

Hospital do Contrato Diamantino, Santa Casa de Diamantina and Hospício da Diamantina

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ABSTRACT

We describe in this study the origin and evolution of three hospitals in the city of Diamantina. The Hospital do Contrato Diamantino, the Santa Casa de Caridade de Diamantina e the Hospício da Diamantina were, in chronological order, one of the first hospitals, the third catholic hospital, and the first psychiatric hospital in the state of Minas Gerais, respectively. To understand the emergence and evolution of these three health care institutions, we review the socioeconomic history of the city of Diamantina.

Key words: History of Medicine; Hospitals/history.

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RESUMO

Descrevem-se a origem e a evolução de três hospitais da cidade de Diamantina. O Hospital do Contrato Diamantino, a Santa Casa de Caridade de Diamantina e o Hospício da Diamantina foram, por ordem cronológica, um dos primeiros hospitais, a terceira santa casa, o primeiro hospital psiquiátrico do estado de Minas Gerais, respectivamente. Para se compreender o surgimento e a evolução das três casas de saúde, é feita revisão da história socioeconômica da cidade de Diamantina.

Palavras-chave: História da Medicina; Hospitais/história.

INTRODUCTION

This is a description of the origin and evolution of three hospitals in the old Tijuco (or Tejuco) village, later known as Diamantina. The Hospital do Contrato Diamantino, the Santa Casa de Caridade, and the Diamantina Asylum were, respectively and in chronological order, one of the first hospitals, the third Santa Casa and the first psychiatric hospital in the state of Minas Gerais. The sources for the history of the Santa Casa are its own archives and the Antônio Torres library administered by the Institute of National Historical and Artistic Heritage (Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional – IPHAN).

To understand the emergence and evolution of the three health institutions it is necessary to know the diamond mining history at Tijuco, later the city of Diamantina.

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DIAMANTINA

Diamantina, as with other historical cities in Minas Gerais, is the result of the adventures of pioneers in search of precious metals. In order to support the exploration, which was the main economic activity, several diversified parallel activities were developed and this produced the material wealth that enabled the villages to develop cultural manifestations inspired by European elites. This relationship with Europe and the riches from the gold and diamond exploration enabled the development of a singular culture, reproducing in Minas Gerais a sophisticated colonial architecture similar to what was built at the same time on the European continent.

In the late 17th century pioneers and adventurers found abundant gold on the banks of the Tijuco stream in northeastern Minas Gerais, the location where the Arraial do Tijuco was soon to be established. Diamonds were first found in 1727, and their existence was made official in 1729, when they were declared property of the Portuguese Crown, along with all other precious metals. The Captaincy of Minas Gerais was divided into four districts: Vila Rica, Rio das Mortes, Rio das Velhas, and Serro do Frio. In 1731, the district of Serro do Frio was established as the diamond district, with headquarters at Tijuco. By that action, the Portuguese Crown made the access to the mines more difficult and increased the capitation rates in order to exercise a strict control over the production and price of diamonds on the European market. In 1734, with the purpose of curbing the spread of smuggling and stopping the losses of public funds, the *Intendência dos Diamantes* (Diamond Stewardship) was created. It prohibited the indiscriminate exploitation of diamonds by individuals. In 1739 diamond exploitation became the private monopoly of a contractor who bought extraction rights from the Crown. It was the contractor's right to mine and charge taxes, and any individual was then prohibited to mine or dig for gold in the lands of the diamond district; from 1745 on even the public's entry was not allowed without authorization from the colonial authorities. In the period from 1740 to 1748, Sergeant Major João Fernandes de Oliveira was contracted. From 1748 to 1752 the contract was under the responsibility of Felisberto Caldeira Brant. In 1753, the Crown converted diamond sales into a Regal Crown monopoly. From 1753 to 1770, João Fernandes Oliveira assumed the position of contractor along with his son, who was a judge and had the same name. The gold from the co-

lony and the diamonds extracted from Tijuco in that period sponsored the splendor of the transoceanic empire of João V (1689-1750).^{1,3}

In 1771 by decision of the Marquês de Pombal, a minister under King José I (1714-1777), the system of contracts was abolished. The extraction of diamonds, as well as the marketing, became a monopoly of the Portuguese Crown under the supervision of the *Real Extração dos Diamantes* (the Royal Extraction of Diamonds) with headquarters at Arraial do Tijuco. It was composed of the steward of the king, three cashier-administrators, and one inspector. By means of the *Regimento Diamantino* (nicknamed "the green book"), the diamond district became submitted to specific administration directly under the steward and the governor. The *Regimento* was constituted by the compilation of several older decrees, which were continuously reiterated and never effectively implemented in the district. The Royal Extraction system continued along the reign (1777-1792) of D. Maria I (1734-1816), during the regency (1792-1816) and the reign (1816-1826) of her son D. João VI (1767-1826).^{1,3}

Tijuco was located in the Serro Frio district and was the administrative center of the Diamantina Demarcation. It was downgraded to village status during the colonial period, despite the significant population at the time. Only after 1821, with the reform of the code, did the Tijuco inhabitants manage to free themselves from the great oppression imposed by the Royal Crown through the *Regimento Diamantino*. In 1831 the village was dismembered from Serro and raised to the category of city in 1838 with the name of Diamantina.^{1,2}

Diamond extraction in Diamantina in the 19th century presents phases of crises and recoveries that can be separated thus: 1808-1832, first crisis; 1832-1870, peak of the mining activity; 1870-1897, second crisis; 1897-1930, recovery of mining activity.⁴

The crisis between 1808-1832 corresponds to the final collapse of the Royal Extraction, triggered by the Portuguese crisis in the early 19th century (the Napoleonic wars and the French invasion of Portugal) which culminated in the coming of the Court to the colony in 1808, followed by its independence in 1822. Between 1832 and 1870 there was a marked increase in mining caused by the freedom to dig for gold as a consequence of the country's independence and discovery of new mines. That was the period of highest extraction of diamonds in the Alto Jequitinhonha region. In 1870 a severe crisis started as a direct consequence of the discovery of diamonds in South

Africa, which caused a severe economic depression in the Diamantina region. From 1890 the mining activity recommenced with the installation of companies on the banks of the Jequitinhonha River.⁴

When the decline of mining in Minas Gerais, the economic solution was agriculture. As a consequence of the barrenness of the Diamantina soil, in 1874 Bishop João Antônio do Santos led a development project formulated by his two brothers (Antônio and Joaquim Felício dos Santos) and Pedro da Mata Machado to cope with the severe economic crisis. This project resulted in the foundation of three textile mills (Biribiri, São Roberto and Santa Bárbara) – an industrial complex of considerable magnitude at the time. The Diocesan Miter was the greatest promoter of this process, either as the owner of the textile mill or as issuer of printed bonds (“borrusquês”) in the consolidation period of the Republic in the 1890s, when there was a shortage of currency. From the second half of the 20th century the textile industry in Diamantina suffered considerably and diamond extraction progressively declined.⁴

As a consequence of the economic crisis, and its isolation in the wilderness of Minas Gerais, Diamantina’s progressive development in the 20th century was late, and only effectively achieved in the context of Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira ascent to power. His actions leaned towards the preservation of the historical urban center and to connecting the city by roads to the rest of the state. He spearheaded the construction of roads to connect Diamantina to the municipalities in the North and South regions. With the purpose of preserving the colonial houses, he managed to have the historic city center listed as cultural heritage in 1938. The immediate effect of that listing was the restoration of several buildings from the 19th century which were in ruins.⁵

By the end of the 20th century the city was elevated to the status of World Heritage Site by UNESCO and became the seat of the University of Vale do Jequitinhonha and Mucuri. Its economy has progressively been restructured based on tourism, education, and health.

