

50¢ JULY 1978

the Cracker Barrel

with
TEMPO

The Coffmans
Launched Our Modern
Health Department



**COFFMAN
HEALTH CENTER**
WASHINGTON COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT



PUBLISHER'S MEMO:

We are pleased to announce the establishment of a CRACKER BARREL - sponsored creative writing competition at Hagerstown Junior College. The winners of the first annual awards are listed on pages 12 and 13, along with the text of the paper submitted by the first prize winner.

The encouragement of creative writing among local people has been a high-priority item for us for some time. We are pleased that the college faculty has seen fit to adopt our proposal for an annual competition among serious writing students on the local campus.

Awards in the competition will be made each year at graduation at the Hagerstown Junior College campus.

A. VERNON DAVIS

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Material Invited

Although unsolicited manuscripts and pictures for publication are invited, they must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope, or picked up at the CRACKER BARREL office.

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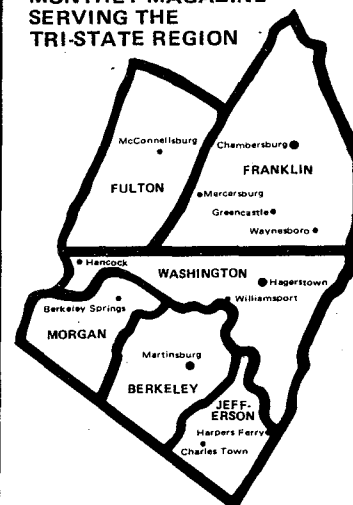
FRONT COVER: Mr. and Mrs. Andrew K. Coffman, who launched the modern Washington County Health Department by contributing two buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue in the 1950's, are pictured against a backdrop of photographs showing the most recent building expansion for the local government agency.

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COFFMANS LAUNCHED PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER HERE

EDITOR'S NOTE: IN THE MARCH 1978 ISSUE, WE PUBLISHED THE EARLY HISTORY OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE IN WASHINGTON COUNTY. THIS MONTH'S STORY BRINGS THAT HISTORY UP TO DATE.

By Rita Clark Hutzell



Mr. and Mrs. Coffman were honored by the State of Maryland by Governor Theodore R. McKeldin as another former Governor, William Preston Lane Jr. of Hagerstown looked on at right.

Sixty-seven years have passed since the Washington County Health Department originated in a single, rented room on S. Jonathan St. in Hagerstown. Now located in newly renovated and expanded quarters on Pennsylvania Ave., it has grown not only in size, but in scope and status over the years.

As the Health Department moved to various city locations between 1912 and 1955, in order to accommodate its expanding programs, it always held fast to its original concept, "to promote better health conditions in Washington County."

In March the Cracker Barrel related the early, often struggling days of the department through the personal experiences of Miss Ethel Middlekauff, first "county" health nurse who joined the health program in 1919. In this issue we will look at the various additional programs and unique situations which have gone into making the Washington County Health Department widely acclaimed and world renowned.

When two three-story brick buildings were constructed in 1955 and 1958, it marked the first time that the department moved into permanent and wholly owned facilities. The first building was built in conformity with plans developed by the Health Department, while the second met National Cancer Institute specifications for the purpose of research. The buildings,

named the Coffman Health Center and the Coffman Research Laboratory, were gifts to the people of the county from the late Mr. and Mrs. Andrew K. Coffman.

The Cancer Research Laboratory was the first of its kind in the United States, and its immediate objectives were to determine the cause of cancer, and if possible, to develop a means of prevention of the disease.

It was Dr. W. Ross Cameron, first Washington County Health Officer, who developed the Hagerstown cancer project. After observing the cancer effects from the atomic bombing at Hiroshima, Japan, he theorized that the disease might be caused by everyday radiation from the surrounding environment. Since Washington County was considered typical of national standards, and because of its long-standing, detailed vital statistics records, the area provided ideal conditions for the five year study.

Observers from all over the world came to the local health department during the complex study, and news of the project was reported in medical publications and the national press.

