Criminal Diversions:

Newspapers, Entertainment, Sport, and Physical Culture in New York Prisons, 1899-1920

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ABSTRACT

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Prisons in New York in the early twentieth century were becoming modern institutions. In my dissertation I examine the cultural dimensions of the prison reforms that were part of the progressive era "new penology" movement that fundamentally altered life in prison in this period. In researching this largely neglected area of prison reform, and the particularly neglected period between 1899 and 1913, I have discovered that the major reforms instituted across the prison in the state in 1913 were part of a much more gradual process than previously thought. I argue that the prisoner-produced newspapers, the entertainment and leisure activities, and physical culture programs that were introduced starting in 1899 laid the groundwork for the reforms to come. The prisoners and prison administrators used the recreation programs to present themselves to the public in a positive way, to forge new relationships between the prison workers and the prisoners, and to build new connections between the world of the prison and the world beyond prison walls. These changes led to a period of prisoner self-government that gave prisoners more power in the institution and helped to shape contemporary prison structures.

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Introduction

"It is our own fault if we are not understood by the public, for we have a medium through which we may reach the outer world".

> From the *Star of Hope* by prisoner number 321, Auburn Women's Prison's Local Editor, January 26, 1901[1]

Prisoner 321's bold assertion here refers to the first prisoner-produced newspaper in the country, the *Star of Hope.* The newspaper was one of the first reforms in the New York state prison system that allowed prisoners to communicate and collaborate with one another and with those beyond prison gates. 321 was writing about the newspaper, but her statement applies to all of the cultural and athletic activities that were introduced to prison life in New York state in the early 1900s. These activities were grounded in the idea that prisoners were citizens.

The recreational activities in prisons in the New York system during the first decades of the twentieth century were simultaneously gratifying and enjoyable for the prisoners and propaganda tools for both prisoners and prison administrators. All of the activities in the prison, whether it was the newspaper, knitting, vaudeville shows, social dances, baseball games, or film screenings, garnered national and international attention, as well as extensive coverage in the *Star of Hope*. The coverage of these activities pleased the administrators as it made the prisons appear to be aligned with the progressive principles that were gaining currency in this period, even while the reality of prison life was far removed from these enlightened ideals. For the prisoners, their participation in these activities worked to counter prevailing negative ideas about prisoners and to show them as upstanding citizens who were engaged with politics and ideas as well as popular culture and leisure. In my thesis I am examining all of the cultural, leisure, and athletic activities that took place in men's and women's prisons in New York state from 1899-1920. I chose to investigate New York prisons in this period in order to examine how the early experiments with recreational activities in the prison primed prison administrators, the public, and the prisoners for the more radical changes in prison life that were introduced in 1913.

My work contributes to the overall field of carceral studies, which has exploded in the last decade. Scholars exploring the carceral in recent years have been assessing the causes and effects of mass incarceration in America. Michelle Alexander's book declaring mass incarceration the new Jim Crow has been hugely influential and has shaped contemporary

discussions about the state of prisons.[2] Kelly Lytle Hernández, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, and Heather Ann Thompson in June 2015 edited the *Journal of American History*'s special issue on carceral studies, which draws together current scholarship on prison history.[3] The issue however, covers only work dealing with the post-1950 period. Regina Kunzel's *Criminal Intimacy*, about the history of sex in prison, and Cheryl D. Hick's *Talk With You Like a Woman*, about African-American women in the prison system in the early twentieth century, examine life in prison, but the majority of the current work in carceral studies addresses problems around prison rather than what has taken place in prison itself. Scholars are drawing attention to issues around policing, sentencing, and ex-convicts re-integrating to society.[4] Some of these scholars, including David M. Oshinsky and Robert Perkison, focus particularly on the American South and the ways in which the criminal justice system has functioned differently there compared to the Northern states.

I am especially interested in the pre-1913 forays into breaking with the prison routine and how they changed the relationships between the prisoners and the prison staff and between the world of the prison and the world beyond prison walls. I argue that the early activities, which showed that prisoners could be responsible and were worthy of humane treatment, led the prison administrators to be open to and for the public to support more dramatic prison reform. The reforms introduced in 1913 improved the quality of life for prisoners and gave the inmates some power to organize and even to govern prison operations. Under prisoner self-government, the newspapers, along with the entertainment and athletic activities that once only implicitly called for prison reform, became tools that prisoners explicitly used to generate support for prisoner rights. Through culture and sport, the prisoners created, to borrow Nancy Fraser's variation on Jurgen Habermas' concept, an alternative public sphere.[5] By 1920, however, the state prison administration had restricted the prisoners' ability to use prison activities for political purposes. Baseball, movies, and theatre productions were no longer means by which inmates could advocate for prisoner empowerment. These activities instead became the prison administrators' tools for prisoner management. In this regard, my work is informed by Michel Foucault's arguments in *Discipline and Punish.* Foucault contended not only that the prison system aimed to create docile bodies, but that the wider society aimed toward the same end, arguing that modern societies were operating as a carceral state, with ever more surveillance and and an ever-growing number of institutionally-registered and penalized infractions against the social order.[6] He argued

that the modern prison was characterized by a move away from the punishment model to a more benign system based on creating compliant inmates. My research shows, however, that there was a period of transition in the New York prisons that complicates this division between punishment and discipline. The flux in the prison in the early years of the twentieth century meant that prisoners' lives were not entirely dictated from above, and that, for a brief time, the prisoners had a role in shaping the institution.

Punishment: Prison History Pre-1899

In the period preceding 1899, prisons in New York state exploited prisoners' labour and governed prisoners' lives according to rules and routines designed to prevent prisoners from organizing.[7] From when the first state prisons were established in America between the 1820s and 1830s, prisons were principally thought of as places for criminals to be punished. In the 1820s, penologists in New York state developed what came to be known as the "Auburn System" of prison management, which eventually became the model for all prisons in the United States. Under the Auburn System, prisoners worked together during the day and were confined in their cells alone at night. This system contrasted with the "Pennsylvania system", in which prisoners were in solitary confinement for their entire prison sentence. Solitary confinement was meant to break the prisoner's spirit so that he or she would be easier to control. Though the Auburn System allowed the inmates to work and eat together, the system's signature feature, the rule of silence, prevented the prisoners from speaking to one another. The system worked to strip the inmates of their individuality by having inmates referred to by their inmate number rather than their names, shaving their heads, and having them wear a striped prison uniform. To control the inmates as they moved from place to place in the prison, the Auburn System required the inmates walk in lock-step, whereby prisoners' legs were chained together and they had to walk in unison with their heads down. To deal with rule breaches or any disorder, the wardens authorized the keepers and guards to use physical force to maintain order. Another common punishment was for disruptive prisoners to be sent into solitary confinement for a number of days, weeks, or months.

Each institution was run by a warden and in keeping with the Auburn System principles. The State Superintendent of Prisons, based in Albany, oversaw all of the prisons in the system. Auburn, built in 1819, was the oldest state prison (after Newgate Prison closed in 1828) and was

a maximum-security facility. Just over five years after Auburn was built, Sing Sing was designed and opened to house the overflow of prisoners from Auburn. Clinton prison was constructed in 1844 to deal with the ever-mounting number of people being put behind bars. The state also opened two prisons for young offenders, Elmira, built in 1870, for all young offenders, and Great Meadow, built in 1900, with no surrounding wall, for first-time young offenders. Great Meadow and Elmira were meant to focus on programs that would be of particular benefit to young criminals, who, the administrators believed, would be more amenable to reform than older prisoners. Shortly after opening, however, the Elmira reformatory simply became a maximum security prison, just with younger inmates. Great Meadow kept to its initial mission for several years, but ultimately adopted maximum-security prison management techniques and built a surrounding wall in 1928. Napanoch prison, which became part of the state prison system in 1900, was transformed into a reformatory in 1906 and was at that point no longer considered to be part of the system.

New York state's female convicts were initially housed in areas adjacent to men's prisons.[8] The records for these prisons reveal that the conditions for female convicts were harsh and that physical punishment was common practice. The women's prison's location combined with guards' unchecked power meant that sexual abuse of female prisoners by their guards and by their male prisoner neighbours was rampant. In 1825, the Auburn prison began receiving women prisoners and placed them in a large room in the attic of the south wing. Remarking on the conditions in the women's wing, Reverend B. C. Smith, the chaplain for the prison, said, "to be a male convict would be quite tolerable; but to be a female convict, for any protracted period, would be worse than death."[9] Within months of joining with the men's prison, the women's sector came under scrutiny when several high profile cases of cruelty against female prisoners became public knowledge.

The delay in moving women into their own, separate institution was linked to the valuable labour that they provided the institution by washing, ironing, and sewing for the men's and the women's units. The state legislature finally authorized the building of a women's prison at Auburn and at Sing Sing in 1835, though the Auburn prison was never built. The women's prison at Sing Sing housed all of the state convicts until 1877, at which point they began to be housed instead at county jails across the state. The county jails quickly became overcrowded, so when the Asylum for the Criminally Insane closed at Auburn in 1894, the state authorized that

the building be transformed into a prison for women. The prison had 125 rooms and could accommodate as many as 250 women, enough to serve the entire state.[10] Shifting the female prisoners' locations gave the appearance that the state was addressing the problems that had been brought to public attention in the earlier years of the century, but the abuses and mismanagement persisted.

All of the early state prisons were organized around involuntary servitude, a practice that was legitimated in the thirteenth amendment to the American constitution.[11] The idea behind this system was that in committing a crime, criminals had forfeited their rights and freedoms and deserved to be punished. Part of their punishment was to be forced to work. That prisoner-workers were forced to work under terrible conditions was justifiable by the very fact that they were prisoners who did not deserve better. Not having to pay a reasonable wage or to worry about providing reasonable working conditions was highly attractive to private contractors, and by the 1850s and 1860s, contract labour became the dominant labour model in prisons. Contract labour was unambiguously exploitative, but it did give the prisoners a small degree of power in the institution. The more the prison relied on contract labour to run the prison, the more the prisoners had to gain from refusing to work. Though they met with brutal repression, prisoners in the nineteenth century frequently rioted and withheld their labour to protest their abominable living and working conditions.[12]

By the end of the nineteenth century, the prisons were facing protest not only from the prisoners themselves, but from labourers on the outside who objected to prison contract labour on economic grounds. Labour unions organized against prison contract labour arguing that the extremely low wages paid to prison workers amounted to unfair competition. These union-led protests against prison labour practices were especially fierce in the rapidly-industrializing northeast. It was in New York state that the labour unions made the most gains in challenging contract labour in prison. By 1895, the prisons across New York state ended contract labour, and over the next several decades, the courts forced prisons in the rest of the country to follow suit. The New York system again proved to be the testing ground for reforms that were eventually adopted in other parts of the country. With the strictures against contract labour, the prison administrators in New York had to think of a different way to structure prison life.[13]

Reform: Progressivism and Prison Reform

Progressive ideology was crucial to the prison reform to come. Starting in the 1870s, self-described progressive reformers were aiming to remodel American society according to efficient systems.[14] Progressives saw governmental action as central to their project. They fought for legislative change to address a vast array of causes. Through their campaigning, reformers pushed local, state, and federal governments to pass laws to curb political corruption, to preserve natural resources, and to protect workers and consumers. These new policies and procedures were meant to generate productive citizens and to improve the quality of life for the nation's poor and unfortunate. It was only logical, then, that many progressive era reformers set their sights on transforming prisons and prisoners. The men and women who became known as "new penologists" sought to make prisons not places of punishment, but places where, through education and training, prisoners would become better equipped to function in their modernizing society. Those working in prisons and those interested in thinking about a different way to deal with criminals formed the National Prison Association (NPA) and they had their first meeting in Cincinnati in 1870. By the turn of the century many of the ideas presented at NPA meetings and in their publications were beginning to be applied in prisons across the country. Many of the men and women involved in prison reform movements went on to work as administrators in the prison system, while others chose to improve prisons and prisoners by initiating particular projects within the prisons.

The old system was not completely overthrown, but prison administrators in New York did start to do away with the more brutal practices within their prisons. Out of necessity rather than choice, the prison could no longer operate around contract labour. This does not, however, mean that the prisoners no longer worked. New penologists envisioned prisons as places to train inmates to become productive worker-citizens upon their release. Having inmates work while in prison was therefore consistent with their goals. For white women, the skills that they learned in prison were designed to train them to be capable housewives and mothers. For black women, prison labour was meant to prepare them for domestic service jobs.[15] The same race-based ideas about labour governed work placements in men's prisons; white inmates were placed in workshops that could lead to more gainful employment on the outside than the workshops to which black inmates were assigned. The new penologists also saw prison's potential for Americanizing the inmates, over half of whom were either non-native born, (with representatives

from fourteen different countries).[16] Programs that aimed to turn prisoners into good citizens were targeted at white native-born Americans and European immigrants. No resources were specifically allocated to education or post-release employment for black inmates.[17] The prison reformers used many of the activities in prison to promote white, middle-class values. In the prisoner-directed cultural and athletic activities, the racial politics were more complicated. The women's prison population was over 30% African-American, and at the men's prisons, black men made up between 15 and 18% of the prison population.[18] It is clear from the records that black inmates were actively involved in cultural production in the prisons, from the newspaper to the entertainment programs to physical culture. Culture in prison both contested and reinforced the segregation that existed within the prison.

Regardless of their designated shop, after contract labour was abolished prisoners still spent several hours of their day working. The difference was that they were now producing goods for the state rather than the private marketplace. The prisoners writing in the *Star of Hope* referred to the end of contract labour as the end of a dark time in prison history, one which they often compared to slavery. Prisoners continued to spend the vast majority of their time either working or alone in their cells, while those at the head of the prisons started to think about how to address something more than just the prisoners' basic needs. By 1907, prison administrators had rescinded the more dispiriting rules such as the lockstep, prison stripes, and mandatory head-shaving.[19] The reforms in the early 1900s were significant, but isolation, physical punishment, and silence continued to characterize prisoners' existence into the 1910s. Breaks from these conditions, including vaudeville shows and movie screenings, were new, but infrequent. The new penologists were united in the idea that prisoners needed to be reformed and that prison's ultimate goal should be to turn criminals into productive citizens. In practice, however, the prisoners were not given much chance to flourish.

