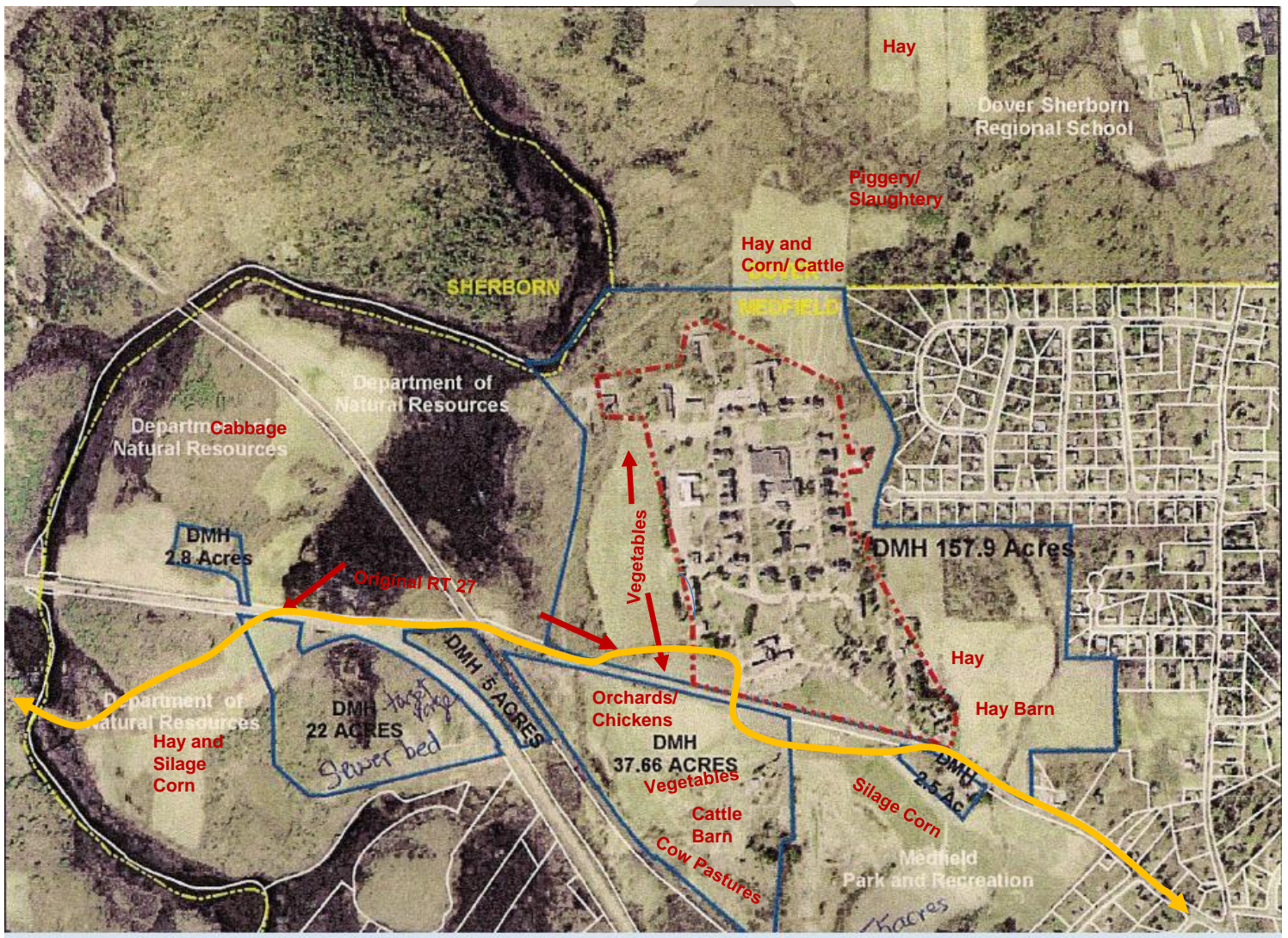


Notes from Discussions with Tom Sweeney by Ros Smythe and Gil Rodgers. Initial meeting was held at Blue Moon Café on 1/28/2013 and second, a walk around Hospital grounds on 2/5/2013. Also includes an e-mail from Darel C. Nowers and David G. Nowers on 2/2/13 who lived at the Hospital when their father was the head farmer.

