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Report of the Committee on Craig Colony

Enoch V. Stoddard, M.D.

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Genesee Valley Historical Reprint Series



Genesee Valley Historical Reprint Series: Report of the Committee on Craig Colony

The Craig Colony for Epileptics opened in Sonyea, NY, in January 1896 as “a new form of charity, recently adopted by this State, and is based upon the idea of being, as fully as possible, self-supporting.” Indeed, it was only the second such institution in the United States. This brief report, written in November 1896 by Committee members Dr. Enoch V. Stoddard, William P. Letchworth, and Peter Walrath, is an assessment of the Colony’s first year in operation. Their conclusion that “this experiment on the part of the State has proved, during its first and most difficult year of trial, to be not only justifiable, but such as to meet the further expectations of those who have been most interested in its origin and development” was quite prescient, as the Colony (which was eventually renamed Craig Developmental Center) continued to operate until 1988.

In their report, the Committee describes the progress made on renovating the existing buildings of the former Shaker site where the Colony is located and makes a case for construction of a new administration building; new dormitories for patients (alternately referred to as inmates); a house and office for the Superintendent; and living quarters for employees, most of whom have had to find lodging in Mount Morris, a village some four miles distant. Much praise is given to the doctors at Craig, who have established meticulous record-keeping based on careful and scientific observation and have made advances in classifying, and thus treating, epileptic patients. Treatment includes occupation (patients engage in real agricultural work, earning \$14,230.20 for the Colony in its first year, and other household and technical work), diet (very little meat, lots of fruit and vegetables), and “a common school education” (a school was opened in September 1896 to provide “moral and mental treatment” for the patients.)

As medical science progressed and treatments for epilepsy evolved, Craig Colo-

ny's useful life came to an end in the late 20th century, but it became the foundation for the Finger Lakes Developmental Disabilities Services Office based in Rochester, NY.

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STATE BOARD OF CHARITIES.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON CRAIG COLONY.

**Transmitted to the Legislature of the State of New York, with the Thirtieth
Annual Report of the Board, February 25, 1897.**

Report of the Committee on the Craig Colony.

To the State Board of Charities:

The past year has been one of continuous development of all departments in this institution. The Colony is a new form of charity, recently adopted by this State, and is based upon the idea of being, as fully as possible, self-supporting.

In its development, the most serious obstacle which has been met has been the difficulty of projecting new lines of procedure, which do not require more or less constant revision and alteration. At almost every turn new problems are offered for solution. Unexpected embarrassments have been met by the board of managers; but their indefatigable superintendent has successfully and satisfactorily solved the most difficult of those which have presented themselves.

At the very outset, constant difficulty has arisen from the lack of opportunity to properly classify the inmates upon their reception from the various parts of the State. This has been due, in part, to the lack of ability to separate, in distinct buildings, certain distinct classes of cases; and in part to the necessity for selecting in every case, as far as possible, those which might be benefited by Colony treatment, regardless of their ability to work.

The main occupation in which the inmates have been engaged is agriculture. With the exception of the work of the household, involving that of the kitchen, little of the construction work has been performed by the inmates.

Opening of the Colony.

The Colony was formally opened January 20, 1896. The patients already admitted have been selected with great care. At the suggestion of this committee, the State Board of Charities requested Dr. Charles S. Hoyt, Superintendent of State and Alien Poor, to

associate himself with Superintendent Dr. Spratling, of the Craig Colony, in the selection of cases from the various institutions of the State. This has proved a happy combination, as Dr. Hoyt's intimate knowledge of the inmates of the several institutions of the State, particularly of those having many of this class of cases, has enabled him to greatly aid Superintendent Spratling in selection and apportionment.

Improvements and Conditions.

The growth and development of the Colony, in its various departments, has been pushed forward during the year in accordance with the plans made at its beginning. The changes in the buildings include repairs, as well as additions to the water supply and heating appliances. These have all been economical and satisfactory, and have been completed within the estimates made at the beginning of such work. In the water supply, extensive results have been accomplished, and that, for the ordinary use of the household, and for protection against fire, has been very satisfactorily completed. The supply of spring water, for domestic use solely, is ample and of most excellent quality.

