

September 10, 1937

[HRPC - Graduating Teachers - Doug Keapic, NY]

FDR Speech File

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INFORMAL, EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
to the Graduate Nurses at the Hudson River State Hospital
near Poughkeepsie, New York
September 10, 1937 4.40 P.M.

(The President was introduced by Judge Hopkins, who men-

tioned the fact that the estate was owned by the President's father

in 1867 and that the President's father had become a member of the
Board of Trustees in 1872.)

DR. FOLSOM, MEMBERS OF THE BOARD, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, AND YOU OF
THE GRADUATE NURSES:

I am very glad to have a chance to come down here today to
renew a very old acquaintanceship that goes back to my earliest days
when, as a very small boy, I used to come down here with my father
and hold the horses while he attended the Board meetings. And I re-
member one of my earliest recollections when I was about ten years
old, one of the few times that I ever saw my father thoroughly upset.
He came back into the carriage to drive back to Hyde Park and he was
quite silent. I knew what he wanted to say, and I said, "What hap-
pened?" "Well," he said, "I had the most terrible time because we
were going through -- the Board of Managers -- one of the wards and
there was a perfectly dear, sweet old lady in the ward but as soon as
she caught sight of me she jumped up out of her chair and said, 'Why,
Albert, don't you remember your Vicky?' She insisted that she was
Queen Victoria and that I was Prince Albert."

So, from those earliest days on up to the time I became Gov-
ernor I have always driven through here very often and kept in touch
with this perfectly splendid institution of the State of New York.

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This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

And then, when I went to Albany, a very curious thing happened. I knew the Hudson River State Hospital so well that during the whole four years I was in Albany I never inspected this hospital -- it was too close to home. I did not have to inspect it.

But during those four years we did, I think, a very great thing for mental hygiene in this State because when I got to Albany in 1928 I found that we were something like five or six thousand beds short. There was a great deal of overcrowding and a great deal of suffering and we launched at that time this big building program you are all familiar with, with the result that today, with nearly all of the building activities completed, the State of New York stands, I think, first among all the states of the Union in its care of mental hygiene cases.

As Governor I made a number of inspection trips and during those trips I became very familiar with all the other State Hospitals and I had all kinds of interesting experiences. I remember when we were up on the St. Lawrence near Ogdensburg, I was driving through the grounds with the Superintendent in an open car, just like this one, and as we drove through the grounds there was a very sensible looking old gentleman who was mowing the grass. As we approached, -- the Governor of the State and the Superintendent of the Hospital -- he put down his mowing machine and stood at the edge of the road and, as we went by, took off his cap most politely and put it back on his head. My family were in the car behind and after we got about fifty feet past him, I heard the family roaring with laughter. I could not do anything about it so when we got back to the Superintendent's house I asked them what the joke was and they told me that the old gentleman, after we got

safely past, had put his hat back on his head and put his thumb up to his nose. (Illustrating -- laughter)

So I told the Superintendent I did not think there was anything the matter with him and that he ought to be sent home. (Laughter)

I am glad to see my old friend, Dr. Parsons, over here in the back row. I am awfully, awfully sorry he is leaving the Department (of Hygiene, of the State of New York) because the people of the State of New York and a good many Governors have depended on him for all these years. He has done a wonderful job and I am awfully sorry he is leaving the public service. We shall miss him very much. (Applause) And I think in these years that he and I have been in Albany -- he knows more about it than I do -- it is a very remarkable thing what progress has been made in mental hygiene. Even during the short time I was in Albany, the number of cases that were cured, sent home able to resume their life in the community, represented a constantly increasing percentage. It is one of the most interesting examples of the kind of work being done today by medical science.

You young ladies who are graduating today have a great responsibility in carrying on the progress we are making. You are performing an excellent service for the people of the State.

I am glad to have been here today and I hope to see many of you in the years to come. (Applause)