

**BLOOMINGDALE HOSPITAL.
WHITE PLAINS, N. Y.**

Bloomington Hospital has not a separate corporate existence. It is a department of the New York Hospital, but, for convenience and efficiency in administration, is conducted, as far as possible, as a separate institution. The hospital is maintained by the Society of the New York Hospital, a benevolent organization, which was incorporated under a royal charter granted on the 13th of June, 1771, by the Earl of Dunmore, Governor of the British Province of New York. The petition for the charter was presented by Peter Middleton, John Jones and Samuel Bard, three eminent physicians. The suggestion for the establishment of a hospital appears to have been first formulated by Dr. Bard, to whom this credit was given by Dr. Middleton in an address delivered at King's (now Columbia) College on the 3d of November, 1769. A subscription for obtaining funds had been started in May of that year, and in 1771, under the terms of the charter, a Board of Governors, consisting of 26 members, was organized. Through the good offices of Dr. John Fothergill and Sir William Duncan a considerable amount was contributed to the society by many of the inhabitants of London and other places in Great Britain. In 1772 the Legislature of the Province of New York voted "an annual allowance of £800 (\$4000) in aid of the institution, for twenty years."

With the resources thus made available, the governors of the society in 1773 purchased from Anthony Rutgers and Mrs. Henry Barclay a plot consisting of five acres on Broadway, at Duane Street, as a site for the hospital. The site is described as "one of the most open and airy situations in the city; and possessed great advantages for the enjoyment of fresh air and salubrious breezes." Plans of a building were procured by Dr. Jones and the foundation stone was laid on the 27th of July, 1773. On February 28, 1775, the building, when almost completed, accidentally took fire and was nearly consumed. By this misfortune the society suffered a loss of £7000, and the execution of its benevolent project would probably have been indefinitely suspended had not the Legislature voted it a grant of £4000 towards the rebuilding of the edifice. The war between Great Britain and the colonies broke out, however, during the same year, and work on the building was discontinued. During the war the building was occupied by British and Hessian soldiers as a barrack and occasionally as a hospital. Following the war, the reduced circumstances of so many of the citizens and the general derangement of affairs prevented any attention to the hospital for some time, and it was not until the 3d of January, 1791, that it was ready to receive patients.

This account of the origin of the hospital was obtained from an interesting history of the New York Hospital, by an unknown author, which was published in 1820. It is of special interest to students of the history of the institutional treatment of mental disorders in America to find that, even before Pinel and Tuke had accomplished their epoch-making reforms, enlightened physicians and philanthropists of New York were including the mentally sick among the classes of cases for whom they contemplated furnishing hospital care and treatment.

That it was the deliberate belief and intention of the governors that this class of sick persons should be provided for is apparent from the following which appeared in their annual report for the year 1797:

“Persons laboring under incurable decrepitude, or long-continued ailments of any kind, are considered fitter objects for an almshouse than for this hospital, which is properly an infirmary, for the reception of such persons as require:

- 1st. Medical treatment.
- 2d. Chirurgical management.
- 3d. Maniacs, and
- 4th. It is contemplated to fit up a lying-in ward, etc.”

From this beginning has grown the present development of Bloomingdale Hospital. The accommodations at first provided for the mental cases were in the basement of the general hospital. This basement is described as being “about ten feet high, contains a large and smaller kitchen, a laundry, bathing room, three storerooms, and three wards, fitted up for the temporary accommodation of patients whose particular disease renders it necessary to remove them from intercourse with others.” These accommodations were, however, found to be inconvenient and inadequate, and in 1806 the governors resolved that, if the Legislature would aid, a separate building for the exclusive use of persons suffering from mental disorder, or “lunatics,” as they were then called, should be erected. An application was accordingly made to the Legislature which, on the 14th of March, 1806, passed an act providing for continuing the annual provision for the hospital, payable out of the duties on sales at auction in the City of New York, until the year 1857. The governors immediately proceeded to erect the building, which was opened for the reception of

patients on the 15th of July, 1808. It was designated "Lunatic Asylum" and the total cost was about \$56,000. The following description of the building is given in the history already referred to:

"The building denominated the lunatic asylum is also of gray stone. It is situated on the southerly side of the ground, at a short distance from the principal building, and corresponding with it in its exterior appearance and style of architecture. Being separate from the other house, the sick are not incommoded by the lunatics, who have separate yards enclosed, one for males and the other for females, where such as can be trusted at large are permitted to walk in the open air.

