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Earnings Of Megowan Fund Brings Happiness To Inmates Of State Hospital

Income Totals $2,500 A Year

Dances, Movies And Occupational Hobbies Provided At Asylum

By Malcolm Patterson

"For greater comfort and happiness of the patients . . ."

This phrase has run through a seemingly interminable number of grand jury reports on conditions at Eastern State hospital. It has been contained in reports of special inspections and surveys, both independent and governmental.

And it was uppermost in the mind of an old gentleman residing in Montgomery county almost 90 years ago. Having passed his allotted three-score and ten, James Strode Magowan, owner of extensive farmlands, made a decision in his 76th year. It was "for the purpose of adding to the amusements and comforts of the patients" at what was then known as the Kentucky Lunatic Asylum.

How well this thoughtful old man carried out his decision cannot be measured by the amount of money he decided to donate to aid mentally-ill fellow-Kentuckians. He gave only $1,000. He did not live long after making his donation. He died in 1852, two years after establishing the fund for inmates of the hospital. But if he were alive today he would find that $1,000 yields the asylum an annual income of $2,500. What it has provided in the way of recreation for patients in the years since its establishment is indeterminable. What it is providing today and what it will provide tomorrow is heartening to anyone who visits the second oldest insane asylum in the United States.

We visited it the day after the recently adjourned Fayette county grand jury went to the institution. But what the Magowan Fund, or Megowan Fund, as it is called on hospital records, is accomplishing today could not be viewed in its entirety in a single day. We returned another day and yet again two nights, twice with the staff photographer. And part of what we saw is presented herewith. All could not be. What is being done is too wide in scope and extends through too many seasons of the year for that.

Hands No Longer Idle

In the daytime at the hospital you see: Hands, formerly idle as thumbs twiddled, at work. You see the old women, young women, fat women, thin women knitting, making their own bedspreads in what Dr. F. K. Foley, superintendent, explained was the first step in occupational therapy designed to prevent these mental ailments from retrogressing. This knitting leads to more complicated work with hands until finally these women assume positions at weaving machines, where exquisite work is done.

You walk down a long hall, not lined with as many women as it was upon a visit a year previously. As you approach the end of the hall you hear strains of music—mountain music. It is that of three French harps and a piano. Entering an attractively decorated room containing books, magazines, game boards, tables and chairs, you see three young men playing the harps as they are accompanied by a silver-haired, motherly looking woman. All are inmates. Then you notice three women, ranging in ages from 17 to 60, playing Chinese checkers; another group, playing regular checkers. Others are onlookers. All are patients.

From the music-filled room, you pass down another hall, up three flights of steps, into a large room seemingly swarming with men. But they are not idle as they were a year previously. Some are working with ordinary thread spools. Others are sawing ordinary pineboard boxes in which canned food was shipped to the asylum. Others are sanding boards cut from these boxes. Still others are making hooked rugs. All are busily engaged. Heads are bowed, but not in morbid musing. The heads are bowed over the patients' work. From the thread spools and pineboard boxes, these men are making book tables which will be sold. From the rags and cord and yarn, they are making beautifully designed rugs and table mats.

Patients Rever Dr. Foley

When you leave these men and accompany Dr. Foley and the photographer along another hall and down another flight of steps, you notice the scrupulous cleanliness of the hall, the stairs. And Dr. Foley remarks to an inmate sweeping the steps as you pass him: 'John, you're doing a good job here." And you think that that man will wear out his broom, if not the century old steps, if energy can accomplish those things, for the inmates revere Dr. Foley. They reach out and try to touch his clothing as he passes crowds of them. They call to him in low voices to attract his attention.

Here you see kindness being practiced instead of the cruelty criticized by former grand juries. And this brings us to our night visits. Each Monday night a dance is given for the inmates. Each Thursday night a motion picture is presented for the patients.

"Instead of cruel treatment we have a new method of obtaining order among patients," Dr. Foley said. "If they are untidy in person or in their quarters, we 'threaten' them. We tell them that they cannot attend the movies and the dance that week. Nothing could be greater 'punishment' for them, because they look forward to these two nights from week to week."

