

## A History of Social Welfare in Indiana

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The social security and public welfare programs did not spring into full bloom in 1935 and 1936. They grew slowly, out of changing conditions, to meet the needs of the citizens of the community. Almost the entire development of the present welfare system has taken place within the memories of persons now living.

Developments in Henry County are indicative of what has been woven into the present public welfare program. Therefore, something of the history of Indiana welfare will be presented using Henry County as an illustration. Personal experiences and knowledge, conversations with older men and women, to a large extent recorded history, official correspondence and reports, and old newspaper accounts will serve as the sources.

Public provisions for dependency were few in pioneer days, but compared with the developments of the times they were adequate. The early settlers were rugged people, who felt that all persons should be self-sufficient, and families were responsible for the care of dependent relatives. If public relief was harsh and stringent, so also was ordinary daily living. Money was scarce, and commodities were frequently used as a medium of exchange. Any expenditure of public funds was a highly personal matter with all the taxpayers. Standards of living were comparatively low in their own households, and it would have been inconsistent to provide more for persons considered shiftless and lazy. The professional approach with which most of today's problems are met was then unknown.

Yet there was public need then, just as there has always been, and it was met. From the very beginning of this nation the community, either through its churches, neighborhoods, or organized government, has assumed responsibility for unfortunate citizens. This philosophy of aid had prece-

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dent in early biblical history. There have always been groups composed of the aged, the blind, the sick, and the crippled to whom society felt it owed aid and protection.

As in most sections of the United States, the Northwest Territory's and Indiana's early poor laws were based on the old Elizabethan poor laws. The territorial laws of 1790 made provision for the poor through the appointment of township overseers of the poor.<sup>1</sup> Indiana's constitution of 1816 (effective until the constitution of 1851) and the laws written under it provided in general for five types of public assistance: Indoor relief in which persons were placed in poor asylums or poor farms under the care of county officials; the contract system in which the people as a group were placed with a private individual who was paid by the county; the farming out system in which the people, individually, were placed in the care of private citizens who were paid by the county; the apprentice system of binding out minor children; and outdoor relief, in which the individuals and families were given relief in their own homes.

Though Hoosiers everywhere have a great deal in common, there are many variations in the patterns of early community settlements, among which are origins of nationalities, religions, purposes for migrating to Indiana, and economic status. Although Henry County was not settled until 1819, its early settlers were in general thrifty, courageous, and poor.<sup>2</sup> They came mainly for the purpose of establishing homes in the new state. There were several neighborhoods of Quakers in early Henry County who were well known for their hospitality and neighborliness. A fraternal and helpful spirit prevailed among the people. There was work for everyone, and everyone worked hard. Church activities, however, were of first importance among them. Among popular community activities were quilting bees, corn husking, apple parings, log rollings, house raisings, sugar boilings, and weddings.

Despite this apparently ideal state of affairs, there was both dependency and crime in early Henry County. In 1823 bids were taken on the first county jail, and in 1830

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore C. Pease (ed.), *The Laws of the Northwest Territory, 1788-1800 in the Illinois State Historical Library Collections* (Springfield, Illinois, 1903- ), XVII (1925), 39. See also pages 216 to 232.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Henry County, Indiana* (Interstate Publishing Co., Chicago, 1884), 249-250.

it was found necessary to enlarge it. The present jail was erected in 1866 and was probably the sixth to be built, each structure larger and more secure than those preceding it.<sup>3</sup> It might be of interest to discuss the development of jails and the place served by the modern jail, as the inspection of jails is one of the functions of the present State Department of Public Welfare, but emphasis here will be placed on the subject of dependency.

