A View of American Orphanages Through A Study of the History of The Ohio Pythian Home

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A View of American Orphanages Through

A Study of the History of The

Ohio Pythian Home.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.

By

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2011
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This study aims at analyzing the general situation of American orphan asylums in the period from 1894 to 1944 by looking at the Ohio Pythian Home, which operated in Springfield, Ohio at this time. Through the use of primary and secondary sources, as well as interviews with former orphan residents of the Ohio Pythian Home, the study demonstrates that contrary to popular belief the orphan asylums of the period were nurturing institutions concerned with the well-being of their wards.
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**Introduction.**

In 1925 Springfield’s own Dick Anderson became the national marble champion. He pursued his dream and became known as the Springfield, Ohio “marble king.” The young Anderson advanced to the national championship match. He took a train for the first time in order to participate in the championship finals in Atlantic City, New Jersey. He won the marble championship and received a huge trophy, which he still had into adulthood. He received notoriety for his “marblous” performance in the 1925 Springfield newspaper, the *News-Sun*. What else was unusual about the boy, Dick Anderson? He lived at the Ohio Pythian Children’s Home.¹

This orphan asylum was “home” to nearly two thousand children who lived there in its more than fifty years of operation from 1894 to 1944. It represented security, care, and a place to call home. It offered an opportunity for life to turn out better than it started, to turn sorrow into happiness, to gain an education and to become part of the surrounding community.

The story begins with a critical look at the history of child welfare and orphanage asylums first across the United States, then in Ohio, and finally in Springfield as the home of the first Knights of Pythias orphanage in the United States, a model for other Pythian Homes built in fourteen other states. Springfield, known as the “home city,” became the location for other fraternal homes and orphanages.

The home began as a philanthropic dream of a fraternal organization in 1894. The home originally had eight buildings on 83 acres but expanded to ten buildings. Later, the Pythians

¹ Tom Stafford, “He was city’s marble king 65 years ago,” in *Springfield News-Sun* (May 20, 1990), 4A.
reduced the acreage used for the home and discontinued the operation of the home’s farm.

The Pythian fraternal organization started during the Civil War and always cared for orphans and widows. The lodge members supported the home and the orphans not only financially but also psychologically. The Knights of Pythias provided food, clothing, shelter, a good education, sports, bands, orchestra, marching corp, and a dramatic club for the orphans. They established college scholarships for the most capable of them. Lodge members from throughout Ohio visited them. They collected gifts at Christmas for the orphans and organized parties and festivities for them.

Reporters from the *Springfield News-Sun* conducted interviews of former residents during the many reunions held by “K P kids.” The children at the orphanage identified strongly with the home and spoke of a sense of security. They did not see themselves as Dickens’ orphans or Orphan Annie children but saw themselves in a positive way. They developed a sense of accomplishment and identified strongly as members of the home. They participated in various activities in school. One boy became a star football player. Two girls became homecoming queens. I interviewed two former orphans recently. They identified strongly with the orphanage and had no regrets about living in it. They maintained a close relationship with their siblings because the home enabled them to stay together as a family.

In the fall of 2009, I planned to write a paper about the Clark County Children’s Home but instead looked at some records of the Ohio Pythian Home that were recently donated to the Clark County Historical Society located on South Fountain Avenue in Springfield, Ohio. The records had been in the attic of an old Pythian building and were in no particular
order. As the archivist at the historical society went through the old records and filled boxes, I anxiously awaited her completion so that I could study the records that I found intriguing. These records enabled me to ascertain the criteria for admission to the home and gain insight into the Pythian view of charity and their sense of duty to care for orphans and widows.

After reading notations and correspondence of the Pythian Board of Trustees and lodge members, I do not doubt their sincerity and dedication to their charitable mission. I used the applications to learn who was admitted, what criteria for admission were used, and other information such as first hand accounts of orphans to form a picture of the orphanage and its day to day functioning. The records of the home at the historical society were invaluable to me. After I completed my study, I found it difficult to believe that no one else had ever written a thesis or book about this great institution of the past.
Chapter 1: The Place of Orphanages in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century America with an emphasis on Ohio.

The orphanage as an asylum for children who had lost one or both of their parents has a long pedigree in American history. A few such institutions were actually established in the eighteenth century and several came into existence during the pre-revolutionary era. The period from 1800 to 1830 saw several private orphanages established in major cities throughout the growing American republic. These periods were known for their socio-cultural division of the destitute into the “worthy poor” and the “unworthy poor.”

Individuals and communities gave goods and assistance to the “worthy poor.” These impoverished were oftentimes widows with children and elderly. Early Americans saw the “worthy poor” as having been victims of circumstances while they saw the “unworthy poor” as deserving suffering under the weight of their vices and low morals or the vices and low morals of their relatives. Communities and individuals offered and gave worthy orphans apprenticeships. However, the era before 1830 saw very few people in serious need.

Communities and individuals ostracized and refused assistance to the “unworthy poor” during these years. They received sanctions and punishments. In pre-revolutionary New Jersey “town paupers were required to wear a letter ‘P’ on their sleeves as well as the initial of their town.”

According to one social reformer of Massachusetts, Walter Channing, the almshouse for the paupers was “a place where the tempted are removed from the means of their sin, and

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3 Ibid, 14-15.

where the indolent, while he is usefully and industriously employed, may be removed from
opportunities for crime, and by a regular course of life . . . be prepared for a better career
when restored to liberty again.” The belief of most people of this period was that a person
who was poor had to have some culpability in his impoverishment since he lived in a land
of bountiful opportunities.⁵

Indentured apprenticeship had been a prominent solution in seventeenth and eighteenth-
centuries America for dealing with needy half or full orphans.⁶ Lori Askeland in her article
“Informal Adoption, Apprentices, and Indentured Children in the Colonial Era and the New
Republic, 1605-1850” states that in colonial times “poor and orphaned children experienced
early America’s version of foster care.” More than half of all colonists who came to
colonies south of New England were indentured servants. They were mainly between the
ages of fourteen and nineteen, usually males. Local authorities forced them to work for
farmers at hard labor, householders, or business owners. Life was very difficult for these
indentured servants and many died before their indenture periods had ended. Some children
were even kidnapped from the streets of England and shipped by force to Virginia.⁷ Even in
the New England colonies where most families were intact, children from poor families
were sometimes auctioned to put the burden of their keep on others; some families sold

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⁶ Hacsi, 16.

their children as apprentices. It was only later that most colonials would accept the traditional European and English prejudice against adopting.8

In 1727 in then French New Orleans, the Ursuline Orphanage became the first orphanage in the future United States territory. Its name came from the Catholic convent and nunnery that founded it. The Ursulines focused largely on caring for children orphaned from American Indian attacks and continued its work until 1834.9 Ironically, German Lutheran immigrants founded the first British North American orphanage in Ebenezer Colony, Georgia. This home was primarily for German Lutheran children orphaned in the Georgian colony.10 This orphanage in turn inspired an Anglo-Methodist clergyman, George Whitefield, to establish a home in Bethesda, Georgia for parentless British colonist children.11

When the British attacked Charleston, many families were destroyed along with many buildings. The town commissioners appealed to the public for donations to build a public orphanage for children left homeless and parentless. The public responded favorably, and the community built the first public orphanage in 1794 in Charleston, South Carolina. One hundred and fifteen orphans moved in.12

Thereafter, until 1830, both Protestant and Catholic orphanages gradually arose in every large city throughout the thirteen British colonies and Louisiana and later the American

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8 Ibid, 9.
9 Ibid, 17.
10 Hacsi, 17-18.
11 Ibid, 18.
Union. Catholic orphanages of the early nineteenth century tended to specialize in working with parentless girls because nuns generally operated these Catholic homes. Northeastern Protestant women of established bourgeois families, acting almost as a precursor to the social reform movement of the later decades of the century, were crucial in the establishment of Protestant orphanages in New England before 1830. Almost all of these early orphanages were indeed attached to a particular religious denomination.

Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, and other Protestant churches established orphanages, as well as the previously mentioned Lutherans, Catholics, and Methodists.

The period from 1830 to 1865 witnessed a new burst of life to orphanages in the United States. All of the states, except for eight, had orphan asylums by 1860. Increased urbanization, population growth from both natural and immigration sources, and epidemics of cholera, yellow fever, and other plagues increasingly made the orphanage a municipal necessity, particularly in large cities.

The Catholic Church established large numbers of orphanages. It used nuns to do the orphanage work and thus kept costs to a minimum. Nuns dedicated themselves to their mission of caring for children and saving souls. According to Monsignor John O’Grady, “the care of children away from their own homes . . . occupied a larger place in Catholic Welfare in the United States than any other type of work.” Catholics were so prolific at

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13 Hacsi, 18-19.
14 Ibid, 19.
15 Ibid, 18-19.
16 Ibid, 22.
17 Ibid, 21.
orphanage building that they established sixteen orphanages before 1840 and before the turn of the next century had 175 orphanages up and running.  

Irish Catholic orphanages had become the dominant Catholic homes in the United States prior to the 1830s. This situation changed during that decade when large Catholic German, Swiss, and Austrian immigrant populations settled in the United States and cholera epidemics began breaking out in the newcomers’ cities. Irish Catholic charities oftentimes assisted the German-speaking Catholics by caring for orphaned children. The Irish did so because many Catholic Germans were more recent arrivals and thus their ethnic institutions were not as thoroughly established as the Irish institutions and the Irish felt a loyalty to coreligionists in need. From 1837 to 1850, the Roman Catholic Teutonophones established specifically German Catholic homes to care for the parentless or half-parentless children of their communities.  

California built its first asylums for orphans immediately after the gold rush of 1849. The long distance travel of migrants caused the orphaned children of such adventurers to be isolated from kin in faraway states and this situation led to a need for homes. Orphanages, developed throughout California from the 1850s until the 1920s, brought new government policy on orphans.  

Free black citizens also responded to their communities’ needs for orphanages throughout this period. Both Protestant and Catholic free blacks built homes around New Orleans.  Two white Quaker women established the Association for the Benefit of the  

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19 Hacsi, 23.  
Colored Orphan in New York City when they recognized a need among the city’s black population for such an institution. This need stemmed from the aforementioned Quakers having learned that no white orphanage of any sort would allow black orphans to become residents in New York City.  

In 1884 a wealthy white woman, Almira S. Steele, opened an orphanage for black children in Chattanooga, Tennessee after an epidemic of yellow-fever. There were no orphanages in the area that would accept black children. A short time after she built the home, whites burned it down because they were appalled at her charity for blacks. Fortunately she and the children escaped the fire. She built the orphanage again.

Four states were representative of the different types of state systems that developed in the nineteenth century throughout the United States to take care of neglected and orphaned children. The four states with these different systems were New York, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Ohio.

New York taxpayers supported private orphanages with public subsidies. New York had more children in orphanages than any other state. Massachusetts formed policies that were just the opposite of New York. Massachusetts developed a system of placing children who were wards of the state in family foster homes and it did so more than any other state. However, endowments and churches still financially supported a large number of private

\[\text{References:}\]

21 Ibid, 27.


23 Crenson, 45.

24 Ibid, 45-46.
and ecclesiastical children’s homes in Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{25} The two systems of Minnesota and Ohio were somewhere in the middle with both family foster homes and orphanages. Both of these states had the goal of using orphanages as a temporary place of care with the intention to place children out for indenture or adoption.\textsuperscript{26}

New York State witnessed an important event in the history of American childcare in 1856. That year, a state senate committee “recommended that children should be removed from poorhouses and placed either in private orphan asylums at state or county expense, or in public asylums built specifically to hold dependent children.”\textsuperscript{27} When speaking of the children in the almshouses, the committee gave a scathing report of their care and said:

\begin{quote}
a great public reproach that they should ever be suffered to enter or remain in the poor houses as they are now mismanaged. They are for the young, notwithstanding the legal provisions for their education, the worst possible nurseries; contributing an annual accession to our population of three hundred infants, whose present destiny is to pass their impressionable years in the midst of such vicious associations as will stamp them for a life of future infamy or crime.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

Nevertheless, the State of New York ignored this committee’s findings until 1866 when the legislature established the New York State Board of Public Charities.\textsuperscript{29} These boards monitored public institutions and state programs. Before the turn of the twentieth century, 18 states had similar boards. They later became state departments of public welfare.\textsuperscript{30}

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\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, 45-46.
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\textsuperscript{27} David M. Schneider and Albert Deutsch, \textit{The History of Public Welfare in New York State, 1876-1940} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), 341-44.
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\textsuperscript{28} Crenson, 46-47.
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\textsuperscript{29} Hacsi, 29.
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A New York State Board of Public Charities member and retired business man, William P. Letchworth, went to each poorhouse in New York and investigated the treatment of children as the earlier committee had done two decades before. Again it was a horrible picture of abuses and neglect just as it had been in 1856. With Mr. Letchworth’s evidence, the state legislature finally passed the law of 1875 requiring county governments to take the children out of the almshouses. County governments paid orphanages to house children removed from almshouses. The law called for the placement, when possible, of children in orphanages of the same religion as their parents.31

Letchworth visited not only almshouses but one hundred thirty orphanages. He wrote more than four hundred pages of careful notes about the orphanages that he visited. He was impressed with the nutrition, clean living conditions, and safety standards at the orphanages. He viewed moral and religious training at the homes as leading to good citizens of the nation. His careful notes also revealed attitudes of many orphan administrators. Mrs. Helen Mercy Woods, the matron of the Onondaga County Orphan Asylum in Syracuse, New York, made an enlightened statement: “I endeavor to convince the boys that they can be anything they please if they will only try for it. I do not see why they should not fill positions of respectability as well as others.”32

New York delayed removing children from almshouses. Another year passed before the removal. Local government officials needed extra time to make new living arrangements for all of the children in the almshouses. Mr. Letchworth talked to superintendents of all of

31 Crenson, 48-49.

32 McKenzie, Rethinking Orphanages for the 21st Century, 68.
the orphanages in New York and urged the creation of an adoption program to accommodate the children from the almshouses.

