

The National Leprosarium of the United States

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THE Congress, in 1916, having considered testimony of expert witnesses and upon the recommendations of the various State Health Officers and various national medical societies, determined upon the Federal care of lepers found within the United States, and enacted a Bill to provide a home for the care and treatment of persons afflicted with leprosy and to prevent the spread of the disease in the United States, said home to be administered by the United States Public Health Service and, for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this Act, appropriated the sum of 250,000 dollars.

Considerable difficulty was encountered by a committee designated to select a suitable site for the proposed institution because of the evident impracticability of finding in combination, the desirable prerequisites of relative isolation from cities or towns; convenience of transportation; physical suitability of site and local public goodwill. The World War interrupted somewhat the surveys of the committee and it was not until January 3rd, 1921, that the final recommendations of the committee were crystallised in the purchase of the Louisiana Leper Home at Carville, by the Federal Government.

The unexpended portion of the appropriation after purchase of the site, was immediately used for the construction of additional dormitories for the housing of new patients and medical personnel. Necessarily tentative estimates concerning the number of lepers residing within the United States determined a plan of procedure whereby the institution, rather than be completed as a unit, should be enlarged by progressive stages until sufficient to accommodate all known cases. Appropriations have been made and expended subsequently, until the institution at the moment provides hospitalisation facilities for approximately 500 patients, together with adequate living quarters for permanent employees. A total expenditure of 1,143,082 dollars has been made to date for construction purposes. Additionally, a chapel for the use of Protestant patients and one for those of the Roman Catholic faith, have been built from non-Government funds and presented to the Government.

CENTRAL POWER HOUSE.

By virtue of relative isolation it has been necessary to provide facilities so that the institution is almost entirely self-contained and, from an administrative standpoint, may be considered as having been constructed around the central power plant as a nucleus. This structure contains equipment and machinery for the sedimentation, filtration and chlorination of the water supply ; for the circularisation of hot and cold water and steam heat ; and to generate electricity for illumination and refrigeration to the buildings, approximately one hundred in number. The same building houses an ice plant manufacturing approximately ten tons of ice a day and circulating refrigerated brine to various storehouses. Fire-fighting equipment is centralised and a stationary fire engine controls the water pressure at fire hydrants appropriately spaced throughout and among the buildings.

Sewage disposal by means of underground septic tanks and chlorinated effluent constitutes a unit of the plant, as does a garbage and refuse incinerator.

Fuel used in the central power plant and the kitchens is crude oil purchased in barge lots arriving by way of the Mississippi River, the oil being stored immediately adjoining the power plant in tanks which hold approximately a three months' supply.

PATIENTS' QUARTERS.

Radiating from the central power plant are the quarters for the patients, consisting of 35 cottages arranged around the four sides of a rectangular space, which space serves for recreational purposes. Each cottage is joined to its neighbour by a raised, covered screen walk. A typical dormitory consists of 12 private bedrooms with conveniently located bath and toilet facilities, recreation room and sleeping porch. Most of the cottages have radios.

PSYCHOPATHIC WARD.

At the north-west end of the rectangle is a psychopathic unit with facilities for the isolation and special care of 12 mentally deficient patients and those requiring special segregation for disciplinary purposes.

RECREATION BUILDING.

At the opposite end of the rectangle there exists a 'T' shaped building, one wing of which is used as a moving-picture theatre ; "talkies" are exhibited three times weekly. The short wing of the letter 'T' houses the canteen,

which is operated by the patients for the sale of commodities not furnished by the Government, namely, cosmetics, soft drinks, tobacco, candy, etc.

INFIRMARY.

On the south side of the main rectangle there has been erected an infirmary building for the hospitalisation of those patients who may be suffering from the acute manifestations of leprosy or from intercurrent conditions and therefore are too ill or too disabled to care for themselves in their regular quarters in the cottages. This infirmary has 65 bedrooms with, additionally, four large verandas convertible into bed space should emergency arise. The infirmary also contains the various facilities so necessary in the general care of leprosy patients; outstanding among these are dressing clinics for the daily care of patients suffering from ulcerating lesions; eye, ear, nose and throat department for prophylactic and treatment purposes; electrotherapy section for the experimental and routine administration of infra-red, ultra-violet, diathermy and the like; hydrotherapy department for the furnishing of contrast baths and massage, found by experience to be useful in leprosy neuritis; and hydrotherapy by modified Turkish bath system. The Medical Officer of the day has a suite of rooms in the infirmary for the treatment of minor symptoms not of sufficient importance to require hospitalisation.

The surgical site consists of an operating room with appropriate preparation and sterilising rooms; immediately adjoining which is the X-ray department, chiefly used for diagnostic purposes. A dental suite with one dental officer on full time duty cares for the many disabilities of the mouth.

