

### **Wilhelmina Bachman nee Geissinger**

Born 1849, widowed. Was in late 60s early 70s while at Hospital. Died in 1929 at the Bensalem Mansion part of Friend's Hospital

Wilhelmina "Willie" Bachman (nee Geissinger) was born in 1849<sup>1</sup>, putting her in her late 60s when she was admitted to Friends Hospital in the late 1910s. Her case provides an example of long-term hospitalizations and the life of the elderly at the institution.

Over the 2 years documented in the daily record book, Willie spent most of her time "occupied in ward," reading, or doing needlework.<sup>2</sup> In March, April and June 1919, reading and "occupied in ward" are the only activities recorded in the record book. The frequency with which Willie took part in reading, needlework or both was inconsistent, though Willie showed a general preference for reading over needlework. From September through December 1919, Willie took walks with an attendant and participated in art classes, and spent other time outside. However, from the beginning of 1920 through the rest of the time recorded in the casebook, Willie's activities were once again restricted to needlework, reading, and being "occupied in ward."

It is difficult to ascertain the severity or nature of Willie's condition from the casebook. During these two years, Willie was never recorded as being in restraints or secluded, "fed mechanically" or destructive. At the same time, Willie never ate at the Officer's Table, attended special activities such as sociables, or left the Hospital to visit family. Before Willie was at Friends Hospital, she lived with her daughter and son-in-law for more than a decade after her husband's death.<sup>3</sup> It was not uncommon for mentally healthy elders to end up in mental institutions in the early years if their families were no longer able to support them in the early 20th century. Willie continued to be treated by Friends Hospital for the rest of her life. She was

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<sup>1</sup> "Pennsylvania, U.S., Death Certificates, 1906-1969," digital image s.v. "Willie A Bachman (died 15 Jan. 1929), *Ancestry.com*."

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all following citations are from Daily Record Book, 1919-1921, MC-1261, Item 116, Friends Hospital Records, Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections, Haverford, Pennsylvania.

<sup>3</sup> See 1910 and 1920 US Federal Censuses, "Willie Ann Bachman."

transferred to the Friends Hospital Bensalem Mansion sometime between 1921 and 1929.<sup>4</sup> The Bensalem Mansion was a “convalescent home,” most likely a home for elderly patients who required long-term care.<sup>5</sup> She died at Bensalem (recorded as “Ben Salem Farm” on her death certificate) on January 15, 1929.

## Women’s Ward 1

### October 1918

- Occupied in ward, needlework

### November 1918

- Occupied in ward, needlework
- Two quaker visits: Nov 4 and Nov 26

### December 1918

- On special diet, occupied in ward and reading all month
- 5 days near end of month also needlework

### January 1919

- Occupied in ward, reading, all month
- One day also needlework

### February 1919

- Missing records for first  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the month, but Feb 19-29 occupied in ward and reading

### March 1919

- Reading and occupied in ward all month

### April 1919

- Reading and occupied in ward all month

### May 1919

- One day of reading and occupied in ward at the beginning of the month
- Needlework and occupied in needlework at the end of the month

### June 1919

- Reading and occupied in ward

### July 1919

- Reading, occupied in ward every day
- Sometimes needlework

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<sup>4</sup> Willie was most likely transferred to Bensalem in 1921. Her 1929 death certificate says that she had been suffering from “chronic myocarditis” for 90 months at the time of her death. Working under the assumption that Willie was moved from the Philadelphia location of the hospital to the Bensalem location around the time that her physical health problems began, this would situate her move in mid-1921.

<sup>5</sup> “Pennsylvania, U.S., Death Certificates, 1906-1969,” digital image s.v. “Willie A Bachman (died 15 Jan. 1929), *Ancestry.com*.

#### August 1919

- Reading, occupied in ward every day
- Sometimes needlework
- Two walks w attendant at the end of the month

#### September 1919

- Reading every day
- Frequent walks with attendant
- September 8-13 walks, needlework class, art class, occupied outside every day
- Either often unclean in habits

#### October 1919

- Reading + occupied in ward every day
- Outdoor walks w attendant nearly every day
- Unclean in habits nearly every day

#### November 1919

- Reading, occupied in ward every day
- Only about half of the days walking, needle work class

#### December 1919

- Reading, occupied in ward every day
- Only 9 walks this month
- Few needlework classes

#### January 1920

- Reading and occupied in ward every day until January 15
- January 16 switches over to reading and needlework everyday, except for January 17 when it's reading, needlework and occupied in ward
- Recorded as "Nellie" this month???

#### February 1920

- Needlework and reading every day

#### March 1920

- Needlework and reading every day until March 20
- After March 20 adds occupied in ward as well

#### April 1920

- Occupied in ward, needlework, reading every day

#### May 1920

- Occupied in ward, needlework, reading every day until May 24
- May 25 onwards only occupied in ward and reading

#### June 1920

- Variable patterns of needlework, reading and occupied in ward

#### July 1920

- Same as June

#### August 1920

- Same as June

#### September 1920

- Only ward and reading, except September 9 when needlework too

#### October 1920

- Variable ward, reading and needlework

November 1920

- Same as october

December 1920

- Only ward and reading

January 1921

- Variable ward, reading and needlework