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MUSEUM OPENS AT PATTON STATE HOSPITAL
Spotlight on History of Treatment of Mental Illness

PATTON - A museum that examines the history of psychiatry and treatment of mental illness in state facilities opened today at Patton State Hospital. Spanning the 122-year life of the hospital, the museum offers a glimpse of the evolution of the treatment of mental illness.

“The museum contains many rare artifacts and documents that help describe the history of care for those with mental illness,” said Pam Ahlin, director of the Department of State Hospitals. “Since Patton State Hospital opened more than a century ago, the treatment of people who are mentally ill has advanced and changed greatly. The museum offers a window into how far we have come.”

Patton accepted its first patients on August 1, 1893. The museum, only the second of its kind west of the Mississippi River, features more than 140 items. Among the artifacts found in the museum are original medical and surgical equipment, firefighting equipment from the early part of the last century and nursing uniforms from the 1950s. The museum itself is located in what was once a cottage built for staff living on hospital grounds.

The museum was created through the volunteer efforts of hospital staff and with the assistance of museum studies’ students from California State University, San Bernardino. The students obtained education grants through the university that funded the creation of the museum displays.

Because the museum is being operated and staffed with volunteers, not hospital employees, it will only be open for visits one day a month beginning in June. Those interested in signing up for a visit can do so by sending an email to the facility at pshmuseum@dsh.ca.gov.

Patton was established in 1889 for the treatment of the mentally ill. It was founded as the Highland Insane Asylum and later changed its name to the Southern California State Hospital for the Insane and Inebriated. The name changed again to Patton State Hospital in 1927 after Harry W. Patton of Santa Barbara, a member of one of the state’s first boards of the hospital. It is operated by 2,390 employees who serve more than 1,500 patients each day.

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