Oakdale in the Newspapers
Date Unknown 1951 or later
Oakdale in the Newspapers

Dec. 27, 1951

Dr. Robert L. Dixon

Death came Sunday to one of the Nation’s most eminent doctors, Robert L. Dixon of Caro. The 74-year-old physician suffered a heart attack in May, and had been in hospitals most of the time since he became ill. He had been in the University of Michigan hospital the last six weeks.

Dr. Dixon was medical superintendent of the Lapeer State Home from 1948 to 1951, and was known and admired by countless residents of this area.

Born in Attica, Michigan, Dr. Dixon received degrees from Tri-State College, Angola, Indiana, and the University of Michigan Medical School.

He was the first head of what was then called the Michigan Farm Colony for Epileptics, at Waiahena, beginning his duties in 1914. Except for his seven-year superintendency at Lapeer, he was at Waiahena (now Caro State Hospital), until he retired in 1948.

Under his leadership, the institution at Waiahena was expanded, until in 1940 when he retired there were 1,500 patients and 450 employees.

Dr. Dixon was recognized as a national authority on epilepsy. He served as president of the National Association for the Study of Epilepsy, and had also been on the council of the American Psychiatric Association. He was a charter member of the American Epileptic League, a Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, a Diplomat of the American Board of Neurology and Psychiatry, and also had served as acting state mental health director.

He was a charter member of the Caro Rotary club and served two years as its first president. He was president of the State Savings Bank of Caro.

Last August Dr. and Mrs. Dixon celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Besides his widow, the doctor is survived by a sister, Olive, of Angola, Ind., a son, Robert, Jr., a professor at the University of Michigan, and a daughter, Mrs. Richard Stammer of Grouse Point.

Funeral services are at 2 o’clock from Masonic Hall at Caro State Hospital. The Rev. Bart C. Kuntz, pastor of the Presbyterian church in Caro, will officiate, and burial will be in the Caro cemetery.

Dr. Robert L. Dixon

Funeral services for Mrs. William J. Kay, 88, 307 Washington St., were held Wednesday at 2 p.m. at the Presbyterian Church. The Rev. Stephen Crowell officiated and burial was made in Mt. Hope cemetery.

Members of the County Medical Society were pallbearers.

Mrs. Kay died suddenly Sunday night from a heart attack. She had visited with friends only two hours before and seemed in fairly good health. The end came quickly and was unexpected. Although Mrs. Kay was quite feeble the last few years her general condition this winter had been somewhat improved.

She was the widow of that eminent country doctor and leading citizen of Lapeer, the late Dr. W. J. Kay.

She was born September 25, 1906 at Clinton, Ontario, Canada, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Gibbings. She married Dr. William J. Kay November 4, 1920 and they lived at Clinton until his graduation from Detroit College of Medicine in 1927. They moved to Lapeer, Lapier County, later moving to Lapeer in 1908. Dr. Kay died April 14, 1950, while serving as superintendent of the Lapeer State Home and Training School.

Mrs. Kay was a member of First Presbyterian Church, Lapeer. She was a Charter Member of the Eastern Star, Attica, and of the Lapeer Tuesday Club.

Surviving are her daughter, Mrs. G. W. DesJardins; two grandchildren, Major William Kay White, USMC, and Dr. B. K. White of Ann Arbor, and seven grandchildren; also a brother, R. J. Gibbings, and two sisters, Mrs. J. W. Treleaven and Miss Elizabeth Gibbings, all of Clinton, Ontario.

Art Clarke Honored for 43 Years of Service at the Home

Arthur G. Clarke, head supervisor at the State Home, was honored at a dinner given by the Home Employees Club, last Thursday night. Mr. Clarke is retiring after 43 years of service at the Home.

Tributes were paid Mr. Clarke by Dr. Rehn, Home Superintendent, and Lee Waterbury, Home Office. The guest speaker was Ernest Huff, Personnel Director of the Department of Mental Health.

A poem, written in honor of Mr. Clarke by Charlotte Holcomb, was read by Fred Wilder.

A set of power tools, a gift from the Employees Club, was presented to Mr. Clarke by Credington Reoster, club president. Carl Hancock gave Mr. Clarke an easy chair on behalf of the general supervisors.
By MILNER THOM

Estatication of a new phase at Lakeport State Home in 1932 brought hope to the hearts of hundreds of patients that they might live relatively free and useful lives.

It was the parole system, now accepted as a valuable training ground for mental deficiencies.

Before the 1920’s patients remained at the Home until they ran away or died.

NOW more capable can support themselves by outside jobs and live in private homes.

The patients have been encouraged to free them from the tragic handicap and learn to get along with all kinds of people, can hope for discharge.

For a few years before 1923 a handful of patients had been paroled informally by superintendent H. A. Haynes. Bat parole was established officially in 1923 with the coming of Mrs. T. Q. Caley as the institution’s first parole social worker.

MRS. Caley describes those early days:

"When I arrived at the Home most of the patients on parole were here in Lakeport. Dr. Haynes was much beloved. His wife’s friends would telephone him, find me a girl to work in the house for me."

"Patients would stop him on the street downtown and ask the doctor for farm boys. He’d come back. The Home was a refuge for the unemployable.

"There was no discharge at that time. The patients who went to work were told to find out if they made good, they could return, and they still wouldn’t be considered.

"MORE and MORE folks asked the doctor for help until by 1929 there was need for some kind of a system. Up to that time investigations of families and checks on patients working for them was most informal.