Early History of Farm at MSH

Originally, the land for Medfield State Hospital was probably a large existing farm(s) that the State acquired by eminent domain. The original parcel of land was approximately 900 acres. Of this sizeable property, most has been transferred to DCR, Dover-Sherborn High School or the Town of Medfield, leaving only about 223 acres under ownership of DCAMM including the central campus and surrounding fields (see blue lines delineating DCAMM property on map below.)



The map shows a solid yellow line indicating the Old Route 27. It took somewhat of a serpentine path passing near the front entrance of the MSH (Stone Gate), then dipping down to the farmer's house (you can easily see the old paved section), looped up near the back

entrance to the hospital (close to the guard's trailer), down the hill towards the power plant road (following along the stone wall,) then west towards the Charles River and Sherborn, and crossing a very dangerous bridge over the Charles (called "Death Bridge") where some serious accidents occurred (according to one story.)

Buildings and Layout

The farm started from the very beginning when the facility first opened in 1896 and was the main food source for the hospital.



Photograph of MSH Farm in the 40's or 50's. The photograph was taken from the knoll on old route 27 at the brim of the hill facing west towards the Odyssey House or farmer's house (large building with chimneys behind the rock crusher), cattle barn (with the two cupolas) tractor shed, and other structures.) Rock crusher building is to the right for crushing rocks into gravel for roads and footings. Two attached ells to the dairy barn provided stabling for cows, one for the calves and one for the yearlings. The shed in front of the barn was a maintenance shed for tractors -- see the ramped entrance on the right hand side of the building. Underneath the maintenance shed were two root cellars for vegetables -- you can see one of the open doors on the lower level of the left hand side of the shed. There was a third cold storage facility for vegetables outside the purview of this picture, in the foreground further left than the boundary of the photo. Immediately behind the maintenance shed was a carriage barn for the wagons used to carry hay and perhaps coal. You can also see some of the silos to the left of the barn (there were 4 or 5 in total) to store silage for cows. The field in middle of photo was planted with corn (for feedstock,) and apple trees are in the foreground. The small building in front of the cow barn was the milk shed used for pasteurization. The bull pens housing two bulls were located behind the cattle barn. Up to 1000 free range chickens resided in a three-story building near the top of Hospital Hill. (Photo and details courtesy of Tom Sweeney.)

Management of Farm

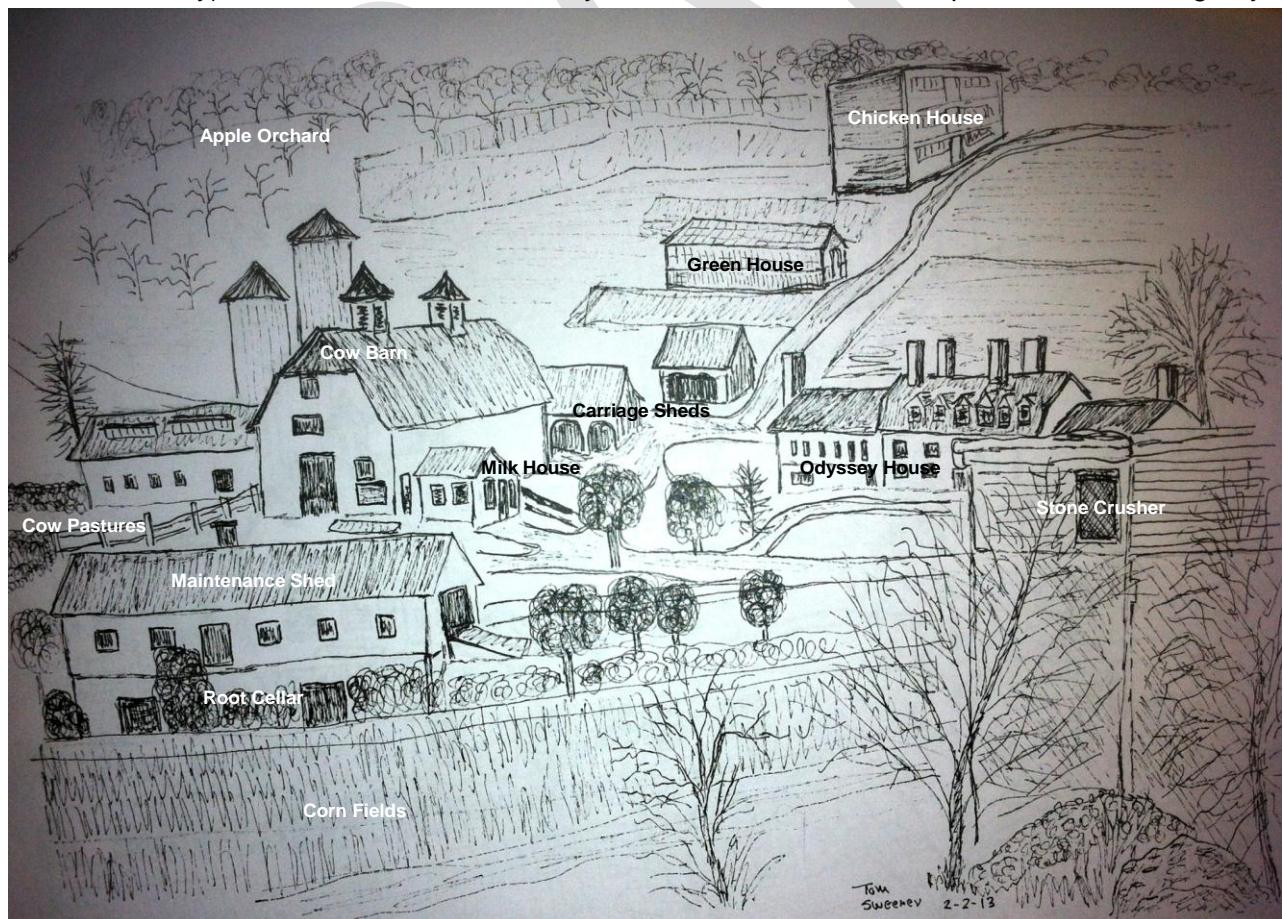
Rodman Nowers (David and Darrel's father) was the head farmer for many years perhaps starting in the 1930's and employed until the 60's (Verify actual dates.) He reported to the Head Superintendent and was considered as his deputy. Dick Elmsworth was the next head farmer after Nowers and managed the large complex until the cattle operations closed in late 60's after the fire that destroyed the cow barn.