Emergent Self-Government: Prisons Between 1899 and 1913

My dissertation revises current historiography by showing how the changes in prison life in the early period, 1899-1913, prepared prisoners, prison officials, and the public for major prison reform. It is to the sweeping changes post-1913 and to Thomas Mott Osborne and Madeleine Z. Doty (the reformers most associated with these reforms) that most scholars of early twentieth century prison history in New York direct their attention. In 1913, Thomas Mott Osborne and

Madeline Z. Doty lived in prison for a week to investigate prison conditions and make recommendations for reform. Osborne, calling himself Tom Brown, inmate number 33,333, went to Auburn prison and lived among the prisoners. He spent one night in solitary confinement so that he could have the full prison experience. Doty, inspired by Osborne's experiment, spent a week at Auburn Prison for Women, adopting Maggie Martin as her alias. Osborne and Doty both wrote books about their week-long stays in prison, which were (mostly positively) reviewed in newspapers across the country.[20] Doty and Osborne described the conditions in the prisons as inhumane and advocated dramatic changes relating to prison management, prisoner autonomy, and prison activities. In addition to recommending improvements in food and sanitation, Doty and Osborne advocated for the prisoners having a say in the way that the prisons were run. To that end, they proposed a system of prisoner self-government. They also encouraged the prisons to dramatically expand prisoners' recreation programs, arguing that isolating the prisoners from one another and limiting their ability to exercise and breathe fresh air went against new penology goals. Another key recommendation was for the prisons to abandon the rule of silence.

The prison administrators across the New York system agreed to experiment with many of Osborne and Doty's recommendations. The administrators at the prison for women were, however, less willing than their counterparts in the men's prisons to disrupt their prison order. Lifting the rule of silence was one of the first changes instituted in all of the prisons. Just months after Osborne's stay at Auburn, he initiated prisoner self-government at the prison. The Auburn inmates called their organization the Mutual Welfare League (MWL) and all prisoners were eligible to become members. The League came up with a motto, "Do Good, Make Good," and established the by-laws that governed their organizational structure and activities. The prisoners at Clinton and Sing Sing soon created their own branch of the MWL.[21] The inmates at each institution elected an executive and a board of governors who were drawn from each of the prison shops. They set up eight committees to oversee matters related to sanitation, education, employment, entertainment, sports, and decoration. The MWL took over some aspects of prison discipline and set up a judiciary board to resolve disputes between inmates. They also advocated for their membership in meetings with the prison administrators.

The degree to which the prisoners were able to make decisions about how the prison was run was unprecedented. In addition to granting the Mutual Welfare League such powers, the prison administrators followed Osborne's and the NPA's recommendations to allow prisoners to

have more recreation time and more scope for determining what form this would take. Organizing sporting events was a priority for the MWL. The sports teams were divided according to workshop, which had the effect of creating segregated teams as the workshops themselves were organized according to race. They formed several baseball teams and arranged for outside baseball teams to play against the inmate teams for as much of the year as weather would allow. Baseball was the athletic committee's major focus, but the MWL often organized multi-sport athletic days and held regular boxing matches. For the winter months, and for days with inclement weather, the MWL organized entertainment events inside the prison. The prison administrators allowed the MWL to take on prison monitoring and disciplining. At many of their events, members of the MWL and not prison guards monitored the proceedings.

These changes significantly altered everyday life at prison for everyone at the institutions, but they were not without precedent. Historians focusing on the post-1913 reforms present these changes, especially in entertainment in prison, as being new. Film is a case in point. Prison historian Rebecca McLennan and film scholar Alison Griffiths claim that films were first shown in the prison chapel only after the 1913 reforms when, in fact, inmates had been watching films since 1906.[22] It was only because the screenings in the intervening years had gone smoothly that the prison officials agreed to hold more regular film events. In presenting film and other activities at the prison as being new, McClennan and Griffiths present the 1913 reforms as being more drastic than they actually were. That film and other entertainments were part of prison life since the early 1900s shows that the changes after 1913 were the culmination of a far more informal and gradual process, and one in which the prisoners had a hand in shaping. I am interested in the emergent quality of the cultural activities in prison that other scholars have missed.[23] In their attention to the post-1913 period, scholars have discounted the importance of the early editions of the *Star of Hope*, which contain the details about cultural activities in the prisons before 1913.

Getting at Prisoner Agency: A Note on Sources

To get a more complete picture of culture in prison, I examine both the pre- and post-1913 period. I therefore looked at the entire run of the *Star of Hope.* I also examined Mutual Welfare League publications, prisoner memoirs, books and reports written by key prison reformers, administrative records from the state prisons, and contemporary newspaper articles.

My dissertation draws on two major archives, the records of the Department of Correction in the New York State Archives in Albany and the Osborne Family Papers in the George Arents Research Library in Syracuse. The Department of Correction Records hold all of the administrative records for prisons in the New York system as well as the prisoner-produced newspapers the *Star of Hope,* the *Star-Bulletin*, and the *Sing Sing Bulletin.* The Osborne family papers archive holds Thomas Mott Osborne's papers as well as the records for the Mutual Welfare League, including the League's newsletter, the *Bulletin.*

The most important sources for my dissertation were the various iterations of the prisoner-produced newspaper: the *Star of Hope,* the *Star-Bulletin,* and the *Sing Sing Bulletin*. The newspapers were mediated, as whatever the prisoners wrote had to make its way through the prison censors, but the newspapers remain a unique source for prisoner opinion. Hundreds of prisoners from all of the prisons in the system wrote articles for the prison newspaper over its twenty-one year run. The newspaper provides a window, though an administratively-mandated rosy one, into prison life. The *Star of Hope* was a truly general interest paper, featuring articles about prison reform but also about current events, literature, science, as well as articles with a lifestyle focus and letters to the editor. Among the wide-ranging subjects the paper covered were articles detailing the daily life and special events at each of the prisons. The inmates provide the rich detail about the goings-on behind prison walls that the bare-bones administrative reports are missing. The prisoner-produced articles often included programs for events and described all of the components listed therein and provided details about who organized the events and who attended them. Beyond the organized large events, the inmates provide insight into how their days were structured, the work that they did, and what interested them. The prisoners also used the paper to form discursive relationships with one another, with the administration, and with the public outside of the prison. In closely reading all sections of the newspaper for all of its run, I was able to find important details about prison life that other scholars have missed.

Rebecca McClennan, Alison Griffiths, and James McGrath-Morris have used the *Star of Hope* as a source, but they did not look at the entire run of the paper. McGrath-Morris, in his book about prison journalism, devotes one chapter to the *Star of Hope* and one to the *Sing Sing Bulletin*.[24] He focuses on the paper's inception and its ultimate demise, leaving over a decade of the paper unexamined. Because McLennan is looking at a long swath of prison history, starting from 1776 and ending in 1941, her engagement with the *Star of Hope* is necessarily limited. She

discusses the context for the newspaper's introduction in 1899 and looks to the paper for information about the transformations in prison after the major reforms in 1913. Griffiths homes in on the information about film in the *Star of Hope* in the years after 1913. In limiting the amount of the paper that they examined, McGrath-Morris, McClennan, and Griffiths did not get a complete account of the cultural history of prisons in the early years of the twentieth century.

When citing the articles from the *Star of Hope,* the *Star-Bulletin,* and the *Sing Sing Bulletin,* I have noted the title and author when this information was available. Not all of the articles were titled and not all named the author. Until 1916, the *Star of Hope* by-lines referenced the author according to their prison and their inmate number, for example, Sing Sing 55,717 or Auburn State Prison for Women, 320. Because the prison name is always used when authors are listed, it is clear whether the writer was a man or a woman.

The *Bulletin*, the Mutual Welfare League's newsletter, which ran from 1914 to 1917, was another key source for the prisoners' perspective on prison life and on prisoner-self government. Unlike the *Star of Hope* and its variations, the *Bulletin* was designed solely for a prisoner audience. The *Bulletin* was meant to update prisoners, as Mutual Welfare League members, on league activity. All of the different committees reported on their accomplishments, plans, and concerns in the newsletter. I was particularly interested in the reports on the entertainment and sporting events that they were organizing and their reviews of events that had recently taken place. Because the document was not also designed with a public audience in mind, the *Bulletin* was more frank than the *Star of Hope* in its discussion of prison life and Mutual Welfare League politics. Whereas the *Star of Hope* mostly presented prisoners in the best possible light, the *Bulletin* called out prisoners for bad behaviour and in so doing revealed some schisms between prisoners and the fragility of the prisoner self-government arrangement in the prisons. I looked at other Mutual Welfare League records, including internal memos, correspondence between the MWL and outside organizations, as well as between the MWL and the Outside Branch of the MWL, which supported the MWL's work from beyond the prison and worked to generate funds and other donations for the organization. The *Bulletin,* however, was the MWL source most relevant for my research.

Another source for the prisoners' perspective for my time period was *My Life in Sing Sing,* a memoir written in 1904 by former Sing Sing inmate 1500, the man responsible for creating the *Star of Hope.*[25] His book reveals what his articles in the newspaper could not. 1500

details the horrid conditions in the prison, the corruption among prison guards and keepers, and the ways that prisoners found to get around prison rules. He also provides invaluable information about his experience founding and editing the *Star of Hope*. I also consulted the many interviews that 1500 gave to national press after his book was published.

Other useful primary sources for information on prison life were those related to prison reformers Thomas Mott Osborne and Madeleine Z. Doty. Their books about their prison stays, *Within Prison Walls* (Osborne) and *Society's Misfits* (Doty) were key sources, as were their reports on prison conditions and recommendations for change, their speeches, and their correspondence. Osborne and Doty's positions of power and as prominent figures in the prison reform movement meant that they could reveal the reality of prison conditions and criticize prison management with impunity, unlike the prisoners. Their accounts about their time undercover in prison are important not only in describing the details about the clothes prisoners wore, the beds that they slept on, the food they ate, and the way that the guards meted out discipline, but also in providing insight into the reformers' perspective on prison. The way that they wrote about their mission and their vision for a better prison reveal much about the ideas that informed the prison reforms that came about soon after their stays in prison. The way that they think about their own roles in the reforms and how they describe the prisoners uncover their attitudes about class, race, ethnicity, and gender. The Osborne Family Archives included correspondence between Osborne and other prison reformers, prisoners, and other people whom he enlisted in his prison reform project. His archives were also an excellent source of visual material and artefacts relating to the Mutual Welfare League, entertainment, and sport at the prisons in the system. To broaden my research on prison reformers beyond Osborne and Doty, I looked at the records from the National Prison Congress meetings. The congress records include speeches and papers by major figures in the prison reform movement as well as those by wardens, chaplains, and superintendents of prisons.

Using the prison administrative records, I was able to discover who was in the prison and how the prisons ran. The records provide information about how many prisoners were in the system, the nature of their crime and their sentence, the prisoners' race, country of origin, country of origin of their parents, how many children they had, their literacy level, and whether they drank or smoked. The wardens' reports detail what food the prisoners were eating, what work the prisoners were doing, as well as their physical condition and spiritual well-being. In

addition to the more general reports about the prisoners, the archive contains the individual prisoner records, which included specific details about their crime, as well as the details from their Bertillon assessment. The records also contain the prisons' budgets. The most relevant for me were the reports on recreation and entertainment. These reports, however, tended to be be fairly short, usually one or two lines, and did not provide much detail about whatever recreation or entertainment activities had taken place.

To research the public's responses to New York state's pioneering changes to prison routines and to prison management, I surveyed newspaper coverage of prison activities in papers from the towns in the areas surrounding the prison, major metropolitan newspapers in New York, and in newspapers across the United States. Newspaper editors and writers across the country were intrigued by the changes in prison and frequently wrote about what was going on in the New York system. The journalists writing about prison did not have the vested interest that the prisoners or the prison reformers had and because of this, they add a unique perspective on the changes in prison during this time. The newspapers reveal critical details about the prison administration and the prison reformers that do not appear in the official prison records, the reformist literature, or the prisoners' writing.

Chapter Summaries

In my first chapter, on newspapers in prison, I argue that the *Star of Hope* was the first significant progressive reform in the prisons in New York and that it was a crucial first step in changing prisoners' image from that of ignorant brute with nothing to contribute to society to that of engaged citizen entitled to respect and dignity. The paper served both the prisoners' and the prison administrators' interests. The *Star of Hope* gave the impression that the prisons in the system were run humanely and that in allowing the prisoners to publish their own newspaper, prison officials were in keeping with the new penology objective of reforming the criminal. Because the administration had the ultimate decision about what would or would not be published, they could ensure that only positive stories about the prison made their way into the paper. This had the effect of obscuring the brutal reality of prison life. The administrators, from the wardens to the superintendents, believed that the paper appealed to the inmates' higher instincts and that it encouraged them to see their prison experience as part of their personal growth. This was not entirely the administrators' fantasy, as the newspaper was one of the few

things, especially in the first decade of the 1900s, that offered prisoners a way to connect with one another and with the world outside of the prison. With the rule of silence in place, the *Star of Hope* was one of the only ways to break the isolation of prison existence. Inasmuch as the administrators wanted the *Star of Hope* to show that prison was helping criminals become citizens, the inmates writing in the paper were asserting themselves as always having been citizens. As journalists, the inmates became experts and authorities on a wide variety of subjects. While they could not criticize prison conditions outright, the inmate writers found clever ways to make known their complaints about the food, their treatment at the hands of the guards, and the conditions of their cells. Through humour and in appealing to administrators' egos, the writers were able to subtly reveal the grim reality of the prison routine and to advocate for reforming the prison rather than the prisoner.

