March 2012

H03-1513. Ottawa County Family Independence Agency/Community Haven. Records, 1866-2020. 11.00 linear ft.

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Abstract

Also known as the Ottawa County Poor Farm/Work Farm/Poor House/Infirmary/Community Haven from 1887-1997. The collection includes Ottawa County Circuit Court records of persons housed at the facility titled “Ottawa County Infirmary Records of Inmates,” transcribed in 2002 by Holland Genealogical Society members Irene Reidsma and Darlene Winter; histories; newspaper clippings about the facility (1887-2011); photographs; correspondence; audiotape cassette and transcription of 1978 facilities addition dedication; original scrapbook and photocopies; loose clippings; receipts and correspondence, 1891-1973; yearbooks; Haven Hilite (1986-1987); receipt ledger, 1915-1921; Record of Inmates of the Poor House ledger, 1887-1933; compact disk (CD) titled The Poor Farm: A Broadcast Production by WGVU/NPR with David Moore, Featuring the Friends of Ottawa County Parks Project to Restore and Preserve the Cemetery at Eastmanville Farm, November 2-3, 2009; and materials concerning the 2010 Poor Farm Cemetery dedication.

Accession No: H03-1513
Provenance: Ottawa County Family Independence Agency
Donors: Ottawa County Family Independence Agency; Jan Sluka
Photographs: 82 images (Boxes 2, 6, 9)
Processed by: Catherine Jung, May 2007

History

The Ottawa County poor farm was developed in the late 1800s to house indigent residents of the county. By working with crops or with the dairy herd, persons could pay off their debts and be released. Some of the residents who were unable to cope with life in the outside world were housed at the facility permanently. The farm served as a refuge for the poor and mentally disabled until 2000, when the facility closed and the residents were moved to other facilities. Most of the buildings on the 229 acre property have been destroyed. There is a small cemetery on the property. The land is currently leased to local farmers by the county and there are plans to possibly turn the property into a park or educational farm, although there are no firm plans to do so.

Scope and Content

The collection contains histories, original records from the poor farm, meeting minutes, departmental annual reports, newspaper clippings, photographs and memorabilia from the farm’s inception in the late1800s through many expansions, building of new facilities, and the eventual closing of the facility and the uncertainty of the county’s new use of the property in 2003. The collection is arranged alphabetically.
Container List

Box 1

Address Book, 1923
Addresses and Correspondence, n.d., 1923, 1925, 1934, 1957
Admittance Records, 1924-1943, indexed by Loekie Boersma, 2003
Annual Reports
  Ottawa County Department of Social Welfare (5 folders), 1940-1960, 1962-1965
Audiotape, Cassette Tape, and Transcript of Dedication Service, 1978
Brief Histories of Community Haven, 1978, 1992
Clippings, 1866-2011
Cornerstone Contents List, 1979
Correspondence
  Joe Steele’s 110th Birthday, 1970
  Miscellaneous
  Tobacco, 1927
Directions for Admittance – Ottawa County Superintendents of the Poor, n.d., 1915-1933
Film Premiere, The Poor Farm: A Documentary, 2017
Haven Hilite (3 folders), 1985-1987
Haven Highlights, 1992-1994 (incomplete)
Herd record book and cow information, n.d., 1919-1936
Holstein-Friesian Association of America Membership Certificate, 1984
“History of Community Haven,” n.d.
Land sale deeds, 1866, 1869, 1878, 1890, 1917
Lists
  Meals Served, 1964-1970
  Number of Beds, 1971-1973
Minutes
  Social Welfare Board, 1950-1959
  Superintendent of the Poor, n.d., 1928-1939
Miscellaneous
National Dairy Association National Honor Roll Certificates, 1930, 1931, 1937
Notes on residents, n.d., 1898, 1899, 1957, 1961
Ottawa County Community Haven Strategic Plan, 1990
Ottawa County Infirmary, 1866-1883, 1919-1932, 1951-1976, Revised by Loekie Boersma, 2003
“The Ottawa County Poor Farm at Eastmanville 1917 – A Look Inside,” Kramer, Eldon, 2002
Box 2

“Ottawa County Poor Farm: Eastmanville, Polkton Township, Ottawa County, Michigan,” Boersma, Loekie, 2003
Ottawa County Work Service Program Brochure, n.d.
Outreach magazine, 1989
PALS Program, n.d., 1992
Pennies and plaque from Cornerstone, 1979
Photographs
   Holland Genealogical Society Records Transfer, 1997 (25 images)
   The Poor Farm: A Broadcast Production by WGVU/NPR with David Moore, Featuring the Friends of Ottawa County Parks Project to Restore and Preserve the Cemetery at Eastmanville Farm, November 2-3, 2009 (Compact Disc)
“The Poor Farm Grows Up in Ottawa County,” n.d.
“A Poor Farm Withstands the Test of Time” by Deborah Sturtevant, 1992
Psalter, 1927
Receipts
Records
   Inmates, 1940-1976
   General Records (3 folders) (bound volumes), 1866-1893, 1920, 1922, 1931-1932
Resolutions, 1973, 1978
Sesquicentennial Celebration, 2016
Signatures of Staff and Residents, cornerstone laying, 1979
“Superintending the Poor: Social Welfare in Michigan during the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” by John L. Martin, 2020
Vader, Lorraine (Piers) (6 images), 1941, 1990-1996 (6 images)
Photo Album, New Building Dedication, (bound volume) August 1978
Patient Record Book IV (bound volume), 1950s-1970s

Box 3

Record of Inmates, 1887-1933 (fragile, oversized)
Scrapbook, 1977-1999 (oversized)

Box 4

Register of Warrants Paid, 1933-1939 (oversized)

Box 5

Invoice Record, 1896-1905
Receipt Ledger, 1915-1921
Poor Farm Cemetery Dedication Materials, 2010 (17 images)
Photographs (12” x 14”) (2 images)

Box 7

Cornerstone copper box

Box 8

Wooden mailbox, n.d.

Box 9

Photographs, Aerial View of Ottawa County Poor Farm, n.d. (2 images)
Resolution by the Social Services Board and the Department of Social Services in and for the County of Ottawa, Michigan Recognizing William Kennedy, 1978
Sesquicentennial Celebration Display Posters
  Deputies Gerald Schreur, Albert Pontarelli, Bruno Olechnowicz, n.d. (1 image)
  Horse, Rider, and Handler at Rear of Poor Farm Main Building, n.d. (1 image)
  Milk Cows and Milking Personnel, n.d. (2 images)
  National Dairy Association National Honor Roll Certificate, 1937 (1 image)
  Nine Women Dressed in Period Dress, n.d. (1 image)
  Small, Rustic House, n.d. (1 image)

Oversized (stored in oversized cabinet)

Pencil Drawing of Ottawa County Community Haven, n.d. (2 items)