



Our Times

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THE PEOPLE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE OF LOGAN COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Winter 2000

Lincoln State School

A Little History of a Big Place

In 1918, a woman we'll call "Jane" was admitted to the Lincoln State School and Colony (LSS&C). While home for a visit some years later, she became pregnant. After her son, "Tom," was born in South Hospital on the State School grounds, a probation officer put the baby in a foster home.

Jane's whole family appeared to be somewhat retarded; still, her mother took Tom out of the foster home and raised him herself.

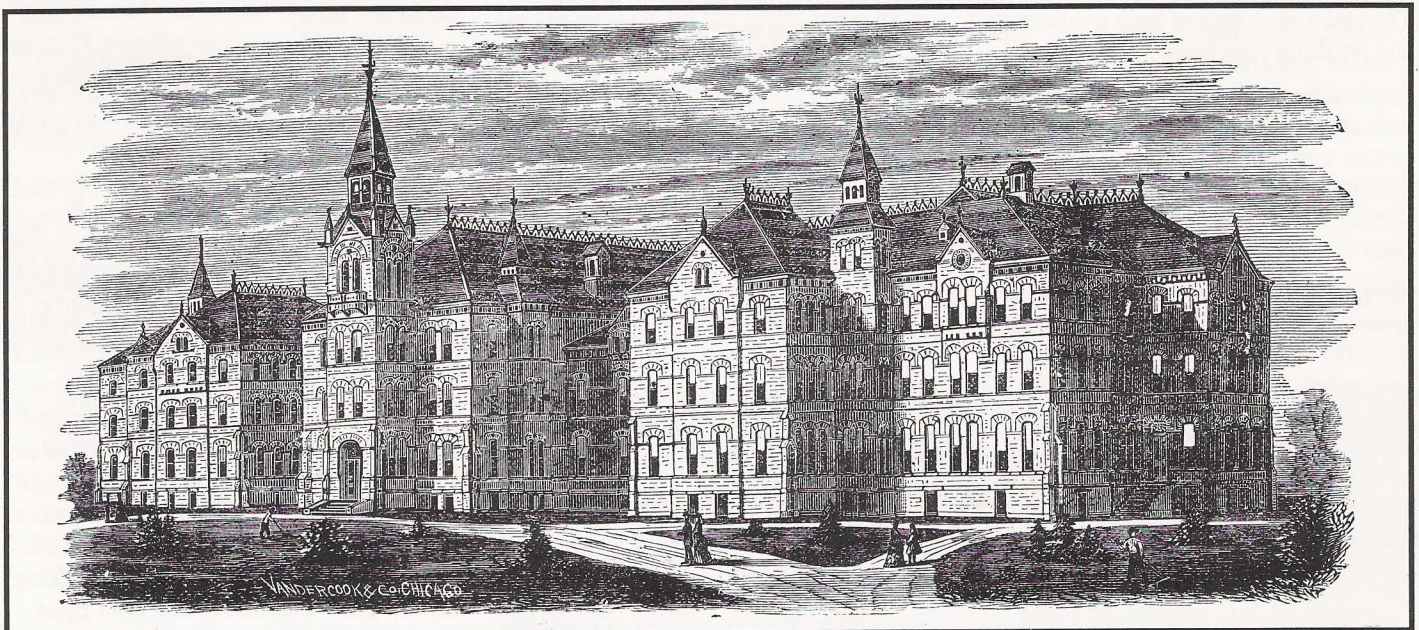
Tom graduated from Lincoln High School in the top ten of his class, with a college scholarship. The evening of graduation, he went out to the State School, picked up his mother, and took her to the graduation exercises.

The State School (now Lincoln Developmental Center or LDC) came to Lincoln as the Illinois Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children. Opened in Jacksonville in 1865 as the Experimental School for Idiots and Feeble-Minded Children, it had been successful in teaching children who were moderately or mildly retarded but "not epileptic, insane, or greatly deformed," as stated in the asylum's circular.

In 1877, the first residents arrived at the school's new home—a Victorian Gothic Revival building on 40 acres known as Wyatt's Grove near Lincoln. Later, 45 more acres were purchased.

A visitor who stopped by in 1903 could take one look at the school building, the industrial training building, the hospital, the custodial building for the severely retarded, and the asylum farm (about two miles away), and think that the institution now had a pretty heterogeneous population—and he'd be right.

(Continued on page 2)



Illinois Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children (later the administration building). It was surrounded by spacious grounds, with the thought that children could play outside without being stared at by a curious and sometimes cruel public. The building was torn down in 1998. The first superintendent of the school was Dr. C. T. Wilbur. Biennial report, 1880.

Our Times

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Publisher's Notes

Writing about the State School at Christmas time is a mixed blessing. The place has a way of both confirming and crushing your faith.

I visited the State School for the first time about 30 years ago, when I was a special education teacher and a graduate student—a few years before I moved to Lincoln. It was on a field trip with a class in mental retardation.

