

A Guide to the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts - Central State Hospital Records, 1864-1890

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1864-1890

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History

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Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

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APA 127

Language

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Creator

Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts

Extent

2.8 cu. ft. (5 boxes)

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Transferred from the Auditor of Public Accounts in 1913.

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Biographical Information

In 1868, the Freedman's Bureau acquired land known as Howard's Grove, (or Howard Grove), located one half mile east of the city of Richmond, on the Mechanicsville Turnpike, in Henrico County. Through a lease from Mr. Bacon Tait (or Tate), the Bureau renovated several barrack-type structures that had been used as a Confederate hospital during the Civil War. The new facility became known as "Howard's Grove Freedman's Hospital."

The hospital was turned over to the state in December 1869 by way of General Order Number 136 issued by Major General Canby, Military Governor of Virginia. Beginning January 1, 1870 all African American patients at Eastern Lunatic Asylum in Williamsburg, (the only state institution at the time to accept black patients), as well as all jailed black lunatics from across Virginia, were to be removed to Howard's Grove for treatment. The General Assembly passed legislation in June 1870 renaming the facility "Central Lunatic Asylum" and designating it the official "reception and treatment facility for colored persons of unsound mind." This legislation was enacted with the stipulation that the Howard's Grove location was to be temporary.

Many patients arrived at Howard's Grove by way of civil commitments made by local judges at the request of friends and family. Other patients were removed from local jails and criminally committed. The asylum was overseen by a superintendent who answered to the Court of Directors. As with other state institutions, physicians, nurses and matrons were employed to care for patients. The buildings at Howard's Grove during the period of 1870 to 1885 were described as being of plain, if not crude, wood construction. They were divided into sections according to the patient's particular ailment or behavior. Residents were fed in their cells, as no dining facility existed at that time. There was no sewage system, and light was supplied by kerosene lamps and candles.

In order to enlarge the institution and alleviate the poor living conditions, a 300 acre tract of land was purchased in March 1882 by the City of Petersburg and given to the state for the purpose of constructing a permanent mental health facility for African Americans. Construction of the new facility near Petersburg was completed in early spring 1885. Additional tracts of land were purchased and new buildings were constructed regularly thereafter, as the number of patients increased.

In 1894, Central Lunatic Asylum was officially renamed Central State Hospital. This piece of legislation also altered the names of the other mental health facilities in Virginia in an attempt to inspire a more positive image of the institutions, and of mental health treatment in general. It is important to note that another state institution located in Staunton, Virginia went by the name Central Lunatic Asylum between the years of 1861 and 1865. Its name was later changed to Western Lunatic Asylum, and is a separate facility with no connection to the Richmond/Petersburg hospital for African Americans.

Scope and Content

Records, 1864-1890, including accounts and receipts of the Central State Hospital located in Richmond and later Petersburg, Virginia. The bulk of the records relate to the expenses for running and maintaining the hospital and inmates. Detailed are purchases of supplies for the hospital (glass, soap, coal, nails, locks, paint), clothing, food (eggs, coffee, peaches, beef, cabbage, peanuts, sugar, rice, cigars, potatoes, molasses, butter), transportation costs to jailers for bringing patients to the hospital, repairs to the building, purchases of furniture, and other sundry items. Also included are orders, 1864-1865, for funds from the Auditor of Public Accounts and a resolution, 1890, also drawing funds from the Auditor.

Of note are the payrolls, 1872-1876, of officers and employees of Central State Hospital (located in the oversize accounts and receipts). The payrolls list employees name, job title, dates, annual salary, amount paid, and signature of employee. Also of note are the accounts and receipts, 1883-1885, for the construction of a new facility near Petersburg, Virginia. Included are public notices to builders and contractors asking for building proposals; transfer of land to the asylum; hiring of builders, carpenters, contractors, plasterers, and stonemasons by architect and supervisor Harrison Waite; correspondence from Waite to the Building Committee regarding contracts and payments; and some construction payrolls are included.

For additional information and records please see the Central State Hospital Records, 1874-1961 (LVA Accession 41741).

Arrangement

This collection is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

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Box 1

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Accounts and receipts, 1873 January - March.

Box 1

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Accounts and receipts, 1873 April - July.

Box 1

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Accounts and receipts, 1874.

Box 1

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Accounts and receipts, 1875 January - April.

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Folder 1

Accounts and receipts, 1875 April - June.

Box 2

Folder 2

Accounts and receipts, 1875 July - October.

Box 2

Folder 3

Accounts and receipts, 1875 October - December.

Box 2

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Accounts and receipts, 1876 July - October.

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Accounts and receipts, 1876 October - December.

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Accounts and receipts, 1877 October - December.

Box 3

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Accounts and receipts, 1878 July - October.

Box 3

Folder 3

Accounts and receipts, 1878 October - 1879 January.

Box 3

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Accounts and receipts, 1879 January - April.

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Folder 1

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Accounts and receipts, New building expenses, 1884.

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Accounts and receipts, New building expenses, 1884.

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Accounts and receipts, New building expenses, 1885.

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Accounts and receipts, New building expenses, 1885.

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Folder 9

Oversize Accounts and receipts (mostly payroll), 1872.

Box 5

Folder 1

Oversize Accounts and receipts (mostly payroll), 1873.

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Folder 2

Oversize Accounts and receipts (mostly payroll), 1874 - 1875.

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Oversize Accounts and receipts (mostly payroll), 1876.

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Oversize Accounts and receipts (mostly payroll), 1877 - 1878.

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Folder 5

Oversize Accounts and receipts (mostly payroll), 1879 - 1880.

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Oversize Accounts and receipts (mostly payroll), 1882.

Box 5

Folder 7

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