

Researcher Guide to Resources on the Willowbrook State School

Compiled by Dr. James Kaser, Archivist, February 2004.

About the Guide

This guide is intended to help researchers locate material useful in understanding the history of the school. The main focus is on selected primary source materials, particularly archives collections and New York State publications.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Manuscript Collections

New York State Government Publications

Secondary Sources

Institutional Contact Information

Introduction

Hal Kennedy, Esq.

Willowbrook State School was built in the 1930's in Staten Island, NY to < for individuals with mental retardation and developmental disabilities. It does not receive its first residents, however, until after World War II. A combine of rising placements, budget cuts, ignorance, arrogance and indifference, created notorious conditions at Willowbrook. By 1965, with over 6,000 residents in an institution planned for just 4,000, Senator Robert Kennedy calling Willowbrook a "snake pit." In November 1971, The State Island Advance published a series of articles detailing the horrible conditions at the school. Following these articles, in January 1972, Geraldo Rivera, the television reporter, began a series of programs that shook the conscience of New York State and the nation and inspired parents and others to take legislative action. The end result was the signing of a consent judgement in federal court in 1975. Willowbrook finally closed its doors in 1987.

The Consent Judgement has been called "revolutionary" because of what is accomplished and for what it inspired. The closure of Willowbrook, the placement of individuals with developmental disabilities in community

residences, the growth of voluntary agencies and the expansion of day programs and special education can all be linked to the Judgement. The Judgement finally recognized and enforced the rights of individuals with mental retardation and developmental disabilities. The Judgement is the mean used throughout the United States and in many parts of the world.

Back to Top

Manuscript Collections

Bronston, William Papers.

75 record center boxes

Dr. William Bronston, MD worked as a staff physician at Willowbrook (from 1970-1972) and was dismissed after agitating for change. Later he was a sl witness in a legal case brought by parents to improve conditions at the School This collection includes the evidence he presented in court and other material he gathered and includes photographs, legal documents and case histories. Significant portions of the collection are slated to be digitized as part of the Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement collection.

Unarranged and unavailable for use.

Bancroft Library/UC Berkeley. Call number BANC MSS 2002/227 c

New York (State). State Commission on Quality Care for the Mentally Disabled. Executive Bureau. "Special project" files of the Assistant Counsel to the Governor, 1975-1978.

16 cu. ft.

This series consists files generated by commission chairman Clarence J. Sundram dating from his service as assistant counsel in the Governor's Of The files include reports, draft memoranda, studies, correspondence, notes background materials. Subjects include the Willowbrook State Hospital investigation; Department of Mental Health reorganization.. .mental hygiene and criminal justice legislation; and a state prison taskforce.

There is a finding aid for this collection. New York

State Archives. Call number: 19357

New York (State). State Commission on Quality Care for the Mentally Disabled. Executive Bureau. Chairperson's daybooks, 1975-1998.

5 cu. ft.

Collection contains the outgoing correspondence of commission chairman Clarence Sundram. Sundram was the Executive Chamber's representative 1 the state's defense during the Willowbrook class-action suit and a member the Willowbrook Review Committee established to oversee compliance with court orders related to that case.

Files are arranged chronologically and a subject index is available. New

York State Archives. Call number: 19355

Rothman, David J. Willowbrook Developmental Center Research Collection, ca. 1971-1986.

36 boxes, 41 cu. ft.

David J. and Sheila M. Rothman wrote *The Willowbrook Wars*; these records are the Rothmans' research files on the Willowbrook case. Included are publications relating to mental health care and photocopies of reports, memoranda, legal briefs, correspondence, and other records from official sources (such as: the State Office of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Willowbrook Review Panel, and New York City mental health agencies). available are an extensive number of community placement files that include information on individual cases, reports on other community placement programs, reports on the Willowbrook community placement program, leg papers on community placement, and duplicate copies of professional literacy on community placement.

This collection is unprocessed and no finding aid is available, however a p index is available within the collections. Access to the collection is restrict

New York State Library. Manuscripts and Special Collections. Call number SC18831

Staten Island Developmental Center. Patient Case Files, 1950-1980.

246 cu. ft.

This series consists mostly of case files of patients who died while residing Willowbrook. The case files document patients' admission, treatment, there and education. Case files typically contain: admission phase sheets, record visitors and correspondents, ward admission records, legal admission record psychiatrists' psychological reports, Willowbrook school reports, physical examination information, progress notes by doctor, social service notes by social worker, laboratory notes, consultation requests (for x-rays, etc.) signed by doctor, prescription records, nurses' notes, dental and weight charts, clothing lists, and correspondence from other institutions.

Access permanently restricted in accordance with Mental Hygiene Law relating to confidentiality of clinical records.