Here's what I remember: a cold winter evening; heavy darkness on the grounds; dimly-lit wards; rank odor; iron-railed beds; grotesque groans and bone-rattling shrieks; scarcely human forms in fetal repose; lumpy, cropped-haired old women pawing passersby. Our professor spoke of syndromes, and we choked back the urge to vomit.

Those memories occupy a black corner of my psyche, next to thoughts of my brother's crippling and ultimately fatal sclerosis, and my son's face laid blood-bare by a dog. I seldom visit this corner

of my mind, especially at Christmas time. I simply cannot reconcile these things with the idea of a good Creator.

Life is livable if we squint our eyes in order to see the cup half full. My wife taught at LDC years ago and teaches children with disabilities in a public school today. Watching her work reveals a quiet joy, an unquestioning satisfaction in the opportunity to extend small comforts. *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* Good does reside in creation.

Lincoln is a better city because of the State School. I know that for certain. LDC contributes something rare to our character. Our children grow up with an uncommon acceptance of the retarded. More than that, they find it easy to look upon their faces, return their eager greetings, talk with them, know them.

Workers at LDC provide us accessible heroes. They approach their work purposefully, casting light against shadows, seeing humanity where others see hopelessness, turning not away from agony.

Residents at LDC expand our conception of soul, distinguishing it from the lesser attributes of cognition and personality. This cuts sharply against any tendency toward elitism in our citizenry. It gives ballast to our folly. Always near is the "voice of woe" that, as the hymnist writes, "bids me go."

What is that star to the north? That prick of light in a sable sky? Love, I guess. If only half full, our cups yet withstand emptiness. **SR**

For Your Information

Over the years, the people who are cared for at the State School have been called pupils, students, patients, inmates, residents, clients, kids, boys and girls. Today, they are referred to as individuals. The names of their disabilities and the titles of those who care for them have changed, too. Here, old and new terms are used interchangeably.

(Continued from page 1)

The Commitment Act of 1915

In 1910, the institution's name became the Lincoln State School and Colony.

In 1915, the state legislature passed a commitment law that took control of admissions and discharges from the superintendent and gave it to the courts, which could commit anyone who was feeble-minded and not insane.

As a result, a flood of the old, the sick, the paralyzed, and babies arrived—even nursing babies (admitted with their mothers and accepted as "guests" until they were old enough to be classified).

For example, in November of 1915, 44 people were received in a special train car from the Cook County Oak Forest Infirmary. Half of them had to be carried into the institution.

Sometimes people were committed because of their behavior.

When Gerald Lewis was teaching at the State School in 1965, he sat down on a bench beside a woman who told him she had been a resident of the institution since 1932.

"Holy smokes!" he said. "What'd you do to get here?"

Very matter-of-factly, she replied, "I shoplifted some things from a grocery store, and I was caught and given a test and then I was sent here."

Some inmates were dangerous. In 1928, the *Courier* complained that, due to overcrowding at the St. Charles and Pontiac reformatories, Cook County judges had once again been classifying young delinquents as "criminal morons" and sending them to LSS&C.

The institution had no jail for disruptive juveniles—or anyone else. Inmates who misbehaved found themselves locked up in the north wing of the administration building or working on the jail ward, shoveling coal from the coal cars into the boiler room.

"You'd have to watch them pretty close, or they'd run away on you," says former employee Lowell Hines.

Well, inmates *did* escape. Seventy escapes were broadcast over the police radio between January and June of 1944. Some escapees were more dangerous to themselves than to others—drowning in Salt Creek or being hit by a car. Most escapees were found and returned, but some did commit crimes in the community.

In 1937, Smith Cottage was built as a detention building for incorrigible inmates. In 1944, two riots broke out at Smith, one led by three convicts who had been transferred from the Illinois Security Hospital at Menard and confined for breaking rules.

The courts began sending juvenile mental patients to Dixon in 1945, but Lincoln would again have its share of delinquents over the years—and its share of controversy over Smith.

Back in 1930, ten cottages had been added on the farm (later called the annex), and many men were moved there from the main campus. Still, the State School was always overcrowded and understaffed.

A number of its residents were not retarded, only poor. Families of borderline or normal intelligence were committed during the Depression.

One man, whose brothers were finally placed out of the State School, said, "I was the only one that wasn't at Lincoln. I was visiting an uncle that night [when the others were rounded up]."

Nor did every baby committed turn out to be retarded. In the fifties, eight to ten children who had lived in institutions or foster homes before coming to Lincoln (and had tested as retarded) were placed in an enriched nursery school at North Hospital on the grounds. They eventually tested as having normal intelligence or better. One child went back to his parents; the others were adopted or put in foster homes. One boy earned a master's degree and became a high school teacher.

Mental Deficiency Law

On October 1, 1949, when the Mental Deficiency Law gave the power to

discharge residents back to the superintendent, hundreds of people on the books were absent without leave or out on variation orders.

