

## A Visitor's Guide

### The Grounds – Tewksbury Hospital

The Public Health Museum in Massachusetts is housed in the Old Administration Building, recently dedicated as the Richard Morris Building, on the grounds of Tewksbury Hospital.

Tewksbury Hospital was established in 1852 as one of the three state almshouses needed to help care for the unprecedented influx of immigrants into Massachusetts at that time. The almshouses were the Commonwealth's first venture into caring for the poor, a duty which had previously been carried out by the cities and towns. Opened on May 1, 1854, with a capacity for 500, the almshouse population grew to 668 by the end of the first week, and to over 800 by May 20<sup>th</sup>. By December 2, 1854, 2,193 "paupers" had been admitted, nearly 90% of these listing European countries as their birthplace. The almshouse reported having 14 employees at that time, and was spending 94.5 cents per week per resident.

In 1866, the almshouse began accepting the "pauper insane," becoming the state's first facility to specifically accept cases with the diagnosis of chronic insanity. By 1874 the facility had become diversified: 40% was used as a mental illness ward, 27% as a hospital ward, and 33% as an almshouse. The chronically ill population continued to grow, alcoholics were admitted for treatment, and programs providing therapeutic industrial and occupational therapy were added in the 1870's. A Home Training School for Nurses was established in 1894, and the school became a full-fledged three-year program in 1898.

The most famous patient of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was **Anne Sullivan** who later became the tutor and companion of **Helen Keller**. Anne Sullivan spent four years at Tewksbury Hospital (1876-1880) before being transferred to the Perkins School for the Blind, now in Watertown, Massachusetts. At age 20, she left the school to go to Helen Keller's home in Alabama. One of the buildings on the Tewksbury Hospital campus is named for Ms. Sullivan.

Reflecting its changing mission, the Tewksbury Almshouse became Tewksbury State Hospital in 1900, the Massachusetts State Infirmiry in 1909, and Tewksbury State Hospital and Infirmiry in 1938. Over the years, facilities were added for treating tuberculosis and other contagious diseases such as small pox and typhoid fever. Meanwhile it continued to serve as a "last resort" for patients in need of shelter and supervised care, especially during the late 1920s and 1930s. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has served as the State Hospital and Infirmiry, playing a major role in the care of patients with infectious and chronic diseases. It is probably the pre-eminent historic example in Massachusetts of a public health institution developed and operated by the Commonwealth.

### The Old Administration Building

The Public Health Museum is housed in the Old Administration Building – Richard Morris Building – dating from 1894. This Queen Anne style building stands at the head of the original main entrance drive on East Street, marked by a granite and wrought iron gate, circa 1900. Designed by Boston Architect John A. Fox, the building was part of a major



construction effort in the 1890s to upgrade the old almshouse by replacing the wood frame buildings with more durable and fireproof masonry structures. The building is a three and a half story, red brick building with a steeply pitched slate roof defined by bridged-end chimneys, roof dormers, and a copper-clad clock tower rising from its center. The original core was enlarged with lateral wings around 1920, and a one-story rear addition around 1930.

Prior to the opening of the Museum on September 30, 1994, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the building, a concerted effort was made to restore the interior space of the Old Administration Building to its early 1890's appearance. In January of 1994, this building and the Tewksbury Hospital campus were placed on the National Registry of Historic Places.

As you enter the large impressive front doors of the Administration Building and look down the expansive hallway, you will see the entrance of the Public Health Museum on your immediate right.

### The Museum Rooms

As you pass through the door into the museum, notice that the **entrance door** to the room has two sections; the top half would have been kept open, allowing the Administrative Assistant to see all who entered the building and to determine what business they had at the Hospital. No one was allowed entrance without first being screened here. Inside this room is an early 1890's **roll-top desk**, which was used by the Administrative Assistant to the Hospital Superintendent, probably a woman. Many of the **boxes and containers** on the desk are also from the early 1900's.

The **switchboard** in this room was originally used at Cushing Hospital in Framingham when it was a Veterans' Hospital. Upon becoming a public health hospital, a modern telephone system was put in. The Cushing, like many other state facilities, has since been closed.

The **opaque glass window** in the room divider in the center of this room was opened and closed by the Administrative Assistant when she wanted to "check" with the Superintendent about certain visitors. He had the final word as to who would be seen at the hospital.

Another duty of those who worked here with the Administrative Assistant was to handle personnel matters. In the Shattuck Area of this first room (the rear half) you will see shelves where the hospital's **personnel files and administration records** were kept.

### *The Shattuck Area*

As you enter the back half of this first room, you enter the Shattuck Area, which is devoted to the history of public health in Massachusetts. The four pioneers of public health in Massachusetts are depicted on the wall. **Lemuel Shattuck, Henry Ingersoll Bowdich, Henry Pickering Wolcott, and George Hoyt Bigelow** all made major contributions to the development of public health as a science (see Four Massachusetts Leaders in Public Health pamphlet).