Like the *Star of Hope,* entertainment and leisure in prison was enjoyable on its own terms but served political purposes for prisoners, reformers, and prison employees and administrators. I argue, in my second chapter, that the early positive experiments with entertainment programming in prisons laid the groundwork for the more extensive prison reforms that Thomas Mott Osborne initiated in the New York system in 1913. Whereas the *Star of Hope* allowed prisoners to take on the role of journalist and expert, entertainment programming allowed inmates to temporarily shed their prisoner personas and become musicians, dancers, singers, actors, and comedians, or simply audience members. Entertainment also allowed the inmates to engage in safe social criticism. Together with the newspaper, prisoners' being involved with entertainment broadened their public profile. The *Star of Hope* rankled the guards as it seemed to align the prisoners with the administration, but the entertainment programming fostered collaboration between guards and prisoners. They often worked together to plan, prepare, and carry out the program. The positive interactions between the guards and prisoners that these events engendered meant that over time the prison administrators allowed entertainment programs to be put on more frequently. These entertainment programs also forged connections between the prison community and the people from the surrounding areas, as shows often featured local talent and entertained local audiences.

The fact that the entertainment programs took place without incident increased morale for all in the prison, generated positive publicity in the press, and even elicited encouragement from the public, meant that a variety of interested groups were already open to the idea of inmates

having some freedom and responsibility in prison. When Osborne proposed his idea of prisoner self-government, part of which included giving prisoners a larger role in determining the entertainment programming, the people he needed to convince were already halfway there. The most significant change with the entertainment programming under the MWL's direction was how the entertainment was framed. When the MWL took over, league members made explicit the connection between entertainment and prison reform. In the *Star of Hope* and in the *Bulletin* the MWL executives clearly stated that it it was using entertainment to spread the word about prison reform and that they equated public support for their entertainment programs as evidence of a unity of purpose with the prisoners.

My third chapter considers physical culture and sport in prisons. The new penologists often wrote about the value of physical exercise in prison, but in practice, were more interested in criminals' bodies as data repositories that they used to bolster theories about eugenics and criminal physiology. Through the "Physical Culture" column in the *Star of Hope*, the prisoners allied themselves with the growing turn of the century physical culture movement to reclaim their bodies from the criminologists and social scientists and to present themselves to the outside world as men and not monsters. By following advice from the physical culture columnists, the inmates transformed their tiny cells into gymnasia, thereby giving them a sense of control in an institution designed to remove any such feeling among its inhabitants. Not all of the inmates managed to do the fitness programs they were provided. Their cells' dimensions and air quality made it very difficult to do any exercising at all, even the recommended deep breathing cycles. Osborne thought that the lack of proper physical activity was responsible for "moral perversion" (code for sex between prisoners) that was rampant in prison, and, because of this, made exercise and sport a central part of his prison reform proposals. The prison administrators allowed the newly-formed Mutual Welfare League and its Athletics committee to take on the sports programming at the various prisons in the system. In addition to organizing Athletic games for special events, the MWL put together teams for various sports, the most important of which became baseball. Because of baseball's popularity, citizens in the local community were eager to see baseball wherever it was happening, and so filled the stands at the games at the various prisons across the state and cheered for the prison teams. This changed the public's relationship to the prisoner. A prisoner was no longer someone to be feared and ostracized, but was someone to support and applaud.

My final chapter explores how reformers and prisoners alike framed activities at the prison in gendered terms. For work and leisure, reformers highlighted domestic roles for women and roles in the public sphere for men. Female inmates, especially through the *Star of Hope,* asserted themselves as intelligent and engaged citizens with skills beyond those required to keep a good house. In their page, which they called "Women's Writes", the prisoners highlighted their ladyhood and their respectability. In so doing, they urged readers to consider them worthy of being treated with respect and dignity. The activities at the prison during in the early 1900s as well as after the 1913 reforms were promoted as cultivating and showcasing the inmates' respectable ladyhood. As the activities at the women's prison befitted ladies, the social dances and entertainment programs in prison did not have the potentially dangerous connotations that popular entertainment held for women in the world beyond the prison.

The post-1913 reforms did affect the women's prisons, but not to the same extent as did those in the men's prisons. Part of this was due to the female inmates being precluded from contributing to the *Star of Hope* after major cuts to the paper's funding in 1916. The *Star of Hope* had amplified the women's voices. In the *Star of Hope* they were responsible for one-sixth of the paper's content, despite the fact that they were only around one-fortieth of the total prison population. Not being able to write for the paper left them without tools for getting their ideas to the public. Because of their numbers, their activities were smaller scale and did not attract the attention that the larger entertainments or sporting events at the men's prisons did. They were therefore not as well-placed to use prison activities to further their own reform agenda.

Leisure in Service of Discipline: The End of Self-Government Post-1920

By 1920, the State Superintendent of Prisons Charles F. Rattigan started to curb many of the MWL's powers in the prison system believing prisoners had too much power in the institutions and that inmates' new roles undermined prison administrators', keepers', and guards' authority in the system. One of the first ways that Rattigan reduced prisoners' power was by shutting down the prison newspaper. Lewis Lawes, who became Sing Sing's warden in 1920 expanded the recreation program even further and allowed the Mutual Welfare League to continue to plan events at the prison. Unlike Osborne and Doty, however, Lawes saw recreation primarily as a disciplinary tool for the prison rather than as a way by which inmates could be reformed into good citizens. While the MWL was still allowed to organize sporting and

entertainment events, in the 1920s, the League no longer had the administrative power that it had in the 1910s. What little remained of the Mutual Welfare League was officially disbanded in 1929 after a riot at Sing Sing prison.

Other scholars have directed their attention to the period of prison history after 1920 when Lewis Lawes became the Warden at Sing Sing.[26] Lawes rivals Thomas Mott Osborne as the most famous prison warden in American history, though Lawes was largely tweaking the reforms that Osborne and the new penologists had already put in place. Lawes strongly believed that prisoners should be treated well and have ample opportunity to exercise and be entertained. He framed this good treatment differently from Osborne and the new penologists, in claiming not that that entertainment and physical activity would encourage inmates to be good citizens but that they would encourage inmates to be good prisoners. His motivation was managerial rather than moral. To keep the prisoners pacified, Lawes increased the number of cultural and recreational activities at the prison and made participating in these activities directly tied to good behaviour. He started the Sing Sing football team and had legendary baseball players like Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig come to play with the Sing Sing inmates. Outside of sports, Lawes arranged for other prominent people, like Charlie Chaplin, Harry Houdini, and journalist Nellie Bly to come to visit the inmates. He also allowed for a feature film about the Alamo to be shot at the prison and allowed the inmates to be extras in the film. Like the cultural activities at prison before his wardenship, these events were widely covered in the local and international press. In addition to the in-prison activities that generated positive publicity and support for his initiatives, Lawes wrote plays about prison and appeared at their productions on Broadway and he travelled around the country promoting his progressive approach to prison management. Lawes increased Sing Sing's public profile even further when he started to broadcast a national weekly radio show called "20,000 Years in Sing Sing" from the prison in 1932. In the program, which ran until his tenure as warden ended in 1941, Lawes narrated dramatizations of selected Sing Sing inmates' crimes and punishment. His broadcasts inspired a Hollywood movie featuring Spencer Tracy and Bette Davis. Lawes is notable in having brought a lot of attention to the prison and to himself as warden. He became the prison's public face.

What makes the period that I am investigating different from the 1920s to 1940s is that in the early period the prisoners were able to speak for themselves, whereas after the 1920s, Lawes became the spokesman for the prison. The orders to shut down the prisoner-produced paper came

from Charles Rattigan, the Superintendent of Prisons, and not Lawes himself, but the prisoners were nonetheless stripped of their voice during Lawes' time as Warden. Lawes did, however, prevent the League from communicating beyond prison walls. He also more closely monitored and censored prisoners' private correspondence for any subversive content. The prisoners' power was further diminished as Lawes weakened the Mutual Welfare League and moved the organization more under his direct supervision. He limited the League's responsibilities to planning and funding entertainment and with handling minor disciplinary infractions. By 1929, the League was abolished as prison administrators took over organizing events at the prison. Lawes was a prominent public figure, something of a celebrity warden, and his voice dominates the period in New York prison history from the 1920s to 1940. I am focusing on a period when the prisoners, and not just the prison administrators, were able to speak about the prison experience.

In the years between 1899 and today, the United States earned the distinction of being the country with the highest incarceration rates in the world. The major escalation in prisoner numbers in the 1970s followed yet another period of upheaval in the prison system. After the Great Depression and the Second World War, there was a renewed interest in prison reform. Prisons were rebranded "correctional facilities" and operated according to a medical model that saw prisoners as ill and in need of treatment. The new institutions were supposed to provide medical and psychological treatment programs along with educational and vocational training to help the prisoners in their transition to becoming healthy men and women. The correctional facilities offered more yard and recreation privileges and allowed increased visits to the prison, but treatment and training programs fell far short of what was promised. Conditions for prisoners remained poor and prisoners remained trapped in their cells or doing menial work for most of their time in behind bars. In the 1960s and 1970s prisoners revolted against their treatment and the conditions of their incarceration, which culminated in numerous prison riots and spawned an organized prisoner's rights movement. The prisons were ill-equipped to handle the prison population in the early 1970s and matters only worsened with the influx of new prisoners later in the decade resulting from the government's so-called "war on drugs." In the last thirty years, the prison population in the United States went from 300,000 to more than two million. Prisons have become over-crowded warehouses to store those who have fallen on the wrong side of the law, the majority of whom are black and Latino.

My work linking the prison newspaper, entertainments, sports, and self-government in 1899-1920 speaks to the entire field of prison studies. It covers the prisons at a time of transition between the old and the modern prison. The period is brief, but instructive, as it shows a time when prisoners were given agency in prison and when the line between the prison world and the larger society was not as deeply drawn as it is today.

[1] *Star of Hope,* January 26, 1901, vol. 11, no. 21, 363

[2] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, (New York: New Press, 2010)

[3] *Journal of American History,* June 2016, vol. 102, no. 1

[4] Some of the key works addressing policing, sentencing and ex-convict re-integration to society are Angela Y Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003); Jill A. McCorkel, *Breaking Women: Gender, Race, and the New Politics of Imprisonment* (New York: NYU Press, 2013); Bruce Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006); Sasha Amarmsky, *American Furies: Crime, Punishment, and Vengeance in the Age of Mass Imprisonment* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007)

[5] Nancy Fraser, *Rethinking the Public Sphere: a Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.* (Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Press, 1991) and Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989)

[6] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

[7] American prison history is covered in the following major works: Rebecca M. McLennan, *The Crisis of Imprisonment: Protest, Politics, and the Making of the American Penal State, 1776-1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); David J. Rothman, *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and its Alternatives in Progressive America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980); Blake McKelvey, *American Prisons: a History of Good Intentions* (Montclair, NJ: P. Smith, 1977)

[8] The key works on the history of women's prisons in America before 1935 are: Estelle B. Freedman, *Their Sisters' Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981); Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Partial Justice: Women in State Prisons, 1800-1935* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985); Cheryl D. Hicks, *Talk With You Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890-1935.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Caroline Press, 2010)

[9] Reverend B. C. Smith, in *Documents of the Senate of the State of New York*, ed. E. Croswell, (New York: New York State Legislature, 1833), 21.

[10] Nicole Hahn Rafter, "Hard Times: Custodial Prisons for Women and the Example of the New York State Preson for Women at Auburn, 1893-1933, in *Judge, Lawyer, Victim, Thief: Women, Gender Roles, and Criminal Justice Partial Justice* (Evanston, Il.: : Northeastern University Press, 1982), 245.

[11] Rebecca M. McLennan's *The Crisis of Imprisonment* is particularly instructive for the history of labour in prison.

[12] McLennan, *The Crisis of Imprisonment,* 71.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Important overviews of American progressive reform include: Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage, 1960); Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Lewis L. Gould, *The Progressive Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1974).

[15] Estelle B. Freedman, *Their Sisters' Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930* (University of Michigan Press, 1984), 46.

[16] *Star of Hope*, November 4, 1899, vol. 1, no. 15, 12

[17] McLennan, 404.

[18] The prisoner admission records as well as census data from 1900, 1910, and 1920 provided information about the prisoners' race, religion, country of birth, parents' place of birth, years of schooling completed, and the prisoners' ability to read and write.

[19] Mclennan, 283.

[20] Thomas Mott Osborne, *Within Prison Walls; Being a Narrative of Personal Experience during a Week of Voluntary Confinement in the State Prison at Auburn, New York.* (Montclair, N.J.: Patterson Smith, 1969) and Madeleine Zabriskie Doty, *Society's Misfits* (New York, NY: Century, co., 1916).

[21] the inmates at Sing Sing called their organization the Golden Rule Brotherhood before adopting the MWL name

[22] Griffiths, Alison, "Bound by Cinematic Chains," in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, ed. André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, and Santiago Hidalgo (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2012).

[23] The idea of emergent, dominant, and residual cultural forms is taken from Raymond Williams' seminal text, *Marxism and Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[24] James McGrath Morris, *Jailhouse Journalism: The Fourth Estate behind Bars* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 1998).

[25] Sing Sing 1500, *Life in Sing Sing* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1904).

