NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ABOUT DELAWARE STATE HOSPITAL

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*The Delmarva Star*, Wilmington, Delaware, March 18, 1934, Features Section, pp. 6-7

Headline: **“From Bedlam’s Asylum to Psychiatric Hospital: State Hospital at Farnhurst Has Made Vast Strides in Bringing Ideas of Insanity Out of Dark Ages, Remove Ancient Onus of Afflicted Minds, Tarumianz Urges State; Cure Supplants Confinement of Afflicted in Dank Cells”**

Main article: “In the dark year of 1402, a royal decree set aside the St. Mary of Bethlehem Hospital, in London, as a lunatic asylum. It was the first to be established in the English speaking world. Afflicted men and women from all walks of life were rounded up, rudely thrust into chains and herded like cattle into the small and evil smelling cells of the hospitals. Formerly a priory, the building consisted of many damp, stone-vaulted chambers without light or air.

Into this vast, mouldering structure were thrust two hundred and thirty unfortunates – gibbering idiots, raving maniacs, pathetically befuddled simpletons. Screams mingled with the hideous wailings of the mad as for lack of space, the afflicted were thrust indiscriminately into the narrow confines and crannies of the forbidding place. Back of it all was merely the idea of getting them in off the streets – the asylum was a prison in which no thought was given of the patients’ well being. If they died, so much the better.

Death was a merciful hand at St. Mary’s. Within a month every man and woman at the place was a screaming, uttering mad bundle of agonized despair. Young boys and girls whose mental progress had merely been retarded after a week’s being chained in close proximity to the dangerous, criminally insane, became as wildly maniacal as the rest. The screams and clanking of chains could be heard for blocks around the streets leading to the scene.

Becomes “Bedlam”

By a contraction of the name, the place became known as “Bedlam,” a word which has entered the language as one typifying the utmost in turmoil and confusion. The patients were fed like animals in the zoo; gruff bailiffs merely tossing scraps of food into the cells at varying intervals, and watching with glee as the famished patients fought desperately for a morsel. No provision for sanitary facilities of any sort was made, and squalor, degradation and pestilence ran rampant.

Such is the picture presented, with only minor variations, of the care of the insane well into modern times. As the world grew more enlightened, the physical care of the patients improved materially; a segregation of the sexes was arranged, more or less sanitary conditions were brought into being, and an effort made to regard the mentally deranged as a human being.

The idea back of the care of the insane, however, remained much the same. Except in the case of private sanitaria for the wealthy, the insane hospital was merely a placed of incarceration where the physical wants of the inmate might be taken care of, and the danger or embarrassment of his being at large alleviated. No question of cure was contemplated, the sole purpose being the “putting away” of the afflicted. As a result many families revolted from the thought of placing a loved one in such an environment, where he would quickly become as made as the violently deranged. Many a home with a locked room and a barred window gave mute testimony of the tragedy that had been enacted within its walls, and of the totally inadequate measures developed to care for the serious social blight of insanity up until the present century.

Niggardly Appropriation

Public funds appropriated for the care of the mentally unfit were in keeping with the trend of thought at the time. As long as the insane were looked upon as unfortunate wards of the State, who must be kept out of the way as cheaply as possible, legislative uplift lagged miserably. In most cases the insane were crowded into almshouses amid overcrowded and socially dangerous conditions.

Delaware’s insane were housed for many years in the old Almshouse on Broom street, or King’s Highway. Until the erection of the first unit of the present group at Farnhurst, in the eighties [1880s], persons whom it was found necessary to put away were thrust into this woefully inadequate poorhouse. Little enough provision was made for their care, and none at all for their social rehabilitation.

In the past twenty years, due largely to the advances made by both physical and mental hygiene, and by sociology, many changes have been wrought in the public attitude toward these problems. Gradually the truth has been brought home that a person suffering from a mental aberration is not a criminal, or necessarily a thorn in the side of society, but that he is an invalid, entitled to as much care and attention as is accorded sufferers from every other disease.

