

COURSE VIDEO

Secret History of Institutions and Institutionalization in America, 1880-1960
An Online Conversation Course

Perspective from Alex Green, Writer, Scholar, and Lecturer

THE BRUE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER

AmericanAncestors.org
by NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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Demystifying the Search for Disabled Ancestors

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Seeing Disabled Ancestors in History

- One of the most humanizing things we can see in our family history.
- You had ancestors with disabilities and you'll never know it
- Not only do conceptions change, terms change.
- Locating and interpreting records can be challenging.

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Perspective from Alex Green

A Bit About Me

- Faculty of the Harvard Kennedy School
- Visiting Fellow at the Project on Disability at Harvard Law School
- Visiting Scholar at the Lurie Institute for Disability Policy at Brandeis University
- The Work...

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Disability records

- Types of individual institutional records:
 - How to locate them.
 - How to interpret their meaning.
- Related records:
 - How to locate them.
 - How to use them to understand the context of your ancestor's life.
- How to understand these documents when interpreting the story of your ancestor's life.
- *A Quick Disclaimer About Language

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A Brief Overview of Institutions

- Almshouses/Poor Houses
- Orphanages
- Hospitals
- Asylums/State Hospitals
- Soldiers' Homes
- Institutional Schools
 - For people with physically disabilities
 - For the blind
 - For the deaf and hard of hearing
 - For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

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What Types of Records Exist and Where Can You Find Them?

- **Federal Records (Including National Archives and Records Administration)**
 - Census
 - Indigenous Institutions
 - Military Institutions, including Soldiers' Homes
- **State Archives**
 - Institutional Records
 - State Agencies, Departments, and Regulatory Boards
 - Legislative Documents and Court Records
- **State Vital Records**
 - Birth Certificates
 - Death Certificates
 - Marriage and Divorce Records
- **County, City, and Town Records**
 - Vital Records
 - County Almshouses (Poor Houses)
 - Financial Statements
- **Nonprofit and University Collections**
 - American Ancestors, State and Local Historical Societies
 - Medical Archives
 - Institutional Archives

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Roadblocks and Why

- Restrictions
- Misplaced fears
- Misinterpretations of vital records
- An ugly feedback loop: How to know what you don't know?
- Truth and reconciliation commission in California
- State Commission in Massachusetts



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Words Matter


DISPENSARIES.— These charities, by practical observation, are also with- be formed of their value, when it is st. are reported more than eighty thousand by the physicians and surgeons in attendan- tions the diseases are arranged into distinct ca. cases of the head, chest, abdomen, extremities, diseases, etc. Over forty thousand have been Eclectic Medical Dispensary of New York by our

INSTITUTIONAL NAMES



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Words Matter:
Hurtful, Dated,
and Bizarre



MORONS.—Those whose mental development is above that of an imbecile, but does not exceed that of a normal child of about twelve years.

Dipsomania
Ames, 187
First published by the author in 1874.

It is recommended by the BUREAU OF STATISTICS as an alternative designation for Alcoholism. Excessive drinking, especially use of P.O.A.

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Words Matter:
"At School"

OCCUPATION, TRADE, OR PROFESSION of each person TEN YEARS of age and over.	
OCCUPATION.	Months and days unemployed.
19	20
at school	
at school	
at school	
at school	

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Words Matter:
Inmate, Patient,
Student

Rose	Inmate	12/17	Jan 1864
Adelle	Inmate	12/17	Jan 1861
Blanche	Inmate	12/17	Feb 1876
Lucas	Inmate	12/17	Mar 1863
Estherine	Inmate	12/17	— 1840
Isabella	Inmate	12/17	Feb 1866
George	Inmate	12/17	Dec 1860

Josephine	Student	12/17	1864	at 0
Patience	Patient	12/17	1864	Relationship: Patient
Anna	Student	12/17	1864	at 0
Anthony	Inmate	12/17	1864	at 0
Harriet	Inmate	12/17	1864	at 0

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Words Matter:
Names & Vital Records

Worcester Lee Harris (P-176)

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Words Matter:
Names Continued

Birth Date: February 10, 1887
Death Date: May 5, 1963
Historians: Alex Green, Sydney and Alex Green

Riley "Aureline" Cross

Riley "Aureline" Cross was born on February 10, 1887, in Worcester, Mass., to Edward Cross of New York and Bridget Cross (nee Doyle), an immigrant from Ireland. Edward and Bridget married in Worcester, Mass., in 1875. Edward worked as a baker. It was a second marriage for Edward, whose first wife Mary had died of typhoid in 1873, after just one year and a half of marriage. Edward and Mary had a daughter, Sarah, who was then raised by Edward and Bridget.

Edward and Bridget continued to live in Worcester, where he worked as a painter for a period before returning to baking. Around 1916, they had a daughter, Louise, followed two


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Proof: Disabled or Not Disabled?

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Rules for Records

- Contradictions of Access & Variations by State
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Next of Kin
- Lawyering Up




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Hot button issues

- Segregating disability records
- Yes or no thinking rather than records management
- Digital revolution

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See you Monday, March 20
for the 6:00-7:30 p.m. (ET)
live discussion featuring
panelists Lindsay Fulton,
Pam Fessler, and Alex Green

The Secret History of Institutions and Institutionalization, 1880-1960

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