The extension of the system of sewerage has been also considerable, and its results have met all expectations. The filter beds, in which this system terminates, have proved to be a valuable resource during the past year. Two of the inmates, gardeners, have been employed in making them available for market gardening.

The removal of some of the old buildings to other sites has been accomplished. The large barn has been transferred from its former position near "Letchworth house" to the section reserved for the agricultural buildings. In rebuilding this structure a well-lighted basement has been added, containing a section for the storage of vegetables, and a fine cow-barn for the accommodation of sixty cows.

The ice-house and cold-storage building are in process of construction, and, when completed, will furnish ample accommodations in this direction.

The new power and pump house is finished. The machinery works satisfactorily in every respect. The electric-light system is extensive, and affords a safe and very satisfactory illumination for the buildings and those portions of the grounds demanding light. A further extension of this plant will prove of great benefit to the institution, by removing the present method of lighting in all its parts.

Results already Accomplished.

Aside from the structural improvements noted, which have been accomplished in the work proper of the institution, one of the earliest efforts of the administration has been to establish a classification, based upon the etiology and pathology of epilepsy. This has been very fully explained in the report of the medical superintendent, Dr. Spratling, to which this committee would refer. It is an elaborate attempt to outline a classification which, by increasing experience, may be modified in such a manner as to approach completeness. That at present adopted at this institution "is not held to be perfect, or even satisfactory, but is used as a working basis for future improvement." A brief summary, taken from the report of the superintendent, indicates that the effort, in establishing this classification, has been to group into separate classes:

(a) Cases of epilepsy occurring in degenerate types of families of low moral and mental development.

(b) Cases in which the disease appears subsequently to infantile paralysis.

(c) Those in which some defect of the skull is apparent.

(d) Those in which hysterical convulsions are, in some way, connected with epileptic seizures.

(e) Those of hereditary origin.

(f) Those in some way connected with imbecility.

(g) And, finally, those in which the changes incident to old age are found in various structures and portions of the body.

Such a classification is based upon the scientific analysis of the sum total of our knowledge of the various conditions which may, either directly or indirectly, result in or favor the development of epileptic conditions.

Treatment.

The lines of treatment adopted have been based upon the three provisions found essential in securing the welfare of epileptic patients. These are: (a) Diet. (b) Occupation. (c) Medical treatment.

It is conceded that for the successful treatment of the epileptic subject a proper diet is indispensable. This involves the exclusion of a large amount of nitrogenous food, fatty substances and those containing considerable amounts of sugar. Meat of any kind is excluded from all meals, except that at noon. Soup is daily given, as being nutritious and also on account of its bulk, which prevents patients desiring large amount of meat at the noon meal. All persons acquainted with the habits of the ordinary epileptic are aware that an uncontrollable appetite is one of his characteristics. With a special fondness for meat food, and his usual lack of self-control, he is disposed to eat a quantity of meat far larger than his condition would warrant or than his needs require.

Vegetable food contains but a comparatively small amount of nitrogenous material and furnishes a resource from which his food can be safely and judiciously chosen. To those following an agricultural line of occupation, the fruits raised in the gardens and upon the farm, furnish a temptation for this kind of food which can, without danger, be quite fully gratified. There are, however, some vegetables which must be denied to the epileptic, except in certain proportions. Among these are potatoes and beets, the first containing a very large proportion of starchy material and the second a considerable amount of saccharine element.

For the special condition of the dietary established at this institution we would refer to the able report of Superintendent Spratling upon this subject.

Occupation.

Closely allied to dietetic regulations are those connected with "occupation." The epileptic, fully as much as any other member of the body social, requires occupation adapted to both his physical and mental capacities. Without it degenerate processes would

proceed more rapidly and largely. By mental and physical exercise the epileptic is placed in a condition favorable for satisfactory results. While we can not claim absolute immunity from epileptic seizures, the influence of the combination of these two factors in treatment is unmistakable. The earliest experience of the Colony affords a striking confirmation of this statement.

On referring to the report of Superintendent Spratling, we learn that, "The first fifty patients who were under treatment five months and over, before the close of the year, had collectively, during the first month of their residence at the Colony, seven hundred and eight (708) seizures. The same fifty cases, after five months of treatment, had, collectively, during the fifth month, three hundred and fifteen (315) seizures, a reduction of fifty-five and thirty fifty-ninths per cent. During the first month each case averaged fourteen (14) attacks; during the fifth month each case averaged six (6) attacks."

