

**MANHATTAN STATE HOSPITAL.**

**Ward's Island, New York City.**

Previous to 1825 the insane poor of New York City were cared for either at the Bloomingdale Asylum or at the almshouse on Blackwell's Island, the more disturbed going to Bloomingdale. During that year 26 patients were removed from Bloomingdale and, with about 35 others, were domiciled in the basement and first story of the building which had recently been erected as a general hospital on Blackwell's Island in connection with the almshouse department. The arrangement continued, however, under which patients might be received at the Bloomingdale Asylum when these buildings became too overcrowded.

The insane at Blackwell's Island were under the immediate care of visiting physicians from Bellevue Hospital until 1847, during which year there were 364 patients in the lower portion of the hospital buildings on Blackwell's Island.

Dr. Moses Ranney was appointed medical superintendent in 1857. Although inexperienced in the treatment of insanity, Dr. Ranney was admirably adapted for the work and made an assiduous study of the achievements of Pinel, Equirol, the Tukes, Connolly, and Pritchard. Although seriously handicapped by the prevailing political system of financial management, his reports show advanced views on non-restraint, on re-education of demented patients, on the employment of patients and after care. Dr. Ranney continued in service until his death in December, 1864, being succeeded by Dr. Ralph L. Parsons, whose service continued until 1877, when he established a private institution. Other reports extant are those of the visiting physicians, Dr. Benjamin Ogden, Dr. A. V. Williams and Dr. James MacDonald (superintendent of Bloomingdale). These indicate a total lack of occupation and diversion of insane patients and complain of the idleness and listlessness pervading the whole institution. The attendants and nurses were appointed by the Common Council of the City of New York. The visiting physicians report as follows:

“The keepers and nurses appointed by the corporation are generally not working people. Some of them have never been accustomed to labor; others are too advanced in life to be active, and it cannot be expected that they will perform the services required. The general employment of

convicts about the persons of the insane has been and is still one of the evils of the present methods of appointing keepers.”

It appears that it had been the custom to place one attendant or nurse in charge of the patients domiciled in a ward with two convicts as assistants. This custom continued until 1850. There appears, however, to have been difficulty as late as 1875 in securing an adequate nursing force, the ratio being one nurse to 30 patients.

On Blackwell's Island construction for additional patients based on the building of the Hanwell (England) Asylum was begun in 1836, though it was not until 1847 that accommodations for 260 patients were provided. In 1841 a three-story building, specially designed for the noisy and violent patients, was constructed. This building, designed for 66 patients, was often occupied by twice that number. A noisy patient could keep every occupant of the building awake. The crowding became so bad that even the corridors were used as dormitories. The only additional accommodations made prior to 1868 was the use of a three-story work-shop for the accommodation of a quiet class of female patients. Subsequently a series of pavilions were constructed for the same class of female patients. These were of wood and one story in height. Each pavilion accommodated 70 patients. In 1868 buildings with accommodations for 640 patients were caring for 1035 patients. During that year plans were adopted for the construction of an entirely new asylum building for 500 patients on Ward's Island, which had been acquired in 1847 by the Department of Immigration and already contained 30 buildings. This building was opened on the 13th of December, 1871, and to it were transferred all of the male patients previously cared for on Blackwell's Island. Dr. M.

G. Echeverria was appointed superintendent of the Ward's Island institution, resigning in 1872. He was followed by Dr. Theodore H. Kellogg, who in turn was succeeded in October, 1874, by Dr. Alexander E. MacDonald, who had been made general superintendent. Dr. Ralph L. Parsons, who had been superintendent of the Blackwell's Island institution since 1865, was continued in office. To the energy and ability of Dr. MacDonald, who served for 30 years as superintendent of this institution, must be ascribed most of the extraordinary developments in the construction and management of this huge establishment.

An interesting departure of about this period was the construction by the State of New York of the emigrant hospital on Ward's Island. Immigrants who had been in this country for a limited period of

time, and who became indigent or ill, including the insane, were cared for in this institution until the expiration of a time limit of five years. The insane who had not then recovered were transferred to the New York City Asylum. This emigrant hospital was discontinued after a few years.

The provision for the insane on Ward's and Blackwell's islands continued very inadequate. The ordinary ratio of nurses to patients was one to 30 and the assistant physicians were, for the most part, wholly inexperienced. They consisted almost entirely of young graduate physicians who were paid nothing for their service, and who remained only a short time for the experience to be gained. The overcrowding on Blackwell's Island, even after 400 male patients had been transferred to Ward's Island, was unbelievable. Not less than 400 beds were made up nightly on the floor.