When the Henry County Board of Commissioners was formed in 1822, at their November meeting of that year, they appointed two overseers of the poor and an agent to settle with the overseers in the townships of Wayne, Dudley, Henry, and Prairie. Overseers were appointed for Liberty Township in May, 1823. In Wayne Township the first overseers of the poor were Ebenezer Goble and Samuel Furgason, with Joseph Watts as agent.<sup>4</sup> From the appointment of the first overseers until 1839, the records show that the contract system was used for the care of the poor, and many payments were made for such services. "May 1830 It is ordered that Ora Schofield be allowed the sum of \$22.50 for keeping Scruss Chamness, a pauper, from the 1st day of January till the 1st Monday in May AD 1830." Five years later "September Term 1835, No. 445 Ordered by the Board that John Whitaker be allowed \$20.00 for keeping Benton Bonen from the 19th of February 1835 and Mary Bonen from the 14th day of June 1835, paupers both up to this date." And a third case for "January 1839 no. 1074 To Migrail Church \$28. for keeping Chockley Allen, a pauper, and for digging a grave and for burial clothes To Harrison Allen \$7.00 for making Coffin for Chockley Allen To Joseph M. Whitsell \$13.00 for medical services for Chockley Allen."

The first poor asylum in the state was built in Knox County in 1821. After a new law was passed in 1831, nearly all the counties built asylums.<sup>5</sup> In 1839, the Henry County Commissioners purchased from William Silver for two thousand dollars a hundred-sixty-acre site one mile north-

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 305-307; *Hazzard's History of Henry County, Indiana, 1822-1906* (2 vols., New Castle, Indiana, 1906), II, 899-902.

<sup>4</sup> *History of Henry County, Indiana*, 859; *Hazzard's History of Henry County, Indiana*, II, 877.

<sup>5</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana, 1820* (1821), 102-110; *ibid.*, *Special, 1830* (1831), 6-7.

west of New Castle. This was rented in May of the same year to John D. Fooshee for one hundred fifty dollars, and it was directed "that all persons that are or may hereafter become a county charge be removed as the law directs," and delivered to him, to be cared for at \$1.25 each per week. Bids were taken for the next several years on the contract for the county home. Other persons besides Fooshee to obtain the contract were Samuel Hoover and Mark Modlin, with the latter retaining it for the longest period of time.<sup>6</sup>

An additional tract of land was added to the farm in 1844 and a new building erected. Thirteen years later the building burned, and it was replaced by a large new structure which composes a part of the present plant.<sup>7</sup>

It is interesting to note that the county commissioners wanted the county home inmates to have good care. Each contract stated that the person contracting shall board and clothe the paupers suitably, make them comfortable, and treat them in a humane manner. Most contracts included responsibility for attending "to the moral instruction of said paupers."<sup>8</sup>

Nineteenth century community responsibility for dependency was dispatched principally through the county asylums. The early ones housed the poor, the old, the sick, the epileptic, the insane, the feeble-minded, the deaf mutes, the blind, the crippled, and dependent children. No attempt was made to separate the shiftless and the vicious from the respectable homeless poor and orphans or the able-bodied from the sick. This was the general situation in county asylums and also existed in Henry County. A report in 1867 by Dr. Joel Reed stated that, "The inmates of the asylum consist of a number of small boys and little girls, adults that are aged and infirm or such as are rendered unable to make their own support from physical or mental disability." Other reports showed tuberculous and cancerous patients, paralytics, epileptics, feeble-minded, and insane to have been present in the Henry County home.

Gradually special facilities were obtained for various groups, so that care and treatment might be given in relation to needs. The state could give better care more eco-

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<sup>6</sup> Hazzard's *History of Henry County, Indiana*, II, 903-905.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 904-905; *History of Henry County, Indiana*, 308.

<sup>8</sup> Hazzard's *History of Henry County, Indiana*, II, 904.

nomically, it was felt, than the counties, in that only a small number of any one group would be present in a county. In 1844, the legislature provided for an "Asylum for the Education of Deaf and Dumb persons in the State of Indiana." The name was changed to "Indiana State School for the Deaf," in 1907, and the act of that date also stated that "it shall not be regarded nor classed as benevolent or charitable institutions, but as educational institutions of the state conducted wholly as such." The State School for the Blind was opened in 1847, and sixty years later it too was designated as an educational institution.<sup>9</sup>