HOSPITAL DO CONTRATO DIAMANTINO —

In the 18th century, medicine in Portugal and its colonies was divided into two branches: an erudite branch, exercised by trained doctors (also called physicians), and another, more practical branch, under the responsibility of surgeons. Before the Coimbra Univer-

sity reforms determined by the Marquis de Pombal, surgeons had a lower social status than doctors. Different from doctors, whose learning was about the ancient classics and their Arabian commentators, surgeons had a more empirical learning which was conducted at the Hospital de Todos os Santos in Lisbon and at Coimbra University.³ After training they were given a licensing letter from the Surgeon-Major of the Kingdom and were given the title of “approved surgeon”. In colonial Brazil, that attribution was granted by the Deputy Surgeon-Major. In addition to the doctor and the surgeon there were two other healthcare professionals: the barber surgeon and the barber. The barber surgeon simply monitored the practice of a trained professional and, after being approved in an exam, was granted a letter entitling him as barber surgeon with rights similar to surgeons. The barber, the last in the hierarchy of the medical practitioners, had no formal training whatsoever. Often, those who were skilled in the art of clipping and shaving hair also performed bleeds, applied suction cups and leeches, and performed enemas.⁶

Due to the shortage of doctors in Brazil in the 18th century, the boundaries between the roles of doctors and surgeons were vague, and in practice surgeons performed all therapeutic procedures, even those that were once reserved for doctors. Formally, doctors were responsible for the treatment of the so-called internal diseases, while surgeons were in charge of exercising simpler functions such as bloodletting, treating injuries, removing foreign bodies, applying suction cups and leeches, and surgeries in general; i.e., a series of procedures which depended on manual skills. The craft of barber in Brazil was also performed by black men, as shown in Debret’s paintings.

The colony had no attractions for the renowned doctors trained in Coimbra, but for surgeons it offered a chance of social and economic ascent and expanded the limits of their activities in a region devoid of doctors. Proof of that ascent is the fact that all manuals of Medicine written in the colonial period were authored by surgeons, not by doctors.

In the villages established in Brazil in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, as in all Portuguese domains, the first health facility established was a *santa casa*, following the model of the *Santa Casa* in Lisbon. In the gold and diamond extraction centers at the Captaincy of Minas Gerais, due to the extraordinary number of slaves and military personnel to extract and protect the riches, it so happened that military hospitals were built in Vila Rica and Vila do Príncipe, and a hospital for the slaves in Tijuco.

The population of Tijuco, as in the rest of the captaincy, was composed mainly of slaves, followed by free poor men (of often mixed background) and finally by the smaller proportion that was the dominant white class. In 1738 the district of Serro do Frio had 9,681 inhabitants, 1,744 of which were white, 1,744 of mixed background and 7,937 black. In 1772 the population of Tijuco was 4,600 inhabitants, 3,610 of them black. Due to the work conditions these slaves died of many diseases and frequently had accidents in the mines.⁷ Because during the period of contracts the slaves worked solely for one master (the diamond contractor, who rented them from their owners), the need was felt for a health center to preserve the strength of the manpower used for mining.

When the contracts were established in Tijuco, the Hospital do Contrato Diamantino or Hospital do Real Contrato dos Diamantes (Hospital of the Royal Contract of Diamonds) was founded to assist the slaves who worked in diamond extraction. Its name was given due to the fact that, at the time of diamond extraction by contract, all expenses with the hospital and the payment of the physicians were the contractor's responsibility. In 1771, as diamond extraction also became the exclusive right of the Portuguese Crown, these costs were transferred to the Real Intendência dos Diamantes (Royal Intendency of Diamonds). According to the documentation, many slaves owned by Chica da Silva (a former slave who owned at least 104 captives) died after having been hospitalized at the Hospital do Contrato Diamantino. The hospital presumably also had a chaplain, since in some documents there are records stating the slave "died after having confessed and having been anointed at the hospital".^{8,9}

The date this hospital was inaugurated is unknown, as are the names of all professionals who worked there. What is known is the name of a doctor (José Vieira Couto) and two surgeons (José Ferreira Gomes and José Antônio Mendes), due to the fact that the surgeons were related to two of the most important medical books written in the captaincy during the 18th century, and the doctor was a noted intellectual and writer.

The first news of the hospital dates back to the late 1740s when surgeon José Gomes Ferreira moved into the diamond district. His uncle, surgeon Luís Gomes Ferreira, had arrived in Brazil in 1708 to find gold. But because "no doctors or surgeons who still profess surgery come to this place, and for this reason people go through great suffering"¹⁰ he was led to continue his profession, combining the art of Medicine with

the activity of gold exploration. He was trained in the Hospital de Todos os Santos in Lisbon. He was a surgeon in several expeditions into India and settled in Minas Gerais, where he stayed from 1710 to 1731.^{3,10} In 1735 he published his "Erário Mineral" in Lisbon, in which he reported his medical experience. This was the fifth medical book written in Brazil and was, up to the end of the 18th century, the most important medical compendium written in the colony.¹¹

Luis Gomes Ferreira treated several important local gentlemen and their slaves. One of them was Sergeant-Major João Fernandes de Oliveira, who owned a farm and mines in Vila do Ribeirão do Carmo (currently Mariana). Their was the probable and determinant factor for his nephew José Gomes Ferreira, a surgeon trained at the Hospital Real de São José de Lisboa, to become a surgeon at the Hospital do Contrato Diamantino in the late 1740s when the Sergeant-Major became the first diamond contractor (1739-1747 and 1753-1770). José Gomes Ferreira had a long term relationship with his slave, Maria Gomes, who was Chica da Silva's friend and associate and who bore him four children. He was the godfather of Simão Pires Sardinha, one of Chica da Silva's sons with her owner, physician Manuel Pires Sardinha. Another proof of that friendship is the fact that that physician and his former slave, Chica da Silva, were godparents of one of Maria Gomes and José Gomes Ferreira's daughters. Another of their daughters had the Associate Judge João Fernandes Oliveira as a godfather.^{3,8}