The system did not encourage finding adoptive homes for children. The more children an orphanage had, the more money it received from the government. In the case of private orphanages and ecclesiastical orphanages, they received private donations and monies from their respective churches. The government had to subsidize these private asylums for only a part of their maintenance cost. Catholic orphanages in particular were a good bargain for the taxpayers.\(^{33}\)

Massachusetts developed a system to deal with orphanages, as well as dependent and neglected children, which was entirely different from the New York system. The Massachusetts system led the nation in placing children directly with family foster homes. It did not start out with this intent. In 1854 the state government began with the establishment of three state almshouses at Bridgewater, Tewksbury, and Monson. The experiences of state officials with these three almshouses made them choose another route than institutionalization to care for orphaned and neglected children. As more immigrants poured into these almshouses, they filled beyond capacity and lawsuits, confusion, and confrontation became common.\(^{34}\)

After four years of operation, a committee of the state legislature acknowledged that it had made a major mistake in establishing three state almshouses. The legislature had informed the public that, if the three almshouses were built with public monies, they would be financially self-sustaining. The labor of the residents would supply most of the needs for

\(^{33}\) Crenson, 49.

\(^{34}\) Ibid, 50.
the almshouses. The residents could make furniture or some other product and produce their own food on the acreage surrounding the almshouses. The managers of the institutions soon found that they could not get the inmates to work unless they were constantly supervised, a task that took so many employees that any income the workers provided was used to cover the cost of supervisors.35

Another problem that became evident to the committee was that the state-operated almshouses became a congregating place for criminals, alcoholics, drifters, vagabonds, and the innocent people who suffered from some form of tragedy. Researchers of the problem saw “many disadvantages inherent in the vast congregations of human beings which the State almshouses create, especially when numbers of these masses of humanity are mostly coarse, ignorant, and many of them vicious. The pure run a great danger of corruption, and the bad of becoming worse.” Even worse, half of the residents were children who were subjected to these influences. The committee, unlike New York, wanted the children removed and placed in families rather than orphanages.36

In 1863 Massachusetts became the first state to legislate a Board of State Charities. Other states followed its prototype. One of the first directives of the Board of State Charities was to change the state almshouse at Monson into a state orphanage and rename it as the Massachusetts State Primary School. In 1895 Massachusetts became the first state to use a total foster care program for children who were wards of the state.37

Minnesota established its State Board of Corrections and Charities in 1883, a long time after Massachusetts organized and established its State Board of Charities. The governor of

36 Ibid, 51.
37 Ibid, 51-52.
Minnesota and the Minnesota Board of Corrections and Charities proposed a state public school in Owatonna. In 1886 the Minnesota Board of Corrections and Charities hired Galen A. Merrill as the first superintendent of the school and he served until 1933.  

Merrill believed providing an education for children was the key to a better life and the “best preventive of pauperism and crime, especially when assisted by moral and religious training.” Orphanages in the nineteenth century included religious education whether they were public, ecclesiastical, or nonsectarian. Minnesota did not have as many children living in almshouses as other states, but it transferred the ones it had from the almshouses to the new public school institution.

The Minnesota Board of Corrections and Charities planned for the Minnesota State Public School to be a temporary arrangement. Children were to experience a preparatory program for adaptation to a life in a private family home, usually undertaken for indenture. Children needed the preparatory instruction to make them function in a family home environment. The staff would monitor and study the behavior of children in order to help arrange successful placements with compatible families. As Galen Merrill instructed, the children in the school “are of a neglected class, and need to have the filth of the slums removed and the poorhouse marks erased.”

The period from 1865 to 1890 saw an even greater expansion of orphanages. Industrialization and the hardships it brought often left families unable to care for children or youths orphaned or half-orphaned. In the 1870s, county officials established many

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38 Ibid, 161.
39 Ibid, 54-55.
40 Ibid, 55.
orphan asylums. These facilities represented the first American public sector attempts to
deal with the problem of parentless youths.

Governments in eight states built upon this by creating state orphanages throughout the
1880s.⁴¹ Secular private orphanages and fraternal organizations built many homes in the
next decade. It was not an accident that the Ohio Pythian Home and its brother institutions
in other states appeared during this period of private philanthropy.

States in the North, following the end of the Civil War, oftentimes tried to care for “war
orphans,” or the children of dead Union servicemen, by paying private orphanages to care
for these uncalculated victims of the war. By 1876 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
“had cared for more than 8,000 soldiers’ orphans, almost all of them in orphanages.”⁴² In
Illinois the state-supported orphanage system was so successful that it later proceeded to
take any orphans, regardless of their affiliation with the Civil War or not.⁴³

During the 1870s, New York State changed its laws to end state payment to orphanages
in exchange for local and county payments. All local aid to needy orphans would
henceforth in New York be handled through the asylums, according to these regulations.
Local and county payments actually led to an increase in funds that allowed orphanages to
accept a greater number of applicants than they had previously done.⁴⁴

During the period from 1890 to 1923, orphan asylums continued to rise substantially. S.
J. Kleinburg of Brunel University states that “The end of the nineteenth century saw a sharp

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⁴¹ Hacsi, 27.

(December 1989): 615.

⁴³ Hacsi, 29.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 30.
increase in orphanages, homes for older people, and charities . . . these developments indicate that American society viewed support for widows and children as a growing public responsibility.45 During this period the “golden era” existed for orphanages in American history because it was indeed the time when homes for orphans reached their collective peak in numbers. Not only did religious institutions, Protestants, Catholics, and also Jews, flourish, but also more secular institutions arose. These included orphanages that tried to find adoptive homes for children as well as fraternal orphan asylums and other less sectarian organizations.46 These institutions were forces that operated to keep troubled families together and this was then recognized as a virtuous pursuit by the general public.47 Fraternal organizations, such as the Knights of Pythias, became nationally known during this time period for their charitable efforts towards children.

African-Americans were grossly underrepresented in orphan asylum care during the entire 1865-1923 period. Blacks were usually (though not always) excluded on racial grounds in generally white institutions during this era. The institutions that were reserved for black orphans were limited throughout the country. Few black orphanages existed in New England states, the deep South, and Western states.48 One writer on the issue of child welfare policy, Cynthia Crossom-Tower, states that the only facilities “for many African-American children were jails or reform schools, even when they were not delinquents.”49


46 Hacsi, 34.

47 Kleinburg, 15.

48 Hacsi, 35–36.

In the early twentieth century, the public mood became increasingly critical of the orphans’ homes. Progressive thinkers and the general populace saw large institutions for orphans as “far too regimented, and inherently incapable of fostering independence and individuality in children.”50 This popular opinion gained political power in the Progressive movements and caught the ear of President Theodore Roosevelt, who in 1909 called the White House Conference on Dependant Children in order to address the growing concern with the homes. The conference succeeded in bringing much criticism to the established asylum order, including questioning whether the needy should surrender their children to these institutions at all. Nevertheless, Catholic charities and other defenders of the status quo shot back and convincingly defended their efforts.51 After the White House Conference, thirty-nine states passed mothers’ pensions.52

The orphans’ homes did not survive the emergence of “mothers’ pensions.” The payments originated from an idea of the Orphan Guardian Society of Philadelphia. From 1900 to the 1920s, many states sponsored mothers’ pensions. The pensions allowed needy women to keep their children at home. The effect was the gradual decline of the orphans’ asylums.53 In 1943 the Ohio Pythian Home stopped accepting new residents.

The State of Ohio had a rich history concerning the Buckeye State’s care for the orphaned. In 1824 Ohio passed a law that allowed the incorporation of private orphan asylums. Trustees of townships could “bind out” or apprentice an orphan child to serve as a clerk or servant. The child was to be treated humanely and, if he or she was not treated

50 Ibid, 37.
51 Ibid, 38-40.
53 Hacsi, 42, 44-45.
humanely but was abused, the child was entitled to seek justice in court. In practice, this rarely occurred since officials frequently considered bound out children as “pauper brats.” The township trustees had three options: to bind the child out to private orphanages that existed at this time, do an indenture placement with a private family, or simply send the child to jail, an infirmary, or a reform school.54

The first county children’s home in Ohio was Washington County Children’s Home, at Moss Run. The woman who established this home, near Marietta, was Catherine Fay Ewing and she was highly influential in getting the General Assembly to enact the law of 1866 that allowed any county in Ohio to establish a children’s home.55 The bill was titled “An Act for the Establishment, Support and Regulation of Children’s Homes in the Several Counties of the State of Ohio.”56 Matrons of the homes were to see that the children received “suitable physical, mental and moral training.”57

Miss Fay Ewing worked out of state as a missionary to an American Indian tribe. A doctor asked her to take care of five orphaned Indian children. She declined to take the children, believing that she could not adequately teach them. The people who took the children threw one of them, a two-year-old, down a set of stairs and the child died. This death affected Ewing deeply and she felt she had made a tragic mistake by not taking the offered children.

54 Ester McClain, “There was a child went forth,” in Child Placing in Ohio (Columbus, OH: Division of Charities Department of Public Welfare, 1928), 10.


56 McClain, 10.

57 Nelson L. Bossing, The History of Educational Legislation in Ohio From 1851 to 1925 (Columbus, OH: F. J. Heer Printing, 1931), 212.
Fay Ewing later worked as a teacher for a couple of years in Kentucky and then went back to Ohio and purchased a number of acres and a house. She went to the Washington County Infirmary and found twenty-six children living among a variety of people at the poor house. Some of these people who surrounded the impoverished children were sick and senile. Ewing considered a number of them to be of morally despicable character. She convinced the trustees of the infirmary to pay her a dollar a week for each child she took care of at her house. She wanted the state legislature to establish a county children’s home that was entirely separate and independent of the county infirmary or poor house. She used her influence to get the Washington County commissioners to go before the state legislature and ask that each county be allowed to establish a public children’s home by popular referendum with a board of trustees appointed by the county.\textsuperscript{58}

In the following year, 1867, the Ohio State Board of Charities began and its secretary, A. G. Byers, visited county infirmaries that housed children. In three of the infirmaries he found small children constrained with people who were mentally deranged. One little boy who was deaf and dumb was in a room across from an insane woman who tossed feces at him. In most states, children who had serious problems such as deafness or retardation were usually left by the authorities with the paupers in the poor houses. Ohio, however, did establish special state institutions for the deaf and dumb. It also built a home for retarded children in Columbus. Ohio considered the care of these needy groups a serious public concern.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{58} Crenson, 56-57.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, 55-56.
In 1877 there were 2,273 children in the Ohio county poor houses and the numbers were growing. Until the county children’s homes started increasing in numbers, directors of infirmaries received authority by a law passed in 1875 to “bind children out” to foster families. Unfortunately, no laws existed to monitor the care of children placed in foster homes and abuses did occur at times. A. G. Byers told of a terrible case of a young girl who had been tortured by the family in which she was placed. He said, when talking about the girl, “the ordinary human heart grows sick,” and he prayed that “God of the Fatherless will, in his good providence, direct our State authorities to speedy, wise, just and humane methods of relief for the homeless and unprotected children of the State.”60 This type of problem occurred in too many cases.

Ohio was the first state to pass legislation to encourage the removal of children from county poor houses, but, by 1883, Ohio became one of the states actually to require that children be removed from county infirmaries. By the next year twenty-eight counties had established their own public children’s homes. 61 By 1904 Ohio possessed the largest number of public institutions in the Union established for benevolent purposes. 62 The large number of benevolent institutions in Ohio was due to the many county orphanage facilities combined with the many private and ecclesiastical institutions.

For years the State Board of Charities reports showed that the members of the State Board wanted to get children’s homes to place children in families after a term of temporary care. It also wanted them to hire placing agents for the children’s homes and, in

60 McClain, 10-11.

61 Crenson, 55-57.

1889, another law passed which stated the trustees of county children’s homes “may appoint a competent person as visiting agent whose duty it shall be to seek suitable homes for children in private families.” The stated goal of the county home system was to provide temporary care and then place the child in a foster family if the child could not be returned to parents.\textsuperscript{63}

By 1912 two thirds of Ohio counties had children’s homes.\textsuperscript{64} However, it was not until 1913 that the first state law required a minimum of an annual visitation to all children who had been placed out and who were wards of Ohio institutions. Section 1352 of the General Code required the Board of State Charities to review for competency annually public or private childcare institutions that accepted and received children or alternatively placed children in family homes. Upon approval the Board of State Charities granted a certificate for one year.\textsuperscript{65}

Any child care institution seeking incorporation would have to submit its articles of incorporation to the Board of State Charities and the Board would decide if the incorporators were “reputable and respectable persons, and that the proposed work is needed, and the incorporation of such association is desirable and for the public good.” After the Board of State Charities examined the articles of incorporation and issued its certificate, the Secretary of State issued a certificate of incorporation to the institution.

The statute required that the Board of State Charities send a list of such certified institutions to all juvenile courts and all institutions certified. There was a penalty for any

\textsuperscript{63} McClain, 12.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.

person who received children or money for the placement of a child within an institution when the institution was not certified or had lost certification. The person would be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine.\textsuperscript{66}

The statute included two other clauses. The first clause required the placement of children in homes of the same religious beliefs as the parents whenever possible. The second clause gave the governor authority to have the Board of State Charities investigate or appoint a committee of two members to investigate the management of a benevolent institution of the state. The governor received the report by the Board or committee and he could take it before the General Assembly with his recommendations.\textsuperscript{67}

With the new law, state inspectors immediately selected and visited twenty institutions for examination. All types of problems existed. Some problems involved extremely poor record keeping. Some records did not show the names of the families who took indentured children or where they were sent. One institution could not find its records. A search revealed the location of the records in milk cans in the lower level of the institution. People responsible for placements had not visited forty-five per cent of the children placed out for a period of two years or more. Below were three actual cases of children visited by state representatives during the study. They are not uncommon:

(1) A boy lived with a verbally abusive and physically aggressive man. The child lacked suitable clothing. The boy missed school almost every day and he attended church functions rarely. Neighbors reported hearing the man and his wife shouting and using profane language.