The first institution for the insane, originally called the State Lunatic Asylum later changed the name to the Indiana State Hospital for the Insane, was opened in 1846 and operated as a custodial institution. The 1865 laws developed the idea that both the curable and the incurable insane were wards of the state and should have the best possible treatment. Three new hospitals for the insane were established in 1883. A sixth hospital and a diagnostic center were provided for by the legislature in 1945.<sup>10</sup>

In the early years all mental defectives were regarded as idiots. This group was provided for in 1879 by the establishment of the "Asylum for Feeble Minded Children" to be located at the "Soldiers' Orphan Home" near Knightstown in Rush County. Ten years later the Fort Wayne State School was founded. The legislature of 1919 established the Muscatatuck Colony which was a part of the Fort Wayne State School until 1937 when it became a separate institution.<sup>11</sup>

The third group of mentally handicapped to receive special facilities needs little explanation to Henry County residents, for the progress of the Epileptic Village established outside of New Castle in 1905 has been followed with a personal interest by many.<sup>12</sup>

So it was that various groups having specialized needs and requiring specialized facilities of care and treatment

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<sup>9</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana, General, 1843* (1844), 36-37; *ibid., General, 1846* (1847), 41-43; *ibid., 1907*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid., General, 1845* (1846), 116-118; *ibid., Special, 1865*, pp. 199-200; *ibid., 1883*, pp. 164-168; *ibid., 1945*, pp. 1570-1571, 1759.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid., 1919*, p. 480; *ibid., 1937*, p. 1117; *ibid., 1889*, p. 129; *ibid., 1879*, p. 76.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid., 1905*, pp. 483-489.

were taken out of the county homes. It took some time, however, to provide for children. Children were permitted to remain in county homes until toward the end of the nineteenth century with many of them bound out under the apprentice system. A few Catholic and other church institutions had been privately established, and in 1851 the Widows and Orphans Asylum was opened in Indianapolis. By a law of 1875, the county commissioners were permitted to subsidize private orphanages at twenty-five cents a day per child. An investigation in 1880 indicated that seven hundred children under the age of sixteen were still to be housed in county homes, though there is some doubt as to this figure's completeness. Legislation in 1881 authorized the establishment of county orphanages for the care of children under the age of thirteen years.<sup>13</sup>

In 1877 the beginnings of a subsidized boarding home in Spiceland took form. Miss Susan Fussell of Chester County, Pennsylvania, had visited in Hendricks County and seen such care there. She offered to care for Henry County Asylum children for twenty-five cents a day per child, but the county commissioners reduced this rate to twenty-three cents per day. In 1880 Miss Fussell, with the help of a younger sister, Ada, took nine children. Five years later the rate was increased to thirty cents per day for each child. But in 1893 the county commissioners for economic reasons made a contract with Julia E. Work, superintendent of the Northern Indiana Orphans Home at La Porte (subsequently removed to Plymouth) to deliver to her from the Spiceland home twenty-two children who were to be cared for by her and placed in private homes. Mrs. Work was to receive thirty-five dollars for each child when placed. The practice of transferring children to the Julia Work home was continued, and the Fussell Home in Spiceland closed. On December 5, 1893, the commissioners contracted with the Aged Persons Home and Orphan Asylum at Honey Creek to care for the dependent children of the county not yet transferred. This home opened in 1886 and was conducted by the German Baptist Church (Dunkard) of Southern Indiana and continued until a few years ago.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, *Local*, 1850 (1851), 375-376; *ibid.*, 1875, p. 169; *ibid.*, 1881, pp. 10-11.

<sup>14</sup> *Hazzard's History of Henry County, Indiana*, II, 906-909.

It is perhaps ironic, in the light of earlier events which will be related presently, to mention the disposition which Mrs. Work made of those children entrusted to her as revealed in a La Porte newspaper. "Another County heard from. Henry County . . . home at Spiceland has been abandoned, and Mrs. Work arrived home (in LaPorte) with 22 children on Wednesday evening. Several of the new arrivals will be placed in LaPorte County and the rest will go to Iowa in about two weeks. . . ."<sup>15</sup>

There are two other nineteenth century developments in the care of Indiana children on which one should dwell briefly, as both were significant in Henry County. The one is with respect to the needs of war veterans' dependents which is familiar to many. The State Soldiers Home was established in Rush County, just over the Henry County line, in 1865. Some of the soldiers brought their children to live with them at the institution, and a few orphans of soldiers were admitted to a small building on the grounds. Six years later, the larger building burned and the soldiers occupying it were transferred to the National Military Home at Dayton, Ohio. In 1887 a law was passed establishing the Knightstown institution as a home for soldiers' orphans.<sup>16</sup> It is outstanding today for its kind in the United States.

