

The Presbyterian Missionaries of Culion Leprosarium

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Abstract

This research project examines the lives of Paul Frederick Jansen and his wife Maria Elizabeth White Jansen who were Presbyterian missionaries at the Culion leprosarium in the Philippines from 1922-1945. The Jansens were instrumental in the development of infrastructure at Culion and nourishing Protestant spiritual life there. Their daily advocacy and devotion for the lepers of Culion improved countless lives on the island. Very little has been written about the Jansens. There are a multitude of primary sources, like letters and mission board reports. These sources reveal the Jansens' work ethic and opinion of their missionary work. The most integral source has been Quarterly of the American Mission to Lepers, Song after Sorrow: The Jansens of Culion, which details the transnational story of their lives. They were just two of the countless missionaries who have followed God's calling, traveled overseas, and made sacrifices for others. Their lives are worth remembering due to the care, fellowship, and service they offered to the lepers of Culion. Their work is not much different than that of Father Damien and Mother Teresa. Their lives are remarkable, considering the time period in which they traversed to the Philippines. Here is a remarkable set of people and barely anyone has heard of their work. Why is this? They gave up all of their modern conveniences and traveled to a far off island where leprosy was rampant. To answer why the Jansens are worth remembering, first I must detail what makes a life worth remembering. Then analyze what about the Jansens' lives make them memorable.

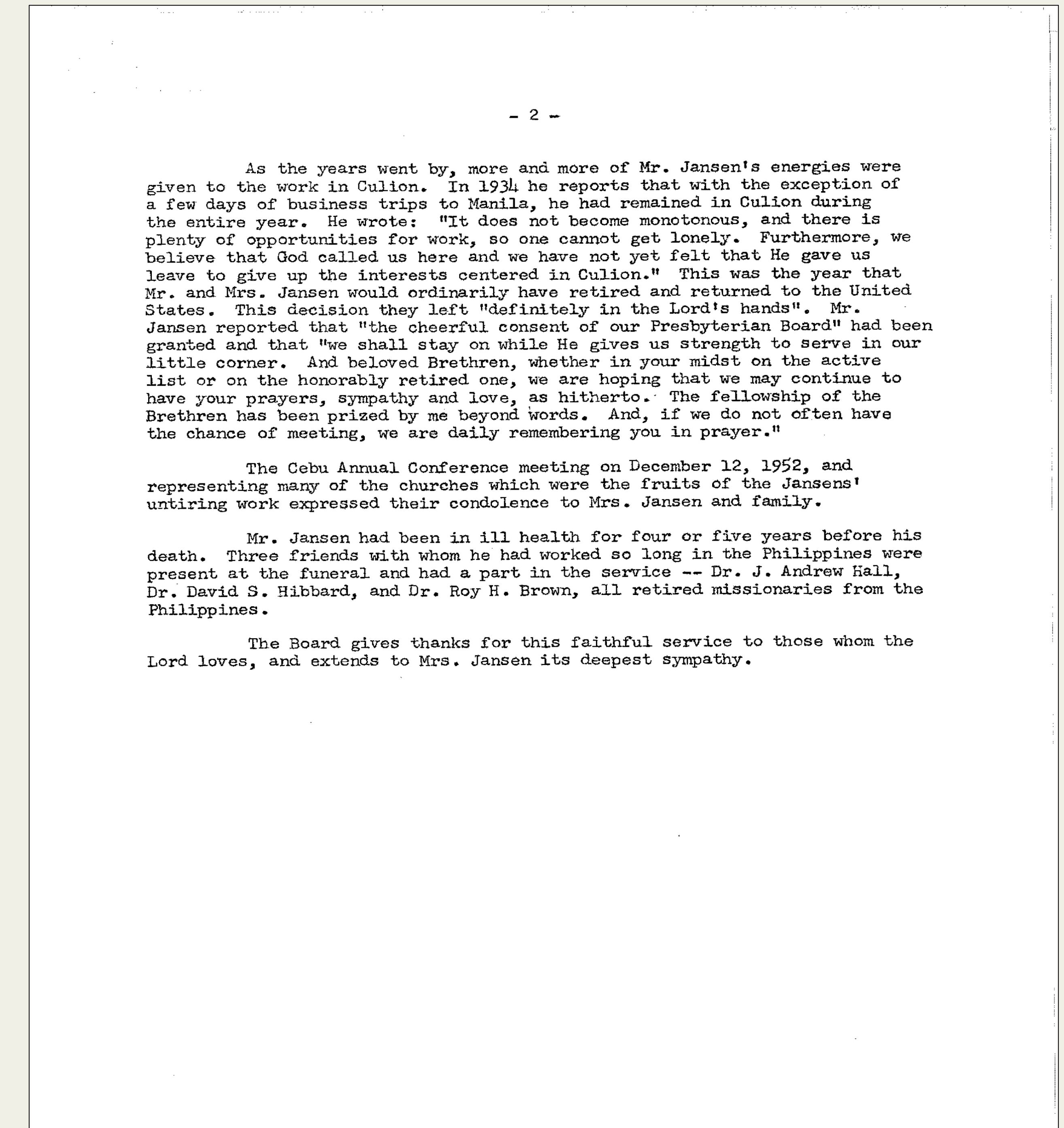
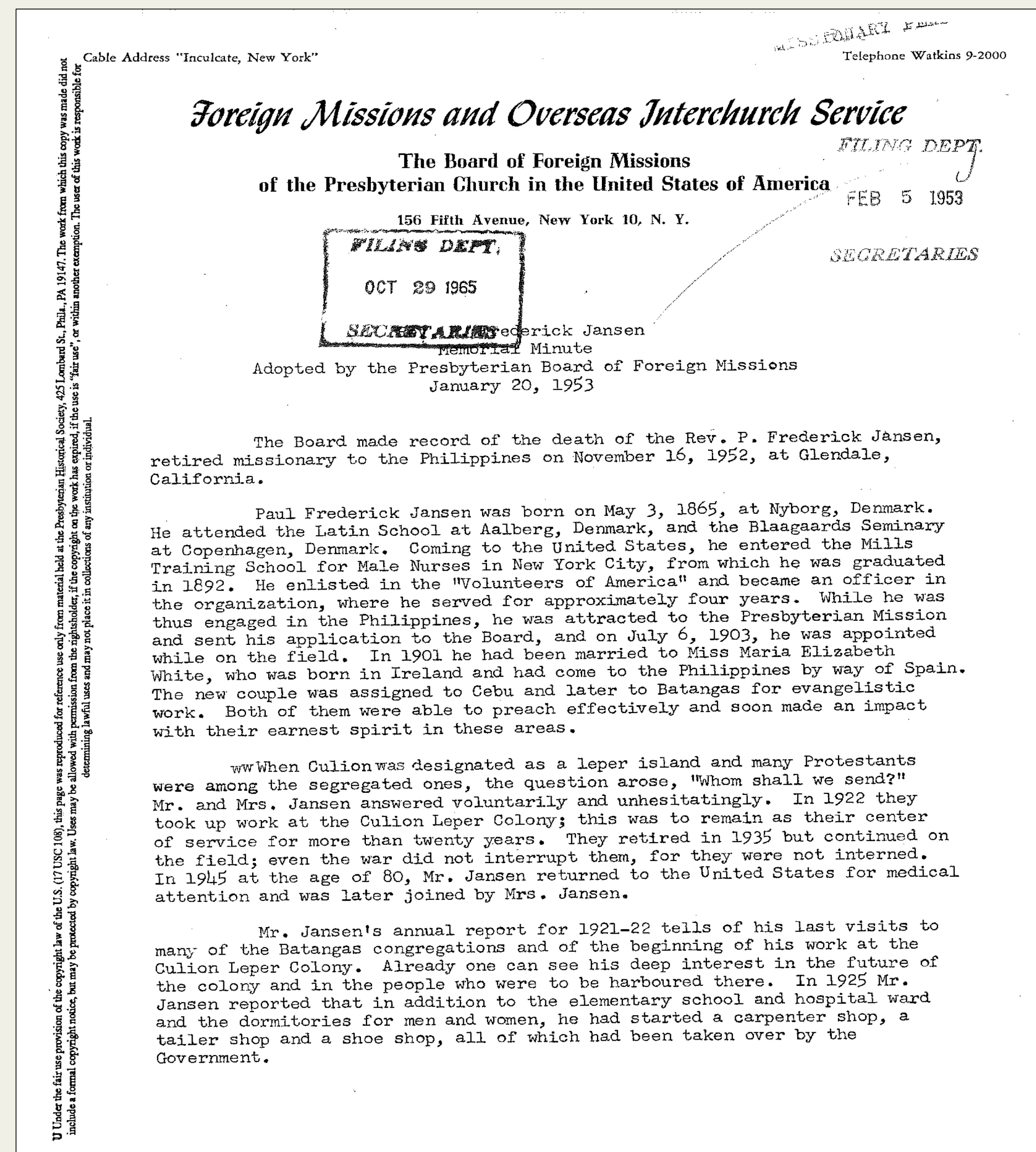


