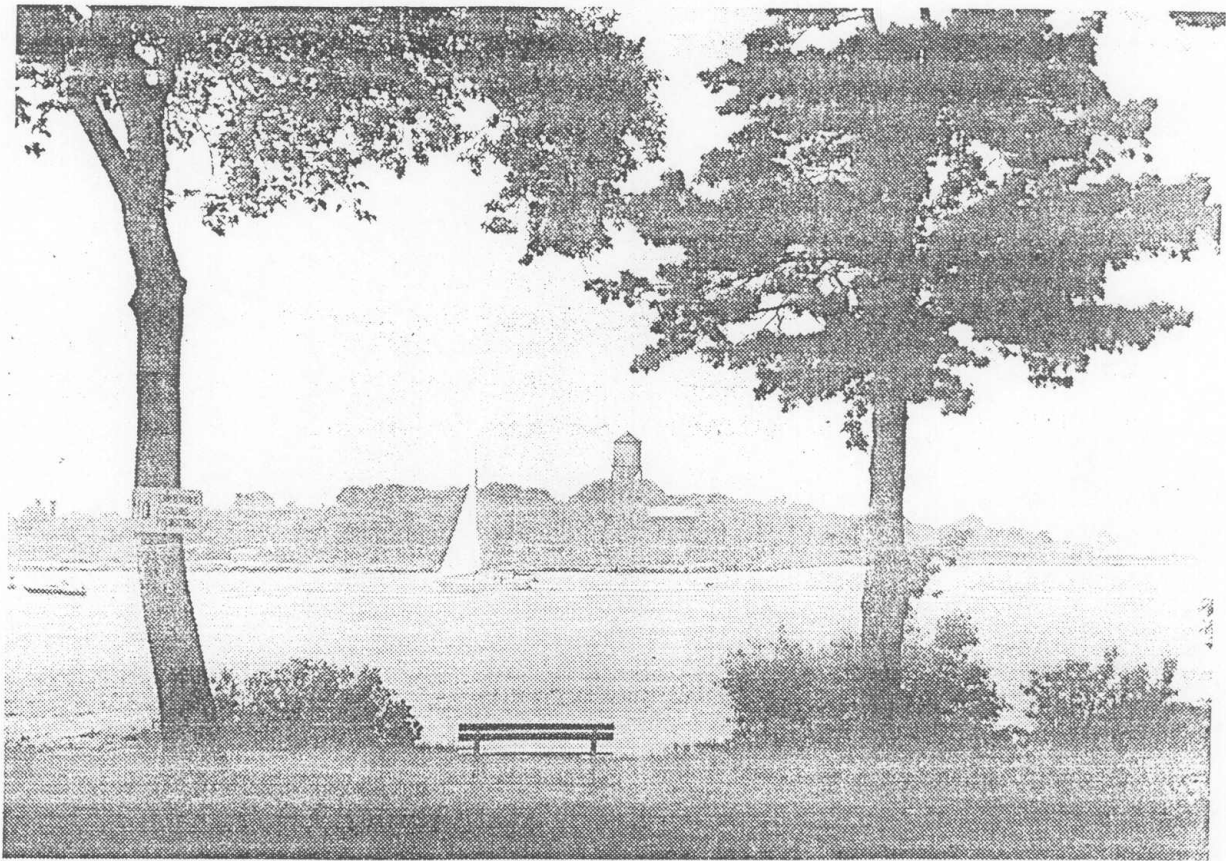


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The New York Times/Alan Zait

Dauids Island as seen from New Rochelle, N.Y. Condominiums are planned for the former Army base.

# Gains in New York Care of Retarded

By ELIZABETH KOLBERT

Living conditions at institutions for the mentally retarded in New York State have "greatly improved" in the last two decades, but many centers still fail to provide adequate teaching and recreation, a state commission has found.

In a report released yesterday, the New York State Commission on Quality Care for the Mentally Disabled said "substantial gains" had been made in insuring humane treatment for residents of state institutions.

In visits to seven centers across the state in the summer and fall of 1986, however, the panel found that the staff members at most, rather than teaching basic eating and bathing skills, "simply toileted, bathed, groomed and fed the clients, sometimes with no verbal interchange at all."

It said that many residents spent too much time idle, that others were poorly dressed and their rooms barren and unattractive and that harmful behavior often was ignored.

### Not All Goals Met

"Some expectations for state developmental centers have not yet been realized, particularly in the areas of attentiveness to individual needs and active treatment," the report stated.

The study was undertaken at the behest of the Legislature.

Responding to the draft of the report,

## But a panel also finds flaws in state centers.

the Commissioner of the State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Arthur Y. Webb, said he was "encouraged" that the panel had identified progress at the centers. He said steps were being taken to correct deficiencies.

In the early 1970's revelations about the mistreatment of mentally retarded patients at the state-run Willowbrook Developmental Center on Staten Island prompted the state to reassess its policy toward such institutional care. Willowbrook has closed, and, with the growth of group homes, the number of people institutionalized at state centers for the mentally retarded has declined to about 10,000 from 26,000.

### Progress Noted by Panel

In the early 1970's, when conditions for the mentally retarded in New York attracted national attention, Willowbrook was overcrowded, chaotic and infested with vermin. In its report, the commission noted that the centers it had visited recently were "usually clean, well-maintained and free of ap-

parent vermin infestations, although some isolated problems were noted."

People who are still institutionalized, the report said, tend "to be more severely disabled than the institutionalized populations of the 1960's and 70's," making their need for protection particularly acute.

To improve care at state institutions, the commission recommended that the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, which operates the centers, reduce the time that staff members spend on paperwork, provide incentives for them to reduce absences and insure that they use such daily care as meals and bathing as opportunities to teach residents.

The commission also called on the office to make sure that all residents have properly fitting clothes, that their living areas are decorated and that adequate recreation is provided.

## BUSINESS DAY



Monday - Saturday  
The New York Times