(2) A young girl, age 11, placed with farmer and his wife. The wife in the family required almost total assistance and can not walk. Child cleaned house all day. She never attended school and had insufficient clothing.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid, 866.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid, 867-68.
A teen aged male placed with family who deserted and left him in empty house. He received little or no schooling. His caseworker never visited. He took care of his own housing arrangements since authorities neglected him.\(^68\)

After the Board of State Charities received the responsibility to certify annually all child caring agencies, it required the Children’s Welfare Department to develop minimum standards for a child-care institution. After input and reviews from many children’s homes’ administrators and their staffs, the Board of State Charities presented a report. In 1915 the Board adopted the report on minimum institutional standards and distributed booklets with guidelines among existing institutions. These booklets with revisions remained in use well into the 1930s.\(^69\)

This type of booklet focused on various topics. One topic was building requirements. All of the buildings had to conform to Ohio State Building Code. The Division of Charities disallowed alterations in existing institutions without approval of the State Department of Industrial Relations. The booklet provided instructions about heating systems. Buildings required both natural and artificial lighting provisions. Children should sleep with open widows unless artificial ventilation existed in the room. Lavatories and sanitary plumbing needed code approval. If city water was not available, the State Department of Public Health required testing of the water. The booklet recommended a room for recreation for staff. Books on child development were to be available for staff to read.

The standards booklet offered instruction and advice on numerous other subjects such as sample diets, infant care, playrooms, dormitories, dining room rules, staff numbers, hospital and isolation facilities, clothing, towel and washcloth, tooth brushes, brush and combs.

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\(^68\) McClain, 12, 14-16.

\(^69\) Child-Caring Institutions Suggested Minimum Standards for Children's Homes in Ohio (Columbus, OH: Department of Public Welfare, Division of Charities, July, 1925), 2.
scales, work assignments for children, recreation, economic training, education and music. The booklet recommended religious and moral training or, as it warned, “educate men without religion and you make them but clever devils.”

In the 1890s three fraternal homes started in Springfield, Ohio. The three fraternal homes were the Ohio Masonic Home, the Ohio Odd Fellows Home, and the Knights of Pythias Home. Mrs. Charlotte S. Clark, a charitable widowed woman, established a home to care for aged women without families at North Limestone Street before the turn of the century, and the Ohio Lutherans selected Springfield for a children’s home, Oesterlen Home for Children. With all of this formation of institutional homes, Springfield became known as the “Home City.” Springfield was an ideal location to be called the “Home City” because it was centrally located and had railroads and interurban lines to connect visitors and residents with other cities in the state. More than 50 passenger trains came into the heart of Springfield every day. Streetcars or trains operated from Springfield to Columbus, Dayton, Xenia, Urbana, and Bellefontaine. In the 1890s and early 1900s, Springfield was a busy city. Its population had increased and the citizens were enjoying the fruits of economic success. Leadership in the town was strong in business and philanthropy. The citizens shared in the economic successes and were interested in helping the city and its residents.

In 1892 the Masonic Home laid its cornerstone, but the building was not finished until 1895. In 1888 the Masonic committee looked at possible sites for an institution. After a donation from prominent Springfield citizen, Asa S. Bushnell, the former governor of Ohio,

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70 Ibid, 28-29.

The Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons secured 154 acres of land along the National Road as their building site. In 1895 indigent Masons, their wives, widows, and children became the residents of the impressive building. Masons eventually built a hospital alongside of the structure for the benefit of their members. Dues from members supported the building project and maintenance.\textsuperscript{72}

The International Order of Odd Fellows Rebeccah Assembly, the female auxiliary of the Odd Fellows, discussed plans for an institution to serve its members as early as 1891. The I.O.O.F. Grand Lodge purchased 300 acres on the northeast side of Springfield. The cost to the fraternal organization was $73,000. The I.O.O.F. built the home to provide for children of deceased Odd Fellows and later admitted men and women who were aged.\textsuperscript{73}

In 1894 the fraternal organization of the Knights of Pythias started its home in Springfield. In 1881 at the Ohio Grand Lodge meeting, the home’s establishment was first planned and discussed by members and lodge officers, Eugene Closse of Cleveland, J. F. Shumate of Urbana, A. P. Butterfield of Cincinnati, J. W. Coles of Springfield, Joseph Dowdall of Columbus, J. S. Beans of Steubenville, E. A. Peck of Delaware, and C. A. Scoville of Lancaster.\textsuperscript{74} The officers appointed a committee to gather the facts and figures needed for an assessment of building a home. In 1891 Grand Chancellor Beatty recommended the resolutions to initiate an orphan’s home. The resolutions passed and

\textsuperscript{72} Benjamin F. Prince, \textit{A Standard History of Springfield and Clark County} (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1922), 479-81.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, 481.

funds were transferred from the lodge’s general fund to a specific account for the Orphan’s Building.\textsuperscript{75}

The Grand Officers and Representatives of the Grand Lodge of Knights of Pythias laid their cornerstone for the Ohio Pythian Children’s Home on the corner of Fountain and McCreight Avenues in Springfield. The children’s home provided a refuge for children of members of the Pythian order who had suffered from the death of one or both parents. The buildings erected were of beautiful stately architecture and all brick. The building site consisted of 84 acres of land, and the Pythian Home had its own vegetable garden and chickens for eggs. The building site initially cost $25,000, but by 1907 the investment totaled approximately $300,000. Dues provided for construction and maintenance of the buildings. The city of Springfield built a school adjacent to it, Jefferson School, so the children only crossed the street to arrive at the school. As described in \textit{Ohio Magazine} of 1907, “there is no brighter star in the diadem of Ohio Pythianism than this generously sustained and admirably conducted Home.”\textsuperscript{76}

Fraternal organizations were prolific during the turn of the twentieth century all over America. They fulfilled many needs of their members, social and economic. The lodges provided amateur dramatics, social activities, and even burial insurance. Some of the fraternal orders took care of elderly members and in the case of the Pythians even took care of orphaned children of members. Without a government safety net, the Pythian Children’s Home can be recognized as a thoughtful societal response to parentless children.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, 1045.

\textsuperscript{76} Charles S. Kay, “Springfield as a City of Homes and Health,” in \textit{Ohio Magazine} 3 (1907), 372.
Picture A: The Otto Pfister Home is pictured above, circa 1900. Eighty-four acres of land surrounded the property. The original cost of the property was $25,000. (From the Paul Bollman Collection in the book Springfield and Clark County: An Illustrated History.)
Chapter 2: The Rise and Decline of the Children’s Homes.

All of the authors mentioned in this chapter: Matthew A. Crenson; Roger D. Farrar; David R. Contosta; Kenneth Cmiel; Timothy A. Hacsi; and Diane Creagh believe that certain political and socio-economic conditions and policies altered to different degrees the role of child-care institutions. Expansion of adoption, foster care, greater life expectancy, demographic changes, increased divorce rates, social work professionals, and various forms of governmental control and aid affected all orphanages. Facing decreased admissions and increased cost, many child-care institutions closed. Some were very good institutions, others were not. The administrators and boards of trustees of child-care institutions that survived had to alter their missions and serve a more complex and diverse population than they had originally served. The Knights of Pythias, as did these other institutions, had to make the decision to continue to operate as a child-care institution or close their doors in the 1940s.

Matthew A. Crenson, in his book Building the Invisible Orphanage: A Prehistory of the American Welfare System, asserts that there were two forces at work during the last half of the nineteenth century. First, internal adaptations were necessary for orphanages to raise children in a mass environment. The superintendents, matrons, and trustees developed many rules to function successfully. They kept boys and girls separate and sorted by age. As the internal organization became more complicated and extensive, cost increased. With the rise in expenses, the incentive to place children outside the orphanages grew.

The orphanage managers placed children in families to make space for new admissions. Placing out arrangements led to less need for the orphanage itself, and the results were a
system of child welfare that used family homes as a replacement for the orphanage. Once the system started, it perpetuated itself. The first internal change of separating and sorting children by age which increased cost altered the institution, and the external change displaced the orphanage.\textsuperscript{77}

In 1973 Roger D. Farrar and other academics of the Ohio State University published a study called \textit{An Assessment of the Ohio Soldiers’ & Sailors’ Orphans’ Home}.\textsuperscript{78} This study looked at a home that operated at the time of publication and also delved into its history. The state government established the Ohio Soldiers’ & Sailors’ Orphans’ Home (OSSOH) during the golden age of orphan asylums and, like the Ohio Pythian Home, it provided for the needs of the parentless.

Farrar and his team saw OSSOH as a mirror image of a national trend for orphan asylums. In 1933 the number of inmates peaked when 150,000 children were residents. From 1933 to 1965, foster care for children tripled while institutional care continued to decline. Farrar and his team cited several reasons for this trend. Foster care availability, expansion of adoption alternatives, and increased family assistance programs led to less need for orphanages. Aid for Families with Dependent Children, Social Security, mental health clinics, and other family aid programs enabled families to stay together. As the population decreased at child care institutions, a different type of inmate appeared. Institutions accepted children with behavioral or some other type of problem.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{77} Crenson, 63-64.

\textsuperscript{78} Roger D. Farrar et al., \textit{An Assessment of the Ohio Soldiers’ & Sailors’ Orphans’ Home} (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 2.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, 31-33.
Farrar’s study was in agreement with Crenson’s theory. OSSOH became more specialized to adapt and survive the effects of decreasing admissions. From about 1930 to 1970, the population of OSSOH decreased by approximately 43 per cent. The children who lived at the institution at the time of the study were older and had more problems than children accepted in earlier years.80

David R. Contosta conducted a study of an orphanage, Carson College, and came to similar conclusions as found at OSSOH. The orphanage in his study started as a private progressive institution. Robert N. Carson, a wealthy Philadelphian who made his fortune in investments in electrical trolley cars, bequeathed five million dollars for the establishment of this orphanage. His will stipulated that the orphanage, originally called Carson College, would house and educate poor white girls between the ages of six and ten who were full orphans, those with both parents deceased.81

When Carson College opened in July 1918, it had more applications for orphans than it could admit. Its enrollment continued to grow throughout the 1920s. By 1928, Carson College cared for 112 children and was filled to capacity. The majority of children came from various Pennsylvania counties. Although the foster-care program placed children in homes, there were more children than available homes. The large cities continued to expand. The number of orphans and neglected children rose. Rural areas decreased in population and farmers took in fewer foster children in exchange for labor. In later years, programs that paid foster parents would increase the supply of homes.82

80 Ibid, 31-32.
82 Ibid, 82-83.
Changes in American life affected Carson College’s ability to survive. By the 1930s, greater life expectancy, governmental programs that provided a safety net, and increasing preference for foster care instead of institutional placement, led to a decline in residents. These developments occurred when Carson College’s income had decreased. As a result of declining enrollment and income, the institution altered its admissions policy to broaden the types of children it served by age, gender, and race. No longer did it care for only whole orphan girls between six and ten years of age. It opened its enrollment to half-orphans, brothers of Carson girls, boys who were not related to Carson girls, and eventually children from public welfare institutions and African-Americans.

Budget problems continued in the next few decades. Governmental policy that favored foster placements hindered Carson College. Its change in admissions policy did not solve problems with finances in the long run. Carson started an innovative foster-care program, which enabled it to survive while many other institutions closed.83 Contosta’s view was that Carson College declined because costs increased and incentives grew to place children outside the orphanage. When placing out occurred, there was less need for the orphanage itself. Today, it exists in the form of a child care treatment facility and a day care program.

Kenneth Cmiel did not see placing out children as one of the main forces that caused an end to most orphanage asylums in his book, A Home of Another Kind: One Chicago Orphanage and the Tangle of Child Welfare, which studied one particular institution, the Chicago Nursery and Half-Orphan Asylum founded in 1860 and in operation until 1984. It

83 Ibid, 4-5.
became known as Chapin Hall in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{84} The managers of the asylum, wealthy Protestant women, spent their time running the orphanage for children of working-class families who were half-orphans. Cmiel focuses on the social history of dependent and neglected children while looking at our national history of cultural attitudes toward child care. The research considers child care history within the broader political spectrum of governmental child welfare policies.\textsuperscript{85}

Cmiel sees three things that led to the eventual demise of Chapin Hall. First, women volunteers shrank in numbers. Staff trained by professionals at a social work school replaced them. After 1928 social workers processed most of the applications to child-care institutions. Second, demographics changed the nature of dependency.\textsuperscript{86} Contosta and Farrar, who also cited changes in demographics in their studies, found the children to be older and with emotional or behavioral problems. Cmiel also noted that children at Chaplin Hall were different after 1920 than they had been in the nineteenth century. They were older, stayed longer, and were predominantly working class or middle class. Fewer children were half-orphaned or from destitute families, and more children came from families with divorced parents.\textsuperscript{87} Third, internal checks disappeared as staff and administrators used softer and kinder methods of handling clients.\textsuperscript{88} If social workers suggested foster care and the parents said no, the children went to institutions. According to Cmiel, it was not until

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{85} Ibid, 2-3.
\item \textsuperscript{86} Ibid, 115-20.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Ibid, 97.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Ibid, 120.
\end{itemize}
the 1950s that social workers encouraged or forced parents to take their children back or place them in foster-care homes.  

Unlike Crenson and Contosta, Cmiel did not see payments to mothers and foster-care as the forces that led to the end of most orphanages. In the 1930s, only the small institutional homes went out of business and their managers operated them on very small budgets with little in the way of donations. When the Depression came, the small homes perished. Illinois passed the first mothers’ aid legislation in the nation, but it only marginally decreased the number of children in institutions. He cites the “relative stinginess of state officials in paying foster parents” as the reason for the small effect on child-caring institutions.

