

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Manuscript Collections

<p>Name of collection: Worcester Lunatic Asylum. Records, 1833-1924</p>	<p>Location: Octavo vols. "W" Folio vols. "W"</p>
<p>Size of collection: 1 octavo vol., 166 leaves (151 blank); 2 folio vols.</p>	<p>N.U.C.M.C. number: N.A.</p>
<p>Finding aids: For information concerning the hospital, see <u>Reports...relating to the State Lunatic Hospital at Worcester, Mass.</u> (Boston: State Senate, 1837), and Charles Nutt, <u>History of Worcester and its People</u> (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1919), vol. 2, pp. 918-20</p>	
<p>Source of collection: Gift of Worcester State Hospital, 1984</p>	
<p>Collection Description: In 1830, in order to provide care for the mentally ill in Worcester County, the governor of Massachusetts ordered the erection of a hospital on Summer Street in Worcester. Commissioners appointed to oversee the new building were Horace Mann (1796-1859), Bezaleel Taft, Jr. (1780-1846), and William Barron Calhoun (1795-1865). Dr. Samuel Bayard Woodward (1787-1850) served as the first superintendent/physician of the Worcester Lunatic Asylum. The hospital was enlarged in 1835 and was considered one of the best institutions in the country for the treatment of insanity. Its successor was Worcester State Hospital, located on Belmont Street. The majority of the records of the asylum to 1870 apparently were sent to the Countway Library of Harvard University. This collection contains one octavo volume, 1912-1924, and two folio volumes, 1833-1873, and 1873-1902, recording trustees' visits to the Worcester Lunatic Asylum. The octavo volume consists of brief comments concerning the satisfactory conditions at the hospital. The first folio volume, 1833-1873, contains considerably more detailed trustees' comments concerning their impressions of the patients (with references to specific patients and their maladies), conditions at the hospital, escapes, suicides, other deaths, the separation of "African" patients, discharge of "idiots" not under their jurisdiction, problems with the building, crowded wards, and the need for enlargement of the hospital as well as a post-mortuary examination room. The entries in the second folio volume are less detailed. Each volume contains statistics concerning the number of patients per month, divided</p>	

(Continued)

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Manuscript Collections

Collection Description (continued) Worcester Lunatic Asylum. Records

by gender, and the numbers of discharges, admissions, and deaths.

Among the trustees who wrote in the volumes are Alfred Dwight Foster (1800-1852), Horace Mann, William Barron Calhoun, Levi Lincoln (1782-1868), Stephen Salisbury (1798-1884), and Samuel Gridley Howe (1801-1876). The latter was, perhaps, most critical (during the 1850s) of the conditions at the asylum and suggested that the "strong rooms" (i.e., cages) be done away with, and that more amusements were needed for the patients.

This collection is "restricted" in terms of quoting its contents for publication. Please see the Curator of Manuscripts.

See Contents List

3 December 1984

Contents List Added 4/30/91

Worcester Lunatic Asylum Records, 1833-1924

Contents List

Octavo Volumes

Vol. 1: Comments on the condition of the hospital, 1913-1923.

Folio Volumes

Vol. 1: Comments by trustees on the condition of the hospital, patients and etc., 1833-1873.

vol. 2: Comments by trustees on the condition of the hospital, patients and etc., 1873-1902.