"Requests were made about the families from any source, if they had any work for them or not. There were about 3,000 patients at the Home at that time.

"If the employer didn’t pay up the wages he owed or didn’t properly supervise the patients, the Home doctor brought the child back to the Home, friends or no friends.

"There also were patients who worked out as day workers like today.

"The layman in the number working is demonstrated by the fact that the Home used to-day to transport them back and forth from town. Then a Motor T. served this purpose.

"THE SOCIAl worker’s job involved various tasks. I went to homes before they returned to their families for vacations.

"Investigations had to be made for parole to their own families or to jobs, too, and I supervised with all the patients in Lakeport. By the time I left in 1927, 125 patients were working out.

"Mrs. Caley’s job in 1921 made her the sole parole social worker in Michigan’s lower peninsula. She traveled over lower Michigan by train, mapping several days in each place checking up on jobs, patients and their families.

"Mrs. Caley also made trips about the state to bring back boys or girls who had run away from their jobs or families.

"SHE REMEMBERS once going to a boy in a hospital having a mental illness and getting a possibly dangerous male patient who had run away from an all-male hospital.

"The police were close behind him, she remembers. "How happened to get in front of them? I’ve never been able to understand. I went after girls alone but usually Arthur Clarke accompanied me when I went to bring boys that had to be brought back.

"Dr. Haynes idea, she continues, was to see patients in their homes so that they could lead productive lives.

"LAPEER was considered a proving ground for the boys and girls. Patients worked here first and then were evaluated at least a year down.

"As a reward for their help in training the girl, an attempt was made to make the girl be this first job as long as she was satisfied.

"It seems to me that wages were $1.25 a week, but later became $3 a week and $5 in the larger cities.

"APPROXIMATELY the first families to employ boys and girls I recall were W. B. Williams, the commissioner, Tom White and the Harry Myres.

"Many interesting things happened. Miss Williams held a grand parade one day. Just as dinner ended and the guests were calling themselves for parole, the girl working for her conscientiously reported rather loudly.

"Two of the teenagers are so loud."

"Mrs. Williams now in the capital is by saying, "Lock the door tight and we’ll search everybody!" And all the guests laughed.

"BY 1927 two assistants, the present Mrs. Lee Waterbury and Mrs. Elizabeth Kearnay, were helping Mrs. Caley. When the latter left, Mrs. Waterbury became a social worker.

"The parole system was not an absolutely new one, Mrs. Waterbury says. A few institutions in the east including one at Home, N.Y. had experimented with the idea.

"The institution here, however, was unusual enough to bring considerable publicity.

"INTELLIGENCE testing and psychology began to be used along with social work during this period. There was more of an effort made now to follow the patient’s progress and to get him outside work if he was qualified when he started there was great demand for patient workers, more than the supply. Approximately 150 jobs grew to 50 and wages for parolee rose to $70 a week and board and room in the cities.

"A large number of discharged patients married successfully, some with little embarrass-
ment about having been at the Home that they bring their husbands to the Home to introduce them to us. The men usually knew about their backgrounds and asdismitted.

"ONE important thing to keep in mind about the mentally deficient is their inability to plan and organize. They must be treated like children in this respect as in many others.

"One girl got into trouble in Detroit and ended up in the police station. The police were giving her trouble calling for her because they suspected her to respond like an adult.

"I went to seek her. She walked into the police station and said, Come along Mable. That was my name. She came, the police were embarrassed.

"Year by year there has been increasing liberalization in the program of parole and training for parole.

"DO NOT forget that there are 30 times as many mental institutions as in the 1910s. In 1910 there were 10,275; in 1930 there were 29,000.

"There is no frustration like the sneeze that fails to come off.

The establishment of the parole system was a turning point in the lives of both State Home patients and employees, these three women recall.

Miss Addie Holcomb (center), reminiscences with Mrs. Julia Yager (right) and Mrs Edith Burke (left). Between them, they have served the State Home more than 100 years.

The Lapeer County Press

Tues., May 15, 1932—Sec. C.
Insanity and Mental Deficiency

Are Opposites

Do You Know Your State Home?

By MILNER THOM of The County Press

What is mental deficiency?

Is it insanity... is it neuritic behavior? Is it an anti-social point of view? Is it inability to get along in school or a job?

No.

But it can cause all these things. This is why the 2% of the nation's population that is mentally defective creates a problem of utmost importance.

Nine-tenths of these 3 million mental defectives are not in institutions like Lapeer State Home. Thus understanding their slight handicap is vitally important to each of us.

We look shoulders every day with individuals who seem dull or odd. Actually many of them are handicapped by abnormally low intelligence.

A mentally deficient individual thinks less efficiently than a normal person of the same age. He lacks normal thinking speed and ability to solve complex problems. He is easily led or organized ideas like a normal person.

His or her mentality is a child's rather than an adult's.

THE RESULT is that a mental defective will tend to behave as a child.

Despite his physical age and appearance, he is being treated unfairly unless he is treated with the same patience and tolerance we give our children.

Mental deficiency exists from birth or in very early age. It results from incomplete brain development or central nervous system damage.

Mental growth is retarded; the boy or girl may "grow up" but actually keeps the mind of a child.

Therefore mental deficiency is opposite to insanity or mental disease. They differ in the same way that a midget differs from a tuberculosis victim.

In mental deficiency the mind does not achieve full growth. In insanity a usually intelligent mind deteriorates because of disease.

