at the institution.

Campbell said it wasn’t known why Ricky went to the window fully clothed in the predawn darkness. Some theories, he said, were that it was accidental that he may have been trying to run away or possibly harm himself.

Ricky—one thought a mute—has learned recently to say “yes” and “no”. He was left at the Florida airport in 1965 by his mother, Mrs. Victor Thorne of Troy, Mich.

His mother later returned to Florida at the insistence of her husband and claimed the boy.

She was quoted as saying she left him there in an effort to focus attention on him in hopes someone would cure his mental retardation.

A Florida judge then allowed her request that Ricky be placed in a home in Florida if the Thorne’s paid the bill. The Thorne’s later sold their home and left Troy, cutting off further payments.

Florida authorities asked Michigan to take him in 1967.

The Thorne’s were last heard of somewhere in Canada, Campbell said. He said, however, two married sisters have been visiting him.

His mental age is less than eight years, Campbell said, adding he was a “model patient.”

“He has shown no aggressive tendencies—if he is directed to do something, he does it.” However, Campbell said, “His behavior does indicate that some type of psychosis is possible.”

In addition to saying the two words, Ricky “will laugh and holler very loud to get your attention,” Campbell said.

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