

“She was such a Good Nurse” retold by Carol (Klenk) Heck

Her name was Pauline (Nierczwichy) Stiegler. She was born in Poland around 1898 and was trained in caregiving at a nursing home in Germany before coming to Ohio. Because of her lifetime devotion and humanitarianism to the elderly and infirmed, Stiegler Lane was named in honor of her.

One story goes that she and her father, a physician, immigrated to Columbus, Ohio to care for wounded American soldiers after World War I. She also spent time working as a nanny in Columbus, and she may have seriously considered becoming a nun here in the United States, or, she had been a nun in Poland.



When Pauline had saved up enough money from being a nanny, she moved from Columbus to Cincinnati around 1922. Here she opened a nursing home in Indian Hill on the southeast corner of Kugler Mill and Camargo Rd. The large house seen here with the chain link fence was where she first started her assisted living care center. It was a 2-1/2 story country home located on approximately 3-3/4 acres. The house served as the office and Pauline’s residence plus home to 4-5 patients. There was a detached garage, a small caretaker’s cabin and a barn. The setting was idyllic and peaceful. There were cattle and poultry on the grounds. I

found this 2001 side view picture, below, of the home on the county auditor’s website.



She took in folks who had a nervous or mental condition, known today as Alzheimer’s. Some patients could not feed themselves and some could not dress themselves. Some had to be restrained during the night, so they would not accidentally wander off. A watchful eye was always necessary.

I found a record that Pauline married Charles P. Stiegler on May 25, 1930. In 1938, The *Cincinnati Post* published an advertisement for Stiegler’s Rest Home saying that it “specialized in old age mental conditions. It was a beautiful country home in an environment where the sun shone, had excellent food, and care was given by a trained nurse at reasonable prices”. Also that year, the Stiegler’s built a 9-room cottage on the land to house more patients. Unfortunately, there was a tragic accident in the basement

which caused two clients to succumb to noxious fumes from the oil burning stove. This resulted in licensing and regulations for private nursing and rest homes beginning in 1940. There were nineteen patients living on the premises at that time. Some rooms had more than one bed. Her husband, Charles, most likely helped her with much of the daily work. However, Charles passed away in 1943, leaving Pauline to run things on her own. Pauline contacted her family in Europe in the 1950's to invite them to America. She could provide jobs, housing, and cars to those who wanted to join her in her life-long passion.

First to come in 1953 were her widowed niece, Helena Klobutowski, from West Germany and Helena's two daughters, Brigitte, age 17 and Renee, age 15. They moved into a newly built ranch house, seen here, at 8475 Camargo, a short distance from the main house and cottage. The three of them



shared one bedroom with the mother sleeping in a twin bed and the two girls sleeping in a double bed. The other bedrooms in the house were given to patients. Renee went to school, but Helena and Brigitte started working right away caring for the patients. Nurse Pauline monitored 10-12 patients at the big house, Helena took care of 4-5 patients at the ranch home where she lived, and Brigitte took care of about 23 patients at the cottage. Brigitte says she worked as a teenager from 7:00 AM till 7:00 PM, 365 days a year. She earned \$100.00 a week plus free room and board.

Great Aunt Pauline taught Brigitte how to drive. She also bought clothes, shoes, and bicycles for the children of her other employees. Thirteen sponsored family members moved to the states and Pauline provided each family with a house and a car. Some relatives stayed in the area, some went back to Europe, and some went to Chicago.

There was no dietician. Pauline purchased the groceries from the old Kroger store on Miami Avenue circa 1940-60's in Madeira. Meals were carried on trays to the various domiciles on the property. After all the patients were fed, and the dishes done, the staff ate family style in the dining room of the big house. Left over scraps were taken daily to the Grob farm on Given Rd. for the hogs.

They took the patients outdoors for some fresh air and to bask in the sunshine. Music was played for their enjoyment and sometimes Brigitte would dance with the patients. Sunday was visiting day for the families. Other than that, there was not much variation in the daily routine; dressing, feeding, cleaning up, feeding again, and so on.

Ora Lawson, from southeastern Kentucky, was the cook in those years. Relatives of hers, also from Kentucky, gained employment at the nursing home in 1955. Harding Ward, and wife Aslee, were hired and moved to the complex with their daughters, Ann, age 12 and Stella, age 10. Harding was the caretaker. The girls helped with chores; carrying trays and doing dishes.

They attended Indian Hills School. There was a non-paying patient who was the laundress, Susan, who worked to secure her place at the facility.

Dr. W. S. Terwilleger, from Madeira, was the attending physician. There were never any empty beds. The rest home was always full, and entrance depended on space at the facilities.

For decades, Pauline Stiegler was the owner, administrator, and head nurse. She slept in the office and always wore a uniform while on duty. She was on call 24/7 and was always working. In a time period when state certification was not required, she trained the new staff members.

The Village of Indian Hill was incorporated in 1941. The Village Charter prohibited commercial establishments. However, since Pauline had established her business and renovated her parcel before the charter was written, her business was grandfathered in. In 1960, however, she started construction on a new larger place in Madeira at the corner of Camargo Rd. and a small lane. Madeira asked the family what they should name the lane so Pauline's grandniece,



Brigitte, suggested it should be called Stiegler Lane. Today, Stiegler Lane is still there, but because of enlargement of the nursing home, the lane no longer goes through. See photo above.

The new nursing home could accommodate 72 beds. It had a chapel, recreation area, five lounges, a beauty salon, and a hydrotherapy facility. Stiegler's Nursing Home moved to the new building in Madeira in 1961. This picture is what the 1960's building looked like. Indian Hill had purchased her old place.

Pauline continued her life's work at Stiegler Nursing Home in Madeira, tending for as many as 94 residents there. The place was advertised as the home with a heart for its patients. In the late 1960's she retired and sold the business to James Glass and his brother, Donald Glass. They changed the name to Madeira Nursing Center. In 1976, the nursing home was sold to Premier Health Care Management. It is now called Madeira Health Center and has been expanded by 44 private beds.

Nurse Pauline Stiegler was not only compassionate to her patients, so was she generous to her family. She was a selfless, stalwart, and purposeful woman. In Brigitte's own words, "she was such a good nurse".

Thanks to Brigitte Vielhauer and son, Jeff Vielhauer, for the personal interview. I am glad we got to meet, and I learned about the history of Stiegler's Rest Home and Stiegler Lane.

My references were so well written that it was hard to resist retyping it in whole. However, those of you who follow my Madeira Historical Society stories might know that's not been my style. Please, forgive me for either copying parts verbatim, or where I took poetic license.

Mrs. Stiegler's Nursing Home in Indian Hill, history written by Brigitte Vielhauer, Ann Ward McFarland, and Stella Ward Schafer.

Indian Hill Bulletins, part 1, September 4, 2019, by The Indian Hill Historical Society, page 22, and part 2, October 2, 2019, page 14.

Photos courtesy of the Vielhauer's and Hamilton County Auditor website.

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Also see, "What's in a Name" under Street Names.