THE ONLY LINK is that insanity results from overpowering emotional stress. Confusion and insecurity. Mental deficiency can contribute to these stresses.

The mentally deficient person is burdened with extraordinary problems in making a living and in getting along with people.

As with individuals of normal intelligence, these problems can produce nervous disorders, maladjustment, anti-social acts and difficulty at school and work.

INSTITUTIONS like the State Home try to help mentally deficient people overcome these handicaps so they can lead useful lives to the best of their abilities.

If a patient is not mentally up to this, they provide as happy an environment as possible for him.

The essential thing to remember is that dull "boys" and "girls" think like children. The only successful method is to treat them as such.

THE STATE HOME staff determine each patient's handicap by considering:

1. His physical condition and defects.
2. His intelligence level.
3. His emotional reactions and adjustment.

Psychologists have established three general ranges of mental age. We use the names attached to these mental ages with little understanding of what they mean.

The classifications are:

Mental Age: Grade, I.Q.
9 to 3 years: Idiot
3 to 15 years: Imbecile
15 to 10 years: Moron

THE IDIOT can scarcely speak. He understands little that is said to him and cannot find his way about. He can do no work and requires infant care.

The imbecile can be taught to understand and carry out simple tasks. But he requires supervision in washing and dressing.

The moron may reach the fifth or sixth grade in school. He can learn skills which will make him useful in or outside the home. Some can be paroled and eventually discharged.

NOT ALL PATIENTS at the Home have mental levels in the defective range. Still they are so handicapped with physical and emotional disorders that they cannot use their minds in a normal way.

These boys and girls are classified as borderline, dull normal and normal. They stand excellent chances of learning to lead useful lives.

WHAT RETARDS the mental development of a deficient person? 56% of the Home's patients appear to have inherited defects. Their family histories reveal relatives with low intelligence or anti-social and criminal records.

The other 44% of the boys and girls suffer from brain or nervous system damage. Injuries, disease or infection can cause this damage even before birth.

Many come from the finest homes where everything possible has been done for their care and training.

Ordinarily the "inherited" patient has good chances of learning to fend for himself. Chances are poor for the average patient with a "damaged" mind.

PHYSICAL characteristics of the defective vary widely. Some appear normal. Others have distorted faces, skin and eyes, abnormal skin color and bent limbs, short stature or lack of muscular coordination.

However, not all persons with these traits are mentally deficient.

There are numerous kinds of behavior that bring normally deficient children or adults to the attention of doctors and social workers. These simply may represent or may result from mental defects.

Habits like nail biting, thumb sucking, masturbation and stomach pains are frequent. Truancy, quarreling, disobedience, untrustworthiness, stealing, impulsive destruction of property, vandalism, drug addiction, cruelty, sex offenses, vagrancy and delinquency are common.

Thick and habit sprees, sleep walking, stammering, overactivity and irrational fears may be other signs.

But these are not characteristics of a mentally defectives.

They must be considered instead as normal age personality traits and physical condition effects. A normal version of mental deficiency can be reached.

Many persons of normal intelligence have these traits.

"How many can you cure?" is a question doctors are often asked.

There is no easy thing as a cure for mental deficiency. There must be training and adjustment for the rest of the life.

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Oakdale in the Newspapers

Do You Know Your State Home?

Happy Babies Play in Lapeer State Home Nursery

It is the babies at Lapeer State Home and Training School that first win over a visitor.

They have all the charm of normal children. The fact that they are mentally retarded does not seem important.

As you enter the Home's elegant nursery building you hear the familiar waves and gurgles that you hear in any nursery.

You see the children, many pretty and openly affectionate, each in his crib, involved in his own infant world.

**YOUR INSTANT** reaction is: "There is nothing the matter with these children, why are they here?"

You imagine the feelings of parents who must leave their babies here.

But the sad fact is that these children, despite appearances, are not normal.

"The minds of most of my children won't ever develop any more," Mrs Cleo Dennis, nursery supervisor, explains. "The only way in which most will grow is physically."

**THE BUILDING**'s 199 little boys and girls all require infant care. Their ages normally vary from 1 to 12 years. Most are committed to the Home by parents who realize that institutional care is the best solution to a family tragedy.

Mrs Dennis, a registered nurse who formerly took private patients of Lapeer doctors, has directed the care for four years. Helping her is a staff of 72 employees. Because care is on a 24-hour basis, each attendant may care for as many as 18 babies while on duty.

Thus there is more than one employee for every three patients. In addition some 59 older workers and girl patients help out.

**THOUGH SOME patients** are 12 years old, all are crib cases because of their low intelligence and performance ability. A toddlers group of about 20 youngsters are toilet trained and can feed themselves.

All follow a regular infant schedule with 5 major meals a day, though meals and snacks are offered. The nursery has its own kitchen and does some of its own laundry. Breakfasts include the meals. A separate unit of the Home's hospital cares for the children medically.

**THE STAFF** doctor assigned exclusively to the nursery is Dr.

Frances, J., Mary and Janie, both 15, are typical of the 199 youngest in Lapeer State Home's nursery.

Lively and affectionate they watch a nurse as their picture is taken. Though pretty the tots probably have reached their maximum mental growth.

NOT ALL the nursery's charges are in Kathleen's precarious condition however.

About 30 children are outdoor playground, riding the hobby-horses and digging in the sand.

Two television sets break the monotony of routine for the boys and girls. Though they may not understand what the picture means they hold its interest. Mrs Dennis says. Music is especially helpful in quieting the children. Nearly all wards have a radio or record player.