In the care of the majority of epileptics, employment in the open air has been found beneficial. The agricultural features of the Colony, therefore, provide fully for all requisites in this department. For the care of inmates, from the labor upon the farm to the lighter work in cultivating the gardens and care of the roadways and walks, opportunity is afforded for employment of both male and female residents of the Colony. The avocations of the household, in its various departments, provide for the women and girls varied occupation and employment in the necessary labor connected with housekeeping.

In addition to this, the needs of other classes of patients will be met in the establishment of technical occupations involving carpentry, shoemaking, blacksmithing and other pursuits. These will be commenced as rapidly as opportunity is afforded in the development of the buildings and other conveniences for their establishment.

We are impelled to urge the importance of the mental and moral treatment projected in the order of this institution. It is comparatively recent that this has been fully recognized and appreciated as an essential feature of the treatment of epilepsy. In

addition to the discipline of a systematic and regular performance of manual labor, certain advantage is gained by a well adjusted direction of the mental and physical faculties, along lines which are commensurate with the intellectual capacities of each individual.

Occupation, physical and mental, tends to develop in the individual a feeling of self-dependence, of personal pride and a certain ambition for the attainment of better things, which are of the greatest importance to the epileptic patient. They tend to overcome, to a certain extent, a tendency toward downward degeneration, mental and physical, and serve to increase the power of self-control in the individual, which, in the epileptic class, is notably lacking.

An admirable suggestion has been made by the president and superintendent of the institution, in the establishment of a school. We could not better state the idea, upon which this is based, than to quote the words of the superintendent, in his annual report.

“In the establishment of a school, we seek to obtain a two-fold object:

“1st. To inculcate certain principles.—A few hours daily spent in the atmosphere of the schoolroom, where order is enforced, salutary discipline maintained and constancy and continuity of action patiently and persistently taught, will, in time, instill into the beneficiaries of the system, habits of industry and principles that can be applied to great advantage in the prosecution of the ordinary avocations of life.

“2d. To give them a common school education.—A great majority of the young people committed to our care have so long been afflicted that educational advantages have hitherto been denied them. The doors of ordinary institutions everywhere are closed to them.

“We recognize many epileptics as defective beings, too often representing a perverted and unfinished product of the human race, so to speak. We shall, therefore, not attempt to supply him with what nature has denied him, but it will be our constant and earnest endeavor to teach him to cultivate, to value and to utilize

to the greatest possible degree, both for his individual good and for the good of the universal social order of which he is, in a measure, an integral part, the talents that nature gave him, and that a beneficial environment served to develop and educate within him. We will endeavor to educate him simply; to teach him to write, that he may communicate with his friends; to read, that he may enjoy his hours of rest from manual toil with some wholesome book, and to perform such arithmetical problems as will aid him whenever the exercise of mental power is called for."

On September 28th a school was opened at the Colony with an attendance of twenty-three.

Medical Treatment.

This portion of the treatment of this class of patients needs but a passing mention from this committee. It has been fully explained and dwelt upon in the report of the superintendent, to which we refer. It may be said, however, that all approved methods of medical treatment have been followed, in groups of selected cases, and observations have been carefully recorded, from which general deductions may be drawn, as the number of observed cases increases. In connection with Special Medical Treatment, certain other disturbances which, in the epileptic, demand care and attention, have also been noted and properly cared for.

On the whole, while a history of treatment in the Colony has, thus far, extended over but a comparatively limited space of time, there have been collected a number of all-important facts and results which are sufficient, of themselves, to emphasize the value of this effort on the part of the State to care for its epileptic wards.

Records.

Not the least important part of the matters relating to treatment in this institution is the elaborate system of records which has been adopted and followed.

These are as complete as it is possible to make them. The character of the attacks, the frequency of their occurrence, the influence of sex, and many other distinctive conditions, have been

laboriously classified and arranged in form for ready reference, tabulation and classification. Your committee considers the system of records referred to as one of the most valuable of the proceedings initiated during the past year, both as regards its present as well as its future bearings. The fund of information obtained is of value on account of the careful and scientific methods of observation followed, and is daily accumulating matter of a character differing, in many respects, from anything previously recorded and classified.