Also on the wall are pictures pertaining to the role of the city of Boston in the development of public health in America. As early as the 1700's, Boston harbor served as a first line of defense against smallpox, with ships being quarantined in the harbor. The **first board of public health** in the new nation was established in **Boston in 1796**, and its first president was **Paul Revere**. One of the first reports to link environmental and social factors to health was Lemuel Shattuck's **Report of the Sanitary Commission of Massachusetts**, presented to the state legislature on April 25, 1850. This report also called for the establishment of a state board of health, but Shattuck died in 1859 without much response to his report. Finally, in **1869 the first state board of health** was established in Massachusetts. The **seal** you see on the wall was designed in 1969 to celebrate the **Centennial of the Department of Public Health in Massachusetts**. Other pictures include Cotton Mather, who inoculated against smallpox in 1721; and the first use of ether in a surgical operation at Massachusetts General Hospital in 1846.

A long, glass-topped cabinet houses an exhibit on the early care and treatment of **tuberculosis** in Massachusetts. Photos show tuberculosis wards before the introduction of antibiotic therapy when the only successful way to treat TB was rest, good food, and lots of fresh air. Until the 1920's it was not unusual for tuberculosis patients to live out their lives at home with their families. However, when it was discovered that tuberculosis (or consumption, as it was then called), was caused by a bacterium and could be transmitted by contact with infected people, all patients were required to be isolated in institutions – either public or private – until they were either cured or they died. Most of the large sanatoria of that era are now closed or have been converted to other uses because it was discovered in the late 1940's that patients could be successfully treated as outpatients with antibiotics such as streptomycin and isoniazid. In recent years the number of persons infected with tuberculosis has been on the rise, particularly those infected with strains of the bacteria which are resistant to more common antibiotic treatment. This cabinet was formerly used to display skeletons and bones for the teaching of anatomy to medical and nursing students.

### *The Superintendent's Office*

The spacious room you enter next served as the Hospital Superintendent's Office from 1894 until the new Administration Building was erected in 1970. Furnishings for the room came from this Hospital as well as other, such as Lakeville and Danvers which are now closed. Central to this room is the large **superintendent's desk**: this particular desk was made at Lakeville Hospital in its carpentry shop. In some institutions, the patients engaged in occupational therapy by working in the carpentry shops and would have made such things as chairs, picture frames or clothes hangers.

On the immediate right is a typical circa 1894 **fireplace** which was used at that time as the main heat source. On the mantel rests the original insignia of the Tewksbury Almshouse. Above the fireplace is a portrait of Dr. Herbert Burr Howard.

The large **clock** was made by the Howard Clock Company of Boston and has a patent date of 1876. It was programmed to ring at different times during the day and throughout the hospital to signal events throughout the day, opening and closing times, meal times, etc.



The **panel displays** in the room include early 20<sup>th</sup> century pictures of Tewksbury Hospital and the patients treated here. **Poliomyelitis**, another dreaded disease in America's history, is depicted in this display. Before the advent of the polio vaccine in the 1950's, patients who were infected with the polio virus were often partially or totally paralyzed. For those patients such as President Franklin Roosevelt, who had some use of their lower extremities, braces were often fitted that provided support and allowed some movement. Other more seriously paralyzed patients were often confined to bed, and some were so weakened that they could not move their chest muscles to breathe. In the latter case, they had to be placed in an **iron lung** that mechanically moved their respiratory muscles. Another mode of treatment was for patients to swim in warm water, thus allowing them to exercise their muscles and at the same time provide relief from stiffness and pain. Other items on the panels touch on additional concerns, programs and of the activities of the Department of Public Health, including some of which extend back in time to colonial days.

In the middle of these panels is a hutch that is a complement to the superintendent's desk and was also made at Lakeville Hospital. Above the hutch hangs a portrait of Dr. John Holyoke Nichols.

On the far side of the display panels is a long, narrow room that was created from the front office at the time of renovations to this building in the 1920's. This room used to be the **mail room** for the hospital and was the nerve center where everyone met and exchanged information. The mailboxes in this room were for the population of workers who lived on the hospital campus: farm workers, carpenters, iron workers, doctors and nurses. The museum currently uses this space to store rare books and other small artifacts. Note the huge **fireplace**, matching the similar fireplace you will see in the Mural Room.

As we move through the Superintendent's office toward the rear wall, we see on either side of the door some built-in display cases. These cases are used by the Museum to house various temporary exhibits as well as some items that need special protection. Currently a collection of **patent medicine bottles** is on display.

### *The Waiting Room*

As you walk out of the Superintendent's office through the door in the center of two glass cases, we enter a small room with French doors that look out onto the hospital grounds. This room has had a variety of uses over the years, including that of an office for the Medical Director and a waiting room for the Superintendent's office.