Figure 1. Leper's Ward, 1910 government report (Culion Sanitarium and General Hospital).

Overview of the Jansens' Service in the Philippines

The Culion Leper Colony was established in 1906 at Culion, an island off of Palawan, Philippines. Paul Frederick Jansen (1865-1952) enlisted for the Spanish-American War as a hospital steward; he had trained as a nurse in New York City. He was sent to Manila with the army. There his was able to do Christian work among the soldiers and others. Maria Elizabeth White (1869-1955) came to the Philippines with the Christian Missionary Alliance. When the Christian Missionary Alliance left she stayed behind and began working for Dr. James B. Rodgers and his wife Anna, who were Presbyterian missionaries. Elizabeth taught bible classes at San Lazaro, a Spanish leprosy hospital in Manila. There she and Paul Frederick Jansen met and they married September 30, 1901. In November 1903 they joined the Presbyterian Mission and began working in the province of Cebu and Batangas. They preached, taught bible classes, and organized churches. In 1922 the Jansens volunteered to go work among the people suffering from leprosy at Culion. They remained there until 1945 when they were forced to return to the United States due to health problems.



Figure 2. Nuns caring for patients in Leper's Ward (Culion Sanitarium and General Hospital).



Figure 3. May 27, 1906- Arrival of lepers from Cebu (Culion Sanitarium and General Hospital)