The attending specialists have consultation and treatment rooms, adjoining which are the record rooms in which are contained the individual progress notes of all patients in the institution. The building likewise contains a pharmacy for the compounding of the many prescriptions as well as for the preparation of the various special anti-leprosy medicaments. Diet kitchens and small dining rooms are located on each floor for the service of the bedfast or ambulatory infirmary patients. The laboratory is located in the infirmary building and occupies one entire wing on the second floor; the suite consists of a department devoted to blood chemistry, one to clinical photography and photomicrography; a museum for the preservation of interesting surgical or post-mortem material; a general

laboratory for routine examinations and a research laboratory devoted to pathology and bacteriology.

Each of the 65 bedrooms is steam heated, electrically lighted and cooled and contains a lavatory with hot and cold water ; an electric call system as well as bedside radio serves the patients. Portable air-conditioning machines are available for the comfort of those seriously ill.

The building, a two-storey structure, has a flat roof upon which has been constructed a pergola for the use of convalescents in clement weather. This roof garden is accessible both by stairway and elevator.

MORTUARY.

The hospital morgue is located at the extreme east end of the main quadrangle and contains an electrically refrigerated mortuary cabinet with storage facilities for four bodies. The building includes the post-mortem room and facilities for the preparation and temporary storage of autopsy specimens as well as a small room in which funeral services may be held should it be undesirable, for some special reason, to take the remains of a patient to either the Protestant or Roman Catholic chapel for services.

HOSPITAL CEMETERY.

At some distance from the north end of the quadrangle is located the hospital cemetery in which there are interred, at Government expense, the remains of patients dying in the hospital whose relatives have preferred not to claim the bodies.

KITCHEN AND MESS HALL.

Inside the main rectangle and adjacent to the infirmary is located the kitchen mess hall, a structure with sufficient facilities and space for the preparation and service of food to 500 patients. The kitchen proper contains the usual facilities including refrigerating space sufficient to care for a 48-hour supply of foodstuffs. The food service in the mess hall is by cafeteria system and the patients, after obtaining their selections, are seated in cubicles in the main dining room in groups of their own selection, by race, sex or other preference. The dishes, trays and table ware are washed by means of dish-washing machine, which uses pressure sprays of superheated soapsuds and boiling water for rinsing. For those patients who, due to special incapacities, prefer not to come to the cafeteria, food is served by means of food trucks of the thermos type at their respective quarters.

SCHOOL AND LIBRARY.

The main quadrangle has a small building set aside for school purposes in which the small number of children, illiterates or foreigners, may receive rudimentary instruction. In a separate building there are library facilities with current magazines, newspapers, books of fiction, travel, education, etc., available.

STOREHOUSES.

A large refrigerated storehouse, subdivided into appropriately sized rooms, conserves commissary supplies, including beef and pork raised and slaughtered on the station. The same building contains the bakeshop which furnishes bread and pastries for the institution. Three large warehouses are necessary for the storage of general supplies, including reserve stocks of clothing for general distribution, medicine and the like.

UTILITY BUILDINGS.

The size of the institution makes it necessary to employ carpenters, painters, plumbers, electricians, garage mechanics, etc., and small buildings have been erected for the use of these various journeymen who are permanent employees and devote full time to the care and maintenance of the various buildings.

FARM.

A very considerable portion of the 360 acres comprising the reservation is devoted to the raising of vegetables and forage. The hospital has a modern dairy barn with facilities for the care of the milk herd of 100 carefully bred cows and has modern facilities for the pasteurisation of the daily milk output, averaging 150 gallons. A piggery is maintained as well as a herd of cattle for beef purposes.

QUARTERS FOR NON-LEPROUS PERSONNEL.

Living quarters are provided for employees and their families; more than 100 non-leprous persons reside within the reservation.

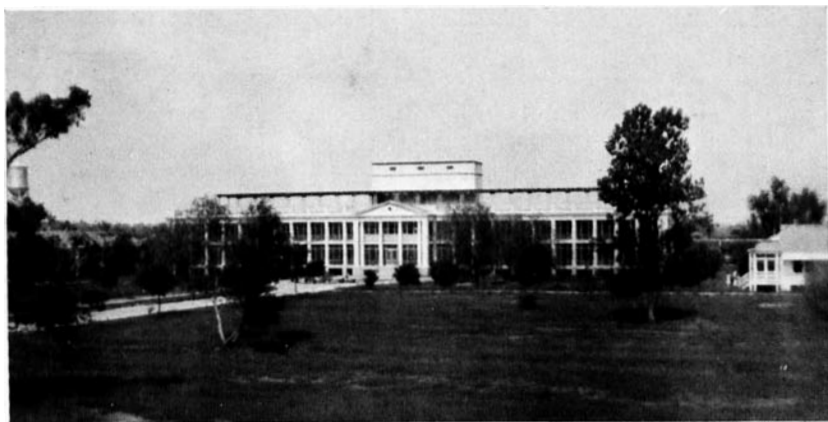
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.

The Administration Building is an antebellum plantation home. The lower floor is used for general administrative offices, and contains a large kitchen, for preparation of food for non-leprous personnel, and several dining rooms.

NATIONAL LEPROSARIUM, CARVILLE.



DAIRY BARN. MILK PASTEURISING HOUSE AT LEFT.