The second phenomena concerned dependent children of New York City who were crowded into stock cars and shipped west by the New York Charities Aid Association. Advance contact was usually made with responsible citizens at stations along the railroad line. The children would be herded like cattle on an auction block while citizens gathered to select those they were willing to take into their homes.

Children for whom homes could not be found in urban New York were quickly taken by middle western farmers, which shows how valuable children were to the frontier rural economy. Between 1853 and 1864, the largest number of children placed in a single state was 1,326. Indiana became the future home for this number. During the next ten years, 1865-1874, the second highest number of children, 1,484, were placed in Indiana. Later, children were sent

<sup>15</sup> La Porte, Indiana, *Daily Herald*, November 2, 1893.

<sup>16</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana, 1867*, pp. 190-193; *ibid.*, 1887, p. 16; *Hazzard's History of Henry County, Indiana*, I, 60-63; A. L. Gary and E. B. Thomas (eds.), *Centennial History of Rush County, Indiana* (2 vols., Indianapolis, Indiana, 1921), I, 159-162.

mainly to western and southern states, with a gradual decrease in the number located in Indiana.

At least one group of New York children was received in New Castle. The following announcement appeared in a local newspaper: "The Children's Aid Society of New York will send a company of children to New Castle, Indiana, within a few weeks. Those who desire to take one or more of them will please apply to the following committee: Benjamin Shirk, James S. Ferris, Miles Murphy, Emsley Julian, John W. Vanse, Butler Hubbard." In the editorial column of the same paper under the caption "Children's Aid Society" appeared the following explanation: "We published this week a notice that this society will bring to New Castle, within a few weeks, a company of children, with the intention of providing them with homes. For the information of those who may not fully understand this enterprise, we extract the following from the Society's Circular: 'There are in the City of New York thousands of poor idle children, a large portion of them orphan or half orphans, and nearly all of them neglected and abandoned by parents and friends. In the absence of all restraint or education, this multitude of poor unhappy, deserted, and degraded boys and girls are beginning lives of vice and crime. We, as Christians, cannot look upon such a state of things without feeling our responsibility to God for, at least, giving them the opportunity for improvement, and every person throughout the country partakes in a greater or less degree, in this responsibility. To meet these evils, the Charities Aid Society was organized. Its object is to provide work, food, and homes for these needy children. So far as our means permit, we gather from the highways and the by-ways the most friendless of these outcasts, furnish them with food and necessary clothing, and cause them to be taken to all parts of the country, wherever we can find those who will receive them in accordance with the Savior's demand.'"<sup>17</sup>

These children arrived at ten o'clock on June 26. "Mr. Friedgen, agent of the New York Charities Aid Society reached New Castle last Thursday, bringing with him a cargo of 46 homeless wanderers, whose destitute conditions appealed strongly for a place in the homes and hearts of our favored community. Nearly divided as to sex, in age wide

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<sup>17</sup> New Castle, Indiana, *Courier*, May 22, 1862.



range with the youngest being four years while quite a number especially females were fully grown. With the advent of the children, a large number of people thronged the Court House. In the course of the afternoon all but one half dozen were disposed of. Next day two little boys were still left on the agent's hands. These he took with him."<sup>18</sup>

It is not known who in Henry County took those forty-four New York children, but, no doubt, they were taken into families and offered such advantages as the times afforded. And probably they in their turn became substantial citizens of the community, and their children and grandchildren are no different in aspect or accomplishment from others whose ancestors came here in covered wagons or on horseback.

It is fortunate that today dependent children are treated in a gentler fashion. Much progress has been made since 1862 in the care of children as well as in the care of other dependent and handicapped groups.

