Colonial Lunatic Asylum

1846 – 1852

Details

The Colonial Lunatic Asylum was opened in 1846 by the Colonial Government at Parkside. It operated as a temporary institution for people suffering from mental illness who were previously kept at the Adelaide Gaol. It is possible that children may have been among the patients. The opening of the new purpose built Adelaide Lunatic Asylum on North Terrace led to the closure of the Colonial Lunatic Asylum in 1852.

In Adelaide prior to 1846 people suffering from mental illness, which at the time often included people with intellectual disabilities, were confined at the Adelaide Gaol. A special ward at the gaol was set aside where these inmates were restrained. In 1845 eight male and four female patients, considered then to be lunatics, were segregated at the Gaol.

In April of 1846, bowing to public pressure, the government took out a two year lease on an eight room wooden house on one acre of land at Parkside in Adelaide's east. The property was officially appointed as an Asylum by the Lieutenant-Governor on 7 May 1846:

> *Very great inconvenience having been found to arise from the confinement of lunatics in the Adelaide Gaol-as well on account of the number of such patients now under restraint in that building, as from the interference, thereby occasioned, with the regular prison discipline-it has been considered necessary, as a temporary measure, to secure the house situated on the Eastern Plains, on Section 264, District A, for the accommodation and safe custody of persons suffering from mental derangement;*

On the 21 May 1846 nine patients were moved from the Gaol to the Asylum. From 1847 the operation and over-site of the Asylum was the responsibility of the Colonial Surgeon.

The building used as the Colonial Lunatic Asylum, despite some alterations and additions, was quickly found to be too small. Many mentally ill patients remained incarcerated at the Adelaide Gaol. By 1849 plans for a purpose built asylum that could cater for up to 60 patients were underway. Construction began at North Terrace, Adelaide, in 1850.

Always intended to be a temporary institution it is possible that, during the six years of its operation, children with intellectual disabilities or suffering from mental illness may have been among those placed at the Colonial Lunatic Asylum.

When the new Adelaide Lunatic Asylum opened in 1852 all patients from Parkside were transferred to the new building and the Colonial Lunatic Asylum was closed.

Gallery

Colonial Lunatic Asylum, Glenside

Description: The library description states: Colonial Lunatic Asylum, a wooden house of eight rooms at the back of the present Glenside Hospital grounds, with a small cottage for staff at 92 Conyngham Street off Greenhill Road.

More info

Chronology

- **Colonial Lunatic Asylum (1846 – 1852)**
  - Adelaide Lunatic Asylum (1852 - 1902)

Related Entries

Run by
- [Colonial Surgeon's Office, State Government of South Australia (1836 - 1914)](#)

Records

Records

- [Correspondence files, annual single number series - Colonial Surgeon's Office and successor agencies (1850 - 1979)](#)

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