On Three Fronts

With this as its prime mover, the Delaware State Hospital at Farnhurst has waged incessant warfare for the past two decades toward a more progressive outlook toward the insanity problem. Its battle has been fought on three fronts: First and primarily, the work within the institution itself; second with the legislature in an effort to provide additional facilities and a more extensive program, and third in an educational campaign that sought to impress upon the public mind the fact that a mental hospital was not merely a prison for the socially unfit, but that it was a hospital in every sense of the word.

“Send us your insane at the first sign of trouble,” was the doctrine preached from the housetops, “give us the facilities to take care of them, and we will send them back to you as useful members of society.”

When, in 1918, Dr. M.A. Tarumianz came to the State Road institution as superintendent, he took up the sword with an intensive fervor. One of the most eminent psychiatrists in the country, Dr. Tarumianz had long been an evangelist in bringing a new view of insanity to the world.

To his credit may be attributed the great work of the Delaware institution.

Conditions Poor

Conditions at the hospital were very poor when the new superintendent assumed his duties. The plant boasted of only one major building for the confinement and treatment of all cases, and it was hopelessly overcrowded. Patients were accommodated in long dormitories, with only straw on the floor for beds, only as recently as a dozen years ago, and the facilities for medical and psychological care were practically nil. In spite of the advancement of thought, no additions with the exception of a colored ward, had been added in the previous thirty-five years. With practically the same facilities with which the hospital was started, a constantly increasing number of patients had to be taken care of.

The conditions, both physical and mental, which this brought about were of a decidedly serious nature. Mind mental cases, even neurotic and entirely nervous patients were forced to be in daily contact with those whose aberrations had reached advanced stages. Recreational facilities, dining hall room, and similar activities were conducted under such crowded and disadvantageous conditions that any progress in the treatment of mental psychosis was seriously impaired.

New Era Dawns

With the appropriation in 1929, of funds providing for a permanent improvement program, a new era dawned at the hospital. While still seriously handicapped by a lack of funds, it was possible at this time, by the act of the Assembly, to begin operations on the first of the proposed units which would bring about the completion of Dr. Tarumianz’ plans. In December of 1928 plans were prepared for future developments, calculated on a base of the last 20 years. These plans were presented to Governor Buck for his approval, and submitted to the Legislature for their consideration.

By virtue of the funds made available by the Assembly it was made possible to erect four buildings, which materially relieved the congestion which had so seriously handicapped the hospital authorities, and provided facilities for the treatment and rehabilitation of cases which were curable with proper medical care.

These included the psychiatric observation clinic, the building for continued treatment, the re-educational building and the first wing of a nurses’ home. Brown and Whiteside, architects, with the expert collaboration of the hospital staff, succeeded in providing buildings which represented the highest development both in convenience and in scientific advancement.

Clinic Important

Most important of all the recent additions is the psychiatric observation clinic. With the facilities thus placed at the hospital’s disposal, it is possible to carry out two of the prime factors of the insanity program, namely: Curative and preventative measures, and segregation. Since it is no longer necessary for the mildly mental and nervous cases to be thrown in with those whose trouble is of a more serious nature, the old stigma of the “asylum” is cast off, and the real hospitalization work realized. Aside from the obvious advantages of a separate housing for the mildly afflicted, therefore, are the even greater opportunities for cure, study and prevention. The clinic represents the first great forward step in Dr. Tarumianz’ program.

“The building of this psychiatric observation clinic placed Delaware among the States leading in the care of their mentally sick,” Dr. Tarumianz tells you. “Modern psychiatry fully realizes the importance of early diagnosis of insanity. It also appreciates the fact that insanity has a prodromal stage, much as any other disease. Moreover, this specialty does not only care for the actually insane, but it is also interested in the many cases of mentally mal-adjusted, who are not actually insane, but who are yet prevented from making a satisfactory adjustment in the community due to some irregularity of disposition, some anti-social habit, or some neurosis.”