The nice dresses and suits which the children wear come from outside sources, some from parents, some from anonymous donors.

**BECAUSE THE nursery children** are so young, their parents "bring to them closely." Mrs Dennis relates. Some come and hold birthday parties in the nursery for their own boy or girl and his or her wardsmates.

If they progress enough so as not to need nursery care as they grow older, the children are transferred to other buildings where they will fit in.
Work Training is Patient’s Passport to Society

This figure introduces a large number who work at the Oakdale School and are engaged in various occupations. They are considered to be mentally and physically sound and are capable of performing tasks that are not too difficult. Some of them are able to work outside the institution. They may be able to work in factories or other places where they can earn a living wage.

The stay of patients at the Oakdale School is generally for a period of 3 to 5 years. It is recommended that patients should be trained to work outside the institution. The Oakdale School has agreements with various industries to ensure that patients who have been trained can find employment.

It is also recommended that patients should be encouraged to work outside the institution as soon as possible. This will help them to develop skills and become self-sufficient. It is important that patients are given the opportunity to work and earn a living wage.

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Oakdale in the Newspapers

Crippled Girls

Care for Themselves at

Do You Know Your State Home?

Crippled at Lapeer State Home, every helps if they can avoid it.

Despite their mental deficiency, 11, crippled girls of the Home's building 36 are fighting to learn the three R's and to take care of themselves.

They are confined to wheelchairs for some were crippled and some have spina bifida. Most of them can walk short distances without aid, but some are unable to stand or walk without support.

Yet they attend school classes in their classrooms. They are taught to care for themselves and move about under their own power. All are taught to dress themselves without help, make their beds and dust their rooms.

These girls and the 16 others in the building are school girls, learning reading, writing, arithmetic, and other school subjects. Some of the girls are able to attend school classes in the Home's school and some attend special classes in the Home.

The girls in building 36 are not only the beneficiaries of the Home's programs but are also the beneficiaries of the hard work of the staff who help them to care for themselves.

School Patients differ greatly from normal child who make up a large part of the Home's population. They are the patients of higher intelligence. They can care for themselves better and do not need to be watched or supervised.

The girls in building 36 range in age from 6 to 17. Most live in dormitories. However, there are some rooms for four girls. Arranged in one of these rooms is a reward for progress and achievement.

The problems with which these girls struggle seem simple but they are not. One remembers that their mental ages are below normal.

One of the crippled girls barely able to write when she started going to the school classes. She worked hard and finally became able to write her own letters. Despite her physical handicap, she has learned to be a beautiful needle worker by sewing only her feet.

Most of these patients' parents are in the service or in the building's kitchen. When the Home's school is out for the summer, about 30 girls, who have been living in the building since spring, go home to their families for vacations. Some of the girls may return in a few weeks, others for the entire summer.

After school, girls and boys have learned as much in their academic courses as they are able to in adult schools. They are better able to get along with older people.

Work training is the next step for them. In work training they get experience and working skills that will lead to work outside the institution.
State Home To Get Road—Where They Don’t Need It

The Lapeer State Home has long needed a new pavement. Recently they’re going to get it.

It will be in the wrong place. But state “rules” say that’s where it has to go.

The road at the west entrance of the Home is of course where the new road is needed. That’s where all deliveries are made. That’s where most employees drive in, so they can reach parking space in the west part of the grounds. That’s the only direct route to the colonies south of the tracks, and to the institution farm.

The old road here has been so narrow that two trucks can’t pass on it. Two passenger cars have to have steady drivers or they’ll scrape fenders.

Everyone thought that a new road would go down this route. It won’t.

State “rules” say improvements of roads from highways to institution grounds shall take the shortest route from the highway to the entrance of the administration building. This means at the Home a new road must enter at the east entrance, past theupta’s new home, and skirt the edge of the pond to the Administration building.

There is now a pretty, winding road on this route. Trees line the sides of it. Traffic is no problem on it. Trucks never use it. There is ample room for passenger cars to pass. It’s rough, but a little grading and blacktop would fix it.

Down this attractive road the Highway Department will send its road crew. They’ll rip out half the trees. They’ll straighten two nice curves, and ram the new road straight to the Administration building. All according to rules.

The other clogged up road at the west entrance will stay as is. The “rules” won’t permit that to be fixed.
Crowd of 700 Enjoys Annual Dinner Party of Home Staff

It was the biggest party the State Home employees ever had. And it was the biggest dinner even served in the Legion Building.

Nearly 700 people of the State Home staff, and their spouses had their annual dinner Friday night. In the past years it had always been at the institution. A crowd of 300 had been tops.

The downtown affair more than doubled the attendance. A dance afterward was another attraction.

Mark Freeman, president of the Employees Club, was master of ceremonies.

The Rev. Horace White asked the invocation.

OFFICERS for next year were introduced:

President, Jay Carpenter.
Vice-President, Mrs. Dorothy Shonig.
Sec.-Treas., Larry Krutson.

Directors are: Dr. H. M. Dale, Otto Green, Robert Peck, Mrs. Alice Tuckel, Alice Peck and Vincent Porsch.

LARRY KRUTSON, the perennial secretary-treasurer, had his usual penny-accurate report of the club and the club store. It showed sales of $51,213.

Principal expenses after cost of goods were salaries, $1617, Taxes, $504.11, flowers for the site, guest parties $532. Net profit was $430.

The club store is on sound footing with over $7,000 on hand, an inventory of $6429, settlement worth $2500.

