

**BUFFALO STATE HOSPITAL.
BUFFALO, N. Y.**

There have been but two superintendents of the Buffalo State Hospital, and when a history of the institutions for the care and treatment of the insane in the United States was first proposed it was a matter of great regret to me that Dr. Judson B. Andrews, the first superintendent of this hospital, and my worthy predecessor, could not himself have been the historian, so familiar was he with causes and events which led up to its foundation. Could he have had the opportunity and the honor of recording the history of the years when it was building, and while he was superintendent, until his early death 14 years after it was opened for patients, it would, I thought, have been eminently proper and fitting that his successor should bring the history down to the present date. Little did I think that such could possibly happen, until I opened accidentally, and it seems providentially, Volume 29 of the American Journal of Insanity of 1872, where I found this article, entitled:

**STATE PROVISION FOR THE INSANE—BUFFALO STATE ASYLUM—ITS HISTORY
AND DESCRIPTION.**

By Dr. Judson B. Andrews.

In July, 1797, the New York Hospital, located in the city of New York, first received insane patients, and in 1821 the Bloomingdale Asylum, the insane department of the hospital, was completed. This received aid from the state, and accommodated a limited number of indigent patients. In 1830 the first steps were taken which eventuated in the erection of the New York State Lunatic Asylum, at Utica. This was opened in 1843. In 1852 further accommodations were demanded, and Governor Seymour embodied in his annual message a recommendation for the erection of another state asylum. In 1856 the superintendents of the poor presented a memorial to the Legislature, recommending “that your honorable body will at once cause the immediate erection of two state lunatic hospitals, so located that they may accommodate the largest number of insane at present unprovided for.”

A committee was appointed to report upon the condition of the insane poor then confined in the county houses and receptacles and recommended “the establishment of two more asylums for the insane in addition to the existing asylums, and to be under similar management with the State

Asylum,” and presented a bill for the immediate location of one such asylum east and one west of Utica. This measure failed of success at that time, but it has been the basis of the subsequent exertion and action of those interested in the welfare of the insane and of the Legislature; and at length the adoption of this plan then recommended has been secured.

In 1864 the Legislature directed further inquiry, and under its enactment Dr. S. D. Willard, as secretary of the State Medical Society and Surgeon-General of the state, arranged a report from materials furnished by physicians in each of the different counties, setting forth the condition of the insane then kept in the county houses. He recommended in this report to the Legislature the establishment of an institution for the care of the incurable insane. At the same session in 1865 a bill was introduced providing for the erection of two asylums of a similar character to the State Asylum, one to be located east and one west of Utica, which was referred to a committee and reported favorably upon. This bill was subsequently modified so as to provide for the erection of one institution, entitled the “Beck Asylum for the Chronic Insane,” who are paupers, in honor of Dr. T. Romeyn Beck. While the bill was on its passage Dr. Willard died, and the name was changed to the “Willard Asylum for the Chronic Pauper Insane.” Its erection has steadily progressed, and for two years past it has been receiving patients of the class designated by law as parts have been successively completed. This in no way obviated the necessity or abated the efforts to carry out the original design to care for all the insane, and in 1867 a bill was passed organizing a second state asylum. This was located at Poughkeepsie and designated the “Hudson River Hospital for the Insane.” It is now open for the reception of patients in the portion already constructed.

In further pursuance of this policy the Legislature passed an act on the 13th of March, 1869, by which the Governor was authorized to appoint five commissioners to select a suitable site in Western New York, in the Eighth Judicial District, on which to erect an asylum for the insane. “The said commissioners shall have power to receive by gift or to contract for the purchase of such site for the location of said asylum, subject, however, to the approval of the next Legislature, to whom they shall report their action in the premises within ten days after the commencement of the session.” Dr. John P. Gray, of Utica; Dr. James P. White, of Buffalo; Dr. Milan Baker, of Warsaw; Dr. Thomas D. Strong, of Westfield, and Dr. William B. Gould, of Lockport, were appointed commissioners, and formally organized at Buffalo on the 15th day of July, 1869, with Dr. Gray as chairman.