Hanging on the wall to your right is an **aerial view of the hospital grounds** that was used by the architects and planners of these facilities. Drawn in the 1930's, it has every building labeled and numbered. The building housing the Museum is building No. 1. At one time, the grounds were surrounded by a wall or were inter-connected, as were most institutions of this kind in the late 1800's and early 1900's. A labyrinth of underground tunnels also connected the buildings.



Just under the aerial view of the hospital grounds is a wood storage cabinet that came from the Superintendent's residence, which is visible just to the right if you look outside through the French doors. From the 1890s to the 1950's all of the Superintendents lived in this residence. The building is now called the **Annie G. McDonald House** to honor Ms. McDonald, Director of Nursing at the hospital for over 40 years before she died of cancer. The building is awaiting restoration.

The majority of the space in this room is being used to depict a typical *Hospital Room* of the 1920's. A room like this was often used as a teaching room as well. The **metal beds** were high off the floor and required a footstool for patient comfort and safety. This height was to make the patient more accessible for procedures and nursing care. Notice also that the patient's supplies consisted of the bare essentials.

It also displays vision and hearing testing equipment invented in the early 1900s.

### *The Classroom*

As you continue through the waiting room, you come to a series of small rooms that have been set up as models for a variety of functions. One is a school of nursing classroom. This classroom looks much like any classroom from the 1920s's and 1930's. The portrait on the back wall is of **Ms. Annie G. McDonald, former Director of Nursing**, done shortly before her death. The other picture in this room is of **Linda Richards** who was the **first graduate nurse in the United States**. She worked at the New England Hospital for Women and Children (also known as Boston Floating Hospital), now a part of the New England Medical Center. The third portrait is of Marjorie McDermott, Director of Nursing at Tewksbury Hospital from 1947 to 1987.

The **picture of a maternity floor** in this room was probably used to demonstrate proper aseptic techniques. Notice that everyone in the photo is wearing a mask. Most of the mothers in that ward were unwed mothers – some of whom kept their babies while others gave them up for adoption. The **medical instruments**, which you see here, are typical of the era; notice the blood pressure measuring device called a **sphygmomanometer** and the **electrocardiogram machine**. These would have been used in the classroom for demonstration purposes.

Near the far door is a **student nurse's uniform**. In the early days of nursing, there was a formal ceremony at the end of a probationary period at which time a student was given her **cap**. Each cap was a distinctive and unique style indicating which nursing school a nurse had attended. When a nurse graduated and received her diploma, she was given a pin, also distinctive for each school. Today, university schools of nursing maintain individualized pins as a sign of their particular school. Once a nurse passed her licensing exam, she would wear her cap and pin as well as the uniform of the institution from which she graduated. Interestingly enough, recent legislation in Massachusetts requires that nurses wear name pins identifying them as registered nurses. In earlier times, the nurse's uniform consisted of a white cotton dress that was starched, often with a bib and apron as well as celluloid collar and cuffs. At first, student nurses wore black stockings and black oxford shoes; only later did they switch to white.



## *The Dental Office*

This room resembles a typical dental office in the early 1900's. Note the numerous **medical instruments** typical of an earlier era.

## *The Mural Room*

The large central room with the **murals** completes the tour of the Museum of Public Health. This spacious room was used for formal receptions for visitors to the hospital. It was decorated in the **1930's** with murals painted by artists who worked under the auspices of the **Federal Arts Project**, part of the WPA (Works Progress Administration) program during the Depression of the 1930's. The murals are attributed to artists **W. Lester Stevens** born in 1888 in Rockport Massachusetts; **Maurice Compris** born in 1885 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands; and **Samuel F. Hershey** born in 1904, in Peru, Indiana. Hundreds of murals were painted throughout the United States in post offices, courthouses, and other public buildings, with financial support from the WPA; many of these murals incorporated local scenes or socio-political motifs. Like most of the murals painted by WPA-supported artists, these depict local industries and farming endeavors. The mural near the fireplace, depicting looms, was painted by Compris; the mural over the windows, depicting quarries and factory work, was painted by Hershey; and the remaining murals of farm work, boat building, and fishing, are by Stevens. These murals on the Museum walls remain in excellent condition, having been protected from sunlight, which could have faded them over the past 70-plus years. The large map of Massachusetts on the wall was also painted in the mid-1930's.

None of the pieces of furniture in this room are original to the Administration Building, but were collected over several years by the museum from the Tewksbury Hospital and other state institutions.

The most prominent feature of the room is the huge **brick fireplace**, complemented by the **andirons** in the shape of Native Americans and the **seal of Massachusetts** above.

The **steep staircase** up one wall leads to a small room, which was used to store records for the various offices of the hospital located in this building.

This room is also used for special exhibits, from time to time.

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We hope you have enjoyed your visit to the Museum. Please tell your friends and colleagues. We welcome your comments and suggestions. What would you like to see in a public health museum, or programs that could be offered? Thank you for your interest.

Special thanks to Chester Kennedy and the late Marjorie McDermott for providing most of the factual information for his Guide.

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