One other surgeon at the Hospital do Contrato Diamantino was José Antônio Mendes, who had come from São Vicente do Chão at Minho, Portugal. He was trained at the Hospital Real de Todos os Santos in Lisbon, where he was granted the surgeon certification letter in 1739. As reported in the preface of his book, he worked for over 30 years as the physician of Hospital do Contrato Diamantino and at the Hospital dos Dragões da Guarnição de Minas Gerais, located respectively in Tijuco and in Vila do Príncipe. He would introduce himself as an "approved surgeon and anatomist and Commissioner-General for all Americas". In 1770 he published the "Government for Miners", a practical guide aimed at both the poor so they could contract the services of a surgeon and also at the slave masters¹². The term "government" in the title means "information", as in the Portuguese expression: "for your government (information), I hereby report that [...]". His medical practice dealt mainly with slaves and his book was the main source of information on the way of life, work conditions and

diseases of the slaves in the 18th century. It describes in 15 chapters the causes, symptoms, and curative methods for the most frequent diseases in the Serro do Frio county, especially among slaves.^{3,9}

Associate Judge João Fernandes Oliveira (1720-1779) was the contractor at the time, who took on the contract (1753-1770) after his father and namesake moved to Lisbon. He was the richest man in the region and governed as a sovereign with his concubine Francisca da Silva Oliveira (known as Chica da Silva; around 1732-1796), whom he purchased from physician Manuel Pires Sardinha, and with whom had 13 children. His contract coincided with the golden period of Tijuco's history, when there was a significant increase in the population, commerce was expanded and large buildings and the main churches were built. José Antônio Mendes reports in his book having healed several patients sick with ulcerated cancer "at the Hospital do Contrato Diamantino and the poor people whom Associate Judge João Fernandes de Oliveira sent to be healed for the love of God. Some of them, to the great surprise of the Associate Judge, got cured. As soon as he laid eyes upon them, he had them sent to be accepted and they, once healed, went to the Judge to give thanks." Mendes returned to Portugal and, as a reward for his services to the State, he was promoted to Surgeon-major's Commissioner of the kingdom in all the Americas.^{3,9}

José Vieira Couto (1752-1827), a physician, mineralogist and writer, graduated from the University of Coimbra and worked at the Hospital do Contrato Diamantino. In 1798 he was put in charge by Queen D. Maria I of making observations and mineralogical and metallurgical examinations in all of Serro Frio county. Steward João Inácio do Amaral Silveira prevented him from doing his job and the governor, in a letter to the Court, described Dr. Couto as "a victim of his despotism, who by his own hatred was dismissed from his job as a physician at the administration hospital." An order from Prince Regent D. João, dating back to 1799, reprimanded the steward and determined that everything should be done to make the work of Dr. José Vieira Couto possible. The steward ended up being suspended from his position by royal order. The administration hospital refers to the Hospital do Contrato Diamantino.¹

Another known Tijuco physician and miner, Manoel Pires Sardinha, is likely to have worked at the Hospital do Contrato Diamantino, although no document exists to offer definite proof. He was Chica da Silva's first master and father to her firstborn child.

She was a slave who he later sold to Associate Judge João Fernandes de Oliveira. He was friends with the Associate Judge and was the godfather of one of his daughters with the above mentioned slave.³

The closing date of the Hospital do Contrato Diamantino is unknown. A record in the General Administration of Diamantina ledgers of 1772 (page 29), which can be found at the Museu do Ouro in Sabará, mentions its operation in Tijuco at that time². And as the letter sent by Governor Bernardo José de Lorena to the Court in 1779 reports that João Inácio do Amaral Silveira, steward from 1795 to 1801, had dismissed José Vieira Couto from the hospital, it can be stated that during the referred steward's administration the hospital still existed.

SANTA CASA OF DIAMANTINA

Origin of the Santas Casas

The Lisbon Santa Casa de Misericórdia (Holy House of Mercy) was created on August 15 1498, by Queen D. Leonor de Lancaster (1458-1525), who was King D. João II's widow (1455-1495) and who reigned on behalf of her brother D. Manuel (1469-1521), with the aim of helping solve the serious health care issues that existed in Lisbon. Thus, in the year of the apogee of the Portuguese Empire when Vasco da Gama (1469-1524) undertook the epic discovery of the route to India which was sung of in the *Lusiads* by Camões (1524-1580), no less relevant an act for mankind was the institution at the Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade of the Brotherhood of Mercy (Irmandade da Misericórdia) by that meritorious regent. She was guided by a "Commitment", confirmed by Pope Alexander VI in 1499, establishing 14 houses of mercy to be practiced by the fraternity, which served as a model to hundreds of other mercies later created in Portugal and all over the Portuguese Empire.^{13,14}

It was the duty of the mercies to grant housing and treatment to underprivileged sick people; shelter and education to orphans; prayer and burial for those who died in poverty; support to poor widows; shelter and help to needy pilgrims; maintenance in jails, defense in courts and supplication at the feet of the throne for miserable prisoners; religious comfort at the oratory and in transit to the gallows. For many mercies, the duty managing hospitals coincided with their foundation charters.

The Lisbon Santa Casa de Misericórdia grew fast and in 1542 was transferred from the small chapel cloister at Sé de Lisboa where it was quartered to new facilities in the waterfront region. The earthquake of 1755 and the fire that ensued destroyed the facilities, forcing the dispersion of the services. In 1768 King D. José (1714-1777) donated the building of the Casa Professa de S. Roque to the Santa Casa. The building had to that date belonged to the Companhia de Jesus, where it is headquartered to the present date. In its five centuries of existence it amassed a broad artistic and cultural heritage, from which we can highlight the Saint Roque Church and Museum and the Historical Records building.^{13,14}

D. Manuel and his successors encouraged the creation of other mercies in Portugal and in all of its colonies. Thus, mercies were created in India (1542), in Brazil (1543), in Macau (1569), in Angola (1576) and in Japan (1583). By the death of D. Leonor, in 1525 there were around 60 mercies in activity. The notable Brotherhoods of Mercy are among the most widespread and lasting humanitarian institutions.¹⁴

THE SANTAS CASAS IN BRAZIL

In 1532 the colonizing expedition by Martim Afonso de Souza (c. 1490/1500-1571) brought nobleman Braz Cubas (1507-1592), a grandson of Nuno Rodrigues, founder and keeper of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia of Oporto. Braz Cubas was designated foreman and inspector and founded the Santa Casa da Misericórdia of Santos, the oldest Brazilian hospital, in the village of Porto de São Vicente (later Vila de Santos, capital of the Captaincy of São Vicente) in 1543. He named it the Hospital de Todos os Santos (All Saints' Hospital), inspired by the name of the great hospital in Lisbon. The original village became known as Porto de Santos Village, after the hospital's name. Between 1545 and 1547 Captain-Major Braz Cubas raised the village to the condition of town, naming it Porto de Santos Town. The first hospital building was built at the foot of the Santa Catarina hill, where Visconde do Rio Branco street is now located in downtown Santos. A second building was finished in 1665, a third one in 1836 and the current set of buildings (fourth building), the only part still standing, was inaugurated by President Getúlio Vargas in 1945.^{15,16}

After the Santa Casa de Santos shortly came the Santa Casa da Bahia (1552), the Santa Casa do Espírito Santo (between 1545 and 1551), the Santa Casa de Olinda (1560), the Santa Casa de São Paulo (1560) and the San-

ta Casa do Rio de Janeiro (1582). Afterwards, hundreds of others were built to serve all regions and be responsible for caring for most of the poor people in the country.

