

RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN THE NATIONAL LEPROSARIUM, CARVILLE, LA.*

Until recently most of the buildings of the Federal leprosarium at Carville were of wooden frame structure and therefore a fire hazard. Starting in the spring of 1940, at a cost of approximately two and a half million dollars, the Government undertook to rebuild the institution almost completely, in order to make it fire-proof. This building program was completed by the end of 1941. Facilities have been increased to take care of 480 ambulatory patients, in addition to the 65 hospital rooms for bed patients. At present the leprosarium at Carville can be considered the finest and most modern in the world.

The visitor who approaches the Federal leprosarium at Carville for the first time is surprised to see such imposing buildings in an otherwise rural district. After he enters the reservation of 350 acres, he is impressed by the fact that it is a self-sustaining community, resembling a small town. There is a power plant for the generation of electricity, the manufacture of ice, and the operation of a central steam-radiator heating system. A modern sand filtration plant with attached chlorinating apparatus furnishes over 200,000 gallons of potable water a day. Both hot and cold water is piped to all the buildings of the colony. The water consumption per capita is above that of most large cities in the United States. This meets with the approval of the administrative force, since cleanliness is conducive to health and the source of supply, the Mississippi River, is inexhaustible. There are two modern sanitary laundries, one for the patients, the other for the personnel. A large sanitary dairy with pasteurization and cold storage facilities produces 180 gallons of Grade A milk a day. Cattle are raised to furnish beef products. Protestant and Catholic churches and their respective resident chaplains afford the patients religious comfort. A well-equipped fire department is ready to function at all hours. The sewage system with its septic tanks and the incinerator plant for the disposal of garbage assure the complete sanitation of the community and protection of the neighboring public. An extensive drainage system demands constant attention to prevent a mosquito nuisance and a possible malaria menace. Besides the numerous buildings for the use of the patients and the large nurses' home, there are 25 residences for doctors, administrative, clerical, mechanical, and other employees. All the personnel are employees of the Federal Government; there are no volunteer workers. Paved roads connect the different parts of the reservation.

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Passing from the personnel to the colony side of the estate, the visitor comes first to the hospital where the bed patients are treated. This is a two-story concrete building containing 44 rooms for men and 21 rooms for women patients. In addition, it contains a first-class operating room, an adequate X-ray department, a dental clinic, a bacteriologic and pathologic laboratory, a physiotherapy department, dressing-room clinics for men and women, offices, and examining rooms.

The ambulatory patients, who are by far in the majority, are domiciled in 16 two-story concrete buildings. Each of these buildings contains, on each floor, 15 individual bedrooms, bathrooms, a reception room, and front and back porches. The front porches are connected upstairs and downstairs by concrete passageways, screened and covered for the protection of the patients in going about the colony.

Every effort has been made to provide the patients with the comforts of home; for the most part, they are contented and well satisfied with all that is being done for them. They can pursue their avocations and enjoy a variety of community activities. Each patient has his own room with adequate modern fireproof furniture. He may arrange and decorate his room to suit his taste. Visitors are allowed, as in other hospitals. There are no restrictions in correspondence with relatives or friends except that all outgoing mail is disinfected.

On each side of the hospital is a building for occupational therapy. Each of these two-story buildings has 18 rooms. These are used as sewing room, music room, school room, photography room, barber shop, tailor shop, pressing shop, carpenter shop, shoemaker's shop, bicycle repair shop, radio repair shop, rooms for various other arts and crafts, and finally the printing offices of the patients' local paper, "The Star." This is an interesting monthly periodical, the purpose of which is "radiating the light of truth on Hansen's disease." It contains many splendid articles from the pens of patients. Its outside circulation is increasing. Occupational therapy in its different forms is a useful part of the patients' treatment. Occupation has a good moral effect upon the patient; it prevents brooding upon his malady. The employment of 98 patients on a small salary basis by the Government serves the same purpose. It also affords them ready cash for the purchase of the little luxuries not furnished by the Government. The Government provides all patients with food, clothing, toilet articles, books, magazines, newspapers, a golf course, tennis courts, baseballs, basketballs, and other sporting equipment, and three motion-picture shows each week.

The new recreation building has filled a long-felt need at the National Leprosarium. This beautiful, spacious, two-story structure is the feature of the new construction program which has pleased the patients most. It cost approximately \$140,000 and was well

worth the price for the recreational facilities it affords this group of shut-in citizens from practically every State of the Union. A modern motion-picture theater, a canteen operated by patients for the benefit of the patients, smoking rooms for men and women, and a splendid library with many excellent books are on the first floor. On the top floor is a huge ball or concert room with an orchestral platform on one side. Here frequent dances are given by the patient body. Baton Rouge and New Orleans bands come to play the latest swing music.

