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Pennsylvania

## History

From Almshouse to Detention Center: A Brief Historical Survey of Institutions and Organizations for the Care of Dependent and Delinquent Children in Lancaster County

### **Introduction**

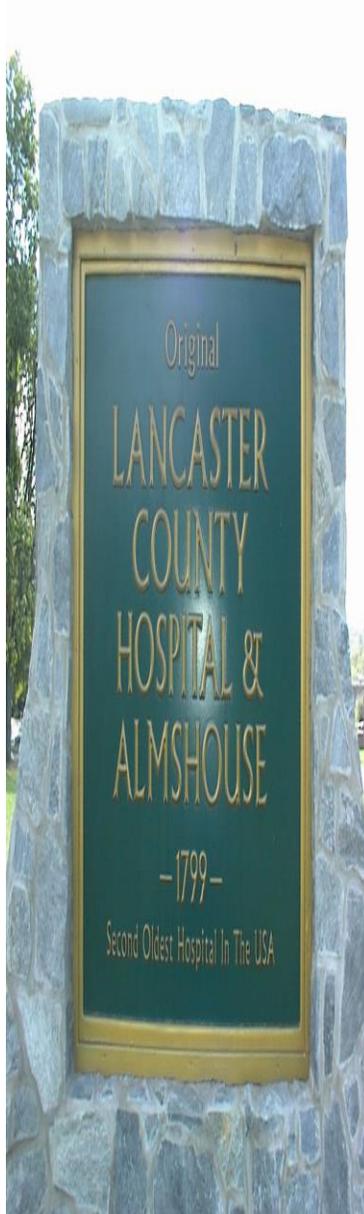
This history is a chronological overview of organizations and institutions involved in the care and treatment of dependent and delinquent children in Lancaster County Pennsylvania. Throughout the history of the United States, the line separating dependent and delinquent children in the justice system has changed repeatedly and often been unclear. In writing about the founding of the houses of refuge, the first institutions for the care and control of youth, Krisberg and Austin report, "from the outset, the first special institutions for juveniles housed together delinquent, dependent, and neglected children".<sup>1</sup> The origins of this movement has been the subject of excellent scholarly attention, however its effects and the effects of others like it on local communities has been less well documented and examined. Lancaster County has a facility for dependent and delinquent children to deal with some of the social problems in Lancaster County.

This history is chronologically organized with dates of operation for the organizations or institutions if available listed in the subheadings. Sources of information include scholarly literature, surviving records, newspaper articles, and personal interviews. Available sources were examined to identify the following: institutional or organizational mission or purpose, and its connection with dependent and delinquent youth, source(s) of funding for operations, and administration and staffing.

### **The Lancaster County Poor and House of Employment, 1799**



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**Currently the site of the Children & Youth Agency**

Construction of The Lancaster County Poor and House of Employment also known as the Lancaster County almshouse began in 1799 at what is presently 900 East King Street. The exact date the almshouse opened for operation is unknown.<sup>2</sup> This institution at its inception was expected to serve a multitude of functions in the community, but was primarily intended for the social control of the poor. In the eighteenth century, poverty and urban life were viewed as the primary causes of such social ills as crime,



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homelessness, immorality, and even mental illness. In discussing the almshouse movement in the Mid-Atlantic region Bourque states, "Communities constructed almshouses as part of a complex response to social problems, and almshouses were part of a wide spectrum of efforts to manage the poor."<sup>3</sup>

Talbott specifically identifies that delinquent and dependent children, at least initially were housed in the Lancaster County almshouse.<sup>4</sup> It appears unclear as to whether these children were admitted to the almshouse with their families because of poverty, or as individuals because of dependency or delinquency and what role the Courts had, if any, in the admission process. County taxes provided the primary source of funding for the almshouse. The Lancaster County almshouse included a working farm and stone quarry, and the manufacture of household goods with the residents of the institution employed in these operations. These operations were intended to reduce institutional dependence on county taxes by providing a source of revenue through the sale of excess produce and commodities.

Overall, administration of the almshouse was entrusted to a steward/superintendent, with his wife serving as matron of the hospital. Talbott reports, "it was typical for husband and wife to have these two positions, as it was required that the steward and his family live at the almshouse."<sup>5</sup> Other staff positions are not as clearly documented, but seem to have included attendants, nurses, and a storekeeper.

### **The Home for Friendless Children, 1900-1941**

This institution was located in Lancaster city on the corner of South Ann Street and Chester Avenue, the site of the present Garden Court Apartments. The purpose of this institution as stated in the Twelfth Annual Report of The Lancaster Charity Society was "the care of destitute and friendless children of Lancaster City and County... for boys and girls from four to ten years of age."<sup>6</sup> United States census records of the Home from 1900 indicate that a total of one hundred and six children were in residence.<sup>7</sup> Review of this census report indicates that the home admitted and cared for both white and African American children (70 white males, 2 African American males, 31 white females, and 3 African American females).