Social workers wrote the county judges, listing the people who had been out on court order for the last five years, and asking if they had any objection to discharging them. Anyone who had left prior to 1944 was simply discharged.

By 1954, when the institution's name was changed to Lincoln State School, state funds had been increased for the care and treatment of residents and for staff training. But in 1960, the facility was still 34% overcrowded.

Illinois voters passed a \$150 million bond issue that year, of which \$6 million came to Lincoln. After the state built three new and smaller facilities elsewhere, some Lincoln residents were moved there. Others were moved to small, community-based facilities.

Deinstitutionalization

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court had decreed that residents working in charitable institutions (the working boys and girls who did a lot of the work and cared for other residents) had to be paid on the same basis as employees. In 1973, Dr. William Sloan, Deputy Director for Mental Retardation, ordered an end to the practice of having residents work

in institutions.

"It was a blow to those working residents," says former nurse Ann LaMothe. "That was their identity."

No longer vital to the maintenance of the facility, some residents began to work in the School's sheltered workshops, while others were transferred to smaller institutions, group homes, and nursing homes.

Research indicating that rearing handicapped children in institutions led to serious lags in emotional, behavioral, and intellectual growth, also led to a decrease in numbers. When its name became Lincoln Developmental Center in 1975, the facility's population had gone from a high of 5,408 in 1958 to 1,680.

The annex was converted to Logan Correctional Center in 1978. In 1981, classes run by the Regional Superintendent's office opened on campus for LDC's school-age residents. Adult residents go to day programming or workshops at Logan-Mason Rehabilitation Center sites.

Today, says assistant facility director Bill Overton, LDC is the home of 383 individuals, with a staff of 698. Some people who came to LDC in the past remain there because their guardians feel it is a secure place for them. Others have disabilities requiring extra care or problems that make it difficult to adapt to the community. When possible, residents return to the community within 45 days. ■



Custodial Building. Courtesy Lincoln Developmental Center.

The Little City Unto Itself

In its heyday, Lincoln State School was a self-reliant little city. It had its own power plant, kitchen, bakery, sewing rooms, laundry, hospitals, nurses' school, fire department—and jail. In its greenhouses, residents watered the poinsettias and other plants that decorated the state offices in Springfield.

At various times over the years, residents not only made mattresses, shoes, and brooms, but cared for other residents and helped keep up the campus, working in the laundry rooms and cleaning the buildings.

Ben Courtwright started working at the State School in 1957 as a brick mason. When he replaced the grout in one of the State School kitchens, he had 10 to 12 residents (boys, they called them then) helping him.

"When we got paid, it was payday for them," says Ben.

Each boy who worked in the mechanical shop usually got "about a buck" from the paid staff to spend in the commissary. The shop included painters, carpenters, brick masons, plumbers, and steamfitters.

Ben didn't live on the grounds, but many attendants, psychologists, teachers, and other staff members did. After the staff apartments on Kickapoo Street were built in 1950, doctors and heads of departments lived there.

Lowell Hines was one of many who came from Southern Illinois to work at the State School in the thirties. He worked as an attendant (a political job in those days) and earned \$32.50 a month plus a room on campus, board, and laundry service.

Lowell met his wife, Madeline, in the little park between the residences of the men and women employees. Madeline later was in charge of inventory at the School, but in those days, she worked in a cottage of 25 or 30 girls. One employee per shift was sufficient, because the more capable girls looked after the others.

In 1930, the State School had 2,610 residents. The School raised a lot of its own food on the 1,100 acres it farmed. In 1931-32, 300 male patients helped



The institution's Holstein herd. Notice greenhouses in the background. Courtesy Lincoln Developmental Center.

in the farm and garden, supervised by Head Farmer McDonald and Head Gardener Gray.

A report of farm products in 1931 included everything from corn and oats to eggs, poultry, pork, beef, pumpkins, squash, and strawberries.

In 1933, the farm's herd of Duroc Jersey hogs numbered 600, and the residents who took care of them were signing up for 4-H hog projects. Killing about twenty hogs a week in the slaughterhouse at the farm kept everyone in pork all winter.

In 1950, Ben Courtwright's dad was head farmer. He supervised several men (the dairyman—Thomas Stolz at one time—the hog man, etc.), who each had a group of residents to help him do the work. Each of 20 to 30 residents milked two or three Holstein cows by hand, while another 50 to 60 worked on the farm.

In addition to corn (Ben's dad was national Corn King one year), the farm raised watermelons, cantaloupe, and just about "everything that was edible," remembers Ben.

Rack wagons piled with vegetables stopped by the buildings where the older residents lived. Someone would throw off the vegetables, and the men would pick the beans and shell the peas. Food that wasn't eaten fresh at Lincoln or other state institutions was taken to the canning factory at the farm.

