

On August 23, 1929, Molly Stark Sanatorium opened its doors to the public, providing care to residents of Stark County suffering from tuberculosis. Named in honor of the wife of General John Stark, for whom Stark County is named, Molly Stark was built under the prevailing medical philosophy of the time that sunlight and fresh air were good for patients in need of compassionate care. Molly Stark stood as one of 25 tuberculosis hospitals in the State of Ohio.

Designed by architect Albert Thayer of New Castle, Pennsylvania; Molly Stark showcases Spanish Revival style of architecture popular throughout the United States between 1915 and 1930. The many windows, vaulted porticos, recessed balconies, and rooftop verandas provided the institution's tuberculosis patients with ample access to both the fresh air and sunshine abundant in the rural farmlands of Nimishillen Township, just outside the city limits of Louisville. The entire landscape surrounding the original five buildings on site was designed to provide a therapeutic and restful environment for those undergoing treatment and recovery at Molly Stark. Even the original utility infrastructure was placed underground, to preserve the pastoral country setting.

The years following Molly Stark's opening were tumultuous years fraught with change. In 1938, the Works Progress Administration installed nearly 1,200 linear feet of tunnels at the sanatorium. While the tunnels were built initially for utility infrastructure on site, these tunnels provided an alternate means to travel between the various buildings on site that was undoubtedly appreciated by the staff on cold and rainy days. Later in 1952, substantial additions to both the east and west wings of the hospital expanded the facility's patient capacity. These additions, visible and identified today by their lack of architectural adornments, were designed by Charles Firestone. Canton residents may recognize the brick cladding on the building additions, as Charles Firestone was the same architect who designed the Canton Memorial Auditorium that these additions resemble.

Beyond structural improvements, other changes affected Molly Stark beginning in 1956. As medical science had allowed for great advances in identifying and treating tuberculosis, the need for Molly Stark to operate solely as a tuberculosis facility diminished. In 1956, the name changed from *Molly Stark Sanatorium* to *Molly Stark Hospital*, as the county run hospital began the treatment of medical cases other than tuberculosis. Throughout the years Molly Stark provided care to those in need of physical rehabilitative therapy, those with drug and alcohol abuse issues, and aging adults in need of care. The last of the remaining tuberculosis patients were transferred to the newly built J.T. Nist nursing home in 1970, which today is the adjoining Green Meadows facility. The hospital continued operating until 1995, when due to aging infrastructure and a diminished need the doors of Molly Stark were shuttered. The building sat abandoned, left alone but not forgotten.

April of 2009 brought a new life to the old Molly Stark property. Purchased from the Stark County Commissioners for the sum of one dollar, Stark Parks opened the new Molly Stark Park as a publicly accessible county park on the former hospital site. With walking paths, picnic tables, and grills, the park provides a nearby escape into nature and a visit with our past. The medical philosophies of the 1920s that founded Molly Stark still apply today... fresh air and sunlight are good for you! And they are abundant at Molly Stark Park for Stark County residents to enjoy.