



Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape

By Katherine Ziff

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Asylum on the Hill is the story of a great American experiment in psychiatry, a revolution in care for those with mental illness, as seen through the example of the Athens Lunatic Asylum. Built in Southeast Ohio after the Civil War, the asylum embodied the nineteenth-century “gold standard” specifications of moral treatment. Stories of patients and their families, politicians, caregivers, and community illustrate how a village in the coalfields of the Hocking River Valley responded to a national impulse to provide compassionate care based on a curative landscape, exposure to the arts, outdoor exercise, useful occupation, and personal attention from a physician. Although ultimately doomed by overcrowding and overshadowed by the rise of new models of psychiatry, for twenty years the therapeutic community at Athens pursued moral treatment therapy with energy and optimism. Ziff’s fresh presentation of America’s nineteenth-century asylum movement shows how the Athens Lunatic Asylum accommodated political, economic, community, family, and individual needs and left an architectural legacy that has been uniquely renovated and repurposed.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Anyone who peruses Ziff’s work will not have an easy time putting it down. This book is more than a history of a time, a place, a movement, and a people. It is instead a sensitive and centered examination . . . her portraits of people who influenced the asylum are wonderfully rendered . . . alive and moving.”
— Samuel T. Gladding, Wake Forest University

“*Asylum On The Hill* is a fascinating and poignant history of one hospital, its patients and staff. Accompanied by rare, never released photos and records, Ziff’s easy narrative weaves the personal accounts of daily life with the broader context of post-Civil War America. What’s truly remarkable about Ziff’s book is that it tells a parallel story of our nation’s history and the forces that shaped not only the asylums but also the many other fundamental public institutions that survive today. A highly engaging work that makes the past come alive.”
— Christopher Payne, author of *Asylum: Inside the Closed World of State Mental Hospitals*

“This well-written, accurately researched historical work tells the story of the Athens Lunatic Asylum. . . . This is a work that brings the reader inside the life and times of patient care in Ohio. *Asylum on the Hill* is highly readable, enlightening, and for those who currently work in the field of psychiatry, the story is familiar and somewhat poignant. . . . Highly recommended.”
— *Choice*

“Ziff’s narrative—skillfully interwoven with period photos and excerpts from letters and reports—keeps the reader firmly rooted in the benevolent mindset of the time. While also covering negative aspects such as endemic political patronage and eventual overcrowding, it is, nevertheless, a lovely glimpse at a kinder and gentler time in Ohio’s treatment of its mentally ill.”
— Thomas Walker, *Ohio Today*

“Katherine Ziff’s fascinating *Asylum on the Hill* concentrates on the first 20 years of the institution, from 1874 to 1893, when it was a cutting-edge example of progressive care for the mentally ill. . . . Ziff’s detailed research into patient records and letters yields tantalizing glimpses into the lives of those taken into the asylum, as well as those of staff members. . . . The volume is amply illustrated with period photographs, reproductions of letters, maps, tables and postcards.”

— *The Columbus Dispatch*

“By telling the story of one institution, Ziff places in context the larger picture of how professionals and the lay public thought about and cared for less fortunate individuals. Readers with diverse interests such as the history of psychiatry, medico-sociological analysis, and mid-to-late nineteenth century politics will enjoy this book.”

— *Metapsychology*

“Asylum on the Hill provides a valuable contribution to nineteenth-century American history and to the history of medicine.”

— *Indiana Magazine of History*

“People interested in the history of Ohio University’s Ridges property—and there are many such in this area—may think they’ve struck a gold mine if they open a new book issued by the OU Press.”

— *The Athens News*

About the Author

2013 Ohioana Book Award Finalist

Katherine Ziff is a scholar of psychiatric history and asylums. She is a public school mental health counselor and an artist. Ziff has published articles in *History of Psychiatry*, *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *Creativity in Mental Health*, *New Research in Mental Health*, and elsewhere.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Daniele Chambers:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important act, like looking for your favorite publication and reading a publication. Beside you can solve your long lasting problem; you can add your knowledge by the book entitled *Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape*. Try to the actual book *Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape* as your pal. It means that it can to become your friend when you truly feel alone and beside that of course make you smarter than in the past. Yeah, it is very fortunated in your case. The book makes you a lot more confidence because you can know almost everything by the book. So , we need to make new experience and also knowledge with this book.

Robert Ford:

This *Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape* is great book for you because the content which can be full of information for you who always deal with world and possess to make decision every minute. This specific book reveal it data accurately using great coordinate word or we can point out no rambling sentences included. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole data in it. Doesn't mean it only

provides straight forward sentences but hard core information with beautiful delivering sentences. Having Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape in your hand like finding the world in your arm, data in it is not ridiculous one. We can say that no guide that offer you world in ten or fifteen small right but this publication already do that. So , this really is good reading book. Hi Mr. and Mrs. hectic do you still doubt that will?

Ralph Wood:

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Walton Han:

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