At the movies each Thursday night more than 400 patients sit silently, attentively, in the main dining room which is cleared of the long rows of mess tables for the show.

—Herald-Leader Photos

Implementing recovery from mental ills is $2,500 annual income from a $1,000 gift donated the Eastern State hospital nearly 90 years ago. In the above photographs are shown some uses to which proceeds of the fund are applied. At the upper left, three female inmates of the asylum occupy their minds with the problem of "the next move" in a game of Chinese checkers. In upper center picture, patients go through the fast steps of a square dance. Then at upper right, "Brewster," Negro patient who works daily in the hospital's blacksmith shop, beats a set of drums that he made himself during his spare time. No happier person attends the weekly dances in the institution's main dining hall than "Brewster." At lower left, three young men swing out with mountain music to the accompaniment of a piano in one of the recreation rooms. The young girl, whose back is turned to the camera, sings with them. Yes, she's the same girl as pictured in the upper photo. Elderly, motherly looking women are shown in the picture at lower right sewing bedspreads for their own use. From the ward they now are in, they will be "graduated" to more complicated hand-weaving and machine-weaving tasks in the occupational therapy department. While under some former superintendents, the original $1,000 gift which established the "Megowan fund" was allowed to accumulate from year to year, since Dr. F. K. Foley assumed the superintendency of the century-old hospital, renewed emphasis is being placed upon use of the fund. Dr. Foley said the only worry he had about the $2,500 annual income, which is derived from rents on a Lexington store building owned by the fund, is that more than the $2,500 yearly will be needed for the occupational and recreational work required at the hospital.

In contrast to the movies is the scene in the huge dining room on Monday nights when the dances are held. When you enter a few minutes before dancing begins you see about 150 men seated at one end of the dining room, about 150 women seated at the other. The band starts playing. The caller—for most of the dances are of the square variety—blows a whistle as he is perched upon the back of a chair. At the blast, the men hasten toward the women, the great majority heading for particular ones. You hear Dr. Foley explain this phenomenon in a quiet voice: "Each man has his own girl. When the women serve as waitresses at mealtimes they see to it that their own beaus receive extra large pats of butter."

On Road To Recovery!

Then you become sad at the sight of these people dancing. You become sadder as the dance becomes more furious, as the square-dance steps become more intricate. Finally, you can contain yourself no longer. You mention your feelings to Dr. Foley. Then he tells you: "These people are happier than either you or I. Many recently were in strait-jackets. The ones here tonight are on the road to recovery. Many will be able to return to their homes. Then, too, they have no worries, nor sense of responsibility. Thus, they are free to enjoy this moment."

And before you depart, you find yourself smiling with the grinning patients. But the knowledge that less fortunate patients were not at the dance brings back your sense of responsibility to these inmates. You remember that the last grand jury, after stating that the state should consider itself fortunate in having a man of Dr. Foley's ability and reliability in charge of the institution, declared that "there is still much that needs to be done.

"New buildings are needed and present buildings need further changes, particularly in the matter of sanitary floors and elimination of wooden stairways; the institution is still overcrowded and still cares for infirm, invalid and particularly for feeble-minded patients who should not be housed with the insane; modern hydro-therapeutic equipment is needed. Pending improvements at the institution seem to have been well thought out, and future needs, as they develop and are presented, should receive favorable consideration by the citizens of the commonwealth."

There it is, what still needs to be done. What we saw being done was made possible through that old Montgomery county gentleman's idea of donating $1,000 for the benefit of inmates. It is infinitesmal in comparison with the major task of the hospital. Yet it also provides magazines, beauty treatments—most are taken by the women just before dances—taps for tap dancers, pastors for both white and Negro church services, eyeglasses that patients may read, story-telling hours, croquet grounds, tennis courts, seeds for flowers and greenhouse plants, decorations for holiday occasions and many more items not included in regularly state appropriated funds.

Fund Remained Idle

When Mr. Magowan made his gift, it was permitted to lie idle. While received by the hospital in 1850, it was not applied to the purpose for which it was given until 1863. At that time, the Board of Managers ordered it to be funded, together with the accumulated interest, in a building in Lexington, proceeds from which were to be known as the "Megowan Fund."

