

**BINGHAMTON STATE HOSPITAL.  
BINGHAMTON, N. Y.**

As early as 1858 the citizens of Binghamton had donated 250 acres of land two miles from the center of the town as a site for an institution which, under the title of the New York State Inebriate Asylum, had been given corporate existence by the Legislature during the session of 1854. The asylum, though receiving \$17,000 annually from the excise funds of the state - additional funds for maintenance being received from voluntary subscriptions - proved a failure, and on the 15th of May, 1879, the state acquired full title through legislative enactment. A Board of Managers named by Governor Robinson appointed on June 20, 1879, Dr. Carlos F. MacDonald, formerly superintendent of the State Asylum for Insane Criminals at Auburn, as superintendent, Jerome DeWitt as treasurer, and H. G. Blanding as steward.

Meanwhile the Legislature, by Chapter 280 of the Laws of 1879, had appropriated \$67,500 for the general remodeling of the buildings and subsequent appropriations were for many years on a similar scale. In the disbursement of this sum, however, the managers were charged by State Comptroller Wadsworth with violation of law in exceeding appropriations, extravagance and grave irregularities. Governor Cornell transmitted these charges to the Legislature, recommending the removal of the entire board. After a legislative inquiry, however, the charges were finally withdrawn and the board was continued in control. Architect Isaac G. Perry had charge of the remodeling of the buildings, which made rapid progress. With total appropriations from the state of only \$210,360, the institution opened its doors under the title of the "Binghamton State Hospital for the Chronic Insane" on the 19th of October, 1881, after the completion of repairs made necessary by a disastrous fire; receiving by transfer from the asylums at Utica, Poughkeepsie and Middletown 298 chronic patients, who otherwise would have gone to county institutions. Meanwhile unfortunate differences had arisen between the Board of Managers and Superintendent MacDonald, resulting from an attempted inference on the part of the former in the appointment of subordinate employees. This resulted in the resignation of Dr. MacDonald on July 1, 1880. Dr. Theodore S. Armstrong, a member of the Board of Managers, succeeded Dr. MacDonald on the 28th of April, 1881, and Edwin Evans succeeded Mr. Blanding as steward of the institution.

The hospital grew rapidly in population and through the erection of buildings of a simple character, supplemented at times by the use of tents. In 1887 the Phelps Farm of 388 acres, two miles from the main building, was acquired and the following year the Barlow Farm adjoining, consisting of 191 acres, was also purchased. On these two farms a definite plan of allowing the chronic insane greater liberty was put into successful operation. The farms were largely cultivated by the labor of patients, for whom comfortable quarters were provided in farm-houses already constructed upon the property when it was purchased. The farmhouses were afterwards improved and enlarged and now constitute the farm colony known as "Orchard House," "Morningside," "Plymouth Rock" and "Parkhurst." The early purchase of other lands increased the farming area to approximately 1000 acres.

To provide for the constantly increasing population, additional buildings of a simple character and chiefly on the dormitory plan were erected for the use of patients, and other structures, including shops for general repair work, a laundry, carriage and cow-barn, stables and a variety of other small buildings, were added. A new heating system was devised in connection with a great power plant on the bank of the Susquehanna River alongside the Erie Railroad tracks, from which a pipe line running through a brick duct half a mile or more to the several buildings supplied steam for heating, cooking and power purposes; also new pumps for an adequate water supply and a gasoline lighting plant of large size were installed. In the meantime extensive improvements were made upon the asylum grounds by grading, road building and landscape gardening, all of which greatly increased the attractiveness of the institution.

For the entertainment of patients a brass band was organized among the employees early in the history of the asylum and excellent concerts were given on the lawn in summer and in the chapel during the fall and winter. Weekly dances were held for the patients during the cooler months and an asylum orchestra furnished the music for them. Another important musical organization in those early days, composed of employees, was a choir consisting of male and female voices, which regularly furnished good music for Sunday religious services and often sang for the patients on the wards in the evenings.

In 1890 the state abolished the distinction between acute and chronic insanity. The name "hospital" was substituted for "asylum" and a systematic effort was made to educate both the patients and the

public to look upon these institutions as hospitals where care and treatment were provided, rather than as mere places of detention where the unfortunate sufferer once incarcerated had little if any chance of ever emerging alive. The same act provided for the division of the state into districts. Under this beneficent law the Binghamton Asylum for the Chronic Insane became the Binghamton State Hospital, and the district assigned to it comprised the counties of Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Madison, Otsego, Schoharie and Tioga, from which since 1890 it has received all the insane, regardless of whether the malady was in the acute or chronic stage.

In all progressive steps that made for the betterment of conditions surrounding the insane Dr. Armstrong was deeply interested, but failing health during the last two years of his life seriously interfered with the completion of his plans. Shortly before Christmas, 1891, he had a severe attack of epidemic influenza, and died suddenly of heart failure December 27, 1891.

The vacancy caused by his death was filled February 8, 1892, by the appointment of Dr. Charles G. Wagner, first assistant physician at the Utica State Hospital.

At the time Dr. Wagner assumed charge the "hospital idea" was already in the ascendancy and the new superintendent devoted his energies to the development of all its departments in harmony with that idea. Mechanical restraint was abolished from the wards, bars and gratings were removed from many of the windows, diversified occupations were provided and the largest degree of personal liberty consistent with safety was allowed the inmates. As the chronic asylum features were eliminated the wards took on a more cheerful aspect and the patients became more tractable under the refining influence of artistic furniture, pictures, rugs, carpets, curtains and other draperies.