The surviving records of this institution include Minutes of the quarterly meeting of the Trustees of the Home and a pamphlet of its Constitution and By-Laws dated in 1900.<sup>8</sup>



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The meeting minutes indicate that Trustees were appointed for various terms by the Lancaster County Court to manage the home's finances and oversee operations. The minutes contain numerous references about expenditures for the repair and maintenance to the physical structure and grounds of the home. The records also include a lengthy inventory of fruits and vegetables canned and preserved to feed the children. This detailed accounting seems to imply that the home included an operating farm or large garden and orchard. Records indicate that the County of Lancaster provided at least some of the operating funds for the home, but it appears the Trustees were required to borrow money periodically to pay expenditures. The minutes date the closing of the Home by Court Order in 1941. It appears the Home primarily admitted and cared for dependent children, but surviving records do not include criteria for admission or the identity of the admitting authority or organization. Records seem to indicate that the position of matron was responsible for overall administration of the home, but provide no other information on staffing.

**The Lancaster Charity Society, 1904-??**



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**Currently the site of the Lancaster Day Care Center  
*An United Way Agency***

The Lancaster Charity Society, founded in 1904, maintained an office at 144-146 South Queen Street in Lancaster City. According to this organization's annual reports, its purpose was "the elevation of the moral and physical condition of the indigent, and for the relief of their necessities; for promoting cooperation with other charitable organizations."<sup>9</sup> Surviving records indicate some conflict between this organization and the Home for Friendless Children involving the placement of children in foster care.<sup>10</sup> The twelfth annual report of the Lancaster Charity Society (10/01/1915 to 09/13/1916) includes an interesting commentary on the prevalence of mental illness in the populations of incarcerated adults and juveniles - a major area of concern of the juvenile justice system today. The



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commentary titled "Some Necessary Preventive Measures" was stimulated after a traveling "exhibit on feeble-mindedness" was viewed in Lancaster by officers and directors of the organization. The commentary states, "One of the features of the Exhibit given particular attention, was the existence in our jails and penitentiaries of a large percentage of feeble-minded persons, and we know from the experience of our own Society that of the inmates of the Lancaster County jail, who average 122 daily, and of the boys and girls sent to State Reformatories through our Juvenile Court, many are mental defectives."<sup>11</sup>

**The Law and Order Society of Lancaster County Pennsylvania**

The Law and Order Society appears to have been only anecdotally involved in the lives of dependent and delinquent children of the community. According to Betts, the focus of this organization was "the suppression and elimination of unlawful, immoral, and corrupting conditions and agencies in the community, and other benevolent undertakings along kindred lines."<sup>12</sup> This organization functioned as a moral "watchdog" in the county, concerned with crimes of vice such as prostitution, gambling, and the sale and consumption of alcohol. Membership included leaders of some of Lancaster's churches, and the organization appears to have been privately funded.

The Society claimed to "fight juvenile delinquency by keeping in touch with the Probation Officer who cooperates with their activities."<sup>13</sup> It appears that before 1919, there was no existing facility in the County devoted to the care of delinquent children, and common practice included housing juvenile offenders in the county jail. The History of the Rotary Club of Lancaster, Pennsylvania credits the Law and Order Society as a strong advocate for the separation of juvenile and adult offenders in different facilities.<sup>14</sup>

**The Rotary Home for Boys, 1919 -1963**



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**Operated by the Lancaster Rotary Club  
Currently the site of Café Chuckles**

Any examination of the history of the social control and care of juveniles is in some measure contextually framed by the laws and statues in place at the time. In 1901, Pennsylvania established its first Juvenile Act. This legislation established legal definitions for dependent, neglected, and delinquent children, among other provisions, and marked the beginning of the modern juvenile justice system in Pennsylvania. This Act prohibited the confinement of juveniles under the age of fourteen in jails, further if a child over fourteen was to be confined to a jail they were required to be completely separated from contact with adult offenders. Apparently, the Lancaster County Courts at the time, lacking a separate institution for juveniles utilized the County jail for the confinement of delinquent youth.

The Lancaster Rotary Club became aware of this local practice at least in part because of the public criticism previously mentioned by the Law and Order Society. The club's history also credits Judge Wagner of the Berks County Courts, addressing a club meeting in the spring of 1919, as a motivator for the establishment of a more suitable institution for delinquent boys.<sup>15</sup>

The club developed a plan to operate a home for delinquent boys, and successfully presented it to the Lancaster County Court and County Commissioners, with the County agreeing to pay a per diem of thirty-eight cents per day, per boy. The club's history cites this per diem rate as the same charged for institutional care at the Huntington Reformatory for Young Offenders and Glen Mills.<sup>16</sup> Five thousand dollars was the estimated annual cost of operating the home, and with the exception of the County per diem, operations were completely subsidized by the Rotary Club until 1921. Beginning in 1921, Lancaster County allocated five thousand dollars per year to the home in addition to the per diem, increasing the allocation to seven thousand dollars in 1922.<sup>17</sup>

The Rotary Home for Boys officially opened on August 23, 1919, at the intersection of Fruitville Pike and Keller Avenue, as the first local institution devoted to the care of delinquent boys.<sup>18</sup> On that date, Judge Landis committed two boys to the home for auto theft.<sup>19</sup> There appears to be no surviving records of the operations of the home.



