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Chilling Photos Of An Abandoned Mental Asylum That's Being Turned Into An Evangelical College Campus

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David Allee

Life-long New Yorker David Allee has spent his summers in rural Connecticut for as long as he can remember. Every year, on his drive up to his family's country house, he would pass by the Harlem Valley Psychiatric Center, a massive complex that dominates the upstate New York town of Wingdale.

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Originally slated to be a correctional facility, the hospital treated patients suffering from severe psychological and psychiatric issues from 1924 until it closed its doors in 1994.

The campus has sat abandoned for 20 years, giving it an unnerving atmosphere. But it's about to undergo a major transformation. It was recently purchased by Olivet University, a west coast-based evangelical Christian college that was founded by controversial preacher David Jang, who was rumored to have helped fund International Business Times' acquisition of Newsweek.

Allee made a dozen trips to the complex to capture it in its abandoned state, photographing the buildings and surrounding area. He has shared a selection of the photos with Business Insider. See more of his work on his Facebook page.

The hospital is made up of 80 buildings on more than 800 acres of land. The massive complex has sat empty for two decades.



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When it was opened in 1924, the prevailing approach to psychiatric care was to remove patients from the stresses of daily life.

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The center, about 65 miles north of New York City, was originally built to ease overcrowding at nearby institutions.

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Because patients became dependent on asylums, they rarely left. Hospital populations continually grew, often leading to poor living conditions.

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At its peak, in the mid-1950s, the hospital had more than 5,000 patients and 5,000 employees, according to Hudson Valley magazine.



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The campus was so large that there was even a 9-hole golf course that doctors could play on. Patients were often encouraged to be caddies.



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It had its own bakery, a bowling alley, ice cream parlor, and one of the biggest dairy farms in the state.



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The complex produced its own energy via a dam and hydroelectric power plant.



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The trend towards treating mentally ill patients in "complete institutions" where they lived and worked fell out of fashion in the 1960s, as overcrowding and underfunding led to wide abuses at hospitals.

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A real estate company purchased the abandoned asylum a decade ago, but gave up on plans to turn it into a housing and retail complex before the housing market collapsed, according to The New York Times.

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Olivet University paid \$20 million for about half the property in 2013.

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It's an ideal space for a college campus: A Metro-North railway stop on campus connects it directly with New York City.

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Olivet has already begun to clean up the former asylum, mowing lawns, stripping brush, and clearing land for sports fields.

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While Olivet's plans are still not totally clear, it appears that the college intends to use the existing buildings. Allee, who used to be an urban planner, doesn't think that's a good idea.

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"It's become a hazardous waste site. The buildings were so full of asbestos and mold that I'm shocked anybody thinks they could rehab them," says Allee.

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Wingdale residents are actually excited about the arrival of Olivet, according to the New York Times. Residents expect that the college will draw new jobs and commerce to the town.

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Read more: <http://www.businessinsider.com/17-chilling-photos-of-the-abandoned-upstate-new-york-asylum-that-will-soon-be-a-college-campus-2014-7#ixzz37ddSILh4>