Invitations were received to visit various places within the district to examine the locations presented. The action of the board was based upon the requisites demanded for the location of an asylum, as set forth in the propositions adopted by the "Association of Medical Superintendents of Institutions for the Insane." It was further resolved that no site should be chosen of less than 200 acres of land; that it should be located where an abundant and reliable supply of water could at all times be obtained, and that in the examination and final determination a site containing the greatest practical and substantial advantages should be selected. The commissioners met on the 5th of October, and between that date and the 16th examined the various sites presented. Propositions containing a full description of the property and specifications of the cost of building materials and supplies, addressed to the commissioners, were required to be in writing.

After a careful review of the sites offered and the advantages of each it was unanimously determined that it would be for the interest of the state and the welfare of the insane and to the success of the institution to locate it in Buffalo upon conditions proposed by the city and substantially as follows: "That the property mentioned and referred to in the proposals received from said city, containing 200 acres, more or less, shall be gratuitously conveyed and donated by a full covenant warranty deed to the State of New York, for the purpose of said insane asylum. That the said city will guarantee to the State of New York a free, perpetual right and privilege to use from the water works of the city whatever water may be required for the purposes of said asylum, without any compensation therefor and will covenant on its part that such gratuitous right and privilege shall never be revoked, withdrawn or rescinded." The city also agreed to lay main pipes of size sufficient to furnish all the water required for the asylum, as soon as work should be commenced on the foundations. The propositions were accepted by the commissioners, to take effect after the passage of an act of the Legislature authorizing the city to make the purchase and conveyance. A report of these proceedings, with the recommendation of the commissioners, was made to the Legislature during the session of 1870, and their action was approved. On the 23d of April the act to establish the asylum in the city of Buffalo was passed. This authorized the Governor to appoint, by and with the consent of the Senate, 10 managers for the "Buffalo State Asylum for the Insane," and designated their respective terms of office. The law organizing and governing the State Asylum at Utica was made applicable to this institution, and an appropriation of \$50,000 was made, subject to the provision that none of it should be expended except for plans and specifications to be on the basis of 500 patients.

The managers appointed were John P. Gray, Utica; Asher P. Nichols, Buffalo; William B. Gould, Lockport; Lorenzo Morris, Fredonia; Augustus Frank, Warsaw; and Albert P. Lanning, William G. Fargo, George R. Yaw, James P. White, and Joseph Warren, all of Buffalo. The board met at Buffalo on the 26th day of May, 1870, and formally organized by the appointment of Dr. James P. White as president; and a committee was appointed to procure plans, drawings and specifications for the proposed buildings. In this condensed history of provision for the insane, terminating in the establishment of the Buffalo State Asylum, is seen the success of the proposition made in 1855 to erect "two state lunatic asylums, so located that they may accommodate the largest number of insane at present unprovided for." This object has been steadily kept in view by the advocates of the measure, and they have, by earnest and persistent effort, attained a result which will promote the true interest of the insane and do credit to the humanity and generosity of the state.

From the first annual report it is learned that the asylum is located upon a farm of 200 acres of unbroken land, situated in the western part of Buffalo, some three miles from the center of the city. The land is bounded on the north by the Scajaquada Creek, a tributary of the Niagara River; on the south by Forest Avenue; on the east by the line of Elmwood Avenue, and on the west by a line parallel to and 300 feet east of Grand Street. Upon Forest Avenue it has a frontage of some 3000 feet. The natural surface of the ground is undulating, and portions of it are traversed by several ravines, which cross it generally from east to west. On the southeast part of the grounds is a fine grove of trees, principally oak and maple. There are also several springs, one of which has long been noted for its mineral qualities. Much of the surface is underlaid with rock, and clay of good quality is abundant. The asylum grounds, as presented in the plan, were laid out and improved under the direction of Fred. Law Olmsted, the celebrated landscape architect.

The building has a southern exposure, and fronts upon Forest Avenue. It overlooks the city, the Niagara River and Lake Erie, and presents a fine architectural perspective from the park and its approaches. It is situated within a short distance of a depot of the New York Central Railway, and is easily reached by lines of street railroad. The beauty and natural advantages of the location, in its diversified scenery, ease of drainage, readiness of obtaining material and supplies, and of access from all directions, show the wisdom and foresight of the commissioners who selected it. The generosity of the City of Buffalo in giving to the state such a tract of land and in binding itself to furnish a

perpetual and full supply of water free of cost should not be overlooked and cannot be too highly appreciated.