This building, on account of the declivity of the ground, has a sub-basement, besides a basement and two principal stories. Its length is 90 feet; it is 40 feet deep in the center and 65 feet at the wings, which project 12 ½ feet on each side. The sub-basement contains 10 rooms, 11 feet long and 8 ½ feet wide and 9 feet high; 3 rooms, 16 ½ feet long and 11 ½ feet wide, and a kitchen 23 ½ feet long and 16 ½ feet wide. There is a hall running through the center from one end to the other, into which the doors of the rooms or cells open, opposite to the windows. All the rooms or cells, except the four largest and those in the upper stories, are arched with brick, whitewashed; so that there is no wood, and the floors being filled with brick, the building is completely fireproof; and the patients, while they have sufficient heat in the winter season, cannot possibly set fire to any part of the building, or injure themselves. The basement story contains the same number of rooms, and of the same size with those in the sub-basement. In each of the two principal stories are also 10 rooms, 11 feet long and 8 ½ feet wide; two rooms, 17 feet long, and 11 ½ feet wide, and two rooms, 24 feet long, and 17 feet wide, which open into a hall 11 feet wide. The height of the principal story is 14 ½ feet, and of the upper story 12 ½ feet. There is a yard enclosed, 75 feet in length and 65 feet in breadth, and another between the house and street wall on the southerly side about 200 feet long and 50 feet broad, in which the patients take air and amuse themselves.

The height of the building, from the ground, in front, is about 46 feet. It contains 60 rooms of different dimensions, which will contain about 80 patients. The apartments are adapted for persons of every condition, the rich and the poor, equally subject to this worst of human miseries, who may be here accommodated according to their various circumstances in life."

Previous to the opening of the building the work in dealing with mental disorders was apparently not very well organized, nor are the records relating to the cases complete. The total number

received previous to January 1, 1804, was 215, and when the new building was opened 19 patients were removed to it from the other building and 48 others were admitted. Dr. Archibald Bruce was appointed attending physician to the "Lunatic Asylum" and placed in sole charge of the medical treatment of the patients. He was required to visit the asylum three times every week at least, and oftener if necessary. In 1817 he was succeeded by Dr. William Handy, upon whose resignation, in 1819, Dr. John Nielson was appointed and fulfilled the duties of the office until July, 1821, when the treatment of mental cases at the New York Hospital was discontinued and the work transferred to the new department which was in that year opened in the country under the name of Bloomingdale Asylum. The medical records of the "Lunatic Asylum" of the New York Hospital have been preserved and show that the patients received careful medical study and treatment in accordance with the best standards of the period. In at least one of the histories reference is made to the use of chains in the management of the patient previous to admission to the asylum, but there is nothing to indicate that these implements of restraint formed part of the asylum armamentarium. Blood letting and other depleting measures seem to have been employed rather freely.

The total number of patients treated up to July, 1821, when the department at the general hospital was discontinued, was 1553. Of these, 704 had been discharged cured, 239 "relieved," 278 by request, 61 as improper objects, 65 "disorderly or eloped," 154 died, and 52 were removed to Bloomingdale Asylum.

The administration of the "Lunatic Asylum" was carried on under the supervision of a committee of three governors, annually appointed, who admitted and discharged all the patients. The domestic management and economy of the institution were in charge of the superintendent, who was also steward, and a matron.

