



Nebraska Sanitarium, 1911-1912.

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Nebraska Sanitarium

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The Nebraska Sanitarium operated between 1894 and 1920 in College View, a suburb of Lincoln, Nebraska. It was founded by John Harvey Kellogg as a branch of the Battle Creek Sanitarium, and initially housed in a large frame dwelling north of the Union College campus.¹

In the late 1890s, the college was facing a financial crisis due to a dramatic decrease in students. Since the sanitarium was growing, it leased North Hall, one of the college's dormitories, in 1899 for \$1,250 a year. Dr. A.N. Loper was the first to head the institution as medical superintendent, followed by Dr. W.A. George and then Dr. Orville Rockwell.² The purpose of the sanitarium, as with other Adventist sanitariums, was to provide a place of healing while also teaching patients and students how to live healthful lives through natural means.

Located on the north end of Union's rural campus, the Nebraska Sanitarium was away from the city but close enough to draw attention to its work.³ The spacious lawn was equipped with swinging lawn chairs.⁴ In 1905 the sanitarium purchased the property for \$17,800, giving the college the means to build a men's dormitory.⁵ In addition, the grove behind the facility was leased jointly to the college and the sanitarium by the Central Union Conference to become a park and outdoor gymnasium.⁶ One year later, an elevator was installed in the building for \$3,000. Funding came from the proceeds of a large estate that the late K. G. Smith had bequeathed to the Nebraska Conference as a direct result of the sanitarium's work.⁷

After visiting the sanitarium in 1905, Ellen White reported her general satisfaction with the facility. She admired the location and thought the building's interior was simple and pleasant. She reported that the carpets and rugs were well selected and that the furniture gave the rooms a comfortable and homelike appearance without being extravagant. Recognizing some deficiencies, including beds that were so hard as to be "very uncomfortable" for patients, she emphasized the need to continue improving the sanitarium "so that it may do the very best class of work." She also encouraged the members of the Central Union Conference to be united in making "the Sanitarium at College View a praise of the earth, and a continual blessing to many, that from it there may shine forth the light of truth."⁸

In 1905, shortly before the sanitarium purchase was completed, the Sanitarium Association became affiliated with the Nebraska Conference. In 1906 the sanitarium freed itself from debt by making \$49,000 in business, leaving it with a profit of over \$12,000.⁹ Interestingly, the sanitarium prospered despite conducting very little advertising and doing considerable charitable work. Marketing came mainly through the testimonies of individuals who had been treated.¹⁰ Like the Battle Creek Sanitarium, the Nebraska Sanitarium focused on hydrotherapy and natural treatments. Over its life, the sanitarium served over 25,000 people.¹¹

A branch operation, using the same name, was opened in Hastings, Nebraska in 1908, along with a nurses' training school that enrolled an average of 20 students a term. The Hastings branch was financially self-sufficient, even though it also did a great amount of charity work. Its patronage peaked at 700 in 1916-1917 but by 1920 had dropped to 215.¹²

For many years, the operations of Union College and the Nebraska Sanitarium benefited each other. Students worked at the sanitarium, and the two entities jointly operated an excellent nursing program. However, some friction developed between the two institutions related to student government and use of facilities. The peak years of operation for the sanitarium were 1915 and 1916 when it served 2500 patients each year with its 80 rooms.

In the years immediately after World War I, patronage at the sanitarium diminished while attendance at Union College increased. In 1920, the college president, H.A. Morrison, reported a severe shortage of dorm space. Acquisition of the sanitarium enabled the college to meet this need at a cost of \$65,000.¹³ Thus the Nebraska Sanitarium building was converted back to a dormitory in 1920.¹⁴ It was hoped that the sanitarium would be

able to find another place to operate.¹⁵ A plan to return the building to the sanitarium after the 1920-1921 school year did not work out, and it never reopened.¹⁶ The Hastings branch closed in 1927.¹⁷

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. "Chamber of Commerce Agitating for Local Community Hospital," *Clock Tower*, February 16, 1928, 1, 4.
2. "Nebraska Sanitarium," *Central Union Outlook*, June 13, 1911, 5.
3. Lyra H. George, "Nebraska Sanitarium Day at the Omaha Camp-meeting," *Educational Messenger*, September 1, 1905, 7.
4. Everett Newfon Dick, "The Founding of Union College, 1890-1900," *Nebraska History* 60, 1979, 455, 468.
5. "Nebraska Sanitarium," *Central Union Outlook*, June 13, 1911
6. "Transfer of Sanitarium Property," *Educational Messenger*, November 15, 1905, 7-8.
7. "Nebraska Sanitarium," *Central Union Outlook*, June 13, 1911
8. Lyra H. George, "Nebraska Sanitarium Day at the Omaha Camp-meeting," *Educational Messenger*, September 1, 1905, 7.
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10. Lyra H. George, "Nebraska Sanitarium Day Day at the Omaha Camp-meeting," *Educational Messenger*, September 1, 1905, 7.

11. "Chamber of Commerce Agitating for Local Community Hospital," *Clock Tower*, February 16, 1928, 1, 4.
12. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. edition (1996), s.v. "Nebraska Sanitarium (Hastings, Nebraska)."
13. H. A. Morrison, "Annual Report of Union College," *Central Union Outlook*, March 2, 1920, 2.
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