The epochal event in the development of state and local care was the establishment in 1889 of the Indiana Board of State Charities and Corrections. A serious defect in both the local and state charitable and correctional system had been the absence of any comprehensive scheme of inspection and supervision which would secure unbiased information as to the efficiency of the institutions and the economy of their administration for the use of state officials and the public generally. Even in local administration there was little central organization and less effective control. Such inspections and investigations as were conducted by state and local institutions were hasty and perfunctory.

The importance of better control over all penal and benevolent agencies and the need for more accurate statistical information were noted by governors of the state long before reforms were instituted. The political patronage scandals of 1887 and 1889 focused popular attention upon the question of management and discipline of the penal and benevolent institutions. The result was the passage in 1889 of the act establishing the Board of State Charities.<sup>19</sup> This act was passed, in the words of the Attorney-General, Louis T. Michener, "to correct the abuses which had existed in some of our State and local institutions, and also to lift the manage-

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, July 3, 1862.

<sup>19</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana, 1889*, pp. 51-52.

ment of such institutions to a higher plane, by the dissemination of a knowledge to the officers governing them of modern and effective methods in the care and treatment of unfortunate and delinquent classes committed to their keeping."<sup>20</sup>

The Board was composed of the governor and six appointed members, three from each political party, with the governor as president. It was to meet quarterly or oftener if necessary and to appoint a salaried secretary. According to the act the Board was given the authority to investigate the whole system of charitable and correctional institutions of the state and to examine their conditions. In case of necessity the personnel in charge of the various institutions could be required to appear before the Board, to produce papers, and to submit such information as seemed pertinent. Furthermore, the Board could prescribe forms for reports and registration, and could also criticize and suggest changes in the plans for the operation of jails and infirmaries. Each county was required to present such plans to the Board before they could be adopted.

The Board, however, did not have the power to correct abuses. Changes were made largely by calling to the attention of state officials as well as the public undesirable conditions. The people had confidence in the Board's recommendation. Among the results of the Board were non-partisan administration of state institutions, regular supervision and inspection, uniform and high standards of administration, business methods, and higher standards and more humane treatment of inmates. As regards local administration, its work brought about a reduction in outdoor relief; improvements in poor asylums, jails, and orphans' homes; reduction in the proportionate number of dependents; homes found for dependent children; the regulation of child caring institutions, associations, and maternity hospitals; and compulsory school attendance.

Outstanding citizens were appointed to the Board. Of notable memory is Timothy Nicholson, a Quaker, who was a citizen of Richmond and was well known to many residents of Henry County. Alexander Johnson, affectionately remembered by old-timers as "Uncle Alex," was the first secre-

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<sup>20</sup> *Biennial Report of the Attorney-General of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1890), 161.

tary of the Board. He was followed by Ernst P. Bicknell and Amos W. Butler. John A. Brown, now director of the Allen County Department of Public Welfare, succeeded them.

To bring about unity and understanding within the state among persons directly concerned with charities and corrections, the Board inaugurated meetings of township trustees and county commissioners. Out of these meetings grew the Indiana Conference of State Charities, which was organized on an independent basis in 1893, and later changed its title to the Indiana State Conference on Social Work. A combination of public interest and Board sponsorship brought into existence the Indiana Mental Hygiene Society. These two organizations drew together representative members from public and private agencies as well as lay members from the state who were interested in charities, corrections, and mental hygiene. Both lay and professional members took an active part and co-operated to promote their common interest. These organizations laid a good foundation for Indiana.

Upon the recommendation of the Board of State Charities, progressive legislation was passed. A study was made of the methods and procedures in other states, particularly in institutions, and changes and recommendations were made in Indiana on the basis of findings. Indiana became an example among the states and a national leader in the fields of charities and corrections.