Mrs. T. REHN, medical supv., thanked the employees for the work they've shown in the training of the less fortunate, and credited this to enthusiastic and skilled work. She told the group how the training has brought good results.

Mrs. William R. Brown, who has been in the position of assistant, told of plans for the future.

Mrs. Leon Bouch, who is one of the medical staff, addressed the graduates of the attendant nurses class, and complimented them on their work and for reaching this goal in their careers.

In the group were:

GERTRUDE ALDERSON
ERMA ALLSPAUGH
ELVIRA ATWOOD
ESTHER AYLING
HERMAN AYLING
DELLA BIBBER
CHARLES CARLOW
ELA CASTLE
ALBERTA COLLER
LOTTIE DILLON
VIDA FELLEY
FANNIE GATLIE
MYRTLE GAYNOR
ARTHUR HARDIES
JO ANN JOHNSON
ALLIE KALAS
BETTY LAMBERT
VERNA J. LOCKERY
CATHERINE MAROSKY
VINCENT PORSCH
ARCHIE PATRICK
JACQUELINE PATRICK
MARY ROACH
LILIA SCHULZINGER
CHARLES SCHMIDT
THELMA SMITH
ZOLA STONE
ALTA SWAYZE
HAROLD SWAYZE
THOMAS TERRY
ELIZABETH WILSON
ANNIE ZELNICKER
CHESTER LEE

Miss Thelma Smith, valedictorian for the group, responded.
Oakdale in the Newspapers

60 Years Ago, They Laid the Cornerstone at State Home

Sixty years ago this month they laid the cornerstone for the first building at the Lapeer State Home. Then they called the place the Home for the Feeble-Minded and Epileptic. That was before they knew more about the nature of epilepsy and found that their care should be quite different from that of mentally retarded people.

Here are excerpts from the invitational folder. Dr. H. B. Zemmer found a copy and gave it to the Press:


Lansing, June 4, 1894

Executive Office,
Michigan

Hon. Wm. H. Phillips,
Grand Master of Masons,
Menominee, Mich.

Dear Sir: Knowing it to have been a custom from time immemorial for your ancient and honorable fraternity to lay the corner stone of public buildings on behalf of the State I extend to your fraternity a cordial invitation to lay the corner stone for the Home for the Feeble Minded and Epileptic in the City of Lapeer, on the 26th day of June, 1894, with appropriate ceremonies, in connection with the state officials.

Sincerely Yours,
John T. Rich, Governor

Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons
State of Michigan
Office of Grand Master,

Hon. J. Rich,
Governor of Michigan,
Lansing, Mich.

Dear Sir: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your esteemed favor of the 4th inst., extending to the Grand Lodge of Michigan a cordial invitation to lay the corner stone for the Home for the Feeble Minded and Epileptic, on the 26th inst. in the City of Lapeer.

It affords me great pleasure, Honorable Sir, to accept this invitation, and I will immediately notify all the grand officers and do all in my power to make the occasion a success. With high regard, I have the honor to subscribe myself.

Respectfully yours,
W. H. Phillips,
Grand Master

Compliments of Committee of Lapere Lodge No. 54, F. & A.M.
W. E. Brown J. Armstrong
P. Lincoln R. A. Hungerford
J. H. Eoff

1954

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Patient Admits Murder; Mt Clemens Police Blush

A paralyzed State Home patient has confessed the rape and brutal assault of one Mt Clemens woman and the murder of another.

He is being questioned about the JoAnn Gillespie murder in Detroit two years ago. At the time he lived in a few blocks from the Gillespie home.

Richard Dutton, 26, is in jail in Mt Clemens. He confessed the murder after questioning in Lapeer by Dr A T Rehn, State Home medical superintendent, and State Police detectives.

Dutton was committed to the State Home from Detroit 12 years ago. His mentality he ranked among the higher patients.

At the Home he never exhibited criminal tendencies. He was meek and obedient but discontented. He ran away several times.

He was paroled to jobs in other cities three times but in each case soon left the job. In May he was placed on a job in Flint. He left two days later and the Home lost track of him.

A week ago he was arrested for the rape of a 21-year-old Mt Clemens woman. He dragged her off the street and savagely beat her. He admitted this crime when identified by witnesses.

State Police detectives then questioned Dutton about other recent crimes. They were particularly interested in the July 1 death of a Mt Clemens woman. She had been found dead in a hotel bed. The coroner listed the cause of death simply as "accidental suffocation." She had registered as Mrs Richard Dutton. State Police recalled this name when Dutton was arrested on the rape charge six weeks later. Her real name was Homedia Dunn.

Here he admitted that, after being with the woman in her room, he had suffocated her.

Dutton denied knowing anything about the notorious murder of the Gillespie girl. He said he was never in that section of Detroit. Later he admitted this was a lie. He was living in that section at the time of the crime.

Mt Clemens police officials tried to suppress the whole story. Long-standing jealousy toward State Police cropped up and it was evident that the Mt Clemens police wanted to get confessions of their own from Dutton before they released any news. There is also embarrassment in the part of police officials for their failure to determine murder as the cause of the woman's death.
Home Employees Cleared Of Mistreatment Charge

An investigation last week cleared Lapeer State Home employees of mistreating a patient.

Sheriff Bill Porter, Prosecutor George Lutz and State Police Detective Ralph Baney concluded their investigation with the statement, “We could find no substantiation for the charges.”

