

S. C. State Hospital-1827 to 1954

By INEZ NOLAN FRIPP

SINCE colonial days South Carolina has had a deep sense of responsibility toward the mentally ill which has been emphasized with the enlightenment of the general public regarding mental disorders; the recognition of mental illness as an illness; and the importance of early care and treatment.

A clear indication of the changed attitude was the number of interested visitors who responded to the South Carolina State Hospital "Open House" invitation in May 1953, during mental health week. They were given first-hand information by conducted tours through many wards, buildings and departments. The antiquated fear of the hospital and of mental patients is being considerably relieved or removed by education and by

such personal observation of hospital conditions and activities.

The two occasions of "Open House" in January 1954, when the four new dormitory buildings at the Columbia division were inspected, again proved revelations to the people generally. These ward buildings, each costing approximately \$717,000 with a bed capacity of 152, incorporate the most modern facilities, including in each treatment rooms, radiant heat, ceiling exhaust fans, offices, a beauty or barber shop, recreational areas, occupational therapy room, cafeteria, etc.

These four completed ward buildings, together with the tremendous kitchen-cafeteria-bakery located at the Columbia

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The Mills Building, completed December 18, 1827; architect, Robert Mills of Charleston. This was the original structure of the S. C. State Hospital. (Photograph of an oil painting by a hospital patient.)



The Ensor Research Laboratory, completed in 1939, one of the newest structures at the S. C. State Hospital.

division; and the two modern ward buildings under construction at the State Park division for Negroes, are the beginning of the extensive building program authorized by the 1952 General Assembly under the leadership of Governor James F. Byrnes whose sympathetic understanding and wise counsel are of untold value to the hospital and to the patients.

Even with the four completed structures at the Columbia Division with a bed capacity of 608, the overcrowding will not be relieved to any extent. One old building condemned as being unfit for patient use will be demolished; and two more will be vacated and completely renovated. At present there are 5,768 patients in the hospital with an acceptable bed capacity of 3,148.

The earliest attempt to provide a special place for the mentally ill in South Carolina was made by the Fellowship Society in Charleston in 1772. Apparently a great deal of good was accomplished but a building was never secured for that purpose.

The South Carolina State Hospital, Columbia, established by an Act of the

General Assembly, December 21, 1821, was the second in the United States exclusively for the care and treatment of the mentally ill.

The first state hospital for the mentally ill was opened at Williamsburg, Virginia, on October 12, 1773. The second was the Eastern State Hospital, Lexington, Kentucky, opened May 1, 1824. Our hospital, the second to be established, was the third to be ready for patients on December 18, 1827.

The General Assembly of 1821 appropriated \$30,000 to purchase property and construct appropriate buildings. A four-acre lot in the city of Columbia on Bull Street was secured and construction of the Mills Building started. The final cost of the structure was around \$100,000.

The establishment of the institution for the care of the mentally ill resulted from the inspiration, determination and perseverance of Colonel Samuel Farrow (1760-1824), member House of Representatives from Spartanburg County, known as the father of the hospital; and of Major William Crafts, Jr. (1787-

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State Service Magazine

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION

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dents. You can prevent accidents by carrying out safety rules and regulations set up by your employer, and by using the safety devices which your employer should furnish you. If your employer does not have safety rules and regulations and does not furnish you with safety devices to use; if you think parts of your work are hazardous, subjecting you and your fellow employee to an accident, why not call this to the attention of your immediate supervisor and show him the hazard. Your employer wants the department in which you work to be a safe place to work and he will be glad to correct the condition.

The slogan used by the South Carolina Annual Accident Prevention Conference was "Safe Today—Work Tomorrow." Won't you work safe in order that you can work tomorrow!

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S. C. STATE HOSPITAL

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1826), Senator from Charleston County. Portraits of these noble, public-spirited patriots are in the corridor of the administration building.

The Mills Building is the oldest structure in the nation erected to house mental patients which is in practical use today. Within recent years the interior has been altered, completely redecorated and converted into a modern home for nurses. The exterior remains the same, thus retaining the original architectural beauty; an imposing monument to the creative genius of the celebrated South Carolina architect, Robert Mills of Charleston. The cornerstone was laid July 22, 1822, but construction was slow and not until December 18, 1827 was the hospital declared completed and ready for use.

The first patient was admitted December 12, 1828, a young white woman from Barnwell County, accompanied by her mother who was employed as the first matron.

During the first years there were few admissions, and South Carolina advertised for patients; these being admitted from North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama and Tennessee.

There are many interesting facts about the earlier administrators and other personnel. Dr. James B. Davis, the first physician connected with the hospital, was elected by the Board of Regents in 1828 and served until January 1835. The General Assembly had in 1821 appointed him as a member of the commission to purchase the site and to construct the required building for mental patients. According to the *House Journal* of December 21, 1822, Dr. Davis was one of the elected trustees and visitors to the hospital.

