

\$8 1/2 Million State School Expansion Nears End

By ERWIN ENDRESS

Willowbrook State School will be able to stamp its \$7.2-million-dollar expansion program completed by Jan. 1, officials said today. Fifteen large infirmary buildings and two new infirmary buildings and a huge kitchen to serve the growing facility.

Dr. Harold Berman, Willowbrook's director, said installation of utility needs and kitchen equipment are all that remain to be done before the program, more than seven years in the making, is finished.

Opening of the remaining buildings is expected to bring the total of mentally retarded patients being treated there to

approximately 5,700. There are 5,200 patients there now.

The vast project, for which an initial five million dollars was appropriated in 1952, includes five large infirmary buildings and the new kitchen and cafeteria.

BUT EVEN as officials prepare to stamp the big expansion project complete, new work is under way at Willowbrook.

Work crews arrived this month to begin the groundwork for a huge \$740,000 addition to the institution's already big laundry plant.

The money constitutes a separate and special state appropriation to help meet the growing laundry needs as the patient enrollment of Willowbrook mounts.

While awaiting completion of the addition, Willowbrook officials say, much new equipment has been put in place in recent months in the existing plant to meet the mounting demands.

MORE than 1,700 persons are presently employed at Willowbrook, Berman says more jobs will be made available as the patient register grows.

Four of the five new infirmaries differ markedly from the older infirmary buildings built prior to World War II, and used during the war years and afterward as facilities for sick and wounded members of the armed forces and for veterans.

These four are considered by Department of Mental Hygiene officials as the most modern of their type in existence. They were constructed after several years of painstaking studies by state architects working with psychiatrists and others who specialize in the care of the mentally retarded.

Because of a crucial need for space at the outset, one of the five infirmaries in the project was erected prior to the others. It was based on plans originally developed during the construction of the Willowbrook buildings.

It was the years of "blimping and doctoring" among state architects, which, officials say, was largely

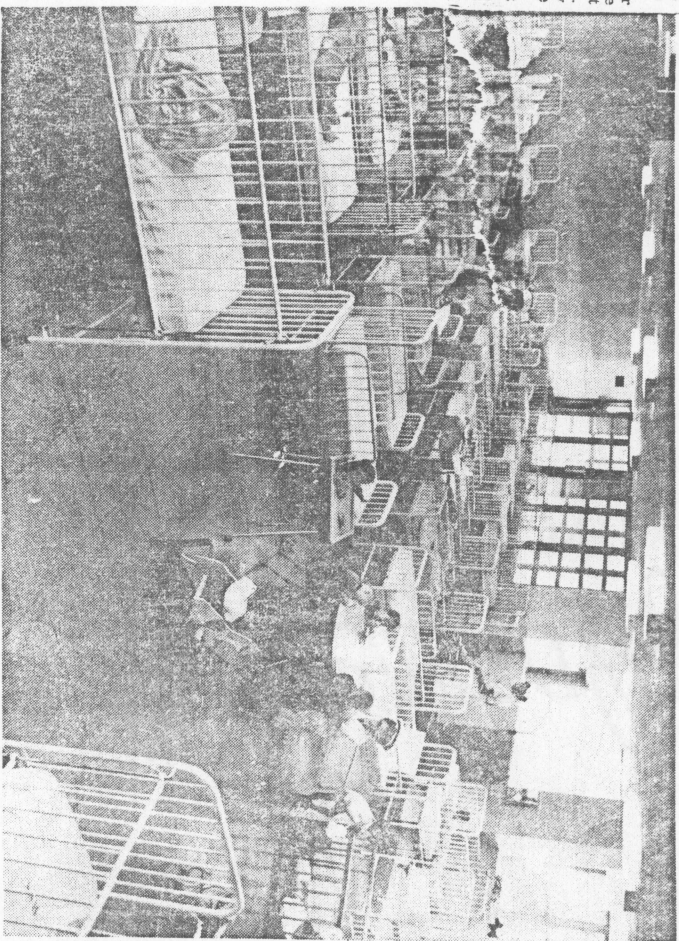
responsible for the long delay in ed, most of them children, officials say.

Although there are three or four children on a lengthening waiting list for every child who comes to Willowbrook, officials doubt that the Island institution will be further enlarged upon completion of the project.

ALL ROOMS, fixtures and furniture in the new infirmaries have been expressly designed to meet the needs of the mentally retarded, their enlarged upon completion of the project.

For this reason, he said, it is more likely that a new institution will be constructed elsewhere in the state than that Willowbrook will face further expansion in the years ahead.

For this reason, he said, it is more likely that a new institution will be constructed elsewhere in the state than that Willowbrook will face further expansion in the years ahead.



STYLE SETTER—The interior of one of Willowbrook State School's new infirmary buildings, part of

expansion program now nearing completion. Two other new infirmaries there soon are to be opened.