A nearly two-decade fight for the Marshall County Home & the politics involved
The first “asylum” used in Marshall County was a building purchased in 1849 for $1671.11 three miles northwest of Plymouth on the LaPorte Trail. It was sold at a substantial loss in 1853 for $900.00. No details of the building, its use, or why it was sold are known.

From 1853 until 1862, the poor of the county were “let out to the lowest bidder and did not always receive the care and attention that humanity would demand.”

The second “poor farm” was property purchased near Tyner, 10 miles northwest of the county seat of Plymouth, in 1862. A two-story wood frame building, 34’ x 36’, was erected the same year.

It served until the third and final county “infirmary” was built in 1892.
The asylum is about half a mile from Tyner, on a farm of 160 acres of poor land, valued at $30 per acre; 120 acres are tillable, and there are 20 acres of good timber; the remainder is waste land. There is a good garden and orchard, giving a full supply of vegetables and fruit. The buildings are of frame and are old, worn out, and very poorly arranged, constituting a dangerous fire-trap. The Superintendent's house is separated by a narrow passage from the paupers' house. There is no sex separation, except as the sexes are locked up in separate bed-rooms at night. The heating is by stoves and is poor. Bedding was good and clean. The cleanliness of the house was only moderate. The floors are badly worn and decayed. The present Superintendent claims that the place was badly infested with bed-bugs when he took charge, but that they are much lessened in number now. The beds were all clean when visited. There are no bath-tubs, but the inmates are made to wash themselves weekly in wash-tubs. The food seems good and abundant. The farm buildings are much better than the houses, and the yards, fences, etc., were all neat and tidy. The impression made was that the management was good, considering the difficulties arising from the old and awkward buildings. A new house is very necessary. The Superintendent's salary is $700 per annum. He furnishes teams and farm implements. The Commissioners allow him one farm hand and one domestic help. The net annual cost is about $1,150; average number of inmates, about 24; weekly cost per inmate, about 92 cents.

Not a raving review, no wonder a year later the commissioners were looking for land to build a new facility.
The third Marshall County Home was built between 1892-1895 and was designed by Wing & Mahurin. It is located on 196 acres of land purchased in 1891, 3 miles east of Plymouth along what would later become the Lincoln Highway/U.S. 30 (now bypassed). The development included a large bank barn, and other agriculture structures which do not survive. It cost $79,547.50 to construct and had a capacity of 100 and followed the general design approved by the State Board of Charities.

The county retains about 160 acres of the original farm.
Residents, commissioners, and superintendent’s family in front of home.
Mid-1898
Sullivan County Home, 1896 (left) and Kosciusko County Home, 1895/97 (right): Wing & Mahurin designs

Images from Kayla Hassett "The County Home in Indiana : A Forgotten Response to Poverty and Disability."
Farm equipment & residents in front of Marshall County Home, c. 1900
Marshall County Home at harvest time, note sheaves in foreground, from the side elevation, c. 1900. The orchard is in the left side of the photograph.

The front part – superintendent's quarters – and the back part which housed the laundry, kitchen, as well as other services and servants’ quarters above, are extant. The middle dormitory portion was razed in 1978,
• Remodeling campaign c. 1930 (right)

• Name changed to “Shady Rest” c. 1960

• Commissioners authorize study on viability in 1976

• Commissioners replace dormitory wings in 1978, reducing the overall capacity from 100 to 40

• In 2000, the Council voted to forego funding repairs and instead formed a task force to determine if the building would remain open

• Engineers estimated $3 million in work would be required and that the building was not historic nor would it be eligible for grants

• Secretly, I had submitted a National Register nomination in 2000

• About the same time, the cemetery was razed and plans were being made to raze the barn

• No surprise, the task force recommended the facility close
• 2000, being an election year, one of two commissioners were voted out of office for supporting the closure. The other commissioner, Mr. Overmyer, is still on the board today. Petitions, yard signs, even a parade float were employed to keep the home open.

• The property was officially listed to the NR in 2001, drawing outrage from the commissioners. One was interviewed and said “this is why we tore the old jail (NR) down, to not get stuck with it!” -Ferguson

• The incoming commissioner proposed a transfer to the Otis R. Bowen Center for Mental Health corporation in 2001. As part of the deal, current residents could stay, but the building would transfer back to the county if it was no longer in use by Bowen Center.

• A “transfer” committee was organized that included myself, our county historian, & the new commissioner.

• Over $5000,000 in repairs were made through CDBG grants for the home and HP funds for the barn between 2003-2005.
A celebration dinner was held in the barn after restoration in 2003, and as part of Indiana Landmarks Movable Feast in 2002.
I was fortunate enough to serve as the project architect on the building and barn restoration, aiding Bowen Center in applying for grants, and then working through restoration drawings.
i·ro·ny¹
ˈɪrənē/
a state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what one expects and is often amusing as a result

Did I mention that I was elected Marshall County Commissioner in 2014?

_I filled the seat held by Commissioner Ferguson, and my colleagues were his daughter and Commissioner Overmyer_
May 2017, Bowen Center notified the commissioners that they would end residential care at Shady Rest by August 1.

I was appointed to chair an advisory committee for a new use. We sent out a request for proposals in September, 2017.

We received four, two of which were similar in treating opioid recovery; they were also local. This seemed to justify further exploration and we asked them to combine efforts.

The advisory committee recommended transfer to “David’s Courage” in January 2018 after two very emotional public meetings.

While there was a last-ditch effort to derail the process, we voted 3-0 in February to complete the transfer.

Final preparations are being made and transfer should be complete by May, just in time for this guy’s re-election bid. One candidate running against me is promoting his opposition to the transfer to gain votes in the subdivisions around the home.
CHALLENGES

• County homes are large and generally have been under-cared for
  We were fortunate with Shady Rest because of renovations in 2005

• County homes most likely would require some kind of residential use
  because of their size and arrangement of space

• Most uses would not turn a profit, so understanding who can use it
  and how it can be transferred between a county and non-profit is
  important.

• Typically, these buildings were in rural areas but now have modern
  residential developments around them, which can lead to protests
  against certain uses. This time petitions were circulated against its
  use.

• Sale or auction likely will not generate funds for the county unless the
  property is highly desirable (White County): our demolition estimates
  were $300k to gain 5 acres. However, that may be far less than the
  cost of remodel/operations.
THANK YOU

SPECIAL THANKS & HISTORICAL PHOTO CREDITS TO...

MARSHALL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Book of hand-drawn & colored illustrations by a resident, c. 1930