On the 25th of August, 1870, a sketch of the ground plan, devised by Dr. Gray, of the Committee on Plans and Specifications, was unanimously adopted by the board and approved by the state officers in accordance with legislative enactment.

Subsequently the elevation and plan presented by H. H. Richardson, of New York City, was accepted, and he was appointed architect, and A. J. Warner, of Rochester, supervising architect.

On the 18th of September, 1872, the corner-stone of the hospital was laid before a distinguished body of people. The account written at that time says "the display made by the military and Masonic Order, including the Knights Templar, was the finest ever witnessed in this city, and had the weather proved propitious the effect would have been grand. Governor John T. Hoffman made the opening address, and an oration was delivered by James O. Putnam. After the oration Dr. James P. White, president of the Board of Managers, notified Christopher Fox, Grand Master of the Masons of the State of New York, to lay the corner-stone with the ancient forms of Masonry."

The hospital, whose beginning has thus been described by Dr. Andrews, was opened for patients in December, 1880, and the first patients received were from the Utica State Hospital, and thus it began fulfilling its mission by relieving another institution of its accumulation of patients of Western New York. The original buildings were the administration buildings, the easterly wing of the main building, consisting of five buildings and eleven wards, besides the power house, laundry and service buildings generally. This was the extent of the hospital for ten years, and it was not until 1891 that the first building to the west of the administration building was opened for patients. In 1893 the second building on the west was completed, and in 1895 the three final buildings necessary to complete the original plan were erected. Dr. Andrews, however, who had labored so earnestly and unceasingly for the welfare and extension of the hospital, did not live to see the original plan completed, but passed away in August, 1894, and in November the writer and present superintendent, who had been connected with the institution since 1885, was elected to succeed him, having been acting superintendent since January 1, 1894. In 1897 the building for acute cases of insanity, with its full equipment of hydrotherapeutic and electrical apparatus, operating rooms,

laboratory, etc., was completed, on the easterly borders of the hospital grounds, fronting Elmwood Avenue. In 1905 there was completed upon the grounds of the hospital a chapel and amusement hall, a home for men employees accommodating 100, a residence for the superintendent and one for the staff. The quarters thus vacated, being entirely too large and extensive in the first place, increased the capacity of the institution considerably. In 1908 the institution, by lease, established a convalescent camp on the shores of Lake Ontario for tardily convalescent patients, an innovation in the history of this hospital which has been followed by the most beneficial results. In 1909 there was completed and occupied, Ward 35, a pavilion for tubercular woman patients, and in 1913, Ward 36, a pavilion for contagious diseases. This constitutes, to the present time, the extent of the buildings of the hospital, and has provided for an increasing number for patients, until now, at the date of this writing, the total number of patients has reached 1967. During this period there have been treated at this hospital 13,176 patients. It has, from being a hospital in the outskirts of a large city, become, by the growth of the city, quite within its limits, and has become thoroughly identified with the medical progress and needs of a large city. It has maintained a clinic for the students of the medical department of the University of Buffalo for many years; it has aimed to maintain a high standard, and has endeavored to care faithfully for the mentally sick of the community and to meet in all ways the needs of a large population of this state for relief from mental diseases.

The Buffalo State Hospital has the distinction of having been one of the first hospitals for the insane in this country to establish a training school for nurses. A private hospital for the insane - McLean Hospital, then at Somerville, now at Waverley, Mass. - established its training school previous to this, but that at Buffalo followed, being the first institution wholly under state control to establish a training school. The training school here has maintained a high standard; has been registered by the State Board of Regents of the New York State Department of Education, and has graduated, including the class of this year, 440 students. Dr. William D. Granger deserves much credit, as he was very active in its inception and organization. He published a handbook of instruction for attendants.

The hospital, which took its first patients in 1880, and was then on the outskirts of the city, is now an institution caring for over 2000 patients, very much within the city - a city with over 400,000 people - its districts embracing Erie and Niagara counties, which have a population of about 621,021 people.

Reprinted from *The Institutional Care of the Insane in the United States and Canada*, By Henry Mills Hurd, William Francis Drewry, Richard Dewey, Charles Winfield Pilgrim, George Adler Blumer, American Medico-Psychological Association. Committee on a History of the Institutional Care of the Insane, Thomas Joseph Workmann Burgess, Volume 3, The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1916, Pages 179 – 184.
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