

**SYRACUSE STATE INSTITUTION FOR FEEBLE-MINDED CHILDREN.
SYRACUSE, N. Y.**

The first attempt in this country to found a public institution for the feeble-minded was made in New York State in the year 1846 through legislation introduced by Frederick F. Backus, of Rochester. The measure, however, was not successful until 1851, when the institution was established in Albany on an experimental basis. The State of New York thus became the first one in the United States to make separate and special provision for the feeble-minded. Two years later the Legislature provided funds for the erection of permanent buildings on a site in Syracuse donated by philanthropic citizens. The corner stone of the main building was laid September 8, 1854, with impressive ceremonies and in the presence of distinguished guests, among whom was Dr. Edward Seguin, whose work in France had been the inspiration of the first efforts made in America for the training of the feeble-minded.

The Syracuse State Institution for Feeble-minded Children is located upon a beautiful elevation in the southwestern part of the city. The grounds comprise 65 acres, divided into lawns, garden, and a grove at the rear, which latter forms a delightful playground for the children. Burnet Park borders the institution grounds on two sides, city streets forming the east and south boundaries. A farm of 210 acres at Fairmount, four miles from the city location, supplies the institution with milk and other products.

The main, music hall and boys' buildings comprise the chief group, the girls' building and hospital being on an elevation at the rear. All of these buildings are two or more stories in height, and were erected many years ago. It is hoped soon to secure the relocation of the institution upon a larger site a short distance from Syracuse. The present population of 600 tests the capacity of the institution to the utmost and the demand for the admission of children grows more urgent each year.

The law which originally brought the institution into existence declared its purpose to be the education of the feeble-minded. This purpose has always been kept to the front, the school being the prominent feature in the work of the institution. Children between the ages of 7 and 14 who are feeble-minded or so deficient in intelligence as to be incapable of being educated in any ordinary school are eligible for admission.

Approximately 300 children are under instruction in the regular school department in addition to those receiving special physical and sense training. In the scholastic work the limit of attainment has been found to be the fourth grade, although occasionally a child is capable of doing some fifth grade work. The girls are trained in singing, at the piano and in the orchestra, while the boys have two band organizations. Sewing, ironing, cooking, raffia and reed basketry, towel and rug weaving, the making of caps, mittens, stockings, and coir mats, sloyd, chair-caning, the renovation and making of mattresses, etc., afford valuable training in addition to the very satisfactory results obtained. The work of the school and the institution is closely coordinated and the aim to produce useful institutional workers is constantly kept in mind.

Just within the main entrance to the institution is a marble tablet with this inscription: "Hervey Backus Wilbur, M. D., the first in America to attempt the education of the feeble-minded, and the first superintendent of this asylum. By his wisdom, zeal and humanity he secured its permanent establishment." Dr. Wilbur served the institution from 1851 to 1883 and upon his death the superintendency was offered to Dr. G. A. Doren, superintendent of the Institution for the Feeble-Minded at Columbus, Ohio. Dr. Doren accepted the appointment conditionally and for ten months was the nominal superintendent of both institutions, but eventually decided to remain in Columbus. In 1884 Dr. James C. Carson became the head of the institution and continued in this capacity until April 18, 1912, when he was succeeded by the present superintendent, Dr. O. H. Cobb.

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