Porter said the patient had apparently hurt himself in order to get into the new hospital — viewed as a Shangri-La among many of the patients.

The patient, Billie Porter, 26, no relation to the sheriff, had been in State Institutions for the past 11 years. Records showed a history of self-inflicted injuries.

His sister, Mrs. George Shaw, Flushing, and Mrs. Bernice Kelly, Livonia, charged that Billie had told them he was beaten by three employees. Examination showed bruised buttocks and a scratched chest.

Two other patients said the bruises occurred when Billie ran backward against the wall, kicked his feet out, and slammed to the floor on the seat of his pants. One of the patients said he and Billie had plotted to get into the hospital. Billie didn’t succeed but the other one did by smashing his fist through a window.

St Andrews Entertain State Home Patients

The second annual party for patients of the Lapeer State Home and Training School was given Tuesday, June 25, at the Grace Episcopal Church Parish House. These events were originated in 1956 by the Rev. Canon Charles Braidwood. In the absence of Canon Braidwood, who is in Europe at the present time, the Rev. Yung-Hsuan Chou officiated.

Sixty patients enjoyed dancing and entertainment after which lunch was served.

Nine members of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew furnished cars to transport the guests from the home to the Church Parish House and returned them after the party. The Brotherhood prepared and served the refreshments.

Payroll at Home $179,000

The first payroll carrying the new raises was made Thursday at the Lapeer State Home. Total for the two-weeks period was $179,000.

Figuring 26 pays for the year, the total will be $4.65 million, up from $4.24 million before the raise.

State Home officials had figured their payroll costs so closely that the $179,000 pay left the institution in the black by only $169.

That much balance will allow the Home to expand its payroll by one person, if the present division of personnel in the various pay classes holds.

The Home payroll continues by far the largest in Lapeer county. Only milk checks pour more money into the county from a single source.
Oakdale in the Newspapers
County Press, August 29, 1957

Art Conn Retires;
Self-serve Presses
At the Home Now

Art Conn, faithful County Press salesman at the Home, has made so much money that he's retiring. Poor health has something to do with it, but mainly, Art is giving up the business because he has nearly $500 in the bank.

Art had worried for years because he thought he'd die broke, and wouldn't have a nice funeral. His opportunities running errands and acting as guide at the institution didn't bring him much cash.

Then the Press gave Art the exclusive field of selling papers at the Home, and he did such a good job of it his burial fund soon reached the goal he had set.

Art has been at the Home for 52 years, coming there as a boy of 10. He has been a favorite of every superintend, and has had hundreds of friends among the staff and patients.

The County Presses after this week will be left at self-serve newsstands in the Administration Building, the Hospital, the Employees Building and the Nursery, and also at the club store.

62 Cattle Saved
in $90,000 Fire

Fire of unknown origin destroyed a $60,000 dairy barn at the Lapeer State Home Wednesday at 9 a.m.

The flames were discovered in the east end of the building, which had 75 tons of straw in it. James Rangster, supervisor for that barn, was just finishing milking the 62 Holsteins, and the animals were still in the stanchions. His crew quickly put all the animals out.

FRED BENTLEY, sup't of animal husbandry at the institution, was on another part of the grounds and arrived about 10 minutes after the fire started.

"I was the first man there. Rangster had all the cattle out," Fred said. "He did a fine job."

The barn was a cement block hip-roofed structure, built in 1931. It was about 100 x 40, and adjoined the dairy office.

"Could the state afford $60,000?" said Fred. "And today it had $25 of straw and 100 tons of hay in it."

The hay and straw at $10 a ton is worth $2,500.

Lapeer City and State Home trucks left the blaze from endangering other buildings. A metal shop was threatened briefly to the west.

The state insurance fund covers the loss.

The Home is selling 75 head of cattle in October, but until then their remaining facilities will be taxed to care for the herd.
Seek Patients In Truck Theft

Two runaway State Home patients are suspected of a break-in and a truck theft Saturday night. The Cascadden gas station at Metamora was broken into Saturday night. Nothing was taken but an attempt was made to steal a car there. At the Stephen Knobloch nursery a short distance south, a panel truck was stolen the same night.

Cramton Protests State Refuses To Cut Price Of Home Land

Prospective buyers in Lapeer were dismayed this week when the State Tax Commission made only small changes in the price for 180 acres of State Home land. The land buyers protest that the price is too high.

A year ago when it was decided to quit farming at the Home, the Legislature put up for sale the property north of M-21, east of Millville Road and south of Oregon Road—an area about one-half mile square.

State land cannot be sold for less than the appraised value so the State Tax Commission was asked for an appraisal. The Legislature agreed to sell various local groups the property they wanted at the appraised price. The balance was to be put up for bids, with the provision that no bid less than the appraised price would be accepted.

The appraised values ran from $800 to over $2,000 per acre.

The value set on the 62 acres the school wanted was $55,000—about $860 per acre. Value of the eight acres wanted by the City of Lapeer was $17,000. The City had planned to buy this property and give it back to the State as a site for a National Guard armory. The Guard had no funds for a site.

Values of the six acres wanted by the Lutheran Church was set at $4,600.

The remaining 85 acres was to be sold to the highest bidder in one parcel, the minimum price to be $55,000. This property was advertised but no bids were received. Nor did any of the Lapeer groups meet the price set on the property they wanted.

State Rep. Louis C. Cramton protested that the prices were far too high. He presented to the State Tax Commission the independent appraisals of four local real estate men. Their estimates of the land’s value averaged about half of the State’s estimate.