“Yet it can readily be seen that people suffering from these milder types of mental disturbances are not willing to become patients in a State hospital. Of private institutions there are plenty, but these are luxuries, and the average individual is unable to afford the prolonged treatment necessary. Realizing that many individuals need this treatment, and should have the opportunity to receive such, the psychiatric observation clinic was built. Although under the same control as the State Hospital, it is an institution apart, being a complete hospital unit, with its own personnel, surgery, treatment room, kitchen, and all departments which make up a complete institution. The patients are not legally committed to this hospital, but come voluntarily, the family physician requesting admittance through a regular certificate. The period of observation is for four weeks only, but may be prolonged, if found necessary. This institution, among the first of its kind connected with State Hospitals, has been a source of much satisfaction. It has been well received by the people, and there is often a waiting list of patients.”

Successful Treatment

A child, for example, is discovered to be suffering from psychosis manifested in hallucinations of fear. No longer is it necessary for her to go along for years, finally ending up as a hopelessly insane person. A period of a few weeks’ time under the care of psychiatrists in the clinic is very likely to banish the aberration from her mind. The clinic is a mental hospital, no more and no less, and the patient should have tubercular person to a sanitarium (sic). Dr. Tarumianz points out that the notion that a mental affliction is a blot upon the family escutcheon is in many cases the very thing which prevents the patient being cured. He is convinced that at least 60 per cent of the cases of insanity may be entirely cured if treated in incipiency.

The continued treatment building is utilized as a hospital for cases of a more serious nature, but in whom there is a prospect of cure. Ultimately there will be two of these buildings, one for each sex. The re-educational building is used for fitting patients whose mental sub-normalities have been cured to a normal life outside the institution. Some must be taught everything all over again – the use of dining utensils, the functions of dressing, and similar normalities which, in many cases, have become entirely lost. Here again is a task of first magnitude. The social regeneration necessary to refit a person for life as a useful citizen is one of the prime requisites of any thoroughly comprehensive program.

Still Cramped for Room

While the expansion program thus far carried out has gone forward relieving the overcrowded conditions, the institution, as it stands, is woefully is need of additional space, and continues to grow more so as time goes on. The population of the hospital has increased tremendously in the past few years, as was predicted in the 1928 report of the trustees. It is expected that it will be necessary to provide accommodation for 1,000 patients by the end of 1935. The capacity of the hospital in 1928 was 500 beds. The enlargements taken care of since that time, which they have increased the effectiveness of the hospital many fold, have increased the available space only to the extent of 200 beds. The present absolute population, excluding the paroles, is 830. It is obvious that unless space for 300 additional patients is provided for, even more discouragingly overcrowded conditions will result, or drastic reductions in the medical and educational programs will be necessitated.

Whatever the immediate solution of the problems, it is certain that ultimately the plans outlined by Dr. Tarumianz will be carried out. The plant, when completed, will be perhaps the finest in the country, and will be a complete realization of the new psychiatric ideal. The large cost of constructing such a hospital is more than overshadowed by the benefits both social and material which will assuredly be extracted from it. The per capita cost of caring for the unfortunate will be lessened still further (it has shown a steady decrease, in spite of the vast strides made), and the number of mentally afflicted turned back into useful and productive citizenship will be enormously increased.

The building program as planned would provide complete segregation. Dr. Tarumianz’ plans call for separate buildings for nearly every class of insanity. A building set off from the rest will house the criminally violent. Another will be used entirely by syphilitic cases. Men and women will be taken care of in separate structures. A complete plant for education, occupational duties, recreation is included in the proposals. Hospitalization, prevention and cure will be carried to the utmost reaches of science. When the State of Delaware finally acquires the completed plant it is thought that the bill society pays in the insanity problem will be cut to the limit of human ingenuity.

Figures compiled last year seem to indicate that insanity is growing all the time – indeed, if progression kept up at the rate the affliction has grown since the sixteenth century, by the end of the twentieth every other person would be incarcerated in an asylum, and in another hundred years, everybody would be crazy!

Dr. Tarumianz admits the large number of those whose brains are subject to question, but thinks such statistics prove little. What he is interested in is cure, and believes that with another decade or so, anything will be possible.