He was succeeded by Dr. D. H. Trezevant of Columbia, a physician and a member of the original Board of Regents,

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in January 1835. This man of skill, vision and deep interest in the mentally ill made an invaluable contribution to South Carolina which will be remembered through the ages. He resigned in 1856.

There were three laymen in charge of the hospital from 1828 until January 1, 1837 when Dr. James Waring Parker became the first medical superintendent. After 33 years of continuous service and after rendering financial aid with his own funds, he was removed by a "partisan administration." Of worthy note is the fact that his successor, Dr. Joshua Fulton Ensor, recalled Dr. Parker in 1876 as assistant physician, which position he held until his death on October 11, 1882.

Dr. Ensor likewise spent his personal fortune for food, clothing and medicines for the patients, there being little official state interest in the hospital during this period of reconstruction following the War Between the States. Having almost exhausted his own funds, Dr. Ensor borrowed from the Quakers in Philadelphia for the maintenance of the institution.

Since the establishment of the hospital several of the administrators have attained not only national but international fame for research activities (the pellagra studies by Dr. J. W. Babcock), for instituting far-advanced methods of caring for the mentally ill, and for administrative ability.

When the hospital was founded in 1821 no provisions were made for the Negro patients. In their first report (1829) the Board of Regents referred to the matter, but no definite action was taken until the General Assembly of December 19, 1848 passed an act authorizing the admission of "persons of color" according to regulations and conditions heretofore established for white persons.

At first Negro patients were cared for on the same premises, but in separate buildings. In 1910 lands were purchased about six miles from Columbia at State

Park, and a separate unit established for Negroes. In 1937 the last group was transferred from the Columbia division.

The State Park division has steadily grown in size and population, today having about the same number of patients as the Columbia Division. There is a progressive building program and now under construction are two modern dormitory buildings similar to the ones just completed in the city.

In 1852, of her own initiative, Miss Dorothea L. Dix of Maine and New Jersey, the crusader for adequate care for the mentally ill, visited the hospital. By invitation of the Board of Regents she returned in 1859, and after a thorough inspection of the hospital she personally contacted every member of the legislature, urgently presenting the needs of the patients. By popular subscription she collected a substantial sum (\$3,300) to be used for the benefit of the patients. For years the Dix Cottage, named for her, was occupied by patients, and later was a nurses' home.

With keen judgment and foresight, Governor Richard I. Manning in 1915 appointed as superintendent of the hospital Dr. Charles "Fred" Williams of Columbia, originally of York County, a member of the Board of Regents and the first South Carolina State Board of Health Officer.

Beginning with Dr. Williams' administration on May 1, 1915, many changes occurred. First, at his insistence, the authority of appointing the superintendent was delegated to the Board of Regents, with the consent of the Senate. The statutes referable to the admission and other procedures pertaining to patients were rewritten. The name of the hospital was changed to the South Carolina State Hospital to conform to the modern trend of thought and ideas. An extensive program of improvement, con-

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struction and renovation was started which led to the hospital's being nationally recognized for the standard of excellence in the scientific and humane care of the mentally ill.

A skilled physician, a psychiatrist of national renown, a forceful executive, Dr. Williams built the hospital into one of which South Carolina was proud. The advanced methods of treatment for the mentally ill and the mental hygiene clinics for those outside the hospital, together with many other services of value, are monuments to him and to the personnel who worked diligently with him.

As in other things, there is a cycle in a hospital; and today there are again revisions, improvements, new constructions, renovations.

The year 1951-1952 is a memorable one in the history of the South Carolina State Hospital. After the report of the joint committee appointed by Governor Byrnes to study mental health facilities in the state, and his excellency's eloquent appeal after a personal visit to the hospital with most of the General Assembly, there was appropriated for the fiscal year 1952-1953 the sum of \$5,000,000 for permanent improvements here and at the S. C. State Training School. This is the most substantial appropriation of funds at any one time for the S. C. State Hospital for permanent improvements.

During this session of the General Assembly was enacted the new mental health law, completely revising the statutes pertaining to the admission and other procedures relative to patients of the hospital.

The new law deletes objectionable terms and directs the use of more modern and humane expressions regarding the mentally ill patients. At the same

time provisions were made whereby patients are simply "admitted" rather than "committed" to the hospital.

(A continuation of this article will be featured in the June issue.)

NOTE

Senator Callison's bill (No. S-429), referred to as the "social security act"; and Senator Morrah's bill (No. S-173), providing supplementary benefits for certain retired state employees—both approved by the Legislature as we go to press.

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