Timothy A. Hacsi has a different prospective than Kenneth Cmiel on the role government played in the demise of orphanages. In his study of American orphans and orphan asylums, *Second Home: Orphan Asylums and Poor Families in America*, he cites the huge growth in population of 33 million people between 1910 and 1933. The number of orphanages kept pace by increasing from 972 to 1,321. Hacsi sees the orphan asylum as the central institution for child care from 1830 until it was “killed” by the passing of Aid to Dependent Children, Title IV of the 1935 Social Security Act, and its aftermath. Diane Creagh, who wrote a chapter in a book edited by Lori Askeland, *Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care*, agreed with Hacsi that Aid for Dependent

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89 Ibid, 95.
90 Ibid, 121.
91 Ibid, 95.
92 Hacsi, 50.
Children reduced child dependency and allowed parents to keep their children. The act expanded coverage for a child who had an incapacitated parent. Creagh agreed that foster-care and government aid programs largely ended the age of the orphan homes. She also saw the depression as the cause of some orphanages closing doors. Institutions were already financially burdened and the economic crisis added to the number of new arrivals.  

Social workers, foster home placements, and the changing management goals of trustees of child-care institutions affected orphanage closures. But Hacsi saw as the biggest factor to the closure of many orphan asylums, the establishment of Aid to Dependent Children’s payment program because it provided an alternative solution that enabled and incentivized financially a single parent or disabled parents to take care of their children at home. When given a choice between institutionalization and child care at home, parents chose overwhelmingly a solution of care at home. Aid to Dependent Children provided enough funds to enough people to signal the end for most orphanages. Large numbers of children benefited from Aid to Dependent Children in comparison to the limited number of children who benefited from mothers’ pensions.

Catholic orphanages in Cleveland, Ohio experienced a rise in the number of orphanages in the 1850s and a decline in the 1940s. Marian J. Morton who wrote “The Transformation of Catholic Orphanages: Cleveland, 1851-1996,” proposes that the rapid growth of Catholic orphanages was due to the influx of immigrants, largely Irish and German. Catholics

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94 Ibid, 50-51.

wanted their orphans raised in religious institutions of their faith, and they wanted to avoid
the stigma of almshouses. They began building orphanages in the 1800s with St. Mary’s
Asylum for girls.96

Morton, like Creagh and Hasci, saw government aid as an important reason for
institutional decline. The effects of the Great Depression created a severe financial hardship
for Catholic orphanages just as it did for others. Relief agencies asked Catholic orphanages
to accept children without any payment. During the Depression, Cuyahoga County started
the Cuyahoga County Child Welfare Bureau which assumed financial control for children
requiring long-term care. After the crisis of the Depression, the CCCWB became the
primary caretaker of Cleveland’s dependent children.97

Morton uses the Parmadale institution founded in 1925 to show the fate of Catholic
orphanages. As Catholic child-caring institutions became more dependent on public funds
and nuns declined in numbers in the 1960s, the population of the institution changed. The
children were older, predominantly non-Catholic, and likely to have behavioral problems.
The Catholic institution altered its mission and social concerns to care for non-Catholic
poor.98

The Pythian Home in Ohio generally followed the national trends of institutions
established for child care during the twentieth century. The home received many children
during the era before Aid to Dependent Children. With the passing of the act, the Pythians
came to experience declining numbers of charges by the 1940s.

98 Ibid, 163, 170-73.
Chapter 3: Brothers in Life and Death.

The Knights built their first orphanage in the United States in Springfield, Ohio as a fulfillment of their dreams to provide for care of Pythian orphans. It is not difficult to see why Pythians would build a children’s home for orphans. Their original Declaration of Principles declared their mission “to alleviate the sufferings of a Brother, succor the unfortunate, zealously watch at the bedside of the sick, soothe the dying pillow, perform the last sad rites at the grave of a Brother, offering consolation to the afflicted, and caring for the widow and orphan.”

The Knights considered pecuniary help as a constitutional right when a brother suffered from disease or injury. They believed in financial and emotional support to the final end of the grave. From 1892 to 1901, the organization spent four million dollars in aid to widows and orphans of deceased members, and spent a half million each year in that time period caring for sick members. From their inception to 1963, the Knights of Pythias spent $87,757,651.89 from subordinate lodges for relief purposes. These did not include dollar amounts for maintenance of Pythian institutions, altruistic services of lodges to communities, purchasing property for children’s homes outside the order, playground equipment, aid to crippled children, Christmas and Thanksgiving baskets, relief to poor, entertainments for people confined to institutions, and special relief efforts to flood and tornado victims. The aid expended was estimated by the Order to surpass a quarter of a billion dollars.


During the Hellenic Age in the Mediterranean, the Greek historian Aristoxenus of Corinth informed the literate world of the story of the deep friendship between Pythagoreans Damon and Pythias. The Ancient Sicilian historian Philistus and the first century B.C. Roman orator Cicero also corroborated Aristoxenus’ account. In these accounts we find that one of the two friends received a sentence of death by Tyrant Dionysus the Younger of Syracuse. The condemned man wanted a few days away from prison to put his family affairs in order before his execution and asked the sentencing ruler for this last request.

The other friend then stepped forward and volunteered to be a hostage until his sentenced friend returned for his execution. Dionysus agreed to this but made it clear that the volunteering friend would be killed in place of the other if the condemned man did not return. Both men accepted this ruling. The man awaiting death did as he promised to do and then came back to Syracuse on time for his punishment. Dionysus the Tyrant was so impressed with this feat of friendship that he pardoned the condemned and asked to join both men as a third partner in fraternal fellowship.

Numerous accounts and works of fiction based on this story followed in the centuries after Aristoxenus, Philistus, and Cicero. John Banim, an Irishman, wrote a drama called *Damon and Pythias*. The first performance of this play occurred on 28 May 1821 in London and soon became popular on both sides of the Atlantic.

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105 Ibid, 313-14.
This dramatic piece of fiction based on myth tells of Damon attempting to stop the Syracusan army from following Dionysus in a coup against their city-state’s democracy by appealing to the patriotism and liberalism of Syracuse’s history. The mercenary army ignores Damon’s democratic proclamations and threatens to kill him in the drama. Damon survives because his close friend, the ever popular Pythias, arrives and convinces the troops not to harm him. Dionysus then comes to power as the military backed tyrant. Damon, seeing himself as a true son of Syracuse’s democratic traditions, then tries to kill Dionysus and escapes a quick execution only because Pythias agrees to take his place as a captive for six hours while Damon visits his wife and child in the countryside to say goodbye.\textsuperscript{106}

Banim’s tale has Dionysus overcome with shock that any man would sincerely risk his life for another and the tyrant disguises himself as a prisoner and tries to convince Pythias to flee. Pythias’ fiancée also comes and pleas for her betrothed to try to escape. In the end, Damon, as in the original account, is true to his word, even after an all too loyal servant killed his horse and he had to walk miles to return and exchange his life for Pythias’ life. Again, Dionysus is overcome and forgives all. This is important because it was this popular dramatization of the Damon and Pythias mythos that inspired the founding of the Knights of Pythias.\textsuperscript{107}

In February 1864 Justus H. Rathbone founded the Order of the Knights of Pythias in Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{108} Rathbone, born in 1839, grew up in Deerfield, New York. He went to good schools. These were Mt. Vernon boarding school, Cortland Academy, Carlisle

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\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, 314-15.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, 315-16.
\textsuperscript{108} Dowd, 120.
Seminary, and Madison University, all in the state of New York. He spent time teaching at various schools in Michigan. Later he worked for the United States government in the Department of Treasury and Department of War.

While teaching at a school, Rathbone became acquainted and impressed with the story of Damon and Pythias and their willing sacrifice for each other. He became convinced that their example deserved commemoration and he committed himself to persuade men to follow an example so “pure, generous, and holy.” He developed the rituals necessary to honor the self-sacrifice evident in the story of Damon and Pythias.109

The Pythian Order selected the motto: “Be Generous, Brave, and True.” During the Civil War, Justus Rathbone believed the country needed these tenets “to rekindle the brotherly sentiment which had been all but stamped out under the merciless heel of human passions.”110 The tenets of the Knights of Pythias Order so impressed President Abraham Lincoln that he said about the Order “It is one of the best agencies conceived for the upholding of government, honoring the flag, for the reuniting of our brethren of the North and of the South, for teaching the people to love one another, and portraying the sanctity of the home and loved ones.” The Congress of the United States passed an act that made the Order of Knights of Pythias the first fraternal organization ever chartered by an Act of Congress.111

The Pythians recognized that any organization of greater numbers required a hierarchy. The Supreme Lodge served as the chief governing body of the Knights of Pythias. The

109 Ibid, 147.


Order established a constitution for the Supreme, Grand, and Subordinate Lodges.\textsuperscript{112} The national convention was under the control of the Supreme Lodge and it met every two years. The officers were the chancellor, vice chancellor, prelate, secretary, treasurer, master at arms, inner guard, and outer guard.\textsuperscript{113}

The members of the Knights band together in the form of a government structure to strive for “betterment of mankind.” The Subordinate Lodges serve as the foundation of the fraternal organization. A person must be in “good standing” in his Subordinate Lodge to keep his honors in the Pythian system of government.\textsuperscript{114} Originally the Knights of Pythias called their Subordinate Lodges “castles” but this changed to Subordinate Lodges.\textsuperscript{115}

The fraternal society bars no religion or political persuasion from its doors. The Pythians were unique for their time in this regard and it suggests a general liberal mindset. Every knight formulates his own religious views and belongs to a religion of his choosing. However, a member must demonstrate a sense of moral responsibility and believe in the existence of a Supreme Being.\textsuperscript{116} In 1875 the Knights allowed maimed men to join their fraternal organization.\textsuperscript{117} In 1894 the Holy Office of the Catholic Church forbade its members to belong to the Knights of Pythias. Two years later the Holy Office of the Catholic Church revised its rule and allowed a Catholic to remain a member of the Knights of Pythias if he became a member in good faith; if he would suffer serious earthly loss

\textsuperscript{112} William D. Kennedy, \textit{Pythian History Part I}, 278.

\textsuperscript{113} Schmidt, 186.

\textsuperscript{114} Webb, 5-6.

\textsuperscript{115} Schmidt, 186.

\textsuperscript{116} Dowd, 123.

\textsuperscript{117} Schmidt, 184.
insurance) if he resigned; and if his belief in Catholicism was not in danger of being lost.\textsuperscript{118} Pythian lodges did not allow blacks to join. This rule did not change until the 1950s.\textsuperscript{119} Fraternal organizations commonly prevented the membership of blacks. However, the Knights were liberal by nineteenth-century standards in that their membership was not a whites-only policy but was a policy that allowed anyone membership except African-Americans. The Knights of the 1800s openly encouraged American Indians, whom they greatly esteemed, to become members.\textsuperscript{120} In 1869 Blacks formed their own separate organization called the Knights of Pythias of North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Members vote on the acceptance of any new members. An applicant goes through an initiation rite. There are degrees of ranks within the organization just as there are within the Masonic order. The first rank requires a blindfolded applicant to kneel before a coffin and take an oath. Members keep passwords, grips, and signs of the organization secret. Higher degree ranks also require acceptance of oaths.\textsuperscript{121}

In 1888 the wives, daughters, and sisters of Knights organized a separate auxiliary group for women called the Pythian Sisters. Special groups for youth such as Sunshine Girls and Junior Order of Princes also existed. The Knights of Pythias organized contingent groups, the Uniformed Rank, Dramatic Order of Knights of Khorassan, and the Endowment Rank.\textsuperscript{122} The Knights believed the Uniform Rank interested the younger members of the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}


\bibitem{121} Schmidt, 186.

\bibitem{122} Ibid, 184-85.
\end{thebibliography}
Order in military tactics and encouraged an interest in patriotism. The Endowment Rank came into existence to provide more substantial aid to deceased members’ widows and orphans. The Dramatic Order of Knights of Khorassan developed to bring the Knights together in a social setting without the business agenda of lodges. It enabled members of various lodges to become better acquainted in large settings. The regalia of the Dramatic Order appear similar to the design and style of Shriners’ uniforms.

In 1877 the Endowment Rank started. It offered insurance to its members at an affordable price. In 1930 the insurance rank separated from the Knights of Pythias and became a mutual life insurance company. It became known as the American United Insurance Company with headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The Pythian Order believed in a primary creed, the “Pythian Trinity” of friendship, charity, and benevolence. The inverted triangle of the Pythian Trinity symbolized the Order. In ancient mythology, the triangle represented the deity. It represented the Holy Trinity to Christians and it enclosed the name of God to Jews. Pythagoras discovered the relationship of the sides of a triangle to each other and many of the teachings of the Order were based upon Pythagorean philosophy. The upper left section of the triangle revealed the letter “F” for friendship, the upper right section showed the letter “C” for charity, and

123 Webb, 178-79.
124 Dodd, 167.
125 Webb, 235-36.
126 Schmidt, 184-85.
127 Ibid, 185.
128 Webb, 99-100.
the bottom inner triangle displayed the letter “B” for benevolence. In the upper middle of the triangle was an upright triangle that depicted the bust of a knight with an ax symbol.¹²⁹ Sky blue color surrounded the friendship section of the triangle and stands for faithfulness, yellow surrounded the charity section of the triangle and stands for warm glow of the soul, and crimson surrounded the benevolence section of the triangle and stands for the Knightly heart.¹³⁰

The Knights made their cardinal principle, friendship. Stories existed in their earlier twentieth century books where members died for other members, such as the case of the “yellow death” epidemic experienced in Tennessee in 1878. The head of the Pythian committee of relief took care of his afflicted brothers and ended up succumbing to the disease in selfless brotherly fashion.¹³¹

The adoption of the Knight model symbolized the Pythian belief in chivalry, braveness, and boldness. The Pythian Order expected its Knights to display fearlessness, selflessness, empathy for others, generosity, courtesy, and high moral standards. The Knights adopted phrases and forms of ancient Knighthood.