Every little city has its school. In 1965, Gerald Lewis lived in the Idle Hour on the main campus and taught special education at the big school. On Friday nights, Gerald and his future wife, Peggy, joined other members of the staff at the Mill restaurant, across the street from the institution. They could hardly have guessed that the little city would someday be so different. ■

Music and Maypoles

George Treach was “a very patient man” says his son Fred.

He had to be—he was director of the Lincoln State School band from 1946 until it disbanded. So the man band members called “The Boss” taught not only music but also manners: how to tie shoes, say please and thank you, and how to act in public.

Dressed in their red uniforms with white piping, band members traveled the state: performing at the Palmer House in Chicago, marching in step at Christmas parades, and placing second in the American Legion competition at the Illinois State Fair in 1953.

The band played at the Logan County Courthouse on Memorial Day and at the Logan County Fair every summer.

Betty Eaton worked as a recreation therapist and directed the festivals and Christmas plays.

Not only did George Treach teach the students to read music, Betty says, but “no matter what I asked—and some of it was out of the ordinary—he would always produce it.”

Mary Downey was the director of the recreation department, which had a staff of 60. In the classes and social clubs, residents did everything from Southern play party games and circle dances to square dancing.

“We reached every level of resident,” says Betty, from those who could learn to tap dance to the profoundly retarded.

At one Christmas play, Shirley Bruketa made poinsettias out of umbrellas, and some of the profoundly retarded posed with them while the chorus sang—moving some of the audience members to tears.

The big event of the year was the May Festival, when the whole baseball field was taken up by the five Maypoles, each one a different color.

Holding their streamers, the boys and girls bowed perfectly to their partners before weaving in and out to wind the ribbons onto the pole as the band played. Then they reversed themselves and unwove it until each Maypole was “big and full and gorgeous,” and the field was covered with color.

Another beautiful sight, says Betty, was the line of 500 residents snaking around the grounds on the way to the gym for the Thursday afternoon movie. Munching on cracklings sent over by the butcher shop, they enjoyed action movies, musicals, and comedies. John Wayne was a favorite star.

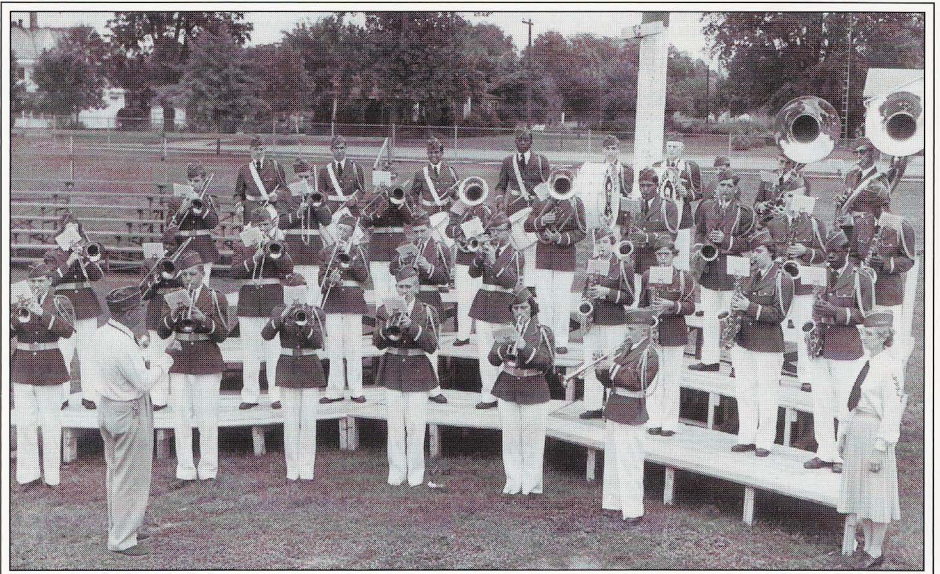
Operettas, entertainers like Marty Robbins at the Fourth of July Festival, softball games, a drum and bugle corps and rhythm (or kazoo) band led by Myron Jackson at the annex—“we just really had some good times,” says Betty.

Linda Schaefer has taught music with the chaplain’s department at LDC for 30 years and remembers William Joyner, the last state musician to retire. (Dorothy Barringer was another long-time state musician.) June Boyd directed the “very good” general choir, says Linda, as well as the Walking Canes, a group of musically gifted blind residents who wore purple satin capes for their performances at meetings and conventions.

Linda used to have a music therapy class of individuals who were deaf-blind. They enjoyed leaning against the piano or putting their backs against the back of a guitar to feel the vibrations. The organ was on a raised platform; when it was played, they used to lie on the platform and get their whole bodies involved in the music.

Deaf students enjoyed the sign-language choir, and Linda uses sign language today to show her deaf individuals which bell to play. Getting exercise by moving to music, using funny songs to teach everyday skills such as blowing your nose, bringing a keyboard to severely handicapped people, leading Sunday afternoon singalongs—“it’s very exciting,” says Linda.

