

PAMPHLET

"THE END OF JOURNEY'S END"

(c. 1936 - 1938)

W.P.A. Project # N.Y. 1185



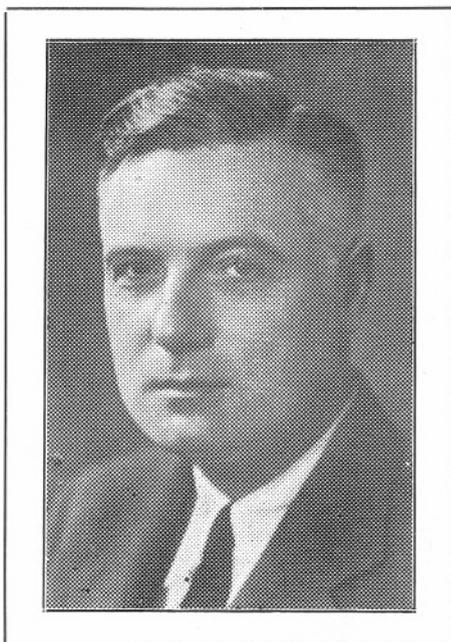
THE End of Journey's End . . .

“OVER the Hill to the Poorhouse” was advertised as a melodrama in the old days. The playhouses were crowded to the aisles with those who wanted to shed a tear or experience a heart throb or two. The reddened eyes and moist kerchiefs were a tribute to the skill of the playwright but little did the playgoers realize that behind the exaggeration of the melodrama was a drama of real life involving thousands of real human beings. Few caught the full significance of the title of the play for but few had ever been within the doors of a poorhouse.

It is a basic concept of sociology that social institutions, if not checked, have a tendency to swerve from original trends and objectives. The poorhouse of the nineteenth century offers proof of this fact. Originally intended for the care of the poor it soon became a catch-all for all types of wasted humanity. Criminals, lunatics, cripples—all were herded under the same roof with the poverty-stricken. Frequently local courts would commit miscreants for thirty or sixty days at hard labor at the County Home instead of sending them to jail. Little thought was given to the individual and his problems. The cause for his condition was not a consideration. The easy way was to send him to the poorhouse.

Little wonder, then, that the very suggestion of “poorhouse” struck a note of terror in the hearts of many unfortunates who had not been able to swim against the economic and social tides of the times. As the door of the poorhouse swung open the door to hope slammed shut forever. Truly, life's journey's end.

This was the atmosphere in which the first Suffolk County Almshouse had its origin in 1870. As the successor to local “Town Houses” it was regarded “as probably the best for the purpose for which it is intended, of any in New York State.” (*This quotation and many others that follow are extracted from a book titled “Yaphank As It Is and Was and Will Be,” published in 1875 by L. Beecher Homan, a native son of the hamlet.*) The sponsors of this proud project “for centering the pauperism of our County in one institution” would have been shocked to know that sixty-seven years later a Grand Jury, using the same words, would declare the building “totally unsuited for the purpose for which it is intended.”



WARREN F. GREENHALGH
*Chairman, Suffolk County
Board of Supervisors
1936-1937*

THE large frame structure, designed by Charles Hallett of Riverhead, was erected on a farm "purchased in 1870 from William Phillips, Esq., a Yaphank man, for twelve thousand seven hundred dollars, for which amount the County pays him interest."

"The entire building contains about fifty rooms. The first floor contains eighteen large rooms, the second twenty-seven, and the third but four. The superintendents', overseers', and assistants' private apartments, are on the first and second floors of the main building; and the engineer's and medical room are included in the number. Three large water tanks in the garrets, with a capacity of three thousand gallons each, supply the house with the indispensable fluid, which is replenished from the roof, or pumped from a well in the basement."

"A passage-way connects with the rooms where are confined the milder class of lunatic paupers."

"The workshop, storage-rooms, drying-room, coal and engine rooms are in the basement, which also contains cells for the raving lunatics."

The farm originally contained about one hundred and seventy acres. Through successive administrations additional acreage was acquired and in 1937 the County Farm consists of approximately six hundred acres, half of which is under cultivation.

In a brief biography of William Jones Weeks, the first County Superintendent of the Poor to occupy the new Almshouse, L. Beecher Homan reports, "He originated the system of interments in a uniform manner, and of registering the same for future identification." The cemetery is still in use—its numbered headstones standing with the stern regularity of white fence pickets.

