

ARCHIVES CURRENT

Newsletter of the Friends of the Indiana State Archives, Inc.

UNIQUE PRESERVATION PROJECT UNDERWAY

The Indiana State Archives newest challenge is to preserve a unique part of Indiana's medical history—the glass plate negative collection from the Central State Hospital's pathology department. When the project is completed these images and the related clinical data will form an important resource for researchers.



Central State Pathology Building, home of the Indiana Medical History Museum

Between the opening of the Pathology Building in 1896 and 1947, physicians at the Central State Hospital in Indianapolis conducted over 1400 autopsies in an effort to better understand the physiological causes of mental illness. In the 1920s and 1930s work in the Pathology Department focused on the study of syphilis. Central nervous system syphilis was one of the major causes of institutionalization at that time. In 1930 thirty percent of patients

admitted to Central State suffered from dementia or general paresis due to syphilis. Under the leadership of Dr. Max Bahr, the hospital's superintendent from 1923 to 1952, and Dr. Walter Breutsch, who joined the Central State medical staff in 1925, extensive research was conducted on syphilis and its effect

on the nervous system. They were the first physicians in this country to use the malarial treatment of syphilis on a large scale. Injecting patients with malaria was the only means of stopping the disease's degenerative progress prior to the introduction of penicillin in the 1940s. Bahr's and Bruetsch's research earned them international acclaim. Central State Hospital was known at the time as the home of the malarial treatment in America.

Data from autopsies at Central State was carefully recorded in large autopsy books. Pathological specimens from each autopsy were preserved for research. Tissue sections from these specimens were

later photographed with a special camera using glass plate negatives. The negatives in turn were used to produce glass lantern slides. These slides were utilized for illustrations in clinics and lectures for medical students given in the amphitheater at the Pathology Building.

The Central State Hospital autopsy records remained in the Pathology Building after the hospital closed in 1994. The building now houses the private Indiana Medical History Museum. The Museum has been increasingly concerned in recent years with the preservation of the autopsy materials. The negatives have been stored in paper sleeves with the autopsy number and clinical data typed on the sleeve. The Museum has limited temperature and humidity controls and the paper sleeves were beginning to deteriorate. Without the clinical data recorded on the sleeves, the negatives would be useless.

With the cooperation of Virginia Terpening, the Medical History Museum's executive director, the glass plate negatives and lantern slides have been turned over to the Indiana State Archives, which already has a extensive collection of related material from Central State

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SIX NEW VOLUNTEERS JOIN PROGRAM



Christy Hamlin joined the Friends' volunteer program in April. A

retired nurse, she worked for many years at Community Hospital, the State Department of Health, and for private health insurance companies. Christy heard about the Friends' volunteer program at a genealogy class conducted by volunteer recruiter **Lloyd Hosman**. Christy is helping to index the early Central State Hospital admission books. These books contain information on patients admitted to Central State between 1858 and 1924.



Marilyn Tompkins is also indexing early Central State Hospital admission

books. She heard about the Friends' volunteer program from Christy Hamlin. Marilyn has nursing degrees from Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis and Ball State University. She has worked at Community Hospital North since 1977.



Diamond and Glenn Mather were introduced to the Friends' volunteer program at an

orientation tour at the State Archives during the Midwest Roots Conference in July 2003.

Diamond is a graduate of Indiana University and taught school in South Bend before moving to Bloomington with her husband Glenn. Her hobbies are genealogy and quilting. She also volunteers at the Wylie House Museum and with Meals-on-Wheels. At the State Archives she is processing early medical records from the Logansport State Hospital for long-term preservation.



Glenn Mather holds AB and MD degrees from Indiana University. He was a pathologist

at the Bloomington Hospital from 1964 until retirement in 1993. Since then he has devoted time to genealogy and to the Meals-on-Wheels program. As an Archives volunteer he is putting his experience as a pathologist to work helping to preserve the glass negative collection from the Central State Hospital pathology department.



Harry McClung is back in familiar territory as an Archives volunteer. He

previously worked for many years as a microfilmer with the Indiana Commission on Public Records. Since joining the volunteer program in August, he has been

refoldering and reboxing fragile correspondence, maps and blueprints from the early files of the Department of Conservation, the forerunner of the Department of Natural Resources.