Residents in Pat Caveny’s art classes did what children do in any grade or high school, with only those modifications necessary for success. ■



The Lincoln State School Band, director George “Fobey” Treach, left. Gertrude Brown Mileham, right, assisted for years. Courtesy Fred Treach.

Work—A “Successful Scheme”

In the 1916 biennial report of the ILSS&C, Managing Officer Thomas H. Leonard, M. D., reported on a “successful scheme.”

“Very carefully selected institution trained, high grade feeble-minded persons” had been placed in private homes. Working as domestics, they were supervised by a visiting matron, who helped them manage their wages.

Meanwhile, 20 to 30 trained and trusted boys were working on a rented farm, under the supervision of a housemother and housefather. Any food raised above and beyond what they needed was delivered to the institution.

By 1921, 30 girls were “on parole,” working as domestics at a local hospital. Still able to receive institutional care, they received a small weekly salary which they could use to buy their own clothes.

The girls appreciated the chance; what is more, it was believed that the behavior of girls “with delinquent tendencies” was improved by the hope of a chance to do some outside work.

Meanwhile, boys who showed “proper conduct reactions” were going out from time to time to earn spending money.

What came to be called the wage placement program was quite suc-



Using a rug loom. Courtesy Logan-Mason Rehabilitation Center.

cessful during World War II, when employees were scarce.

When Larry Bussard worked at the State School as a social worker between 1949 and 1954, about 150 men and women were working in the community at any one time.

Residents worked in Bloomington at Streid’s bakery on Main Street and as busboys and kitchen helpers at the Illinois Hotel; as housekeepers at St. Joseph’s home in Springfield; and as domestics at Kerri-gan’s funeral home in Lincoln.

Wings restaurant in Rantoul employed a “slew of residents” says Larry, and a resident who worked at the Steak ‘N Shake near Chanutte Air Force could fry 80 pounds of hamburger in his eight-hour shift.

A lady in Marshall, Illinois took in six or seven women at a time for \$75 apiece per month and taught them housekeeping. About 25 women went through that program; only one had to return to the State School.

Residents in the wage placement program lived in rooming houses or apartments with other residents, so they would have someone to socialize with. Still, moving out of the State School was an adjustment.

Imagine having all your decisions made for you—never even being allowed to turn on a light—then suddenly being more or less on your own. It was hard.

One of the residents had a landlady who complained about the odor in his room. He had figured out, he told Larry, that it was cheaper to buy new socks at the dime store for 10 cents than to pay 12 cents to send them out to be laundered.

Very smart—but the old socks were piling up, and there was nobody to tell him to throw them out.

Scheffler’s Greenhouses in Wheaton took a lot of wage placement residents.

When a man named Ernie was paroled from St. Charles, he asked if Mr. Scheffler could do something for his mother and brothers, who were living at the State School in Lincoln.

He could. Mr. Scheffler built a house near his greenhouse, and the family was taken out of the institution. Ernie’s mother did the cooking and cleaning and took in other wage placement workers; Ernie served as foreman in the greenhouses.

While some residents were working on the outside, countless others were doing the work involved in running the institution.

When the practice was ordered to be halted in 1973, there was a place for some of the residents in the sheltered workshop on the grounds.

Ken Tappendorf says he was “a little one-horse industrial art teacher with a little woodshop” when Larry Bussard returned to Lincoln State School as superintendent in 1971.

Ken was doing some unusual things—like having a couple of blind and retarded residents operate a table saw.

With Larry Bussard’s encouragement and the help of Dave Diamond and Roseanne Lisk, the shop grew to a sheltered workshop where 70 to 100 residents a day worked on two converted floors of the vacated North Hospital.

John Sutton ran a parallel program at the annex, with the help of Jerry Cisco.

Ken says that two of their big contracts were making glue blocks for Myers Industries and packing strips for U. S. Corrugated.

The trick in making glue blocks was to modify the saws so that a crew of

3 to 6 people could push the boards into an opening that fed them into the saws.

Another crew sat at a table and sorted out anything that didn't meet the Myers standards. Each crew shared the money they generated.

Visitors touring the workshop were always astounded to see residents using printing presses to make handsome business cards.

The presses were modified so that once staff members had hand-set the type, residents could do the printing.

The cards sold for three cents apiece, and the residents could only make about 50 cards an hour, so the project never generated very much money.

It did, however, generate a lot of positive feedback from visitors, which was a real boost to the ego of the residents.

For four straight years, the Lincoln program was displayed in the Governor's tent at the Illinois State Fair. Shaking hands with the Governor and other dignitaries, Ken says, the six residents who attended would "light up like a Christmas tree."

As the more capable residents were outplaced, the challenge was to "downshift to provide program services to a broader range of people," says Ken, by constantly modifying the equipment.

The workshops have left LDC, along with most of the residents. Since 1980, LDC residents have been participating in workshops and other programs of the Logan-Mason Rehabilitation Center, at its Postville Drive and State Street sites in Lincoln or in a small program on the grounds of LDC. Logan-Mason is operated by Mental Health Centers of Central Illinois, a not-for-profit corporation.