The new Ward's Island building was faulty and inconvenient. Lighting and heating were inadequate. The attendants were too few, and food and clothing not much more than sufficient to keep soul and body together. The furniture was the rudest, benches without backs, deal tables that never saw a cloth, tin pannikins and iron spoons were the appointments, and the eating was frequently done with the fingers. Meal time meant bedlam. Many a patient went to bed with an ache in his stomach, and sedatives had to give the sleep which a full stomach would have found for itself. Nights were hideous with noises and profanity. Patients were locked in their rooms. The atmosphere was stifling. Straw-filled ticks, reeking and filthy, lay heaped about. Nurses were unknown and the attendants were coarse and inexperienced. Many were the appointees of local politicians who thus discharged their political obligations.

Maniacs, alcoholics, melancholies and paretics mingled indiscriminately together. In the exercise yard they worked off their fighting propensity in dust an inch deep, and hunger and ill-temper caused an indescribable uproar. With no change or recreation, it is a surprise that so many regained their mental integrity. The asylum was soon filled to overflowing by the inmates of the lunatic asylum and almshouse, and, relief becoming imperative, in 1875 patients were transferred to the inebriate asylum, an old building on the island. In 1877 it was necessary to use an unoccupied building on Randall's Island, quite unsuitable for insane patients, and a building known as the "annex," formerly used as a barrack for immigrants, was leased from the Emigration Department. It was also unsuitable, being only a large building of three floors without rooms or conveniences, and was furnished with stoves, gas and other dangerous appliances.

In 1880 transfers were made to the branch at Hart's Island recently vacated by the industrial school. These buildings were simply shanties, built during the Civil War as temporary barracks for soldiers and were unfit for habitation. Into these the unhappy insane were packed, and this cattle-like herding was borne for several years.

On Superintendent MacDonald's urgent request a new wing was projected from the main building in 1878, and begun by patients and convicts from the penitentiary. The estimated capacity was 250. To save time a second wing to correspond with the one begun was also commenced. The accumulation of patients from the Emigration Department, together with those from other states who had been surreptitiously brought to the city and abandoned in the streets, still further increased the congestion.

Under the plea of economy, food had been curtailed to the lowest possible limit. The question had been how cheaply to "keep," not "cure," the patient, and many of the incurable cases were so, through being denied more food and care in the amenable stage. Dry bread was the staple article of diet, few accompaniments were permitted and much was diverted by the so-called "cook," who was selected from the workhouse prisoners. A new dietary added five cents per diem to the cost of maintenance, and the preparation and distribution were improved. There was a decrease in general expenditures, improvement in cooking and accounting, and the number of recoveries increased. An improvement in the condition of the patients in their food and clothing was noted. More comforts were added for the patients, clothing and bedding and other articles of ward furniture grew better, and comfortable settees and chairs replaced uncomfortable benches. (An official report states: "No such allowance toward adequate and intelligent care for the insane had been made in any former years of their existence.") Dr. MacDonald strove for a more liberal amusement fund. He urged an increase in the number of attendants and in their compensation; that \$20 a month with board was too small compensation for 15 hours spent in the companionship of the insane. Thirty dollars per month was little enough, he thought, to tempt men to make a life work of it.

Assistant physicians received no remuneration and the superintendent asked that at least one salaried physician be appointed to represent him when absent from the building.

In July, 1875, the offices of resident physician and warden were abolished, thus ending an unsatisfactory division of authority. The powers and the responsibilities were reposed in Dr. MacDonald, and the warden retired from the stage. Dr. MacDonald prepared a code of rules and regulations which were adopted by the board and presented to each officer and employee as an official notice of the duties required of him, and the power of suspension rested with the medical superintendent alone.

In 1875 pathological notes of autopsies by Dr. E. C. Spitzza and Dr. Andrew Robinson were furnished. A regularly appointed pathologist was not obtained at that time.

In June, 1879, four clinical lectures on insanity were given at Ward's Island for medical practitioners and general students. These were probably the first lectures of the kind ever given in a hospital for the insane in New York. The attendance averaged over 20 persons, and over 200 patients were demonstrated to them.

