In view of the knowledge to be acquired': public visits to New York's asylums in the nineteenth century.

'In View of the Knowledge to be Acquired': Public Visits to New York's Asylums in the Nineteenth Century.


Author(s): Miron, Janet

Abstract: This chapter examines asylum tourism in nineteenth-century New York. It argues that the popularity of visits by the public undermines the notion that asylums were segregated from greater society, and instead, suggests that these institutions were deeply embedded within the social and cultural landscape of the time. While challenging many of our assumptions regarding the relationship of asylums with their greater communities, the phenomenon of visiting enhances our understanding of both popular attitudes towards the mentally ill and the experiences of patients themselves. As people believed asylums represented something remarkable in society, visiting provides new perspectives on the social role of these institutions and nineteenth-century practices more generally.

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