Yes, all available records, mostly annual reports of the institution, call the trust the "Megowan Fund." Apparently this was caused either by a clerical error or by the name "Magowan" becoming confused with the name "Megowan," that of a prominent Lexington family in the early 1800's, according to descendants of Mr. Magowan.

The rents and income from the building, according to the annual report for the year ending Sept. 30, 1869, were to be expended "for the purpose of adding to the comfort and amusement of the patients." And income from a three-story brick building in downtown Lexington is still being expended in this manner. It amounts to $2,500 annually. The building is that which is located on the northwest corner of South Limestone and Water streets, occupied by a restaurant operated by M. J. Levas.

A Gift And An Incident!

However, before the present income of $2,500 was attained, the Megowan Fund passed through an "evolutionary" period. To attain its present status, it was combined with another incident in the history of the hospital.

The site upon which the building now owned by the hospital is located was bought by H. C. Pindell of Louisville on May 8, 1845, at public auction, according to records in the county clerk's office.

Then on March 2, 1863—the same year in which the Megowan Fund was put to a use by the hospital and the building was purchased—H. C. Pindell and his wife, Ann Pindell, sold the site then known as "Pindell's Row" to the Eastern Lunatic Asylum of Kentucky for $1, the records state. The site transferred fronted 33 1-3 feet on Water street and 41 feet on Mulberry street or the South Limestone street of today. Two tenements occupied the site. The deed stated that the transfer was in payment of all demands upon Mr. Pindell in his capacity as "surety of Thomas B. Monroe Jr., former treasurer of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum of Kentucky."

In 1869, the year in which the hospital's annual report mentions Mr. Magowan's gift in the fullest explanatory manner found in all available annual reports of the institution, the "Megowan Fund" consisted of a storehouse in the city of Lexington, which was under rent at $300 a year at the time it was purchased in 1863 and was leased at $750 a year in 1869.

Building Erected In 1895

By the time the 1875 annual report of the institution was issued, $1,764 of the Megowan Fund had been invested in 14 shares of stock of the Northern Bank of Kentucky. But it was not until 1895 that the present building at South Limestone and Water streets was constructed. On Sept. 5 of that year a mortgage was executed by the Eastern Kentucky Asylum to the Northern Bank for the sum of $3,090 "to complete the new building" on the site, according to mortgage records in the county clerk's office. The purpose of the new building, as set forth in the mortgage, was to gain funds apart from the hospital's ordinary funds to be used "for amusement of the patients." On Aug. 27, 1898 the Northern Bank assigned to the Security Trust and Safety Vault Company a $1,921.98 note, the balance due on the original $3,090 mortgage, according to a notation on the document. This note was paid Sept. 9, 1901 to the Security Trust and Safety Vault Company. At that time patients were being driven around Lexington and Fayette county in horse-drawn busses, the expenses being paid from the Megowan Fund.

Thus, from pre-War Between the States days, through that critical period, through the Spanish-American War, the horse and buggy days, the World War, the riotous Twenties, the depression, up to today, we find living expression of that intention of Mr. Magowan embodied in the phrase:

"For greater comfort and happiness of the patients . . ."

Scientific Fraternity To Hear Treadway

Sigma Xi, honorary scientific fraternity, will hold its annual banquet and initiation at 6:30 o'clock Thursday night at the Lafayette hotel. Dr. Walter L. Treadway, medical officer in charge of the United States Public Health Service hospital, will be the principal speaker. His subject will be "The Poor, the Sick and the Bad."

New active members to be initiated include Miss Mary Didlake, William S. Hodgkiss, William T. Maxson, Mrs. Elizabeth V. Wright, Henry Beaumont, and Mrs. Margaret M. Ratliff.

New associate members are Ernest Keller Bean, Eugene Smith, Lorenzo Sturkey, Lewis Plymale, J. Rondle Wright, Herbert H. Duncan, Flavius Webb Wyman, Arthur Wayne Plummer, Allen Stewart Kenyon, Eleanor Ada Mitts, Harold E. Huber, Jacob Schroeder, Jack B. Mohney, and Francis Jerome Smith.

It is estimated that less than one-third of the words in any standard English dictionary are purely of English origin.

