

**MATTEAWAN STATE HOSPITAL.
BEACON, N. Y.**

In the organization of a separate institution for the housing of the criminal insane, wholly apart from either prison or civil hospital, the State of New York led in the United States, and, so far as can be ascertained, in the entire world. Up to the year 1859 the criminal insane were committed to institutions for the civil insane. This gave rise to vigorous complaints on the part of the management of the civil hospitals, as well as strenuous protests by the friends and families of patients civilly committed, who objected to enforced association with this dangerous class.

Upon the representation of the inspectors of prisons and of the managers and superintendent of the State Lunatic Asylum at Utica, the Legislature of 1855 passed an act directing the inspectors of prisons to build upon the grounds of one of the prisons of the state a suitable building for the detention and care of insane convicts, and to remove such insane convicts as were then confined in the asylum at Utica to such place upon its completion. No means were provided, however, for the execution of the law.

During the session of 1857 the Legislature appropriated \$20,000 to build an asylum in accordance with the law of 1855 within the walled enclosure near Auburn Prison, formerly used as a garden and containing five acres, with the understanding that a large building within the prison walls, built for a chapel, dining room, etc., but not used, should be taken down and the material used for the construction of the asylum. The building was accordingly commenced.

The next winter \$20,000 more was appropriated and an act passed the Legislature organizing the asylum. Dr. Edward Hall was appointed superintendent November 6, 1858. He reports that the institution had but 64 single sleeping rooms in both wings. The institution was opened February 2, 1859. On the 1st of October, 1859, the superintendent's report shows that there were at that time in the asylum 51 patients, the whole number admitted during the year being 65. The legal designation of the institution was the State Lunatic Asylum for Insane Convicts, it being originally organized to care for and treat the insane convict class. Dr. Hall continued as superintendent until June 1, 1862, and was followed by Dr. Charles E. Van Anden.

By provision of chapter 895, laws of 1869, the scope of the hospital was enlarged. Cases were committed under two sections of this law. First, by direct commitment from the courts; second, by transfer under order of a justice of the Supreme Court, the latter having previously been committed to the State Lunatic Asylum by provision of section 31 or 32, chapter 135, laws of 1842. By this same act the title of the institution was changed from the State Lunatic Asylum for Insane Convicts to the State Lunatic Asylum for Insane Criminals. By chapter 446, laws of 1874, the scope of the institution was further enlarged so that misdemeanants as well as those accused of arson or murder or attempt at murder could legally be committed to the State Lunatic Asylum at Auburn, their commitment proceeding from the courts direct.

The law was again amended in 1884, chapter 515, so that the misdemeanor cases committed on criminal orders to civil institutions could be transferred to the Auburn Asylum by order of a justice of the Supreme Court.

An act of Legislature in 1886 authorized the building of the present hospital, which was opened for patients in 1892, and in this year inmates of the State Lunatic Asylum for Insane Criminals were transferred from Auburn, N. Y., to Matteawan, Dutchess County, N. Y. Dr. H. E. Allison at this time was medical superintendent. In the year 1893 the name of the institution was changed to that of the Matteawan State Hospital.

Because of the rapid increase in the number of patients, the need for a second institution became apparent, and by chapter 520, laws of 1899, the Legislature authorized and organized the Dannemora State Hospital for insane convicts, to be located adjacent to the State Prison at Dannemora. A law was passed stating that this hospital when ready for occupancy shall be used for the purpose of confining and caring for such male persons as are declared insane while confined in a state prison, a reformatory, or while serving a sentence of more than one year in a penitentiary.

The transfer of this class of patients from Matteawan to Dannemora left but two classes of patients to be cared for in the former. First, those committed by the courts directly and non-convicts. Second, those who were transferred from various penal institutions, having been convicted of various misdemeanors. By legal enactment in 1904 these two classes were supplemented by a third. Patients who have been committed to civil hospitals upon the order of a court of criminal

jurisdiction by the judge or justice of such a court, or any patient who has previously been sentenced to a term of imprisonment in any penal institution and who still manifests criminal tendencies, or any such patient who has previously been an inmate of the Matteawan State Hospital, may be transferred to the Matteawan State Hospital by order of the State Commission in Lunacy.

The law as regards the class of patients cared for at Matteawan at the present time provides that the hospital shall be used for the purpose of holding in custody and caring for such insane persons as may be committed to the said institution by courts of criminal jurisdiction, or transferred thereto by the State Commission in Lunacy, and for such convicted persons as may be declared insane while undergoing a sentence of one year or less, or for misdemeanor at any of the various penal institutions of the state, and for all female convicts becoming insane while undergoing sentence.

The Matteawan State Hospital consists of a three-story central building used for offices, quarters for the superintendent, assistant physician and a portion of the clerical force; two wings of three wards each; a cross-connecting corridor with two isolation wards; and two wards on the second floor directly over the dining room in the center. Connecting with the dining room on the first floor, beneath these two wards, are the kitchen, scullery, bakery and storehouse.

During 1908 the nurses' home was completed and occupied. A new group of buildings for female patients was erected and occupied in March, 1911, consisting at present of two wards connecting with the nurses' home by a corridor. These wards are supplemented by the various outbuildings, shops, laundry, cold storage, blacksmith shop, ice house, etc. A new infirmary building is in process of erection to the south end of the women's group and two new wards are to be erected in the near future to the north of the present women's group.

The hospital at the present time cares for 804 patients. It is badly overcrowded and will remain so until the completion of the wards above mentioned.

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 241 – 243.
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