Among the many improvements which took form under the Board of State Charities was the administration of local poor relief. Prior to 1895 township trustees gave aid as they saw fit, with no supervision of any kind. There were flagrant abuses with excessive expenditures in some places and actual neglect of need in others. The law of 1897 required uniform practices of the township trustees in the granting of relief. At this time township trustee aid was defined as temporary aid, and it was stated that permanent charges should be removed to the county asylum. Policies were followed to discourage dependency. Not until 1899 were modern methods of managing poor asylums prescribed. In the county, as in state institutions, it was learned that supervision aided materially in the efficient, humane, and economical administration of institutions. Under the reporting

system developed by the Board of State Charities both for township relief and for county asylums care greatly improved.<sup>21</sup>

By the 1897 law, the State assumed direct supervision over work for children and prohibited the retention of children between the ages of three and seventeen in almshouses for more than ten days. The county commissioners were required to establish and maintain asylums for orphans, dependent, neglected, or abandoned children; to enter into contracts with associations for the purpose to establish and maintain asylums; and to place children in charge of a state agent for placement. After the passage of this law, and as a result of a joint conference between the commissioners of Henry and Rush counties, Mrs. Ella Bundy opened The Children's Home in Spiceland on May 1, 1905, and children were cared for in it under contract at three dollars per week.<sup>22</sup> The home continued in good standing for several years, with an average population fluctuating between twenty and thirty. After Mrs. Bundy's death, however, the quality of the home's services deteriorated, and it was closed in 1914. The children in it at the time were transferred to orphanages in Marion and other counties. Since then, homeless Henry County children have been placed in the care of families, in private institutions, or in children's homes of other counties.

In 1899, the county boards of charities and corrections were established, and two years later the county boards of children's guardians were provided for by legislative enactment.<sup>23</sup> Although they were voluntary boards and had certain duties of inspection and investigation including reports to the Board of State Charities, they had no actual administrative authority. The first board of charities and corrections in Henry County was appointed by Judge William O. Barnard, and included John H. Hewitt, chairman, of near New Castle; Mrs. Anna D. Welsh, secretary, of Middletown; Benjamin S. Parker and Mrs. Julia A. Loer both of New Castle; William S. Moffat of Kennard; and Mrs. Richard Wagoner of Knightstown.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana, 1897*, pp. 44-48.

<sup>22</sup> *Hazzard's History of Henry County, Indiana*, II, 910-911.

<sup>23</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana, 1899*, pp. 50-52; *ibid.*, 1901, pp. 369-373.

<sup>24</sup> *Hazzard's History of Henry County, Indiana*, II, 911-912.

This board, in the words of a contemporary, was to be the eyes and ears of the county and to make inspections once each quarter. Both the county boards of charities and corrections and the county boards of children's guardians served a real purpose.

The twentieth century became more and more an industrialized society, with a great deal happening in the general thinking of the public about social and economic problems. Poverty and dependency were considered in terms of cause and prevention. Some related work was instituted in the field of education and in the maintenance of public employment offices and public recreational facilities. Whatever else might have developed in the normal course of events was cut across by the widespread unemployment of the early 1930's. This happened so quickly that long-term programs were discarded in order to meet immediate needs.

About this time serious consideration was given to the premise that in this industrialized society the cause of need may be far from local in origin. This trend in thinking, coupled with actual inability of local taxing units to cope with the situation, brought about government intervention. The first of a series of federal aids for local relief was effected through the Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932, which made money available through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.<sup>25</sup> This was followed by a great many types of federal help given through W.P.A., C.W.A., F.E.R.A., and other alphabet agency programs which gave relief in various forms, mainly through work. In 1933, Indiana established the Governor's Commission on Unemployment Relief to co-ordinate and assist the several agencies of the state engaged in relief of the unemployed.<sup>26</sup> Later, as the federal emergency agencies became more active in the relief field, the GCUR co-ordinated and cleared the use of federal funds in the state.

Under an executive order of 1933 reorganizing the administrative form of the state government, the title of the Board of State Charities was changed to the State Department of Public Welfare.<sup>27</sup> In order that the work of this agency and the Governor's Commission on Unemployment

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<sup>25</sup> *United States Statutes at Large*, XLVII, part 1, p. 709.

<sup>26</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana, 1933*, pp. 759-761.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

Relief could be co-ordinated, the Governor named a joint director and board, which continued until 1936 when the Public Welfare Act of Indiana was passed.