[26] Works covering Lawes wardenship include: Rebecca McClennan's "Punishment's 'Square Deal': Prisoners and Their Keepers in 1920s New York", in *Journal of Urban History,* 21, 5, July 2003; Ralph Blumenthal, *Miracle at Sing Sing: How One Man Transformed the Lives of America's Most Dangerous Prisoners* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2013), Charles Bright, *The Powers that Punish: Prison and Politics in the Era of the 'Big House', 1920-1955* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

Chapter One: Newspapers

In April 1899, Edwin O. Quigley, a notorious counterfeiter serving a fifteen-year sentence for his crimes, got to work on designing the nameplate for the Sing Sing's first newspaper, the *Star of Hope*. He settled on a landscape etching featuring a star above a guard tower and the countryside beyond the prison walls. Quigley managed to capture what made the *Star of Hope* unique among newspapers. The pastoral setting, the star, and the tower visually presented how the paper served as escape and wish fulfilment for prisoners while at the same time showed how it was very much under the watchful eyes of the prison officials. The *Star of Hope* was not the first newspaper to be published behind bars, but it was one of the first newspapers to be linked with new penology ideology. When Sing Sing prisoner number 1500 pitched the idea of an eight-page newspaper for his fellow prisoners to Warden Omar V. Sage, who in turn presented it to Cornelius V. Collins, the Superintendent of Prisons, they were both open to the idea. The paper 1500 proposed would publish articles by prisoners and provide some news about the outside. The new-penology-oriented Warden and Superintendent ultimately gave 1500 permission to go ahead with the idea, believing that the right kind of newspaper could be in line with the broader changes in penal practices that were gaining currency among those at the top of the prisons' administrative hierarchy.[1] The *Star of Hope* and its later incarnation, the *Star-Bulletin,* functioned, in many ways, like a regular newspaper, covering topics, ranging from war, to politics, religion, sports, entertainment, and science. In addition to non-fiction writing, The *Star of Hope* showcased inmate talent in its short story writing, poetry, and cartoons sections. The paper created a community of readers and writers engaged in dialogue about ideas both serious and mundane. In doing so, it opened a virtual public sphere for the inmates.

History of Prison Newspapers

Prisoner number1500 began his work as the *Star of Hope*'s first editor-in-chief with a profound sense of mission. When in the late 1800s, prisons brought printing presses into their institutions so that they could do their printing work in-house, 1500 saw beyond the machines' function for prison administration and appreciated their potential as tools for a revolutionary venture. After getting official sanction, 1500 worked on transforming his vision for a prisoner-produced newspaper into something tangible. He did not undertake this task lightly; indeed, he

saw creating the *Star of Hope* as an act that would go down in history. Writing in the *Star of Hope*'s inaugural edition he imagines not only his fellow inmates reading the paper in their cells, but people in the future coming across the paper and remarking upon its significance: "Future generations," he writes,

> will, we believe, read in history a note something after this fashion: 'In the archives of the library in the Superintendent of Prisons' department at Albany, there lies, among rare and ancient folios, in a simple room, a file of the FIRST prison paper in the Empire Commonwealth. Consequently, it stands us in hand to utilize our best efforts toward strengthening our mental capacities, and awakening the lethargic condition of our minds toward higher and nobler aims[2]

The *Star of Hope* was not, in fact, the Empire Commonwealth's first prison newspaper, but it was the first to be published in over one hundred years, and was the first example of prison journalism.

The first prison newspaper, *Forlorn Hope,* came out of a debtor's prison in in New York in the spring of 1800. William Keteltas found himself in debtors' prison in New York when he got himself into financial trouble. He was an atypical prisoner in that he was an articulate, well-educated and skilled lawyer with a practice on Broadway. He used his time in prison to launch a crusade against the law that sent people to prison for debt.[3] At this time, people who could not pay their creditors were sent to jail until they settled their debts. The prisoners had virtually no support from prison authorities and had to rely on friends, family, or charity for basic provisions. The majority of prisoners were in jail not for committing a crime, but because they were poor. The debts that sent most of the men behind bars were for less than twenty-five dollars, and many were for as little as ten. To bring attention to his cause Keteltas created a newspaper, which he called *Forlorn Hope*. Keteltas' friends on the outside worked on his behalf to organize printing, distribute the paper, secure subscriptions, and sell advertising. The paper was aimed for a non-prisoner audience and had many prominent prison reformers as subscribers. He modelled his paper on the popular newspapers that circulated in New York City at the time. *Forlorn Hope* had a masthead and a graphic at the top of the front page and the articles were arranged in three columns. *Forlorn Hope* was not a one-issue newspaper. Ketletas focused his writing on criticising what he saw as the unjust and illogical laws that made debt an imprisonable offense, but he rounded out his content with current events unconnected to prison subjects, prison literature, and a column featuring amusing anecdotes. Though the *Forlorn Hope* was only

published for six months, its twenty-eight issues brought some public attention to the fact that poor people were, essentially, being put in prison for being poor, and also exposed the brutal conditions within the prison.

Forlorn Hope was the first newspaper produced in prison, but it was a one-man operation that did not involve prison authorities. The next prison-oriented newspaper, the *Summary,* appeared over eighty years later. It was produced by non-prisoners but was designed for a prisoner audience. The *Summary* was, in these ways, the opposite of *Forlorn Hope.* In the eighty years that passed after *Forlorn Hope* folded, the prison reform movement had gained traction. This was partly because of a dramatic increase in the numbers of people behind bars in the aftermath of the civil war. Prison officials were beginning to work with prison reformers to rethink the way that prisons were organized and run. Collaborations between reformers and officials were becoming formalized and by 1870, they planned the first American Prison Congress, which took place in Cincinnati in October of that year. One hundred and thirty delegates came to the meeting. By the end of the congress, the delegates signed up to become the charter members of the National Prison Association. James McGrath Morris, author of *Jailhouse Journalism: The Fourth Estate Behind Bars* notes that "a utopian spirit" dominated talk at the meeting.[4] Zebulon Reed Brockway, the superintendent of the Detroit House of Corrections widely regarded as the father of the new penology, was a prominent figure at the congress. In presenting his paper "Ideal for a True Prison System for a State,"[5] which he presented at the Congress, he brought together the most progressive ideas of the era. His central argument was that the prison system should aim to reform criminals. This idea marked a shift away from the idea that prison was solely a place for punishment.

Joseph Chandler, a former congressman and newspaper publisher who established the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Prisoners, suggested creating a newspaper for inmates as a way to reform the criminal mind. In his presentation at the Congress, "The Question of a Prison Newspaper,"[6] Chandler remarked that prisoners were desperate for newspapers, and that all men who could read regularly asked guards and visitors to bring newspapers to them. Indeed, by this time, reading a newspaper had become a daily ritual for most literate people in the United States.[7] Chandler argued that newspapers could provide a much-needed connection to the outside world, but that the salacious material in many of the popular newspapers could work against the reformist mission to make prisoners better citizens.

According to Chandler, the newspapers' "disgusting details of vice and licentiousness […] blunts delicacy in the young and encourages indecency and crime."[8] Brockway shared Chandler's concern about popular newspapers' potential to corrupt the inmates but also believed that the right kind of newspaper could advance their cause. Brockway's "new penology" vision was to make prison a parallel civil society that would prepare prisoners for active and productive citizenship upon their release. He believed that Chandler's idea of a carefully censored newspaper could be a useful tool for their project.[9]

Brockway put this newspaper idea into practice when he was into his seventh year as warden in the Elmira Penitentiary, a reformatory that opened in 1876. Elmira was the first carceral institution to be structured according to the principles established at the congress in 1870. The reformatory housed first-time offenders between the ages of 16 and 30, who were seen as having the greatest potential to reform. Before Brockway bought a printing press for the prison, the only way that the inmates got news about the outside had been through weekly oral readings of censored, short extracts from newspapers at dinnertime. With the printing press in-house, Brockway enlisted Macaulay, a paroled inmate with a degree from Oxford, to organize and edit the new prison paper. The *Summary* was four-pages and included a mix of news about current events, positive coverage of the activities within the prison, and inspirational stories. The short editorial in the first edition explained that the *Summary* was established in the interest of the prisoners and that its "duty will be to interest and amuse you with many things grave and gay."[10] Brockway ensured that the paper not include any coverage of sensational court or criminal news, horse racing, or prize fighting. In promoting *The Summary* among prison reformers, Brockway laid out his "twin purposes" for the paper:

> to furnish the reformatory's inmates with the political, industrial, and social news of the world, and to thereby keep alive their interest in and patriotism for their country, and to inculcate, without sermonizing, ideas of thrift, enterprise, honesty, and manliness.[11]

The newspaper was popular among Elmira inmates, though its popularity is no doubt related to the fact that it was the inmates' only access to media from the outside. Not content to just read the *Summary*, many inmates sent the editor articles that they wanted published in the paper. They wanted their voices to be a part of the publication, even when they were plagiarising from books in the prison library. While clearly dishonest, the inmates' plagiarism shows an attempt to take

on an editorial role and to shape the newspapers' content. The editor did occasionally include non-plagiarized articles that prisoners had written, but the majority of articles in the *Summary* were not inmate-generated.

In addition to the paper's popularity among Elmira inmates, the *Summary* had many admirers among prison reformers. The large number of reformers, both from within the United States and abroad, who subscribed to the *Summary* led the editor to include a page filled with articles by prominent reformers and debates about issues related to prison reform. With such positive reaction to the *Summary,* Brockway allowed the paper to double in size and to publish two issues per month instead of one. By 1890 the paper was produced weekly. The masthead for the revamped *Summary* included its mission statement, "to provide a clean and truthful history of contemporary events. Its constant endeavour shall be to approve the excellent, to condemn the bad in all things that come properly within its sphere as a newspaper."[12] This idea of providing "clean" versions of news is consistent with many of the other facets of the wider culture that were allowed into the prison over the next thirty years. The entertainers that came into the prisons in the New York system in the early 1900s were commended for their "clean" performances, movies screened behind bars were reviewed as being "clean", and the physical culture programs given to the inmates were part of the prisons' wider mission to promote clean living among the prisoners.

The *Summary's* "clean" approach made it a perfect propaganda instrument for the Elmira experiment. Beyond posing no threat to the institution, the paper allowed the reformatory to be hailed as a success story for prison reformers, when the reality at Elmira fell far short of the ideals Brockway endorsed at the prison congress. The *Summary* kept concealed that Brockway was, in fact, a cruel warden who resorted to brutal physical repression when the inmates at Elmira did not respond to his paternalistic methods. Alexander Pisciotta argues that Brockway's reputation as a great reformer is undeserved and that he was "merely the greatest salesman of all time."[13] The *Summary* ensured that his sales pitch was widely distributed. Based on his experience with the *Summary,* Brockway made the idea of a prison newspaper one of the thirteen basic tenets he presented at the International Prison Congress in 1910. The *Summary* ran for at least twenty-five years and inspired officials at prisons across the country to start their own newspapers.

The *Star of Hope*

It was only because of the officials and reformers' positive experience with *the Summary* at Elmira that Sing Sing Superintendent Cornelius V. Collins was willing to consider inmate number 1500's proposal for an inmate-produced newspaper his institutions. In his exposé about his prison experiences, *Life in Sing Sing*, which was published within a year of his release from the prison, 1500 explains that he saw the *Star of Hope* as the first paper of its kind. 1500 claims that he had heard about a prison paper in Stillwater, Minnesota called The *Prison Mirror*, but that it was fundamentally different from the vision that he had for the *Star of Hope*. According to 1500, The *Prison Mirror* was little more than an auxiliary to the chaplain's office, circulating the chaplain's texts and admonitions.[14] 1500's description of the *Prison Mirror* suggests that it was similar in mission and structure to the *Summary.* His disdain for the publication indicates that inmates were not happily lapping up the administrators' propaganda in the way that Brockway described in his reflections on prison newspapers. The *Star of Hope* was going to be different because it was to stem from the whole community of prisoners. When 1500 proposed the paper to Warden Omar V. Sage he explained that it would be

> devoted to the interest of Sing Sing Prisons and its inmates, to be issued bi-weekly, to be original in matter, to be liberal and generous in its treatment of all proper subjects, to abjure criminal news, but still to record the important happenings of the outside world, and to act as a moral and educative factor among the prisoners.[15]

He put together a practical plan for how the paper would be put together, including cost estimates, technology and technicians required, and how to organize the office in accordance with the prisons' disciplinary structure. 1500 recalls seeing his own proposition as "radical, if not revolutionary in prison affairs, [and] almost despaired of success."[16] Warden Sage asked 1500 to make a prototype of the paper so that he could bring it to the Superintendent to assess. Superintendent Collins accepted 1500's proposal and allowed the *Star of Hope* to be published according to the plan.

Except for the *Star of Hope,* inmates were actively prevented from forming a community with either their fellow prisoners or with people beyond prison walls. In the early years of the twentieth century, the rule of silence had been in effect in prisons across the Auburn system. This meant that prisoners were forbidden from speaking to one another when they were not physically

isolated from one another in their cramped, dank cells. Under these conditions, the *Star of Hope* was the inmates' only means of communication. The paper was an important part of life within the prison, but it was also a tool with which the inmates could shape their image for outside readers. Prisons across the country distributed the *Star of Hope.* The *Star of Hope* also had exchanges with major newspapers and magazines and had subscribers across the world. Just one year after its first edition was published, the *Star of Hope* was featured at the World's Fair in Paris. The inmates were forced into silence in the prisons, but the paper gave prisoners' voices global reach. The prisoner-journalists knew that the *Star of Hope* gave them a platform and they were keen to take advantages of the opportunity to argue for their cause. They presented an ideal image of prisoners. Their articles proved the men and women behind bars to be informed, engaged, intelligent and creative citizens who were worthy of being treated with respect. Showing prisoners in these ways served to simultaneously generate support for reform and to present it as already having been achieved.

The superintendent, the warden, and the prisoners were enthusiastic about the new prison newspaper, but besides the top administrators, many prison officials saw the paper as a threat to their authority. 1500 claimed that "of all things that a prison keeper fears, nothing is so terrible as the newspaper. It is associated in his mind with exposure and shame, and its chief business, as he regards it, is to pry into the secrets of his business."[17] He explained that the keepers and guards did not believe that a prisoner-produced newspaper would ever come to fruition and that when it did, "their amazement and disgust knew no limits."[18] The fact that many of the guards were illiterate would only have increased their sense of displacement in the prison hierarchy resulting from the *Star of Hope*'s prominence within the prison and its growing influence beyond prison walls. The *Star of Hope* was one of the first changes to be introduced in prison life that created a sort of alliance between top officials and the prisoners and which the lower level prison officials felt weakened their power in the institution.

