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**Dorothea Lynde Dix - Champion for
the Insane – II**

Lead:A chance encounter in the East Cambridge Jail in 1841 gave Dorothea Dix a cause to pursue, a focus for her intellect and considerable energy, and a passion which would consume her for the rest of her life.

Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts

Content: Dorothea Dix, daughter of an alcoholic itinerant minister, but granddaughter of a prominent and wealthy Boston physician, in her early

years was a devout Christian. She believed her affluent, cultured upbringing and her faith placed powerful requirements on her life. She felt compelled into a life of service to those in society less fortunate, less wealthy, less healthy, less indulged than she.

One March Sunday morning in 1841 she was teaching a Sunday School class in the East Cambridge Massachusetts Jail. After the meeting, she asked the warden for a tour of the facilities. When they reached the section set aside for the insane she was appalled. The inmates were chained, wearing rags, lying on beds of vermin-infested straw, freezing literally to death in an unheated cell

block.

This travesty animated Dix's already intense social sensibilities and she began to make a systematic survey of the jails, workhouses and almshouses in the Commonwealth. Armed with this information and allied with several important social reformers, she began pressuring the Massachusetts legislature to improve the treatment of the insane. From there she went to New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Illinois, and North Carolina. In each case, her compelling research and advocacy led to significant improvement in conditions and treatment of the mentally ill.

Dorothea Dix served as Superintendent of Female Nurses in the Federal Army during the Civil War, but lacked the training or skills to overcome resistance to reform in this male-dominated service. Her great life contribution was in helping restore dignity and health to thousands of mentally ill patients, theretofore forgotten and ignored by society.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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