

Samuel Gray and Cincinnati's TB History

This tells the story of Samuel Gray within the context of the TB (Tuberculosis) health crisis within Cincinnati and all of America.

By 1920, Samuel Gray was no longer living with his wife, Anna Molloy Gray. Census records find him renting a room as a lodger, while she had found a home with her daughter and son-in-law. Whether the separation resulted from illness, financial hardship, or family circumstances, the surviving records do not tell us. By the time Samuel entered Cincinnati's Tuberculosis Sanatorium, however, he appears to have been living apart from his family for several years.

Aunt Jean's written notes recall Samuel and Anna separating when t Clarence Gray was in grade school. In 1923, Samuel entered Cincinnati's Tuberculosis Sanatorium on Guerley Road. On December 13, 1923, he died there at the age of forty-eight. Like so many victims of tuberculosis, his final years seem to have been marked by isolation—living apart from the family he had once known.

Samuel Gray
1923 TB at Dunham

Confirms his parents
are Esther Hicks
from Tennessee
and Wm Gray from
Atlanta GA



STATE OF OHIO
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

1. PLACE OF DEATH: Cincinnati
County: Hamilton
Registration District No.: 4 File No.: 4760
Township: Cincinnati No.: 1 Registered No.: 1

2. FULL NAME: Samuel Gray
(Last, first, middle, and surname)
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

3. RESIDENCE: Cincinnati Ward: 1
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS

4. SEX: Male COLOR OR RACE: White MARRIAGE: Married
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

5. DATE OF BIRTH: Aug 15 1875
AGE: 48 3 28
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

6. OCCUPATION OF DECEASED: Labourer
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

7. PLACE OF BIRTH: Atlanta Ga
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

8. NAME OF FATHER: Wm Gray
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

9. NAME OF MOTHER: Esther Hicks
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

10. PLACE OF BIRTH OF MOTHER: Tennessee
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

11. NAME OF DECEASED'S WIFE: Anna Molloy Gray
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

12. DATE OF DEATH: Dec 13 1923
AGE: 48 3 28
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

13. CAUSE OF DEATH: Pulmonary Tuberculosis
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

14. PLACE OF BURIAL: Cincinnati
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

15. NAME OF BURIAL: Samuel Gray
(If deceased, give the exact name of the person)

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This link tells a story of the TB Hospital on Guerley Road in Cincinnati.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8K34DSzaD8>

This link is a PBS show about TB as experience in America.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/plague/>

Uncle Bob said the same thing that Aunt Jean wrote here. Samuel Gray and Anna Molloy Gray were separated when Clarence Gray was young. Samuel was from Atlanta. Samuel had some background in printing business. Bob and Jean never saw a picture of Samuel Gray. Aunt Jean's note are below:

Clarence Ward Gray, my father, was born on April 3, 1898 in Atlanta to Anna Marie Molloy, who was born in Marietta, Ohio and Samuel Gray, who was from Atlanta, Georgia. Clarence was the only child born to my paternal grandparents. Our Gray ancestors originally came from New York. Some of them came down the Ohio River to this area and then on to Atlanta. Many of them were in the printing business. Anna Marie Molloy was from Marietta, Ohio. I never heard the story of how she got to Atlanta.

When my Father was in grade school his parents also separated, and I never had the privilege of knowing my Grandfather, or saw a picture of him. I don't know anything about his family, except that there were a couple of Uncles - one's name was Bill. That information coincides with information about Dale Gray Corde's family, who is the mother of Cheryl Corde, a playmate of our Cheri, who lived across the street from our family on Nandale Drive in the fifties.

Here is a picture of Anna Gray with Aunt Kiki. She was the oldest relative I ever knew.



Bob, Bernie, Great Grandma, Don, Tom, Aunt Mae, Dorothy



1876

Samuel born in Atlanta.

↓

1898

Clarence born.

↓

By 1920

Samuel boarding as a lodger.

Anna living elsewhere with Clarence and Genevieve Gray (daughter)

↓

1923

Admitted to Cincinnati Tuberculosis Sanatorium.

↓

Dec. 13, 1923

Dies of tuberculosis.

↓

Dec. 17, 1923

Body buried—or removed? (still under investigation)



Samuel Gray's 1923 death certificate places him in the midst of one of the great public health battles of the early twentieth century. Tuberculosis was then what cancer and heart disease would later become: a leading cause of death that touched nearly every family.