New York State Archives. Call number: 19452.

Willowbrook Collection.

6 linear feet

Primarily documents the activities of the One-to-One Foundation, an organization concerned with de-institutionalization and group homes.

Record types includes

correspondence news clippings, books and videos.

Unprocessed, but open to researchers with a preliminary inventory.

Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University.

Willowbrook Review Panel Records, 1970-1985.

117 cubic feet

In 1975, newly elected Governor Hugh L. Carey signed the Willowbrook Consent Decree, a civil rights law that obligated New York State to provide appropriate housing and programs for more than 6,000 individuals at Willowbrook State School. The law established the Willowbrook Review Panel, a temporary federal authority to oversee the transfer of residents from the Willowbrook Center to group homes. These records document the work the review panel over a twelve year period and capture a significant aspect the history of New York state mental health policy and include reports from monitoring agencies, complaints, correspondence, meeting minutes, and research materials. The collection is currently unprocessed and closed. A good is underway to process and create a finding aid for the collection. The collection will be available for access in January 2005. Some materials may be restricted due to privacy. Questions should be forwarded to the Head of the M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives.

Collection Number: APAP-0127

M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University
Albany, SUNY

Wolf, Benjamin H. (1909-) Arbitration Papers, 1972-1982.

45 linear feet

Wolf was an arbitrator, labor mediator and attorney. He represented the City Service Employees Association in *State of New York Departments of Mental Hygiene, Agriculture and Markets, Health, and Transportation and New York State hospitals at Rockland and Willowbrook vs. Civil Service Employees Association*. (1972-1975) on issues of improper personal conduct, discipline negligence, dismissal, fringe benefits, and insubordination.

Open to researchers in keeping with repository rules

Finding aid available in repository or through interlibrary loan, folder level control.

Kheel Center, Cornell University. Call number: 5539

Back to Top

New York State Government Publications

N.B. All of these materials are housed at the New York State Library. Some items, as no are also held by the New York Public Library Research Library. The New York State Library call number is given.

Compliance Audit Willowbrook Developmental Center, May 6, 1976

WIL 600-4 COMAW, UNCAT

Martiniano, Robert. *The Willowbrook Consent Decree: A Case study of the Judicial Impact on Budgeting*. Albany, NY: Rockefeller Institute of Government: Governor's Office of Employee Relations, 1984. GOV 012.1-4 WILCD 92-43572

New York (State). Office of General Services. Public Buildings Design and Construction. *Department of Mental Hygiene Building Inventory, Willowbrook State School, Staten Island, New York*. Albany: The Office, 1970(?). GEN 645-4 DEPMH 99-5838 WILLOWBROOK

New York (State). Office of the Comptroller. Division of Audits and Acco *Audit Report on Financial and Operating Practices*. Willowbrook State School, Staten Island, New York. Albany: The Office, 1966. AUD 200-4 WILSS 1960/64.94-79896

New York (State). Office of the Comptroller. Division of Audits and Acco *Audit Report on Willowbrook Developmental Services: Actions Taken to Implement Recommendations of Prior Audit Reports NY-St-27-73 and NY-23-71*. [Albany]: The Division, 1975. AUD 200-4 WILDS 1975.75-14962

New York (State). Office of the Comptroller. Division of Audits and Acco *Follow-up on Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Efforts to Comply with the Willowbrook Consent Judgment, March 31, 1979* Albany: The Division, 1980. AUD 200-4 WILCJ 197679.80.70297

New York (State). Office of the Comptroller. Division of Audits and Acco *New York State Department of Mental Hygiene Efforts to Comply with the Willowbrook Consent Judgment: April 30, 1975-1976*. [Albany]: The Divi 1977.
AUD 200-4 WILCJ 1975/76.77-54945

New York (State). State Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled. *Annual Reports*. 20 vols. Albany: The Commission, 1978-98. MEN 960-1.84-57089

New York (State). State Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled. *Medication Practices in New York State Developmental Centers Post-Willowbrook Report of Practices at Five Developmental Centers*. Alt The Commission, 1986.
MEN 960-4 MEDPN 87-029587
Also at NYPL

New York (State). State Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled. *Procedures of the Mental Hygiene Medical Review Board*. Albaj The Commission, 1980. MEN 960-4 PROMH 80-70785

New York (State). State Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled. *Protecting the Rights of Developmentally Disabled Persons: Establishing a Statewide System of Advocacy Services: A Report*. Albany: Commission, 1980. MEN 960-4 PRORD 82-70591

New York (State). State Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled. *Public Hearings Held by the Commission on Quality of Care for Mentally Disabled, October 1978: The Establishment of Priorities*. Albany: The Commission, 1979. MEN 960-4 PUBHC 80-70742

