

NORTHAMPTON STATE HOSPITAL MEMORIAL PARK & FOUNTAIN



IN THE EARLY 1980s, as the patient population dwindled and the staff was downsized, the state began planning for the closure of Northampton State Hospital. In 1990, most of the agricultural lands were declared permanent farmland, turned over to the Department of Food and Agriculture, and leased to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School for stewardship. In 1997, a Request for Proposals began the process of redevelopment of the Northampton State Hospital's campus and buildings. Despite creative proposals for reuse, promises for renovation, and the efforts of the coalition "Save Old Main," only a few buildings were saved. With the demolition of "Old Main" in 2006–2007, the construction of Village Hill began and continues into the 2020s.

After the Hospital closed in 1993, the call for a memorial to the patients who lived here was immediate. "While the place is gone, we cannot let the lives spent here slip from our memory."

The 1997 Request for Proposals required the memorialization of the history of the Hospital, and, in particular, the experiences of patients and staff. In 2007, the Northampton State Hospital Memorial Committee began planning this Memorial Park and the Walking Tour of Hospital Hill. The master developers, Mass Development, donated this piece of land to the City for the park. The original 1876 fountain was restored with private donations and Community Preservation Act funds. These markers acknowledge the history of the Hospital and encourage reflection on the understanding and treatment of mental illness over time.

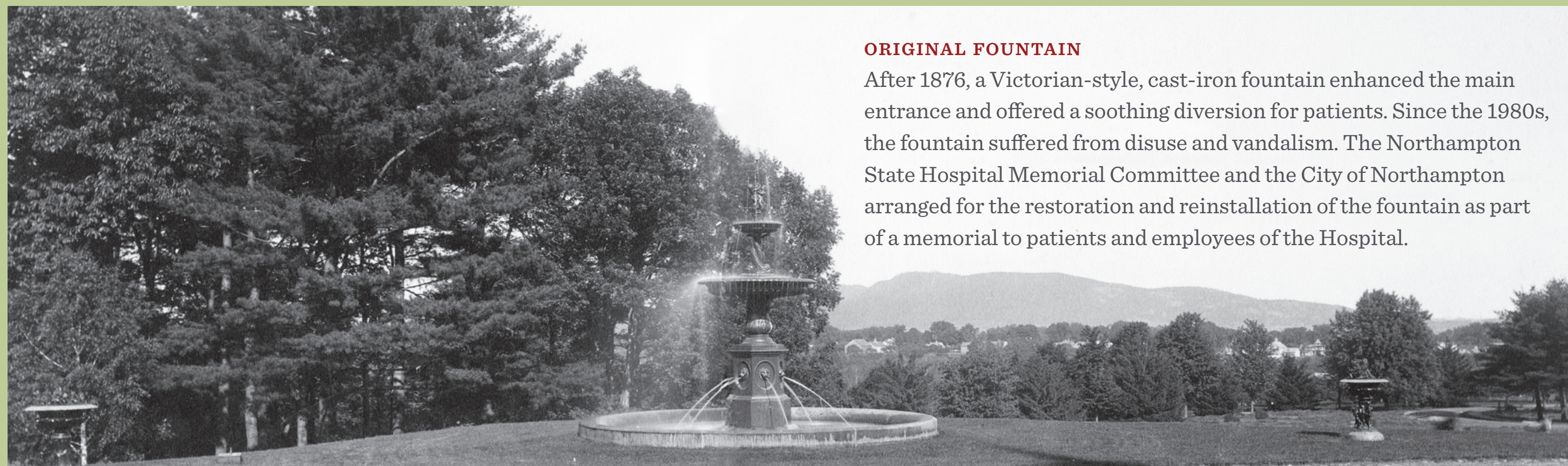


Photo: Moore & Shuleit Haber. Images of America: Northampton State Hospital (Arcadia Publishing, 2014)



DEMOLITION OF OLD MAIN

The entire NSH campus was added to the National Register of Historical Places in 1994, but most of the buildings were demolished during 2005 to 2008. This was the last section of Old Main to be demolished, January 2007.

Photo: South wing by Emily Burrows

HABEAS CORPUS EVENT

In November 2000, artist Anna Shuleit Haber created a sound installation as part of a memorial event called "Habeas Corpus." J. S. Bach's *Magnificat* was amplified to the crowd outside from speakers placed in the windows of Old Main, singing in memory of those who lived there. "It was a terrible place. I'm glad they're getting rid of it. I like the music. I feel it's for all of them. They should be remembered."

— Elderly woman whose sister was a patient

Photo: Moore & Shuleit Haber. Images of America: Northampton State Hospital (Arcadia Publishing, 2014)

"They were humiliated and abandoned in life. The very least we can do is make sure these people get the dignity in death that they never got in life." — Pat Deegan, ex-patient and activist

"... some time ago I spent three years at Northampton State Hospital. They saved my life there, and I am in favor of saving the Main building. ... If we are allowed the space for [a museum], I would like it to be dedicated to the thousands of people who lived and suffered there." — Lois Plumb, 2001