Self-Support.

In the establishment of this Colony one predominant idea, on the part of its originators, was the prospect of making the institution self-supporting. This was considered possible from the fact that, it being largely an agricultural institution, a considerable amount of the food products necessary for the maintenance of inmates could be raised upon the grounds by the labor of the inmates themselves. This has already proved a valuable resource, since it not only provided occupation, so necessary for this class of patients, but also the products raised are of such a character as will be largely utilized in the institution. All surplus products, and this surplus will be a large one in some directions, are available for sale at market prices. The money resulting from such sales being placed, in accordance with the provisions of its charter, in the hands of its board of managers, for purposes of maintenance, has, during the past year, shown in a marked degree the feasibility of this plan.

The report of the matron shows that in the departments of the sewing room a total of 3,431 separate articles have been made by the female inmates, all of which are capable of being used in the institution. These include both household linen and the clothing necessary for the female inmates. In the repair of household and personal clothing, a further number of articles repaired, amounting to 550, may be added to the work of this department.

The report of the steward shows an amount of garden products of the value of \$277.25, and of farm products valued at \$9,852.63 produced by the inmates. In addition, there is a gain in stock of

all kinds amounting to \$1,660.90 during the past year. Added to these are miscellaneous sales amounting to \$1,964.16, making a total of \$14,230.20 as the earnings of the institution in its agricultural and other products for the year.

Needs of the Coming Year.

Among the many actual necessities for the coming year, one of the most prominent is the construction, at as early a date as possible, of an Administration building. Under present arrangements, provision for the executive work of the Colony is made by occupying a portion of the building devoted to the female patients. This building, "Letchworth house," should be entirely freed from any such embarrassment. It is unnecessary to urge that a building, devoted to occupancy by female residents of the Colony, should be as free as possible from anything connected with the administration work of the institution. The executive work necessarily requires the presence of a number of male employes and attendants at various hours of the day and night. This proves detrimental to the welfare of and arrangements for the care of this portion of the inmates of the Colony.

Not only does this condition require unceasing vigilance on the part of the attendants, which is, under proper circumstances, wholly unnecessary, but visitors are brought directly into this building, and its inmates are, consequently, subject to intrusion and disturbances which, in a large number of cases, prove extremely prejudicial. It is, therefore, desirable that an administration building be erected at an early date, and the existing embarrassment obviated. It might be said further, that the portion of this building, "Letchworth house," now occupied by the administration department, could be used for occupancy by a larger number of inmates than at present, and would also furnish additional room for further classification of patients and added facilities for the work of this part of the institution.

Dormitories.

If possible, a more urgent necessity for further construction arises in securing additional dormitory buildings for patients.

Since the opening of the Colony the entire effort in providing accommodations for patients, has been in remodeling and arranging existing buildings for occupancy by both male and female inmates. All available buildings, for this purpose have now been placed in condition. The limit of reconstruction has been reached, and it is, therefore, necessary, in order to take an additional number of patients for which the Colony is prepared, to construct, immediately, a series of dormitories capable of housing those patients, male and female, who are waiting for admission.

In order to meet the demand for admission of patients, now wards of the State in other institutions, a considerable expenditure in the extension of accommodations must be made during the coming year. Nearly 600 dependent epileptics are waiting for opportunity to enter the Colony; and for these, provision must be made as rapidly as possible. These patients will be received under the same conditions which have been established for those already admitted. To provide for additional inmates, dormitories on the cottage plan are proposed. This plan will insure further classification of inmates and a most economical arrangement of the conduct of the household. Upon this system the per capita expense is estimated at a sum not to exceed \$500. This will include all conveniences, such as plumbing, heating and other matters connected with construction and furnishing of the buildings. A number of cottages will be required.

Among the pressing needs is the matter of furnishing. In the expenditure of previous appropriations, no provision, except to a very limited extent, has been made for furnishing the several buildings now occupied, and none for buildings to be erected in the future. It is not only the actual necessities of furniture, such as beds, bedding and chairs, which are required, but other small matters of furnishing which, in the total, reach a large amount. The managers have estimated that a sum approximating \$20,000 would be none too large to meet all necessities in this direction.

In discussing the needs connected with building, a house and office for the superintendent are also to be considered.