Perks or freedoms for the prisoners did indeed chip away at the guards' and keepers' authority. The *Star of Hope* increased the status of dozens of prisoners and allowed them to operate outside of the rules and routines in the prison. The guards were not wrong to be suspicious of the inmate writers, as clever prison journalists found ways to subtly critique the guards and prison conditions in their contributions to the paper. 1500 and subsequent editors did this in a cunning way, flattering the prison administrators before condemning the guards and

keepers. They complimented the prison administrators and commended them on the good work that they were doing in the prison and followed their praise with a critique of guards' brutality. This was evident even in the very first issue of the *Star of Hope.* 1500 wrote several paragraphs praising the recent improvements in food, sanitation, religious services, and the prison library. He followed this with a surprisingly blunt, though still oblique, denunciation of prison guards. He shrewdly appeals to the administrators' reformist mission in his plea for the administrators to do something about abusive keepers. He asserts that

> the time has passed when unsympathetic officials should be given opportunity to swing their batons promiscuously over those under the state's care, merely to gratify their own personal ambition by exercising undue authority. […] Reform is on the wing, and those in highest authority undoubtedly will see to it that small, inefficient men will be eliminated from the state's service, and thereby giving the wards of the state all the opportunity, for reform.[19]

Of course, the guards and keepers continued to wield tremendous power over the inmates after the *Star of Hope* was published and even after the most radical of the changes in prison life were introduced.

Censorship

Despite the guards' and keepers' objections to the paper, the *Star of Hope* quickly became an important part of prison life not only at Sing Sing, but in all of the prisons in the New York system. By the time the *Star of Hope* published its seventh edition in July 1899, each of the prisons in the system had a local editor and a dedicated page in the paper. Unsurprisingly, freedom of the press did not extend to the prison newspaper offices. The *Star of Hope* editors were only able to publish what prison administrators would allow to be published. The writers could use the paper to elevate the prisoner's image, but they had to praise the prison officials in the process. To humanize prisoners, the editors and writers had to conceal the brutal conditions of their incarceration. The *Star of Hope* did not explicitly state how the administration censored the paper. One of the few instructions to inmates related to content of articles submitted was a notice to contributors from the editor that appeared in the November 4th, 1899 edition. The notice explains that the editor had received a high number of articles that criticized the courts of justice and particular juridical figures. The editor advises potential contributors that they are in no position to criticize the actions of the courts and that the paper was not designed to be a forum

for these kinds of complaints. He urges writers to guard themselves and to "avoid *all* criticism and malediction" and to "aim to higher and nobler purposes in your literary pursuits and the results will be in keeping with the idea of the founder of the *Star of Hope*, Superintendent Collins."[20] No further official records remain that explain the paper's editorial decision-making. The only other account of this process appears in 1500's memoirs. He states that a few topics were barred; discipline was not to be criticized and offensive comments about officers would not be allowed.[21]

It would have been risky for prisoners to put forth articles that directly criticized prison officials or conditions. Their disparaging remarks would not have been published and they risked potential reprisals from the authorities for their comments. 1500 claims that these strictures simply made the writers more creative in critiquing prison officers and prison conditions, saying that "contributors became very skilful in concealing their sarcastic shafts under cover of the most innocent appearing expressions."[22] There is evidence of this strategy throughout the paper. The inmates routinely used humour to get past the censors and express their contempt of the guards and keepers. The columns "Whispers You Hear in the Yard," "Rumours," and "Ricochets from the Fun Range" were where cryptic critiques of prison conditions could be found. The column called "Open Parliament", however, was designed as a place for prisoners to communicate some of their complaints about prison life and ideas about penology more generally. Most of these critiques were about the mundane aspects of prison life, and, therefore, did not pose a major threat to the prison administrators. Just as prisoners were risking potential retribution for articles that they wrote for the paper, prisoners could also try to curry favour through their writing for the *Star.* An article praising a particular prison official might get them certain privileges or have guards turn a blind eye to a prisoner's infractions. In this way, what did or did not get published in the paper became a kind of currency in the prison for both the officials and the prisoners.

The *Star of Hope* and its functions

In addition to providing a narrow space for critique, the *Star of Hope* served important organizational functions for the prison. The administration used the paper to communicate with prisoners across the system, bringing attention to changes in prison rules or structures and to changes in laws that affected prisoners. The warden or the superintendent of prisons sometimes published notices in the *Star* but the vast majority of articles were prisoner-produced. The only

regular column not produced by the inmates was "Chaplain's Notice," in which the Chaplains offer advice to the inmates about how to keep their spirits up and how not to behave while behind bars. The notice also included information about previous and upcoming religious services. The administrators largely saw the paper as a chance to advertise their progressive penal practices and to show themselves as being on the forefront of prison reform in allowing prisoners to produce a newspaper. The *Star of Hope* made their system appear liberal and free, while the actual conditions within the prison were not something that the administrators would want publicized. Like the *Summary* before it, the *Star of Hope* was widely circulated among those in the prison reform movement, but the *Star* also boasted a wide public audience that was unconnected to the prison reform movement. With this varied readership the prisoners and the administrators used the *Star of Hope* as a propaganda tool and to further their particular interests.

Creating Community

The prisoners certainly used the *Star of Hope* as a way to change the public's negative view of prisoners and to advocate for prison reform, but the paper also gave prisoners a chance to connect with one another. The paper allowed for a kind of community-building. The inmates used the pages of the *Star of Hope* to hold debates on different facets of prison reform, the criminal justice system, and on theories of crime and criminology. The paper allowed the inmates at each institution to learn about what was going on in other prisons in their system and elsewhere, as it included information about prison conditions and reforms nationally and internationally. In this way, the prisoners could feel themselves to be a part of a broader alliance of prisoners. The *Star of Hope* editor often chose a topic, such as parole or how and why men become criminals, and invited prisoners to write in with their positions on the subject. The subject would be covered over several issues and fostered real debate both in the full-length articles and in the responses to the articles that appeared in the letters to the editor. The prisoners added their voices to the debates on the issues that affected them the most. Rebecca McLennan in *The Crisis of Imprisonment,* argues that the *Star of Hope* prompted a consciousness among prisoners that they were subjects in an administrative state that was part of an "integrated bureaucratic state-wide penal system that was subject to various authorities, not just the wardens"[23] in their particular institution. The alliance among prisoners spread as the *Star of Hope* inspired prisoners in other institutions in the United States to start their own newspapers.

The *Star of Hope* enabled the inmates across the system to engage in a dialogue and to form bonds with one another in ways that were previously forbidden. When the reforms were introduced in the New York System, prisoners in other parts of the country learned about them through the newspapers. Just as prisons outside of New York came to imitate the *Star of Hope,* they also later instituted their own versions of the New York reforms related to entertainment, sport, and self-government.

Providing a bridge between prisoners at different institutions had the effect of giving female inmates a prominent voice. Initially, the women were left out of the paper. 1500 quickly corrected this oversight after receiving a letter from an inmate writing on behalf of the women at Auburn insisting that they be given a section to produce. The women were given the same space that each of the men's prisons had. With a population hovering just around one hundred inmates, the women's prison had representation in the *Star of Hope* that far exceeded their proportion of the the total prison population. The page that the women created, which they called "Women's Writes" had a feminist bent. They wrote about issues related to women's rights and celebrated women's achievements. Besides politics, the women wrote about their particular interests and concerns. Many of the men in prison found reading the women's section and engaging with women through the *Star* to be a revelation. In his memoirs, 1500 explained that he developed a relationship with the editor of the "Women's Writes" pages and that through their correspondence he "came to know a good deal about the women."[24] This was a sentiment that repeatedly appeared in the *Star of Hope*. The women's opinions gained wide respect across the system, as evidenced in the letters to the editor as well as in articles that appeared throughout the paper. Outside publications were also taking notice of the women's contributions to the *Star.* 1500 reported that one of the female inmate's contributions to the "Here and There" column was routinely republished in other publications.[25]

The *Star of Hope* enabled the prisoners to form a discursive and supportive community, but some inmates wanted to use the paper to air their grievances about their fellow prisoners. Over the paper's twenty-year run, the editors sometimes had to remind contributors not to submit nasty or insulting comments in their articles. That the prisoners needed to be periodically retold to refrain from delivering hateful comments suggests that the editors received their fair share of such missives. In 1909, the "Editor's Note" column issued a statement saying that writers had to

remove all comments that could even be perceived as being insulting to other inmates. The editor explained that

> personal references are so apt to cause offense even when intended to be merely jocose, and it is so difficult and then impossible, to discover when they may wound someone's sensibilities, that hereafter they will as a general rule be excluded from the columns of the *Star of Hope*.[26]

Writing for the *Star of Hope*

Despite occasionally receiving unprintable pieces from the inmates, every issue of the *Star* included appeals from the editor for submissions. After proclaiming the *Star of Hope* a "howling success" in the August 1899 edition of the paper, number 1500 tries to encourage his fellow inmates to contribute. "It is exactly what the 'cons' have made it, and it is wholly dependent on the intellectual industry they bestow upon it in the future," he explains. "Don't be content to look on. Use your think-pot for the benefit of a good cause. Write something!" The pool of writers for the *Star of Hope* was fairly limited, as command of English and fairly high literacy skills were a pre-requisite for the task. Most of the prisoners were poor or working class and had, at best, a few years of primary education. That many of the prisoners were part of Italian, Polish, German, Chinese, and Jewish immigrant communities and did not have English as their first language, further limited the number of potential writers. The editors nonetheless wanted the *Star of Hope* to be inclusive and to try to have different voices in their paper. The articles were mostly in English, but to make the paper more representative of the prison population, the editors frequently included articles in Italian and German.[27]

The editors' desire to have the paper be a tool for creating bonds between prisoners was to include articles in which prisoners write about something from their cultural background. The editors actually boasted about the racial and ethnic diversity within the prisons. The Auburn editor in 1901 proudly proclaimed that Auburn is cosmopolitan and that over twenty different countries are represented in its population. Articles by the Jewish inmates included "the Adventure of a Russian Jew,"[28] in which Auburn inmate 25,058 discusses his childhood in Russia in the 1870s. He explains that he and his family faced anti-Semitism and that Jews were blocked from most occupations. In "The Jew of the East Side"[29] tells the story of Clinton inmate number 5,920's experience as a Jewish immigrant in New York and how Jewish immigrants were making the most of the opportunities in their new country by becoming doctors, lawyers and factory workers. 5,920 focused on success stories rather than on the stories of men like him

who were clearly not adapting well to their conditions. Religious holidays gave further opportunity for inmates to write nostalgic and sentimental stories detailing the way that they celebrate the occasion in their country of origin or in their culture or religion. Italian, German, Polish, and Irish prisoners wrote about their traditional Easter, Christmas celebrations while Jewish prisoners explained Passover and Yom Kippur to their readers.

Topics related to China and the Chinese in America frequently appeared in the paper. Some of the articles were written by one of the Chinese inmates at Sing Sing. The editor was pleased to be able to make his paper more diverse, but his promotion of this fact was tinged with racism. In the 1901 edition of the paper Auburn editor, 25,818 proclaimed that

> Our lone 'boxer' may hereafter be properly referred to as a 'yellow journalist'. He has advanced so far in English that he now proposes to write an article for *The Star of Hope.* His first effort will be entitled 'Life in a Chinese Village'[30]

"Life in a Chinese Village" became a regular column in the paper. Through the column, this inmate could be more than a racial stereotype. He was a person with a family and a story. He became a three-dimensional person to the readers. He also offered his fellow-inmates some understanding of life in China written by someone actually from China. When in 1905 the *Star of Hope* held a debate about the Chinese Exclusion Act, the prisoners were highly critical of the legislation. Auburn 27,292 argued that "the American people have, apparently, made a serious blunder by enforcing so rigidly the Chinese Exclusion Act." His argument was, however, a racist one. He thought that it was decidedly wrong to debar Chinese merchants, lawyers, and school-teachers, but its unfairness, according to him, was because America accepts "the scum and dross of Southern Europe and other countries."[31] Auburn 25,673 took a position against the Chinese Exclusion Act that was grounded in anti-racist sentiment. "Contact with another race, the Chinese race in particular" according to him, "would be an acquisition rather than a detriment" and that "data gathered form various sources furnish very good reasons for thinking that even the deep-seated and fundamental difference between the Oriental and Western mind can be abridged."[32] Whether or not reading "Life in a Chinese Village" can be directly credited for his enlightened view is not stated, but the paper's attempt to be inclusive might have encouraged inmates to expand their thinking about race and ethnicity.