The Pythians gave examples of the way a chivalrous Knight would respond to adversity in order to inspire their brothers. The Pythian doctor tends to the sick even if at risk; the Pythian engineer keeps his hand on the throttle valve and goes to certain danger to save others; the Pythian youth foregoes love and ambition to care for his widowed mother; the

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¹²⁹ Schmidt, 185.
¹³⁰ Dowd, 131.
¹³¹ Ibid, 127.
Pythian boy helps an elderly woman across the street; and a Pythian man honors all women and resents those who castigate aspersions on a women’s reputation.\footnote{Ibid, 131.}

The Knights of Pythias believed man has an inherent social nature. Prevent man from “companionship of kindred spirits” and his sense of morality decreases. He loses his noble goals. A man may be surrounded by people but still be alone without true society of people with the same values.\footnote{Ibid, 135.}

Membership in the Knights of Pythias provided a sense of security. A Knight or his children could go to a strange place and experience immediate acceptance and loyal friends when he met another Knight. The other Pythians would immediately help the Knight and his children.

Large towns and cities around the turn of the twentieth century could be unfriendly and dangerous. The bond of the Knights provided safety and mutual aid. As the author of History of the Knights of Pythias said, Pythian brotherhood assured that “The stranger is made welcome at the fireside of any brother Knight. He realizes that his property, his honor, his life are sacred and safe.”\footnote{Ibid, 136.} In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a brotherhood of members provided comfort and safety for the traveler.

The Knights strived to make their members “true and good.” Knights expected a firm denouncement if they had bad habits and the lodge served as a training school where a Knight learned temperance, generosity, and morality. A lodge endeavored to sustain a
brother Knight and help him stay on a path of righteousness. The Pythians expected their brothers to be good husbands, responsible fathers, helpful neighbors, and good citizens.

Mutual relief strengthened the bonds of Pythias members. They offered assistance to each other in times of sickness, accident, loss of employment, disappointment, and other times of tribulation. The Pythians strived to meet the needs of distressed members promptly with all the force of their united brotherhood.135

The Knights received the promise of a deep fellowship with other men, which was profoundly emotionally satisfying, but other benefits were given with membership. First, the organization offered insurance benefits so that Pythian families received medical care in the period before mandatory government backed social services. Following on this benefit, Max Weber commented during a visit to the United States, that membership in a fraternal organization was a mark of “credit worthiness.” Furthermore, when being inducted into a fraternal organization, a man knew that he had been judged by his peers and found to be a compliment to his community and thus admitted into the Pythians or another similar group.136 The Knights had much to offer to prospective members and were so popular that by the 1930s they were the third largest fraternal organization, after the Masons and the Odd Fellows.137

This material is largely provided by Pythian sources and thus can be criticized because of concerns of self interest. The Pythians are a secret society and material is therefore limited. However, no scandals or serious improprieties were discovered by this writer concerning the Knights.

135 Ibid, 135, 139.
136 Beito, 59.
137 Ibid, 222.
Chapter 4: The Home The Knights Built.

In the late nineteenth century, governmental safety nets for children affected by life’s problems of poverty, death, abandonment, and neglect did not exist. The Knights of Pythias brotherhood recognized the need of dependent children and saw it as their duty to help children of deceased Knights or widowed Knights. First, they would have to find the land, build, and furnish their great institution, the Ohio Pythian Home. In order to help children affected by death, the Pythians decided what criteria to use in the admittance of children to their home. They established rules and regulations, and they designed an application form. It reflected the type of society and time in which they lived. Their decisions about applications for admittance revealed a great deal about them as a philanthropic group of men.

A new stage in Pythian history began and fulfilled the Pythian dream and commitment of providing a home for orphan children. The Knights of Pythias opened their very first orphan asylum in Springfield, Ohio.\textsuperscript{138} In early 1895, the home established its first cottage. The Knights of Pythias and their Pythian Sisters auxiliary organization founded an additional fourteen children’s homes in other states.\textsuperscript{139}

The 1904 census, under John Koren’s “Benevolent Institutions,” provided statistical information concerning public and private benevolent institutions in the United States.\textsuperscript{140} Koren found that 377 private and public orphanages and children’s homes opened in the


\textsuperscript{139} Emma D. Wood and Ida M. Jayne-Wayne, \textit{History of the Order of the Pythian Sisters} (Seattle: Peters, 1925), 186.

\textsuperscript{140} Koren, 9.
United States from 1890 to 1903. \(^{141}\) He reported that, in 1904, Ohio had 262 orphanages and children’s homes, 60 public, 131 private, and 71 ecclesiastical. \(^{142}\) The census included fraternal orphanages, such as the Ohio Pythian Home, under the private heading. He also observed that Ohio had the largest number of public institutions of benevolence in the United States. \(^{143}\) The report acknowledged that throughout Ohio and the United States that it was private institutions that provided the lion’s share of childcare to orphans. \(^{144}\) The Ohio Pythian Home and institutions akin to it were crucial to provide for the needs of the parentless.

In 1891 Grand Chancellor William Beatty of the Knights of Pythias brought before the Ohio Grand Lodge convention a series of resolutions to establish an orphan’s home. The resolutions passed, and the Knights selected a Board of Directors of six members. In 1894 the Board of Directors formed an agreement with the city of Springfield, Ohio to build the Knights of Pythias Children’s Home. \(^{145}\)

The board considered several other locations, but nothing in the original declarations told where the other sites were located. The Pythians stated in their own recordings that Springfield natives, Governor Asa S. Bushnell and P. M. Cartmell, were the two people who interested them in the McCreight farm location, \(^{146}\) and the Pythian Board of Directors

\(^{141}\) Ibid, 11.
\(^{142}\) Ibid, 13.
\(^{143}\) Ibid, 14.
\(^{144}\) Ibid, 17.
\(^{146}\) *Ohio Pythian Homes* (Springfield, OH: Knights of Pythias, 1924), 31.
subsequently made an offer to purchase 83 acres of land with no deed restrictions. The board signed the agreement for land with the heirs of Alexander McCreight. The heirs were Anna D. Blount, widow; Alexander McCreight Wilson and his wife, Mary A. Wilson; Celia E. McCreight, widow; Elizabeth McCreight, unmarried of Marysville; and Celia E. Cohmes, widow. The heirs received $20,357.50 for their land. In return, city of Springfield representatives (not named) offered inducements: gas and water mains, electric, telephone, and city school access.

The Pythians built the Ohio Pythian Home on West McCreight Avenue. While the permanent building and cottages were being constructed, the Ohio Pythian Home opened in early 1894 in a temporary residence at the corner of North Limestone and East Cassilly Streets. Springfield at the time contained many homes for orphans. Springfield’s offer of inducements may have been the reason the Knights selected Springfield for their home. Another possibility was that the amount of money lodges of Springfield raised for the project, which was $22,000.00, affected the choice.

While the Knights built the Children’s Home, the city of Springfield representatives agreed to add carpet and make repairs to the farmhouse located on the grounds for temporary living quarters for the superintendent of the home. As an inducement to build at the McCreight location, Springfield representatives promised that the children from the home would attend “one of the best public schools of the city.” The representatives also mentioned in their agreement that Wittenberg College was within a few minutes of the

147 Kennedy, Pythian History Part 2, 1046.


149 Ohio Pythian Homes, 15.
proposed Children’s Home. In addition, Wittenberg College offered five full scholarships for the most capable students at the home.

In 1895 the Pythians completed the first cottage. The first superintendent, Thomas J. Collins, moved into his residence shortly thereafter. The property offered a beautiful view of the woods and many acres of fertile farm land suitable for growing crops of various kinds. \(^\text{150}\)

In 1900 federal census recorded that 117 children, 62 females and 55 males, lived at the home. All of the children were white. The Children’s Home employed a superintendent, a matron, and nine lower level employees. All of the nine employees were female and unmarried. One of the nine employees was a widow. Two of the employees worked as cooks, one sewed, and one served in the dining room. Five were child-caretakers.

The ratio of child-caretaker to children was 1 child-caretaker to 23 children. The children at the home ranged in ages from 3 to 18 years. The 18-year-old, a girl, no longer attended school but taught music. However, she was not listed as an employee but as a resident. Perhaps, she stayed because of a child with the same last name, likely a brother, age 14, who was still at the home and had not finished his schooling. Twenty-two children did not attend school. They were age 6 or younger. \(^\text{151}\)

In the same year, federal census workers took a census of the Clark County Children’s Home and found sixty-nine children, ten black and fifty-nine white. The home employed a superintendent, a matron, and seven lower level employees. The seven employees were one


nurse, two assistant matrons, one seamstress, two cooks and one dining employee. The census did not list a child-caretaker. Perhaps the duties expected of an assistant matron corresponded to a child-caretaker. If this was the case, the ratio of child-caretaker to child was 1 child-caretaker to 34 children. The seven employees were all unmarried and female. One of the seven was widowed. Their wards ranged in ages from 1 to age 19. Of the children, 31 attended school and 37 did not. Of the children not attending school, 6 were nine years old, 8 were eight years old, and 7 were seven years old. Sixteen children were aged 6 or younger.152

The Pythian Children’s Home took care of more than one and a-half-times as many children as the Clark County Children’s Home did at this time. It had a better child-caretaker ratio than the Clark County Children’s Home. At the Pythian Home, seven, eight, and nine year old children attended school while the same age group did not attend school at Clark County Children’s Home. The census did not list a reason why children of school age did not attend school.

In 1903 Beatty spoke to his lodge members about the condition of the Children’s Home at their Grand Lodge meeting. He reported that there were eight buildings: three cottages, an administration building, large auditorium, hospital, barn, and power house. The Children’s Home had eleven cows, three horses, buggies, and farm equipment. The home had increased by 65 children since the census report three years before. There were now 182 children, 92 girls and 90 boys. One building still needed furniture. The investment to

date in the home totaled $300,000. Beatty added to his report, “every member of the Order is proud of the Pythian Home.”

The Pythians wrote a booklet to attract new members. It was significant because it revealed their value system and what they determined as important to attract new members. The booklet also focused on former members whom they tried to get back to their Order. One of the sentences in the booklet stated: “come back where you belong,” and “we need you and you need us--come on.”

The Pythians gave an overview of their charitable endeavors. They proudly boasted a membership of 750,000 members and thousands of lodges throughout the United States. The fraternity was one of the largest active fraternal organizations at this time. The booklet stated it gave more than $4,000,000 a year in annual aid to dependent children, widows, and aged members.

The booklet had numerous pictures of orphans in Oregon, Virginia, Texas, Indiana, North Carolina, Illinois, and Ohio. The Pythians used a picture of eighteen very young children, five boys and thirteen girls, in the Ohio Pythian Home. It was evident that they were extremely proud of their charitable institutions.

The Pythians talked about the importance of caring about the next generation. They appealed to the possible member to reflect on attainments that he could not accomplish in his lifetime but could through his son, “your boy is you,” and it asked the person to think of another person’s son who lost his father due to death. The Pythians asked “is that boy

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153 Kennedy, Pythian History Part 2, 1045-46.
155 Ibid, 25.
entitled to a chance to become a good man and a useful citizen?” They promised through their children’s homes to provide food, clothing, education, and the “best hospital and dental care” for orphans under their care. They also promised to train children to play music and not to allow their dependents “to suffer the humiliation of pauperism or the horrors of the poorhouse.”156

The admission forms between 1894 and 1939 revealed information about what criteria was used in the admission policy to the home and what concerns the philanthropic Pythians had about potential wards. Lodges throughout Ohio submitted all applications for admission to the home. The orphan applicant had to submit his application under the seal of the lodge to which his father belonged. The superintendent of the Knights of Pythias Children’s Home received the applications, which the Board of Trustees reviewed. The trustees granted temporary placements if an emergency situation developed. They made permanent decisions at the regular sessions. The applicant for admission could be the orphan of a deceased Pythian lodge member who was without any means of support; child of a deceased Pythian lodge member who had means of support but was without “sheltering care and influences of a home”; or child of a widowed Knight who could be admitted if “in need of maternal care and attention.”157

All applicants to the home were white because almost all Knights of Pythias members were white. No questions were on the applications about race. There was a rule of black

156 Ibid, 11.

157 File PC 006.026.1707, in Ohio Pythian Home Archive, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.
exclusion in membership in the lodges that did not change until the 1950s.\(^{158}\)

Each orphan applicant had to provide his or her name, age, sex, date of birth, place of birth, and the full name of his or her parents. The Board of Trustees requested the nearest relative’s address and the mother’s maiden name. The orphan applicant had to provide information as to whether he or she had “any defect of constitution, or heredity taint, or deformity of body.”\(^{159}\)

All applications required financial information about the value of any estate left by a deceased Knight and income derived from the estate. The rule required the father to belong to an Ohio lodge and be in good standing for two years prior to his death. If the father died, and his widow had no means of support, his children between 15 months and 14 years of age were eligible for admission without cost. If the father survived but his wife died, his children between 15 months and 14 years of age might be admitted upon special agreement among the father, lodge sending the children, and the Trustees. The regulations required the father to pay a weekly fee to the lodge. The commander of the lodge, in turn, sent the money to a special account for the Children’s Home. The fee provided for maintenance of the child, clothing, school books, and medical expenses. From the case records, the fee averaged $1.00 to $3.00 weekly per child, depending on the father’s ability to pay.