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Throughout its existence, the home was administered and staffed by live in house parents, with the husband serving as superintendent and his wife as matron. The Rotary provided oversight through a standing committee of the club with daily operations managed by the superintendent and matron. The superintendents of the Rotary Home are chronologically listed as follows: Harry Martzall (1919-1923), Harry D. Weller (1931-1954), David A. Strayer (1954-1958), James R. Neal (1958-1960), John K. Jenkins (1960-1962), Elmer R. Ritchey (1962-1963).<sup>20</sup>

The Rotary Home for Boys closed in 1963 due to a combination of economics and mandated safety regulations by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. The Rotary Club history indicates the organization was unable to fund required improvements to the structure.

**The Shelter Home for Girls, 1925 - 1961**

This institution was located at 1232 Lititz Pike and intended for the care and custody of delinquent girls. There appears to be no surviving records of this institution. It appears the home was operated by a volunteer board, and funded by Lancaster County. Newspaper accounts state the home cared for about forty girls per year, and it appears to have closed in 1961 for reasons similar to the Rotary Home - economics and safety regulations.<sup>23</sup> The building is no longer in existence.

**Barnes Hall Juvenile Detention Center, 1963 - 2002**



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Barnes Hall, the first county owned and operated facility, devoted to the care of delinquent youth was named in honor of Edgar R. Barnes, Lancaster County's first Probation Officer. The facility was dedicated on Friday, November 29, 1963, and received its first juveniles (5 boys and 3 girls) on December 1, 1963.<sup>24</sup> Mr. Thomas J. Hick was the first director and boys supervisor, his wife served as girls supervisor with the couple living in quarters provided in the new center with capacity for fifteen juveniles. Other staff consisted of Jack R. Shaub, assistant boys supervisor, and Miss Joanne Todd, assistant girls supervisor, both of these staff persons were also provided with living quarters at the center. Barnes Hall continued to be administered and operated by married couples living at the center until 1976. In that year, administration and staffing was changed to a director and staff, and the living quarters were converted into office space. In 1991, eight detention rooms were added increasing capacity to twenty-three juveniles.



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**Barnes Hall Detention Room Shot #1**



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**Barnes Hall Detention Room Shot #2**



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**Barnes Hall West Wing Shot**

Due to the deterioration of Barnes Hall, and the need for space to accommodate the rising juvenile crime rate in our area, on March 9, 2002, the new Youth Intervention Center opened its doors to serve the citizens of Lancaster County.



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**Aerial Shot #1**



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**Aerial Shot #2**



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**Main Lobby Entrance**



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**Endnotes**

- 1 Barry Krisberg and James Austin, *Reinventing Juvenile Justice* (Sage, 1993), p.17.
- 2 Page Talbott, *The Two Hundred Year History of the Lancaster County Almshouse and Hospital*, (The Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society, 102,2/3, Summer/FaI12000), p. 82.
- 3 Monique Bourque, *The Creation of the Almshouse: Institutions as Solutions to the Problem of Poverty*, (The Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society, 102,2/3, Summer/FaI12000), p. 58.
- 4 Page Talbott, *The Two Hundred Year History of the Lancaster County Almshouse and Hospital*, (The Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society, 102,2/3, Summer/Fall 2000), p. 83.
- 5 Ibid, p. 98.
- 6 Twelfth Annual Report of the Lancaster Charity Society, October 1, 1915 to September 13, 1916, Lancaster County Historical Society, hereafter L.C.H.S.
- 7 Census Report on the Home for Friendless Children, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, L.C.H.S.
- 8 Minutes of the quarterly meeting of the Trustees of the Home for Friendless Children, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, L.G.H.S.
- 9 Annual Reports of the Lancaster Charity Society, L.C.H.S.
- 10 Minutes of the quarterly meeting of the Trustees of the Home for Friendless Children, Lancaster, Pennsylvania February 14, 1939, L.C.H.S.
- 11 Twelfth Annual Report of the Lancaster Charity Society, October 1,1915 to September 13, 1916, L.C.H.S.
- 12 Peter J. Betts, *A History of the Lancaster Law and Order Society*, (The



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Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society, 69,1965), p. 225.

- 13 Ibid, p. 227.
- 14 *History of the Rotary Club of Lancaster, Pennsylvania*, (Acorn Press, 1980), p. 12.
- 15 Ibid, p. 12.
- 16 Ibid, pp. 13-14.
- 17 Ibid, p.14.
- 18 Ibid, p.14.
- 19 The Lancaster Intelligencer Journal, August 23,1919.
- 20 Personal communication from John W.W. Loose, F.L.C.H.S., 2001.
- 21 The Lancaster New Era, November 28, 1958.
- 22 The Lancaster Intelligencer Journal, November 29, 1963.

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