Cramton also submitted the actual sales price of several adjoining pieces of property that had recently been sold. These prices were all below the State asking price.

The State Tax Commission agreed to make a second appraisal. This has been completed and the results turned over to Rep Cramton.

The price of the property the church wants remains the same at $33,600.

The price of the property wanted for a new Lutheran Church also remains the same at $10,000.

The National Guard decided it needed only six acres instead of eight, so the City asked for an appraisal on the smaller acreage. The local officials got quite a shock. The State had asked $117,600 for eight acres. Now they ask $26,000 for six acres.

In the first appraisal, the county had not asked for any and then the jail committee decided it might want 13 acres in M-21 for a new jail. For that, the State now asks $30,000—about $2,300 an acre.

Remaining for open bidding is about 72 acres. For this the State now sets the minimum bid at $52,000—or about $700 an acre. This compares to the earlier minimum of $1,000 an acre for 85 acres. The new and smaller parcel, however, has less frontage on M-21, probably accounting for the lesser price.

This land will probably be advertised soon by the State Administration Dept.

Cramton said he intended to renew his protests of the “ridiculous high prices” and to attempt to get new appraisals.

“This land was advertised and never drew a bid,” he said. “That should be good evidence that the price is too high. The Legislature wants this land sold but it won’t be until a reasonable price is reached.”

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Cramton Fights for Land Price

"I'll Go To The Governor," He Threatens

Louis C. Cramton, state representative, will carry his fight to Governor Williams for a fair appraisal of the State Home acreage that has been offered for sale — with no takers.

A year ago the state authorized the sale of 378 acres, bounded by Oregon, Millville and W. Genesee St. Set aside for possible purchase by public units were 62 acres for a school, 8 acres for a Lutheran church, and 6 acres for a city for a National Guard Armory.

That left about 102 acres for sale to the public. Minimum price on this was set at $8,250.40.

Result: Nobody bid on it, and the state still holds the property.

The areas set aside for public use were appraised at that time, and these groups felt the price was too high. Rep. Cramton then arranged for a re-appraisal, which was done by the state tax commission this summer.

Result: The new figures were no lower — and in some cases higher than a year ago.

Here are the new appraisals:

1956     1957
62 a. for school $55,135 $55,135
6 a. for church 6,980     6,980
8 a. for city 17,780     17,780
6 a. for city 20,220     20,220
13 a. for county 30,350

Mr. Cramton has been especially mad at the increase of the appraisal for an Armory site. For two less acres than requested before, the price has jumped $2,560.

The tax commission ignored appraisals made by three local realtors on this property," he said. "They ignored an appraisal made by local bankers. Their appraisals averaged less than half what the state set.

"Yet when their own sale flopped and not a single bid was received, they came back and raise their last figures even higher."

"I'll carry this to the Ways and Means Committee of the House next January, and I'll take it to the Governor himself if I have to," he said.

Tells Of Program At The State Home School

"An awful lot of effort going into the problem of re-programming for the trainable child is being wasted by lack of direction," said Marvin Wirtz, Ed. D., director, Special Education, Eastern Michigan College of Education, Ypsilanti, in summarizing findings of a meeting of educators and parents recently in Lansing.

A major part of the problem was cited as the parents need to know what is actually happening to themselves as they cope with the situation of a retarded child in the family.

"Any school organized by parents of retarded children without a parental counseling service is missing the boat," commented Dr. Wirtz.

Dr. Wirtz was the final speaker at a meeting called by the Special Committee on Mental Deficiency sponsored by the Michigan Society for Mental Health, a Michigan United Fund Agency, and attended by parents and educators of Michigan's private, public and special state education programs.

Geneva McAllister also spoke for the training program at the Lapeer State Home and Training School which recently opened its new Woodside School. Here, youngsters between six and 16 years of age chronologically, whose mental age range is between three and seven, receive training in several areas with the ultimate goal being good social adjustment.

The Lapeer youngsters now "come to school" like other youngsters. They learn self care for personal habits. After much repetition and patience from their teachers most of them learn to write their own name and to recognize key words for their own protection and safety. They learn domestic usefulness, simple music appreciation, said Miss McAllister, things that can mean a life with meaning and comfort to themselves and their family.
2 1/2 Million for 1957
New Construction
At State Home

200-bed Hospital Will Start This Year;
Funds also O.K.’d for New Building for
50 Employees; Jobs Ahead for Scores

Michigan legislators have appropriated $2,000,000 for construction of a new 200-bed general hospital at Lapeer State Home.

The hospital is biggest of three projects in a total allocation of $2,843,000 for new construction at the Home.

Appropriations for other buildings are:

- Quarters for 50 employees: $405,000
- School building and vocational shop: $300,000

In addition, $200,000 was allotted for extension of utilities to the new buildings.

This program plus work on Lapeer County’s new general hospital should produce one of the greatest building booms in the county’s history. Total amount being spent will exceed $3 million.

The new sums for Home construction come on top of $10,000 for planning. In 1951 the legislature set aside $40,000 for hospital plans and $10,000 for employees’ building plans.

Home hospital plans are in the final drafting stage. After approval by the Home and the State, bids will be received. The hospital should be completed by fall of 1953, Superintendent A. T. Rehm estimated.

The hospital will be located opposite the administration building.

The Home’s present general hospital will become a geriatrics unit for elderly patients.

The employees’ building is in the preliminary planning stages. But because of its smaller size it will probably be finished before the hospital. It will be located toward Lapeer near the present farm home on Genesee St.