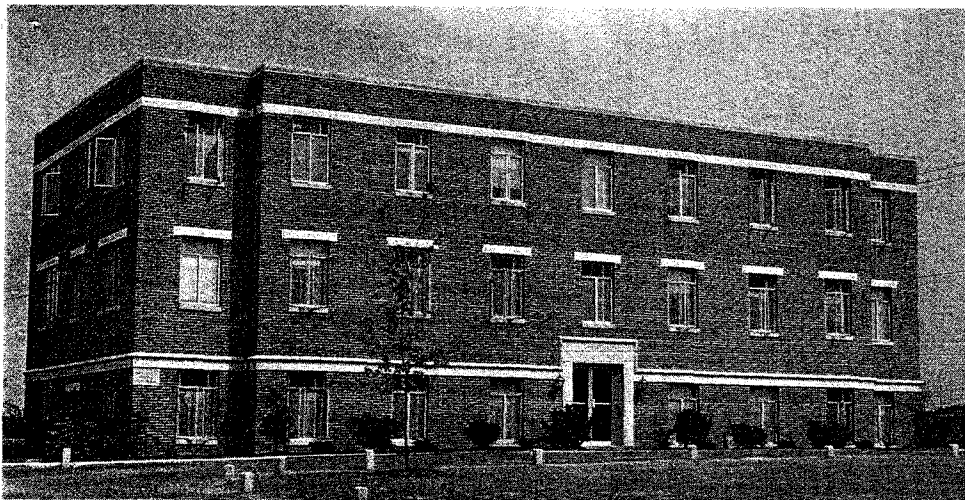
But 1958 was not the first time the local area had been the center for research into health problems.

In 1922 the Rockefeller Foundation, United States Public Health Service, Johns Hopkins School of Hy-

giene, State Department of Health, and the local Health Department joined forces to begin what came to be called the "Hagerstown Health Studies". At that time the community itself became a research laboratory for the investigation of public health problems. Before the Hagerstown studies began, public health statisticians and administrators had little or no factual information on the frequency of illness in a general and representative population.

Hagerstown was chosen as a study site because of its relatively stable population, extensive birth and death records, and demographic characteristics. These beginning statistics expanded into a consecutive series of investigative studies. Comprehensive individual and family records, maintained by vital statistics over the years, were also utilized in studies of medical and health services received by the population, and of the relationship of genetic, familial, environmental and socioeconomic factors of illness.

The Hagerstown studies not only established a pattern for nearly all subsequent surveys of the incidence and prevalence of illness, but pioneered in providing long-term data on progressive effects of illness essential for the analysis of chronic diseases. Many of the methods and procedures in public health investigation that are now in standard use in the United States and



First Coffman-built structure was public health center for Washington County. It was completed in 1955.



Coffman Research Center was built in 1958.

foreign countries were developed through the series of Hagerstown studies.

The county population was always willing to cooperate in research projects, with 7,800 persons in 2,000 families taking part in the 1921-1924 surveys. Over 300 medical surveys took place between 1921 and 1954, and through them the local Health Department achieved international recognition.

All present operations and activities of the Health Department are under the direction of Dr. Paul V. Joliet, who serves as both Deputy State and Washington County Health Officer. The 115 employees, who administer the health services, are hired under the State Civil Service System. Serving Hagerstown and Washington County, the department is a branch of the Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The Board of County Commissioners is the official Board of Health in the county. An Advisory Board of approximately twenty-five agency representatives and community members advise the Commissioners and Health Officer on public health matters. Two branch offices are maintained at Hancock and Smithsburg.

As new programs were added over the years, it became evident that additional space was required. A grant to

renovate the two brick buildings was approved in June, 1973, and by June, 1977 - four years later - the present expanded and remodeled health facilities were dedicated.

Built at a cost of over \$1.5 million dollars, the project consisted of two major components, and more than doubled the existing space. The two old buildings, thought to be so adequate just twenty years before, were joined and renovated to provide offices and administrative quarters for all health department personnel, while a new wing was built for badly needed clinical facilities. A description of the present buildings gives some insight into the varied and busy life of the department.

