



Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape

By Katherine Ziff



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Asylum on the Hill is the story of a great American experiment in psychiatry, a revolution in care for those with mental illness, as seen through the example of the Athens Lunatic Asylum. Built in Southeast Ohio after the Civil War, the asylum embodied the nineteenth-century “gold standard” specifications of moral treatment. Stories of patients and their families, politicians, caregivers, and community illustrate how a village in the coalfields of the Hocking River Valley responded to a national impulse to provide compassionate care based on a curative landscape, exposure to the arts, outdoor exercise, useful occupation, and personal attention from a physician. Although ultimately doomed by overcrowding and overshadowed by the rise of new models of psychiatry, for twenty years the therapeutic community at Athens pursued moral treatment therapy with energy and optimism. Ziff’s fresh presentation of America’s nineteenth-century asylum movement shows how the Athens Lunatic Asylum accommodated political, economic, community, family, and individual needs and left an architectural legacy that has been uniquely renovated and repurposed.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Anyone who peruses Ziff’s work will not have an easy time putting it down. This book is more than a history of a time, a place, a movement, and a people. It is instead a sensitive and centered examination . . . her portraits of people who influenced the asylum are wonderfully rendered . . . alive and moving.”
— Samuel T. Gladding, Wake Forest University

“*Asylum On The Hill* is a fascinating and poignant history of one hospital, its patients and staff. Accompanied by rare, never released photos and records, Ziff’s easy narrative weaves the personal accounts of daily life with the broader context of post-Civil War America. What’s truly remarkable about Ziff’s book is that it tells a parallel story of our nation’s history and the forces that shaped not only the asylums but also the many other fundamental public institutions that survive today. A highly engaging work that makes the past come alive.”
— Christopher Payne, author of *Asylum: Inside the Closed World of State Mental Hospitals*

“This well-written, accurately researched historical work tells the story of the Athens Lunatic Asylum. . . . This is a work that brings the reader inside the life and times of patient care in Ohio. *Asylum on the Hill* is highly readable, enlightening, and for those who currently work in the field of psychiatry, the story is familiar and somewhat poignant. . . . Highly recommended.”
— *Choice*

“Ziff’s narrative—skillfully interwoven with period photos and excerpts from letters and reports—keeps the reader firmly rooted in the benevolent mindset of the time. While also covering negative aspects such as endemic political patronage and eventual overcrowding, it is, nevertheless, a lovely glimpse at a kinder and gentler time in Ohio’s treatment of its mentally ill.”
— Thomas Walker, *Ohio Today*

“Katherine Ziff’s fascinating *Asylum on the Hill* concentrates on the first 20 years of the institution, from 1874 to 1893, when it was a cutting-edge example of progressive care for the mentally ill. . . . Ziff’s detailed research into patient records and letters yields tantalizing glimpses into the lives of those taken into the asylum, as well as those of staff members. . . . The volume is amply illustrated with period photographs, reproductions of letters, maps, tables and postcards.”

— *The Columbus Dispatch*

“By telling the story of one institution, Ziff places in context the larger picture of how professionals and the lay public thought about and cared for less fortunate individuals. Readers with diverse interests such as the history of psychiatry, medico-sociological analysis, and mid-to-late nineteenth century politics will enjoy this book.”

— *Metapsychology*

“*Asylum on the Hill* provides a valuable contribution to nineteenth-century American history and to the history of medicine.”

— *Indiana Magazine of History*

“People interested in the history of Ohio University’s Ridges property—and there are many such in this area—may think they’ve struck a gold mine if they open a new book issued by the OU Press.”

— *The Athens News*

About the Author

2013 Ohioana Book Award Finalist

Katherine Ziff is a scholar of psychiatric history and asylums. She is a public school mental health counselor and an artist. Ziff has published articles in *History of Psychiatry*, *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *Creativity in Mental Health*, *New Research in Mental Health*, and elsewhere.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Patrick Cartwright:

This *Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape* book is just not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book will be information inside this e-book incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper an individual read a lot of information you will get. This kind of *Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape* without we know teach the one who looking at it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't always be worry *Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape* can bring once you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' come to be full because you can have it inside your lovely laptop even telephone. This *Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape* having good arrangement in word and layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

Rebecca Lopez:

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watching TV, or even playing video games all day long. If you wish to try to find a new activity honestly, that is look different you can read a book. It is really fun to suit your needs. If you enjoy the book you read you can spent 24 hours a day to reading a guide. The book Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape it is quite good to read. There are a lot of people who recommended this book. They were enjoying reading this book. When you did not have enough space to deliver this book you can buy the particular e-book. You can m0ore effortlessly to read this book from a smart phone. The price is not to cover but this book provides high quality.

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