The first Santa Casa in Minas Gerais was the Santa Casa de Ouro Preto (1735) and the next two were the Santa Casa de São João del Rei (1783) and the Santa Casa de Diamantina (1790), both founded by Hermit Manoel de Jesus Fortes.

There are currently almost 300 santas casas in Brazil.

SANTA CASA DE CARIDADE DE DIAMANTINA

Minute of Foundation (Figure 1).

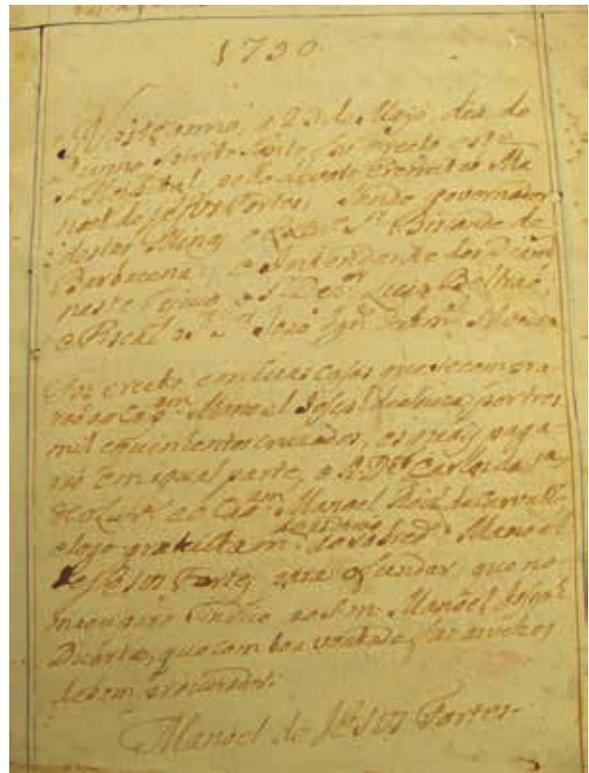


Figure 1 - Minute of foundation of the Santa Casa de Caridade, handwritten by hermit Manoel de Jesus Fortes.

“1790

In the present year, on May 25, the day of the Divine Holy Ghost, this Hospital was erected by the devout hermit Manoel de Jesus Fortes; being the governor of these Minas the Hon..Viscount of Barbacena and Steward of the Diamonds in this Tijuco Hon Justice Luiz Beltrão and Inspector Dr. João Inácio do Amaral Silveira.

It was erected in two houses that were bought from Capam. Manoel Lopes de Souza for three

thousand, five hundred cruzados, which shall be paid for in two equal parts by Dr. Carlos da Silva de Oliveira and Capam. Manoel Roiz de Carvalho, and then they shall be granted free of charge to the aforementioned Manoel de Jesus Fortes for its foundation. He, in his turn, appointed as manager S. M. Manoel Lopes Duarte, who out of goodwill plays well the role of good solicitor. Manoel de Jesus Fortes”.

This is the minute of foundation (which seems to be written and signed by Manoel de Jesus Fortes in his own handwriting). It remains in the Santa Casa de Caridade of Diamantina's files. It states that, in 1790, Father Carlos da Silva e Oliveira (whose surname Rolim is omitted in the document), along with Captain Manoel Riz de Carvalho, acquired two houses which were later donated to hermit Manoel Jesus Fortes so that he would implement a hospital in them. It is the only Santa Casa de Caridade (Holy House of Charity) known, since all the others are known as Santa Casa de Misericórdia.

Soon after that, the first board of directors was elected to govern the purposes of the house. The board was as follows:

- **president:** Rafael da Rocha Neves Quintela;
- **registrar:** José Joaquim Perpétuo;
- **treasurer:** Manuel Lopes Duarte.

The Santa Casa was founded in the restless political setting of the Enlightenment at the end of the 18th century, only a year after the Inconfidência Mineira rising (1789), a time when there was a struggle between the wish for emancipation and more freedom for the Brazilian people and the exploitation of the colony by Portugal. Also in that period there were signs of decline in the gold economy in Minas Gerais and the depreciation of the price of the diamonds from Arraial do Tijuco were evident. The reasons that directly determined the first crisis in the diamond mining were the exhaustion of the old mines and the prohibition of opening new mines in the diamond district; the lack of organization in the European consumer market; the finding of new mines in other regions of Minas (that is, Abaeté, Idaiá, Itacambira, Rio Pardo and Grão Mogol) and the final crisis of the Real Extração.¹⁷

Physician José Vieira Couto describes at the time a diamond district in ruins where poverty and misery were widespread, with unemployment for both slaves and free men. The picture was aggravated by the severe demands from the Regimento Diamantino.¹⁸ These

conditions required a hospital to take care of the large majority of the population of the poor and the slaves.

The authorities found in the minute of foundation are part of this complex political setting in the Captaincy of Minas Gerais, as will be seen below.

The Viscount of Barbacena (1754-1830), D. Luís Antônio Furtado de Mendonça, was governor of Minas Gerais (1788-1797) in the period of the Inconfidência Mineira. He was appointed by the Marquis de Pombal with the purpose of increasing the amount of gold sent to Portugal. He was in charge of repressing the libertarian movement.¹

Luiz Beltrão de Gouveia, Steward of Diamonds (1789 – 1795), was a humane and impartial magistrate, but was also famous for his debauched, wanton life. He applied the stern and hated Regimento Diamantino mildly in an attempt to alleviate the population's suffering.¹

João Inácio do Amaral Silveira was an inspector in the previous administration, later promoted to steward (1795-1801), and was the most hated of the stewards because he very strictly enforced the Regimento Diamantino to inhibit diamond losses, which set him against the dominant class, which pursued illegal activities. His administration was marked by continuous popular uprising, led by physician José Vieira Couto, one of the greatest proponents of the new ideas of the French Enlightenment. Silveira ordered the eviction of several people from Tijuco, including Father Carlos José da Silva e Oliveira Rolim, one of the founders of the Santa Casa, and his brothers Alberto and Father José da Silva e Oliveira Rolim, all suspected of trafficking diamonds. José Joaquim Vieira Couto, the brother of Dr. José Vieira Couto, was sent to the kingdom's capital by the people of Tijuco in 1799 to request the steward's dismissal but he ended up being arrested by the Inquisition of Lisbon¹. The departure of hermit Manoel de Jesus Fortes from the diamond district a few years after the foundation of the hospital is related to these facts, and he was also a victim of the steward.

