What’s in a Name?

When it comes to our state’s history of caring for people with mental illnesses and physical deficits, quite a bit.

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How we should care for our most vulnerable citizens is an issue Minnesota first tackled some 150 years ago. At that time, the state’s approach to caring for people with mental illnesses, addiction, contagious diseases and physical defects was to house them in large, if not grand, buildings set on acres of land in small towns. Seventeen such facilities were once in operation.

As understanding of the conditions of the people they served evolved, so did treatment. Programs were added and/or discarded, buildings were built and torn down, and new treatment approaches were tried. As thinking changed, so did terminology, and the linguistic changes were reflected in the names of the facilities.

In 1985, Gov. Rudy Perpich renamed the remaining state hospitals “Regional Treatment Centers.” By then, the mental health system was becoming decentralized. People with substance abuse problems were treated in a variety of settings. Children with mental and physical disabilities were cared for in group homes, specialized hospitals or at home. Here’s a look at how the names of a few state-owned institutions evolved over the years.

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St. Peter

1866 The state’s first Asylum for the Insane is opened.
1893 The hospital is designated St. Peter State Hospital.
1911 An Asylum for the Dangerously Insane is built on the land to house and treat “mentally ill and dangerous men from the entire state.”
1957 The Legislature allows the hospital’s residents to rename the hospital Minnesota Security Hospital.
1963 Minnesota Security Hospital separates from St. Peter State Hospital.
1970 The Intensive Treatment Program for Sexual Aggressives is established.
1980s The Minnesota Sex Offender Program is formed.

Today, St. Peter is home to a wing of the Minnesota Sex Offender Treatment Program and the Minnesota Security Hospital, which treats people who are mentally ill and dangerous.

Back view of the St. Peter Asylum for the Insane, 1880
**Hastings**

1899 Hastings Asylum for the Insane opens when 112 patients are transferred to it from the state hospital in Rochester.

1919 The name changes to Hastings State Asylum.

1937 The name changes to Hastings State Hospital.

Over the years, it starts and disbands “mental retardation” and alcohol and drug abuse programs. In 1978, the hospital closes and is acquired by the VA.

**Cambridge**

1919 The Legislature authorizes creation of the Minnesota Colony for Epileptics.

1949 The name changes to Cambridge State School and Hospital.

1967 The Legislature changes the name to Cambridge State Hospital.

1985 The name changes to Cambridge Regional Human Services Center, which serves developmentally disabled persons from nine counties.

1999 The facility closes.

**St. Paul**

1897 The Legislature gives the University of Minnesota the authority to start the Minnesota Institute for Crippled and Indigent Children.

1925 The hospital is renamed after its chief surgeon Arthur Gillette, M.D., and becomes Gillette State Hospital for Crippled Children.

1971 The hospital is renamed Gillette Children’s Hospital. Today, the hospital is a multisite entity known as Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare.
AH-GWAH-CHING

1907  The Minnesota State Sanatorium for Consumptives opens its doors on the banks of Leech Lake in Cass County.

1922  The U.S. government changes the name of the post office at the sanatorium from State Sanatorium to Ah-gwah-ching, which means “out of doors” in Ojibwa. Congress approves funding for a building to be constructed for treating Minnesota Indians.

1957  The name changes to Minnesota State Sanatorium.

1962  The facility is converted into a state nursing home for geriatric patients with “challenging behaviors” and renamed Ah-gwah-ching Nursing Home.

1983  A Lakeside Treatment Center opens to treat chronically chemically dependent patients.

2008  The facility closes.

In 2001, Ah-gwah-ching was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

FARIBAULT

1879  The Legislature authorizes the Minnesota Institute for the Deaf and Dumb (established in 1858) to start an Experimental School for Imbeciles.

1881  The Legislature appropriates $25,000 for the construction of a Department for the Training of Imbeciles and the Custody of Idiots.

1887  The name changes to Minnesota Institute for Defectives and later that year to the Minnesota School for the Feeble-Minded.

1900  A 40-bed hospital opens, and the name of the institution is changed to the Minnesota School for the Feeble-Minded and Colony for Epileptics.

1949  The name is changed to Minnesota School and Colony.

1955  The name changes to Faribault State School and Hospital.

1980s  The Legislature authorizes the facility to be turned over to the Department of Corrections for a new prison, and the name changes to Faribault Regional Center.

1998  The facility closes.
**Willmar**

1907  The Legislature authorizes establishment of Willmar Hospital Farm for Inebriates.

1912  The hospital opens.

1917  Because of prohibition, business is slow, so the hospital expands its mission to include caring for the mentally ill.

1919  The name changes to Willmar State Asylum.

1937  The name changes to Willmar State Hospital.

1965  An adolescent treatment program is started.

1973  Glacial Ridge Training Center is established, which provides training for developmentally disabled people.

1985  Name changes to Willmar Regional Treatment Center.

1996  Developmental disability services become community-based.

2006  The hospital’s 37 buildings are sold. Seven are purchased by Kandiyohi County and leased back to the state.

Today, Willmar is home to Minnesota Specialty Health System, which serves adults with complex needs; has a chemical dependency program; and offers child and adolescent behavioral health services.

**Anoka**

1900  Anoka Asylum for Insane opens.

1919  The facility becomes known as Anoka State Asylum.

1937  The name changes to Anoka State Hospital.

1985  The name changes to Anoka-Metro Regional Treatment Center.

Today, this state facility consists of a 110-bed inpatient mental health facility and a 26-bed chemical dependency center. It offers outpatient care as well. MM