The employees to occupy it now live in Staff Hall, North and South Halls and etch units.

The new school building receives only planning money at this time. It would replace present school space and consolidate it all in one place. Now the Home’s school uses much basement space in various buildings.

When the new school is completed, the old White School will be torn down.

The request for a new superintendent’s residence on East Drive is still to be approved.
Executive Board At Lapeer Local 567 Very Busy These Days

Members of the Lapeer State Home and Training School Local 567 pose in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Thompson during an executive board meeting. From left to right: Carl F. Hauser, executive board; Theodore A. Richards, executive board; Elmer J. Bailey, treasurer; Earl E. Thompson, president; Marilyn Thompson, secretary; Fred Baxter, vice president. The remaining member of the board, Winfred Baxter was not present due to flu.
Oakdale in the Newspapers

County Press, November 7, 1957

Home Teachers in Lansing Program

Miss Geneva McAllister, supervisor of the program for trainable children at the Lapeer State Home and Training School, discussed this program and showed slides of typical activities for the Board of Directors of the Michigan Association for Retarded Children at their October 27 meeting in East Lansing. Also participating in the program was Miss Leonora Volkmer who discussed her work in religious education initiated at the Training School in April 1957.

MARC's Board of Directors had earlier planned to hold their October meeting at Lapeer in connection with the formal dedication of Lapeer's new Woodside School. Cancellation of the dedication was due to illness among Training School children and staff.

Union Classes At State Home

The first class in a new Union Leadership Development Program sponsored by Lapeer State Home Employees Local 587 (AFL-CIO) was held Monday night, Oct. 28, at the Employees' Club Room at the Lapeer Home. Instructor for the course, which is expected to last for several months, is Robert G. Grovenor from the Union's State Council offices in Lansing.

"The course," said Local 587 President Earl Thompson, "is designed to give our local union officers and stewards a better understanding of the history and structure of our union and a thorough explanation of the civil service rules under which we operate."

At the local union's Executive Board meeting following the training session a program to be presented to Charles Wagg, Director of the Department of Mental Health was developed. The program is to be presented through the Union's State Council Mental Health Policy Committee representing all state mental hospitals which will be meeting with Mr. Wagg in November.

County Press, November 21, 1957

School Staff of State Home
Hear Dr. E. Doll

A workshop for teachers and parents of severely retarded children was held in Grand Rapids on Friday, Nov. 8 and 9. The workshop was sponsored by the Lincoln Foundation, Inc. and several other community agencies.

Dr. Edgar Doll, consulting psychologist of the Bellingham Public Schools, Bellington, Washington, spoke on the topics, "Beneath the Appearances" "After School, then What?" and "Why Testing." Dr. Doll is a well known authority in the field of mental retardation and the originator of the widely known Vineland Social Maturity Scale.

Richard Prather, Mrs. Chet Matheson, Miss Lenora Volkmer and Miss Geneva McAllister, members of the trainable staff at the Lapeer State Home and Training School attended the Friday meeting.

County Press, November 28, 1957

Turkey Day at The State Home

A ton and a half of turkey will headline the Thanksgiving menu at the State Home.

Charles Pearson, steward, says there'll be about 130 birds, weighing 22 to 25 lbs. apiece. At the non-custodial cottages the birds will be delivered whole and will be carved and served family style.

At the other cottages the kitchen will prepare the birds ready for serving.
Home Workers Seek Lower Taxi Fares

A change in cab fares for State Home employees was asked Monday night by John Halpin, president of the Lapeer chapter of the Michigan State Home Employees Association.

City commissioners have set the rate at $12 a month for rides to and from work at the Home. Halpin objected that this rate is charged even though the person may not be working part of the month due to sickness or vacation.

He wants the rate reduced to $8 for a person riding one-half a month or less.

CITY ATTORNEY Richard Bahls explained that the $12 rate is the contract price for group rides and the driver still makes the trip even though one person is not there.

"Since the driver is on the job and ready to take a person," said Bahls, "it seems to me the driver is penalized if the rider does not fulfill his contract to pay $12 for a month's rides."

Ray Toole, operator of one of the two cab companies, said he thought Halpin had a legitimate squawk. "I'd like to go along with the lower rate," he said, "but Rossman won't even talk about it."

Cal Rossman is the operator of the other cab company and it was apparent that relations between Rossman and Toole are strained.

Commissioners felt it was a matter that should be threshed out in conference rather than before them. Attorney Bahls arranged a meeting for Friday afternoon with Rossman, Toole, Halpin and another employee representative to be selected by Halpin.

They will attempt to agree upon a recommendation to present the commission in January.
Big Day for Lapeer

JUST about the biggest thing that ever happened to Lapeer was when the Legislature decided in 1883 to locate the State Home at Lapeer. It was a decision that may have had something to do with a Lapeer man, John T. Rich, being governor at the time. But, politics or not, it was a happy decision. It still ranks as the biggest, steadiest and best-paying “industry” the town ever landed.

The cornerstone for the first building, No. 18, was laid in 1894. That was cause for the big parade pictured above. The Lapeer Democrat, ancestor of The County Press, reported that the “huge parade of seven divisions” was under the command of Chief Marshal L. W. Hine.

This picture was taken from the corner where the Cyclone Insurance building now stands. In the far background can be seen the White Block (Vincent’s Drug Store). Nepessing Street was still unpaved. Why the parade seems to be turning north up Mason Street is not known.