Children were either whole orphans or half-orphans and this designation appeared on all applications. Whole orphans had both parents deceased and a half-orphan had one surviving parent. Most of the applications were for children who had a surviving parent and


\(^{159}\) File PC 006.026.1768, in Ohio Pythian Home Archive, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.
thus were half-orphaned. Most listed deceased fathers; a small minority listed a deceased mother. In one particular case, a man’s wife died, and he did not have a job. He applied for his two children, a girl of seven and a boy of five. His application was based on his inability to support his children financially and the death of his spouse. The Pythian Board of Trustees approved his application.160

In rare situations, the widows of Knights requested admittance to the home along with their children. They would stay temporarily from one to four months and then leave. The trustees expected the widowed mother to work at the home. Questions on the applications related to her ability to earn a living for her support. The home managers asked what type of work, if any, she would be able to do at the Children’s Home. In two applications in which the mother asked for admittance, neither worked outside of the home before the death of their husbands and their skills were limited to housekeeping and sewing.161

In the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century, the public saw the poor as divided into the worthy poor and the unworthy poor.162 The Home for Destitute Children in its annual report stressed that the largest group of children it cared for came from families where “the demon of strong drink has made a victim of father or mother or both.”163 Evidence of this type of thinking appeared in the applications submitted to the Ohio Pythian Children’s Home during this period. The applications stressed the worthiness of

160 File PC 006.026.2288, in Ohio Pythian Home Archive, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.
161 Files PC 006.026.2328 and PC 006.026.1864, in Ohio Pythian Home Archive, Boxes 3 and 5, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.
162 Hacsi, 15.
applicants. Comments were made such as the parent was “worthy of all favors given him”\textsuperscript{164} or in another case, the parents were “honest, industrious, temperate, law-abiding people. They had the respect of everybody who knew them.”\textsuperscript{165} 

The person completing an application needed to state the habits of both parents as to “sobriety, frugality, industry and any other facts which may assist the Board in arriving at the natural tendencies and character of the applicant.” The applications asked if either parent had addictions to intoxicating drinks or tobacco. The child and parent’s use of profanity received scrutiny. A few people did answer yes to these questions. In fact, one father had an addiction to intoxicating drink, but his children were not denied admittance to the Children’s Home.\textsuperscript{166} Some were granted admittance after admitting to profanity or smoking. The element of worthiness remained a pinnacle concept when an organization considered helping the destitute, but personal habits that were considered a character flaw did not disqualify the application for a needy child with the Knights of Pythias Board of Trustees.

One particular case mentioned the strict law of the Pythian Home that required the continual payment of dues from the member in order to grant aid to his children. In one such case, the deceased parent allowed his dues to lapse before his death. The lodge members pleaded for his children with the following statement: “We are aware of the fact that as a matter of strict law, they are not entitled to admission, but that Pythian Charity

\textsuperscript{164} File PC 006.026.2288, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{165} File PC 006.026.1721, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{166} File PC 006.026.1719, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Box 4, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.
should, and does look beyond the letter of the law, and as the case is a thoroughly meritorious one, we appeal to you with confidence that our request will fall upon friendly ears."\textsuperscript{167} The Board of Trustees for the orphanage put the welfare of the children above rules, and granted admission.

The applications addressed issues of personal demeanor. One question specifically asked if any information needed to be brought to the attention of the superintendent about the habits of a child. Some of the "noteworthy habits" would not be listed on any type of application for care of children today. Such habits were "untidiness, telling stories, disobedience,"\textsuperscript{168} "inclined to be saucy,"\textsuperscript{169} "very high temper,"\textsuperscript{170} and "hard to control."\textsuperscript{171} Employees at the home sometimes brought positive behavior of a child to the attention of the superintendent, such as describing a boy as a "very bright and obedient child."\textsuperscript{172}

In 1894 applications for admission requested information about specific diseases: epilepsy, small pox, measles, scarlet fever, and whooping cough. There was a question about whether the orphan applicant received a vaccination. However, it did not specify for which disease. Prior to November 1901, the applications did not request information about

\textsuperscript{167} Files PC 006.026.2097, PC 006.026.2330, and PC 006.026.2331, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{168} File PC 006.026.2332, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Boxes 3 and 5, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{169} File PC 006.026.2265, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Boxes 3 and 5, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{170} File PC 006.026.2114, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Boxes 3 and 5, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{171} File PC 006.026.1740, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Boxes 3 and 5, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{172} File PC 006.026.2100, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.
tuberculosis. The revised applications asked for the first time if any immediate relatives died of tuberculosis or if applicant’s relatives had the disease. By 1910 four counties—Clark, Greene, Madison, and Champaign—had built a District Tuberculosis Hospital in Springfield, Ohio to take care of cases of tuberculosis and to quarantine infected people. The hospital had beds for 95 adults and 25 children. It was likely that tuberculosis became a concern to the Pythian Home managers since cases of tuberculosis increased substantially in the early 1900s and four counties established the tuberculosis hospital.

The Board of Trustees changed the applications in regard to required signatures on an application. From 1894 through October 1901, the board required the signatures of the Chancellor Commander and Grand Keeper of Records and Seal of the lodge in whose jurisdiction the applicant belonged. In November 1901, the board required the signature of the parent or guardian, in addition to the Chancellor Commander’s and Grand Keeper’s signatures. They also required a statement that the parent or guardian agreed to the rules, and statements made about the applicant were true. It seems probable to this researcher that problems arose from not requiring the signature of the parent or guardian and possibly some false statements occurred. In any event, it was good policy and legally advisable to require the signature of parent or guardian to avoid any misunderstanding of intentions or circumstances.

In 1925 the forms for admission received substantial changes. The Pythians still asked about tuberculosis, but they no longer called it consumption. They wanted to know if either

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173 File PC 006.026.1895, in Ohio Pythian Home Archive, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

parent had venereal disease, rheumatism, epilepsy, alcoholism, or insanity. They asked specifically if the father was in good standing at the lodge at the time of his death. They asked about the cause of death for mother and father of the applicant. The Board of Trustees retained the questions about the use of tobacco, liquor, and profane language. It inquired about additional diseases: chickenpox, typhoid fever, mumps, pneumonia, diphtheria, chorea, tonsillitis, ear discharge, and rheumatism. The application additionally had questions about injuries, operations, and epileptic or other fits.\textsuperscript{175}

In 1925 a new application form had more sections to complete. A trustee completed part of the new application. He signed an area of the form that said he had personally investigated the orphan’s situation and recommended admittance. The home physician gave all new residents an examination prior to admittance and completed a large section on the application. Prior to 1925, an applicant could have his physician do the examination and certify that there were no infections or contagious diseases. For the first time, certain laboratory tests were required by the State Health Department prior to admittance. The child received the Schick test for diphtheria, Dick test for scarlet fever, and Wasserman test for syphilis. The form went from a two-page, front and back, to a five-page form.

In 1925 the managers of the home added additional rules and regulations. The superintendent’s duties increased. He had the general oversight of the home under his management. The goals were cleanliness, industry, economy, kindness, and politeness among residents. The matron conducted household affairs. She directed the kitchen staff to prepare nutritious, ample, and hygienically prepared meals. She supervised the cleaning and

\textsuperscript{175} File PC 006.026.2138, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.
care of the rooms, beds, and clothing. She organized the activities of the female residents.\textsuperscript{176}

The Pythian Home Board of Trustees reserved the right to return a child to the lodge that had sent the child if the managers of the home deemed the child to be a danger to others, or if the behavior was so incorrigible as to warrant such a dismissal, or the child would threaten the discipline of the home. Upon the return of a child, the board required the officers and members of the lodge to use “due diligence” in finding suitable employment for the child (case records requiring due diligence did not specify age). The superintendent’s responsibility involved supervision of the placement of the child in his or her new surroundings.\textsuperscript{177} By putting this clause in the rules, the Pythian Board of Trustees did not intend to leave the extremely difficult child stranded but had arrangements made after his or her dismissal. The Clark County Historical Society offered no record of any such dismissal. Either it did not ever occur or the record existed elsewhere.

The Board of Trustees violated their own rules when it helped children. A man who belonged to the Knights of Pythias had eight children. He died in 1913, and his wife predeceased him several years earlier. The oldest of the children were adults, and the three youngest children, all girls, were minors. The oldest of the three youngest children was 15 years old, too old for admittance to the Pythian Home. A friend of the family wrote the trustees and advocated the oldest girl’s admittance with her two younger sisters. He said that the girl was very bright and would not get to finish her education because her older siblings could not help her. Because of her age, she would be compelled to get a job, or go

\textsuperscript{176} Rules and Regulations: Ohio Pythian Children’s Home, Ohio Pythian Home Archive, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.
in some home to work for her keep. The Board of Trustees approved her admittance with her younger sisters, and she stayed at the home until she was eighteen years old. It did not say in the record that she completed high school, but it appeared that she did, since she stayed at the home so long.\textsuperscript{178}

In another case, a mother, whose Pythian husband died, had three children. She worked as a nurse and had a small income. The Pythians expressed concern about her health in their correspondence. She was very overweight and had extremely poor health. She asked for help with the children, and they gave it to her. The oldest daughter, 11 years old when she entered the home, stayed until she was 19. She and her two brothers all left the home on the same date. Apparently, the Pythians allowed the oldest daughter to stay beyond the age of 18 so she and her brothers could leave together.\textsuperscript{179}

In 1914 three girls, aged 7, 10, and 13 needed care. They were not orphans. Their mother and father were both living. Their father could not work, and their mother was destitute. They did not meet criteria for admission, but, according to notes in the file, the Board of Pythian trustees called a special meeting to discuss the particulars of the case. One of the trustees wrote that “we would be remiss in our duty if we failed to extend our rules and admit them.” All three girls were accepted and stayed at the home until they were each 16 years old.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{178} File PC 006.026.1829, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{179} File PC 006.026.1690, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{180} File PC 006.026.1583, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.
In another case, a Pythian widow worked as a housekeeper. No one watched her twelve-year-old son during the day because she went to work daily. Her son began to pilfer things and get into trouble. She asked the Pythian lodge members to take her son into the home. The lodge member who helped her with the application said “the child did not have the proper care after his father’s death that he should have had on account of his mother having to be away from home so much to gain a living for her and her family.” The child received guidance and stayed a year at the home.¹⁸¹

At times the Pythians took children whom they knew in advance to be difficult or likely to be a problem. A trustee noted on an application that if the child’s behavior became deleterious to the home, the lodge would need to agree to take him. The child’s retirement date indicated that the home kept him until he was old enough to be on his own.¹⁸²

In 1917 a lodge member asked permission to admit two boys, 15 and 12 years of age into the home. A women’s Pythian husband died, leaving her penniless. She planned to move in with her sister, but she needed a place for her two sons. A board member made a visit to the home to assess the situation. The board and lodge members expressed concern about the woman’s serious drinking problem and her failure to care for the boys when she drank. The Pythians placed the boys in the home quickly. Each boy stayed until he was 18 years old.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ File PC 006.026.1828, in Ohio Pythian Home Archive, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

¹⁸² File PC 006.026.2482, in Ohio Pythian Home Archive, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

¹⁸³ Files PC 006.026.1613 and PC 006.026.2844, in Ohio Pythian Home Archive, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.
The Pythians developed many rules and regulations to guide them in the admittance of orphans or half-orphans. They changed their application forms several times during their years of operation to adjust to current medical requirements. They always put the welfare of children first. Sometimes their decisions violated their own rules and regulations, but they never lost sight of their duty to help the most vulnerable, orphan children.
Picture B: Frank Zimmer with other orphans at the Ohio Pythian Home. (Photograph Courtesy of Frank Zimmer)
picture c: Boys' Band on Pike's Peak, Colorado, En Route from Portland, Oregon, Khorassan Convention, 1923
(from the booklet Ohio Pythian Homes , page 60, 1924)
Map of North Springfield in relation to the Ohio Pythian Home in 1937. (From Page 79 of Atlas of Clark County, Ohio - 1937)
Chapter 5: Memories of the Ohio Pythian Home.

The Ohio Pythian Home had ten separate buildings in its final completion, but it was more than the buildings and brick. It represented a real “home” to more than seventeen hundred children who passed through its doors in more than fifty years of operation. The journey began for the child with the tragedy of the loss of a loved one and ended with hope for the future. A number of former Pythian Home children shared their memories of what the home meant to them and what it was like to live there.

By 1924 the Pythian Home no longer ran a farm, but its employees continued to grow vegetables and raise chickens on the surrounding 41.82 acres. [See illustrated map on page 68.] The administration building was the main building on the grounds. Reception rooms, a large dining room, personal quarters for the superintendent and his wife, some sleeping rooms for children, a library, and auditorium made up the huge main building. The sleeping rooms in the main building could hold 110 children. One room in the main building received the name “mahogany room,” and William Beatty donated the furniture for it. Three older girls occupied this room. The library received its splendid looking furnishings from Highland Lodge of Cincinnati. The auditorium seated 330 people.

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184 Ohio Pythian Homes, 19.
186 Ohio Pythian Homes, 29.
187 Ibid, 32.
188 Ibid, 43.
189 Ibid, 42.
190 Ibid, 41.
The auditorium was the location of Christmas parties and other festivities. The lodges collected money from their members throughout the state for gifts for the children at Christmas time.\textsuperscript{191}

Children lived in the three cottages. The buildings resembled large castles of fine architecture. Twenty girls lived in cottage number one.\textsuperscript{192} Sixty girls lived in girls’ cottage number two, and sixty boys lived in cottage number three.\textsuperscript{193} The Pythians also built three employee cottages for married employees with families.\textsuperscript{194} These homes stood along Pythian Avenue. In 1924 the Pythians finished and dedicated the baby cottage or LeFevre cottage, named after the second superintendent. The babies, five and younger, had a separate dining room, kitchen, living room, and lived in two separate dormitories.\textsuperscript{195}

Highland Lodge of Cincinnati erected and furnished the hospital building which the Pythians equipped with modern surgical instruments.\textsuperscript{196} They named the hospital the Highland Memorial Hospital. If a child had a contagious illness, he or she moved to the hospital until well enough to return to the dormitory.\textsuperscript{197}

The name most often associated with the building of the orphans’ home was William Beatty, a member of the Toledo Lodge, the Knights of Pythias Grand Chancellor, and later

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid, 27.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid, 30.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid, 34.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid, 61.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid, 18, 20, 23, 26.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid, 35.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid, 25.
Grand Keeper of Records of the Grand Lodge.\textsuperscript{198} He was born on October 27, 1851, and immigrated to the United States from his birthplace, Montreal, Canada. He was from a very poor family. He described his formal schooling as minimal and often said that he went to school in the “poor man’s college” of a print shop.