Rodney Nowers lived in the large house (what we now call the Odyssey House) with his family (wife and five kids,) single farmhands (married farmhands lived off-campus), and some patients that were assigned to work on the farm. The farmer's house was similar to a dormitory with many small bedrooms in the two wings and on the top floor with perhaps 20 – 30 people living there; a pool table, a large fireplace, ping-pong tables, and showers were located in the basement. However, farmhands and staff would walk or ride over to the main campus to eat their meals at the employee's cafeteria.

As many as 100 people would be working in the fields during harvest season. Attendants could be identified by their white pants and coats, whereas farmhands and patients were distinguishable by wearing coveralls.

Farm Buildings

It is important to emphasize that the dairy operation was one of the primary drivers for the farm and the Hospital maintained a herd of 75 – 100 dairy cows. There were two huge barns: one behind the Odyssey House -- for cattle and hay (shown in the photo above and sketch below by Tom Sweeney) and a second one in the hay field to the east of the campus used for storing hay.



The enormous and very well constructed cattle barn burned down due to a fire in the late 60's caused by a lightning strike. The hay barn also caught fire and was destroyed again by a lightning strike. Numerous large cow pastures surrounded the cattle barn and can be identified by high stone walls that still stand.

(What happened to all the wastes from the maintenance of tractors and other machinery -- oil, grease, gasoline, lubricants, etc.?)

There was a large three-story chicken house near the very top of the Hill (see sketch in upper right) -- you can still see the outline of the foundation when walking the grounds. Chickens would roam freely around among the apple trees that were planted on Sledding Hill. The chickens were raised for both egg production and as a meat source. Slaughter of hens too old to produce eggs was done on the property and then were sent to the butcher to become food for the clients.

Greenhouses were located near the barn for starting vegetable plants (center of sketch), and another greenhouse was on the west side of the campus near the men's residence building and used to grow flowers mainly for decorating dining and gathering rooms.

A cement piggery housed up to 250 pigs was located on the north side down the road leading to the D-S Regional School. (Its foundation is still visible when walking down the road.) In this location was also a slaughterery for processing pigs and cattle. The cattle were brought over from the main farm prior to slaughter for fattening up.

There was even a soap house where soap was made for the hospital probably using lard from the pigs. This was located southeast of the stone crusher building -- not shown in the picture.