Carlos da Silva e Oliveira Rolim was a priest certified in Coimbra. He was the son of Sergeant-Major José da Silva e Oliveira Rolim and brother of Father José da Silva de Oliveira Rolim (1747-1835). Sergeant-Major José da Silva e Oliveira Rolim, in whose house the secret meetings of the Inconfidentes had taken place a year before, was part of the Junta Administrativa na Intendência dos Diamantes (Administrative Board in the Diamond Stewardship) and the main treasurer-administrator. Father Rolim was one of the

most important figures of the Inconfidência Mineira. While he took part in the foundation of the Santa Casa, his brother, Father José da Silva e Oliveira Rolim, had been arrested at the Ilha das Cobras fortress in Rio de Janeiro and had already undergone 13 out of 15 interrogation sessions. He was convicted and served time in Lisbon from 1792 to 1803, and then returned to Arraial do Tijuco.^{19,20}

The 1870 Santa Casa de Caridade of Diamantina report states that as soon as the hospital was founded it started to admit the sick, and that hermit Manoel de Jesus Fortes worked restlessly carrying stones and other materials for the expansion works of the house while still begging in the village and its surroundings. The report states also that steward João Inácio do Amaral Silveira persecuted the hermit during his frequent excursions and allegedly evicted him from the demarcated plot as a suspect of diamond trafficking.

Manoel de Jesus Fortes (Figure 2) was a singular character in the 18th century. His origins are unknown and shrouded in legend. Apparently he was a wealthy young man, unsympathetic to work and dedicated to the pleasures of life. After a mystical experience he changed radically, became a hermit and started begging for donations for building a hospital for the poor in São João del Rei. In 1783 he finished the basic facilities of the Casa de Caridade with two infirmary wards (totaling 30 beds) annexed to a chapel under the invocation of São João de Deus. In 1817 the Casa da Caridade was named Santa Casa da Misericórdia, a name it holds to this day. There one can see an oil painting dating back to 1860 by painter Venâncio José do Espírito Santo, from São João, subtitled 'Manoel de Jesus Fortes'. At an unknown date he withdrew from Vila de São João del Rei and went to found a chapel in Ouro Preto and another Casa da Caridade in the Arraial do Tijuco (according to Saint-Hilaire, he was in Tijuco in 1787).²¹

There are two citations about Manuel de Jesus Fortes in the Inventário dos Manuscritos Avulsos Relativos a Minas Gerais (Inventory of the Detached Manuscripts on Minas Gerais) at the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon (Ultramarine Historical Archive). The first one, compiled to 1785, states: "Application by Manuel de Jesus Fortes, inhabitant of the São João del Rei Village, requesting from D. Maria I the mercy of authorizing him to erect the Casa de Misericórdia and establish a brotherhood with the commitment, statutes, and similar privileges in said village". The second one, from 1785, states: "Notice by Martinho de Melo e Castro, State Secretary of Navy and Overseas,

to the Count da Cunha, Antônio Álvares da Cunha, president of the Overseas Council, ordering the application by Manuel de Jesus Fortes to be verified".²²



Figure 2 - Hermit Manoel de Jesus Fortes.

So two of the main founders of the Santa Casa (Father Carlos da Silva e Oliveira Rolim and hermit Manoel de Jesus Fortes) were expelled from the diamond district soon after its foundation and Dr. José Vieira Couto, a probable physician at the institution, was severely persecuted by the steward. The financial difficulties, always present in the founding of the santa casa buildings, were aggravated in Tijuco by the troubled political setting of the late 18th century.

The hospital was maintained by alms and donations and a small income from the treatment of slaves and soldiers of the Diamond Extraction. As stated in the 1870 report, it was closed due to financial and political difficulties from 1810 to 1838, which is in accordance with Saint-Hilaire's reports when he passed Tijuco in 1817.²³

After the minute of foundation, the first reference we have to the Santa Casa of Diamantina is from French scientist and explorer Saint-Hilaire (1778-1853). He arrived at the Tijuco Village on September 29, 1817, and according to his information the village had around 6,000 people and 800 houses. He was a guest of diamond steward Manuel Ferreira da Câmara Bitencourt e Sá (1762-835), the first Brazilian steward, who held the position from 1807 to 1823 when he took a seat at the Constituent Assembly. Like Saint-Hilaire, he was a man of science and a humanist, and had been a contemporary of José Bonifácio de Andrada e

Silva's at the University of Coimbra and in other European universities.²³

Saint-Hilaire reports: "Around 1787 a hermit, having warmed the charity of the church goers, collected abundant alms to found a hospital there. He acquired a house in a very well-aired location and furnished the place with the required equipment. The hermit begged; he stimulated the pride of the inhabitants and the hospital lasted for as long as its founder remained in Tijuco. But that useful citizen, having become upset with the actions of certain local authorities, withdrew from there; the alms became less abundant and the hospital was abandoned".²³

The hermit referred to here is Manoel de Jesus Fortes and by the date in the reference (1787) it is evident that he spent a long time collecting the necessary funds, since the Santa Casa was founded only in 1790. The problems the hermit had with the authorities seem to be connected to the already reported acts of terror implemented by steward João Inácio do Amaral, which resulted in the eviction of several people from the diamond district.

