

Reprint Of

**History of Buchanan County
1881**

Reprinted By

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE COUNTY LUNATIC ASYLUM, POOR HOUSE AND FARM,

Now an important feature of the county, like many other institutions of equal consequence, had its origin in very small beginnings. Pauperism is an evil which has never, to any considerable extent, afflicted any portion of our State, still less the wealthy district included within the limits of the Platte Purchase. No land, however blessed, has been always and uniformly exempt from misfortune which may result in inability to afford self-support; and Buchanan County with her generous soil, enterprising and liberal-spirited population, has proven no exception to the universal rule. Still, many years of rapid development and increasing population rolled onward from the first settling of the county before the necessity arose of providing for an indigent class which had just begun to appear.

About the year 1850, the county first began to recognize the necessity of such provision, but the number of paupers being extremely limited, it was deemed a matter of economy to quarter them on private individuals who could thus, for a reasonable compensation, provide for their necessities, without reducing the county to the expense of purchasing and maintaining an establishment restricted to the special object of their use and benefit.

The first to keep the paupers in the county was E. Richardson, a farmer residing near One Hundred and Two River, not a great way from the city limits in a northeast direction. He received as compensation from one to five dollars per day per head for boarding and caring for them, the county paying the additional expense of clothing and medical bills. He kept the paupers about two years.

At the suggestion of Judge C. Roberts, who had been appointed to a seat on the county bench made vacant by the resignation of Hiram Rogers, the court ordered to let the keeping of the paupers to the lowest bidder. The contract was bid in by the Judge himself at \$80 per head per annum, the county providing clothing and paying medical bills. Judge Roberts continued to keep the paupers on these terms till March 4, 1857, when the county purchased from Leroy Bean for the purposes of a poor farm, a certain tract of land containing 140 acres, situated about two miles southwest of old Sparta, and described in the deed of conveyance as the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter, and the

east half of the northeast quarter of section thirty; and the east half of the southeast quarter of section thirty-one, all in township fifty-six, range thirty-five. The sum paid by the county for this land was \$3,500. John Peter was then appointed to the charge of the county poor who were forthwith removed to this farm. His compensation for keeping them was \$75 or \$80 per annum per head. He continued to discharge the duties of this position till the year 1861, when Henry Utz was appointed his successor. Utz served several years as Superintendent, when he was succeeded by George Peter. In December, 1865, Isham Wood was appointed to the charge of the county farm. He continued to hold the position till January 20, 1868, when he purchased, for the sum of \$4,200, this farm from the county, and the paupers were moved to the city of St. Joseph. Dr. William Bertram was then appointed Superintendent of the Poor, and County Physician. January 1, 1871, Dr. A. S. Long was appointed his successor, and continued to discharge the duties of the offices till September, 1871. The compensation received by Dr. Long during the period of his continuance in the offices of Superintendent and County Physician was fifty cents per day for each pauper, the county providing everything but food.

On the 16th of August, 1871, the county purchased from Matilda S. Hughes and Martin Hughes, her husband, the northeast quarter of section 27, township 58, range 35, for the purpose of a county poor farm. The price paid for this valuable property was eleven thousand dollars, less than the original cost of the elegant, but then scarcely completed mansion on the premises. The court further expended one thousand dollars in the purchase of stock, agricultural implements, grain, etc., etc., then on the farm. They also made a further appropriation of one thousand dollars for completing and painting the building.

On the 1st of September, 1871, the county poor were moved to this farm, of which James Spellman was first appointed Superintendent, while Dr. A. S. Long was retained as County Physician.

Mr. Spellman remained in office till December 31, 1872, when he was succeeded by John Shehan who, in turn, served to July 6, 1874. The Judges on the county bench then were Fitzgerald, Taylor and Sutherland.