The editors and writers took pride in their progressive stances, often presenting themselves as being on the vanguard of liberal thinking. In 1904, the editor reported that the United State Supreme Court had just decided that Puerto Ricans are not aliens. He then proudly states that "the *Star of Hope* handed down the same decision over four years ago."[33] In a report on goings-on in Turkey in 1903, the writer claims that it was almost as unsafe for an American living in Turkey as it was for a black American to reside in Georgia.[34] Contributors often contrasted their more enlightened views with those that many Americans outside of prison held. The editors also praised the work of African Americans in the prison. One such example was the inspirational story about a young "coloured girl" who, despite having arrived at prison unable to read or write, came to produce a series of maps of such high quality that her work was chosen to represent prisoners' achievements at a prison exhibit at a conference in Albany in 1906.[35]

For the most part, writers do not identify their race or ethnic background in their articles. Their background is obvious when the articles are personal and are designed to highlight a part of their ethnic background, country of origin, or religion. It is less clear when the articles are of a more general nature. There are, however, occasional hints as to some of the writers' race or ethnicity. In 1903 the Auburn editor wrote to thank one of their "Hebrew correspondents" for bringing eight square feet of matzoh to the *Star* office. He said that "we certainly appreciate Joe's kindness but can't say that we would care to feed on matzoth as a steady diet. Too much like eating paper." The editor took the opportunity to explain that the Jews' superior intelligence has led to them being persecuted by more "mutton-headed" races.[36] In 1907 in writing about an upcoming edition explained that "one of our coloured contributors" had handed in an article about how to raise chickens, which he said was written by an expert and would prove instructive to amateur poultrymen.[37]

The examples of openness and inclusivity are undermined by the casual racism that often appeared in *Star of Hope*. A joke reprinted from another paper with which the *Star* had an exchange joked about Africans being cannibals.[38] An Auburn contributor wrote an article about a black kitten found in the prison library, who he jokingly introduces as a new member of the library staff whose specialty is catching all the mice. He closes the article by saying that the kitten has been christened "nigger."[39] Reports on "nigger" and his activities became a running joke in the paper for years. The racism mostly appeared in these kinds of joking ways. The punchline for a joke that appeared in August 1900, in which a black inmate is asked by the

Principal Keeper if he has the carving experience needed to work at the Art School, is in the inmate's reply that he "carved a couple of coloured genmans down on Thompson street."[40] Accompanying the joke is a cartoon in which the black prisoner is shown in caricature, with giant lips being his principal feature. Images of this type appear in the paper throughout its run, particularly in the first decade of the 1900s. Some of the racist jokes went quite far, as did the following joke in a 1902 edition of the paper, "a chicken, like an Indian, is best when it's dead – particularly if it is fried."[41]

There were hints at conflicts between prisoners based on race, religion, and ethnicity. Dr. Israel Davidson, the Jewish Chaplain at Sing Sing wrote a column in the *Star of Hope* in which he claimed that there was no religious prejudice among prison officials and that they do not discriminate between Jew or Christian inmates. He said, however, that where he did find prejudice and discrimination was among the inmates. According to Davidson, their common status as prisoners did not lead to inter-group solidarity. He found that even Sing Sings Jewish population was divided into many factions. These factions were less about particular religious practice, but the type of crime for which the men were convicted.[42]

Despite the prison population being divided into factions based on race, religion, ethnicity, language, or even type of crime, the newspaper tried to draw disparate groups together in the project of improving prisoners' literacy. To that end, the editors created a regular column entitled "Common errors in English writing and speaking" in which they explained basic vocabulary and grammar points. They also encouraged prisoners to send in articles, regardless of the quality of the writing, explaining that the editors would edit their writing and shape the articles into publishable form. Sing Sing prisoner number 51,721 claimed that "as an educator it is better than anything else for while it instructs the reader, it inspires him to write an article that will be read by others, and when an inmate once starts writing he will not be satisfied until he is ranked among the best contributors of the paper."[43] This comment was fairly typical. Prisoner letters to the *Star of Hope* frequently echoed this idea, claiming that the inmates were learning to read and write through the paper. Many prisoners expressed a feeling of pride in seeing their words in print, which was something that they could never have imagined. Other inmates' pride in their accomplishments spurred many prisoners to submit articles to the *Star of Hope.*

The Editor-in-chief of the *Star of Hope* for the anniversary issue in 1901 provided statistics about submissions to the paper. In the previous year the editor claims to have received

1,384 submissions from across the institutions in the system, out of which 996 were prose and 388 were various kinds and styles of verse.[44] By 1903, the editors had received 5,160 submissions.[45] Those submitting articles for publication were not people who would have been published outside of the prison in such a widely circulated publication, if at all. The editors were nurturing previously untapped talent. Even if the prisoners did not submit full articles for publication, they could still contribute to the paper. Sending letters to the editor and responding to articles was another way that prisoners could be part of the debates in the paper. Prisoners could also send in quips or brief comments or messages to other prisoners in various columns, including "Whispers You Hear in the Yard" and "Local Gossip," which were designed for these kinds of communications. While many prisoners never sent a word to the editors to be printed and the *Star of Hope* restricted what the prisoners could express, the paper nonetheless gave some of the most marginalized people in the country a public voice.

Plagiarism

Because the *Star of Hope* was written and produced by prisoners, its writers were prone to plagiarism accusations. Journalists writing in outside publications often suggested that *Star of Hope* writers were dishonourable. They usually made their allegations in a joking manner and were based on the idea that those behind bars would have no qualms about plagiarism, given their proven immoral character. Others laid more serious charges. On February 26th, 1901, the *New York Times* printed an article that directly accused a *Star of Hope* writer of plagiarism. The *Times* writer explains that his paper had frequently expressed appreciation for the *Star of Hope's* general excellence. He notes that the *Times* staff were pleased, though surprised, about the paper's high quality. Over time, the *Star's* high quality made many *Times* journalists begin to suspect that at least some of what was published in the *Star of Hope* was either adapted or stolen outright. The *Times* writer explained that

> after a while doubts as to the wisdom of giving to convicted criminals an opportunity to pose as the unfortunate victims of economic and social wrongs grew stronger and stronger in our minds, and of late we have left to others the task of praising the literary productions of the jailbirds.[46]

Dozens of publications had given the *Star of Hope* rave reviews. But an article in the *Chicago Times-Herald* , which provided the proof that confirmed the *Times'* writers' suspicions and

finally led the *New York Times* to shift from not covering the *Star of Hope* to accusing its writers of plagiarism. The *Chicago Times-Herald* article revealed that a poem called "The Fireman," which appeared in the *Star of Hope* and was credited to Clinton 4,715, was, in fact, written by poet Robert T. Conrad. Robert T. Conrad was not a well-known poet. He was a lawyer and a judge who dabbled in literature. It took a professional poet working at the *Times Herald* to detect that the poem in the *Star* had been plagiarized and to find the source material to prove his charge. The *New York Times* writer agreed with the *Times-Herald* in accusing Clinton 4,715 of plagiarism, although he admitted that even the "best regulated offices have been fooled into printing previously published work as original." He was, in this instance, putting the *Star of Hope* on a level with these more prestigious publications. These prestigious publications were torn between respecting and being suspicious of the *Star of Hope*. The *New York Times* writer's advice is not for the *Star of Hope* to cease publication, but for its editor to adopt a questioning attitude toward the paper's contributors. His advice to the *Star*'s editor is that he should be

> very thoroughly on guard against the wiles to be expected from his peculiar contributors, and it furnishes some justification for our own impression that much of the matter in the *Star of Hope* simply could not have been written by the class of people that tends naturally toward state prison.[47]

It was this sentiment to which 1500, the *Star of Hope* editor at the time, took offence when he addressed the plagiarism accusation in April 1901. He resolutely denies that the charges, claiming that they are "unfounded, unjust, and easily refuted," but he does not get any more specific. He does not specify the charge against the Clinton contributor nor does he show how the charge can be easily refuted. He does not even specify which "strong and influential metropolitan newspaper"[48] published the accusation. He focuses instead on how the charge itself did not follow correct procedure. The whole ordeal, according to 1500, "serves only to illustrate the eagerness with which some narrow-gauge minds seize upon opportunities to condemn without investigation."[49] He went on to say that the literary theft was never proven but that 3,500 men were nonetheless condemned. With the *Star of Hope*'s and the prisoners' reputations on the line, 1500 made the decision to deny the plagiarism and to continue to present inmates as respectable members of society. Throughout his tenure as editor, 1500 made clear to the reader that he was applying a keen eye to submissions and that he would discover and shame any plagiarizers. After the plagiarism scandal he reserved a space in the *Star* with the heading

"Contributor's Blacklist: the Plagiarist's Rendezvous,"[50] under which he listed the prisoner numbers of those caught submitting unoriginal work. The cost of admitting his error in printing Clinton 4,715's (potentially) unoriginal work would be too high as it would undermine his whole project with the paper and would serve to reinforce negative attitudes about prisoners. He wanted to try to maintain the goodwill that the paper had accrued since its inaugural issue. 1500 might not have been wrong that the process by which some journalists on the outside arrived at their conclusion about the *Star of Hope's* editorial standards was grounded in prejudgements about prisoners' natures. The *New York Times* writer admits that many writers and editors were dubious about whether or not inmates were capable of writing and editing a newspaper.

In disparaging the *Star of Hope* the established newspaper writers and editors were at the same time trying to protect their own reputations and position. If prisoners with lowly reputations could produce a high quality newspaper, then writers and editors on the outside could have felt that their status was being threatened. Professional writers and editors were therefore motivated to find evidence of plagiarism in the *Star of Hope.* They vigorously examined the *Star's* contents to find the proof that would confirm their suspicions. The *Times* writer admits that the writers at his paper were looking for a smoking gun, but that they "never lighted upon any clear evidence of gross plagiarism."[51] That the Chicago *Times-Herald* found the evidence that they needed in the poem section of the *Star* speaks to the level of scrutiny that professional journalists were applying to the prisoner-produced publication. That it took these journalists almost two years to find the proof that they wanted to find shows, in fact, that the inmate editors and writers were not simply stealing from other publications and that they were, for the most part, writing their own articles, stories, and poetry. The *Times* writer acknowledges that editors do occasionally err and publish unoriginal material, so it is unlikely that even a newspaper of the *Times*' or the *Times-Herald*'s calibre would have been able to hold up against the level of scrutiny to which the *Star of Hope* was subject.

Exchanges

The plagiarism suspicions and accusations aside, many high profile publications and organizations expressed their admiration for the prisoner-produced paper. The *Inter Ocean* newspaper out of Chicago, Illinois claimed, in 1904, that the *Star of Hope* had been "one of the most widely quoted newspapers in America"[52] for a number of years. One of 1500's priorities as

editor was to forge relationships between the *Star of Hope* and other publications. He sent copies of the paper to other newspapers and magazines hoping that the publishers would place the *Star* on their exchange list. He started the "Our Exchanges" column as a space to include extracts from the publications that had agreed to exchange with the paper. The excerpts were surely interesting for the inmates, but they also functioned to highlight that other publications were taking the *Star of Hope* seriously. They exchanged with popular general interest magazines like the *Saturday Evening Post, Century, Wide World Magazine, McClure's Magazine, Collier's* and *Metropolitan Magazine*, as well as more specialized magazine like *The Engineering Record, Textile American, Mines and Minerals,* the *Independent Farmer* and *Western Swine Breeder.* The male writers even endorsed the *Ladies' Home Journal* as a high-quality magazine for everyone, men and women, to enjoy. The selections from the *Ladies' Home Journal* were not relegated to the Women's Writes page, but appeared in the paper's main section. They also exchanged with other prison newspapers across the country. The excerpting was not a one-sided operation. Major publications excerpted articles from the *Star of Hope*. Many of the newspapers covering prison reform, and parole law in particular, reprinted articles from the *Star* on the subject. These excerpts showed the prisoners to be serious and thoughtful and to have valid opinions. This presentation was undercut somewhat when newspapers printed only the jokes section from the *Star of Hope.* In context, the jokes section in the *Star* makes it like any other major newspaper offering a combination of light and serious content. When removed from this context, the jokes serve to reinforce rather than challenge ideas about prisoners as subjects for ridicule. For the most part, however, the material reprinted from the *Star of Hope*, was the more serious content and the more personal reflections from prisoners that humanized the inmates for their outside readers.

The *Star of Hope* and prisoner motivation

At the same time as the paper gave the prisoners a favourable public profile, the editors and writers wanted the paper to inspire a more personal change in prisoners. Given the tremendous limitations on the prisoners for self-improvement in prison, the editors and writers often wrote about the power of a positive attitude. "Don'ts" was a regular feature in the *Star* in its first few years of publication. The column listed things that prisoners should avoid, with each listed item starting with DON'T in all caps. The "don'ts" all related to what prisoners should

avoid thinking about or about what demeanour they should avoid projecting to fellow inmates. Prisoners were instructed not to be moved to anger, not to blame the world for their present surroundings, not to appear sad and gloomy, and not to let the opportunity pass to be kind, polite, and ready to help others. The advice was surely useful. Prisoners had little to be happy about and a smile from another prisoner would likely have, in a small measure, made them feel less alone. A positive attitude likewise would have helped them get through their sentence and to avoid the depths of despair that so many of the prisoners wrote about in the *Star of Hope*. The references to despair were usually, however, set in the past, as something that the prisoner had overcome. In calling their paper the *Star of Hope,* it is clear that the editors saw one of their publication's goals as consoling and inspiring; to lift the prisoners out of their misery. The paper, then, had to try to encourage positive thoughts. And changing their thoughts was possible in a way that changing prison conditions were not. The advice was grounded in a spirit of solidarity as the writers acknowledged their common condition and encouraged their fellow inmates to do what they can to help out their brethren and to imagine a better future. One of the don'ts advised the prisoners not to "think yourself better than the next man; you may have been blessed with privileges that he was not able to reach, but remember we are all in here brothers in misfortune, and one day all men, rich and poor, will be equal."[53]

In some way, however, the advice to smile and not be angry is cruel. The prisoners had to endure cramped, filthy, vermin-infested cells and sleep on bedbug-infested straw mattresses. When they were not isolated in their cells, they were working for a pittance or being scolded by the chaplain at the Sunday service. The food they ate barely qualified as food. The inmates were regularly abused by the guards and keepers and, according to 1500, had to collude with them in criminal enterprises to get any relief from their suffering. They were also prohibited from speaking to other prisoners. It would have taken an incredibly strong-willed person to endure all of this with a smile. The inmate writers certainly meant to help the inmates with their advice, but there is a sense in which the institution is left off the hook and it is up to the inmates to change their attitude as a way of changing the prison experience. The editors were not able to reveal the actual conditions in prison, let alone call for change. Presenting prisoners as noble and strong in the face of adversity was the inmates' way of showing the public that they deserved better.