Logan-Mason has contracts with Eaton, Inland Tool of Mt. Pulaski, and Myers Industries, among others. Many of their workers live in group homes, and job coaches place disabled people in jobs with 14 different area businesses. ■

How Things Change!

When Ann LaMothe first came to Lincoln State School as a nurse in 1956, males lived in the north wing of the administration building, while females lived in the south wing. All other buildings were either all male or all female, except for the hospitals and the receiving cottage.

It was a big change when men and women were integrated in the dining room. When men sat on one side and the women on the other, they used all of their energy throwing cigarettes back and forth and making contact.

Once they were integrated, she remembers, the guys said, "Now we have to keep our shirts tucked in and our hair combed."

"It was just a more normal interaction," says Ann.

Ann has seen great strides in resident care, from something as simple as fitted sheets (so the residents weren't lying on rubber mattresses, with the sheets all wadded up), to the use of disposable diapers, to bedrooms with two or four beds instead of dormitories with 150 residents.

As a result, infectious diseases such as salmonella, e coli, and shigella are no longer rampant.

The use of tranquilizers, with all their unfortunate side effects, has been replaced by behavior modification.

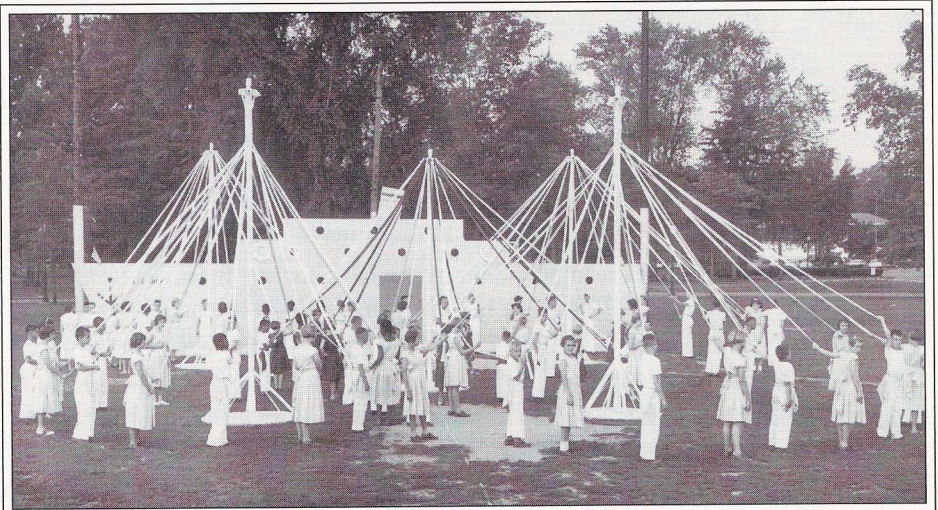
Even in the past, there were employees who taught the children how to feed themselves. Still, as the overall level of staff training has improved, caring for patients—which was an art—has now become a science.

The employees' union, the AFSCME Local 425, has also been instrumental in improving conditions.

When Larry Bussard became superintendent in 1971, the State School had 2,600 residents and 1,800 employees—but only 600 were working in the wards with the residents.

Once residents were no longer allowed to care for other residents and workers were reassigned, more employees could work in direct care. Today, there are 698 employees and 383 residents.

Former facility director Martin Downs says the emphasis has changed from programming individuals to listening to them and their guardians. In fact, since 1996, LDC has been accredited by The Council, an international organization that measures whether residents can pursue their own dreams. ■



Maypoles. Retired 50-year employee Pat Beckholt Kindred remembers watching fireworks on July 4th at LSS&C as a child in the '30s. Courtesy LDC.

I Get By with a Little Help . . .

In the early days of the Foster Grandparents program, remembers Jane Poertner, there were lots of little children at the State School.

She says it was "just wonderful" to see them lined up waiting for their foster grandmas—jumping up and down and yelling, "Grandma! Grandma! Grandma!"

In the four hours each weekday she was at the School, each volunteer grandma spent two hours with each of her two foster grandchildren. In return for reading, playing games, or just sitting and rocking them, she received transportation, a small stipend, a hot meal—and an enthusiastic welcome.

As assistant administrator of CIEDC (Community Action), Jane Poertner opened the Foster Grandparent program at the State School in 1967. Directors of the program have been Merle Ording, Anita Bingham, and Paula Poe.

A foster grandparent for ten years, Eloise Owens had signed up just as soon as she turned 60 and was eligible. She loves to talk about Jimmy, her foster grandchild who couldn't walk or talk but "understood things real well" and had "the prettiest big brown eyes."

"I used to sing to him a lot. Whenever he'd hear any kind of music, he'd get so excited. Thank God he could hear," she remembers.