While the emergency agencies were functioning, a feeling began to grow that the burden of caring for dependents should be spread permanently to a partial federal base. The Social Security Act of 1935, therefore, was passed to provide certain basic securities for the individual. Among its provisions were grants to the states for public assistance and child welfare. The states, in order to be eligible for securing such federal funds, had to pass legislation and set up machinery for operation. Grants-in-aid for public welfare, just as for any other federally shared function, allowed the federal government to impose standards upon state and local governments.<sup>28</sup>

The Indiana Public Welfare Act of 1936 was passed to make Indiana eligible to receive grants-in-aid from the federal government for aid to the aged, the blind, and dependent children; for child welfare services; and for services to crippled children.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the federally shared functions, Indiana public welfare was given responsibility for an eye-treatment program for the blind and incipient blind and later a medical-aid program for recipients of public assistance. To carry out the provisions of the Public Welfare Act, the General Assembly established the State Department of Public Welfare to supervise, and a county department of public welfare in each of the ninety-two counties to administer the program, thus retaining a certain amount of local responsibility. Parole supervision, however, is under the jurisdiction of the State Department. In addition, the duties and responsibilities formerly delegated to the Board of State Charities were transferred to the State Department. These include inspections and investigations of state and county institutions, the licensing of all children's institutions, child-placing agencies, and boarding homes. A recent law has also authorized the State Department to license nursing homes.

The first Henry County Board of Public Welfare, appointed by Judge J. H. Morris in 1936, was composed of Will A. Smith, Ulysses T. Moore, Dr. Walter U. Kennedy,

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<sup>28</sup> *United States Statutes at Large*, XLIX, part 1, pp. 620-648.

<sup>29</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana, 1936*, pp. 12-80.

and Mrs. Mame Hunter. The original board is still intact, with the exception of Moore who died in 1944. It was largely through his initiative that many old records useful in verifying eligibility data became available to the county department, and his efforts did much toward establishing the present welfare program as a part of the county's public services.

Carl Strother became the first director of the Henry County Welfare department and organized the department's services. It was a pleasure in 1946 to present him with an award certificate attesting to his ten years of faithful performance of service.

In looking over the history of Henry County and the development of public welfare, one finds allusions to many problems recurring even to the present. An interesting article appeared in the *New Castle Courier* in 1870. "The county is swarming with a class of vagabonds known as 'tramps' who, during the summer season, strike out through the country, and manage to steal and beg enough for subsistence. They generally make it a point to reach a farm house just about dark, that hour being better suited to work on the sympathies of the inmates. When they secure a night's lodgings they affect gratefulness and all that sort of thing, but unless they are closely watched they leave early in the morning and carry away such articles as they can turn into capital. True charity is commendable but help extended to roving characters like the above is merely encouraging vagrancy, and making dead-beats of men who would otherwise strive to make an honest living."<sup>30</sup>

Besides showing at least partly the reason for the development of organized charities, this account highlights a general problem. John Steinbeck's 1939 bestseller book, *The Grapes of Wrath*, brought the migrant laborer to the attention of the public. With today's fuller employment there is little of that type of problem, but there are still many cases of dependency among nonsettled persons, and it is necessary to transfer dependents without legal settlement back to their state of residency. This sometimes becomes a difficult task, with the great variation in state laws on residence. Other functions in which residency effects pro-

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<sup>30</sup> New Castle, Indiana, *Courier*, June 10, 1870.

cedure is in parole supervision and the institutional care of the mentally handicapped.

Someone has made the statement that, "The twentieth century has seen many changes in social customs. More and more clubs and societies have been founded and combine charitable work with social activities." This is true, but the older social groups also maintained charitable activities. Such activities become more apparent as one notes the structure and activities of present social groups. And in passing, special mention should be made of the Rotarians, Kiwanis, Lions, Xi Iota Psi, Tri Kappa, Legion posts, and all the other organizations whose work has filled needs which lay outside the scope of the public agency and supplemented the services of public agencies. These organizations have taken over to a large degree functions earlier conducted through "good neighbor" services and compare with the "aid societies" which gave help during the Civil War to needy soldiers' families.

