

## Hopeworth Sanitarium in Bristol offered rest and work cures

### Founder grew up in Civil War field hospitals, orphan asylum

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Hopeworth was situated on 65 acres of seashore, woodlands, fields and gardens. The main building consisted of 24 bedrooms, sitting rooms, treatment areas, and dining, music and billiard rooms.

**DR. HERMAN CANFIELD, JR.**, first came to Bristol in 1879, several years after graduating from the University of New York Medical Department (1876). He was determined to open a sanitarium. With \$12 in his pocket, he settled into the town by the bay with his wife and child, and after two years of practice rented the Gen. Burnside estate to open his sanitarium. Within 18 months, he purchased a large parcel of land and buildings along the shores of Mount Hope Bay and established the Hopeworth Sanitarium in 1883.

hospitals. The boys trailed after their mother, and the generals as well.

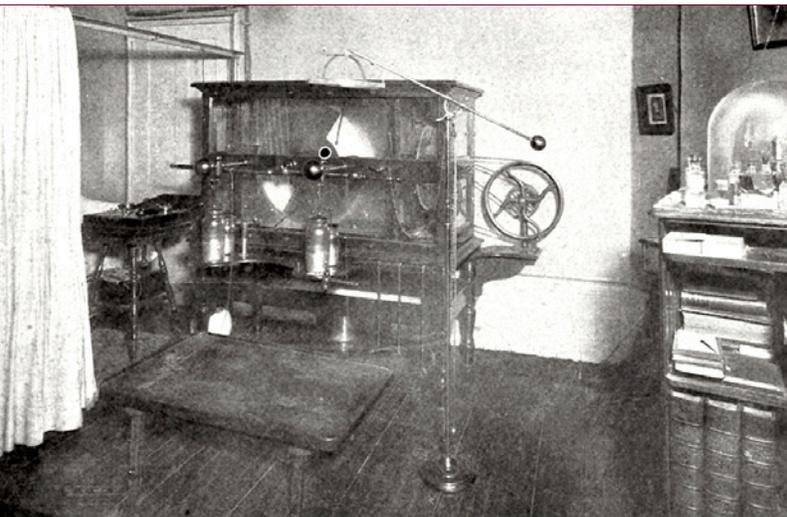
After the war, she opened the Canfield Colored Orphan Asylum in

Hopeworth was billed as a respite for the “weary invalid.” Accepted were chronic “nervous cases, other than the insane,” patients who suffered from rheumatism, gout, diabetes, diseases of the kidney, stomach and bladder, heart disease – in short, just about everyone, with the exception of those with tuberculosis, infectious diseases, and epilepsy. The sanitarium was also open to selected recovering alcoholics and those with drug addictions, but only with prior screening.

When Herman Canfield, Sr., a prominent Ohio lawyer, mayor, senator and Abolitionist was killed at the Battle of Shiloh during the Civil War, his wife Martha packed up her two boys and headed South, to use her nursing skills to tend the war wounded in field

Memphis, Tennessee, which became home to her two young sons and an army of ‘siblings,’ many street urchins orphaned during the war.

The Canfield boys would eventually wind up in Bristol, RI, as the physician directors of the Hopeworth Sanitarium.



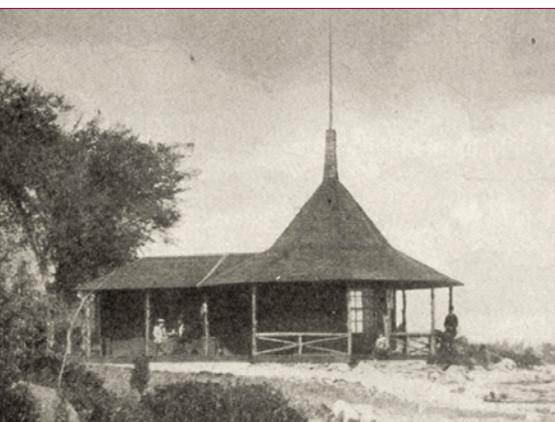
**Electrical Room:** A brochure sent to physicians advertised the various treatments offered, which included: massage, medical gymnastics, mechanical vibration, and electricity in its various forms (galvanic, faradic, static, etc.).