Dr. A. S. Long continued to hold the office of County Physician till January, 1872, when he was succeeded by Dr. Gray, who served till May of the same year, when he died. Dr. Samuel Goslee who had, for many years, while the poor farm was located near Sparta, filled the position of County Physician, was reappointed to succeed Dr. Gray. In the meantime, falling sick, Doctors Geo. C. Catlett and E. A. Donelan discharged, for Dr. Goslee, the duties of the position which, through illness, he was incapacitated from exercising. On the death of Dr. Goslee, which occurred in June, 1873, Dr. E. A. Donelan received the appointment of

County Physician. This office, the duties of which he discharged with ability, he continued to fill till his election from the city of St. Joseph to the State Legislature in the fall of 1877, when he was succeeded by the present (1881) incumbent, Dr. J. M. D. France.

At the period when the present (1881) poor house building was erected it was designed as a place of public entertainment. At that time, the afterwards abandoned Savannah Railroad was being built through the farm, and Mr. Hughes confidently expected that a station would be put up at his gate. The railroad company, however, concluding to locate the depot at Jamestown, a mile beyond, Mr. Hughes' success in his prospective enterprise was thus seriously impaired; and the subsequent abandonment of the road and removal of the track completely destroyed every hope of his ever realizing any remuneration commensurate with the outlay he had expended. This condition of things induced his disposal to the county of this beautifully improved spot, at the comparatively insignificant sum above mentioned.

In 1873, the State Lunatic Asylum at Fulton being full and unable properly to accommodate applicants for admission, the mild and incurable patients of Buchanan County, to the number of about twenty, were sent home. To accommodate these, the County Court caused to be erected on the premises of the poor farm, a frame building at a cost of \$1,200. These remained there in charge of the County Poor House Superintendent till the completion of State Lunatic Asylum No. 2 in January, 1874, when they, thirty-five or forty in number, were removed to that institution.

July 20, 1874, Bluford B. Allee, one of the early settlers of the county, and a constant resident of Bloomington Township from the year 1841, was appointed to the charge of the county poor farm, and immediately entered upon his duties. He was, at that time, in feeble health, and accepted with some reluctance the position. On the 19th of August following, he died at the farm, regretted by all who knew him as a good citizen and an honest man. William Allee, his son, continued to superintend the farm till the appointment of his successor, William Carson, in March, 1875.

The county insane patients remained in State Lunatic Asylum No. 2 till the burning of the same, January 29, 1879, when the mild and incurable of these to the number of nineteen were sent back to the county farm. At that period, the establishment, including both buildings, was crowded with paupers, amounting to seventy-five in number; and the absolute necessity of a building specially to accommodate the county insane became apparent.

The County Court, composed of Judges Brown, Roberts and McIntyre, at the advice of the Superintendent, William Carson, and the County Physician, Dr. J. M. D. France, concluded to meet the demands

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of a crying necessity and determined on the erection of a county asylum for the insane.

The order for this building was issued in August, 1880, and the sum of ten thousand dollars, the amount set forth by the architect, W. A. Powell, as necessary and sufficient for the erection of such a structure, was granted for that purpose.

The ten thousand dollars thus appropriated proved, however, insufficient for the completion of the building according to the plans and specifications of the architect, and work on the same was suspended till the following February, when the court made a further appropriation, and the structure was, forthwith, finished. In the following March it was occupied.

The style of the building, while inexpensive, is substantial and architectural in appearance. It is 40 by 80 feet in extent. The sub-structure is a lofty stone basement. Above this rise two successive stories of brick, and the whole is crowned with a commodious and well ventilated attic. The interior of the building is furnished with every necessary appliance of modern convenience that could reasonably be looked for in a building of its character and cost.

Every floor is heated by steam, and water is pumped from a well of inexhaustible supply ninety-one feet deep, and seven feet in diameter, affording a direct and ample supply to every floor in the building, each of which is provided with bath-rooms, water closets, etc.

The building as it is, is adapted to the accommodation of 150 patients. There are at present (1881) twenty-one males and nineteen females in this asylum. There are five employes connected with the institution, two of whom are ladies.

There has never been a more efficiently or economically managed institution in the State than the Buchanan County Lunatic Asylum.

