A Brief History of the VA Medical Center
Chillicothe, Ohio

The price of freedom is visible here.
With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the night, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan...

Abraham Lincoln
Second Inaugural Address
March 4, 1865
The Scioto Valley from behind present V. A. Hospital in 1890.
From about 200 BC to AD 500, the Ohio River Valley was a focal point of prehistoric Hopewell culture, a broad network of beliefs and practices among different Native American groups over a large portion of eastern North America.

The culture is characterized by the construction of enclosures made of earthen walls, often built in geometric patterns, and mounds of various shapes. Visible remnants of Hopewell culture are concentrated in the Scioto River valley near present-day Chillicothe, Ohio.
In 1787, Congress established the Northwest Territory. The portion that became Ross County was part of a land grant given to Virginia Veterans who had served during the Revolutionary War (1775–1783).
In 1796, Nathaniel Massie founded Chillicothe, a name derived originally from a Shawnee Indian word meaning “principal town.”

Soon after, Chillicothe began to grow and prosper, attracting prominent men of culture and vision. Among these were Ohio’s first governor, Edward Tiffin, and Thomas Worthington, the “Father of Ohio Statehood.”

The U.S. Congress designated Chillicothe as capital of the “eastern section” of the Northwest Territory in 1800.
In 1803, when Ohio entered the Union, Chillicothe became the state’s first capital.
The construction of the Ohio and Erie Canals in 1831 made Chillicothe a major canal port.

Combined with the construction of the Marietta & Cincinnati Railroad, many new settlers traveled from Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland to Chillicothe.
World War I
1917-1918
In April, 1917, the United States Congress passed a declaration of war against Germany and her allies. Military training camps were needed and on June 8, 1917, Chillicothe, Ohio was selected as the site for training soldiers from Western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio.
PETERSBURG, VA. AND CHILlicothe, OHIO WERE APPROVED TODAY AS SITES FOR CANTONMENTS FOR THE SELECTIVE CONSCRIPTION ARMY, MAKING UP SEVEN OF THE SIXTEEN SITES TO HAVE BEEN DETERMINED UPON.

Scioto Gazette, June 8, 1917
A site north of town was selected because of its healthy climate, plentiful food and water supplies, transportation network, and extensive level terrain. The camp was named in honor of Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman who hailed from nearby Lancaster. Construction began on July 1, 1917, with the first draftees arriving September 5. It would become the third largest training center in the United States at that time.
Camp Sherman

U. S. NATIONAL ARMY—CAMP SHERMAN, CHILlicothe, Ohio

Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio
Camp Sherman
Troops on Paint St. with the Warner Hotel visible behind them, 1918
Machine gun Instructions – Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio.
1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic

Top: Barracks of Medical Corps

Left: Two American Red Cross nurses demonstrated treatment practices.
Troops in town awaiting their return to Camp Sherman after recuperating from the flu.
21,000 Camp Sherman troops forming an image of President Woodrow Wilson on parade grounds.

*Photograph by Arthur Mole*
Camp Sherman

Present site of Hopewell Culture National Historic Park

Present site of Chillicothe Correctional Institution

Intersection of High St. and Orange St.

Camp Extension - originally constructed for use as a detention camp for German POWs - now the present site of the VA Medical Center.

Present site of Union-Scioto Local School District

Present site of Ross Correctional Institution

Scioto River

St. Rt. 104 (Columbus Ave.)
Armistice
WAR IS NOW OVER

Armistice Terms Signed by German Commission at 2:15 a.m. Washington

SECOND EXTRA!

CONGRESS CALLED TO HEAR TERMS

President Tells What the Allies and U.S. Demanded

10,000,000 Lives Lost, Terrible

Armistice Terms Signed at 6 "O'Clock French Time, Time This Morning.

ALL NOVEMBER DRAFT CALLS FOR NATIONAL ARMY CANCELLED

Belgium, France, Alsace, Lorraine and Luxembourg Must be Evacuated by Germans, Allied Forces, Fortified Cities, Airports, Ports, Bridges and Defense Work of Enemy Kind to Be Occupied by Allies

THE KING OF SAXONY IS DETHRONED

All Lights Are to Burn Tonight Says Adm. Garfield in Aid of the Big Jubilee

Points for You to Remember! Make This Celebration a Big One! No Bonfires, Res Fire Furnished by the F.F.

