

First Indianapolis AA Member

Doherty Sheerin (1892-1953)

Doherty's niece, Laura, described him as a devoutly religious family man who was full of fun and steady as a rock. His friends never saw him drunk and received news of his illness with stark disbelief. But in the spring of 1936, Doherty became ill with a damaged liver and had to stop drinking—his life depended on it, but he could not. Consequently, he became a patient in the alcoholic ward of Menninger's Hospital, in Topeka, Kansas;



Doherty Sheerin's town residence

750 Central Ave., Indianapolis, IN

but he left after few months and began compulsive, destructive drinking. Eventually, Doherty became a patient at Sacred Heart Hospital in Milwaukee where he spent two years. He was released, but only under the care of an attendant. He returned to Indiana, and took residence at the family's country home, nicknamed "The Tangle" (pictured below).

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This November 1937 photograph was taken about three years before the historic first AA Indianapolis meeting took place in this house in October of 1940. This property included 10 acres of heavily wooded land which bordered 106th Street and west of Keystone in Carmel, Indiana. Doherty had been sober since 1938, but two years of that time was spent being treated for alcoholism at Sacred heart Hospital in Milwaukee. A live-in attendant was assigned to watch over him, here at Tanglewood, but Doherty won a court battle in January of 1940 and became free of supervision.