The original building, which was used for the poor house when the farm was first purchased by the county, and above referred to, is a gothic frame structure, ermined with beautiful grassy and well shaded grounds. The farm, on which it is situated joins the Andrew County line and is distant from St. Joseph, in a northeasterly direction, about three miles. It is one of the finest quarter sections of land in the county. Generally prairie, there is a small amount of timber within its limits along the streams which traverse its surface, affording an excellent and unfailing supply of stock water. Besides the supply thus afforded there are several excellent springs on the farm. Three good wells and four large cisterns are found on the premises. When William Carson, the present (1881) Superintendent, took possession of the county farm in March, 1875, the place had the appearance of a long deserted home. About one half the farm was in an imperfect state of cultivation. To-day, with the exception of about fifty acres in timothy and bluegrass, the entire

place is in a high state of cultivation, and presents the appearance of a well-kept garden.

In the spring of 1881, one hundred and fifty hard maple trees were set out for shade around the new asylum building, nearly all of which have grown well.

In September, 1871, when the county poor were moved to this farm, there were, in all, seven males and six females in the institution; and James Spellman was paid for his services as Superintendent one hundred dollars per month. During his period of service from September, 1871, to December 31, 1872, there were, including 136 at different times discharged, in that period, 161 inmates.

During John Shehan's administration from January 1, 1873, to July 6, 1874, the average number per month of paupers was twenty-six. Mr. Shehan's salary was one hundred dollars per month.

During the administration of Bluford Allee, from July, 1874, to March, 1875, seven months of which period, as above stated, was served by his son (he having died a month after entering on his charge) the average number per month of paupers in the institution was thirty. The Superintendent's salary was seventy-five dollars per month.

March, 1875, William Carson took charge of the poor farm at a salary of sixty dollars per month, for one year. The average number of paupers per month during that period was thirty-two, the cost per day of each, 28 cents, including all expenses. March, 1876, William Carson was reappointed, at the same salary. The average number of paupers per month was, during the year, thirty-five. The cost per day of maintaining them, 28 cents.

In March, 1877, he was again appointed Superintendent, with the same salary. The average number of paupers per month during the ensuing year was thirty-seven. The cost of maintaining them, 29 cents per day. This included the cost of keeping up the farm-fencing and outbuildings.

In the year beginning March, 1878, the average number of inmates in the asylum per month was forty-three, and the cost of maintaining them, 23 cents.

From March, 1879, when Mr. Carson was again reappointed, to the close of the year, the average number, per month, of paupers was fifty-one. The Superintendent fed them, during this period, for nine cents a day, the other expenses being paid by the county. In the month of May, 1879, nineteen insane paupers were moved to the County Poor Farm and placed in charge of the Superintendent. During the ten succeeding months, the average monthly number of this class of paupers here was twenty-three.

From March, 1880, to March, 1881, Wm. Carson still in charge, the average number per month of paupers in the institution was fifty-one.

Expense of feeding, 15 cents per day—all other charges paid by the county.

During that same period, the average monthly number of lunatics in the County Asylum was twenty-five. The Superintendent is paid at the rate of \$2.50 per week for furnishing this class of inmates with every necessary, except clothing.

During the year 1877, when the expense per head was 29 cents, a spacious barn 60 by 60 feet was erected, and a large cistern was also built.

In March, 1881, William Carson was again re-elected to the position of Superintendent of the County Poor Farm and County Lunatic Asylum, the superior efficiency of his management of these institutions being universally conceded.

Among the most conspicuous of the public buildings for which Buchanan County is noted is the spacious and elegant structure of the

STATE LUNATIC ASYLUM NO. 2.

This is the only State institution within the limits of the county; and its vast proportions and stately elevation, no less than the importance of its object, render it one of the most notable features of this section of the State.

The necessity of additional accommodations for the insane had long been seriously felt. It was not, however, till the 19th of March, 1872, that a bill passed the Legislature appropriating two hundred thousand dollars for a "Northwestern or Southwestern Lunatic Asylum." To carry into effect the provisions of this act, the following gentlemen were appointed a Board of Commissioners: Wm. H. McHenry, of St. Louis; Hon. Zach. J. Mitchell, of Lafayette County; Joseph K. Rickey, of Calloway County; Louis Hax, of St. Joseph; and William E. Gilmore, of Springfield.