Tuberculosis in the 1920s

In 1923, tuberculosis (TB), often called "**consumption**" or "**the white plague**," was still one of America's deadliest infectious diseases.



Courtesy of Mary Hotaling





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Some perspective:

- Before antibiotics, **there was no cure.**
- TB was caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, although many people simply knew it as a wasting disease.
- It spread through tiny droplets when infected people coughed or sneezed.
- Victims slowly lost weight, developed chronic coughs, fever, night sweats, and often coughed up blood.
- Many remained ill for months or even years before dying.

In the United States during the early 1920s:

- TB killed roughly **100,000 Americans every year.**
- It was responsible for about **one out of every ten deaths among young adults.**
- The disease struck rich and poor alike but flourished where people lived in crowded housing with poor ventilation.

Because there were no effective medicines, physicians concentrated on giving the body every opportunity to fight the disease.

The Treatment Philosophy

Doctors believed recovery depended on four things:

- fresh air
- sunshine
- nutritious food
- complete rest

Patients often spent hours every day on screened sleeping porches—even in winter under heavy blankets.

The typical routine was remarkably strict:

- Wake early
- Temperature and pulse recorded
- Large breakfast
- Hours of enforced bed rest
- Quiet walks only if improving
- High-calorie meals
- Early bedtime

Some patients recovered enough to return home. Many did not.

It would not be until **1943**, with the discovery of **streptomycin**, that physicians finally had an antibiotic capable of treating tuberculosis.

The hospital where Samuel Gray died in **1923** was indeed on **Gurley (often spelled Guerley) Road in West Price Hill**, not at the Longview Hospital campus. My earlier reply conflated two different Hamilton County institutions.





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Here's how the history fits together:

- **1879** – The City of Cincinnati purchased the **53-acre Gurley Farm** along what is now **Guerley Road** in the Lick Run valley area of West Price Hill. A **Branch Hospital for Contagious Diseases** was built there, originally to isolate smallpox and other contagious illnesses.
- **1897** – Tuberculosis had become Cincinnati's leading cause of death. The Branch Hospital was expanded and became **the first municipally owned tuberculosis hospital in the United States**. Fifteen TB patients were transferred there from Cincinnati General Hospital, and new wards were added over the following decades.
- **1912** – It officially became the **Cincinnati Tubercular Hospital**, a separate institution devoted almost entirely to tuberculosis treatment. By then it had about **450 beds**, open-air sleeping porches (solaria), nurses' residences, occupational therapy buildings, and even a school for children of patients.
- **1923** – When Samuel Gray died there, it was operating as the **Cincinnati Tubercular Hospital**. The name "**Dunham Hospital**" would not be adopted until **1945**, when the hospital was renamed in honor of Dr. Henry Kennon Dunham, its longtime medical director and a nationally recognized TB researcher.

What Samuel would have experienced

In December 1923, Samuel likely stayed in one of the long brick wards with large windows and open porches. Patients spent much of each day outdoors, even during winter, wrapped in blankets to receive what doctors believed were the healing effects of fresh air and sunlight. Since antibiotics were still twenty years away, treatment consisted primarily of:

- Bed rest
- Fresh air therapy
- High-calorie meals
- Careful nursing
- Hope that the body's immune system could contain the infection

Unfortunately, many patients admitted in the advanced stages of tuberculosis never returned home.

Today, the site is the **Dunham Recreation Center**. Much of the hospital complex was demolished after it closed in 1971, but a few historic buildings remain and have been adapted for community use. Many longtime Price Hill residents still remember the property simply as "Dunham."

There is no evidence that Samuel Gray was buried in the old **West Price Hill Potter's Field** lies immediately south of the hospital grounds. Historical research has shown that **hundreds of tuberculosis patients from the hospital who had no family or whose families could not afford burial were buried there**, many in unmarked graves.

The last lines of the death certificate are hard to read, but it appears to say _____ Med School.

The final line of Samuel's death certificate is difficult to decipher. Rather than naming a cemetery, it appears to reference a place of 'removal,' possibly ending with the words 'Med. Sch.' If this interpretation proves correct, it could indicate that Samuel's body was transferred to a Cincinnati medical school after death. Additional research is needed before this conclusion can be confirmed.

Final Thought

In 1923, Samuel's story was tragically ordinary. Tuberculosis was America's leading infectious killer. Almost every Cincinnati family knew someone who had entered the Tuberculosis Sanatorium on Guerley Road. Thousands never returned home. Samuel Gray's story is therefore both intensely personal and part of a much larger chapter in Cincinnati's history.