

commentary

from other pens...

A mental institution reaches for recognition

At its founding 150 years ago, St. Elizabeths Hospital pioneered the idea that humane treatment in pleasant surroundings could open the road to healing for people with mental illness.

It was hoped the careful landscaping and panoramic view of the capital might have a calming, helpful effect on the institution's inmates.

Over 15 decades, thousands of mental patients have received treatment on the 300-acre, government-owned hospital grounds. One was the poet Ezra Pound, whom many suspected of faking a mental disorder to avoid trial for treason in the aftermath of World War II. Presidential assailant John W. Hinckley Jr. remains in custody at St. Elizabeths.

Last week, the National Trust for Historic Preservation placed St. Elizabeths on its annual list of 11 most endangered historic places, calling its rapidly deteriorating buildings irreplaceable architectural marvels.

"This place is knee-deep in history," Joy Holland, St. Elizabeths chief executive officer, said last week as officials led a tour of Center Building, the first structure to be opened on a site that looks more like a badly neglected college campus than a medical facility.

Designed by Thomas U. Walter, architect of the Capitol dome and wings, the 1855 Center Building is a four-story fortress of red brick with a battlemented roof and a central tower.

Unused for some 40 years, its musty, waterstained corridors are a dimly lit wilderness of broken glass and peeling paint. Many of the timbers supporting the floors are eaten through with rot and near collapse.

The hospital was founded in typical Washington fashion: the result of a lobbying campaign. The chief lobbyist was Dortha Dix, one of the most persistent social crusaders of the 19th century. Her cause: to persuade Congress to improve the conditions under which the mentally ill were cared for.

She argued the capital had become a magnet for people from all over the country "whose minds are more or less erratic" and who "ramble about poorly clad and suffering from want of food and shelter."

"Dortha Dix awakened a civic consciousness about mental illness and the necessity for the government to play an important role in the care and treatment of the mentally ill," the District of Columbia Preservation League said as it nominated St. Elizabeths for the annual National Trust "most endangered" list.

Ground was broken at a site near the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia rivers in 1852. Patients were admitted to three years later.

By the Civil War the asylum for the insane was such a fixture in the capital President Lincoln told his wife, distraught over the death of their son, Willie, that if she did not control herself she would be sent there.

Mary Lincoln was never committed, but thousands of wounded Union and Confederate soldiers were treated at St. Elizabeths. The many amputees among them received artificial limbs from a factory created for that purpose. More than 300 soldiers, Union and Confederate, white and black, are buried on the property.

In letters home, these soldiers refused to say they were at a hospital for the insane and wrote they were at "the St. Elizabeths Hospital."

The name became so commonplace it was officially accepted in 1916, without the apostrophe, just the way the soldiers had written it.

The history of St. Elizabeths mirrors the development of psychiatry, beginning with the humane "moral" treatment of confinement in home-like surroundings that was advocated in the 1850s. A history of the place notes every type of psychotherapy has been applied there as it became available, including psychoanalysis and the use of psychiatric drugs.

The federal government retains ownership, but operation of the facility was taken over by the District of Columbia. St. Elizabeths once served 6,000 patients a year but now houses about 500.

Officials intend to end operations on the spacious west campus and concentrate activities on a separate site to the east. Work is to begin soon on a master plan for the historic property.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Lawrence L. Knutson has reported on the White House and Washington's history for 34 years for *The Associated Press*.

ARAFAT



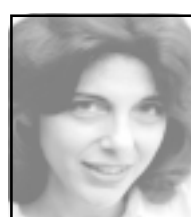
Who's policing the INS?

Where were you last weekend between the hours of 1 p.m. Saturday and 6 p.m. Sunday? That's when police in Tacoma, Wash., believe somebody broke into the local inspection office of the Immigration and Naturalization Services and made off with a choice collection of INS ink stamps, all of which, with a well-aimed thud, can officially and talismanically grant access to the United States.

Among the missing items are a 90-day-admission stamp that validates foreign passports; a "parolee" stamp for refugees; two different stamps that allow foreign sailors ashore to shop; and an "I-551" stamp that marks the visas of those awaiting permanent-residency cards. Also pinched in the weekend burglary were a slew of INS forms, an INS badge, a .40-calibre Beretta, two clips of ammunition and a laptop computer.

In these times, it's a nerve-wracking haul — unless you work for the INS. With a determinedly chipper clairvoyance, these real-life Keystone Kops — sans laughs — have decided the burglary has absolutely no connection to terrorism. "We're concerned that someone broke in," INS spokesman Garrison Courtney told the *Seattle Times*. "But we're not overly concerned they took the stamps or the badge. That's OK to us. I know the public is concerned that they could be used to make fraudulent stamps, but we're prepared for that."

That's OK and we're prepared? Pardon me for withholding audible sighs of relief, but this is the INS, not the Boy Scouts. Frankly, the agency should be a little "overly concerned." But no. "We've got them flagged," Courtney continued, just brimming with comic-book bravado as he argued the worthlessness of the booty. "We'll know right away that they're stolen."



diana west

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Each stamp, it seems, has its own number, and, in the event of loss or theft, INS agents are notified a number has become invalid. So now, in addition to keeping an eye on the big picture — you know, identifying terrorists passing into the country — already over-stretched immigration agents have to check the fine print, literally, on their papers.

Even if the INS isn't fooled, others could be. "These stamps, when placed on a passport, any passport, or any other INS documents, are get-home-free cards when stopped by local police," explained retired INS district director Ben Ferro to Tacoma's *News Tribune*. "These are stamps that authenticate someone's documents. In light of September 11, the agency should be turning things upside down looking for these stamps." But the agents don't seem to want to break a sweat. "If they're going to send in this stuff, we're going to catch it," Courtney told the newspaper. "We're everywhere."