**Solarium:** [Right] An 80-foot conservatory of flowers was often used as a solarium and area for the “rest cure.”



**Farm work:** [Left] For those disinclined to take the rest cure, the work cure was available to tire but not fatigue the individual. Excursion boats also took residents to different towns along the bay, clamcakes, and nearby resorts.

**Bowling Alley:** [Right] A bowling alley, exercise room, tennis courts and croquet grounds provided residents with ample recreational opportunities. A barn was expanded to hold carriages, horses and a large herd of Holstein and Jersey cows.



**Bath House:** [Above] The Bath House was situated along the shoreline. Hydrotherapy in full tubs, with or without electricity, douches, sprays, packs and rubs, vapors, etc. at varying temperatures, was offered to residents in the warm weather.

**Outdoor life:** [Below] Built on the shoreline of Narragansett Bay in Bristol, the sanitarium offered the use of a sloop for the nautical-minded.

In 1885, Herman's brother, **DR. WILLIAM E. CANFIELD**, joined him. One of their rules was to offer care for two deserving patients who are unable to meet the regular charges. The costs were:

- Single room, \$15–\$30 per week, only general medical direction
- Suites: \$35–\$75 week
- Additional medical treatment: \$20 per week and upward
- Weekly settlement of bills required.

The consulting physicians included:

- George W. Porter, MD, gynecologist, Providence
- George L. Shattuck, MD, neurologist, Providence
- George S. Matthews, MD, general medicine, Providence
- John W. Keefe, MD, surgeon, Providence
- H.C. Pitts, MD, gynecologist

The salty air and temperate summers mitigated by bay breezes was proclaimed in the sanitarium's advertisements, as well as its accessibility. It could be reached by electric trains from Providence, which left every hour to the Bristol station on Franklin Street, where a carriage would be awaiting.

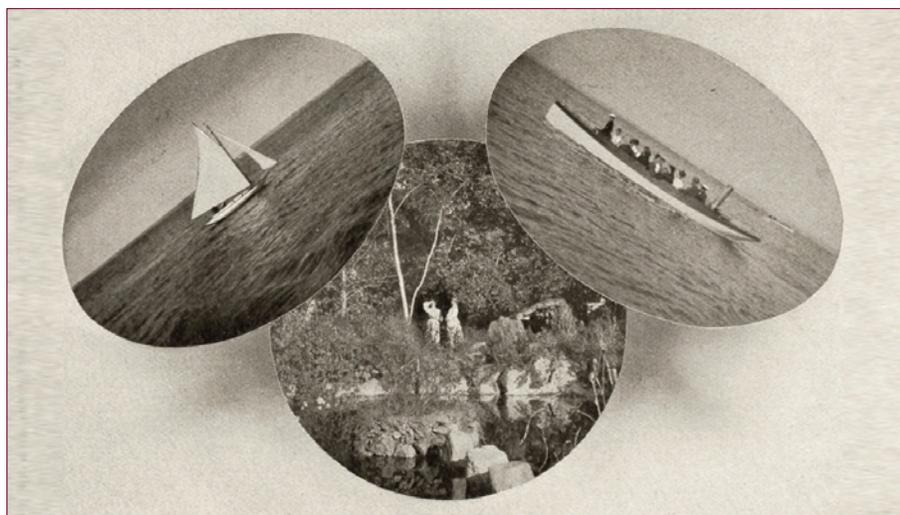
For out-of-towners, the Federal Express train left Washington D.C at 4:20 p.m. and arrived in Providence (without changing trains!) at about 6 a.m. For New Yorkers, the Providence Steamboat Line and the Fall River Steamboat Line left Pier 18 in that city at 5 p.m. daily.

In addition, according to the brochure, residents had the luxury of making local and long-distance telephone calls.

Martha Canfield became a permanent resident at Hopeworth, until she died there in 1889, according to one account, "from the effects of exposure in her work for the soldiers during the war."

The Canfields sold the facility in 1909, when Herman opened a smaller facility in Newton, Mass. He also opened facilities in the Caribbean, and died in Florida at the age of 60 in 1914.

In 1959, the main building of the former sanitarium was destroyed in a fire. Eventually the land was divided into home parcels and scattered throughout the area are remnants of the old stone-walls and pillars, crumbling sentinels of a bygone era. ❖



PHOTOS: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE