

HOSPITAL, from page 4

Native Oregonian that I am, I almost peed my pants. Needless to say, my mom thinks I'm crazy.

Giddily arriving at the hospital on a drizzly cold Dec. 22, I felt as if I were on the school field trip my school probably would never have let us go on, to a place as much a part of Oregon as the Doug Fir trees on the hospital's grounds.

Going inside the hospital, I, along with members of the Mental Health Association, passed through at least three gates that had to be unlocked and then shut again as we passed through. Was I in a maximum security prison, or a mental health facility? Sometimes, it was a little hard to tell.

The day room is a testament to the disrepair one wing of J Building has fallen into since 1991, when the decision was made to close and not renovate the ward. Plaster peels off the walls, falling onto tables and chairs that were once used by patients. The ward is like a time capsule of what a building would look like if it were never repaired.

The bathrooms are enormous. Green tile lines the bathtubs, the same color of surgical uniforms worn by today's doctors and nurses. Here, many patients received hydrotherapy. In the early 20th century, it was thought that bathing people in different water temperatures may yield some psychiatric benefit. No longer practiced at Oregon State Hospital, hydrotherapy is a now commonplace at spas and beauty salons.

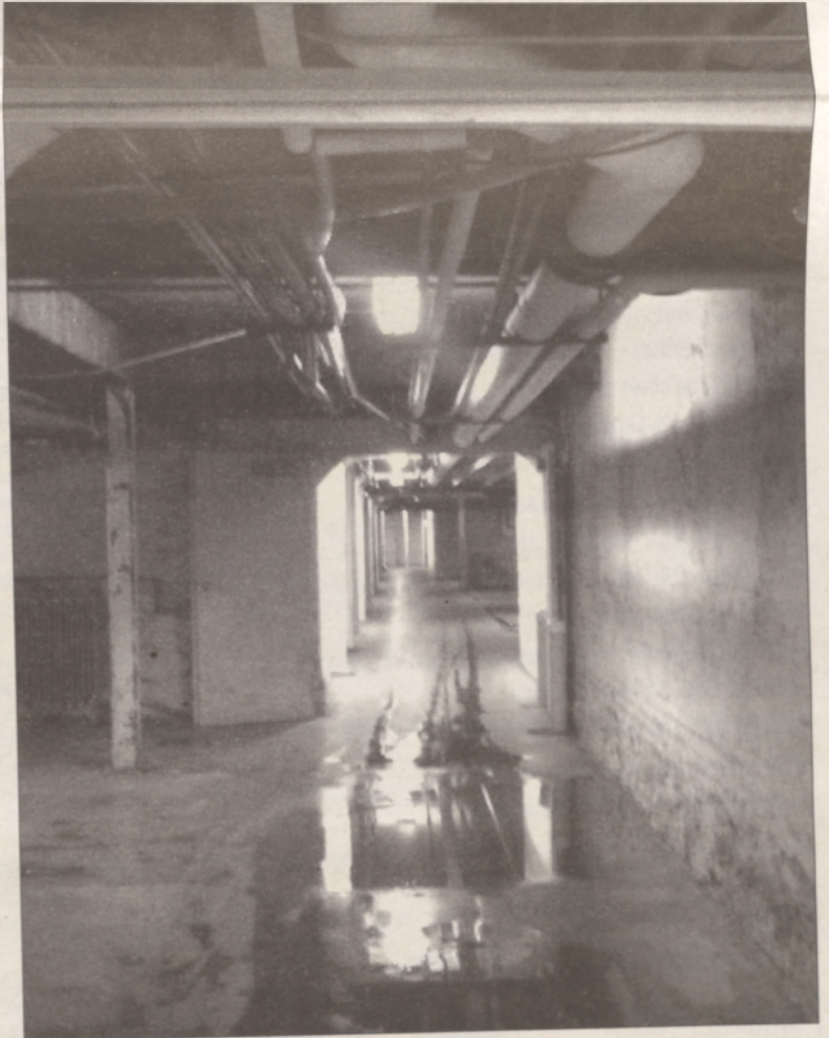
When showering, patients were escorted by nurses into the shower room where many were either handcuffed or tied with a security strap to the railing. Nurses would then proceed to either turn the shower on or spray patients down with a hose.

Underneath the hospital lies an extensive network of tunnels connecting all the hospital's buildings. The tunnels are still used today to transport patients, food cooked in the kitchen, and hospital workers. Bustling with movement in the past, the tunnels will be filled in when a new Hospital is built in 2011.

Completed in the summer of 1883, J Building is the hospital's oldest building, and has been called one of the most



dangerous mental health buildings in the country. The day after Street Roots and the Mental Health Association toured one floor, demolition began to gut the interior. Once the new state hospital is complete, will Oregon remember its past travesties and wretched treatment of patients? Will the new, 21st-century hospital finally begin to provide its patients with 21st-century treatment? If the haste and eagerness to tear down J Building represents an eagerness to forget the hospital's history, mental health advocates may be disappointed.



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