Water Supply and Sewerage System.

Immediately related to the construction of additional buildings, is an extension of water supply and the sewer system. It is unnecessary to urge the importance of enlarging these systems upon a definite plan, in connection with the location of new buildings. If these two systems be extended to the east side of Kishlaqua creek, as proposed, this desirable portion of the grounds can be made immediately available for the erection of buildings for further accommodation of patients. For this extension, and an additional one upon the west side of the creek, a considerable appropriation is required.

Provisions for Tenants.

The experience of the past year has shown an urgent demand for facilities for lodging certain employes of the institution. It is with regret that your committee is obliged to admit that it has seen no way, under present resources, to provide for these employes except to consent to their residence in the village of Mt. Morris, nearly four miles distant. These employes are among the most important and valuable to the Colony, and it has proved detrimental to its best interests to be compelled to submit to this inconvenience, which has resulted in loss of valuable time and service. To provide for the residence of these employes, a number of small tenement houses should be erected, which, aside from furnishing a residence for such employes in close connection with the administration of the institution, will, from rentals obtainable from them, prove a source of pecuniary saving to the funds of the Colony.

Accommodation for Livestock.

One of the sources of income to the Colony during the past year, as shown in the report of the steward, is the increase of its livestock. For the care, shelter and maintenance of this feature of its agricultural portion, adequate provision is necessary. This is specially apparent in providing ampler housing for livestock of all kinds and for the fowls required by the institution for its own uses. The raising of stock, and particularly of poultry, should be carried on to a considerable extent on account of its

affording occupation for certain classes of inmates and also for the possible revenue obtainable therefrom. For this purpose a sum should be appropriated for the construction of properly arranged and located buildings.

The extension of facilities for the storage of agricultural products, resulting from the labor of the inmates upon the farm, is necessary, and is specially indispensable in properly securing and storing grain and similar products.

Miscellaneous Needs.

A further need exists in the actual and prospective wants of the Colony in the departments of blacksmithing, carpentry, etc. For these added facilities an appropriation is required to meet demands for fencing the entire grounds, moving buildings from present sites to those more desirable, together with painting, repairs and other improvements.

A further extension of the electric plant is required to furnish additional lighting and a certain amount of power which, with the present resources, will be sufficient for such technical work in the Colony as may require it.

In the appliances and provisions for fire protection, a further addition is required. While the water supply is ample, and the location of hydrants affords sufficient for any needs, movable fire apparatus is considered indispensable on account of the large number of groups of wooden buildings upon the grounds.

For the development of the various industries in the shops, provision should be made, as the present number of inmates, increasing during the coming year, creates a demand for facilities for labor in this department. For securing these additions to the accommodations for inmates and for their profitable employment, it is obvious that a sum must be appropriated in addition to that for maintenance.

Your committee is, with the superintendent and executive committee of the board of managers, studying most carefully the absolute requirements in these directions. The conclusions reached will be presented later, in definite form, as a supplement to this report.

Your committee, in concluding this report, congratulates the managers of the institution upon the very satisfactory results accomplished in the face of so many difficulties. The year about to open will, we believe, prove to be one of greater advancement and of even more satisfactory results than that which is about to close. Thus far we are impelled to express it as our opinion that this experiment on the part of the State has proved, during its first and most difficult year of trial, to be not only justifiable, but such as to meet the further expectations of those who have been most interested in its origin and development.

ENOCH V. STODDARD, M. D.,
WM. P. LETCHWORTH,
PETER WALRATH,

Committee.

Dated November 13, 1896.

Supplementary.

Immediately subsequent to the completion of this report, Commissioner Letchworth, feeling compelled to lay down the work which he had followed during so many years and with such distinction, tendered his resignation to the Governor and severed his official relations with colleagues who part with him with the deepest regret.

One of the earliest projectors of the establishment of this Colony, he, with the late President Craig, of this Board, left no effort untied to secure the opening of this great eleemosynary institution. With the knowledge, persistence and ability which have characterized the work of his life, he has followed its development with tireless interest.

We desire to give formal expression to our esteem for our late colleague, and to the sense of loss which the retirement of one so earnest, resourceful and able, creates.

ENOCH V. STODDARD, M. D.,
PETER WALRATH,

Commissioners.