The case for the *Star of Hope*

The *Star of Hope* routinely published letters from prisoners, other publications, reformers, and members of the public who praised the newspaper. The anniversary issues, which were published every April, were particularly geared toward self-congratulation. The self-congratulation was genuine, and they were rightly proud of the newspaper that they put together, but it was also strategic. The *Star of Hope*'s status was always precarious. There was no guarantee that the administration would allow its continued publication. It was an expense for the institution, as the paper was not allowed to accept advertising and the subscriptions did not cover all of the expenses required to produce and distribute it. The paper was also potentially a subversive force in the institution and could ultimately thwart administrators' goals rather than support them. The editors, then, had to continually reassure the people in power that the paper served their interests as much or more than it did those of the prisoners. They regularly highlighted how the paper was an effective tool for reform. The editors reprinted letters from individuals, organizations, and other publications that reinforced this position. One such letter was from the editor of the *Troy Times* appeared in the April 20, 1901 edition of the *Star of Hope*. In his letter he claims that "it would be a soft-headed person who would fail to perceive the reformatory advantage of such occupation,"[54] arguing that it encourages prisoners to have self-respect, to consider themselves part of society, and provides a breadth of view that make men good citizens rather than criminals. Many of the letters from prisoners selected for publication expressed respect for the Superintendent for allowing the newspaper to be published and the moral uplift and moral regeneration that they felt as a result of reading the paper. A letter from Sing Sing inmate 54,902 conveys the sort of hyperbolic expression of support for the paper that was published in these anniversary issues:

> The *Star of Hope* is still further a degree of encouragement as it best typifies the new spirit of the age which extends to every earnest man the friendly hand of a Christ-like and enlightened humanity - encouragement that will surely lead to the social regeneration of thousands who, by a harsher course, would be irredeemably lost to all that is noble and commendable.[55]

Others tried to reinforce the idea that the *Star of Hope* propelled people to reform by arguing that without the paper's influence they would spend their days plotting revenge or future crimes but with it, they feel inspired to the good. While advancing the idea that the paper was key to

reforming prisoners was perhaps more calculated than sincere, the prisoners' expressions about how important the newspaper was to prisoners seems to be heartfelt.

The prisoners often describe the *Star of Hope* as being a lifeline that helps to relieve the despair that they feel in their prison existence. State Prison for Women inmate 589 in 1908 likens the receiving the paper to a friend dropping in for a friendly chat. She explains that it is the fact that it is written by other people in her situation that makes her feel so connected to and implicated in the publication. The prisoners often wrote about the "mental help" that the *Star of Hope* supplied and how the paper alleviated some of their prison-related anxiety and distress.[56] Auburn prisoner number 22,501 takes this sentiment even further, saying "I love to write for the paper more than I do to eat."[57] The quality of the prison food notwithstanding, this statement is a testament to the paper's importance in many prisoners' lives. 22,501's statement is similar to the sentiments that other inmate-writers expressed in their letters to the paper. Many explained that writing for the paper gave them a sense of purpose and the chance to be part of something.

Current events

With their bi-monthly edition of the prison newspaper, the inmates were able to keep up with current events around the world and to learn about subjects ranging from history to politics, science, math, and technology. When they started to receive the paper, the inmates were no longer shut off from the world. The paper discussed what was going on across the globe. The front pages often covered international events like the war in the Philippines, and inside the paper featured discussions on current events, such as the "Symposium on the Italian-Turkish War," in which several inmates debated the war's origins and implications. "The World Over" section provided inmates with snippets of news from the United States and around the world including the Panama Canal treaty,[58] political unrest in Finland,[59] debates in the Irish House of Commons,[60] changes in the Chinese legislature,[61] Peace Conferences at the Hague,[62] elections in Mexico,[63] use of the telephone in France,[64] snowstorms in North Africa,[65] women's suffrage in Norway,[66] and the building of the Trans-Continental Railroad in Canada. When President McKinley was assassinated in September 1901, the inmates read about it in *Star of Hope* and could therefore be part of the public mourning.[67] The coverage was mostly about politics, but it sometimes ventured into more frivolous topics, such as where Rudyard Kipling was spending his holiday.[68] Keeping abreast of national and international political events meant that the inmates

could see themselves as citizens of the world. The *Star of Hope* equipped them to discuss the important issues of the day.

Creative writing

As much as the paper provided a forum for discussing prison reform and serious contemporary political issues, the *Star of Hope* created an avenue for the prisoners to engage in creative pursuits. Each issue had at least one short story, and many of the inmates' characters and stories became serialized. Finnigan, a comical Irish character that Clinton 3,852 created, became a running feature for several years starting in 1900. Written in a kind of phonetic Irish brogue, each column was devoted to Finnigan's take on a particular topic. He became such a popular character that writers from different prisons took on his persona and followed Clinton 3,852's format. Finnigan expounded on an impressive range of topics, from music, to bread dough, to gossip, to thinking, to the phrenology of birds. Many of the other stories that appeared in the paper were about adventuring, triumph over adversity, and finding love. These themes also appeared in the poetry that was a staple in the paper from the first edition. Countless letters to the editor from the inmates compliment their fellow-inmates' poetry. Just a few months after the *Star*'s first edition appeared, the editors decided that the paper should have a poet laureate. Men from across the system had to put their names forward to be considered for the position. The women were not included in the competition because the women's prison had already chosen their own poet laureate. Reflecting on the literature that appeared in the *Star of Hope* under his editorship, 1500 concluded that the quality was respectable, considering that he prioritized inclusivity over literary worth. He claims that he could have published stories and poems that were "elaborate and dignified" because there was so much talent among the prison community, but he wanted to make the paper truly representative. Having made that choice, he supposes that the *Star of Hope* had printed more and worse verse than any publication in the world. He claimed, however, that

> it had […] the distinctive quality of being representative. It had much to say about mother, and home, and was frequently mawkishly sentimental; but it was generally informed by a real feeling, and sometimes it was genuine and strong.[69]

A later editor made much the same observation about the prisoners' writing in 1916. He remarked on irony of the fact that inmates write "mushy, sentimental stories" while "successful short-story writers are riding around in limousines on the profits of 'crook' plays and stories of the underworld."[70]

To round out its more serious political or literary content, the *Star of Hope* included many humour columns as well as a puzzles and games section. The regular humour columns, such as "It is To Laugh" and "Prison Bric-a-Brac" and "Jokes" included humorous quips and actual jokes. In the "Advertisements" section, the writers mimicked the style of want ads in mainstream newspapers to comic effect. One such ad was "WANTED – A good dentist can find remunerative employment if he will call here, to extract the teeth from our 'nightly visitors'. Apply to Hunter. Box 4,909 Clinton."[71] The joke is funny, but it is also subversive as it reveals the kinds of conditions under which the prisoners are living. Much of the humour in the humour takes this somewhat dark approach. Cartoons were a regular part of the paper, and they got more elaborate over the years. Most of the cartoons were single frame images. By 1919, the *Star-Bulletin* was publishing half- and full-page comics by "Mandey" the in-house cartoonist, with a story told over about five to ten frames. The stories all featured prisoners. In addition to the cartoons and jokes, the paper included activities for its readers. Through the activities column prisoners could imagine their next move in a theoretical checkers game and analyse the previous moves in the game described in the text below the image of the checkerboard in play. Word games were also a popular feature in the games section. A word game that often appeared was a poem with words missing. The inmates were invited to submit the words that they think are the correct ones and the winners were announced in the next issues. The column "Our Knowledge Box," though less for leisure than for education, included math problems for the inmates to solve, the answers to which were revealed in later issues.

Prisoner as expert

The editors aimed to keep the inmates' spirits up and to engage them in a wide range of topics and fields, but they also wanted to give the prisoners advice that would help the inmates to navigate the world beyond prison walls upon their release. The *Star* writers often argued that the general knowledge that they acquired and the literacy skills that inmates developed through reading and writing for the *Star* would help them to secure positions and to advance in their

chosen work when they left prison. The "How Can I Earn a Living" column provided more targeted advice for the inmates thinking about their post-prison job prospects. Even if the inmates' release date was far into the future or perhaps not even in the cards, the "How Can I Earn a Living" gave the inmates a change to imagine a life in which they are free and productive members of society. The advice in the column usually came from inmates who had held a particular job before being put behind bars. They gave the reader details about the skills required to be able to do the job (often highlighting that no skills are required) what the work involves, the particulars about hours and wages, how someone could try to get employment in that field, and what a career trajectory could look like in that field. Would-be chauffeurs were told to get work on the floor at a garage and familiarize themselves with many makes of cars;[72] the potential baker was told about the high possibility of securing such employment because many bakers are retiring from the profession and there are not enough people stepping in to take their places;[73] and the aspiring private detective was informed that the job requires a great deal of patience and perfect vision.[74] The variety of jobs "How Can I Earn a Living" featured is impressive, from occupations at sea, work in moving pictures, photography, electrician work, farming, poultry husbandry, bricklaying, milk delivery driving, and gathering weeds. The discussions about particular jobs continued in later columns as the editors published letters from inmates who had experience in the field and wanted to either add to or dispute the original writers' claims about the nature of the work. As well as drawing attention to particular jobs, the column occasionally included information about work opportunities in other countries, including Argentina, Canada, Australia, and explained what would be involved in making a move to those countries.

The columnists addressed one of the major obstacles to former prisoners' future employment – that they would be applying to jobs as former prisoners. The job descriptions often included information about how employers would be likely to react to the fact that the person seeking employment was an ex-convict. Most of the jobs featured in the column were those involving manual labour or service. The columnists usually said that the employers would not discriminate against ex-convicts as long as they were good workers. They were honest about difficulties that they might face or about employment that they were unlikely to get. An inmate asking about whether or not a man who had been to prison could study law was told that the chance of success for a person who has served time in prison even if he could be admitted into the practice would be "very poor"[75] because lawyers gained their trade on reputation and that ex-

convicts would already have a strike against them. Their penal history would not be an issue, however, if they wanted work as longshoremen.[76] Sometimes the paper got information about a particular job from a company that was looking to recruit workers. Vermont Marble Company was looking for quarries, cutters, engravers and draftsmen and promised that the "nobody will ask you, there, where you come from or what you have been doing in the past. They only care to know what you can do and how you do it."[77]

Some "How Can I Earn a Living" columns were devoted to jobs to which the female inmates could apply their efforts upon their release. Sing Sing 57,779 used the column to highlight "Occupations for Women" and assured the readers that "in these days of suffragettes, suffragist and women's rights clubs there are opening to women many new fields in which they can exercise their independence."[78] He urged the women to not take the beaten path of factory girl, waitress, manicurist or "chorus lady," but to seek opportunities in new fields. He decided to restrict his discussion to occupations that do not require special training. He focused on four jobs – product demonstrator (which he insists does not require that the demonstrator possess good looks or style), curios and mementos seller at summer resorts, lady theatre ushers, and, finally, journalist. Except for the last, the only qualification for the jobs that he describes is a pleasant demeanour. A pleasing appearance, though not mandatory, might add a little to their incomes, according to the expert. After promising that the world was newly open to women in his first sentence, 57,779 concludes by saying that

> women should avoid the bizarre; it is not necessary for a woman to drive a taxicab or carry the hod or try to fill any of the innumerable positions that call for masculine traits alone, but rather should seek out the position in which she can exercise womanly tact and patience and she may rest assured success will reward her efforts.[79]

Some of the finer points of the suffragette and women's rights movements appear to have been lost on him.

When the columns were written by women, the advice same advice was framed in a different way. The article about nursing, by State Prison for Women prisoner 800 emphasized that nurses should be pleasant, put themselves in the background, and attend to their duties. This was not because it was in line with women's true nature, but that it would give her a better chance at getting promoted and to get better wages. She indicates that this advice applies to

"both white and coloured."[80] Other columns explained to women how they could secure positions in hairdressing parlours and manicurist salons. In the same way that male writers presented manual labour as a worthy work, so too did the women writers. In one article about domestic work, State Prison for Women prisoner 782 said that "we should feel proud that we are competent to fill such positions, for there is no position quite so grand in my opinion, as that of being a good housekeeper."[81] She explains that she had been a servant and expects to be one again when she is released. She emphasizes the honour in the work and that it is just as dignified as being "in the parlour playing the piano." As much as 782 touted the virtue of domestic work, prisoner number 775 wanted a different future for herself. She wrote to the *Star* asking how a "coloured woman" can earn her living in some way other than by doing cooking, domestic, or laundry work. 844's advice to her was to work as a receptionist at a doctor's or dentist's office and doing maid duties at the office. 844 also suggested hair dressing, manicuring, and being a maid on a first-class passenger train. While 844 was trying to be helpful, she continued to propose maid work to the black woman who was looking for a way out of this kind of labour.[82]

The *Star of Hope* in general, and the "How Can I Earn a Living" column in particular enabled the inmates to fashion themselves experts in particular areas and to be giving helpful and important information to their peers. They took on a position of authority in a space where exercising authority was a punishable offense. A recurring theme in the column was the satisfaction and pride that comes with hard work. As 782 was doing in her column, the writers showed that even though the jobs that they have done or might do may not be the most celebrated jobs in American society, that they have value and that dignified people do this kind of work.

The *Star of Hope* and reading

Having encouraged a newspaper-reading habit among inmates through the *Star of Hope,* the editors hoped to inspire prisoners to expand their reading repertoire. The local pages for each prison included lists of books in the library and highlighted new acquisitions. From its first year the *Star of Hope* had a column devoted to books. Some of the articles simply explained the value of reading, arguing that books are "faithful friends" and that reading helps to develop the brain, and is a source of pleasure. Another argument in favour of reading that *Star of Hope* writers frequently presented is that reading books while in prison prevents prisoners' time spent behind

bars from being a complete waste of time. According to their arguments, prisoners could sharpen their mental faculties and learn about a wide range of subjects, and be inspired by great works of literature. The writers want their readers to truly understand and appreciate what they are reading and so advise people to work up to more difficult texts by starting with reading essays, biographies and other light literature. To help them out, the editors included abridged versions of popular fiction. In introducing "Harlem Harry or the Boy Detective," Auburn 26,125 says that the story is being published "for the benefit of our younger readers who may miss their favourite mental recreations, the perusal of the dime novel."[83] To make more difficult texts seem accessible the paper published a column called "My View of Books" in which an inmate summarizes the plot of important works of literature in the vernacular. Sing Sing number 57,709 condenses Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde* thus:

> This one is a hair-raiser. It'll give you the horrors in a jiffy. The doc has wheels in his sky-piece; he butts into some kind of hop that brings out all that's bum in him; changes him into a Mr. Hyde who goes out and plays the scoundrel then changes him back into the genial doc again. In the end he loses the combination to his hop and has to shuffle off this mortal coil as Mr. Hyde. We got so sore at him we'd like to have been able to hand him a few swift swats in the breadbasket.[84]

All of the summaries and the reviews are followed with information about how to find the book in the prison library. While the books columnists made a real effort to bring low-skilled readers into the world of books, they also included more elevated literary criticism and discussions of non-fiction works. Several of the book columns were devoted to writing about books and their relationship to prisons and prisoners. One article covered "great books" that were written in prison as well as books written by former prisoners. The columnists also reviewed books set in prison and criticized the authors when their accounts relied on tired stereotypes and myths about prison life. These kinds of columns again gave the prisoners a chance to see themselves as part of a distinct community and as authorities in this sphere. In addition to encouraging the inmates to read, the editors wanted the inmates to reflect on reading itself. In 1911 they chose books as one of the topics for a formal debate in the paper. The debate, framed as "Travel vs. Reading"[85] asked the inmates to present arguments in favour of one or the other in terms of its value in expanding the mind.