The patients are served their meals cafeteria style at 7 a. m., noon, and 5 p. m. The dining room adjoins a clean, well-equipped kitchen. Menus are carefully planned; the food is well cooked, tasty, and nutritious. The meals served can be compared to those of a first-class hotel. Food plays a direct part in the fight against the disease and no effort is spared to provide the best.

PLATE 1

FIG. 1. Panorama of the National Leprosarium, Carville, Louisiana.

FIG. 2. Patient's dormitory, National Leprosarium, Carville, Louisiana.



PLATE 1

PLATE 2

- FIG. 1. Hospital at the National Leprosarium, Carville, La.
- FIG. 2. Entrance to the National Leprosarium, Carville, La.
- FIG. 3. Kitchen (with non-leprous personnel) of the National Leprosarium, Carville, La.
- FIG. 4. Patient's room at the National Leprosarium, Carville, La.

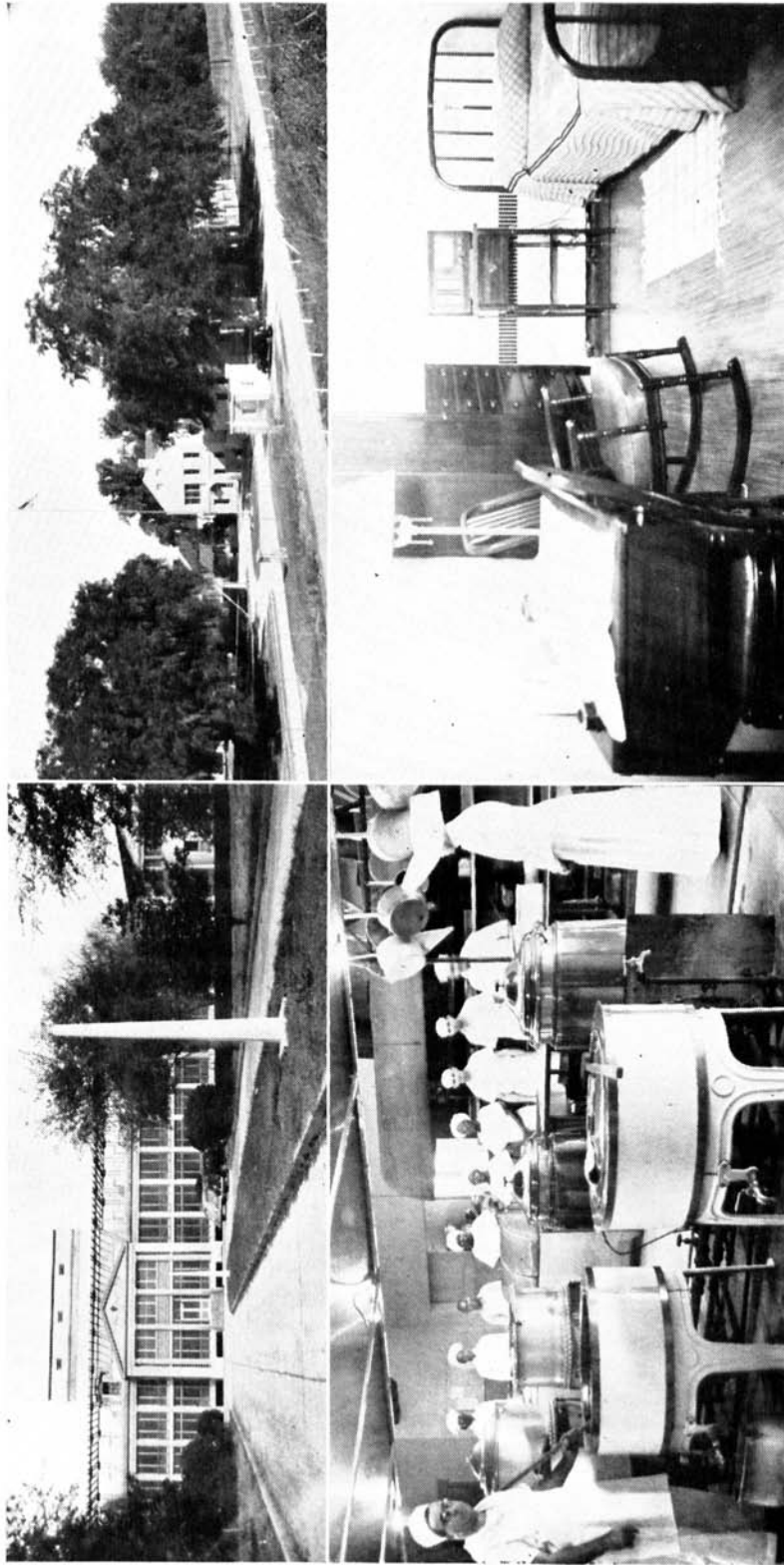


PLATE 2