

# Last Look?

## J.N. ADAM CENTER, PERRYSBURG

By Jim Bisco



The main building of the J.N. Adam complex in Perrysburg as it stands today. See page 54 for story on the site's history.  
LARRY BEAHAN PHOTO

Abandoned for the past decade, the J.N. Adam Developmental Center in Perrysburg is withering away like the patients who first came for a tuberculosis cure in the complex's original inception as a sanatorium.

The complex and its surrounding 650 acres have been bandied about in recent months between those interested in preserving the site and a logging company interested in purchasing it.

The Friends of J.N. Adam Historic Landmark & Forest (FJNA) is a group of concerned citizens who are reaching out to universities, outdoor education groups and individuals to find a tenant-enterprise that would both preserve and employ these great assets, the J.N. Adam campus and the Perrysburg forest.

FJNA saw the danger that the historic buildings, some still in good repair, might be leveled and the forest itself, valued at \$1.5 million as timber but invaluable in terms of recreation, education and watershed protection, might be harvested. Destruction of its forest-protected watershed would compromise the Town of Perrysburg's water supply. If the property were sold primarily for logging rather than reuse, a treasure of historic and natural resources would be lost to Western New York.

The 93-year-old complex, originally owned by the City of Buffalo, is a unique and revolutionary design done by the noted architect John Hopper Coxhead that incorporated principles of the naturalistic Swiss-oriented TB cures of the

time. The hospital's success in treating this disease brought fame and prosperity to this region of Cattaraugus County in the first half of the 20th century. When effective antibiotics for TB made long hospitalizations unnecessary, the sanatorium was recycled for educating the mentally handicapped. Better methods of helping the mentally handicapped again forced the venerable establishment into retirement by the 1990s.

The preservation issue took a sharp turn at the Buffalo Common Council meeting of August 10th when the vote was passed to give up the city's reversionary rights. The decision paves the way for the state to sell the site to Trathen Land Co. of Livingston County, the logger that accused the city of illegally blocking its plans to buy the land. The deal would also transfer the site's water system to Perrysburg.

The vote was taken when Council President David A. Franczyk, a vocal opponent of the sale, was out of town. In a letter sent to peers urging them to block the deal, he said, "Not only is our city being cheated on the purchase price, a measly \$333,900 when the parcel in question was assessed at \$4 million two years ago, but the bidder has no ... plan ... to preserve or reuse the buildings." Trathen has pledged to "responsibly" manage the forest.

The FJNA promises to continue seeking preservationist options for the site. In developing a new marketing campaign for this purpose, they say that a biodiversity survey of the 650 acres and a professional real estate survey of the buildings are necessary.

Hopefully a cure can be found for the former TB hospital site and its lush forest rather than its imminent demise at the cutting hands of a logging operation. ■