



# Asylum for the Insane: A History of the Kalamazoo State Hospital

*William A. Decker, M.D.*

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To establish the context within which the Kalamazoo Hospital came to be built, Decker begins the story in Europe in the previous centuries with historical antecedents, theories about mental illness and the treatment of mental disorders. These formative, primitive ideas were gradually adopted in this country where very little understanding of mental disorders existed. When the Kalamazoo State Hospital was founded, then named the Michigan Asylum for the Insane, in 1854, there were no private practitioners of psychiatry even in the largest cities. Psychiatry grew out of the exchange of information between the medical staff of these new public institutions. Dr. Decker gives readers a comprehensive view of Michigan's first psychiatric facility including the architectural style and plans, building descriptions and history, Legislative Acts regarding the operation and governance, personnel including Medical Directors, historical perspective on the causes of insanity, their treatment and services, noteworthy events and a complete bibliography and appendix.

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