

UTICA STATE HOSPITAL.

UTICA, N.Y.

(Several pages missing)...In 1841 Messrs. David Russell, W. H. Shearman, Nicholas Devereux, Theodore S. Faxton and Dr. Charles B. Coventry were appointed trustees, and on April 7, 1842, Messrs. Devereux, Jacob Sutherland, Charles A. Mann, Alfred Munson, Abraham V. Williams, Thomas H. Hubbard, David Buel and Drs. Coventry and T. Romeyn Beck were made managers. Among their first acts were the appointments of Edmund A. Wetmore, treasurer, and Dr. Amariah Brigham, physician and superintendent.

On January 16, 1843, the asylum, though still hardly completed, was thrown open for the admission of patients, and during the year 276 persons were received. In 1844 it became evident that enlargement was necessary, and the original plan for four separate buildings being abandoned, two wings each 240 by 38 feet in size were built, projecting from the center of each wing and at right angles thereto. In 1847 these wings were completed, bringing the total cost of the asylum up to \$448,980. During his incumbency as superintendent Dr. Brigham had all the labor of organization upon his shoulders. That he was not content with simply building an institution for the incarceration of the lunatic, but wished to have it really a hospital for the cure of the insane, is shown by his frequent reiteration of the fact that insanity is really a disease, and that the patient required treatment as much as any other invalid. A great believer in the therapeutic value of labor, Dr. Brigham set the patients at work on the grounds and farm, and caused to be constructed carpenter, shoemaker, cabinet maker, tailor, blacksmith, and "whittling" shops. A printing office was established, and in 1844 the *American Journal of Insanity*, the first journal devoted to the subject of insanity in the world, was published, with Dr. Brigham as editor. *The Opal*, edited and published by the patients, also was begun at this time. The tremendous strain under which he had labored soon began to tell upon Dr. Brigham's strength, and in 1848 his health failed. A trip to the South and an absence of several months failed to restore him, and on September 8, 1849, he breathed his last within the walls of the institution which his energy, foresight, wisdom and ability had converted from an empty shell into a flourishing home for the insane and a seat of scientific research, which was already attracting the attention of the medical world.

On November 3, 1849, Dr. Nathan D. Benedict, of Blockley Hospital, Philadelphia, was appointed superintendent. He held the position for four and a half years, when failing health necessitated his resignation. The most important events of this period were the installation of a heating and ventilating system in 1851, features which had been sadly neglected by the original builders, the grading of lawns and roadways, the setting out of trees on the grounds, and the abandonment of the strong rooms which had previously been used in the basement of the institution. The work on the grounds which was begun during Dr. Benedict's time was carried on under the direction of Mr. Charles Downing, of Newburgh, an eminent landscape artist, and to his efforts and artistic taste are due the superb trees which to-day make the grounds one of the beauty spots of the city. Most of the planting was done in the years 1853-55. The abolition of the strong rooms, though occurring during Dr. Benedict's jurisdiction, was due to the initiative of his assistant, Dr. John P. Gray. Prior to this time strong rooms, padded cells and all manner of mechanical restraints were considered necessary for the care of the insane. In 1852, however, Dr. Gray, with his superior officer's consent, tried the experiment in the most disturbed men's ward of taking all patients out of their confinement, and allowing them to come to a common dining table. Such good order prevailed, and the patients, as a result of the kindness, were so much quieter, that soon the strong rooms were left unlocked, and as rapidly as possible were remodeled into ordinary rooms. Since then strong rooms have not been used. On July 19, 1854, Dr. John P. Gray was appointed superintendent, to succeed Dr. Benedict.

On July 14, 1857, an incendiary fire destroyed the main building of the institution, but fortunately the patients were all removed safely. Two years later the damage had been entirely repaired, many improvements having been made in the process. After the repairs had been completed the average daily number of patients rapidly increased, and in the year 1860 the number reached 516.

During the next decade the overcrowding became extreme, and the facilities for the proper care of patients were much diminished in consequence - a crowded condition, however, which was relieved by the opening of the new Willard Asylum for chronic insane in 1869, and the Hudson River State Hospital in 1872.

In 1879 day rooms were added for the women patients. In 1880 the work shops were much enlarged, and in 1885 new additions were made for the care of disturbed patients. The same year cracks appeared in the walls at the northwest end of the main building, and steadily widened, causing

great anxiety as to its safety. Investigation showed that this end of the building had been built on quicksand, the foundation of the inner walls being only three feet deep, and resting on sand and gravel. The entire end of the building was supported by steel girders, the sand and gravel were excavated, and new foundation walls were built upon hardpan. In 1886 work on the assembly hall was commenced.

Dr. Gray's administration may well be characterized as marking the period of the introduction of scientific research. In 1861 the medical work of the institution was organized, and a systematic record of each patient's case was inaugurated. In 1868 Dr. E. R. Hun was appointed special pathologist, and upon his going in 1873 he was succeeded by Mr. Theodore Deecke. Dating from the appointment of Dr. Hun, systematic autopsies of patients dying in the asylum were made and recorded, to be eventually published in the superintendent's annual reports. Photography and photomicrography were also developed to promote exact records. In 1869 Dr. Henry D. Noyes, of New York, made extensive ophthalmoscopic examinations of patients, and instructed the staff in the use of the ophthalmoscope.

Thorough studies of the blood and excreta of patients were also begun. In every possible way scientific studies of the physical aspect of insanity were conducted, and the reports which appeared in the *American Journal of Insanity* attracted wide attention among European psychiatrists.