New York (State). State Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled. *Quality of Care: A Newsletter Published by the NYS Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled*. Albany: The Commission, 1980. MEN 960-3 QUACN 84-56650

New York (State). State Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled. *Willowbrook: From Institution to the Community: A Fiscal and Programmatic Review of Selected Community Residences in New York City* [Albany]: The Commission, 1982. CSI, Special Collections HV 3006 N69 N489 1982

United States. District Court (New York: Eastern District). *New York State Association for Retarded Children, Inc. . . . [et al.] and Patricia Parisi. . . al], Plaintiffs Against Hugh L. Carey, Individually and as Governor of the State of New York. . . [et al], Defendants, United States of America, Amic curiae*. [New York]: The Court, [1975].
362.385 qU587 96-13255
Also at CSI, see Archives and Special Collections.

United States. District Court (New York: Eastern District). *New York State Association for Retarded Children, Inc. . . . [et al.] and Patricia Parisi. . . al], Plaintiffs Against Hugh L. Carey, Individually and as Governor of the State of New York. . . [et al], Defendants, United States of America, 1987 Settlement Agreement*. 1987.
362.385 qU587
Also at CSI, see Archives and Special Collections.

Willowbrook Review Panel. *Proposed Community Placement Plan for the Members of the Willowbrook Class in NYSARC and Parisi v. Carey / Prep Under the Direction of the Willowbrook Review Panel [in Cooperation with the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene]*. [New York?]: The Pa 1976?
MEN 455-4 PROCP 79-70818

Willowbrook State School. *Annual Report of Willowbrook State School, Si Island, N.Y., to the Department of Mental Hygiene for the Fiscal Year End March 31*. 14 vols. Utica, NY: State Hospitals Press, 1949-1962. SCH 590-1 99-65

Back to Top

Secondary Sources

Ferguson, Nancy Jean. *The Willowbrook Consent Decree and Its Ramifications on Residential Services in the State of New York*. M.P.H. thesis, New York Medical College, 1990. CSI Special Collections, KD 3412 F47 1990

Lambert, Paula Adrian. "The Federal Court and State Government as Salient Variables in a Social Reform Movement: The Willowbrook Consent Decree." Ph.D. diss., Yeshiva University, 1982. CSI Special Collections, JK 3441 L36 1982

O'Connor, Patty. "The History of Institutionalization and the National Deinstitutionalization Movement in America (with Special Focus on Willowbrook State School)." M.A. thesis, College of Staten Island/CUNY 1998.
CSI Special Collections, RC 443 036 1998

Rivera, Geraldo. *Willowbrook: A Report on How it is and Why it Doesn't 1 to Be That Way*. New York: Random House, 1972. CSI Special Collections, HV 3006 N7 W57 1972

Rothman, David and Sheila Rothman. *The Willowbrook Wars*. New York: Harper & Row, 1984.
CSI Special Collections, KF 228 N48 R67 1972

Back to Top

Institutional Contact Information

The Bancroft Library

University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley California 94720-6000 (510)
642-6481; fax (510) 642-7589 e-mail:
bancref@library.berkeley.edu
<http://bancroft.berkeley.edu>

College of Staten Island

Archives & Special Collections
Library, 1L-216
2800 Victory Boulevard
Staten Island, New York 10301
(718) 982-4128; fax: (718) 982-4127
e-mail: archives@mail.csi.cuny.edu
<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/archives>

New York State Archives

Cultural Education Center 3043

Albany, NY 12230
(518)474-8955
e-mail: archrefi@inail.nysed.gov
<http://www.archives.nysed.gov>

M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives

State University of New York, Albany
New Library Building, Room 352
1400 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12222
(518) 437-3931; fax (518) 437-3930
<http://library.albany.edu/speccoll/>

Kheel Center

Martin P. Catherwood Library
School of Industrial and Labor Relations
Cornell University
227 Ives Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853-3901
607-255-3183; fax 607-255-9641
email: kheelcenter@cornell.edu
<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/kheel>

New York State Library

Manuscripts and Special Collections
Cultural Education Center
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12230
(518) 474-6282; fax (518) 474-5786
e-mail: mscolls@mail.nysed.gov
<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/mssdesc.htm>

Special Collections Research Center

Syracuse University Library
E.S. Bird Library, Room 600
Syracuse University
Syracuse, NY 13244-2010
(315) 443-2697; fax (315) 443-2671
email: arentsl@library.syr.edu
<http://libwww.syr.edu/information/spcollections/index.html>

Back to Top



The College of Staten Island
Archives & Special Collections Library,
1L-216 2800 Victory Boulevard Staten
Island, New York 10301

Telephone: 718.982.4128

Fax: 718-982-4127

Email: archives@mail.csi.cuny.edu

Updated February 26, 2004