

**REPORT OF THE
VIRGINIA EASTERN STATE HOSPITAL
BICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY COMMISSION
TO
THE GOVERNOR
AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



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Report of the
Virginia Eastern State Hospital
Bicentennial Anniversary Commission
to

The Governor and The General Assembly of Virginia

Richmond, Virginia
January , 1974

TO: HONORABLE MILLS E. GODWIN, JR., *Governor of Virginia*

AND

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA

I. Introduction

On November 15, 1769, the Virginia House of Burgesses, at the urging of the then Royal Governor, Francis Fauquier, passed an act "to make provisions for the support and maintenance of idiots (sic), lunatics and other persons of unsound minds." This act created a "court of directors, consisting of some of the most prominent Virginians of the time, who were "empowered to purchase a piece or parcel of land. . . as convenient as may be to the city of Williamsburg, and to contract for the building thereon a commodious house or houses, fit for the reception and accommodation of such disordered persons." The first building was not completed until almost four years later and the first patient, a Negro resident of Hanover County, was admitted on October 13, 1773.

This legislation and the construction of the first public supported mental hospital in the territory known today as The United States surely establishes the Commonwealth of Virginia as "*The First To Care*" about the welfare of those unfortunate individuals who are handicapped with mental illness or mental retardation.

In order to give proper recognition to Eastern State Hospital and to recognize the Hospital as the oldest public supported institution of its kind in America, the General Assembly of Virginia, during its 1970 Session, created the Virginia Eastern State Hospital Bicentennial Anniversary Commission by enactment of House Bill No. 163.

CHAPTER 485

An Act to create the Virginia Eastern State Hospital Bicentennial Anniversary Commission; to appropriate funds.

(H 163)

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia :

1. § 1. There is hereby created the Virginia Eastern State Hospital Bicentennial Anniversary Commission, hereinafter referred to as the Commission. The Commission shall be composed of seventeen members appointed as follows: eight shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates from the membership thereof, four by the Lieutenant Governor from the membership of the Senate, and five shall be appointed by the Governor from the State at large. All members shall be appointed for terms to expire December thirty-one, nineteen hundred seventy-three, and vacancies may be filled for the unexpired term. The Governor shall be the

Honorary Chairman of the Commission. The Commission shall name five of its members to constitute an executive committee. The Commission may associate with itself an advisory group to be composed of such persons as it deems especially interested in the Anniversary.

§ 2. The Commission shall employ an executive director and such other assistance as may be required. They shall be charged with developing and coordinating the plans of public and private agencies for the Anniversary observance. All agencies of the State and all political subdivisions are authorized to cooperate with the Commission and to grant funds and property to it for the furtherance of such observance.

§ 3. (a) The Commission is authorized to enter into contracts, provided the same have been approved by the Attorney General, and to do all things proper and necessary for the proper marking of the Anniversary. The Commission is further empowered to receive and expend gifts, grants and donations from whatever source derived for the furtherance of such Anniversary.

(b) The Commission is hereby authorized to form a nonprofit corporation as an instrumentality for assisting in details of the administration of the celebration.

§ 4. The Commission is empowered to adopt a seal, and other emblems for the Anniversary observance, publish books, and to copyright the same in the name of the Commonwealth. With the approval of the Governor, the Commission may lease or sell the title to the use of such seal and other emblems, and publications upon such terms and conditions as seem proper.

§ 5. In the lease or sale of any property or right of use, the Commonwealth shall provide that the revenues therefrom shall be paid into the State treasury to the credit of the Commission and they are hereby re-appropriated to the Commission for its purposes.

§ 6. In the discharge of its duties, the Commission shall locate the major portion, or all, of its activities incident thereto in the Williamsburg area and shall coordinate its plans with those of other organizations and agencies holding commemorative meetings and activities in other portions of the State, to the end that public attention shall be properly focused on Eastern State Hospital.

2. There is hereby appropriated to the Commission from the general fund in the State treasury the sum of five thousand dollars for each year of the biennium beginning July one, nineteen hundred seventy for the expenses and operation of the Commission. Any unexpended balance from the first year of the biennium shall be available to the Commission for expenditure in the second year of the biennium. The Commission is authorized to use funds hereby appropriated for the preparation of plans and purchase of materials for the bicentennial of 1973.

Pursuant to this legislation, the following were appointed to the membership of the Commission: Delegate Matthew G. Anderson of Oilville, Dr. Howard H. Ashbury of Williamsburg, Mrs. Thomas F. Brummer of Williamsburg, Delegate Russell M. Carneal of Williamsburg, Senator H. Dunlop Dawbarn of Waynesboro, Delegate Ernst W. Farley, Jr., of Richmond, Senator William E. Fears of Accomac, Delegate Ray L. Garland of Roanoke, Mr. Richard S. Gillis, Jr., of Richmond, Senator Garland Gray of Waverly, Delegate John D. Gray of Hampton, Mr. Rudolph L. Gurley of Newport News, Senator Omer L. Hirst of Annandale, Dr. William Massey, III, of Williamsburg, Delegate George N. McMath of Onancock, Senator Thomas R. McNamara of Norfolk, and Dr. William Ferguson Reid of Richmond.

As stated in the enabling legislation, Governor A. Linwood Holton served as Honorary Chairman, and the Commission elected an Executive Committee, consisting of Mr. Carneal, Chairman; Dr. Massey, Vice-Chairman; Dr. Ashbury and Messrs. Anderson and Gillis.