Special Judge Calls Common-Law Docket

Judge Richard C. Stoll, acting as special judge of Fayette Circuit Court in the absence of Judge King Swope, called the common-law docket during motion hour yesterday and set civil cases for a two-week term beginning May 15.

The acting judge announced there would be no motion hour next Saturday, Derby Day, and set Monday, May 8, as the next motion day.

Through an agreed order entered yesterday, the case of Willett Bruner, suing through her mother, Ada Clausen, vs. C. Spillman Jones Jr. and C. Spillman Jones Sr. was dismissed without prejudice. The suit was filed March 20, 1937, in an effort to obtain $2,750 damages for injuries allegedly received by the plaintiff in an automobile accident.

Maysville School Band Gets Uniforms

MAYSVILLE, Ky., April 29 (Special)—N. P. Brilla, director of instrumental music in Maysville public schools, announced today that new uniforms have been received for members of the Maysville high school band, which will give a concert in the high school auditorium Tuesday night. The new uniforms will be worn the first time at the concert.

Purchase of the uniforms was made possible by the Parent Band Auxiliary and the city board of education. The coats, developed along military lines, are of wool maroon serge, with effective touches of white silk trimming. Attached to the left shoulder is a citation cord. Caps are of maroon with white silk band. The trousers are of white flannel.

Open House Arranged At University School

An open-house for parents and friends of students of the University elementary and high schools will be held at the school from 4 to 5 p. m. and 7 to 9 p. m. Wednesday, it was announced yesterday by Leslie Betz, chairman of arrangements.

Classrooms will be open to visitors and tea will be served by members of the Parent-Teacher Association of the school. At 7 o'clock a half-hour program of musical selections will be presented in the auditorium under the direction of Dr. Alexander Capurso and Miss Leila Mason. At 7:30 p. m. a motion picture of student activities will be shown. During the open-house, an art exhibit will be held in the auditorium.

Members of the National Honor Society and the Student Government Council of the school will act as guides for the guests.

Masonic Team To Visit Here

Eleven Counties Unite In Honoring Detroit Highlanders May 12

"The Highlanders," a Detroit Masonic degree team, dressed in kilts and sporrans, will visit Central Kentucky on Friday, May 12, to appear at the 26th district meeting of Kentucky Masons to be held in the high school gymnasium in Nicholasville, with Hart Lodge No. 61, F. & A. M., acting as hosts. The district is composed of the 11 blue lodges located in Fayette, Franklin, Jessamine, Woodford and Scott counties.

At 6 o'clock a dinner will be served in the Christian church for the Detroit Masons and grand lodge officers. Lodge will be opened at 7:30 o'clock, with Hugh Blair, master of Hart lodge, presiding. After the reception of distinguished visitors the Master Mason's degree will be conferred by the Detroit Masons.

Preparations are being made to entertain more than a thousand Masons for this event, making it one of the largest Masonic gatherings ever staged in the Bluegrass. Delegations from lodges in Tennessee, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky have signified their intentions of being present.

The Detroit delegation is due in Lexington Friday morning, May 12, coming in their special car from Detroit, and will be parked at Union station. The visitors will be entertained at lunch at the Phoenix hotel and after which a tour of the Bluegrass farms will be made.

At a similar meeting held in Toledo, Ohio, on April 22, more than 2,000 Masons attended the presentation of Master Mason's degree by this team. Andrew W. Johnson of Lexington, keyman for the 26th district, was present at the Toledo meeting and made the final arrangements for the visitation here.

Mr. Johnson is being assisted by Dr. L. H. Durrell, secretary of Hart lodge, in making the preparations for this meeting.

Robert Wadlow of Alton, Ill., the world's tallest man, 8 feet, 8¼ inches, has accepted an invitation to be present and will be a guest at the dinner.

The Detroit delegation will leave Saturday, May 13, for Newport where they will be guests at the 29th district meeting held in the high school auditorium that night.

Kiser To Address Junior Bar Group

Attorney Strother Kiser will address members of the Lexington Junior Bar Association at a dinner-meeting at 6:30 o'clock Tuesday night at the Lafayette hotel. Joe Arnold will serve as program chairman.

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