

**ST. LAWRENCE STATE HOSPITAL.  
OGDENSBURG, N. Y.**

For many years prior to 1887 agitation had been conducted by the State Charities Aid Association and others interested in securing accommodations in state institutions for the 2200 insane who still remained in county asylums and poorhouses. A commission appointed by Governor Hill to select an appropriate site for an institution to be located in the northern part of the state finally chose that at Ogdensburg, passing over one offered at Plattsburg. The site chosen was a plateau located three miles below Ogdensburg on the St. Lawrence River, with a frontage on the river of about one mile and a depth of about one and one-half miles. Under the authority granted by Chapter 375 of the Laws of 1887, the St. Lawrence State Hospital was established and a board of managers appointed. Isaac G. Perry, then acting as capitol commissioner at Albany, was selected as architect.

The work of locating the central group of buildings was commenced on May 25, 1888. This group was permanently placed 1400 feet from and fronting the St. Lawrence River, and the work of construction started without delay. The general plan contemplated an administration and hospital group for 300 insane or acute cases and outlying buildings in groups for the care of 1200 or more chronic patients. On August 29, 1889, Dr. Wise, who had previously served as building consultant, was selected as superintendent. Dr. Wise had shown executive ability of a high order as superintendent of the Willard Asylum for the Chronic Insane.

In the construction of the buildings Gouverneur light gray limestone, Potsdam red sandstone and navy blue limestone were used. The buildings, though plain, are of substantial character. There are spacious sun rooms, day rooms, corridors, etc., and not a single room in the building lacks direct light through the outer walls.

In 1890 Dr. Wise selected as his first assistant Dr. J. Montgomery Mosher, who came from the Willard State Hospital well equipped for work. At the same time Dr. John A. Barnette was appointed assistant physician and William C. Hall steward.

On December 9, 1890, at 7 p. m., the hospital opened its doors, 47 patients being received at the infirmary building from Onondaga County. These were soon followed by 56 patients from other

points. During the next year patients originally committed from the region of the northern counties to the Willard and Utica asylums were transferred to the new institution.

In July, 1891, the executive building and reception cottages were opened. Transfers in the meantime were made from Utica and Willard state hospitals, and various patients admitted from their homes. With the opening of the main building Dr. Robert G. Cook and Dr. Richard H. Hutchings were added to the medical staff and Dr. Caroline Bristol was appointed woman physician.

Many difficulties attended the preliminary work of the hospital. The classification of patients was a slow process; there were no nurses nor nurses' home. The attendants had their rooms on the wards in the central group or wherever else they could find accommodations and much time was required for the adjustment of both patients and attendants to a new environment.

In September, 1891, the training school for nurses was established and organized by Dr. Wise, and the first graduating exercises were held in the infirmary in May, 1893.

About this time Group 3 was in the process of construction. On March 4, 1893, when nearly completed, it was partially burned, but work was immediately recommenced and before the end of the year it was completely finished. A special legislative appropriation of \$181,500 made this prompt restoration possible.

The first field day sports were held July 1, 1893.

In 1894 a fire alarm system was installed and the fire department was organized, with fire drills, etc.

The employees' building was opened in 1895. One hundred employees of both sexes lodge in the first and second stories and 34 in the third story.

In 1895 the electric trolley was built from the city to the hospital grounds.

In 1896 a finely equipped recreation building was opened, providing for theatrical entertainments, lecture room, club room and library.

In 1896 the cow barns were constructed, providing accommodates for 200 cows and 30 farm horses. At this time the mortuary was built.

On October 1, 1896, Dr. Wise was appointed president of the State Commission in Lunacy and resigned his office as superintendent, being succeeded by Dr. William Mabon.

In 1898 the farm cottage building was opened to accommodate patients who worked on the farm and in the barns. During this year the butter factory was completed, the first butter being manufactured in May, 1898. Additions to the infirmary were started in 1899, and were occupied by 155 cases transferred to the hospital on March 26, 1900.

In 1897 the steamer "Dorothy," for the use of excursion trips for the patients on the St. Lawrence River, was purchased. The cold storage plant was built and various additions to existing buildings were provided. In January, 1903, Dr. Mabon resigned as superintendent to assume the superintendency of Bellevue and Allied Hospitals in New York City. On September 10, 1903, Dr. Richard E. Hutchings, first assistant, was promoted to the vacancy.

In 1904 an isolation cottage for contagious diseases was built. Improvements to the grounds by planting of hundreds of trees was carried on.

In 1904 the training school was registered by the University of the State of New York.

In 1905 a pavilion for tuberculosis, named Inwood, was constructed. This provides for 100 patients afflicted with tuberculosis. It is situated on the southern edge of a large grove, and has a full southern exposure, with protection on the north and west. The broad verandas are exposed to the sun the entire day, and the numerous large doors and windows are so arranged that, no matter what the state of weather or direction of the wind may be, some of the doors and windows can be open at all times.

In 1906 St. Vincent's Roman Catholic chapel, with a seating capacity of 800, was donated to the hospital by Rev. Father Conroy, the hospital chaplain, through whose untiring efforts the sum of \$20,000 was collected.

In 1907 a general operating room was installed and equipped.

In 1909 a superintendent of the training school was appointed, and in 1910 new class rooms for theoretical and practical work were equipped. In 1910 an affiliation was made with the Hospital of the Good Shepherd at Syracuse to complete the experience necessary for a diploma of the State Board of Regents as registered nurse.

In 1910 dining rooms and diet kitchens were built in connection with the reception cottages. In these diet kitchens all extra food for the sick is prepared by nurses as part of their class instruction. In 1910 "Eastwood" was built for the accommodation of employees caring for tuberculosis patients.

One of the principal reasons for selecting the site of this hospital was that the St. Lawrence River would provide a water supply in perpetuity. As stated above, the hospital had been located three miles below the City of Ogdensburg, which discharged its raw sewage into the river. After an outbreak of typhoid fever in the city, cases were noted in the wards of the State Hospital and experiments soon showed a contamination of the water supply. An arrangement was at once made with the City of Ogdensburg to provide water from the Oswegatchie River and an annual charge of \$7500 is now paid for this service.

The state authorities have opposed any further increase in the size of this institution for many years for the reasons: (1) That the rigorous climate requires an expensive type of buildings with thick walls and double windows throughout; (2) that the per capita cost of coal is the largest in the state; (3) that the district assigned to the institution is not sufficiently large to keep its wards full.

The total cost of the land, buildings and equipment of this hospital up to the opening of the institution for 150 patients was \$1,050,460, and from that date until 1912 \$1,500,000 has been expended.

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 194 – 197.  
<<http://books.google.com/>>