Belgium, France, Alsace, Lorraine and Luxembourg Must Be Evacuated by Germans, Allied Forces, Fortified Cities, Airports, Ports, Bridges and Defense Work of Enemy Kind to Be Occupied by Allies
Germany On Verge Of Famine
Ross Co., Chillicothe and Camp Sherman Celebrate

Wants Peace Contab Called Quickly
And Sets Forth Need of haste To Save People From Starvation

London, 4 p.m., Nov. 12-(By Associated Press)
Germany has requested the president of the United States, according to a German wireless message from Berlin to arrange immediately for the opening of peace negotiations. There being a threatened danger of famine

The message was sent to Foreign Secretary Stolz to Secretary of State Lansing. It said:

The negotiations have been opened by the German government to present the situation of the United States to the world. The German government is, therefore, offering to the United States to arrange for the opening of negotiations. For the negotiations to be successful, the American government must take the initiative in this matter.

HINDENBURG STICKS TO ARMY AND GOES OVER TO THE REDS

Orders issued which brought an end to the hostilities

Here’s What Ross Co. Has to Raise

German Fleet in Hands of Mutineers—May Give Trouble

Reconstruction and peace brings its problems too

Montenegro Has Insurrection

Old Glory Flew Over Trenches When Bugle Sounded Cease Firing

Draft Board to Send Out No More Questionnaires

Let lights burn to help war work

Emperor Charles of Austria Has Abdicated His Throne

Fur Display and Sale

Here’s What Ross Co. Has to Raise

Draft Board to Send Out No More Questionnaires
In December the injured started arriving at the camp hospital group and casualty companies were formed. The convalescent soldiers maintained the vegetable farm, the cattle, the horses and the mules. The government quickly realized that some of the injured would require indefinite hospital care.
In 1921 Congress established the United States Veterans’ Bureau and shortly thereafter, President Warren G. Harding appointed a commission to study veterans needs.

The commission recommended $35 million be set aside for hospital construction – enough for about 50 hospitals. The Veterans Bureau quickly made plans for a permanent Veterans Hospital on the site of the Camp Sherman Extension. They also created a Training School with instructors conducting classes in agricultural activities.
Caring for the Veteran
Within four years after the establishment of Camp Sherman, the land had been assigned to the Veterans Bureau. The land transfer included 4,733 acres.
The Veterans Bureau Training School now supplied skills in many trades including automotive maintenance, agriculture, upholstering, electrical principles and wiring, woodworking, laundering, and even tailoring.
By the end of 1923, the initial phase of hospital construction was nearing completion.
1923 construction of Veterans Hospital No. 97
Of the typical elevation and floor plans used by the VA in constructing hospitals, by far the most popular architectural style used throughout the mid-west, including Chillicothe, and northeast was the Georgian Colonial Revival style. A particular style was always carried through to the staff and director’s quarters, as well as engineering and support buildings.
Sherman's Latest Claim on Nation's Interest

Hospital Dedication, July 9, 1924

[Image of Dedication ceremony and hospital building]
Left: “Administration Building” (Building 1)

Right: “Little Theater,” now the Recreation Hall (Building 9)
VA Health Care then.
There were 24 patients on dedication day, July 9, 1924. The first patients had been transferred from the old Camp Sherman Hospital (Barracks H). Later in the month, patients were also transferred from Hospital 86 at Sherman Tech. These patients were mostly surgical patients. (Sherman Tech was the vocational school established after the war by the Veterans’ Bureau).

Dr. William Dobson, First Hospital Director
Keeping the promise...
As America’s sons and daughters prepared for a second World War, the Chillicothe VA Hospital continued to grow. 1937 newspapers featured stories about the new “large circle” which included Buildings 26 and 27, with Building 30 well underway. It would bring the bed capacity to 1,106. The daily patient census was running 1,021.
New Infirmary to Add 162 Beds for Veteran Patients

Next March will see completion of a $258,000 unit
At the North End of U.S. Reservation;
Clinical Administration Building Next

By Howard G. Over

Building 24 (1929)

Building 26 (1932)

Building 30 under construction

Chillicothe, Ohio, Scioto Gazette

Friday, September 24, 1937
By 1941, Chillicothe was the fifth largest of the 29 neuro-psychiatric hospitals established by the VA since World War I.