To allay public distrust of institutions for the insane and to educate physicians in the diagnosis of insanity Dr. MacDonald gave them the opportunity of examining cases of insanity within the walls of the asylum.

A few patients had been taken from time to time to the clinics of Prof. John P. Gray, of Bellevue Hospital Medical College, and Prof. W. A. Hammond, of the Medical Department of the New York University. Dr. MacDonald's own lectures were similarly illustrated.

The close association of charitable and correctional institutions of New York prevailed for economical reasons. Dr. MacDonald recognized the evil and protested against the employment of prisoners, male or female, in the management of the hospital, showing that the close contact of men and women of the most worthless class brought an atmosphere of crime and depravity that stood in the way of the hospital's progress. At this time 100 women prisoners from the workhouse under sentence worked in the wards. These women were finally withdrawn, the attendants were held responsible for the cleanliness of their wards, and the patients were benefited by the occupation thus afforded them.

After 1880 mechanical restraint, such as manacles, wristlets and seclusion, was abolished.

In 1886 seven junior assistant physicians were allowed salaries. Night and day medical service was established, senior and junior medical officers were assigned to each service, and every patient had to be seen daily by his ward physician. With a steady increase of population, buildings became overcrowded, and the State Board of Charities investigated complaints of poor food and unsuitable attendants and found them justified. Appropriations were increased and orders were issued to begin work on new buildings. A new dietary was put into effect, and buildings were started on a 1000-acre tract of land at Central Islip.

Homes for attendants were built at Blackwell's, Ward's and Hart's islands and a splendid sea bath with water from 5 to 2 ½ feet deep was cut into the solid rock at the south end of the island, which let in the waters of Hell Gate through a sluice and afforded exercise and bathing for the patients.

This was a great success, and as many as 1300 patients bathed in it in one day. A plunge bath was also built in the basement of the west wing and furnished with a continuous stream of sea water. A printing office, operated by compositors and pressmen from among the patients, was started and did all the printing for the department. Brush, shoe and tailor shops were started. The carpenters and painters from among the patients did all the work of the asylum, and every patient physically fit was put to work at his accustomed trade or in the farm and grounds, and it was a rule that before a patient should be discharged he had to demonstrate by his work in one or another of the industries his fitness to earn his living outside.

In 1892 the City Asylum consisted of four divisions or departments, one each on Blackwell's, Ward's and Hart's islands, and one at Central Islip, L. I., 40 miles distant from New York City, having a total population of 7478 patients. In 1886 Dr. MacDonald, the general superintendent, was appointed by the commissioners executive and administrative officer and each institution was placed in immediate charge of a local medical superintendent, subordinate to the general superintendent: Dr. E. C. Dent, the superintendent of the female division, Ward's Island; Dr. William A. Macy at the male division, Ward's Island; Dr. H. C. Evarts at the Central Islip division, and Dr. G. A. Smith at the Hart's Island division.

The federal government took over the Emigration Department, and in July, 1892, the emigration buildings were taken possession of; most of them were mere barracks in a fearful state of decay. Several were razed to the ground or burned.

In April, 1894, 2000 patients were brought to Ward's Island from Blackwell's Island, which was abandoned as unfit for habitation, and in 1896 Hart's Island, with its so-called pavilions of hemlock boards, built for the sheltering of soldiers, was abolished and its 1555 patients transferred to Ward's Island.

By the creation of a State Commission in Lunacy in 1889 and by the enactment of the State Care Law in 1890, patients in county institutions were taken care of by the state.

Through this act the care of the insane passed into the hands of the state. The counties of Monroe, Kings and New York were exempted from its operations, however, until their authorities should desire to transfer to state care. Monroe took advantage of these provisions in 1901 (1891), Kings in 1905, and on the 28th of February, 1896, through legislation, the New York City Asylum for the Insane became the Manhattan State Hospital for the Insane.

In 1900 each of the three departments was made a distinct hospital. The hospital for men became Manhattan State Hospital East, under Dr. A. E. MacDonald; that for women, Manhattan State Hospital West, under Dr. E. C. Dent; and that at Central Islip, the Central Islip State Hospital, under Dr. George A. Smith.

In 1904 Dr. A. E. MacDonald resigned to retire to private life.

June 1, 1905, by legislative action Manhattan East and Manhattan West were consolidated, Dr. E. C. Dent being made superintendent.

