

TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 1964

WILLOWBROOK'S CITY OF 6,000

State School Opened 6 Years Late, But Soon Caught Up

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SECOND OF FIVE ARTICLES

Willowbrook opened about six years late. World War II interrupted with most of the buildings nearly completed, and it wasn't until October 1947 that the first patients were admitted.

In the meantime, the federal government issued the property for Halston Central Hospital during the war and Halston Veterans Administration Hospital after the war.

Things didn't go smoothly for Willowbrook even in the beginning.

When it was first proposed, a hearing was held in St. George. Forty-one civic spokesmen opposed the institution and eight favored it. Despite the opposition, the plans moved forward. Even when the state got back about 40 per cent of the site in 1947, its problems weren't over.

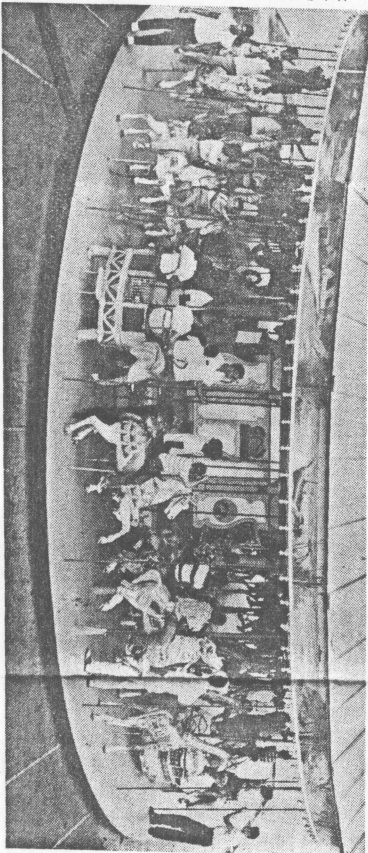
**DR. FRANK B. GLASSER**, now acting director, has been in Willowbrook from the beginning. Dr. Harold H. Berman as director from Feb. 1, 1948, until last Dec. 31, when he retired.

"It was difficult in the beginning," Dr. Glasser said. "We had a same big, empty buildings and that was all. With the war, some priorities lifted, we had difficult time getting equipment and found trouble getting necessary help."

The Veterans Administration stayed until the summer of 1951. When Halston A. H. hospital went out of existence, Willowbrook had 2,840 patients.

Willowbrook brought about a significant change in the care of mentally retarded in New York State.

Before the school opened, no child under 5 years of age—rare exceptions—was admitted to a state school for the mentally retarded. The feeling was that "crisis could ad-



**PUN FOR ALL**—The merry-go-round, purchased for Willowbrook by the Willowbrook Chapter of the Benevolent Society for Retarded Children, is one of the children's favorite forms of recreation. This

equally care for youngsters of this age.

**IN MARCH 1952**, with the institution about filled to capacity, the state appropriated \$5 million for an expansion program consisting of six new buildings. The program was much delayed, however, and no work was started until March 1955.

After one patient building was started, the program was halted. Finally, in March of 1957, work on five ultra-modern infirmary-type buildings was started.

The expansion program was later expanded to include an addition to the laundry plant and new kitchen and dining facilities and the price was increased to \$8 1/2 million.

The program was completed in November 1960, making Willowbrook the largest treatment center for the mentally retarded in the nation.

**LESS THAN** a year later, and

is only one of many things given to the school by the society. This is one of the extras which the state can't always provide.

At least one important training program at the school was for practical nurses, which became possible by legislation passed only a few years ago.

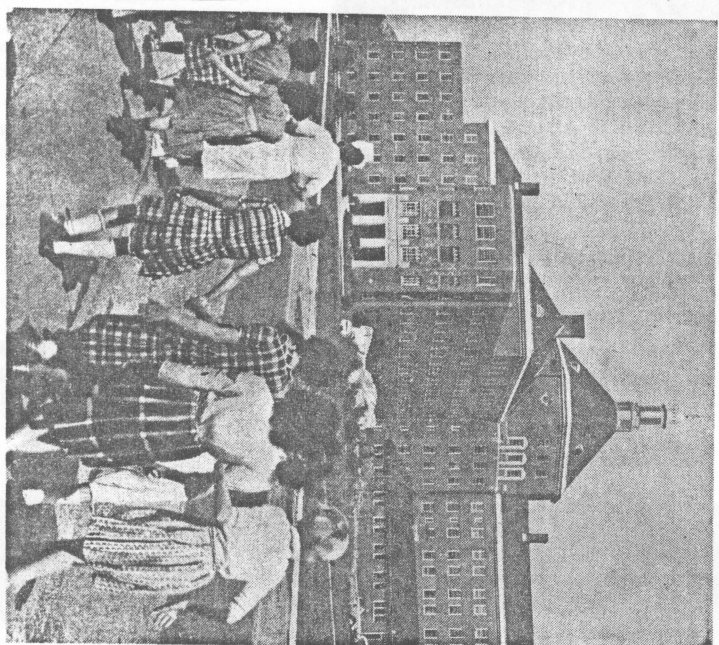
These are classes held for trainable children—those too severely retarded to take academic subjects but able to learn to care for themselves. Before the legislation, there was no money available to train these children.

The institution has a school available to some extent to critical shortage of nurses. Most of the students come from the community.

Willowbrook also offers training to nursing students from state hospitals and employers who wish to advance or enter other more needed jobs.

The new, federal-aided facility will be known as the New York State Institute in Mental Deficiency. Although on the Mental Deficiency Institute, it will make extensive use of the medical and scientific facilities at the school.

**ALTHOUGH** Willowbrook has stopped—at least for the present—growing in size, it continues to grow in the scope and effectiveness of its work.



**SCHOOL BELL RINGS**—Girls are led to one of the many types of classes held daily for the children at Willowbrook State School. The aim is to have every child reach his highest possible potential. In the background is the largest building at the institution.