During the first year of his administration a training school for nurses was started, an annual field day was established, and the Christmas tree festivities were inaugurated, all of which have since been permanent features of the hospital management. An electric lighting plant was installed in 1893, to replace the old gasoline generators; a new bakery was built and a coal trestle was constructed in connection with the power-plant. A little later an assembly hall for entertainments and religious services was erected; a nurses' home was built and the old north and east buildings were enlarged and modernized. Other improvements of greater or less magnitude were made from year to year, which contributed to the general betterment of the hospital. In June, 1905, the new tuberculosis

pavilion, Edgewood, was opened for 100 patients of both sexes. This pavilion was modeled after the plans outlined in the King Edward prize essay published in 1902, and occupies an exceedingly favorable location on a southern slope of the hospital premises, protected on the north and west by highland and forest. A superintendent's residence was also erected and the quarters formerly used by him in the main building were transformed into wards for patients. In 1905 the hospital farm was increased by the purchase of 180 acres of land known as the "Parks" farm, and the farm area was further extended in 1912 by the purchase of 250 acres known as the "Hays" farm. These purchases have increased the farm and garden territory to 1363 acres and have made the maintenance of the dairy and the cultivation of farm produce important departments of labor at the institution.

In 1908 an acute or reception hospital, "Fairmount," with 80 beds, was opened for the early reception of patients suffering from acute attacks of insanity. This building, with its trained nurses, small wards, hydrotherapeutic equipment, special diet kitchen and other facilities for the care and treatment of acute cases, has proven a great boon to those who need the care given to the sick in addition to protection and shelter. Another notable feature of the year was a new departure in caring for convalescent patients by the establishment of a summer camp on the hospital farm about two miles from the main building. This camp was christened "Pine Camp." It consisted of a number of tents in which patients and their nurses slept, a dining tent and a small wooden shack for a kitchen. The camp had an ideal location on a fine terrace along the Susquehanna River. Great pine and elm trees sheltered it from the summer sun and a broad stretch of moderately deep water afforded ample facilities for boating, fishing and bathing. Hammocks and swings, boats, music, a library of reading matter, and all necessary kitchen and dining room utensils completed the camp equipment. A telephone in the tent occupied by the charge nurse is connected with the office in the hospital administration building, so that the camp may be at all times in close touch with the medical staff. In the evening a camp-fire glowed at the water's edge in front of the tents and was greatly enjoyed by the patients, of whom about 25 were usually in the camp. From the first the camp was a success. The patients enjoyed the open air life, with its numerous and diverse recreations; they slept better and had better appetites; they gained in general health, and with bodily improvement came strength of mind and nervous vigor. The nurses who had charge of the camp enjoyed the outdoor life and volunteers for the camp service were numerous. The camp was continued until October, when frosty nights and early morning fogs were found somewhat objectionable and it was deemed best to take down the tents and pack them away for the winter. Such was the experience with the camp the

first year of its existence. Since then it has been enlarged, improved by the erection of several rustic buildings and made a permanent feature of hospital summer life.

In 1908 the large building, Broadmoor, designed for 600 chronic cases, was completed and its wards were filled by transfer from other state hospitals where crowded conditions were in urgent need of relief. Early in 1910 the new nurses' home, Ferris Hall, with accommodations for 150 persons, was opened and gave to the employees more comfortable quarters than had been previously available in the institution, and in 1911 a filter plant, constructed as a part of the water-works system, provided for the hospital an abundance of pure water. At the present time (1913) funds to the amount of \$60,000 are available for general reconstruction of the electric lighting plant and \$22,000 for the enlargement and better equipment of the laundry. These improvements will soon be made. Besides the items mentioned in this brief outline of the history of the Binghamton State Hospital, there have been many improvements incident to the growth and development of a great institution, of which the patients' population now numbers nearly 2400, and the employment roll nearly 500, but the limits of this sketch do not admit of their complete description or enumeration. It should be mentioned, however, that with the material development of the hospital there has been great progress in its clinical work.

The training school for nurses has reached a high degree of efficiency and supplies skilled nurses for ward duty. The medical staff performs its duties with closer attention to systematic details and its members have become more efficient through attendance at the Psychiatric Institute in New York City, where special courses of instruction have been given from time to time by the directors, Drs. Adolf Meyer and August Hoch, and their able assistants. Consequently the methods of study and analysis of cases, the systematic recording of histories and the care and treatment of patients are now far in advance of the methods of a few years ago.

Since 1895 the hospital has maintained a pathological laboratory and has accumulated a large and valuable series of specimens of diseased structures, many of which have been carefully studied microscopically and sections from them have been placed permanently in cabinets and regularly catalogued. It may be added that more than 80 per cent of all cases dying in the hospital come to autopsy. In connection with the pathological laboratory there has also been maintained a department of analytical chemistry, where for several years past the hospital chemist has made qualitative and

quantitative analyses of practically all drugs, food supplies and commercial articles of every description used in the state hospitals of New York.

When the hospital was first organized its affairs were placed by law under the direction of a Board of Trustees. The title of the board some years later was changed to “Managers” and again to “Visitors,” but the term “Managers” was finally again incorporated in the law and the board is now known by this title. The managers for the year 1913 are: Jervis Langdon, president; Henry A. Stephens, secretary; Mrs. Katherine Ely, Dr. Lavinia R. Davis, Merritt Corbett, Benjamin F. Welden and William H. Hecox.

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