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**Collection 245**  
**New Jersey State Hospital at Trenton, 1898-1986**

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**History**

Founded in 1848 by Dorothea Dix, the New Jersey State Lunatic Asylum was the first public mental hospital in the state. In 1893, the hospital's name changed to the New Jersey State Hospital at Trenton, and in 1971 the name changed again to Trenton Psychiatric Hospital. Prior to the hospital, the mentally ill were often given care in jails, or confined in private homes.

Dr. Henry Cotton served as medical director of the hospital from 1907 until 1930. At first, Cotton was praised for his ingenuity regarding the cause of mental disorders, but overall had a controversial tenure as he experimented on patients and had high mortality rates on surgeries. The 2005 book *Madhouse* by Andrew Scull is based on Cotton. See Collection 145 Charles Private Hospital for another place where Cotton worked.

Harold Sinclair Magee was a later medical director of the hospital (see Collection 246).

The hospital has been involved in many controversies in the later 20th century, including mistreatment of patient lawsuits, misappropriation of funds, and drug smuggling incidents. More information can be found in the library Card Catalogue and Vertical File's newspaper clippings.

The hospital, as Trenton Psychiatric, still functions in 2020.

**Scope and Content Notes**

This collection contains annual reports, letters, maps, and other documents pertaining to New Jersey State Hospital from the years 1898-1986, and is contained in two boxes and six folders. It traces the hospital's function from its early days in the late 19th century to more recent dates. The collection contains names of doctors and other staff members throughout its history.

## **Scope and Content Notes (cont.)**

The collection is divided into six series: I. Official Hospital Documents; II. Maps and Floorplans; III. Correspondence; IV. Hospital Programming; V. “The Welfare Reporter”; and VI. Material Related to the Hospital.

### **Series Description**

#### **Series I. Official Hospital Documents**

Series I consists of items that elucidate the hospital’s functionality. Official papers feature rules for employees and hospital philosophy. Found in this series is a packet of documents giving an overview of the hospital’s history. This series also contains hospital annual reports dating from 1898.

#### **Series II. Maps and Floorplans**

Series II features a variety of maps and floor plans of New Jersey State Hospital, one of which came from Mueller’s 1905 Trenton atlas.

#### **Series III. Correspondence**

Series III consists of a variety of handwritten and typed letters concerning New Jersey State Hospital. The letters mention patients, hospital events, borrowing books from the city library, and the hospital water mill.

#### **Series IV. Hospital Programming**

Series IV contains pamphlets and papers featuring events taking place at the hospital. Christmas programs from the 1950s and staff newsletters demonstrate that social events took place inside the hospital. This series shows a side of the hospital other than medical procedures.

#### **Series V. “The Welfare Reporter”**

Series V contains three editions and one clipping of “The Welfare Reporter”, a magazine about mental health care in New Jersey. The magazines all contain articles written about New Jersey State Hospital or by doctors practicing there. Of particular interest is the article written by Dr. Henry Cotton, a physician at New Jersey State Hospital and the basis of the 2005 book *Madhouse* by Andrew Scull.

#### **Series VI. Material Related to the Hospital**

Series VI consists of one undated radio drama or play script about Dorothea Dix’s founding of New Jersey State Hospital.

### **Container List**

#### **Box / Folder / Folder Title**

Series I

1 / 1 / Official Hospital Documents

2 / Annual Reports

**Container List (cont.)**

**Box / Folder / Folder Title**

Series II

1 / 2 / Maps and Floorplans

Series III

1 / 3 / Correspondence

1 / 4 / Correspondence, Trenton Free Public Library

Series IV

1 / 5 / Hospital Programing

Series V

1 / 6 / "The Welfare Reporter"

Series VI

1 / 7 / Material Related to the Hospital