Beatty worked as a printer and newspaper man in Toledo for many years. He had a reputation for honesty, intelligence, and skillful oratory. He served in government, two years in the Ohio House and six years on the Toledo City Council. He joined St. Paul’s Methodist Church, and he became a member of its Board of Directors and a delegate to the General Conference of that denomination in Baltimore, Maryland in 1908. He served twenty-four years on the Board of Trustees for the Ohio Reform School in Lancaster.

Beatty also held the position of secretary and was a board member for twenty years for the Toledo Park Department. The city of Toledo honored him by naming one of its parks, Beatty Park, after him. In 1916 he became the Director of Public Welfare for the city of Toledo.\textsuperscript{199}

Some very competent and caring administrators served the home. The first superintendent and matron were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. Collins, who administered the home from 1894 to 1896.\textsuperscript{200} Robert M. LeFevre and his wife Clara I. LeFevre exemplified good administrators. Robert LeFevre joined the Knights at the lodge in West Milton, Ohio

\textsuperscript{198} Kennedy, \textit{Pythian History Part 2}, 1045-7.


\textsuperscript{200} \textit{Ohio Pythian Home}, 15-17.
and eventually became the Pythian Chancellor Commander. On the first of April, 1896, LeFevre became superintendent of the Ohio Children’s Home.

LeFevre and his wife, affectionately called “Pop” and “Mom” by the orphans,believed that human beings were the most important form of wealth that a country could possess and in this fashion worked to make the children as productive and well adjusted as possible given the circumstances. The popular couple remained in control of the home until they retired in 1922.201 They served longer than any other persons as heads of an Ohio institution.202

Albert A. Wormwood and his wife served as the next superintendent and matron from 1922 to 1926. They came to the home from Fremont, Ohio. They made numerous changes to the buildings while continuing the policies of the previous administrator. Wormwood installed a new heating plant, rewired the home according to state code, added a water softener, installed a new pump, replaced lavatories, added new lockers in the boys’ facilities, and remodeled rooms.203

Lloyd E. Gayman served as superintendent after Albert Wormwood left. He administered the home from 1926 to 1931. Gayman received his education from Wittenberg College and Miami University at Oxford, Ohio. He was a member of the Knights of Pythias at Whitehouse, Ohio. After he left the Pythian Home, he taught school in Springfield, Ohio until his retirement in 1952 for total teaching service of 43 years. He was an active member of First Baptist Church in Dayton, where he taught Sunday school

201 Humboldt Lodge: Golden Anniversary-September 11, 1873-September 11, 1923 (USA: Knights of Pythias, 1923), 40.

202 Ohio Pythian Home, 17.

203 Ohio Pythian Homes, 17, 21, 23.
classes for 27 years. He wrote a book in 1951, *Hundred Year History of the Dayton Baptist Association*. When he retired from teaching he made a statement which indicated his attitude and concern for children, “I thought of my work not as teaching a certain subject, but as teaching boys and girls,” finding it “a joy to see boys and girls grow in stature, mind and spirit—to be good people and good citizens and make a success of their life work.”

The last superintendent was A. R. Brane, who guided the home from 1931 to 1943.

In establishing a home for orphans, the Ohio Pythian Home’s managers stressed the importance of a home-like environment in an institutional setting. They wanted children raised like any in a large family setting. Each child received a chore assignment, and the chore was appropriate to his or her age level. If a child had a special talent, the home nurtured this talent. An example was the little boy who resided at the home and became the national marble shooting champion in 1925. The Pythian Home managers enabled him to travel to Atlantic City, New Jersey for six days of competition. The home provided a balance to each child’s life of play, work, and school.

The orphanage maintained an open policy for the children to talk to the superintendent and matron anytime they wanted because there were no set office hours. As in a home, the superintendent did not pin rules on the walls. Because of their large numbers, it was necessary to group children by ages and sex. There were older boys, older girls, boys and

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206 *Ohio Pythian Homes*, 15, 19.

207 Tom Stafford, “He was city’s marble king 65 years ago,” in *Springfield News-Sun* (May 20, 1990), 4A.

208 *Ohio Pythian Homes*, 19, 25.
girls ages eight to eleven, and boys and girls ages six and seven. The children from infancy to aged five lived in the baby cottage, where a governess and her aide cared for them.\footnote{Ibid, 21, 23, 25, 27.}

The large numbers made it necessary to have a routine for the children. In 1924 there were 242 children living in the home and 26 employees. In the morning, the children, except the babies, said their prayers, and at six o’clock, they ate breakfast. Each child then did his or her assigned chore. At seven thirty o’clock, the high school children went to Springfield High School, the only public high school in Springfield at that time. At eight o’clock, the grade school children crossed the street to Jefferson School. All of the grade school children returned at noon to eat their lunch, but the high school students ate their lunches at school. Dinner was at five o’clock in the afternoon. After dinner hours, children could spend their time reading, doing homework or playing.\footnote{Ibid, 27.} The time the children went to bed was not recorded.

The home employees encouraged guests to stay for a substantial time and visit with their relatives. When a visitor stayed for a meal, he or she paid twenty-five cents for each meal to the superintendent of the facility, and he turned the money over to the Grand Keeper of Records and Seal who deposited the money into the Pythian children’s account. The managers added the pay for meals rule.\footnote{File PC 006.026.2841, in \textit{Ohio Pythian Home Archive}, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.} This was an indication that guests came frequently. Pythian Home managers described the home as a “mecca” for people from all over the state.
The Pythians stated that they allowed children to have spending money.\textsuperscript{212} Dave Foster, an orphan who lived at an Odd Fellows’ Home from age four to nineteen during the 1930s and 1940s, said that a small allowance was important to a child. When he went to high school, it helped him to develop self-esteem. He said that it enabled him to “stand tall” among his peers.\textsuperscript{213}

Children at the Pythian Home received music lessons. The home created a boys’ band in 1913, a girls’ band in 1924, an orchestra, and its own drum corps.\textsuperscript{214} Both bands and the drum corps wore distinct uniforms.\textsuperscript{215} A Pythian picture showed the boys’ band in front of a train that had the words painted on it: on Pikes Peak, alt. 14109 Ft, No. 4, Aug. 27, 1923. At the bottom of the picture, it read: “en route from Portland, Oregon, Khorassan Convention, 1923.” Children who traveled to the Portland, Oregon, Khorassan Convention received an opportunity to go up Pikes Peak.\textsuperscript{216} [This picture is located on page 64 of this work.]

Foster, a member of the Odd Fellows Home’s marching band, maintained that unpaid musicians often were the center of attention in small town parades during festivities such as Fourth of July, Memorial Day, and Veterans Day. Local communities watched Odd Fellows Home’s marching band and ball teams with pride. Foster played the bass horn and traveled with the orphanage band. Playing music also released him from some chores after

\textsuperscript{212} Rules and Regulations: Ohio Pythian Children’s Home, Ohio Pythian Home Archive, Box 3, Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{213} Dave Foster, Life in the Orphanage (TN: Top Tenn Press, 1997), 80, 162-63.

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid, 27.

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid, 56-57.

\textsuperscript{216} Ibid, 60.
school so he could practice with the band. Once he traveled to Florida with the band for musical engagements for two weeks.\textsuperscript{217}

The Pythian band, orchestra, and dramatic group provided the orphans with travel opportunities. Dorothy Gorham Morton, an orphan in the 1930s and 1940s, recalled that the orchestra traveled by bus to various Pythian lodges throughout the state, that the orchestra played on the radio once in Cincinnati, and that her drama group played at a large theater in Cleveland.\textsuperscript{218}

Music did not provide the only opportunities for travel. Children at the home earned grades for good behavior and managers gave rewards to children who behaved the best. Dorothy Gorham Morton and her sisters received passes to stay with their mother a few days and traveled by train to get there. Morton once won the “good citizenship award” at the home. The managers rewarded her with a trip across Canada. She earned another trip for good grades for behavior the next year. This time the destination was a trip to Michigan for swimming and fishing. The superintendent and matron had a summer cottage in Northwest Ohio, where they allowed groups of children to stay at the cottage for a week. Traveling with the orchestra, drama group, and rewards gave Morton a perception of the home as a “land of opportunity.”\textsuperscript{219}

A reporter interviewed Barb Kelley during a reunion. She found that the Pythian Home offered opportunities that she would never have under the circumstances in her life, the early death of her mother in the 1930s. She recalled the visits from her father, who owned a

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid, 107, 109, 113.


\textsuperscript{219} Ibid.
bakery in Greenfield, Ohio but moved to Springfield to visit his daughter, her two sisters and brother weekly. Her father loved to watch the children play baseball.

In the summer, the Pythian lodges had picnics on the facility grounds. Kelly remembered with fondness the friendly faces of the lodge members and really enjoyed their visits. Sometimes they had entertainment at the picnics.

Kelley and her siblings went to Springfield High School; her two sisters became homecoming queens there and she played the mandolin. All of them graduated from high school. Her siblings went on to college and graduated. They were popular in school and knew how to get along well with people.

The home’s managers not only demonstrated flexibility toward applicants, but also with employees who had families. There were three cottages on the grounds for married employees with families. One of the couples, a nurse and her husband, who lived and worked at the home, had a young daughter, Jewel Boggs. She helped her mother at the Pythian Hospital and the children called her “the adopted kid.” During a reunion of Pythian residents, she recalled an amusing story about dead bushes at the hospital. The employees at the hospital could not figure out what was causing the problem, but Boggs figured out that the scrawny kids, who were forced to take caster oil, would hold it in their mouths and then spit it into the bushes once they went outside.

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221 Ohio Pythian Homes, 61.
Boggs grew up with the orphans and attended the same schools with them. The managers allowed her to take music classes with the other children. When the wrecking crew tore down the Pythian Home, she cried. It was her home, too.\textsuperscript{222}

Children at the home learned to work together on problems, to be resourceful with the tools they possessed, and to work intelligently. Joe Clauss, who entered the home after the death of his father in 1921, remembered that employees would set time each night for homework and study. If a fifth grade student had a math problem he or she did not understand, a child in an older grade would show the younger child how to do the problem. The children learned resourcefulness when they lacked equipment. For instance, the boys loved to play baseball, but they did not have many balls. If the cover came off the back of the ball, the children would stitch the cover back on the ball.\textsuperscript{223} When the residents mowed the lawn, their numbers worked to their advantage: They planned their work and lined up in staggered, overlapping formation to finish the mowing in a short time.\textsuperscript{224}

Clauss learned a work ethic that he used throughout his life from doing chores at the Pythian Home. He remembered loading a truck full of coal and hauling it to the home or plowing furrows with the horse. His work ethic helped him gain part-time jobs while attending the University of Wisconsin. He was thankful for what the home gave him in his youth and said that he would never understand why it was closed.\textsuperscript{225}

\textsuperscript{222} Tom Stafford, “The Ohio Pythian Children’s Home: With the Reunion Fresh in Their Minds, Alumni Remember Their Lives at the Home,” in Springfield News-Sun (July 29, 2002), 4A.


The home gave children a stable environment that kept them out of trouble and gave them guidance. Harry and Ernie Poland, two brothers, lived there from 1926 to 1937. Ernie said, “It was a children’s home with the emphasis on home.” Harry liked the discipline and respect that the home’s officials taught toward others. He did not know a single child from the home who got in any trouble. Harry said, “The K of P Children’s Home would be a solution to today’s child abuse cases involving foster care.”

Frank Zimmer was the son of a Pythian from the lodge at Belpre, Ohio. When Frank’s father died in 1923, his mother took him and his three siblings to live at the Ohio Pythian Home. The home employees separated Zimmer, his two brothers and his sister by sex and age. Zimmer lived with the group for small boys.

Zimmer said of his stay at the home from 1923 to 1925 that “It was wonderful the way we had it. We had a wonderful governess over each one of us.” Zimmer noted that governesses were assigned to each child. While he admitted that his younger brother and sister may not have been as close to their governess as he was, he developed such a close relationship with his central caregiver at the home that decades later he sought her out and found her. She remembered him and exclaimed “Little Frankie!” when they met again and he pointed to her and said “Mom”! Profound closeness was possible even at a large orphan asylum like the Ohio Pythian Home. Zimmer still had the letter she wrote him and seemed to treasure it.

Zimmer recalled how the bed quarters for younger boys like him were divided into rows. He was not sure how many beds were within one room, but he thought it was about

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fifteen to twenty. The Pythian Home commonly placed about fifteen to twenty small boys to a room in this quarter and probably did the same in the small girls’ quarter.

Zimmer’s experiences demonstrated what a young boy, at least in the twentieth century, might expect from the Pythian Home. [See page 63 for a picture of the young Zimmer with his siblings at the Pythian Home.] He stated that the home was orderly yet he also enjoyed himself. Zimmer remembered that the staff treated him and the older young children well. He also recollected that he once received a reprimand for misbehaving. The older children played a baseball game one afternoon. Afterwards, he found a broom and went out to the baseball diamond. He used the broom as a “horse” to ride around the baseball diamond, which caused dust to rise. The young Zimmer became covered in a tremendous amount of dust. His governess gave him a bath and sent him to stand in a corner for a short while. He insisted he never received or saw corporal punishment.

Zimmer attended Jefferson School, across the street from the home. He and his brother and sisters went there until his mother remarried and took her children to a new home. His step-father required him to work very hard and leave school early. On his education, he reflected, “I wish he (his step-father) had kept me there (the Pythian Home) so I could have graduated. I had a pretty rough life from the time I left that home to the time I grew up.”