In 1985, Eloise represented Illinois at the 20th anniversary celebration of the nationwide program. Her eyes still light up when she talks about flying to Washington, D. C. with Anita Bingham to have lunch with Nancy Reagan.

Jane Poertner says the foster grandmas (and grandpas) are "a feisty bunch," who are great advocates for their kids. Early on, one grandma decided her little charge needed a special kind of a wheelchair. The state didn't provide it, so the grandma campaigned until she had found the money for it.

Although most foster grandparents serve in the public schools or at Head Start these days, there are still ten foster grandparents at LDC.

There's love there, says Director Paula Poe, "and you can see it."

Many people have volunteered at LDC over the years, but probably no group has had more influence than the Lincoln Parents' Association.

Founded in 1954, by Henry Bigelow, Louis Coty, and Dr. Paul Ludeman, the parents' group recognized that with over 5,000 residents, the State School was overcrowded and understaffed.

So one of their projects was to establish a speakers' bureau, complete with slides, to make the public and the legislature aware of the School and its problems. In fact, parents' associations across the country were instrumental in getting legislatures to change conditions at facilities for the retarded.

Joanne Koyn Courtwright was president of the LPA for six years. (The Courtwrights' son Chris lives at LDC.) In the years Joanne and her husband, Ben, have been involved in the LPA, it has provided many things to the residents.

The LPA bought the big blue and yellow tent that goes up several times each summer, a screened-in patio for Bowen cottage, and a shelter with a roof behind Graham cottage so the older residents don't have to sit in the sun.

Thanks to the LPA's birthday fund, every resident has a birthday cake and a small present such as aftershave or cologne or a trip to a fast food restaurant.

The LPA meets four times a year and participates in the Fun and Family Day

in May, complete with a parade, floats for each building, and displays of the residents' artwork.

A few years ago, the celebration included a mini-Olympics where residents could race, throw a baseball, and do the broad jump. By holding onto a wooden circle with a string threaded through it, blind residents could even have a race.

Speaking of Olympics, about one-third of the 100 athletes in the Logan County chapter of the Special Olympics live at LDC.

Mrs. Ella Lee Graney and Ron Ross were involved when LDC participated in the first Special Olympics ever held in Chicago more than 30 years ago; today, Pat Caveny and Peggy Ross coordinate the all-volunteer program.

At practices held at the LDC gym, athletes on the basketball skill team practice shooting baskets and dribbling. They compete with other skill teams at the state meets, and hope to eventually join one of the three competitive teams.

Logan County Special Olympians also compete in track and field, where racing and the standing long jump are popular events. Various ages and levels of ability are represented, so almost anyone can join. ■



Eloise with Jimmy. The Pantagraph, October 18, 1985.

Willard's Story

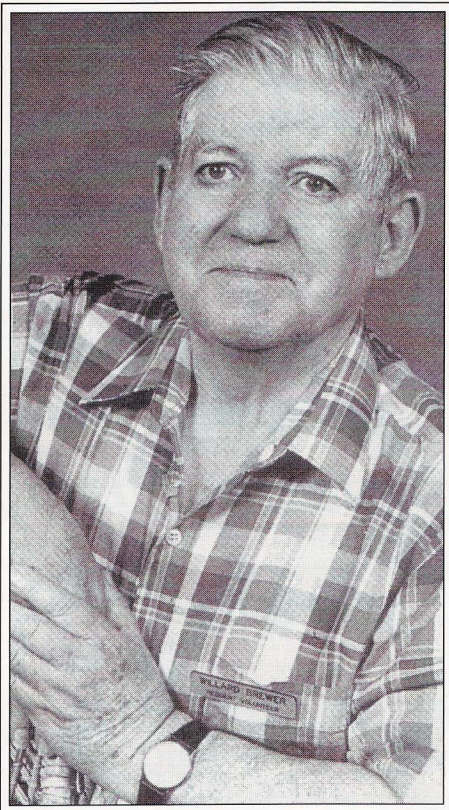
Willard Brewer doesn't remember his mother, but he has been to her grave in the old inmate cemetery near Logan Correctional Center. He bought a new headstone with the money he earned at Logan-Mason Rehabilitation Center, "and it sits up real nice now," he says.

Willard came to LSS&C in 1929 as a "guest," because his mother was an inmate there. He wouldn't be considered an inmate until he had lived there long enough to be classified.

If his father hadn't died of stomach cancer, "I could have grown up to learn a lot of things," says Willard, "because he was a farmer."

Instead, he was put into Nursery I, later transferred to Elmhurst Cottage, and then to the old Central Building.

Both his mother and sister were inmates, but he never saw either one until he finally met his sister shortly



Willard Brewer. The Courier, May 9, 2000.

before her death. She had left the institution years before on a wage placement program and had married. His mother never came to see him, says Willard, because she was "in bed all the time." He was allowed to attend her funeral.