By an agreement made with the commissioners of the almshouse of New York City, patients were received at the rate of \$2 per week. This, it is said, barely defrayed the actual cost of their maintenance, exclusive of medicine, clothing and funeral expenses. By an act of Legislature passed on March, 1807, the overseers of the poor of any city or town in the state, by and with the consent of the Common Council of such city, or two justices of the peace of the county in which the town was situated, were empowered to contract with the governors of the hospital for the care and maintenance of insane persons on such terms as were considered to be proper. Under this act the

governors agreed to admit public patients from any part of the state on the same terms as those from the almshouse of New York.

It was during this period that the reforms instituted by Pinel and Tuke began to excite world-wide interest. There was at that time no place in New York State, except the New York Hospital, where hospital treatment or even humane institutional care could be obtained for an insane person. The demands upon the hospital became so great, therefore, that the governors were led to consider making more elaborate and more suitable provision than could be accomplished on the property then owned by the society. In April, 1815, Mr. Thomas Eddy, one of the governors, presented a communication to the board, in which he set forth the advantages that might follow the introduction of “a course of *moral* treatment for the lunatic patients, more extensive than had hitherto been practiced in this country, and similar to that pursued at ‘The Retreat,’ near York, in England,” and he proposed that a number of acres of ground near the city should be purchased and suitable buildings erected for the purpose of this plan of treatment. A committee was appointed by the governors to consider the plan proposed, and, after receiving a favorable report from the committee, the governors resolved to carry it into effect if they could obtain the aid of the Legislature. On the 17th of April, 1816, the Legislature granted to the society an annuity of \$10,000 until the year 1857, to enable the governors, to erect further and more extensive accommodations for insane patients. The first site selected for the proposed institution was a plot of 39 acres, part of which is now occupied by the Cathedral of St. John. After this had been purchased at a cost of \$240 per acre, it was considered by some to be at too great a distance from the city, and another site, consisting of 20 acres, on the East River, two miles nearer the settled parts of the city, was purchased. This also was found not to be adapted in all respects to the plan contemplated and was afterwards sold at a profit of \$2000. After again inspecting places on York Island, and on the opposite of the East River, which were supposed to be suitable for the location of the institution, it was determined that none of those suggested was preferable to the one which had originally been selected in Haerlem. On examining more carefully the ground on this site, however, it was discovered to be generally wet, and it was therefore considered unfit for the purpose. Another piece of ground, not far from the same spot, and nearer to the Hudson River, containing about 26 acres, fronting the Bloomingdale Road, near the seven-mile stone, was finally decided upon and purchased for \$500 per acre. Small plots of ground adjoining this were later added to it, so that finally the

property of the new institution consisted of a little over 77 acres. Part of this property is now occupied by Columbia University.

On this site the corner-stone of the building was laid on the 7th day of May, 1818. From the various plans of an edifice which were laid before them the governors selected one that appeared to be eligible, but, on further consideration, it was laid aside as being far too expensive and not perfectly calculated to carry into effect the design of the proposed establishment. At the request of the governors, several plans were drawn by a member of the board, Mr. Thomas C. Taylor, one of which, as being the least costly and most consonant with their views, was adopted. The plan adopted provided for a center building 211 feet in length and 60 feet deep, with two wings, each placed at a distance of 50 feet from the principal building and connected with it by a colonnade. Each wing was to be 194 feet in length and 50 feet wide. The first construction was of the center building only, which was intended to accommodate 200 patients. It was thought at the time that the wings would not be needed for many years. The cost of the building and land up to 1820 was about \$125,000, and it was thought that \$34,000 additional would be required before the institution would be ready for use. As the annuity granted by the Legislature did not furnish a large enough fund for the required immediate expenditure, the erection of the new institution was accomplished by means of a loan of \$100,000 at six per cent, which was secured by a mortgage on the property. The annual appropriation made by the Legislature was used to pay the interest on the mortgage and to form a sinking fund for the payment of the principal. The building was opened for patients in June, 1821, and was given the name of Bloomingdale Asylum. The patients in the Lunatic Asylum at the New York Hospital, 52 in number, were removed thither and the building they had occupied became a "marine department" for the use of sick and injured seamen. The transfer of the work for mental cases from the New York Hospital to the new institution in the country was, no doubt, attended with many advantages. With the progress of knowledge, however, and the better understanding of the varying needs of the different types of mental cases, it can now be seen that a more complete development of the work would probably have resulted if the department at the general hospital had been retained and simply supplemented by a new department in the country. Had this course been pursued the progress of psychiatry in New York might have been quite different than it has been, and the separation between psychiatry and the other branches of medicine which prevails so generally in medical thought and practice might not have been so sharp.