Membership of the Commission was altered after Senator H. Dunlop Dawbarn and Delegate Matthew G. Anderson resigned for personal reasons. Senator A. J. Canada, Jr., of Virginia Beach replaced Senator Dawbarn. There was no substitute named to fill the vacancy created by Delegate Anderson's resignation. The untimely death of Dr. Howard H. Ashbury, Director of Eastern State Hospital, necessitated a replacement by his successor Dr. Kurt T. Schmidt.

The Virginia Advisory Legislative Council and the Division of Legislative Services made staff and facilities available to carry out the legislation's mandate; they assigned the necessary employees to assist the members and the study group at all times. Mrs. Mark Neale served as liaison for the Division of Legislative Services while Mr. Robert W. Bendall was appointed Commission counsel.

II. Major Purpose of the Celebration

The 1970 Session of the General Assembly increased appropriations of the Department of Mental Hygiene and Hospitals (now the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation) in order to implement major recommendations of the Hirst Commission on Mental, Indigent and Geriatric Patients. That Commission made additional recommendations to the Governor and the 1972 Session of the General Assembly, which were well received. These were probably the most substantial efforts that have been made to increase mental health and mental retardation services in Virginia since the founding of her first mental hospital and should place Virginia well on the way to reassuming its rightful place in this area.

The latest recommendations of The Virginia Advisory Legislative Council Committee to Study Mental Retardation Care will place highest priority on the training, recruitment and retention of well-qualified professional staffs, inter-agency coordination and greater community involvement in providing mental health and mental retardation services. To effectively implement such priorities will require a great deal of public support from both within and outside the Commonwealth. The communities must be told of the important role which they must play. The appropriate professions must be told of the new and innovative directions Virginia is taking to upgrade her services, if we can be expected to recruit and retain the best-qualified professionals.

Therefore, the major purpose of this celebration was much more than to recognize Eastern State Hospital as the oldest institution of its kind in America and to celebrate the foresight and wisdom of Colonial Governor Francis Fauquier and his associates. The primary emphasis was placed on forwarding the cause of those who are presently mentally ill or mentally retarded, both locally and nationally, pointing the way for advancement and improvement in the future, providing a forum for the dissemination and knowledge concerning mental illness and mental retardation from the professional, political and humanitarian sectors, and showing that, as in the beginning, Virginia now cares and furthermore that Virginia was "*The First To Care*".

III. Programs Conducted in Commemoration of the Bicentennial Anniversary

The major accomplishments of the Commission were the development of the following activities:

1. *Divisional meeting of the American Psychiatric Association.* Although it is the policy of Colonial Williamsburg to discourage conventions during the tourist seasons, they approved a divisional meeting of this important association during the week of celebration in October, 1973. The theme of the divisional meeting was "American Psychiatry—Past, Present and Future."

2. *Address by The Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare.* The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger delivered a major address on mental health in Williamsburg on October 10, 1973, in commemoration of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the opening of the first public mental hospital in America.

3. *Luncheon.* The Commission invited interested workers in the field of mental health and mental retardation and prominent Virginians to be the Commission's guests at a noon luncheon on October 10, 1973, in the Williamsburg Conference Center.

4. *Publication of History.* "Disordered Minds", a History of Eastern State Hospital, by Norman Dain, was published and used in the promotion of this commemoration.

5. *Model of original hospital building.* Mainly because of prohibitive costs, an idea to restore the original site of the hospital was abandoned and the State Hospital Board built a scale model of the original hospital building for display.

6. *Selection of a slogan—"The First To Care—1773-1973."* This slogan was selected from almost one hundred others which were considered. It was first suggested by Mr. M. Costen Forest, Jr., an employee of Eastern State Hospital. The slogan was imprinted on all official Commission mail distributed by the Division of Legislative Services.

7. *Exhibits.* An exhibit of historical medical artifacts to depict the treatment of mental disorders of two hundred years ago was prepared and displayed the week of the celebration, October 7 to October 12, 1973. The display was on view both at the Williamsburg Conference Center during the American Psychiatric Association meeting and at Eastern State Hospital so that an optimum number of people were given a chance to see how far mental health medicine has progressed. The supervision of the historical artifacts display was most professionally rendered by the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation's Chief Pharmacist, Mr. Greer P. Jackson.

8. *Slide shows.* A show-and-tell slide presentation was prepared for showing to mental health associations, community groups, Williamsburg visitors and others.

9. *Publicity.* Stories concerning the celebration were submitted to "Advance," "Commonwealth" and "Virginia Record" magazines. A brochure about Eastern State Hospital was prepared for distribution during the celebration and on other occasions.

10. *Open House.* Eastern State Hospital conducted open house tours of its facilities in commemoration of the Bicentennial Anniversary celebration.

As the enabling legislation directed, the Commission employed an Executive Director to serve as a public relations expert. Mrs. Jean Thompson was recruited and employed to serve in this all important position of

Executive Director. The success of the Commission's celebration is due largely to her most able direction.

Indicative of the excellent planning which went into the celebration, the Commission will return over six thousand dollars to the General Fund of the Commonwealth.

The official papers and files and photographs of the Commission have been made public documents and turned over to the State Archives in Richmond for preservation.

IV. Conclusion

We wish to thank the members of the Commission for contributing their time and effort to commemorate the Bicentennial Anniversary of Virginia Eastern State Hospital.

Respectfully submitted,

Russell M. Carneal

William Massey, III

Matthew G. Anderson

Dr. Kurt T. Schmidt

Mrs. Thomas F. Brummer

A. J. Canada, Jr.

Ernst W. Farley, Jr.

William E. Fears

Ray L. Garland

Richard S. Gillis, Jr.

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