

Western Lunatic Asylum [Staunton, Virginia] Collection

Western Lunatic Asylum [Staunton, Virginia] Collection
1840-1903



Title Statement

Western Lunatic Asylum [Staunton, Virginia] CollectionWestern Lunatic Asylum [Staunton, Virginia] Collection, 1840-1903 (bulk 1840-1868) Ms.2016.021

Author: Katie Herring, Student Assistant, Leeann Jones, Student Assistant, and Kira A. Dietz, Archivist

Publication Statement

Publisher: Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries (0434)
560 Drillfield Drive
Newman Library, Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
Business Number: 540-231-6308
specref@vt.edu
URL: <http://spec.lib.vt.edu>



2021 (CC0 1.0)

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-01-22 07:02:07 -0500.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Revision Description

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 2019-06-11 | Over the last 18 months, new items were acquired and added to the collection, which was reorganized and moved to a larger box. The finding aid was updated and reposted online in June 2019. kad |
| 2021-07-22 | LM Rozema incorporated Acc2019-099 and updated notes to new departmental standards. |

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2016.021

Unit Date

1840-1903

Unit Date

1840-1868

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

The Western Lunatic Asylum Collection includes correspondence written to the Western Lunatic Asylum in Staunton, Virginia, dating from 1840 through the late 19th century, as well as annual reports from the 1860s and 1900s.

Extent

0.6 Cubic Feet 1 box; 1 oversize folder

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

The copyright status of this collection is unknown. Copyright restrictions may apply. Contact Special Collections and University Archives for assistance in determining the use of these materials.

Reproduction or digitization of materials for personal or research use can be requested using our reproduction/digitization form: <http://bit.ly/scuareproduction>. Reproduction or digitization of materials for publication or exhibit use can be requested using our publication/exhibition form: <http://bit.ly/scuapublication>. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives (specref@vt.edu or 540-231-6308) if you need assistance with forms or to submit a completed form.

Source of Acquisition

The Western Lunatic Asylum [Staunton, Virginia] Collection was purchased in three separate accession between August and November of 2016. Additional materials were acquired in 2017, 2018, and 2019. Additional letters may be received in the future.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Western Lunatic Asylum Collection was completed in December 2016. Additional arrangement and description was completed in April 2018. The 2018 and 2019 accessions were processed on a rolling basis and the finding aid was updated in June 2019 and July 2021.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Western Lunatic Asylum Collection, Ms2016-021, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Administrative History

Originally called the Western State Lunatic Asylum, the Western Lunatic Asylum was a hospital for the mentally ill in Staunton, Virginia, opening in 1828. In its early years, the institution was a resort-style asylum, directed under Dr. Francis T. Stribling. Dr. Stribling promoted a clean, healthy, and kind atmosphere that would aid in the healing process of his patients. While Dr. Stribling was the director of the hospital, patients were well cared for and treated with respect.

This model of care vanished in the 1900s, replaced by the overcrowding and the warehousing of patients. Techniques such as physical restraints and straitjackets were then used. After the passage of the Eugenical Sterilization Act of 1924 in Virginia, patients at the Western Lunatic Asylum were sterilized (sometimes forcibly) under the authorization of Joseph DeJarnette, a noted eugenicist. He was the director of the hospital from 1905 to 1943, implementing much stricter and harsher practices than his predecessor. Electroshock therapy and lobotomies were also practiced at the institution.

The hospital moved to its present site off of Interstate 81, and the property remained vacated until it was converted in the 1970s into the Staunton Correctional Center, a men's penitentiary. The prison closed in 2003, and the site was then left vacant again for several years. In 2005, the state of Virginia gave the property to the Staunton Industrial Authority, and the facility has now been converted into condominiums called The Villages at Staunton.

Scope and Content

The Western Lunatic Asylum Collection includes correspondence written to the Western Lunatic Asylum in Staunton, Virginia, dating from 1840 to about 1870, as well as final year reports from 1862 and 1903. The correspondence relates to the Western Lunatic Asylum in Staunton, Virginia, and most of the letters are

written to Dr. Francis T. Stribling, the director of the Western Lunatic Asylum, by family members of patients concerning their care.

Keywords

Folk, historical, and patent medicine

Health

Local/Regional History and Appalachian South

Medicine

Staunton (Va.)

Stribling, Francis T. (Francis Taliaferro), 1810-1874

Western Lunatic Asylum (Va.)

Rights Statement for Archival Description

The guide to the Western Lunatic Asylum [Staunton, Virginia] Collection by Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, is licensed under a CC0 (<https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/cc0/>).

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into two series, Correspondence and Annual reports, which are each arranged in chronological order.

Description of Subordinate Components

Correspondence

Unit Date 1840-1868, n.d.

Undated correspondence

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Unit Date 1840-1844

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

oversize 1 (folder)

Unit Date 1845-1849

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Unit Date 1850-1851

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Unit Date 1852

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Unit Date 1853

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Unit Date 1854

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Unit Date 1855

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Unit Date 1856
box-folder 1 (box)
Container 10 (folder)
Unit Date 1857
box-folder 1 (box)
Container 11 (folder)
Unit Date 1858
box-folder 1 (box)
Container 12 (folder)
Unit Date 1859
box-folder 1 (box)
Container 13 (folder)
Unit Date 1861-1863
box-folder 1 (box)
Container 14 (folder)
Unit Date 1868
box-folder 1 (box)
Container 15 (folder)

Annual Reports

Unit Date 1862, 1903

Report to the President and Directors of the Central Lunatic Asylum for the Fiscal Year 1861-2

box-folder 1 (box)
Container 1 (folder)

Seventy-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Directors and of the Superintendent of the Western State Hospital of Virginia

Unit Date 1903
box-folder 1 (box)
Container 1 (folder)