



PROJETO ACERVO: INFORMAÇÕES HOSPITAIS COLÔNIAS

1 – Name of the Institution: Sanatório Padre Antônio Manuel

2 – Historical Overview: Hospital-Colônia da Mirueira

Inaugurated in 1941, in accordance with the recommendations of the Leprosy Prophylaxis Service, the hospital-colony Mirueira was the symbol of the social isolation of “lepers” in Pernambuco. Located in the outskirts of Beberibe, 14 km from the capital—Recife—Mirueira, as it is popularly known, followed the leprosarium model created by the constructor and architect Abelardo Soares Caiuby with the construction of the Leprosário Santo Ângelo, in São Paulo in 1918. Although it was constructed in a place far removed from any urban location, it was, however, accessible to the “healthy” who wished to visit their relatives and friends interned there. The land is itself elevated, surrounded by a virgin forest and the center of intense wind currents.

Occupying an area of 200 hectares, its construction began in 1936, under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Health, after the state of Pernambuco acquired the land for 100 *contos*. The federal government, according to the article in “Diário de Pernambuco” August 26, 1941, spent, in total, 2513 *contos*, or 850 *reais*. Also according to the article, the maintenance of the hospital was the responsibility of the state government through the Instituto de Assistência Hospitalar, due to an accord signed in 1938.

Constructed to be a “microcity,” and with a capacity for 400 of the sick, the colony was designed to provide the interned with the “means of minimizing their suffering.” In spite of having the name “hospital,” its structure was very different from an asylum with beds and wards. Rather, it was far more like a city, with roads, plazas, a house of worship, a city hall, school, and recreation areas, in addition to the medical complexes necessary to maintain and treat the sick. Divided into three zones, the Mirueira Colony was divided into a “clean” or healthy area, a “sick” area, and a neutral area in between.

Even though they were restricted to the walls of the hospital, far from their relatives, friends, and inclusion into the larger world, the interned in Mirueira did not live lives marked only by pain and suffering. They did not spend their lives waiting for death or a cure. Much more important was their battle against being forgotten, against the historical determinism that labeled them as “condemned” to death.

Within the space that they were forced into, they remade their lives, forged new relationships, and new pacts of mutual help and solidarity. The “metropolis of pain,” the “city of fear,” was a city of much life and joy as well. They resisted isolation and oblivion in almost imperceptible, silent ways. The fight against exclusion was fought not only through protests, articles, and escapes: resistance occurred in the day-to-day lives of these people; in their daily fight for survival, their festivals, their friendships, their loves, their marriages.

During the period in which compulsory isolation was practiced rigorously, the residents of Mirueira developed various activities with the goal of minimizing their suffering: they created a Theatrical Troup—“Troupe Teatral Brasil Lisboa” – which periodically put on spectacles within the colony; a newspaper that circulated in the whole country and a few colonies outside the country—“A Voz da Mirueira,” later renamed “O Momento”; founded a club– “Grêmio Cultural Silvino Lopes” – with the goals of facilitating learning and literacy and incentivizing its members to produce literary works. The club even put on a story contest, written about by “A Voz da Mirueira.” Later, they created the Instituto Técnico e Cultural da Mirueira, with the idea of helping ex-Hansen’s patients create a life outside of the hospital after they were released. The interned also produced a daily sports newspaper, read over the Amplificado Mirueirense, located within the hospital itself. They also organized a music school, later named Grupo Musical Alfa. This group produced a disk for Carnival called “Moreninha Dengosa”. The colony also had two Carnival parrades, the Farrapos and the Batutas; a Sports Federation, with three football teams (União Atlético, Guararapes F.C. and São Cristóvão F.C.); two musical groups, Águias do Ritmo and Five Boys; a theater group, the Cine Teatro Brasil Lisboa; a projection room, where films were shown two times a week; a dance club, where there were parties and dances; a library that at one time had over 2000 books.

3. Situation today: The only active leprosarium in the Northeast, the hospital still treats Hansen’s disease and is now the state reference for treating chemical dependence. 52 people still reside within the hospital, all that are left of the 500 patients that were there in the 1960s. Today, the Hospital da Mirueira decentralized its treatment into an outpatient clinic, with 11 medical specialties and 174 beds for the internment. Even though it is prohibited for patients to live within the hospital, many people still come to the hospital with the intention of living there, according to nurse Rosa Albuquerque, who has worked in Mirueira for the past eight years.

INFORMATION ABOUT DOCUMENTATION AND MEMOIRS

4 – Type of documentation:

(X) textual (X) Iconographic (X) bibliographic () oral

() other: specify: _____

5 – Appr. quantity of documentation: (units; boxes of archives; volumes; *specify maximum*)

1. Textual:

- Journal A Voz da Mirueira (1951-1952 / nº 01 to 04; 06 to 13; 15 to 19).
Journal O Momento (1953-1968 – close to 90 issues, which vary between 4 and 20 pages).
- Revista Brasileira de Leprologia (1936-1970).
- 6 medical theses from 1920 to 1940
- A few documents have been located in the Arquivo Público de Pernambuco, such as the statute of the Sociedade Pernambucana de Combate a Lepra; the Regimento Interno do Instituto Guararapes – preventório (“preventory”); and a few rare booklets about leprosy

2. Iconographic:

- 15 blueprints from the hospital’s original construction
- A few photographs not yet accounted for

3. Bibliographic:

- 4 books produced by ex-Hansen’s patients and one *cordel*

4. Oral: _____

5. Other: _____

() Unknown quantity

6 – Is there some kind of preservation work being done?

() yes

(X) no

7 – If yes, what kind?

() Museum

() Memorial

() Center of Documentation

() Library

() Other: specify: _____

9 – The location has furniture: (*shelves, work table, etc.*)

The documentation is held in the Arquivo Público Estadual Jordão Emerenciano (APEJE) –the journals and the blueprints; the *Revista Brasileira de Leprologia* and the medical theses about leprosy are found in the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco; photographs and books are with individuals.

14 –The community of the Colony knows about the work being done:

yes

no

14.1. The community is involved in the work:

yes

no

15. Is there some kind of oral history work being done with ex-patients?

yes

no

However, I am currently compiling testimonials of residents.

16. Is there some kind of historical work about the institution?
(academic, institutional, etc.)

yes

no

16.1. If possible, please include a reference:

MSc Thesis in conclusion by Carolina Cahu

Responsible for the information provided:

Carolina Pinheiro Mendes Cahu

cpmcahu@hotmail.com

Translation to English: Elisabeth Poorman