Tell that to the New York City cops who, as the *New York Post* reported last week, had to free an overloaded vanful of Middle Eastern men holding "a variety of paperwork" (including a fake government card from Times Square and a phony passport) because the INS didn't seem to have a soul on duty over Memorial Day Weekend. The agency contact number rang an INS office in Vermont, over 300 miles away. As one angry policeman put it,

"What's the point of stopping vans and risking your life when the one agency with power blows you off? And this is after September 11." And what did the INS have to say in response? "Since September 11, our primary focus has been on terrorist-related investigations, and, contrary to belief, we are not in the business of detaining people without cause. These men posed no terrorist threat or, for that matter, any threat to the community."

Sweeping, aren't they? Snippy, too. You might wonder how the INS knew there was no terrorist threat if its agents never showed up. Probably the same way it figured the theft of the visa stamps was no big deal. (And what ever happened to policing good, old-fashioned immigration violations, anyway?) Such high-handed bumbling may be outrageous, but it is also commonplace. Agency overhaul, anyone? Thank goodness the Justice Department has decided to pitch in, having called on anti-terrorism teams of federal, state and local officers formed since Sept. 11 to assist the INS in registering and finger-printing Muslim and Middle Eastern visa holders. Professional Arabists and civil libertarians are squawking, but as Rep. Mark Foley, Florida Republican, has noted, "Al Qaeda is not an equal-opportunity employer."

By reactivating a law unofficially abandoned due to sheer visa volume and INS budget cuts in the 1980s, and applying it to visitors from countries that "pose the highest risk to our security," the government is finally taking a serious step to head off the terror networks that threaten us. In so doing, it will help the INS help itself — and the nation it serves.

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Redistricting keeps legislators at drawing board

An important challenge we faced this session was redrawing legislative, congressional and State Board of Education districts. This issue is one the state legislature must address every 10 years following a national census. Beginning as early as May 2001, a Special Committee on Redistricting held town hall meetings throughout Kansas to obtain public input on congressional, House and Senate maps. The committee identified priorities for which all the maps would be drawn of compactness, contiguity, and above all "one person, one vote." When the 2002 session convened in January, the Special Committee had a congressional, House, and Senate map pre-filed for the full legislature to consider. Both the House and Senate made a commitment to let the respective chambers each draw their own district lines, without changes from the other body.

In February, the House passed a redistricting map which redrew the 125 Kansas House districts. The map includes four districts in which two incumbents reside. In addition, four new House districts were drawn in areas where no incumbents live. The House map demonstrates a shift in population from western/rural Kansas to eastern/urban Kansas. Many districts in the western portion of the state were drawn with a greater geographical area in order to equal the ideal House district population of 21,378 people. In the eastern part of the state, existing House districts had to be drawn to cover a smaller geographical area because of growing population. The House map was approved by the Senate and signed by the Governor. It then was review by the Kansas Attorney General and gained approval from the Kansas Supreme Court on April 26, 2002. The House district lines, as passed by the legislature, are in effect for the upcoming 2002 general election in November. The 121st District now includes all of Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan and Graham counties.

The Senate passed Substitute for SB 379, which redrew the 40 Senate districts, in February. The map as it passed out of the Senate was not the map presented by the redistricting committee, but rather a map which was offered during debate before the Senate. Sub SB 379 included two districts in which two incumbents lived and two new districts. The House passed the Senate map and sent it to the Governor for consideration. However, the Governor vetoed the controversial map citing constitutional concerns over the manner in which the lines were drawn and the fact that the map had not



jim morrison

• capitol review

gone through public or committee review. After the Governor's veto, the Senate had to redraw its district lines. In April, the Senate passed and the House approved Substitute for SB 256. The second Senate map was signed by the Governor and approved by the Kansas Supreme Court on May 9, 2002. District lines in the Senate were drawn with the ideal population of 66,806 individuals. The new Senate map will be effective for the 2004 general election and included one district in which two incumbents live and one new Senate district.

The State Board of Education district lines were also redrawn and approved by the Kansas Legislature this session. As required by the Kansas Constitution, each State Board district is composed of four contiguous state Senate districts. Senate districts used to construct the State Board districts in SB 663 are those created in Sub SB 256. The State Board of Education members' terms are staggered, so the August 2002 primary election will be the first time that five of the ten new districts will be used.

The final piece of the redistricting process this session was the reapportionment of the four congressional districts in Kansas. The Kansas Legislature passed House Substitute for SB 152 during the final days of the wrap-up session. The map redraws the four congressional districts with the ideal congressional district population of 672,105 people. The "Big 1st" district, which historically has covered western Kansas, is the only district that

gained geographical area to increase population in the district. The 1st District, as drawn by the legislature, includes all of its current area plus sections of Greenwood, Geary and Nemaha counties. Each of the other three districts lost geographical area. In the Congressional plan, four counties are split between two congressional districts. Douglas County is split and portions of the county are in both the 2nd and 3rd congressional districts. The boundary line in Douglas County splits the city of Lawrence on Iowa Street. Sub SB 152 splits Greenwood County between the 1st and 4th districts. And, Geary and Nemaha counties are split with portions of each in the 1st and 2nd congressional districts. In Geary County, Junction City and Ft. Riley are no longer in the same 2nd congressional district, with Junction City going to the 1st and Ft. Riley remains in the 2nd. The new Congressional map, if signed by the Governor and approved by a federal court, will reflect district lines for the August 2002 primary election.

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