
The **ESSENTIAL WORK** *of* **SEA VIEW HOSPITAL**

When Sea View Tuberculosis Hospital opened in 1913, TB was a leading cause of death among New Yorkers, killing over ten thousand people in the year 1910 alone. Sea View was one of 30 public hospitals administered by the City of New York. With 1,402 beds, it was one of the largest tuberculosis hospitals in the country. It was expensive to build, costing the city four million dollars, roughly \$120 million today. The hospital grounds consisted of multiple buildings that included open-air patient pavilions, staff housing, a surgical building, a pathological building, a chapel, a powerhouse, an administrative building, a kitchen and dining hall, a nurse's home, an amusement hall, and laundry facilities.

It took a staff of 500 to 800 people to keep the campus running. From nurses and doctors to cooks and cleaners, everyone was essential and at risk of catching TB. In fact, surviving hospital records suggest that 3-7% of nurses contracted TB while employed at Sea View, compared to less than 1% transmission of infectious disease in modern hospitals. Much of the staff lived on campus in staff housing, which included a 300-room nurses' dormitory. Nursing staff delivered round-the-clock care, washing patients, taking temperatures, administering medicine, and assisting in surgeries that sought to stop the progress of the disease. The early 1930s saw a demographic shift in the nursing staff at Sea View as Black nurses stepped in to fill positions vacated by white women.

Sea View's staff worked in fear of incurable disease for another two decades. A series of drug trials, which began at Sea View in 1951, ushered in a new era of outpatient treatment for the disease. The last TB patient left Sea View Hospital ten years later. Now a landmarked historic district, the facility remains a part of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation and serves as a nursing home and rehabilitation center.