In considering human needs, attention has been given to those currently experienced and in proportion to the feeling about them and the knowledge of ways of meeting them. The span of life was comparatively short a century ago, and medicine was in its infancy. Infant mortality rates were high and little was done to guard child life. In the war for health, the chief concern was with diseases prevalent at the time like cholera and smallpox epidemics, malaria, and typhoid riding under the guise of ague or chills and fever or "the shakes." But as the wilderness was beaten back life became more comfortable, modern science developed, and human life became something to protect. Efforts have been focused on previously considered chronic or terminal diseases, the refinements of public health, and preventive medicine. Indiana has increasingly turned attention during recent decades to sick and crippled children, of which Riley Hospital in Indianapolis stands as a living testimonial. The public welfare law makes services available to all children who are crippled within the definition of the law and who may hope to benefit by treatment.

A criticism of the Henry County home made around 1880 received the following reply from the county commissioners: "It would never do to make the fare, the comforts, and the general attractiveness of the asylum such that able-



bodied, but lazy, shiftless persons of whom there are a few in every community, would seek for a residence in the county home." Something of this same problem and the method of handling it exists in the modern public welfare programs. There has always been a desire to give adequate and generous help to people who needed it. But it was never the wish, either in early times or now to support at public expense the person able to maintain himself or who has relatives capable of his support. Nor is it fair to the taxpayers to provide aid to the dependent members of a community to such an extent as to enable them to maintain a higher standard of living than their self-supporting neighbors. These are problems which are inherent in any form of welfare work. The integrity of self-support must be maintained in a democracy. At present the problem is met through the use of county standards of requirements by which each county sets up its own standards based on community conditions and establishes the necessary costs of each recipient's unmet needs against these standards. The total amount of aid must be within statutory limitations. With the present costs of living, however, there is a small possibility that in any county grants of forty-five dollars a month will exceed low level living costs.

Today there are more public services than ever before in history. The state and county departments of public welfare are responsible for only one segment of the entire public services conducted for the relief of dependents and handicapped persons. Public welfare is given the responsibility for the needs of long-term dependents. Short-term or emergency needs are met through the township trustees. The county home, no longer the dumping ground of earlier years, is still used for the homeless dependent of the county. There are fewer able-bodied inmates in county homes today, and it is no longer possible to maintain large farm plants with the aid of inmate help. The increased number of chronically ill and infirm members of the community who need the care provided by the county home brought about the new 1947 law which permits the aged who need assistance to receive emergency or permanent care there, but self-supporting persons are required to purchase their own care.<sup>31</sup> Those county homes which meet

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<sup>31</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana, 1947*, pp. 1217-1222.

standards set by the State Department of Public Welfare, the State Board of Health, and the State Fire Marshall, may receive such persons. Nineteen of the eighty-five county homes in the state, including Henry County, have met these requirements. Veterans and other agencies give services to particular groups. Hospitals and public health agencies are concerned with various phases of dependency problems.

Progress has been made in the general handling of dependents and handicapped individuals since 1816. In the earlier days vindictive treatment was meted out to criminals, changing later to punitive, to reformatory, to rehabilitative, and to preventive treatment. The earliest state prison in Indiana was managed by the contract system which permitted exploitation of prison labor. Today the state takes full responsibility for its prisoners as well as parole and other types of release procedures to supplement penal treatment. The earlier custodial care of mental patients has given way to curative treatment, and today preventive treatment is sponsored through mental hygiene clinics. The dependent person of a century ago was the object of community comment. Now he is considered to have "rights to relief," and his records are handled as a confidential matter. Aid is given wherever and in whatever form needed, but basic to all relief is rehabilitation toward self-support. Hand in hand with rehabilitation by using psychology, medicine, and all the other skills of the modern age, the trend is toward prevention of handicap and dependency. Public health, education, and welfare are particular fields in which people work together toward these ends. But even more basic to the prevention of dependency and delinquency are community and family strains which are inherited and pass on from one generation to another.