

**HUDSON RIVER STATE HOSPITAL.
POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y.**

In 1866, or 11 years after the strong memorial presented to the Legislature by county superintendents of the poor setting forth the neglected condition of the insane and recommending the establishment of two additional state hospitals for their care and treatment, Governor Fenton appointed five commissioners to secure a suitable site “on or near the Hudson River below the City of Albany, upon which to erect the Hudson River Asylum for the Insane.” The offer of a 208-acre farm jointly by the County of Dutchess and the City of Poughkeepsie was accepted and during the following year the Legislature appropriated \$100,000 for the construction of one building. Meanwhile there had been appointed a Board of Managers of nine members, who had selected as superintendent Dr. Joseph M. Cleaveland, who had received his training in the parent institution at Utica. With the appropriation above referred to the managers procured an additional 84 acres of land and authorized a New York firm of architects, Messrs. Vaux, Withers & Co., to prepare plans and specifications for a hospital to accommodate 250 patients of each sex. At the same time extensive plans were adopted for the improvement of the grounds. No patients were received until 1871 and only seven patients were accommodated during that year.

In 1872 the total cost of the buildings having reached \$1,000,000 and accommodations for only 212 patients having been provided - there being at that time 1,210 patients in county institutions not properly cared for - the State Comptroller criticised the managers of what he called an excessive cost of construction up to that time. He expressed the belief that the cost of the institution would be \$7000 per capita; that boards of managers “seldom or never meet, or, if they do come together, generally delegate to others the powers and duties they should themselves assume and exercise”; that the plan of engaging outside architects on a percentage basis was necessarily expensive and that the state should create the position of State Architect.

In a spirited reply the managers denied undue cost of construction, pointing out that after the close of the Civil War, and especially by the enactment of the new eight-hour law, the greatly increased cost of both labor and material was responsible for seeming extravagance. They asserted that the plan followed by them of constructing the hospital by day’s work rather than by contract was the best to follow; further, that “although the hospital has cost money, it is worth the money” and that

the Governor, Comptroller and other state officials had inspected the buildings and had approved the plans and specifications and general scheme of construction. However, appropriations for additional work of any magnitude were deferred until 1875, when the Governor, with legislative sanction, appointed a building superintendent to control the further construction of the hospital buildings. It was also ordered that all building operations be done under contract. Although \$1,500,000 were expended in the 18 years intervening between 1868 and 1886, accommodations for only 400 patients had been provided.

In March, 1893, Dr. Cleaveland resigned and was succeeded by Dr. Charles W. Pilgrim, who had previously served as superintendent of the Willard State Hospital. With appropriations granted in 1891 a group of cottages had been completed on a distant portion of the hospital grounds for the accommodation of 320 of the insane remaining in the poorhouses of the state. Dr. Pilgrim also found it possible by readjustment of sitting rooms and dormitories to provide accommodations in the main institution for 302 additional patients. Thus the capacity of the institution was increased from 800 beds in 1890 to 1400 in 1893. The central group of buildings, nearly a mile from the main establishment, was enlarged and greatly improved. In 1898 the huge north wing was added, thus increasing the capacity further to 1970. The reception building, designed and equipped specially for the care and treatment of new and supposedly curable cases, was occupied in 1908, as was also the building known as Inwood, designed specially for the care of the chronic insane. The capacity was further increased by these buildings to 2708. The land now comprised in the grounds and buildings has reached 1000 acres.

The title of this institution adopted at the time of its organization is the Hudson River State Hospital.

The different groups of buildings permit an excellent classification, the tubercular and epileptic, the most troublesome and dangerous of all, being removed from the general wards. The hospital is thoroughly equipped and has every facility for doing the most advanced psychiatric work. The staff consists of 20 physicians, and there are 608 employees engaged in the work of the hospital. Superintendent Pilgrim served as State Commissioner in Lunacy for one year, 1906, on leave of absence from the hospital.

The main hospital buildings are located on a beautiful slope which extends to the banks of the Hudson River and affords a variety of beautiful vistas.

A trained pathologist, who devotes his entire time to studies of the brain and nervous system, is one of the valuable adjuncts of the hospital. Another feature of merit is a thoroughly organized training school for nurses, which is conducted with enthusiasm and success by the medical staff. A no less important feature is the course of training for beginners, i.e., ward attendants, all of whom are given a course of five lectures, one by the first assistant physician, on the general subject of insanity, the necessity of forbearance, especially on the part of attendants detailed to escort patients to the hospital, and general features of the insanity law; the remaining five on practical ward work, bathing, dining room and kindred work.

Staff meetings are held four times each week, at which unusual cases are submitted for study and diagnosis.

During 1913 the accommodations in the Edgewood Building for 40 patients of the most disturbed class were finished and made ready for occupancy.

Two considerable extensions of the reception building were finished, increasing the capacity of the building by 16. These additions were supplemented by spacious verandas.

A large sewing room for the disturbed and semi-demented women patients was completed and an average of 70 patients are now employed therein.

Many medical men of national reputations have been connected either as managers or assistant physicians with the hospital since its opening. Among them as managers may be mentioned Dr. Cornelius R. Agnew, the noted ophthalmologist, and Dr. George F. Shrady, for many years editor of the *Medical Record*. As assistant physicians we find Dr. Abner O. Kellogg, friend of Booth, Shakespearean critic, and author of Shakespeare's Delineations of Insanity, Imbecility and Suicide; Dr. J. Leonard Corning, the discoverer of spinal anaesthesia; Dr. Frederick Peterson, at one time president of the State Commission in Lunacy and joint author of a "Text-book on Nervous and

Mental Diseases”; and Dr. Theodore H. Kellogg, late superintendent of the Willard State Hospital and author of a “Text-book of Mental Diseases.”

Among the statesmen and jurists who have acted as managers may be mentioned Senators A. W. Palmer, Amasa J. Parker, Chas. P. McClelland and Thomas Newbold; Hon. Frank B. Lown, John I. Piatt, Willard Mace, James Roosevelt, Judge Wheaton, Gen. Howland and Lieut. Governor Lewis S. Chanler.

The first meeting of the Board of Managers was held March 28, 1867.

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 165 – 168.
<<http://books.google.com/>>