In his book, Mr. Homan describes the discipline of the Almshouse in colorful terms. "The laws of the Institution are stern but reasonable, and are enforced to the letter. The paupers are obliged to retire at dusk, and to rise as soon as the first gray light of dawn peeps through the windows. The inmates are managed by signals; in fact, everything goes by 'cracks and snaps'."

"After rising, the pauper makes his bed, sweeps his room, and prepares for the morning meal. The first bell rings out an intimation to be in readiness for breakfast, and at the sound of the second bell, the door of the dining-room is thrown open and he is requested to be seated. At the 'snap' of the third bell, he begins eating. The sane and insane eat separately, and so admirable is the discipline, that not even a lunatic pauper touches his food until he hears the signal from the keeper."



SUFFOLK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
1936-1937

Left to right, standing—Benjamin F. Blackman, Clerk of the Board; Warren F. Greenhalgh, Chairman; Perry B. Duryea, Arthur F. Kreutzer, Frederic J. Wood, S. W. Horton, Edgar F. Hazleton, County Attorney; Hermon F. Bishop, County Engineer.
Seated (left to right)—Milton R. Burns, Edgar F. Sharp, John N. Brennan, J. Augustus Hildreth, Everett T. C. Tutill.

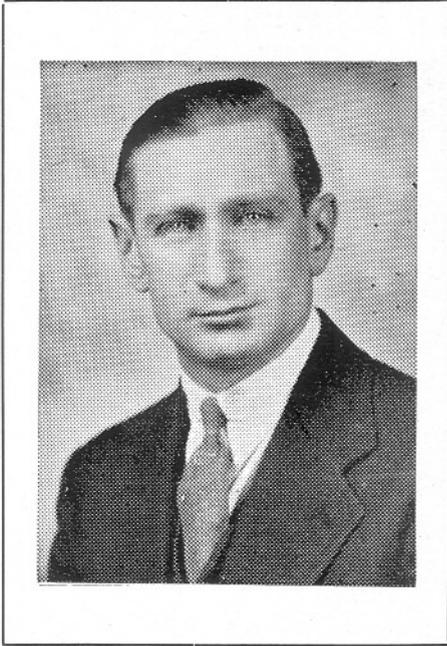
IN another significant word sketch, Mr. Homan writes of Dr. E. H. S. Holden, "This genial and gifted gentleman entered the House as a 'ministering angel' January 1st, 1873. Whether he failed to kill off the paupers as fast as a miserly element wished, is unknown; but it is enough to know that he had hardly got in his position before his foes clamored to get him out."

These interesting contemporary sidelights illustrate early methods of administration at the Almshouse. Thinking in relation to dealing with poverty has become enlightened in the almost seven decades since the institution was established. In 1929 a new public welfare law was passed. It abolished the term "Almshouse or Poorhouse" and the institution became known as the Suffolk County Home. Old Age Assistance came into being and through the medium of cash grants many aged poor persons were cared for in their own homes. The population at the County Home today is made up largely of homeless and chronically ill indigent persons.

About forty years ago a Children's Home was erected on the County Farm. This institution was condemned as a firetrap in 1919 by the State authorities. The Children's Home was abolished and the building was remodeled to serve temporarily as an infirmary for the County Home. It is still in use.

For a number of years Grand Juries have condemned the Home and Infirmary as firetraps. Sanitary facilities are poor and repair bills high.

With the advent of Federal Aid in the form of government grants for construction of public buildings through the Federal Public Works Administration, the Board of Supervisors decided the time had arrived to replace the old structures with modern fireproof buildings. On February 7, 1935, Supervisor Henry Johnson of Babylon introduced a resolution calling for the erection of a new home at a cost of \$300,000 and a new infirmary at \$100,000. Application for a grant was made to the Federal Public Works Administration and plans for the two buildings were prepared by Messrs. Leonard Bishop and Mortimer Metcalfe, Architects of Westhampton Beach. The project lay dormant until 1936 when the newly elected Commissioner of Public Welfare, Irving Williams, recommended to the new Board of Supervisors that the plans be revised to consolidate the two buildings into one unit in the interest of economical and efficient administration and that every effort be made to get the project under way. The Board of Supervisors instructed the architects to revise the plans according to Mr. Williams' suggestions and shortly after traveled to Washington to urge approval of the project by the P. W. A.



