

**DESCRIPTION OF THE  
BOSTON CITY HOSPITAL:  
ITS ENLARGEMENT AND  
RECONSTRUCTION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649306145

Description of the Boston City Hospital: Its Enlargement and Reconstruction by Edward Cowles

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Cover @ 2017

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**EDWARD COWLES**

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BOSTON CITY HOSPITAL:

ITS ENLARGEMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION.

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BOSTON :  
PUBLISHED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.  
1877.



REPRINTED FROM THE SECOND SERIES OF THE  
BOSTON CITY HOSPITAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL REPORTS.

ROCKWELL & CHURCHILL, CITY PRINTERS,  
39 Arch Street.

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## DESCRIPTION OF THE HOSPITAL.

BY EDWARD COWLES, M. D.

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The City Hospital was first occupied in the year 1864, fifteen years after the establishment of such an institution had been proposed in the project of continuing the Cholera Hospital at Fort Hill, in the year 1849. In 1857 the first decided action was taken by the city government, upon the urgent recommendation of Hon. Alexander H. Rice, then Mayor. This, however, accomplished but little more than the obtaining an act of the Legislature authorizing the establishment of "a hospital for the reception of persons who by misfortune or poverty may require relief during temporary sickness." In 1860 the City Council, responding to the appeal of the Mayor, Hon. F. W. Lincoln, Jr., definitely agreed to the project, and set apart from the city lands, on the South Bay territory, the present site of the hospital. During the next year plans were adopted, and the actual work of erecting buildings was begun.

The lot of land upon which the hospital stands is bounded northwesterly on Harrison avenue, 454.83 feet; southwest-erly on East Springfield street, 623.68 feet; southeasterly on Albany street, 453 feet; northeasterly on East Concord street, 660.27 feet; and contains in all about 292,000 square feet, or  $6\frac{7}{10}$  acres. In addition, there was set apart a lot of land containing 69,318 square feet, in the rear of the hos-pital buildings, and east of Albany street, upon which were built a small-pox hospital, cholera wards, coal sheds, and a stable; but, excepting the latter, these buildings and the land were temporarily leased for other purposes in 1872.

The plans for the hospital were made by Mr. G. J. F. Bryant, architect, and were elaborated with much care, and



with the aid and counsel of physicians and others interested in its establishment. The hospital was one of the first built in this country upon the "pavilion plan," and was believed to contain all the modern improvements then accepted as essential in hospital construction.

It is well known that in the comparatively short period since the plans of this hospital were adopted, in 1861, very large experience has been gained in hospital construction in our own and in foreign countries, and very great and general interest has been excited in this and other sanitary questions. The experience of ten years here has pointed out some deficiencies and errors of construction in the original buildings of the hospital, and some very important alterations and improvements have been effected. In response also to the rapidly growing demand for increased accommodations, large additions have recently been made to the hospital. The object of this paper is to show what has been done here in improved hospital construction, and to set forth the reasons for the important changes and additions.

When substantially completed and occupied, in 1864, the hospital consisted of a central or administration building, two three-story pavilions and the necessary auxiliary buildings, — boiler-house, laundry, etc. To these there was added, in 1865, a two-story building for isolating wards. Subsequently a small building was erected, at the main entrance to the grounds, containing rooms for the out-patient department; and an enlargement was made of the boiler-house, with the addition of a dead-house, morgue, and autopsy-room. The buildings stood thus, with little material change, till 1875. Their general arrangement and the use of each are shown in Plate No. 1, excepting that the new buildings, numbered 1 to 5, have been recently erected, of which the first two occupy the places of the curved portions of the original connecting corridors. The principal alterations made in the older buildings were in their basements, for the improvement of their sanitary condition, and will be noticed in connection with the description of the new method of heating and ventilating. Other changes will be alluded to in the description of the buildings.

The administration building (Plates 1, 2, and 3) is 60 by 80 feet, and contains practically two stories, a basement and an attic; it is surmounted by a high dome, the apex of which is 148 feet above the level of the street. The building is of brick, upon granite basement walls, and finished inside with lathing and plaster. The basement rooms are 13 feet high, with floors  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet below the ground level, with an air-space, and concrete upon the earth underneath, and are used as dispensary, laboratory and store-room, dining-rooms for employés, and steward's office. The culinary work has been removed from the basement of this building to the new kitchen and bakery in the rear. The first and second stories, being respectively 16 feet and 14 feet high, are restored to the uses for which they were originally planned. On the first floor are the trustees' room, superintendent's office, room for the reception of visitors and for the library, matron's room and dining-room. On the second floor are the rooms occupied by the superintendent and his family, for officers, etc. The rooms on the third or attic story are lighted only from the ceiling, and are used as chambers for employés. The operating theatre in the dome, early found to be inadequate and difficult of access, is now disused. This building is connected with the others by corridors, open above and covered in below. The lower floors of the corridors, being  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet below the ground level, are at the general level of all the basement floors of the principal buildings, and the floors of the upper or open portion of the corridors are on a level with the first floors of the buildings.

The two pavilions, medical and surgical, are substantially alike in construction. They are 148 feet in length, 48 feet in width, three stories in height, besides the basements. The walls are of brick, upon granite base, and with lath and plaster finish inside. The basements, formerly occupied by patients, are now disused. On the first, second, and third floors are wards, each 80 feet long, and  $27\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide, the two lower being each 16 feet, and the upper being 10 feet high. The first floors are about 6 feet above the general ground level. Each ward is lighted by 14 windows, 7 on

each side, and is arranged for 28 beds. At the entrance to the building on each floor (see Plates 1, 2, and 3) there are upon one side of the hall the patients' dining-room, medicine closet, dumb-waiter, etc., in place of what was originally the bath-room; and on the other side of the hall are a patients' wardrobe, linen-room, and room for special cases requiring removal from the ward, or for paying patients. The linen-room, and patients' wardrobe for clothing in daily use only, are both well-lighted rooms, and take the place of what was formerly the water-closets, and a dark closet for linen, etc., both without ventilation. A ventilating shaft adjoining the dining-room will independently ventilate all these rooms. The main stairway is also at this end of the building. At the farther end the nurses' room and a small stairway are on one side of the hall, as originally built; but on the other side the former arrangement of dining-room, closets for dishes, etc., is replaced by a comparatively isolated and independently ventilated apartment for the water-closets, slop-sink and urinals, and by a bath-room and lavatory. The doors of the two latter rooms close automatically by springs, and the bath-room and lavatory are separated only by a low screen, 7 feet high, so that air can pass freely through it, and light can enter over it, between the rooms and around the exterior of the inner apartment containing the water-closets. The door to the last-named apartment will also close automatically, swinging both ways. Thus will be prevented the danger of currents of air being induced through open doors from the water-closets to the ward. A special arrangement is made for independently ventilating the water-closet apartments by a shaft, 3 feet square, of wood lined with tin, which passes upward through them from the basement through the roof. The shaft contains within it the soil-pipe, hot-water pipes, steam-pipes for the supply of the steam-bath in the bath-rooms adjoining, and gas jets for lighting the water-closets, on each floor, through glazed windows in the sides of the shaft. The heat unavoidably radiated from these necessary appliances furnishes a continuous extracting force for the ventilating shaft at all seasons of the year.