

# SIMONSON PROBES GAPS IN WILLOWBROOK HIRING

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## D.A. Probes Willowbrook Hiring Setup

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Most of the time was taken up in the questioning of Dr. Berman and Dr. Glasser.

The district attorney's investigation was not closed by yesterday examinations, both Cohen and Cosgrove said. Their questions had been confined, they explained, to the Tuccillo incident and the personnel system at the state school. District Attorney Simonson has stated that other matters in connection with the institution are being scrutinized.

Before yesterday's session opened, the district attorney was armed with the fingerprint record of Tuccillo taken at the school Jan. 28 when he applied for a job and which had been checked at the Albany civil service office.

These prints had been forwarded to the district attorney from Albany at his request and were checked in Police Headquarters in Manhattan. They were found to be Tuccillo's own prints, but made out under the alias of John J. Martini. They gave his correct address, 298 Bay street, Tompkinsville, where his true identity could have been learned if a check had been made there, the D.A.'s aides pointed out.

On his application Tuccillo said he had never been in prison nor in a mental hospital. A thorough check of his fingerprints would have shown that he served a term in Sing Sing in 1922 on a robbery charge and had been committed to Matteawan State Hospital for insane criminals in April 1931, later being discharged as cured.

### Mistake as to Race

The reason these facts did not come to light was discovered as soon as the prints were received at the district attorney's office. Tuccillo, obviously a Caucasian, said on his print application that he was "black." This was typed upon his fingerprint record which was sent to Albany for checking.

Under the system there, prints marked "black" are checked only against those of other colored persons. Of course when this was done, Tuccillo's former print record did not come to light.

To some extent, however, according to the information given by yesterday's witnesses to the assistant prosecutors, this slipup would have been academic. Tuccillo was hired Jan. 23, the day following his application and long before any report could have been received on his fingerprints or from his references.

### Case Follows Routine

They questioned all witnesses. Cohen and Cosgrove stated after the examination, as to the hiring system followed at Willowbrook State School, and in particular to Tuccillo's hiring, from the time the application was filed until a report on the prints were received from Albany. In all respects, they said, the answers showed that Tuccillo's case had followed the routine procedure.

The interrogation touched upon no other matters at this time, they said.

Tuccillo filled out his application papers in the administration office, the witnesses said, including the application for fingerprints. He then, unaccompanied, took the fingerprint papers to another building where he was printed by Dutremain.

Last January Dutremain was the fingerprint man at the school. Be-

fore that, he had been the institution's barber and he is no longer doing the fingerprint work. Cohen and Cosgrove were informed yesterday.

With his recorded prints, Tuccillo, again unaccompanied and not supervised, returned to the administration office, carrying his own prints. It was then that the typed part was filled in by Mrs. Sherman, she said in answer to questions.

On his application blank, Tuccillo had given his color as "black." Mrs. Sherman filled it in as "colored." A heavy, large man, Tuccillo gave his weight as 109 pounds. The doctor's examination showed he weighed 207. In spite of this Mrs. Sherman typed in the weight which the applicant gave.

### Accepts Statements

When questioned about the entry "colored," Mrs. Sherman said, according to the assistant district attorney, that the applicant's complexion was dark and that "she does not question the statements made by the applicant upon his application."

As to his weight, according to Cohen and Cosgrove, Mrs. Sherman answered "she was not interested in that."

Tuccillo gave four references, two of them hospitals and two Florida real estate dealers. Queries were sent to these references, the state school officials said, but Tuccillo was hired before any reply could be received.

### Hospitals Deny Employment

They learned, Cohen and Cosgrove said, that the two hospitals given as reference replied the applicant never had been employed there. Perhaps this was due to the fact that he was going under an assumed name, they said.

One Florida real estate dealer said he knew too little of the applicant to give him a reference. The other gave "Martini" a good character.

By the time these answers were received, the Willowbrook officials said according to Cohen and Cosgrove, Tuccillo's work had proved satisfactory and his employment was continued.

The school officials said they had considered also the fact that Tuccillo had produced papers showing he owned Florida property.

During Dr. Berman's examination, Cohen and Cosgrove said, the school director told them he was going to introduce a personnel system which would be "foolproof." In explaining this, he said that he was going to transfer the fingerprint section to the administration office and in the future will not allow an applicant to handle his own papers.

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## TUCCILLO'S CASE SAID TO REVEAL LOOPHOLES

### Data Entered at School Shows Wrong Race, Weight 100 Pounds Off

By HAROLD H. CASSIDY

Weaknesses in the personnel system at Willowbrook State School which permitted the hiring of Ralph Tuccillo, 48, as an attendant without the discovery that he had served a term in state prison and had been a mental hospital inmate, were brought to light yesterday in the examination of witnesses in the district attorney's office, it was announced afterwards.

Questions put to five witnesses, who included Dr. Harold H. Berman, director of the state institution revealed, according to the announcement:

1—Applicants are employed with no checkup upon identity other than the applicant's say-so. (Tuccillo applied and was hired under an assumed name.)

2—Although references are demanded, Tuccillo was hired before word could be received from his references. (Three out of four references he gave could not vouch for him.)

3—In passing from building to building in the process of being hired, applicants were permitted possession of their papers, including fingerprints records, without supervision. (The hospital plans to change this part of its system.)

The prosecution investigation, started by District Attorney Sidney O. Simonson when Tuccillo was arrested Aug. 20 and charged with beating two children, inmates of the school, revealed the cause of why Tuccillo's fingerprint checkup did not show his past record. This was traced to an error in making out his papers at Willowbrook and a loophole in the manner in which prints are checked in the fingerprint division of the State Civil Service Commission.

### Emploees Quizzed

Yesterday's witnesses included, in addition to Dr. Berman, Dr. Frank Glasser, assistant director; James W. Dutremain, who took Tuccillo's fingerprints; and Mrs. Alice Cosgrove and Mrs. Theresa Sherman, personnel clerks. It was Mrs. Sherman who filled in the typed portions of Tuccillo's print record card.

The witnesses were examined by Assistant District Attorneys Daniel Cohen and John Cosgrove in the presence of Acting Lt. John F. Bracken, head of the district attorney's detective squad. The importance placed upon the testimony by the prosecution was shown by the fact that all statements were taken down on a wire recorder.

The examination of witnesses continued from 2 P.M. until after 6 o'clock last night in Assistant District Attorney Cosgrove's office.

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