



*New York State Archives*

**Inmate case files from Matteawan and Dannemora state hospitals A1500**

---

New York State Archives  
222 Madison Avenue  
Albany, NY 12230  
[archref@nysed.gov](mailto:archref@nysed.gov)  
URL: <http://www.archives.nysed.gov/>

---

## Table of Contents

---

Overview of the Records .....	3
Arrangement .....	3
Administrative History .....	3
Scope and Contents .....	4
Related Information .....	5
Other Finding Aids .....	6
Use of Records .....	6
Access Terms .....	6

## Overview of the Records

---

<b>Repository:</b>	New York State Archives
<b>Summary:</b>	This series contains case files that document the commitment, diagnosis and treatment of inmates of the Matteawan and Dannemora State Hospitals for the Criminally Insane. The bulk of the case files contain legal papers documenting the commitment process; admission sheets; statistical data forms; ward admission records; physical examination reports; criminal identification forms furnished by both the FBI and the Department of Correction; inmates' photographs; laboratory reports; psychiatric report; and a transcript of psychiatrist's interview with the inmate.
<b>Creator:</b>	Matteawan State Hospital
<b>Title:</b>	Inmate case files from Matteawan and Dannemora state hospitals
<b>Quantity:</b>	230 cubic feet
<b>Inclusive Date:</b>	1880-1960
<b>Series:</b>	A1500

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Arrangement

---

Alphabetic by name of inmate.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Administrative History

---

Matteawan State Hospital opened in 1892 and was originally designed to house inmates previously held at the State Asylum for Insane Convicts at Auburn.

Chapter 525 of the Laws of 1904 mandated that Matteawan provide for the custody and care of: those persons committed by criminal courts or transferred there by the State Commission in Lunacy; convicts declared insane while serving sentences of one year or less for a

misdemeanor; and for all female convicts declared insane while serving a sentence. Eventually inmate population extended to include: the dangerously mentally ill from civil hospitals in New York State; the indicted who were unfit to stand trial and those charged with crimes who had not been indicted and declared unfit to stand trial. In early 1973 Matteawan State Hospital, Beacon State Institution (created in 1966, Ch. 819) and the Glenham Correctional Facility (created in 1970) were combined as the Correctional Center for Medical Services at Beacon, which in turn was renamed the Fishkill Correctional Facility. In 1977 patients were transferred from Matteawan to the Central New York Psychiatric Center or to one of seven satellite centers throughout the state.

The Dannemora State Hospital for Insane Convicts was officially established in 1899 (Ch. 520) as a facility for the confinement and care of males convicted of felonies who were declared insane while serving sentences. The hospital was constructed on the grounds of Clinton Prison and received its first inmates in 1900. After the hospital was completed all males convicted of felonies who had at least six months to serve on their sentences were to be transferred from the Matteawan State Hospital. In addition, males serving time for felonies in state prison reformatories or penitentiaries and who were declared insane were to be transferred to Dannemora. In 1912 (Ch. 121) the institution's name was changed to Dannemora State Hospital and in 1926 (Ch. 606) it was placed under the supervision of the Department of Correction. The hospital operated as a confinement and care facility for mentally ill convicts and tubercular convicts until 1972 when it was closed and the inmates transferred to the Matteawan State Hospital.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Scope and Content Note

---

This series contains case files that document the commitment, diagnosis and treatment of inmates of the Matteawan and Dannemora State Hospitals for the Criminally Insane.

The bulk of the case files contain legal papers documenting the commitment process (i.e., certificate and/or petition of lunacy, court hearing orders and commitment orders); admission sheets; statistical data forms; ward admission records; physical examination reports; criminal identification forms furnished by both the FBI and the Department of Correction; inmates' photographs; laboratory reports (urine and blood analysis); psychiatric report (also contains periodic observational notes updating the inmate's file) and a transcript of psychiatrist's interview with the inmate. Some of the case files occasionally contain inmate correspondence, dental records, autopsy reports, fingerprint cards, Social Security eligibility reports, reports regarding inmate's early life compiled by a parent, newspaper clippings describing the inmate's crime, correspondence, reports and various forms regarding commitment, admission, personal, physical and criminal history. Other files may contain only the court order transferring the person to Dannemora or Matteawan. By 1896 the State Commission in Lunacy began to issue a form which contained the physician's report, application for order to examine, certificate of lunacy, application for order of transfer, and the order of transfer.

This form provides data on inmates' criminal past; personal history (age, sex, color, occupation, residence and general physical condition); psychiatric history; date of transfer; and names and titles of officials involved in the commitment process.

The case files after 1900 become more unified in content. These usually contain: 1) an admission form providing inmate's name, identification number, inmate number, residence, date of admission, by whom admitted, date of discharge, place of transfer, date of commitment, names and addresses of doctors who presided over commitment, court and name of judge where sentencing occurred, crime, term, previous convictions, correspondents, and disposition of body in case of death; 2) a statistical data sheet providing biographical (name, sex, date and place of birth, citizenship status, names and birthplaces of parents, education, marital status, occupation, religion, residence, military service record, alcohol or drug habits, and economic condition) and admission information (same as above); 3) a ward admission record that describes the inmate in general physical terms and articles and clothing brought into the institution by the inmate; 4) a detailed physical examination report that describes inmate's general appearance and condition, thoracic, digestive and abdominal and genito-urinary organs, the nervous and "vegetative nervous" systems, and the endocrine glands; 5) reports from the FBI and the Department of Correction describing past crimes; 6) inmate's photograph (front and side views);

7) a form entitled "History Blank," a four page questionnaire providing information on the inmate's personal history, past mental troubles, present mental troubles, and biographical information on the inmate's parents; 8) laboratory reports regarding inmate's urine and blood samples; 9) clinical summary reports which are narratives providing basic biographical data, a personal history that is often an account of why the inmate committed the crime he or she was incarcerated for, a statement on the inmate's subsequent behavior, and brief statements describing the inmate's "physical system complex," "mental system complex," "differential diagnosis" and "final diagnosis;" 10) A mental status report describing the inmate's attitude and general behavior, stream of mental activity, emotional creation, affect and mood, mental trend or conduct of thought (in many instances this describes the inmate's frame of mind prior to the commission of the offense and shortly after commitment), and reading and writing skills (often a sample is included); a transcript of the initial interview between the psychiatrist and the inmate; and a series of periodic reports made during the inmate's incarceration updating his physical and mental condition; and 11) some type of legal form committing the inmate to Dannemora or Matteawan.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Related Information

---

### Related Material

Some records found in this series may fill gaps in Series A1501, Inmate identification files.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Other Finding Aids

---

### Available at Repository

Folder list includes inmate name, date of admission, and date of discharge

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Use of Records

---

### Access Restrictions

Restricted in accordance with Section 33.13, Mental Hygiene Law, relating to confidentiality of clinical records. Access permitted under certain conditions upon application to and approval by the Office of Mental Health.

---

## Access Terms

---

- Diagnosing
- Treating
- Psychiatric hospital care
- Psychiatric hospitals
- New York (State)
- Mental health facilities
- Mentally ill
- Admitting
- Identifying
- Psychiatric hospital patients
- Case files
- Incarcerating
- New York (State). Office of Mental Health
- Central New York Psychiatric Center
- Fishkill Correctional Facility
- Dannemora State Hospital
- New York (State). Department of Mental Hygiene
- Dannemora State Hospital for Insane Convicts

Inmate case files from Matteawan and Dannemora state hospitals A1500

- New York (State). Department of Correction
- New York (State). Department of Correctional Services