Saint-Hilaire draws the epidemiological scenario of the time, writing on the main health care issues: "The moderate heat from Tijuco makes leprosy and elephantiasis rare, while the inconsistent temperature multiplies influenza and bronchitis. Other morbid conditions are common in the diamond district; but it is not the weather they should be attributed to; they come from the vices and costumes of the locals. This way, at the Tijuco, as in all parts in the Province, hydropsy, which is frequent among colored people, is the result of their passion for sugar cane spirits. The premature use of the pleasures of love and a sedentary lifestyle are the main causes of nervous diseases which oftentimes strike free men. Lastly, the large number of venereal diseases that occur here, as in the rest in Brazil, are explained by the profligacy into which all social classes unabashedly throw themselves".²³

Saint-Hilaire fell from his horse two and half miles away from Tijuco and one mile from Rio Manso (today Couto de Magalhães de Minas), and suffered TBI with loss of consciousness and hemorrhage in the frontal region and left eye orbit. He was conducted to Rio Manso where he was submitted to bloodletting, and two days later he was taken to Tijuco in a hammock carried by slaves. He was treated by "Mr. Barros, the best surgeon in Tijuco". He adds: "I also met, during the time I was sick, the two physicians who worked in Tijuco. One of them, Dr. Couto, had

traveled all over Europe and was endowed with a vast culture. The other Mr. Teixeira, without such broad travel experience, had studied abundantly and had acquired a large experience". Saint-Hilaire left Tijuco on October 30, 1817.²³

From that report one can presume that in the Arraial do Tijuco at that time there was more than one surgeon and two physicians. The Dr. Couto referred to by Saint-Hilaire is José Vieira Couto (1752-1827), a Brazilian physician and naturalist who graduated at the University of Coimbra in 1777, where he was a reader and had José de Bonifácio as a fellow student, his companion in study trips and someone with who he shared his ideas of freedom and independence. According to Sílvio Romero, he was "one of the wise men of his time, among those who wrote the most and with the best style". He published several works, among which was the "Memória sobre as minas da Capitania de Minas Gerais, seu território, clima e produções metálicas" ('Memoirs of the Captaincy of Minas Gerais, its territory, climate and metal production'), in which he reports his investigative work on the mineral resources of Minas Gerais, a task assigned to him by Queen D. Maria I.^{18,24}

These Memoirs and the works in his library show his deep knowledge of Enlightenment ideals. He owned 228 works in 601 volumes, was an extraordinary thing in the wilderness of Minas Gerais in the 1700s. The largest library in Minas belonged to canon Luiz Vieira da Silva, one of the main activists of the Inconfidência Mineira, who had 276 works in 563 volumes. Some works belonging to José Vieira Couto had been sent to him from Portugal by Simão Pires Sardinha, the first son to Chica da Silva and a wise naturalist who got involved in the Inconfidência Mineira.^{8,25}

José Vieira Couto was a physician at the Hospital do Contrato Diamantino, and it is probable that he worked at the Santa Casa. In the documents of the initial phase of the Santa Casa the names of the physicians cannot be found, which makes it impossible to certify that the above mentioned physician worked there.

The changes that took place in the country in the early 19th century, with the coming of the Court to Rio de Janeiro in 1808, and the Independence in 1822, enabled the extinction of the reviled and repressive Regimento Diamantino (1821), the separation of the village from the city of Serro and its elevation to the condition of town (1831) and from town to the condition of city in 1838, with the name Diamantina. The city progressively became the economic and cultural center of the region in the Jequitinhonha Valley.

As has been demonstrated, the hospital remained closed from 1810 to 1838. The previously mentioned changes made imperative the need for a hospital in the recently emancipated town. In 1832 the Fraternity of Santa Isabel was created and its statute was established with the purpose of raising funds to reopen the hospital. The Fraternity was formed by a group of people who periodically contributed with donations previously stipulated on behalf of the Santa Casa and who, in the decisions of the administrative board, were granted the right to have a voice and to vote. Once the funds were raised the hospital was reopened on July 4, 1838, in the same year the town was elevated to the condition of city.

The hospital maintenance after its reopening could no longer rely exclusively on the charity. Public debt policies were acquired, a theater was built, provincial lotteries were granted and a small subsidy was obtained from the provincial funds.

The theater of Santa Isabel was built in the Largo do Rosário and inaugurated in 1838, the year the Santa Casa was reopened. It became a center of events and social and public meetings during the 19th century. From 1907 on it also operated as a cinema. But with the economic crisis in the early 20th century, maintaining the theater became costly for the Santa Casa. For this reason it was closed in 1912, sold to the State and demolished for the construction of a public jail. As restitution, the municipal government donated to the Santa Casa a plot of land on the Rua Direita, where another theater was erected with the financial resources given by the State and materials that could be reused from the demolition. The new theater was inaugurated in 1914 and was absorbed by the Trianon Cinema in the late 1920s. The former jail house has recently been restored and inaugurated as the new Santa Isabel Theater.

The revenue and expense reports of the Santa Casa record that the physicians did voluntary work until the decade of 1890, while the Sisters of Charity and the Chaplain, in charge of celebrating masses every day and administering the last rites to the sick, were maintained by the administration.

Incentives for foreign immigration to Brazil after the independence and the beginning of industrialization caused many Europeans to settle in the country. Two Englishmen, John Dayrell and John Rose, settled in Diamantina and had a close relationship with the Santa Casa.

John Dayrell (1808-1884) was born in Barbados and lived there until 1820, when his family returned to England. According to English explorer Richard

Burton (who was his guest in 1867) he finished his medical degree in London when he was 22 years old, got married and came to Brazil in 1830.²⁶ He started to work at the Santa Casa in 1838, the year it was reopened. He died in 1884 and because he was a protestant, could not be buried inside the church as usual. He was buried in front of the Santa Casa de Caridade, as reported by his granddaughter Helena Morley (a pseudonym of Alice Dayrell Caldeira Brant, 1880-1970), in the book "Minha Vida de Menina" ('The Diary of Helena Morley', translated by Elizabeth Bishop and made into the feature film 'Vida de Menina' by director Helena Solberg, in 2004)²⁷:

"[...] my grandfather was not buried in the church because he was a protestant; he was buried at the door of the Casa de Caridade (Santa Casa) and people in Diamantina still talk about it until today. When he was very sick, the Father, the sisters of charity and even the Bishop, who liked him very much, struggled to have him baptized and confess so he could be buried in the sacred soil. He would say: "All the land made by God is sacred". The vicar did not let the bells toll, but the most important men of Diamantina went to the churches and had the town bells toll the whole day. He was very benevolent and highly esteemed. When a sick person couldn't afford treatment he would send them the medicine, a chicken and even some money. The whole town followed the burial. When he died, I was very young and until today it people in Diamantina talk about the charity of the 'Doutor Inglês' (English Doctor), which is how everybody called him. Can a man like that be in hell? [...]"

On the street in front of the Santa Casa door there a text identifying the gravestone of his tomb: "Here lies the physician of this Santa Casa, John Dayrell, the 'Doutor Inglês' (English Doctor). Barbados, United Kingdom, 1808 – Diamantina, Brazil, 1884".

In the second half of the 19th century, when the city of Diamantina grew to the condition of economic, cultural, and religious center (the diocese was created in 1864) of the Vale do Jequitinhonha, the Santa Casa became the medical center of the region with an increase in demand and the need for expansion of its limited facilities. Several restoration and construction works were performed between the years of 1866 and 1873, which corresponds to the period of great accumulation of wealth caused by the diamond extraction boom. At the head of this enterprise were the provider Dr. Manoel Alves Ferreira Prado and

the treasurer Commander Herculano Carlos de Magalhães e Castro (of the board of directors from 1864 to 1870). On January 1, 1867, the Santa Isabel Chapel was inaugurated by Bishop D. João Antônio dos Santos and the works of the building that still stands today were later concluded (Figures 3 e 4).