Manhattan is the largest and one of the best psychiatric hospitals in the world. It is a hospital in the highest sense. Every patient is treated as a sick person. Many of its patients never in their lives enjoyed such comforts as they now do. The food, clothing and medical treatment are equal to those of the best general hospitals. Each patient is supplied with recreation, occupation and diversion in

innumerable forms. Trained nurses and specially selected attendants minister to his smallest needs. His surroundings are bright and cheerful. Pictures, carpets, musical instruments and unlimited reading matter divert and soothe him. His likes and dislikes receive sympathetic consideration. He is nursed and made to feel that he is receiving the care and treatment of a sick man.

Manhattan suffers from a constant overcrowding of from 25 to 30 per cent. In psychiatry it is in the front rank. The State Pathological Institute, with Dr. August Hoch as medical director, is in intimate relationship with the hospital, and splendid research work is being done there. Two of its wards have physicians of the institute assigned to them, where the large amount of clinical material enables advanced work to be done. A former associate of the institute has charge of staff meetings and clinical instruction. Autopsical and laboratory work and weekly demonstrations are directed by an appointed specialist. The patients are given the benefit of gynecological and general surgery by New York specialists. A visiting ophthalmologist, aurist and dentist render relief in those fields. Epilepsy, gastro-intestinal diseases and the spinal fluid have all been objects of research. Hydrotherapy and electrotherapy have been of the greatest benefit in select cases. The clinical work is equal to that of the best hospitals in the country.

Women attendants do duty in the acute and hospital men's wards. Convalescent patients are given a long parole to their friends, and many others enjoy the fullest freedom of the island. Patients are admitted here from their homes by "emergency" commitment or by voluntary admission, thus securing prompt hospital care and treatment without delay. Its admissions are in excess of 1700 each year. Hospital treatment is given from the hour of the patient's arrival. The most cheerful environment, liberal diet and congenial employment bring about rapid recoveries. It has a patient's library of 3000 volumes, a daily supply of newspapers, its own industries, diversions, gardens, steamers, marine excursions and ferries, and on some visiting days there are fully 900 visitors. The insane of New York City are fortunate in having this magnificent hospital, which will stand in the future as an object lesson and as an example of a well-managed benevolent institution and medical charity in the community in which it is located.

The Manhattan State Hospital on Ward's Island now cares for 4800 patients; has a staff of 30 physicians and 800 employees. Its real estate and personal property are valued at \$4,800,000.

**MEDICAL OFFICERS.**

**Hart's Island - Superintendents.**

(First opened for 50 patients, January 23, 1877.)

Dr. Armand Duploo 1877-1878; Dr. Andrew Egan 1883-1891; Dr. T. M. Franklin 1878-1879; Dr. George A. Smith 1892-1893; Dr. James R. Healy 1880-1882

**Ward's Island - Department For Men.**

W. A. Macy, M. D 1886-1897; Geo. F. M. Bond, M. D., acting med. supt 1890; Percy Bryant, M. D. 1897-1900.

Dr. Alexander Trautman, superintendent of the State Emigrant Hospital 1880-1881.

Richard M. Lush, warden-in-charge 1872-1873.

Dr. Alexander E. MacDonald 1874-1894 (Became general superintendent in 1894, so continuing until the departments for men and women were separated in 1900, when he became superintendent of the men's division, so continuing until his resignation in 1903.)

Dr. E. C. Dent 1904-1906; Dr. Wm. Mabon, supt. and med. director 1906.

**Blackwell's Island - Department For Women.**

Moses H. Ranney, M. D. 1857-1864; Ralph L. Parsons, M. D. 1865-1876; W. W. Strew, M. D 1876-1879; T. M. Franklin, M. D. 1880-1886; E. C. Dent, M. D. 1887-1895.

(Institution abandoned in 1895.)

**Ward's Island—Women's Department.**

Dr. E. C. Dent 1896-1906

(In 1906 the departments for men and women were consolidated and Dr. William Mabon became superintendent and medical director.)

**Central Islip.**

Dr. H. C. Evarts, physician-in-charge 1889-1895; Dr. George A. Smith, superintendent 1895.

**NEW YORK CITY ASYLUM FOR THE INSANE Medical Officers.**

Dr. J. N. DeHart 1875; Dr. Wickes Washburn 1875; Dr. W. V. Day 1875; Dr. John A. Arnold 1876;

Dr. J. S. Christison 1876 ....

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