The satisfaction of the governors in the progress and prospects of their undertaking is expressed by the historian of 1820 with considerable enthusiasm as follows:

“The delightful situation of this establishment and the extensive grounds attached to it will afford ample opportunity to pursue a course of moral treatment. Patients may take useful exercise in horticultural employments or pleasant walks; may enjoy various amusements, be agreeably occupied in taking care of domestic birds and animals, and indulge in such recreations in the open air as will tend to soothe and divert the mind, to dispel desponding images, and prevent those melancholy musings which so often cause and always aggravate mental diseases. Patients of all ranks and conditions in life will find apartments accommodated to their different habits and the wishes of their friends. The expenses of board will, of course, be proportioned to the accommodations enjoyed; and there is no doubt that the income arising from the board of patients will be adequate to defray all the current expenses of the establishment.

In the asylum attached to the hospital in the city there are now 75 lunatic patients; these, with the number waiting for admission, will make at least 100 patients to be received into the new house at Bloomingdale when it shall be opened for that purpose, which will be in May next. A more particular account of this part of the establishment may then be given. It is the only public institution for insane persons in this state; and, it is believed, there is but one other in the United States. It is certain there is none on a plan so enlarged and liberal.”

The management of the new institution was vested in a committee of six governors, appointed by the board. There has been no change in this feature of the administration up to the present time. The officers of the Board of Governors are members of the Bloomingdale committee ex-officio. The minutes of the proceedings of the committee are read at each monthly meeting of the board, and the committee is, in all its acts, subordinate to the board. The institution was organized by the election of Laban Gardner as superintendent, his wife as matron, and Dr. James Eddy as resident physician. Dr. John Neilson, who had, since 1819, been attending physician to the Lunatic Asylum at the New York Hospital, was continued in the same capacity at the new institution and was given general charge of the medical treatment of the patients, being required to visit the hospital at least once a week. He retained the office until January, 1831, when he resigned. A change in the medical organization was then made by the board, the position of attending physician being dispensed with

and the resident physician given immediate control of the moral and medical treatment of the patients. From the opening of the institution in June, 1821, until the organization, the position of resident physician was held by the following: Dr. James Eddy until September, 1822; Dr. Albert Smith from September, 1822, to March, 1824; Dr. John Neilson, Jr., from March to May, 1824; Dr. Abraham V. Williams from May, 1824, to June, 1825; Dr. James MacDonald from June, 1825, to December, 1830; Dr. Guy C. Bayley from December, 1830, until the reorganization of the institution. In May, 1831, under the new organization, Dr. MacDonald was appointed resident physician and was delegated to visit and study some of the principal institutions for the insane in Europe. During his absence of 15 months his place was supplied by Dr. Bayley. Upon his return from Europe Dr. MacDonald entered upon the duties of his position and continued in office until August 15, 1837, when he resigned to open Sanford Hall, a private institution at Flushing, Long Island. He was succeeded by Dr. Benjamin Ogden, who remained in office until 1839, and on the 16th of September of that year Dr. William Wilson was appointed. Dr. Wilson was succeeded on the 1st of April, 1844, by Dr. Pliny Earle. Dr. Earle resigned in 1849, and was succeeded by Dr. Charles H. Nichols, who had previously been an assistant at the Utica State Hospital. In 1852 Dr. Nichols resigned to accept the position of superintendent of the Government Hospital for the Insane at Washington, D. C, for the establishment of which Congress had made an appropriation. He was succeeded by Dr. D. Tilden Brown, who administered the affairs of the institution until 1877, when he resigned. Dr. Nichols was thereupon invited to return. Before consenting to do so he stipulated that the office of superintendent, which had up to this time been held by the steward, should be transferred to the medical position, as during his previous service at Bloomingdale he had found the division of authority detrimental to the interests of the institution. The governors acceded to his request and Dr. Nichols was made the first medical superintendent with complete control of the internal administration. He retained the position until his death on December 16, 1889, and was succeeded by Dr. Samuel B. Lyon, who had been his first assistant physician. Dr. Lyon continued in office until July 1, 1911, when he resigned and the writer was appointed as his successor.