1,522 patient beds were maintained by a clinical staff that included 13 physicians, two dentists, 54 nurses, 264 attendants, one recreational aide, one pharmacist, and one x-ray technician.
In 1954 construction began on the Ohio Blue Star Mothers Memorial Stadium, now the VA Memorial Stadium.

Top: Mrs. Erma Hoffman, National President, Blue Star Mothers of America

Top: The Ohio Blue Star Mothers Memorial Stadium was dedicated on May 1, 1955
Hospital Campus circa mid-1950’s. The Chapel, Golf Course and Gymnasium have not yet been built. Memorial Stadium is shown but the field faces southwest rather than current northeast as it does today.
Hospital Incinerator, circa 1956
Below: Administrative staff

Right: Pharmacy

Right: Patient Library
Gymnasium and pool, 1960

New Building Finished at VA

This new Therapeutic Exercise Clinic building has just been completed at the Chillicothe Veterans Administration Hospital.

Dr. Sam Bennece, manager of the hospital, says that this new addition will enable the professional staff to increase the scope of its rehabilitation efforts for mentally-ill patients and better develop and maintain the overall program of good health and physical well-being of hospitalized veterans. The building, which contains a therapeutic pool, further provides emotional outlets through physical participation and promotes mental health and well-being of the patients.

The building is finished in red brick to harmonize with the remainder of the hospital. Overall size of the building is 17,300 square feet. The gym floor measures 112 feet x 76 feet.

New Exercise Clinic Completed At Chillicothe VA Hospital

POOL, GYM IS INCLUDED
Recreation and entertainment
B&O Railroad VA Spur Line, circa 1960s
(view from VA looking East across State Route 104)
By 1965, Chillicothe was the third largest neuro-psychiatric hospital in the VA Health Care System, with 2,080 authorized beds and an average daily census of 1,930.
Annual community celebrations routinely attracted thousands of visitors.

Chillicothe Gazette, Monday, May 8, 1972
Aerial view of current VA campus.
Our Community Based Outreach Clinics (CBOCs) and Outreach Clinic (ORC)
VA Health Care now.
Left and right: Building 31 Outpatient Addition, completed 1999.

Below: Building 31 Urgent Care entrance, completed 2012.
In August 2010, construction began for the Biomass Energy Center, the first power plant of its kind in the VA system. By July 2012, the Energy Center was operational.
The Pool and Gymnasium opened in 1960, and recently underwent an extensive renovation to update the equipment and therapy pool.
In October 2013, the VA Fire Department moved into the old boiler plant, which had undergone extensive renovations to meet the firefighters needs.
The Mace House (Building 60), built circa 1826, was restored in conjunction with a Patient Therapy project and re-dedicated in 1985. It is currently used as a Heritage Center and Conference Facility.
In 2006, construction crews working to expand St. Rt. 104 discovered two 8-ton concrete gateposts that had previously marked the north entrance to Camp Sherman. Because they had laid buried and forgotten for almost 90 years, the gateposts underwent an extensive restoration to repair damage and prevent further deterioration. Once the preservation was complete, the gateposts were returned to their original location – now the north entrance to the VA Medical Center – and dedicated on Veterans Day, 2007.
Forrest E. Everhart Memorial Golf Course

The 9-hole golf course was dedicated in 1960 and is named in honor of Technical Sergeant (T/Sgt.) Forrest E. Everhart, a WWII Medal of Honor Recipient from Bainbridge, Ohio.

The **Medal of Honor** is the nation’s highest military decoration awarded by the United States government for valor in combat. It is bestowed by the President, in the name of Congress, upon members of the United States Armed Forces who distinguish themselves through "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States."
Forrest E. Everhart Memorial Golf Course is currently operated by Veterans In Transition, Inc. (VITI), a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the needs of Veterans throughout the State of Ohio.
The **Hall of Heroes**, located in the corridor connecting Buildings 30 and 31, was established in the 1990s to recognize and honor the selfless service of local Veterans who have distinguished themselves on the field of battle.

There are currently 20 Veterans who have served in every major war - from WWII through Operation Desert Storm - and have been awarded a Silver Star or higher, that have their portraits and story on permanent display at the medical center.