Figure 3 - Santa Casa de Caridade de Diamantina.



Figure 4 - Santa Isabel Chapel of the Santa Casa de Caridade de Diamantina.

The restoration of the Santa Casa is connected to the name of Englishman John Rose (1805-1888), an architect and builder. He had worked in the gold mines of the *Saint John D'El Rey Mining Company*, today *Mineração de Morro Velho* in Nova Lima. He later moved to Diamantina

and was responsible for the great architectural works in the city, among which were the construction of the new Santa Casa building with its annexed chapel, the Casa da Glória archway, the textile factory in Biribiri, the old seminar and the *Basílica do Sagrado Coração de Jesus*. He also actively participated in the implementation of the first hydroelectric powerhouse in Brazil in the Inferno stream, an affluent of the Jequitinhonha River, in 1883.²⁸

Don João Antônio dos Santos (1818-1905) was the first bishop of Diamantina (1864-1905). In addition to his role as a prelate, educator, abolitionist leader and person responsible for the implementation of the local textile industry, he was also a great supporter of the Santa Casa, as shown by his yearly donations, registered in the treasury's revenue records., earning him the title of "Protector of the Santa Casa". He was the brother of Antônio Felício dos Santos (director of the factory in Biribiri) and Joaquim Felício dos Santos (1824-1895; politician, lawyer, journalist, professor, writer, lawman), who were his collaborators in the implementation of the textile industry in Diamantina.

Another family member, also named Antônio Felício dos Santos (1843-1931), graduated from the School of Medicine of Rio de Janeiro in 1863 and came to practice Medicine at the Santa Casa of Diamantina. He later entered a political career and was elected to the House of Representatives. Throughout the decade of the 1880s he acted in the movement for the proclamation of the Republic. He took part in the first republican government as the president of the Banco do Brasil at the invitation of Rui Barbosa, who was then Minister of the Treasury.

The oldest existing Santa Casa administration reports refer back to the years 1870 to 1871 and 1871 to 1872, all of them signed by provider Mr. Lieutenant Colonel José Ferreira de Andrade Brant (later Commander). He would later build the asylum and was its provider from 1870 to 1897. By means of these reports it is possible to follow the attempts at modernization of the hospital and the construction of the Diamantina Asylum, the first psychiatric hospital of Minas Gerais.

In the 20th century, as a consequence of the lack of public incentive common to the diverse philanthropic institutions in the country and the declining local economy (resulting from the progressive decrease in diamond extraction and the crisis in the local textile industry), the Santa Casa de Caridade of Diamantina operated with difficulty, as did its siblings around the country, but it fulfilled its role as regional health center.

In the second half of the 20th century three physicians represented the pillars of the Santa Casa, in addi-

tion to having played an important role in the social and political life of Diamantina: Lomelino Ramos Couto, João Antunes de Oliveira and José Aristeu de Andrade.

Lomelino Ramos Couto (3/3/1895 – 7/12/1990) graduated in Medicine in 1918 from the School of Medicine of Belo Horizonte. He practiced Medicine in Bocaiuva up to 1926 when he returned to Diamantina, his homeland, where he applied himself entirely to the Santa Casa (his father, Cosme Alves do Couto, was a provider there for over 50 years), caring for the Jequitinhonha Valley poor. He was mayor of Diamantina from 1951 to 1954, becoming a candidate to that position to answer a personal request of Governor Juscelino Kubitschek. He was co-founder and teacher at the Ginásio Diamantina, where he held the chair of Natural Sciences for over 30 years. He practiced Medicine up to the age of 88. The image that remains of him is that of a competent internal medicine physician, a kind doctor, and a model citizen.

João Antunes de Oliveira (10/20/1918 – 12/28/2002) was born in Turmalina, attended the basic course in Diamantina and graduated from the UFMG School of Medicine in 1946. He settled in Diamantina, where he practiced internal medicine physician and surgery at the Santa Casa. He was its provider for many years. The advances made in hospital infrastructure in the second half of the last century were the result of his work and political relations. He worked as a professor for over three decades and as director of the School of Dentistry of Diamantina, the embryo of the current Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri. He was mayor for three terms and was responsible for several achievements in the areas of health, education, sanitation, culture, and tourism. With his tireless work he undertook actions that provided for the continuity of the campaign started in 1993 by Ivo Pereira da Silva (then president of the Fundação Cultural e Artística de Diamantina – FUNCARDI), whose joint effort along with the work of several Diamantina inhabitants of acknowledged significance resulted in UNESCO granting Diamantina the title of Cultural Heritage of Mankind in 1999. His life was marked by his spirit of service to others and by his dedication to public and social causes. He was a charismatic figure, respected and loved by all the people. His fame was that of a competent, caring physician with a humble attitude, which led all the people from the Jequitinhonha Valley to seek the Santa Casa for attention. The current surge of development in Diamantina, which after the decay of the

diamond extraction has found its modern vocation in tourism and education, is largely due to the work of João Antunes.²⁹

José Aristeu de Andrade (10/28/1923) graduated from UFMG in 1949 and held his medical residency in Gynecology and Obstetrics at the Santa Casa de Misericórdia of Belo Horizonte. He started his professional activity at the Santa Casa of Diamantina in 1951 as an internal medicine physician, gynecologist and obstetrician. For several years he was a teacher in the Colégio Diamantinense and occupied the Physiology chair of the Federal School of Dentistry in Diamantina. In 2001 he was admitted as a full member of the Academia Mineira de Medicina. For over 60 years he has practiced as an obstetrician and family doctor and has given his beloved dedication to the Santa Casa, having been its director and provider more than once. Up to the present day he provides his daily voluntary work at that hospital and is respected by all and regarded as the medical conscience of Diamantina.

In the last decade, the Santa Casa went through an infrastructure modernization process with the implementation of highly complex services in the several medical specialties and an intensive care center. It is the reference hospital of the Sistema Único de Saúde (Unified Health System) for the region of the Jequitinhonha Valley.

DIAMANTINA ASYLUM

In Minas Gerais, as in the rest of the country in the 19th century, the insane wandered the streets at the mercy of private charity, aggression from the population, and police actions for the aggressive cases. It was common practice at the time for santas casas to have reduced space for hospitalization of these patients. These divisions were called strong rooms, strong houses or even insane houses. They were locations designed to contain infuriated subjects, resembling prisons and preceded the construction of asylums as hospitals for the insane.