As mentioned, there were also huge root cellars for winter storage of fruits and vegetables (apples, onions, squash, potatoes, root crops, etc.) which have since been demolished. One was the entire basement of the tractor maintenance shed next to the Odyssey House (see building with large doors in the basement located in lower left of sketch), and the other was near the current-day playing fields behind the manure pile. Screen shelves held vegetables for drying. Tom recounts how large this room appeared was as a kid playing with the Nowers' boys with gigantic squash stacked to the ceiling on multiple levels of shelving.

Crops and Growing Areas

There were a total of about 400 tillable acres available for the farm during the 1920's, however only about half of this land was actually used (annual Trustee's reports.) The following crop and animal husbandry details were provided by Darel C. Nowers and David G. Nowers in an e-mail dated 2/2/13:

The vegetable gardens were all over the place: onions, carrots, beets, tomatoes, peppers, squash (summer, butternut, acorn and Blue Hubbard,) Swiss chard, strawberries, cabbage, lettuce, sweet corn and so on.) The fields were behind the male home & garage as far as the laundry building starting at the edge of old Rte. 27 stone walls. Plus apples trees were behind the chicken house, and also some on the flat land above the house and where the present Rte. 27 is.

We raised Holstein milking cows, from birth to cows; breeding was done with selected sires from the herd until the early 50's when artificial insemination was introduced. Also had chickens for eggs, and when they were done laying eggs, they were killed and sent to the butcher shop where they became food for the clients. At one time they also raised pigs; they were fed on garbage and grain. The piggery was behind the R building at the rear of the hospital. It was closed around 1948 after the snow damaged the building.

They raised hay and corn to feed the cows, the crops were cut green and put in tile silos (there were 4 to 5 silos.) They also cut hay and dried it then baled it and stored it in the Big Barn. There were also a couple teams of horses used to do some garden work and remove animal waste from the barns. In the winter they would pull the sidewalk plow to clear sidewalks around the grounds.

Also had two greenhouses one to start the early vegetables heated with coal. This one was near the main barn; also there were hot beds and cold frames that were used to put the early veggies out in these beds until they were transplanted into the fields. At the main farm area there were several buildings for equipment and vegetable storage, these were known as root cellars as they maintained temperatures ideals for storing root crops in the winter months, one area was full racks made of screening where they dried the onions prior to storing.

There was also a railroad siding that was used for the delivery of animal feed from the south; "Beet Pulp" also with hay and straw in the lean production years.

The open fields furthest away is where the animal crops were raised, silage, hay and cow corn as it was easier to transport back to the main area, all were stored in the silos or barn. The fields on the town side (east) from the farm to the Hinkley Property were all used for animal feed also.

Then there was a large greenhouse up on the hill next to the main vehicle garage that raised the flowers and plants for the grounds and buildings.

Summary of Fields and Uses

Field	Crops/Livestock
North Hay Field (Behind R-Building)	Hay and corn; also used for cattle pasture
Garden Field (West of Campus beside men's living quarters)	All types of vegetables, flowers
Field east of campus near water tower	Hay
Area around Odyssey House and cow barn	Vegetables, fruit orchards
Area behind the cow barn	Pastures for cattle
Sledding Hill	Chickens and apple orchards
Three additional contiguous fields were leased	Animal feed corn
Fields across new Route 27	Hay, corn and vegetables (cabbage)
Dover-Sherborn Regional Soccer Fields	Hay

Surplus output of the farm (primarily milk and dairy products) was transported by truck to Mattapan, Boston State, and Wrentham mental hospitals. (Verify if eggs and vegetables were also shipped to other hospitals.)

MSH even produced some of its own varieties of vegetables such as “Waltham Butternut Squash” that was developed in conjunction with the Waltham Experimental Station and can still be obtained from seed companies.

Infrastructure

There were two railroad spurs off the New York, Hartford, and New Haven main line – one went to the power plant for delivering coal, and these tracks can be seen; and a second rail spur that went on the south side of the farm near the carriage house to deliver grain, hay, straw, and beet pulp to the cow barn, which extended almost as far as the farmer’s house. This is harder to find but the railroad embankment is still visible at the end of the large cow pasture and you can see decaying railroad ties and steel rails. It appears that the railway bed was made of coal cinders, similarly to the foundation for the path to the old power plant, and pieces of coal can be easily plucked from the ground. Coal was also probably delivered on this spur for the farmer’s house, greenhouses, and some of the farm buildings that were heated. The farmer’s house and some of outbuildings were heated by separate coal boilers in the basement – a huge boiler was in the main house.

