

THOMAS W. SALMON PAPERS

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DeWitt Wallace Institute for the History of Psychiatry
Weill Cornell Medical College
525 East 68th Street
New York, New York 10065

Thomas William Salmon was born in Lansingburg, New York, on January 6, 1876. After graduating from Lansingburg Academy, he taught school for two years and then went to Albany Medical College, receiving his degree in 1899. He practiced medicine until his untimely death on August 13, 1927, in a drowning accident while sailing on the Long Island Sound. Surviving were his wife of more than twenty seven years, Helen Potter Ashley, and their six children.

Dr. Salmon was a leading pioneer in the field of mental hygiene. His first position was as bacteriologist studying an epidemic of diphtheria at Willard (N.Y.) State Hospital for the Insane. His interest in psychiatry was kindled at Willard while working with Dr. William L. Russell, already a leader in the field. In 1903, Dr. Salmon accepted a commission in the United States Marine Hospital Service (the present United States Public Health Service) and became especially interested in the sailors who were patients at the U.S.M.H.S. general hospitals. It was for them that he advocated a hospital for deep sea fishermen.

One of his most notable achievements on the P.H.S. was the establishment of the Ellis Island psychiatric service for immigrants. In 1905, Dr. Salmon was assigned to the immigration service and worked there for the next six years. In 1911, at the request of the New York State Commission in Lunacy, he was given a leave of absence from the service in order to serve as chief medical examiner of the New York State Board of Alienists. Because of his work with the immigrants and the New York State Board, in 1912 Dr. Salmon became director of special studies of the National Committee on Mental Hygiene. In 1915, the National Committee could afford to hire him permanently, so Dr. Salmon resigned from the Public Health Service, from which he had been on leave since 1912, and became the medical director of the National Committee.

During the First World War, Dr. Salmon did what he considered to be his most important work. He developed a plan for, and then implemented, the organization of neuropsychiatric units for the Army and the Navy. The goals of these units were the prevention or early treatment of mental disorders in the military services and the elimination of mentally disordered recruits.

After the war, Dr. Salmon became involved in academic psychiatry. He accepted a position as professor of psychiatry at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. As

professor, he carried through the plans of creating a psychiatric institute in conjunction with the University by founding the State Psychiatric Institute at Columbia. In addition to his teaching, Dr. Salmon was a member of leading national and New York societies of neurology and psychiatry and was a president of the American Psychiatric Association and the New York Psychiatric Society. He was the author of one book and numerous journal articles. His complete bibliography is attached.

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National Committee for Mental Hygiene |
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State Commission in Lunacy |
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Box 5

Reprints

W. SALMON

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