

Arsenal Street Hospital

From This is our Saint Louis (written in 1970):

The beginning of this institution dates back to 1846 when that part of the Kemper College tract which was located east of the Blue Ridge Rd. (now Sublette Ave.) and which measured 42.12 acres was set aside for this future purpose. The institution was opened on April 23rd, 1869, and, being owned and operated by the County of St. Louis, it was known as the "St. Louis County Insane Asylum." It is reported that on the opening day 129 patients were admitted. After the City of St. Louis separated from the County of St. Louis on October 22nd, 1876, this hospital was re-named the "St. Louis Insane Asylum." This institution was tremendously enlarged in 1912 when the so-called "Million Dollar Annex" was completed. Many improvements were also made in the late twenties when a bond issue provided the necessary funds. The original center building was fire-proofed throughout, a large auditorium for the purpose of enabling various types of entertainment for the patients was provided along with a cafeteria for the employees and an up-to-date employees building. In keeping with the physical improvements of this institution a concerted effort was started in 1930 to improve the medical and nursing care of the patients. To this end the resident staff was considerably enlarged, graduate nurses were provided and whatever was needed in diagnostic and therapeutic equipment was supplied. While formerly the City Sanitarium was essentially a custodial institution, it has gradually become a first-class hospital for the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. At the present time it houses approximately 3500 patients. In studying the history of the present City Sanitarium and the City Infirmary it is interesting to note that these institutions were originally county institutions. This status prevailed until October 22nd, 1876, when the City of St. Louis separated from the County of

St. Louis under an agreement which is officially referred to as the "Scheme of Separation." This agreement contains a clause which gives the County of St. Louis the right to send patients to these former county institutions until such a time when the county will again have institutions of its own and with the understanding that the county will pay for the maintenance of its patients at the city institution at the prevailing per capita per diem cost. As a result of this provision St. Louis County is still making use in a limited way of the Infirmary, the Sanitarium, the Isolation, the Homer G. Phillips Hospital and the City Hospital.

History of St Louis Neighborhoods

The Hill

Institutions

At 5400 Arsenal Street is the huge structure housing the Missouri State Hospital, formerly known as the City Sanitarium. No provision was made for local care for the indigent insane until 1864, when it was considered by the County Court. A site on elevated ground on Arsenal Road, west of Kingshighway, was chosen and plans for the building were prepared by architect William Rumbold. It was first occupied on April 23, 1869, with a capacity of 250 patients. A five-story central structure was flanked on each side by four-story wings which were terminated by five-story end pavilions. A cast iron dome, 194 feet in height, surmounted the central section. At the rear was an open portico for the full height of the main building, affording an outdoor promenade for the patients. At that time, the boiler room, laundry, kitchen and officers' quarters were in a brick building about one hundred feet distant from the main structure, and connected to it by a tunnel. An artesian well, 3845 feet deep, was drilled on the grounds. Total construction cost was about \$700,000.

By 1881, the institution was woefully overcrowded, as it then had 343 patients. In 1910, the name was changed from insane Asylum to City Sanitarium. Extensive additional wings were added in 1912, increasing the institution's capacity to 2,000.

By 1914, the grounds covered 57 acres, total floor space was nine acres and the overall building cost was \$1,539,000.

The employees' building at Arsenal and Brannon was completed in 1926 and in the 1950's new laundry and industrial buildings were erected. A receiving warehouse was added in 1968 and in 1975, the juvenile treatment center on Fyler Avenue was opened. Originally a county facility, the sanitarium came under City control in 1876 and became a state institution in 1948.