In the mid-19th century a need to adapt the advances of Medicine to the treatment of the insane began to be noticed in Brazil, as had occurred in France, especially with the emergence of asylums as places for cure. The Santa Casa of São João del Rei was the first general hospital in Brazil to have psychiatric units.³⁰ The first asylum in the country, the Hospício Pedro II, was created in 1852 as an annex building to the Santa

Casa de Misericórdia of Rio de Janeiro. The first asylum for the insane in Minas Gerais was the Hospício de Diamantina (Diamantina Asylum), whose cornerstone was laid in 1888.

It was in the context of this discourse of medicalization of madness that the administrative board of the Santa Casa de Diamantina decided on the erection of an adequate building for the asylum. In the commitment reports from 1883 to 1884, provider José Felício dos Santos makes reference for the first time to the need for building the asylum due to the significant number of insane people hospitalized at the Santa Casa. Subsequent reports reinforce this need and the difficulty to obtain the resources for this end. The State conceded assistance in the beginning, which was later gradually reduced until its complete withdrawal.³¹

Despite the withdrawal of government assistance, Commander José Ferreira de Andrade Brant, the provider of the Santa Casa from 1870 to 1904, decided to go on with the construction and this is how he describes the decision: “Convinced of the throbbing need felt in the northeast of Minas for an establishment where mentally ill people can find adequate treatment for their state, as it is already known, I have resolved to erect in this city, and as an annex to the Santa Casa, an Asylum for the Insane, at whose construction I have persistently worked since 1888 [...]”.³¹

The Diamantina Asylum was built and administrated by the Santa Casa de Caridade of Diamantina and operated from 1889 to 1906. Its most important advocate was Commander José Ferreira de Andrade Brant.

The Asylum was idealized and built in the scope of the modernization process that reached Diamantina in the late 19th century. It involved removing the insane from the streets and highlighted the medical desire to treat the sick according to the science at the time, imported from France, which turned the insane into patients. In contemporary documents (Santa Casa reports and newspapers) a political discourse for the institutionalization of psychiatric medicine in order to give the insane social and humane conditions is noticed.³¹

The IPHAN library in Diamantina has a document entitled “Apontamentos sobre o Hospício de Alienados” (“Notes on the Asylum for the Insane”), which gives details on the asylum construction project drawn by engineer Catão Gomes Jardim. This document shows the magnitude of the project and its adequacy to the concepts of the time regarding the treatment of mental illnesses. The building would be in and of itself the representation of charity, the fun-

damental motto of the santas casas. To complement this representation of faith, hope, and charity, two flowerbeds were planted in the garden in front of the asylum. The flowerbed shaped like a cross represents faith and the flowerbed shaped like an anchor represents hope: two theological virtues.³¹

The building occupies an area of 646 meters, composed of a two-storey main building with two contiguous side wards and a gardened patio between them. There is an atrium and a section of trees and gardens with an area of 728 m² in front of the building. To the right side of the garden there is an area with approximately 40x60 meters for the orchard. The project specifies the technical details for ventilation and natural light and a generous distribution of restrooms and latrines. The second floor is composed of an anteroom, a large room, bedrooms for the convalescent, and *water closets*. The two side wards have 10 cells each, independent latrines and corridors communicating with the side gardens. Each cell measures 3x2.5 meters and is 4.5 meters high. Each cell has a latrine. The second floor has two wards with 11 cells each. In the lower pavement of the building there is a kitchen, the mess room, a storeroom, and a bedroom for the cooks. On the first floor there are five bedrooms and latrines for convalescents. According to the report, “the building is endowed with a perfect sewage system” with abundant water supply for the bathrooms, showers, and the four fire hydrants placed at the four corners of the building. At a certain point in the report the engineer makes a detailed analysis of the yearly temperature and wind in Diamantina, concluding that “the building offers the desirable hygiene conditions; and, endowed as it shall be with all modern improvements, it is to be expected that the cure of mental diseases may reach 50%” (Figure 5).



Figure 5 - The Diamantina Asylum.

It was a great construction at the time, designed according to modern medical concepts. It took into consideration the need for fresh air and circulation recommended by the miasmatic concept of cleanliness and the need for baths and showers, according to good health awareness, in addition to the moral treatment proposed by Pinel and Esquirol.

The reports show that during its operation the asylum treated patients from several areas in the Jequitinhonha Valley, with several mental diseases diagnosed. Despite the great interest of the Santa Casa board of directors the asylum became no longer viable due to the progressive withdrawal of assistance from the government.³¹

Diamantina did not have sufficiently strong political and economic representation to maintain the State funds directed to the asylum for the insane in the early 20th century. The city of Barbacena was privileged as the seat of a psychiatric hospital, created in 1903 with the purpose of, on one hand, centralizing the resources which were destined for the several Santas Casas and for the Diamantina Asylum and, on the other, making the states deal with their own sanitation issues according to the decentralizing policy of the Republic.³² The Diamantina Asylum was closed in 1906 due to the withdrawal of public resources made available to it up to then, putting an end to the project for a center of psychiatric Medicine that had lasted for less than 20 years. Patients hospitalized there were transferred to the Barbacena asylum. Later the building was used for other activities until it was completely abandoned in the mid 1970s.

The main building at the high point of Caridade street right above the Santa Casa still stands, but the two side wards have gone³¹ (Figure 6). After so many years being progressively consumed by the action of time it seemed that the old Diamantina Asylum was ultimately condemned to disappear, carrying with it not only an important page of the history of Medicine in Minas Gerais and in Brazil, but also a historical testimony to the medical revolution on mental diseases that occurred in the second half of the 19th century. Fortunately, the current board of directors of the Santa Casa de Caridade of Diamantina has decided to recover the dignity and grandiosity of the old Diamantina Asylum. The restoration works are in full force. It is a great service, not only to the architectural heritage of Minas Gerais, but also to the history of Diamantina and of Medicine in Minas Gerais.



Figure 6 - Picture of the main building of Diamantina Asylum, currently in ruins.

Today Diamantina has two hospitals: the Santa Casa de Caridade and the Hospital Nossa Senhora da Saúde. The latter was founded by Antônio Moreira da Costa (Baron of Paraúna; 1823-1889), a rich diamond miner who, in his will, donated his fortune to the construction of the hospital which opened in 1901.²

This article has tracked the origins of three hospitals in the city of Diamantina; the hospital for slaves and the hospital for the insane have disappeared and remain only in the memories and in the consequential social scars of the two conditions that originated them. The Santa Casa de Caridade of Diamantina continues strongly and since 1790 keeps evolving to become more and more adequate to the social changes in its secular mission of providing health care to the population of the Jequitinhonha Valley. Today it is a modern hospital center with all medical specialties and is an example for the region of the Jequitinhonha Valley. Following the implementation of the Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri in 2005, its next step is to become the university hospital of the School of Medicine of the UFVJM, currently in its implementation phase.

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