In the month of May following, the commissioners, in quest of a suitable location for the asylum, visited several points in the western and northwestern parts of the State.

On the 24th of the same month, they arrived in St. Joseph, and, on the following day, selected the present site, about three-fourths of a mile east of the city limits, the superior claims of this location triumphing over the weighty influences brought to bear from Kansas City, Liberty, Independence, and other points.

On the 14th of June, following, the commissioners returned, and the day after, purchased a tract of 120 acres of land, less than one mile east of the city limits, with which it communicates directly by Frederick avenue. The location is, in every respect, desirable, commanding an extensive and agreeable prospect, and presenting every requisite of

beauty, convenience and health. The price paid for this land was twenty-eight thousand, eight hundred dollars.

At the same meeting, the Board appointed Thomas Walsh, of St. Louis, architect and superintendent of the building. The plan, admirable in many respects, was miserably defective in the important matter of stairways, which were narrow, inconvenient and insufficient in number.

About the middle of September, of the same year, the contract for erecting the building was let to M. H. Fitzgibbons, of St. Louis, for one hundred and eighty-eight thousand eight hundred and ninety-seven dollars, the work to be completed by January 1st, 1874.

This, the original building, afterwards destroyed by fire, fronted west with a width of 58 feet, and was 150 feet long.

The structure was built with north and south wings, each 115½ feet long, rendering the entire north and south fronts 284 feet. The entire edifice was four stories high with basement. The basement and first story were 13 feet high in the clear; the second story, 12-3; the third, 11-6; and the attic, 11 feet. The fourth story, a Mansard, contained 48 dormer windows. The top of the roof of the main building had an altitude of 59 feet from the range work. On the front of the main building, a clock and bell tower rose to the height of 115 feet from the ground. At the rear of the same section a smoke tower went up 100 feet. The walls were faced with stock brick and trimmed with Milwaukee brick. The arches were finished with spring, ring and keystone made of Warrensburg sandstone. The walls contained over 3,500,000 brick manufactured on the asylum grounds. The stone for the rubble work came from Fieldham's quarries, north of the city, and the cut stone from near Amazonia, in Andrew County.

In the basement was located the domestic department; and all the culinary work, washing, ironing, etc., was done there. The store-rooms and engine rooms were also located there, and the entire building was heated by steam generated in this department. The rooms for the patients and their attendants occupied the wings of the building. In the rear of the main structure were the dining-rooms and sleeping apartments of the domestics. The attic was designed for a large hall or recreation room. In the front part of the building were located the business offices, departments for the officers, reception rooms, etc.

The first Board of Managers organized at the asylum March 2, 1874. These included A. H. Vories, R. L. McDonald, J. C. Roberts, Dr. E. A. Donelan, E. H. Norton, J. C. Evans and Dr. J. Malin. The members of the Board are appointed by the Governor, for a term of four years. They elect their own officers. A. H. Vories was elected the first President of the Board, and Dr. J. Malin, Secretary. The Superintendent is elected for four years. The Assistant Physician, Steward and Matron, are each elected for one year. Dr. Geo. C. Catlett was first elected

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Superintendent; Dr. A. P. Busey, Assistant Physician; D. M. McDonald, Steward; A. M. Saxton, Treasurer. Their respective salaries were as follows: Superintendent, \$3,000 per annum; Assistant Physician, \$1,200; Steward, \$1,500; Treasurer, \$500.

About the 1st of September, 1874, the asylum was opened for the reception of patients. These, in a few weeks, amounted in number to about sixty. The extent of the building was then sufficient to accommodate four times that number. Additions and improvements to the asylum in the form of outbuildings were subsequently made at an expense of \$20,000.