Willard remembers a lot about the State School. He can still recite the four punishments: not getting to see picture shows, the locked hall in the north wing of the administration building, Smith Cottage, and the jail ward where "the old-time train" came in and inmates had to shovel coal. He can also tell you the names of many of the people who worked there, from Dr. Fox, the superintendent, on down to the supervisors in his building.

He remembers ice cream on the Fourth of July; band concerts; the "May doings," with the Maypole, the dance, and the flag drill; and the band coming around with Santa Claus at Christmas.

Willard worked in the carpenter shop, which he enjoyed, and on a truck that hauled tanks—which he didn't. At the cottage, "we had to make beds," Willard remembers. The residents did the housecleaning: scrubbing down the walls and floors with a bucket, a bar of soap, and a broom; washing the beds; and getting "a lot of dirt and dust" out of the radiators.

Getting yourself clean wasn't quite so easy. Everyone had to "bunch in there and take a shower at one time," he says. "You couldn't hardly rinse off there, because it was too crowded."

Before Willard moved into Bartmann Health Care Center in 1970, social workers took him over to see how he liked the place. Once he agreed to go, he packed his suitcase ("I didn't have much," he says) and started a new life. He didn't worry about leaving the State School after all those years.

"I liked to live in a different place where you could get to go out," he says. "I wanted to see the world . . . That's why He (God) made all different things around the world for us to see."

At the State School, "you couldn't hardly go out," says Willard. He even had his teeth pulled in the dental clinic at South Hospital on the grounds.

At Bartmann's, he worked in the kitchen and the yard, helped shovel snow, and went shopping with Frieda Bartmann. He says she gave him a raise when he helped her fold clothes; he also began earning money at the workshop.

When Willard had been at Bartmann's for 28 years, he celebrated the anniversary and his birthday at the same party.

"They brought a great big pretty cake and a card with money in it. That's what I wanted," says Willard. "I never did have money in my life . . . I didn't have a good job like you do on the outside," he says.

Money to spend and a chance to see the world—two things that were in short supply at LSS&C—that's what Willard wants.

Willard lived briefly at two group homes, but he didn't like them. At the first, one of the residents couldn't talk; it bothered Willard that the man spent his time "walking up and down." At the second, Willard says he only got to go to Wal-Mart and the workshop. So he chose to return to Bartmann's.

Now that Frieda Bartmann has died, and Bartmann's has been closed, Willard has moved to a new nursing home. He has a cozy room, with a desk where he writes lots of letters, since he learned how to read and write at Project Read. ■

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Extra! Extra! Old Rumor Disproved

Lincoln, IL—Logan County people were shocked today to learn that a long-cherished belief has been discredited.

“Everyone” has always known that the community of Lincoln had a choice between the State School and the University of Illinois and chose the State School.

There now, you see how wrong “everyone” can be? Turns out that Logan County did make a last-minute bid for the Illinois Industrial College (also known as the Agricultural College, the main subject being taught) when the site was being chosen in 1867.

The city and county offered the state \$350,000 for the privilege (\$50,000 to come from the city of Lincoln and \$300,000 from Logan County).

The legislative committee assigned to view the sites arrived by train on February 13, 1867. After a preliminary meeting at the Spitley House (a local hotel), a procession consisting of the Lincoln Band and 50 carriages started out to visit the three possible locations, one of which was the Brainerd farm.

Then back to the Spitley House for a lavish dinner, complete with compliments all around. The delegation left on the 5:00 train.

When the time came to vote on the cities, every attempt to replace the name of Champaign in the bill with the name of Lincoln, Jacksonville, or Bloomington, was voted down. Governor Richard J. Oglesby signed the bill setting the location at Champaign on February 29, 1867.

Eight years later, the committee appointed to choose a site for the Illinois Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children chose Wyatt's Grove near Lincoln. The state paid Latham and Wyatt \$7,500 for the 40 acres, with an option to buy 20 more. No lavish dinner, no financial offers, no band—just success. ■

Our Times

**The People, History, and Culture of
Logan County, Illinois**

Inside This Issue

A Little History Of a Big Place

The Little City Unto Itself

Music and Maypoles

**Work—A “Successful
Scheme”**

How Things Change!

I Get By With a Little Help . . .

Willard's Story

Old Rumor Disproved

Material for this issue came from the *Courier* under its various names; the *Lincoln Daily Herald*; *The Pantagraph*; biennial reports of the institution; a video on Lincoln Developmental Center compiled by Bob Gephart, Fred Paul, and Frank Dees; scrapbooks compiled by Pat Kindred; *Inventing the Feeble Mind* by James W. Trent, Jr., Berkeley, CA, University of California Press; *God Knows His Name* by Dave Bakke, Carbondale, IL, Southern Illinois University Press; *Historic American Buildings Survey Documentation Lincoln Developmental Center*, IL HABS Number LO-1996-1; and the memories of our friends. Oh—and in the last issue, a picture attributed to Jimmy Powell belongs to Jim Boward. Oops.

Our Times

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