During the years that passed from the opening of Bloomingdale Asylum in 1821 until some time after Dr. Lyon became medical superintendent, the work of providing for the care and treatment of persons suffering from mental disorder which had been undertaken by the Society of the New York Hospital was continued at the original site in Haerlem. In the meantime, many important changes had occurred, not only in the affairs of the institution, but in the whole field of provision for mental

diseases, and the growth and organization of the population of the country. When the institution was opened there were but four other public institutions devoted exclusively to the insane in the United States, not one of which was in New York State. Considerable institutional development occurred during the succeeding 20 years, and before the end of the year 1844 16 additional institutions were in operation, making the total number in the country 21. The New York City Lunatic Asylum was opened in 1835, the Utica State Hospital in 1843, and the Kings County Asylum in Flatbush in 1856. Institutions maintained entirely at public expense having thus become available, the need of providing for public patients at Bloomingdale Asylum gradually became less urgent, and after 1857 the institution no longer received any public money, but was supported entirely by the funds of the Society of the New York Hospital. Upon the opening of the New York City Asylum 29 of the patients at Bloomingdale Asylum were removed thither, and the admission of public patients from the city was discontinued. Several important structural changes were from time to time made in the institution. In 1829 the men's department was enlarged by the erection of another building containing rooms for 30 patients, and in 1837 a corresponding building was added to the department for women. The following description of the asylum is condensed from a manual which was prepared by Dr. Earle in 1848. He refers to the beauty of the location and especially of the grounds, which, in the earliest years of the institution, had been laid out and planted in one of the most approved styles of English gardening. "In thus perfecting this part of the establishment," he says, "the governors of the institution have adopted and faithfully pursued that system of moral regime essential to the best interests of the insane by avoiding, as far as possible, the aspect of a prison and surrounding the buildings with agreeable prospects." The buildings he describes as follows:

"The principal edifice is constructed of reddish brown freestone, smoothly hewn. It is three stories high, besides the basement and attic, and consists of a central portion and two wings, the united length of which is 211 feet. The central portion contains the offices and the private apartments of the officers. The wings are occupied by patients, that on the west by men and that on the east by women. On each floor of either wing a hall or corridor 10 ½ feet in width extends the whole length through the center, having apartments on both sides. One large room at the extremity of the hall on every floor is used as a sitting and dining room. The others are lodging rooms of different dimensions, sufficient to accommodate from one to four beds each. There is also a room fitted up

as a wardrobe, and one as a water closet, on every floor in each of the wings, besides a bath room on the second floor.

Parallel with the western extremity of this edifice, and about 150 feet in the rear, there is another building, constructed of brick, 57 feet long, 32 feet 8 inches wide, and three stories high; the corridors are 10 feet wide, and the rooms are mostly of uniform size, being nine feet two inches in length by seven feet two inches in width. In the rear of the eastern extremity of the principal edifice, and parallel with the building just described, stands a third, the basement of which is a laundry, while the upper two stories are occupied by female patients. It is 66 feet six inches long by 38 feet wide. The corridors are nine feet six inches wide, and the patients' rooms nine feet six inches long by six feet six inches wide.

There are six bathing rooms in the establishment, two of which have already been mentioned. There is one in the basement of each wing of the principal edifice, and one in each of the smaller buildings." ... (Several pages missing).

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