About 1 P. M. of Saturday, January 25, 1879, the asylum was discovered to be on fire. The day was warm, for the season, and a heavy fall of snow was rapidly disappearing in mud and slush, which rendered anything like rapid approach from the city with means of extinguishing the fire a matter of no small difficulty. Attention being absorbed in rescuing the inmates, by means of the inconveniently narrow stair cases, with which the asylum was provided, the building which, even with the wretched appliances for obtaining water on the ground, might otherwise have been saved, was destroyed.

The Superintendent and Directors had vainly but repeatedly asked the Legislature for an appropriation to provide wings to the building for the purpose of accommodating additional and much needed stairways, apprehensive of danger in a possible emergency which did, ultimately, occur. There was not even a dollar of insurance on the building at the time of the fire. At the time of the fire, there were 216 patients in the asylum.

About forty of the most violent female patients were forthwith removed to the St. Joseph Medical College and kindly cared for under the supervision of Miss Dixon, an officer of the institution, and six attendants. The remaining female patients were sent to the Court House in charge of Mrs. Calhoun, the worthy matron of the institution. The male patients were all taken to the Court House, where they remained till their removal, some time after, to a temporary building on the asylum ground.

On the following morning after the fire, Sunday, January 26, 1879, a special extraordinary meeting of the Board of Trade was called for the purpose of relieving the distress occasioned by the destruction of the asylum. The object of the meeting was stated by Mr. Judson, who added that more than two hundred insane helpless creatures had been thrown upon the community by the late calamity, and that it became the duty of the Board to assist in procuring for them suitable accommodations, and to relieve their immediate necessities, as well as to secure a prompt and speedy rebuilding of the edifice by the State for the now homeless insane.

On motion, it was resolved that a committee of three, consisting of George Buell, W. F. Studebaker, and W. A. P. McDonald be appointed to co-operate with the committee from the asylum Board in securing immediate quarters for the large number of insane patients now quartered in the Court House; this committee to report to the asylum managers at 3 P. M. It was further resolved that a committee of three be appointed to invite and accompany Hon. John Saunders, Hon. T. J. Crowther, members of the Legislature from the city of St. Joseph, and all the architects, builders and contractors in the city on a visit to the ruins of the asylum, there to investigate the measure of loss and damage and to examine the standing walls, foundations and damaged materials, and to estimate the amount necessary to rebuild or repair the structure. F. M. Posegate, A. L. Kerr and Geo. Hauck were appointed on this committee.

On the afternoon of the same day a meeting of the Asylum Board of Directors was held in the Court House. Allen H. Vories, President, occupied the chair, with a full Board present: Col. J. H. R. Cundiff, ex-Gov. Silas Woodson, Dr. E. A. Donelan, Dr. J. Malin, J. C. Roberts, and R. L. McDonald.

Gov. Woodson then read the following report:

ST. JOSEPH, January 26, 1879.

GENTLEMEN: The undersigned respectfully report that they have, under the resolution of the Board adopted yesterday, as fully as possible in the limited time allowed, investigated the cause of the disastrous fire that, on yesterday, destroyed the asylum building.

It is manifest from the evidence taken by us, and which is herewith submitted to you, that the fire, without fault on the part of any one, so far as we are able to discover, was caused by heat communicated from the boilers used in the engine house to the frame work enclosing the coils of pipe used in heating the laundry and drying rooms of the asylum.

From the evidence taken by us, it is shown that the box enclosing said coils of pipe was fourteen feet square, and three and a half or four feet deep, and was constructed of wood, rendered by use and constant heat, inflammable. That the inside of this box took fire, as before stated, and as it was closed up entirely, the flame was not visible until the box was broken open.

After the flames had gone so far and the air in it had become so heated as to force the smoke through the crevices in it, and that when it was broken open, the fire had attained so strong a hold that it could not be stopped with the inadequate facilities at command for the purpose.

SILAS WOODSON,
E. A. DONELAN,
J. C. ROBERTS.

The report was received and adopted.

