

Book Review: The Untold Story of Addiction Treatment in the United States (Volumes One-Four).

William White

Citation: White, W. (2025). Book Review: Anderson, Kenneth. (2021-2025) *The Untold Story of Addiction Treatment in the United States*. Posted at <https://chestnut.org/li/william-white-library/papers>

Efforts to document the early history of addiction treatment span Turner's *History of the First Inebriate Asylum in the World* (1888) to Terry and Pellens' *The Opium Problem* (1928). Subsequent efforts to document the rise of modern addiction treatment and recovery include Musto's *The American Disease* (1999), Lemanski's *A History of Addiction & Recovery in the United States* (2001), White's *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America* (1998/2014), Campbell, Olsen and Waldens' *The Narcotic Farm* (2021), and Karibo's *Rehab on the Range* (2024). Numerous other published texts document the histories of particular treatment organizations or recovery mutual aid organizations. Interest in the history of treatment and recovery is increasing with numerous research and preservation projects currently underway. This surging interest is unfolding in the context of and perhaps in response to the recent closure of numerous addiction studies libraries and archives.

Previous books such as those noted have provided an overview of the global evolution of addiction treatment institutions and their methods, but no book or other resource has more meticulously catalogued and chronicled the unique history of each addiction treatment institution until the arrival of Kenneth Anderson's multi-volume series *The Untold Story of Addiction Treatment in the United States*. To date, this ongoing series includes the following:

Strychnine & Gold (Part 1): Volume One Part One of the Untold History of Addiction Treatment in the United States (2021)

Strychnine & Gold (Part 2): Volume One Part Two of the Untold History of Addiction Treatment in the United States (2021)

From Inebriate Asylums to Narcotic Farms: Volume Two of the Untold History of Addiction Treatment in the United States (2022)

Sanitariums, Hospitals, and the Belladonna Cure: Volume Three of the Untold History of Addiction Treatment in the United States (2022)

Alcoholism Treatment Rebirth: Volume Four of the Untold History of Addiction Treatment in the United States (2025)

The series reviews treatment methods —from gold cures and electroshock to early modern treatment methods, but it is most valuable in its recounting of organizational histories, including factors and forces that led to the demise of many of the profiled programs.

Ken Anderson is best known as the founder and current driving force behind HAMS: Harm Reduction for Alcohol—an online harm reduction support platform for people wishing to safely manage their alcohol use. Ken has been a prominent figure in the harm reduction movement. He has been a vocal critic of single pathways models of recovery, particularly those promoting AA and AA-oriented treatment as the sole pathway of recovery from alcohol problems. While some may eschew Anderson's latest writings because of such criticisms, that would be a mistake. These volumes are a straightforward account of the history of addiction treatment organizations throughout the United States and the people who were key to their founding and operation. The volumes represent a broad spectrum of programs and treatment philosophies.

This series will find many appreciative readers, but none more so than those researching the history of addiction treatment and recovery, including mutual aid groups working on local history projects or gathering resources for their Archives. For example, those working on the history of local Twelve Step groups will find in the Anderson series a treasure trove of information on previously unknown material on early AA hospital units and AA-influenced retreats and private sanatoria. Much of the material in these volumes is organized by state or city, which will be a great aid to those groups working on local, state, or regional treatment/recovery histories. Addiction professionals will find in this series a much deeper perspective on the history of addiction treatment, particularly the history of such treatment prior to the rise of the modern era of addiction treatment in the 1970s. Those seeking and in recovery will find in this series both sources of inspiration and cautionary tales. Others interested in the evolution of alcohol and drug problems in the U.S. will be charmed by the life stories of the individuals who were the driving force behind the founding of America's early addiction treatment institutions.

If you have an interest in this area of history, you could check out a chronology of early addiction treatment institutions (1840-1950) that Ken and I co-developed. That chronology can be viewed or downloaded at <https://deriu82xba14l.cloudfront.net/file/1263/Early%20American%20Institutions%20Specializing%20in%20the%20Treatment%20of%20Alcohol%20and%20Drug%20Addiction%202023%20Update.pdf>. If scanning that list piques your interest, by all means check out Ken Anderson's series *The Untold Story of Addiction Treatment in the United States*. The available volumes can be purchased via the following link: <https://us.amazon.com/The-Untold-History-of-Addiction-Treatment-in-the-United-States-5-book-series/dp/B09B78Z88R>

I wish to offer a personal word of thanks to Ken Anderson for the exhaustive research that went into this series. Due to my writings on the history of addiction treatment, I am often contacted by individuals asking for information about this or that addiction treatment program that a relative or friend had gone through in the distant past. This ongoing series by Ken Anderson provides a greatly expanded menu of information from which I will which upon in response to such requests.

The Untold Story of Addiction Treatment in the United States series should be on the reference shelf of any serious student of addiction treatment and recovery.