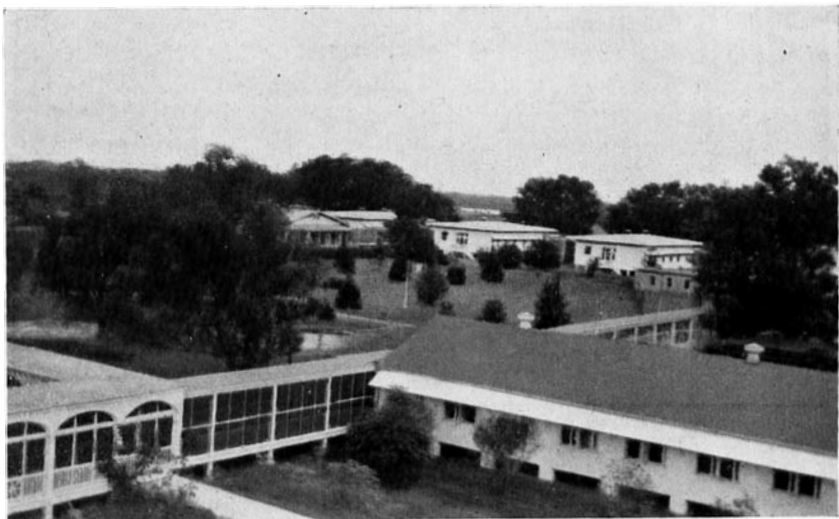


THE NEW INFIRMARY.

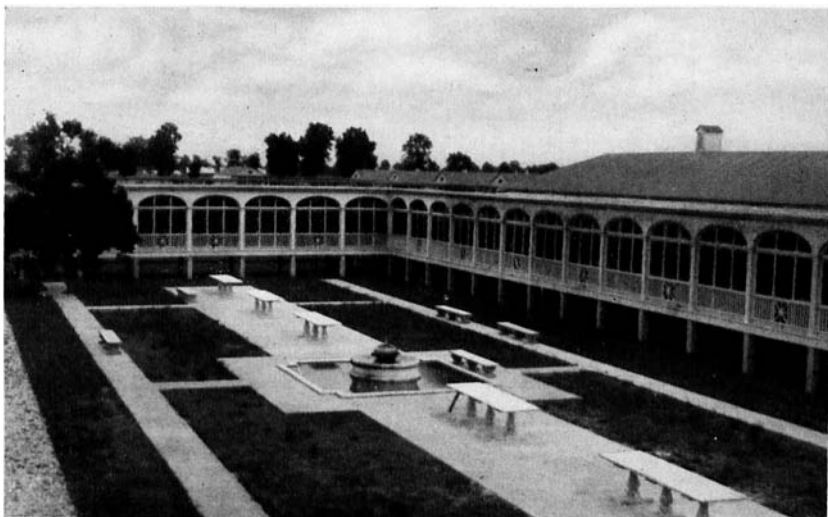


ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.

NATIONAL LEPROSARIUM, CARVILLE.



PATIENTS' COTTAGES.



TEA GARDEN.

The upper floor is devoted entirely to dormitories, recreation rooms, sleeping porches, etc., for use of the nursing staff.

ADMINISTRATION.

The medical care of the patients, consisting at this time of 350, is under the supervision of four resident medical officers, one dentist and four consultants in the specialties.

The nursing care is provided by orderlies who are themselves patients, supervised by 17 especially trained nurses, members of the order of St. Vincent de Paul.

The material section is responsible for the physical maintenance and upkeep of the entire reservation and there are 138 employees in this section.

The clerical section cares for the miscellaneous clerical work attached to the operation of the hospital, including typing and compilation of patients' records.

SOCIAL WELFARE.

In order to minimise group and individual discontent so frequently manifested in an institution for the treatment of chronic and relatively incurable diseases, considerable effort has been expended toward recreational and occupational facilities. Both outdoor and indoor exercises and recreation are stimulated by golf, baseball, basketball, tennis and the like, supplemented by moving pictures shown at regular intervals, by semi-professional and home talent theatricals and encouragement to participate in appropriate activities. To provide additional physical activity for patients, a major portion of the work necessary within the patients' portion of the reservation is performed by the patients themselves, who receive payment therefor, dependent upon the nature of the work accomplished. Nearly a third of the patients are so occupied.

The leprosarium operates as a unit of the Marine Hospital Division of the United States Public Health Service and received its funds for maintenance by allotment from annual Congressional appropriations. The present per diem cost for complete care of an individual is 2.39 dollars, which sum includes 33 cents expended daily for the ration of each patient.

The leprosarium, since its organisation as a Federal institution, has received patients from nearly every country of the world as well as native born, and at the present time cares for patients from 24 foreign countries who, at the time of admission to the leprosarium, had established residence for more than five years within the United States.

In the fourteen years of Federal administration, 801 patients have been hospitalised. Of this number 179 have been released as leprosy, arrested, and the individual no longer a menace to public health. Since the formal release of this group 14 have suffered relapse and have been readmitted for further treatment.