IRVING WILLIAMS
Commissioner of Public Welfare
1936-1938

WITHIN a few weeks the new plans were approved by the Public Works Administration. Due to rapidly increasing building costs, a grant of \$288,000 was made, this representing forty-five per cent of estimated cost of the new structure and then followed rapidly the letting of the contracts at a total cost of \$528,000. Ground was broken on March 1st, 1937 and at the time of this writing work is proceeding almost on schedule.

The new Suffolk County Home and Infirmary Building at Yaphank, New York, are designed to provide the most modern equipment and facilities. The combining of the Infirmary portion under the same roof with the Home section in such a way that the operation and administration of each is separate and distinct one from the other, constitutes one of the outstanding features of the new building.

The new building is of modern fireproof construction throughout and contains in the central portion Administrative offices, Recreation rooms for inmates and a combination Chapel and entertainment hall with provision for motion picture projection.

The southeast wing provides 78 beds for women inmates, with complete locker, toilet, utility and bathroom requirements on each floor.

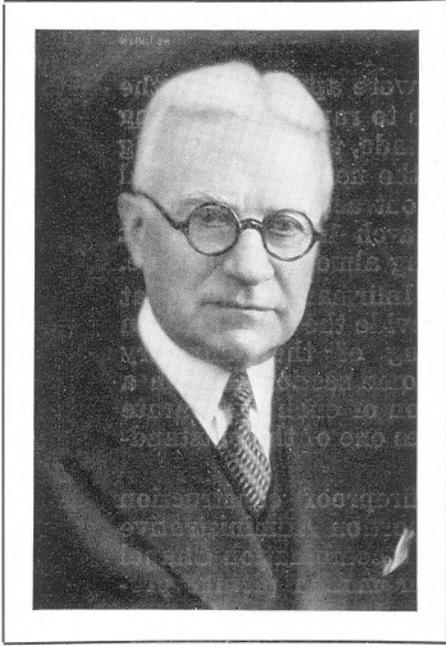
The northeast wing provides 121 beds for men inmates fully equipped with complete locker, toilet, utility and bathrooms on each floor.

The southwest wing is the infirmary completely equipped with beds for 34 women and 34 men patients, Nurses' duty rooms, operating room, Doctors' office, waiting room and recovery room, locker, toilet, utility and bathrooms. These two floors are provided with elevator and dumb-waiter service.

The northwest wing is the Service wing. The first floor provides two main dining rooms for men and women, one dining room for Infirmary Patients, and dining rooms for Nurses, and white and colored help. There are ample storage and service rooms, kitchens, cold storage rooms for supplies such as milk, vegetables, fish and meat. There is also a large room for occupational therapy. The second floor of the wing is provided with beds for twenty employees.

The total bed capacity of the building is about 200 and in addition quarters are provided for the operating staff. The Resident Physician is provided with a living room, bedroom and bath.

In the basement is provided a fully equipped laundry, barber shop, heating and ventilating plant, refrigerating equipment and storage space. There is a direct ambulance entrance to the Elevator and the Morgue in the southwest wing.



ARTHUR S. TUTTLE
State Director, New York
Federal Public Works Administration

MODERN facilities for physical care, and occupational therapy will give an entirely new complexion to institutional service for that group of needy persons who require such service. It is planned to give the institution as much of a home-like atmosphere as is possible in an institution. The combined chapel and recreation hall will permit regular church services and planned recreational programs, both of which have been hampered by lack of proper facilities in the old County Home. Instead of admission to the County Home being the end of all things a new and pleasant form of community living will be revealed. Truly, the New Suffolk County Home means the end of the Journey's End.

The Board of Supervisors and the Commissioner of Public Welfare appreciate the complete cooperation received from Col. E. W. Clark, of Washington, D. C., Executive Assistant to Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, Arthur S. Tuttle, State Director, New York Federal Public Works Administration, the staff of the New York Office of the Public Works Administration, George L. Clarke and Clarence E. Ford of the New York State Department of Social Welfare and all those persons who have recognized the need for and have given their assistance and support to this project.

