

O'REILLY HOSPITAL HISTORIC EVENTS

O'Reilly General Hospital was a U. S. Army temporary hospital which was located in Springfield, Missouri. It was in operation during World War II and in the immediate postwar period.

General Robert Maitland O'Reilly

O'Reilly Hospital was named for General Robert Maitland O'Reilly, U.S. Army. General O'Reilly was a hospital cadet in the Union Army during the Civil War, a field surgeon in the U.S. Army during the Indian campaigns and Spanish American War, and a researcher on tropical hygiene during the building of the Panama Canal. He was appointed Surgeon General of the Army in 1902 and served in this capacity until 1909.



Hospital slogan: "The Hospital With a Soul"

Hospital grounds: Approximately 155 acres, bounded by Glenstone Avenue, Pythian Street, Fremont Avenue, and Division Street.

Buildings: 248, all of wood barracks-type construction, except for one. It is described in the following paragraph.

The Enlisted Men's Service Club, which was of Carthage stone, was situated on the southwest corner of the hospital grounds. This capacious three-story building had been built by the Knights of Pythias of Missouri as a home for orphans and widows of deceased members of the society. The building was dedicated on June 14, 1914 and served the organization as originally intended until 1942. It was then acquired by the U.S. Government and became part of O'Reilly Hospital. Commonly known as Pythian Castle, the building can be seen today at the corner of Fremont and Pythian.

Some time in the spring of 1941 a groundbreaking ceremony was held for O'Reilly Hospital. Dignitaries present included Mayor Harry B. Carr; Maj. Michael Grimaldi, constructing quartermaster; Fred McKinnell, project engineer; and Presiding Judge Frank Wheeler of the County Court. Jewell Windle and John T. Woodruff were the Chamber of Commerce representatives. About 50 children from Tefft School, across the street, were admitted. Since considerable earth had already been moved, the ceremony centered around a footing for one of the main buildings. Cement was poured inside the wooden form.

1941, April 20 – Construction of O'Reilly General Hospital began.

1941, November 8 - O'Reilly Hospital was dedicated. The ceremonies included a flag raising and speeches by U.S. Army and City of Springfield dignitaries. A news story describing the dedication ceremonies appeared in the Springfield, Missouri *Sunday News and Leader*, November 9, 1941, pages A1:2-4 and A14:1-5.

Commanding Officers, O'Reilly Hospital – Brig. Gen. George B. Foster, Jr., U.S. Army Medical Corps, from November, 1941 until late in the war, when he became ill and was admitted to O'Reilly as a patient. He was relieved by Col. Edward B. Burch, post executive officer, who served until succeeded by Col. Charles K. Berle, U.S. Army Medical Corps, on February 14, 1946.

When the Veterans Administration acquired O'Reilly, Dr. W. Forrest Culbertson became manager. Dr. Culbertson was a VA doctor, although he had served in the Army in WWI (receiving a Croix de Guerre) and WWII. He had been separated in March 1946 as a colonel. The organization of O'Reilly as a VA hospital was accomplished under his direction. (See *O'Reilly News*, July 18, 1947.)

1946, December – O'Reilly Army Hospital closed.

1947, February 10 – O'Reilly Hospital reopened as O'Reilly Veterans Administration Hospital, with 500 beds. A year later the hospital had almost 400 patients in 20 wards, and 450 employees.

1952, August 28 – Last patient discharged or transferred out of O'Reilly VA Hospital.

1952, December 2 – O'Reilly Hospital declared excess property by U.S. Government.

1954, December 14 – Public announcement was made in the Springfield, MO *Leader-Press*, on page 1, that 58.51 acres of the O'Reilly property had been granted to the Assemblies of God at 100% discount, to be used as the campus of Evangel University.

