



Out of Mind, Out of Sight: A Revealing History of the Florida State Hospital at Chattahoochee and Mental Health Care in Florida

Sally J. Ling

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KINDLE BOOK REVIEW, 2014 KINDLE BOOK AWARDS SEMIFINALIST Out of Mind, Out of Sight is a revealing history of the Florida State Hospital at Chattahoochee from construction of its original buildings in 1834 as part of the Chattahoochee Federal Arsenal during the Second Seminole War, to its current role—treating individuals who have been civilly and forensically committed. To put the Florida State Hospital at Chattahoochee in perspective, the story is set against a backdrop of the evolution of institutionalized mental health care both in the U.S. and Florida where new emerging treatments—insulin, Metrazol and electroconvulsive (ECT) shock therapies, as well as lobotomies—became part of patient treatment plans. For years, the Florida State Hospital at Chattahoochee had quite a reputation—most of it bad; but, the institution was not alone. For decades throughout the country, state facilities earned shocking reputations for their inadequate care and mistreatment of the mentally ill. Even more chilling was the incarceration of thousands of men and women who were not mentally ill at all, but due to ignorance and prejudice on the part of the public, medical profession, and court system, were confined for epilepsy, sunbathing nude, smoking, menopause or other “egregious” offenses. Some may wonder why an account of the obscure facility at Chattahoochee is important. The answer lies in its dual role as historic physical facility and evolving mental institution that, when combined, paint a poignant portrait of Florida—its history, its laws and its people; and it is incumbent upon historians to preserve this picture—the good, the bad, and the ugly—for generations to come.

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