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The Valmora Industrial Sanatorium: A New Mexico Public Health Story

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“I frequently tell my patients that the trouble they have below the neck is often not as important as the trouble they may have above the neck.”

-C.H. Gellenthien

**INTRODUCTION**

The Valmora Industrial Sanatorium, located in Watrous, Mora County, New Mexico, was one of many Tuberculosis Sanatoria that sprang up in New Mexico around the turn of the century and represented one of the first Public Health efforts to take root in New Mexico. Valmora offered highly patient focused methods of treatment and integrated health education with leading a healthy lifestyle.

Founded in 1909 by Dr. William T. Brown, Valmora was reorganized into a non-profit corporation supported by large businesses back east such as Marshall Fields, Sears & Roebuck, and the Chicago Daily News. This created the opportunity for working people to get effective care for TB that in the past was exclusively available to the wealthy.

Valmora evolved over the 20th century from a self-sufficient industrial TB Sanatorium to a community clinic for heart and chest patients, in addition to a base of operations for the medical director, Dr. Carl H. Gellenthien, as he practiced “old-fashioned” medicine across the better part of northern New Mexico, from delivering babies to stitching up knife wounds.

The dry and thin air of New Mexico’s climate was believed to aid in the recovery from TB. "Lungers” would starve the TB bacteria in their lungs of the requisite moisture and oxygen and thus have a better, quicker chance of recovery.

“In those days when the cause of disease was not known treatment was vague and inaccurate. This, coupled with the fact that man is inherently superstitious led to all sorts of queer and absurd forms of treatment.” C.H. Gellenthien

**NEW MEXICO DIGITAL COLLECTION**

A large portion of the archival material in the Valmora collection has been digitized and uploaded to the New Mexico Digital Collection for any and all to view and use in educational activity, increasing the potential for use in a Public Health Curriculum.

The collection includes 300+ photos, patient creative work, articles of incorporation, and many notes, drafts, and final copies of Dr. Gellenthien’s writings and research, as well as other realia.

http://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/valmora