The second report was as follows:

The committee requested to examine into the condition of the walls of State Lunatic Asylum No. 2, located east of St. Joseph, by the Board of Managers of said asylum, and a committee appointed by the Board of Trade of St. Joseph, have the honor to report that we, the undersigned, have made an examination of the walls of said building, and do approximate the cost of rebuilding said building in a good and firm condition, to wit, as follows:

That said walls can be used to the extent of three-fourths of the entire building, and that the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars will cover the expense of rebuilding.

B. PATTON,
BOETTNER & ECKEL, Architects,
W. ANGELO POWELL, Architect,
L. S. STIGERS, Architect,
R. K. ALLEN,
THOS. WINN,
J. S. ELLIOTT,
G. W. MORRIS,
JAMES PATTON.

At the period of the burning of the asylum, the State Legislature was in session. On Tuesday, January 29th, a Legislative committee from Jefferson City arrived in St. Joseph, and under escort of committees from the Asylum Board and the Board of Trade, headed by Mayor Piner, visited the ruins of the asylum building, and made an inspection of the same. The Legislative committee then visited the Court House where a large number of the lunatics were confined. On the following day, they returned to their duties at the State Capital.

The matter of location in rebuilding the asylum soon became a vexed question in the halls of the Legislature, numerous localities advancing claims and offering inducements to the building of the same in their respective midsts.

Committees were appointed to visit these different claimants for the honor of holding State Lunatic Asylum No. 2, and much valuable time was thus wasted and expense incurred, when it was finally decided to rebuild the asylum on its original foundations near St. Joseph, as a matter of justice and economy.

Accordingly, in May, 1879, the Legislature appropriated the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars to defray the expense of the same. In addition to this, the sum of \$2,000 had been previously appropriated for temporary relief.

The lunatics only remained three months in the Court House, whither they had been temporarily removed after the fire. They were afterwards placed in a temporary building erected on the asylum grounds, 100 feet from the main structure. The \$2,000 appropriation above referred to, defrayed the expense of this building, which is now (1881) used for the purposes of laundry and carpenter shop.

The architect of the rebuilt structure was S. V. Shipman, of Chicago; Leman & Olsen, also of Chicago, were the contractors; L. S. Stigers, of St. Joseph, superintended the work, which commenced August 12, 1879, and was completed March 25, 1880. About April 1st, 1880, the lunatics were removed to the new building.

The expense of rebuilding was less than the amount appropriated, the work being ably and economically conducted.

The new structure is not only more spacious, but, in every respect, a vast improvement on the original building. Wings 40x60 feet were added to the north and south ends of the main edifice. These, each accommodate a broad and easy stairway, while a double stair case in the centre of the main building leads to the fourth story, with landings on each floor.

In addition to these, there is a fifth stairway in the rear of the building. In rebuilding, the Mansard (fourth) story was restored on the main or central structure, but left off from the wings. The entire roof is covered with the best quality of Vermont slate, and no stone or other material not entirely uninjured was allowed to be used in the reconstruction of the building. Taught by a severe experience, every precaution that science could prompt or caution adopt has been applied to render the building absolutely safe from fire.

About \$2,400 was realized from the sale of damaged or scrap iron found in the ruins after the fire.

The enlarged scale of the rebuilt structure affords accommodations for twenty-five additional patients. On the re-opening of the asylum in April, 1880, one hundred and fifteen lunatics were moved in. The present (1881) number is two hundred and eight, one half of whom are females.

As may be supposed, there have been, from the period of its organization, various changes in the Board of Management. The present, (1881) Board include A. H. Vories, Silas Woodson, Arthur Kirkpatrick, John Doniphan, Dr. E. A. Donelan, Dr. J. Malin and R. L. McDonald. A. H. Vories is President, Dr. J. Malin Secretary, and A. M. Saxton Treasurer.

The present officers of the asylum are, Dr. G. C. Catlett, Superintendent; Dr. A. P. Busey, Assistant Physician; L. H. Vories, Steward; Miss Dixon, Matron.

The Commissioners who had charge of the rebuilding of the asylum were A. Kirkpatrick, A. C. Dawes and G. C. Catlett.