After the death of Dr. Gray, Dr. G. Alder Blumer, the first assistant, was appointed superintendent on December 14, 1886. With Dr. Blumer's appointment further changes and improvements were made in rapid succession. He removed from the wards every form of mechanical restraint, the last one, the so-called "Utica Crib," being removed January 18, 1887. This device, which had been introduced by Dr. Gray, consisted of an ordinary wooden bed with slatted sides and top, and had been used to restrain patients whose physical condition demanded rest, but who, owing to their mental state, refused to remain in bed. Much odium has attached to the name of the "Utica Crib," but the wildest stretch of the imagination could not call it an instrument of torture. It was useful in a certain class of patients, but other and better methods of treatment have superseded it. Since 1887, however, no patient has been restrained mechanically in the Utica State Hospital, except for surgical reasons.

Dr. Blumer also early began to change the institution from an asylum to a hospital. In 1887 the bare wards were carpeted and curtained, the attendants were put into uniforms similar to those of hospital nurses, and the admission of general visitors was interdicted, except by card from the managers. In 1888 female nurses were placed upon the male wards, and Dr. Blumer suggested that the name be changed to the Utica State Hospital, thus eliminating the unpleasant terms “asylum” and “insane.” This latter suggestion was carried out by an act of Legislature in 1890, since which time the “New York State Lunatic Asylum at Utica” has been known as the “Utica State Hospital.”

Another change which took place at this time was the systematic introduction of amusements, especially outdoor games, for the patients. On the opening of the assembly hall in 1907, weekly dances for the patients were inaugurated, and were greatly enjoyed by all who were able to attend. The first athletic field day was held on April 29, 1887, and was at once established as an annual event. In 1888 baseball games were held, a pleasure steamboat was procured for trips on the Erie Canal, fireworks were provided for Independence Day, and a tree at Christmas. All of these proved such sources of pleasure and interest, that they have become regular parts of the regime. In 1891 a large sleigh was purchased, and since then sleigh rides are almost daily events during the winter months.

The years 1889 and 1890 are marked by two events of prime importance, the establishment of the State Commission of Lunacy and the passage of the State Care Act. The former took most of the power from the hands of the local managers and gave it to a state commission, and the latter provided that all the insane paupers in the state be removed from the jails and poorhouses and be sent to the state hospitals. The result of these two innovations was an era of rigid economy and supervision of the institutions, and at the same time an extreme overcrowding of the hospitals. In 1892 the overcrowding was in part relieved by the opening of the infirmary building for the care of 200 of the helpless and bed-ridden. This enlargement increased the average of population in 1892 to 811, but the relief was only temporary, and by 1895 an average of 1004 patients was crowded into the hospital each day. In 1897 another great innovation was adopted in the leasing of 160 acres of land south of the institutional grounds, and the opening of the “farm colony,” known as “Graycroft.” In this 20 male patients were quartered, as in an ordinary farm house, and allowed to employ themselves on the farm. The next year “Dixhurst” (named for Dorothea L. Dix), a similar house for 20 women, was opened, and the Graycroft colony was increased to 37. Graycroft has

continued to the present, and has proved most successful. Dixhurst, however, was abandoned in 1901, because the land could not be purchased. With the purchase of Graycroft and other property in 1900, 230 acres were added to the original estate.

On September 14, 1899, Dr. Blumer resigned to accept the position of superintendent of the Butler Hospital, in Providence, R. I. During his incumbency many changes had occurred. To those already mentioned may be added an increase in the capacity of the institution from 600, in 1885, to over 1000, in 1899, and an increase in the percentage of patients employed in useful and pleasant occupations from 35 to 60 per cent.

Dr. Harold L. Palmer succeeded Dr. Blumer, having received his appointment in November, 1899. During his term of office the policies of Dr. Blumer have been continued and extended, and the institution has been greatly enlarged and improved. In 1903 a new kitchen was built, and in 1904 a contagious pavilion for 34 patients was opened. In 1905 separate houses for the superintendent and the medical staff were completed, and in the following year alterations in the old staff quarters furnished accommodations for 76 extra patients. The completion of the nurses' home, in 1908, for 200 attendants, increased the capacity by 100 more, while in January, 1909, the much-needed acute hospital was opened, supplying proper means of caring for acute cases of insanity by all the modern hydrotherapeutic methods, and also giving the hospital a thoroughly up-to-date operating room. The average daily number of patients for the year 1911 was 1491.

During the year 1911 the growth of the city has made it necessary to encroach upon the grounds of the Utica State Hospital by extending Hickory Street through its grounds. The bill allowing this passed the Legislature early in July, and was the culmination of a disagreement between the city and state which had its inception in 1890. The injury to the hospital in consequence of this encroachment upon its privacy is so great it has been deemed wise to move the hospital outside of the city, and on July 24, 1911, a bill passed the Legislature authorizing the Lunacy Commission to procure a site of 1000 acres near the City of Utica, on which a new state hospital may be built. Up to the time of going to press (1915), however, no development of this property has been started, the Legislature having made no appropriation for buildings. The managers of the Utica State Hospital for the year 1911 are: Mr. George E. Dunham, president; Rev. Edward H. Coley, secretary; Mr.

Thomas F. Baker, Miss Mary Isabel Doolittle, Mrs. Lizzie E. Constable, Mr. John D. Kernan, and Lieut. William G. Mayer.

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