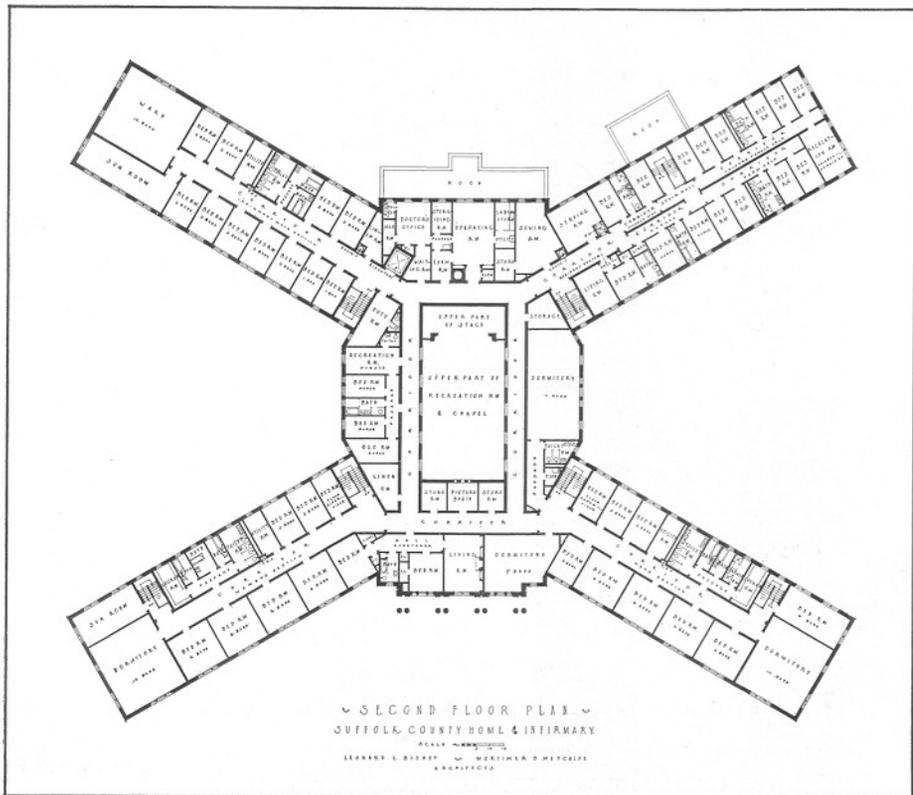
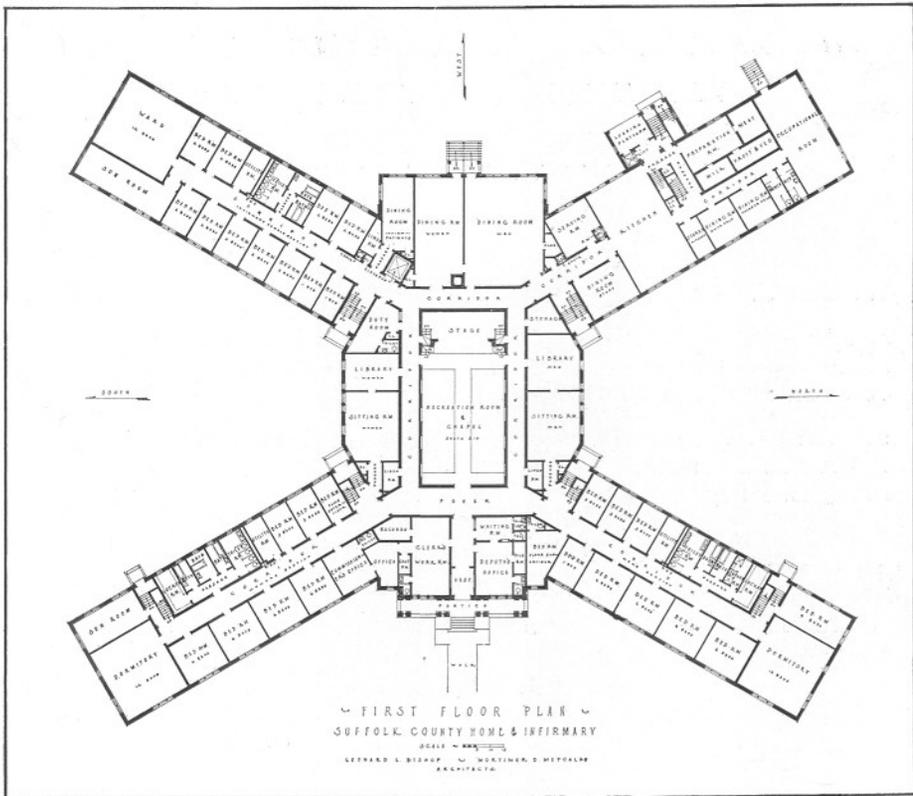




OLD COUNTY HOME

BELOW: PRESENT INFIRMARY





The Suffolk County Home and Infirmary

YAPHANK, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK

P. W. A. Project No. N.Y. 1185

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