Sandy Ricketts of Indianapolis first heard about the Friends'

volunteer program at the Midwest Roots Conference. An avid genealogist, she recently retired after a twenty-five year career as a teacher with the Beech Grove and Warren Township school systems. She earned a BS degree from Indiana State University and an MA from Butler University. Sandy is working at the Archives with Vicki Casteel on reorganizing the Board of State Charities' files on orphanages and maternity homes. These records, which date from 1890 to 1940, are also being refoldered in acid-free materials for better preservation.

For more information about volunteer opportunities at the State Archives, please contact Volunteer Coordinator **Barbara Wood** at 317-591-5222.

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www.fisa-in.org

Hospital, including admission registers, commitment papers, and patient records.

Volunteers at the State Archives have begun placing the negatives in acid free folders and entering the clinical data from the paper sleeves into a new database. Additional clinical data on the patients is being taken from the old autopsy books, which have been borrowed from the Museum. The books have been cleaned of 100 years of dirt and coal dust. They are presently being microfilmed and will be returned to the Museum when data entry is completed. Three Friends of the Indiana State Archives volunteers—**Dr. Walter Jolly**, **Dr. Glenn Mather**, and **Barbara Wood**—are currently working on the project. Dr. Jolly is a retired cardiovascular surgeon from Indianapolis. Dr. Mather is a retired pathologist from Bloomington. Barbara Wood is the Archives volunteer coordinator. They are each coordinating information from the



Barbara Wood and Dr. Walter Jolly

paper sleeve with data in the autopsy book and entering it into the computer.

After the information is entered, the glass plate negative is enclosed in an acid free folder. The enclosure is a great improvement over the old envelopes. Sliding the glass plates in and out of the old sleeves scratched

the image. The new four flap enclosures fold over the glass, which eliminates scratching. Each folder is marked with the autopsy number, the patient's name, and the date of the autopsy. The folders are then placed in an acid free box. Each box holds approximately twenty negatives. The boxes are being stored in the State Archives' vault, which is equipped with temperature and humidity control.

To date three thousand negatives have been entered into the database. In most cases multiple slides accompany each autopsy. When all the glass negatives have been preserved, the lantern slides will be stored in similar four flap envelopes and boxes. The data entry screen contains a check box to record the negatives for which lantern slides are available.

Both Dr. Jolly and Dr. Mather are enthusiastic about the research opportunities offered by this

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JOIN THE FRIENDS OF THE INDIANA STATE ARCHIVES

The Friends of the Indiana State Archives, Inc., is a not-for-profit organization of citizens concerned with helping the Indiana State Archives fulfill its role as the permanent repository for official records of state and local government in Indiana. The Friends supports the management, preservation, and responsible use of Indiana's public records and serves as an advocate for the Indiana State Archives. Join other Hoosier citizens in an effort to save Indiana History. Enroll today.

Enclosed is my check made payable to the Friends of the Indiana State Archives, Inc. Membership benefits include a quarterly newsletter and invitations to workshops, special events and the annual meeting. Gifts to the Friends are tax deductible.

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RENEWAL NOTICE!

You should have received your renewal notice in the mail. Please help the Friends continue its work with a prompt response.

Preservation continued

collection. Many of the clinical subjects examined in the autopsies are rarely or never seen by physicians today. Dr. Jolly was surprised by the large number of syphilis cases, which he likened to the current AIDS epidemic. Working with these cases has given him a real feel for researchers struggling today with AIDS. Dr. Jolly believes that keying the images to the autopsy and the patient records will give researchers a virtual clinical situation. According to Dr. Jolly, comparable clinical experiences are rarely available today, since fewer autopsies are being done.

According to Dr. Mather, these records have great potential value in researching several subjects, including genetics and the long-term effects of various treatments of organic and psychiatric disorders, such as malaria, mercurials, and other therapies once used for syphilis, the incidence of which is on the rise again.

When the project is complete, the State of Indiana will have preserved a unique medical written and photographic record from the beginning of "the scientific era" in mental health treatment.

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