Water was supplied to the house, barn, outbuildings, and fields from the central water system and pumped mainly from the multiple tubular wells off of Colonial Road in Medfield. Vegetable gardens were irrigated with mobile irrigation pipes. Red fire hydrants can be seen around the farmer’s house, barn, chicken house, and the green house areas dedicated to seedlings indicating the location of underground pipes.

The farmer’s house was tied into a gravity sewer system that initially flowed to open sewer beds over sand and gravel deposits. Actually, the original sewer beds were located near where the Medfield soccer playing fields are now. Their use was discontinued as the Hospital population grew and replaced with much larger beds along Rte. 27 where the police target-range is now located. This was later changed and the Hospital’s wastes sent directly to Medfield’s town sewer system assisted by a lifting station near the intersection of Rte. 27 and Hospital Road. When the Hospital finally shut down this facility was demolished but the building foundation and power poles are still there.

Electricity was provided to the barn, house, and other buildings from the main power plant by overhead wires. Electricity from the main power plant was also transmitted by overhead wires to the pumping stations near to the various water sources (e.g., along Charles River and the primary source near Colonial Road.)

There were at least two major waste sites: (1) the one by the Charles River that we now identify as the C&D area - near the old power plant; and (2) a site near the Medfield soccer fields where debris and trash were dumped (including medical wastes) that has apparently been remediated and covered.

Tom also mentioned that the road from Hospital Road to the power plant area has a coal cinder base that received un-burned or partially burned coal from the power plants when they were originally coal-burning. (The original power plant was in the center of the campus, but replaced with a much larger facility down the hill towards the River as the campus expanded and steam and electricity demand grew.)

This raises a concern about the road and the rail embankment where these coal by-products are in the ground possibly leaching hazardous materials into the aquifer or river.

Equestrian Use

The Charles River is very shallow where the old Rte. 27 crossed at Death Bridge, and at certain periods of year the Hunt (at least in the past) forded the River, climbed the steep bank, and

rode through beautiful farm lands (such as Forbes and Constable Farms) along Bullard Street (the current Route 115) into Millis and Sherborn. Tom said he might have an old photo of the bridge from which he made a painting. (It would be fun to reinstate this alternative loop to Sherborn - if possible.)

Tom recalls the Hunt coming through the property and also passing through his grandfather's farm near the Senior Center and Kingsbury Club, taking the jumps over solid stone walls to or from the Hospital grounds. The Hunt would sometimes meet near the Old Post Office on Harding Street and ride up through Scribners' hay field to the Hospital grounds, which offers still another possibility for an alternative route for the Hunt since there is an easement across this property for the underground water pipeline from the tubular wells.

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Thanks to Tom, David, and Darel for providing such a detailed and comprehensive picture of agricultural at Medfield State Hospital. It was an amazingly well-planned and carefully constructed farm for supporting the Hospital's food and other needs for many years.

Another good source of information is Dr. Harry Gardner who now lives in Iowa. He grew up at the Hospital when his father was an Assistant Superintendent of the Hospital. Dr. Gardner is a psychiatrist. Tom is in contact with him by internet and he has provided some of the information for this profile of the farm.

DRAFT

Interview Guide for David and Darrel Nowers and Tom Sweeney (1/28/2013)

History of Agriculture at MSH

When did farming actually begin?

How was the farm organized and staffed?

When did farming finally stop at MSH?

Why was it discontinued?

Description of Agriculture Use of MSH Grounds

How many acres were in agriculture?

What properties were used? (Review maps)

What are the soil conditions?

What crops were produced?

How much livestock? Where?

What buildings were on the property?

How many people were involved – managers, farmhands, patients, support?

How was the patient participation organized?

How open to residents of Medfield?

What uses were made of produce?

How self-sufficient was the Hospital?

Recreational Use of MSH Grounds

Horseback riding and fox hunting

How often?

What paths/routes and fields were used?

Infrastructure

Where did it get water?

Were fields irrigated?

Where did it get electricity?

Was the farm connected to sewer system?

Where were wastes disposed?

What is the hazardous dump site behind Odyssey House?

Was the railroad spur used for shipping/receiving?