The new wing is a two story structure with information and reception areas, waiting room and play area for children on the first floor. Three clinical suites, x-ray, audiometric booth, dental operatories, physical therapy, nursing work stations and multi-purpose rooms are also on the first level.

Mental health clinics, a one hundred seat auditorium and central file room comprise the second floor.

In the "old" wing, the Environmental Health Division occupies nearly all of the first floor, with a central supply room, printing room and several mechanical rooms also located there. The second floor of this wing is occupied by Public Health Nursing

and Child Health personnel, and a data processing team from the United States Public Health Service.

Administrative and support personnel, and the Training Center for Public Health Research of the Johns Hopkins University occupy much of the third floor. Here also, is a new library, offices of Health and Executive Officers, nutrition, health education, and medical social work personnel.

Being developed at the basement level is an emergency operations center.

It is the services however, that have created the reputation enjoyed by the Health Department, for they are varied and valuable.

Public Health Nursing, which in 1919 was considered to be "not quite lady-like", now provides a staff of health nurses and aides who provide generalized family-centered health nursing services to the community. Working in homes, schools and clinics, each staff is assigned a geographic district, assessing the health care needs of the community. Under this division of the department there is a Home Health Care Program which provides skilled nursing care to patients on the orders of their private physicians. Communicable disease control provide outpatient treatment for tuberculosis patients. A Chest Clinic, staffed by a local physician provides medications to combat the disease, while tubercu-



Today the two Coffman-built public health department buildings have been joined together by a government building program that also added a modern new offices/laboratories wing (see photo on front cover). A lasting monument to the philanthropy of Gladys and Andy Coffman.

losis screening is conducted in schools and industries in cooperation with the Health Department, begun in 1912, is still being adhered to.

Veneral disease clinics are also part of the nursing divisions assignment.

Over the years other important services have been added to the Health Department. Important to school age children of the county is the Dental Health Service. This division is staffed by a full time dentist who annually checks the teeth of all kindergarten through third grade students. Dental treatment is administered either by the Health Department or private dental care. Working toward the fluoridation of all public water supplies in the county, since the time when the benefits of fluoride became widely known, resulted in fluoridation of Hagerstown's water supply in 1952. . .the first in Maryland.

The Mental Health Division is a continually growing service. Staffed by a team of skilled specialists, both children and adults are eligible to receive assistance which include patient services, full hospitalization, preadmission screening, after care, emergency care, alcoholism and drug abuse services, children's education and consultation services.

Supportive services are available to all the department programs. These include social work, nutrition, physical and occupational therapy, and com-

munity health educations departments.

For decades the Environmental Health Division has been working to protect the local environment. It has broad responsibilities and carries out many specific programs aimed at achieving a healthful local environment. Four major programs aimed at controlling environmental hazards are: food control, institutional inspections, rabies control and emergency services and safety.

Child Health Services carries out a wide program of preventive, diagnostic, corrective and rehabilitative services for children from infancy to twenty-one years of age. Under the direction of a full time pediatrician, it provides services in three categories: (1) Infant, pre-school immunizations services, (2) School Health services, which began in 1947, and (3) Specialized and Crippled Childrens Service.

The school health program was illustrated in a very graphic way when a film was made here for the United States Department of State by Caravel Films. The Maryland Theatre, now being restored, was the locale for the first public showing of the movie "A Fair Chance" on October 16, 1954. The school health program was then under the direction of Dr. Perry F. Prather and was considered to be one of the most effective in the nation.

Research plays an important part in the Health Department program. The Research Center, opened in 1963, maintains headquarters in the former cancer research building. Numerous studies have been conducted on eye disease, oral contraceptives, stroke, lung disease, heart disease and mental health. Because of a special arrangement that it has with the Training Center for Public Health Research of the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, the local Health Department is indeed unique.

Dedicated men and women, professional and volunteer, have worked long and tirelessly to uphold that principle adopted so long ago. "To promote better health conditions in Washington County" is more than a motto. It is a fact brought about by the support of the community at large. Area residents can indeed be proud of the work of the Washington County Health Department. . .both past and present.

COFFMAN RESEARCH LABORATORY