1955, May 15 - It was announced in the Springfield News and Leader that the remaining 101.49 acres of O'Reilly property had been awarded to the following applicants: Springfield, MO Park Board, 13.5 acres; Civil Defense, 33 acres; U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps Reserve, 20 acres; National Guard, 14 acres; St. Agnes High School (now Catholic High School), 13.7 acres; and U.S. Medical Center, 2 acres.

O'Reilly Army Hospital was originally a 1,000-bed hospital. Its capacity was subsequently expanded until it reached its peak of nearly 6,000 patients in the spring of 1945. For several months an annex was established on the Southwest Missouri State College (now University) campus, where a reconditioning program for more than 500 patients, quartered in the field house, was followed.

A total of over 50,000 patients were treated at O'Reilly Army Hospital through August, 1946. Over 24,000 operations were performed, of which 7,620 were plastic surgery. Other operations included orthopedic; neurosurgery; eye, ear, nose and throat; urology; and maxillofacial.

Besides the surgical service, medical services at O'Reilly Army Hospital included general medicine, cardiology, gastro-intestinal, tropical diseases, dermatology, allergies, neurology, dental, and occupational therapy.

Over 16,000 Army enlisted personnel were trained as laboratory, X-ray, medical/surgical, and dental technicians in the technician school at O'Reilly.

Distinguished visitors at O'Reilly included Generals Omar Bradley and Jonathan Wainwright, the hero of Corregidor. Stars who performed for the patients and staff at O'Reilly included the Mills Brothers, Jeanette McDonald, Jane Wyman, Basil Rathbone, as well as Rin Tin Tin, the canine movie star; and band leaders Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Stan Kenton, and Jack Teagarden.

As of January 11, 1943 there were no less than 44 Army General Hospitals, including O'Reilly, in operation. This is not surprising when it is considered that there were nearly 566,000 U.S. Army wounded in World War II, not counting those who died of their wounds. The hospitals were as follows:

Army & Navy General Hospital	Hot Springs National Park, AR
Ashburn General Hospital	McKinney, TX
Ashford General Hospital	White Sulphur Springs, WV
Barnes General Hospital	Vancouver Barracks, WA
Baxter General Hospital	Spokane, WA
William Beaumont General Hospital	El Paso, TX
Billings General Hospital	Fort Benjamin Harrison, IN
Brook General Hospital	San Antonio, TX
Bruns General Hospital	Santa Fe, NM
Borden General Hospital	Chickasha, OK
Bushnell General Hospital	Brigham City, UT
Charleston General Hospital	Charleston, WV
Deshon General Hospital	Butler, PA
Finney General Hospital	Thomasville, GA
Fitzsimons General Hospital	Denver, CO
Fletcher General Hospital	Cambridge, OH
Foster General Hospital	Jackson, MS
Hammond General Hospital	Modesto, CA
Harmon General Hospital	Longview, TX
Hoff General Hospital	Santa Barbara, CA
Percy Jones General Hospital	Battle Creek, MI
Kennedy General Hospital	Memphis, TN
LaGarde General Hospital	New Orleans, LA
Lawson General Hospital	Atlanta, GA
Letterman General Hospital	Presidio of San Francisco, CA
Lovell General Hospital	Fort Devens, MA
McCaw General Hospital	Walla Walla, WA
McCloskey General Hospital	Temple, TX
Moore General Hospital	Swannanoa, NC
Nichols General Hospital	Louisville, KY
Oliver General Hospital	Augusta, GA
O'Reilly General Hospital	Springfield, MO
Walter Reed General Hospital	Washington, DC
Rhoads General Hospital	Utica, NY
Schick General Hospital	Clinton, IA
Stark General Hospital	Charleston, SC
Sternberg General Hospital	Manila, PI
Tilton General Hospital	Fort Dix, NJ
Torney General Hospital	Palm Springs, CA
Tripler General Hospital	Honolulu, HI
Valley Forge General Hospital	Phoenixville, PA
Wakeman General Hospital	Camp Atterbury, IN
Winter General Hospital	Topeka, KS
Woodrow Wilson General Hospital	Staunton, VA