When asked by this researcher if he had any particularly strong memories, Zimmer talked about big parties the Pythians had for them. He remembered Christmas when Santa Claus came. He also remembered the bands that played at the home.

Zimmer mentioned that the children wore similar clothes appropriate to their age group. His age group wore knee pants and button shoes. The children also had similar haircuts.
When he was asked by this researcher how he would rate the home’s care of the children, Zimmer said that he would give it an excellent rating. “I had no problems when I was there and I had not heard of anyone else having problems.” Again, he said “I was sorry I left there myself.” Zimmer joined the Pythians years ago and he said, “I am going to go and keep going (to lodge meetings).”

In the 1940s Zimmer learned that the home was going to be torn down. He drove past it after work and asked one of the workmen on the demolition project if he could have some bricks as souvenirs. He loaded up his car and still had souvenirs in the back yard of his house. His brothers polished and placed them inside their houses. The souvenirs became his reminders of this once great home.228

Ralph E. Filson, Jr. believed he was the only living former resident of the Knights of Pythias Home in Springfield, and spent 14 years there. Now 89 years old, he entered the home on May 22, 1926 with his four sisters. The home personnel placed him and his two younger sisters in the nursery. At the age of nine months, his youngest sister was the youngest child ever admitted.

The rules and regulations at the Home were strict. Filson and the other children received training in good manners and respect for others. In the main building, children marched to the dining room for meals. Everyone had to say grace before meals. Some of the breakfast meals consisted of fig and hominy with rice. On Sundays breakfast was hotcakes, fried eggs, and toast. Each child took as much as he or she wanted to eat. However, there was a rule that if you took food, you had to eat it. Conversations did not occur at the dining table and the time for eating was limited. The bell would ring, and children prepared for school.

228 Ibid.
Discipline would sometimes be harsh. Filson recalled that, if a child got into trouble, the governess would give him two or three cracks with a paddle in the evening. One time a male employee hit him from behind and knocked him out. Two boys from the orphanage carried him to his room. Another time, he worked in the kitchen after school and the cook slapped him across his face, splitting his lip. He left the grounds and went to his mother’s house. She telephoned the commander of the lodge who had helped her get her children admitted to the home and told him what happened. He drove out to her house, picked her up, and took her to the home. He confronted the cook about the abuse of the teenager and fired him on the spot.

Children kept their rooms neat and tidy. They changed their bedding twice a week, and they made beds in a certain way. If a child failed to make his bed properly, he made it again when he returned from school. The governess inspected lockers weekly for orderliness and neatness. Filson remembered that he kept three pair of shoes in his locker, one for church, school, and work. The entire place was always “spit and polish” clean.

When Filson grew older, he worked in one of the following places: kitchen, dining room, laundry room, or boiler room. His assignment lasted for three months, then he would be assigned a different job. When he worked in the laundry room, the boss of the laundry department went on vacation, and he was left in charge. He and other boys ran a hundred sheets a day through a “mangle” machine, two long rollers operated by a crank that wrung the water from wet laundry, and kept the washers running. All of the departments filled big laundry baskets of clothing.

The managers of the home required regular church attendance. Filson walked four and a
half blocks to Fourth Lutheran Church on Sundays with his two older sisters. The managers chose Fourth Lutheran because of its close proximity. He attended church and Sunday school in all kinds of weather. Fourth Lutheran Church was located near the campus of Wittenberg College. When Wittenberg students went home for summer months, children from the home became the choir at the church. Filson remained a close friend to the choir director from the church for 72 years.

Study and good grades received priority. In the evening, children went into the dining room to study for an hour, five days a week. Several orphans ultimately received scholarships to attend college. Filson thought the Lutheran Church may have assisted with scholarships, but he was uncertain. After high school, he graduated from a two-year business school.

Sports constituted one of the chief interests of the boys. After chores on Saturdays, they played baseball. The “lawn gang,” a large group of boys, mowed the lawn in a hurry in order to play baseball. The Pythian Home played against teams from other lodges, the Masonic, Odd Fellows Home, and American Legion. Filson recalled that all the lodges had good athletes. The desire to play baseball sometimes brought out the resourcefulness in the boys. One time there was a shortage of usable balls. Several boys decided to write to several Washington legislators and explain that they needed baseballs. One day the surprised looking superintendent, Mr. Wormwood, brought the boys three boxes of baseballs, and the letter from a senator stating that any time the Children’s Home needed balls, he would supply them.

When asked by this researcher if the children at the home had a bond with each other
like children in a large family, Filson believed that they did. He cited an incident that happened to him once. In the game, “run sheep run,” he ran barefoot and stepped on a broken canning glass jar. An older boy watched the incident from his window, jumped to the ground, and came to his rescue. The boy removed his tee shirt, wrapped the foot in the shirt, yelled for another boy to call ahead to the doctor at the hospital, and carried Filson across the grounds. Filson said he personally knew the name of every child in the orphanage during the time he lived there.229

When asked for this study if he thought institutions like the Pythian Home should exist today, he said, “I have no regrets being raised there. I got a good education and I knew how to behave.” He maintained children raised in orphanages like the Pythian Home would adopt good values and stay out of trouble. When the last building at the home was demolished, he, like Zimmer, went to get a brick from his old home.

The Pythian Home Board of Trustees planned the Children’s Home to be more than an institution. When they built it in 1894, they had to look at practical aspects along with their idealistic desires for a residence for orphans. They chose a mixture of architectural styles. They had one large building that accommodated as many as 110 children, but they also built four smaller cottages. The board chose to build the cottage style fifteen years before the White House Conference on Dependent Children of 1909 recommended it for orphanages. Robert LeFevre and Albert Wormwood were mentioned in Pythian publications as supporting the small cottage styles.

Former residents organized a number of reunions over the years of Pythian children. The last one occurred in 2002. Reporters for the Springfield News-Sun interviewed some of

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these former residents over the last sixteen years, and two former residents were
interviewed for this study. These were eighty-nine and ninety-three year-old men. Both the
interviewees strongly identified with the home and kept in contact with other former
children. A number of them spoke of the good education, religious training, and work ethic
that they gained while at the home. They did not see their association with the home as a
negative experience but as a very positive one.

The two former orphans interviewed recently, Frank Zimmer and Ralph Filson, had
some dissimilar experiences. Zimmer viewed his years at the home almost in an idealistic
way. He was much younger than Filson and stayed for a shorter time. His governess treated
him very kindly, and he became quite attached to her. He saw the orphanage as an
opportunity to get a good education, and his early withdrawal from the orphanage by his
mother and step-father made it impossible for him to stay in school until he could graduate.
Filson lived at the orphanage for fourteen years from 1926 to 1940. He saw good and bad
aspects. He appreciated the good education and moral training, but he found the orphanage
to be strict and tough in discipline.

The Russell Sage Foundation in its survey over sixteen years reported that the Ohio
Pythian Children’s Home was the “best model of fraternal homes in the country.”230 Both
Zimmer and Filson believed that orphanages, like the Pythian Home, would benefit
children today. It would provide security and a sense of direction. The home was not
perfect, but this foundation’s verdict and the evidence presented demonstrate that the home
was a quality institution that provided care for children.

230 Ohio Pythian Homes, 19, 21.
Conclusion.

The Ohio Pythian Home followed a historical pattern similar to other orphanages of the early twentieth-century across the United States. It was not unique in their history. The Pythians started their child-care institution during the golden years of orphan home building.\textsuperscript{231} By 1924 the home cared for 252 children, which was almost at full capacity. In that year, they had remodeled the home, added new lavatories and lockers, rewired the buildings, and built an additional cottage. They had a financial investment of $1,000,000 dollars in the buildings, land, and furnishings.\textsuperscript{232} The 1920s were their peak years of operation. They never added buildings or remodeled after these years.

In the late 1920s, mothers’ pensions helped nationally more children than the total number of children in orphan homes. In 1933 there were approximately 150,000 children who lived in orphanages. The number of children who benefited from mother’s pensions was more than double the number who lived in orphanages.\textsuperscript{233}

The decline in the number of children in orphan homes occurred at a fairly rapid rate. Ralph Filson, the orphan at the home from 1926 to 1940, believed that the decline in numbers started with the enactment of the Social Security Act of 1935. Parents kept their child in the home when the government paid for dependent children. The number of retirements from orphan asylums outpaced the number of new admissions. Books mentioned in an earlier chapter have similar findings. These were Building the Invisible Orphanage: A Prehistory of the American Welfare System; An Assessment of the Ohio

\textsuperscript{231} Hacsi, 49.

\textsuperscript{232} Ohio Pythian Homes, 19, 25.

\textsuperscript{233} Hacsi, 45.
Soldiers’ & Sailors’ Orphans’ Home; Philadelphia’s Progressive Orphanage; A Home of Another Kind: One Chicago Orphanage and the Tangle of Child Welfare; Second Home: Orphan Asylums and Poor Families in America; Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care; and Home Away From Home: The Forgotten History of Orphanages. Statistics from the Ohio Department of Welfare indicate similar trends. The eighty private child-caring institutions in the state from 1937 to 1940 reported a steady decline each year. More children left the institutions than entered.\textsuperscript{234} By 1943 Aid to Dependent Children legislation impacted the number of children who had traditionally gone to orphanages. They faced a loss of their traditional clientele. Applications of the typical orphans of the past became less frequent. Orphanages needed to accept different clientele with behavioral problems or handicapped children in order to stay in business.\textsuperscript{235} The Pythian Home Board of Trustees faced the same dilemma as other child-care managers: accept children with major problems or go out of business.

By 1944 the Board of Trustees made the decision to close the facility and move the remaining five orphans to the Home for the Aged. On September 25, 1944, the Grand Lodge of Knights of Pythias of the Domain of Ohio, by the signature of S. L. Warner, President and E. E. Coriell, Secretary of the Board of Grand Trustees, transferred their buildings, land, and all their furnishings to the Sisters of Mercy of Cincinnati. The nuns planned to build a hospital on the grounds, and the cornerstone was laid in April 1947. Sister Mary Cecilia Barnett, the supervisor of the hospital, commented about the historic grounds it was to be built on, “the Knights of Pythias Orphanage stood as a symbol of


\textsuperscript{235} Hacsi, 50-51.
security and hope to many parents.” Although most of the Pythian buildings were
demolished, the sisters used a few of the cottages as Mercycrest, a home for the aged. The
beautiful main building where many orphans lived in a span of 50 years ended in a pile of
rubbish.236

A great deal of time and effort over the years went toward transforming the child-care
institution into a home-like environment. The Pythian booklet of 1924 indicated how
dynamics of every day family life were interwoven in their organization of the home. The
children called the superintendent, “Pop,” and the matron, “Mom.”237 This desire to make
the orphanage into a “home” started in the last half of the nineteenth century when most
orphanage managers wanted a home-like environment for their wards. It was common for
the superintendent and matron to serve as substitute parents. The most common term in
orphanage annual reports was the “home” quality of their institutions.238 This desire to
transform a large institution into a real home for the orphans, regardless of commonality
with other orphanages, seemed genuinely sincere among the Pythians.

The traditional differentiation attitudes of poor people as the “worthy poor” and
“unworthy poor” were evident in the study of the applications of the Ohio Pythian Home.
The applications expressed the worthiness of applicants, particularly in the earlier years
before revisions. Both parents received inquiries as to their work ethic and character
attributes.

236 Tom Stafford, “Mercy Hospital was hailed as ‘a glorious beacon of light,’” in Springfield News-Sun
(March 22, 2010), C1.

237 Ohio Pythian Homes, 17.

238 Ibid, 60, 65.
In the late nineteenth century, the poor received unfavorable scrutiny. Many speakers at the 1890 meeting of the National Conference of Charities and Correction voiced hereditarian explanations of personal flaws.\textsuperscript{239} One of the questions in the Pythian applications inquired about the “hereditary taint of the child.” The influence of the thinking about hereditarian flaws of the time existed. The Pythian Home Board asked questions typical of their generation, but they made decisions that favored the welfare of the child.

At the time, the Knights of Pythias experienced decreasing numbers of orphans, the fraternal organization lost membership. This meant substantial loss of lodge dues to continue with its philanthropic pursuits. When the Pythians remodeled the Children’s Home and built a new cottage in the early 1920s, their membership numbers swelled to approximately a million lodge members.\textsuperscript{240} These were their peak years of membership. There was a gradual decline to about 80,000 in the 1990s.

The Pythian Home could not survive national trends beyond its control. The following factors led to its demise: demographical changes, increased longevity, medical improvements, government programs that enabled children to stay in homes, foster care programs, decreased membership in lodges, and the end of mutual aid among lodge members. The Pythian Home buildings and most of the former children who lived in them no longer survive, but the memory of the once great child-care institution still has remained a monument to Pythian charity at its finest.

\textsuperscript{239} Ibid, 61.

Sources Provided and Works Cited.

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Ohio Historical Society. “Ohio Memory Collection: Clark County Tuberculosis Sanitarium Photograph.” Ohio Memory Collection. 

Ohio Pythian Home Archive. 117 South Fountain Av. Springfield, OH: Clark County Historical Society.-This consisted of five boxes and was subject to future alterations of organization at the time this author used it. Boxes 1 & 2 contained photographs, booklets, and other materials related to the Ohio Pythian Home and the Knights of Pythias. Boxes 3 & 4 contained orphan application records and were organized by year of entry into the home. Box 5 also contained application records but was organized by alphabetic structuring. At the time of this work, there was no consistent method of organization employed by the Society when structuring this archive.


- “He was city’s marble king 65 years ago.” *Springfield News-Sun*, May 20, 1990, 4A.

- “Mercy Hospital was hailed as ‘a glorious beacon of light.’” *Springfield News-Sun*, March 22, 2010, C1.


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