Having been practiced in having discussions about literature, history, and politics through the *Star of Hope,* inmates at the State Prison for Women initiated an in-person discussion group in February 1912, which they called "The Worth While Club." They explained that the object of the club is to "have readings of papers written on subjects of interest, so that we may gain knowledge of many things we would probably never obtain in any other way."[86] From the outset, the meetings were carefully organized, democratic, and festive. Once they had a group of interested people together, they had elections for club president, vice-president and secretary who would set the topic for the meetings and arrange the logistics. The meetings opened and closed with either the inmates singing a song or with a musical selection played on the gramophone. After the opening, the president addressed the group, had a roll call and a report from the secretary. They then began their discussions on the day's topic. The president, number 800, published the topic for the next meeting in the *Star of Hope* so that the women could contemplate the subject to be discussed ahead of time. The Club also established a "Committee of Correction" whose members were appointed to read and correct all papers being presented to the club. They worked with Elizabeth Porter Clark, the librarian from the Auburn Public Library, to get relevant reference material help the prisoners prepare their papers for their meetings.

All of the members had the opportunity to present a paper at the meeting. Often there were as many as a dozen people presenting. The Worth While Club meetings were, in this way, akin to seminars. The report on the meeting the club had about New Amsterdam gives a sense of the format for their meetings. There were papers giving a general history of New Amsterdam, the Dutch governors, the capture of New Amsterdam by the English. There was a phonograph break and they resumed their discussion with papers on the life of the colonists and the English influence. After summarizing the discussion, the secretary announces that the topic for the next meeting would be George Washington.[87] Other topics included explorers, China, Clara Barton and the Red Cross Society, and Roger Williams, the early proponent of religious freedom and the separation of church and state. Clark took a special interest in the Worth While Club at Auburn as she was not only the librarian at the local library, but also the Secretary of the Committee on State Prison Libraries. Being involved with a project in which women in prison are having serious discussions about books and ideas would, no doubt, have raised her profile on the committee. 800 speaks highly of Clark and expresses her hope that Clark would one day give a talk at one of their meetings. [88]

Not only did the Worth While Club cite the *Star of Hope* as an inspiration for their club, they made writing in the paper criteria for membership. Only those who had contributed an article to the *Star of Hope* were eligible to join the club. The representative for the club expressed hope that this rule would encourage more prisoners to submit articles for publication. It would be reasonable to assume that the Worth While Club might not have wide appeal among the inmates and that only the most highly literate prisoners would take part in discussions of politics, literature, and history and that even fewer of these would actually have written for the *Star of Hope.* The statistics, however, tell a different story. At their first meeting, thirty-two out of thirty-eight eligible members attended the meeting. In May 1912, just three months since its founding, the Worth While Club had fifty-one members,[89] and increase of sixteen over the previous meeting. With the prison population at 98, that was over half of their prison population. It seemed as though the club's strategy for increasing submissions to the paper had worked. There were certainly other reasons besides wanting to discuss topics like the construction of the Panama Canal that attracted women to join the club. The club gave the women a purpose and something to think about while they endured life in prison. The club also had a feminist outlook. While one of the members said that

> we do not try, nor could we if we wanted to, write upon scientific matters, but we do try to be cheerful in our writings, and help each other that way, leaving deep subjects and solutions to the abler and more learned pens of our brothers', they inspired women to think about issues considered men's domains.[90]

In the same column in which the previous quote appeared, the writer included C. E. Bowman's poem "The Sphere of a Woman," in which the poet rejects the idea that women are limited by any sphere and points to how women are involved in every aspect of human endeavour. The club allowed them to congregate and speak with the women with whom they were, outside of the club, barred from communicating. The club let them to get to know their fellow-inmates, who were virtual strangers to them even though they lived together in close quarters, often for years. The *Star of Hope* had given some indication as to some of the women's interests and personalities, but the club allowed them to interact in person instead of on the page. At one of their early meetings, the club decided that they would devote a meeting to the topic "what in the *Star of Hope* has been of the most benefit to me?."[91] They saw this as a rich topic given that

many interesting subjects had been discussed at length in the paper. Their club was something of an extension of these discussions in the newspaper.

While the women were able to gather to discuss books in person, the male inmates were limited to the *Star of Hope's* books section and the reviews therein. The review perhaps most important to the prisoners' was the review of Thomas Mott Osborne's *Within Prison Walls*. by Auburn number 32,915. Osborne's account of his six-week stay in Auburn prison in 1913 was, unsurprisingly, very favourably reviewed in the *Star of Hope.* The review is full of lavish praise for Osborne and his work in prison reform. The reviewer emphasized how important it was that the book was bringing public attention to what prison is really like. Osborne's book could express what the inmate writers could not – the horrors of prison life and the disgusting conditions in which prisoners live. The book tended toward self-aggrandizement, but Osborne gave his readers the unsanitized view of prison that they could not get from the *Star of Hope*. The reviewers in the *Star of Hope* could not, in their review, be specific about Osborne's revelations about prison, but 32,915 did carefully reference them when he calls on good citizens to take action against the current state of prisons. "Read the book, Mr. Civic pride," he writes, "and never again, so long as the conditions Mr. Osborne describes obtain anywhere, be able to sleep in peace for one forgetful night."[92] The reviewer is thus encouraging readers to supplement the *Star of Hope* with Osborne's scathing critique of prison conditions. The *Star* presents the prisoners as respectable citizens who are interested in a broad range of topics, while Osborne's book shows that these citizens are being mistreated in the prison system. By 1914, the *Star of Hope* was firmly established, with worldwide subscribers and exchanges with dozens of publications. The prison paper thus prepared the reading public to be open to ideas about prison reform generally, and Osborne's proposals in particular.

In a matter of months after the *Star*'s review of *Within Prison Walls* was published, the Mutual Welfare League (MWL) was established at Auburn and Sing Sing prisons, giving the prisoners' unprecedented freedoms and powers within their institutions. The idea for the League came from Thomas Mott Osborne. He thought that loosening the restrictions' on prisoners' movements and giving them some power within the institution would rectify some of the problems that he observed while undercover at Auburn. Prisoners' lives in the New York system dramatically changed after the League formed. Previous prison reforms, such as abolishing the lockstep and lifting the rule of silence were important, but did not fundamentally alter how

prisons were run. With Osborne's reforms in place, the prisoners were given an administrative role and could, to a remarkable degree, structure prison life. The prisoners had more say in how they could spend their time outside of the workshops. Inmates were no longer confined to their cells for most of their non-work time. The various MWL committees organized athletic activities in the yard and entertainment programs in the chapel. The League was democratic; all of the prisoners were de facto members and regular elections were held to determine which prisoners would take on the league's management. Their sphere of influence was broad as they came to oversee matters related to sanitation, education, employment, entertainment, sports, and decoration. The league handled disciplinary matters and created a grievance committee to adjudicate over conflicts between prisoners and conflicts between prisoners and prison officials. The league officials took their new roles seriously and wanted to run their organization as professionally as organizations were run beyond the prison. They did what was in their power to project responsibility and authority. The members of the grievance committee, for example, work robes and wigs, in the style of British high court barristers, to emphasize the professionalism that they brought to their task.

The newspaper post-reform

With the new reforms in place in the prisons across the system, the *Star of Hope's* mission began to shift. In the reforms' early days, the *Star of Hope* played a major role in informing the prisoners and the wider public about the changes happening at the prison. On November 7, 1914, the *Star of Hope* dedicated a two-page spread to the League, with the title "The Mutual Welfare League: What it Is, What it Means, and What it Does." In the article, 32,913 explains that the M.W.L. was, like Cuba, "a dependency, from a governmental viewpoint, existing by the grace of the higher state authorities."[93] The article details the league's history, emphasizing Osborne's pivotal role, the organization's mission and by-laws, and how it would transform the way that the prison is run. After the initial explanatory article, the paper reserved a column for the M.W.L League in which officials would update readers on the League's activities. At the same time as reforms were being put into place, the paper began to shrink. For its first fifteen years, each edition of the paper was between eighteen and twenty pages. By 1916, the paper was reduced to between six and seven pages. The slimmed-down version became much more focused on matters directly related to the goings-on at the prisons and on issues related to

prison reform. Gone were the sections on current events, history, science, and philosophy, while jokes and cartoons remained. Part of this shift in focus was linked to the reforms that allowed more publications to be available to prisoners. With access to daily newspapers, the inmates no longer had to rely on the *Star of Hope* to get their news and commentary about current events.

After 1916, the paper's content suggests that the writers and editors had more journalistic freedom that they previously had. They used this freedom to openly condemn prison conditions and to show prisoners as being noble and good. One writer lamented the fact that the state of New York has "better quarters for its animals than for its inmates." He urged the state legislature to consider "the cubical capacity of the stalls for the horses and then the coffin-like affair wherein men are confined" and insisted that this contrast "be pointed out in no uncertain terms to every visitor to Sing Sing."[94] While showing the bad side of prison conditions, the writers highlighted prisoners' good character, from finding and returning a guests' wallet to fighting fires and saving the prison and wanting to serve their country in the war. The paper even used the story of a prisoner shooting and killing a guard to showcase prisoner nobility and the positive relationships that prisoners had developed with prison staff since the reforms. According to the writer, the inmate who killed the guard was "temporarily maddened by the thought of the grim chair that awaited him"[95] when he shot his keeper. The story then becomes about how surprising it must have been for those attending the guard's funeral to see ten members of the Mutual Welfare League following his hearse. The reforms meant that the guards and the inmates could forge bonds with one another and that one highly publicized unfortunate incident would not undo the progress that they were making in the prison. The paper, then, became an advertisement for prison reform and the good that it does for the prisoner, the prison, and society at large. In August 1916, the editor proclaims the paper as the "argot of the underworld,"[96] explaining that the June issue of the *Star of Hope* was well-received and that seven newspapers to date had copied it or used it for editorial on crime prevention.

Proclaiming "this is the Age of Consolidation"[97] in February 1917, Henry Leverage, the *Star of Hope*'s editor announced that the *Star of Hope* and the Mutual Welfare League *Bulletin* would be merging and would henceforth be named the *Star-Bulletin*. Leverage claimed that the merger would make for greater efficiency and that it would retain the best of both publications. The *Bulletin* was essentially the Mutual Welfare League's newsletter, updating its membership on all of the League's activities and alerting them to upcoming events and meetings. The *Star-*

Bulletin included reports from all of the committees but also included the types of stories and humour pieces that were found in the *Star of Hope*. The new version of the paper became a more explicit promotional tool for the League and for prison reform more generally. Outside readers could get a fuller sense of how the league worked through detailed accounts of League meetings, budgets, and collaborations with outside businesses and organizations. Though the league did not solicit donations through the paper outright, the writers made it clear that they would accept donations.[98] They promised to provide statements about how all donations were spent in the pages of the *Star-Bulletin*, thereby giving private donors the chance to publicize their commitment to prison reform.

The prison reforms that were improving life for prisoners made it so that their newspaper was no longer the lifeline for inmates that it had once been. When 1500 founded the *Star of Hope*, the inmates could not speak to one another and, outside of work, were largely restricted to their cells. The paper opened up a world to the prisoners and allowed them to get to know the people alongside whom they had silently worked, ate, and went to the chapel. There was a sense of urgency to the paper when it was introduced to the prison population. Inmates regularly wrote in to tell the editors and the other readers that the newspaper was the only thing that kept them from falling into despair. As Osborne's reforms took hold in prisons across the system there were other ways for prisoners to keep despair at bay. The inmates could now not only speak to one another, but play sports, attend social events, and work together on League committees to plan activities and govern over prison affairs. The *Star of Hope* and later, the *Star-Bulletin*, remained relevant, but as it was pared down it contained fewer prisoner voices and less content about subjects not related to prison goings-on. When the administration decided to change the paper to the *Sing Sing Bulletin,* citing cutting costs as their motive,[99] all of the non-Sing Sing inmates in the New York system lost their voice in the paper.

While the state prison administrators had found the *Star of Hope* an excellent propaganda tool for making them appear forward-thinking and their prisons modern, the prison paper was, by 1920 too much of a risky proposition for them to maintain. With the Mutual Welfare League and the other reforms that had taken hold in the prison system getting favourable attention among prison reformers and the public at large, the newspaper was no longer necessary as a tactic for gaining public support for their prison governance. By this time, officials had also begun to allow prisoners unrestricted access to daily and weekly newspapers from the outside.[100] The

prison paper now had serious competition for inmate's readership and faced a significant administrative threat. As Charlie Chapin, a prominent figure before he came into prison, brought more public attention to the prison paper when he became the *Sing Sing Bulletin's* editor, the administration became more alert to the paper's subversive potential.

Superintendent of Prisons and former Sing Sing warden Charles F. Rattigan's first strategy for weakening the paper was attrition. Just weeks into the new paper's existence, he reduced the paper's print run to 1500, citing unsustainable printing costs as the reason for the cutback. With 1200 of those copies going to Sing Sing prisoners, there were only 300 copies remaining to be distributed beyond prison walls.[101] In August, 1920, Rattigan made a bolder move and suspended the paper outright. This tactic generated national public outcry and was critiqued in newspapers across the country and by prominent prison reformers. The criticism led to Rattigan denying that he had ever called for the paper's suspension and allowing the *Sing Sing Bulletin* to resume publication. Rattigan did, however, insist on more oversight and editorial control of the paper. Sing Sing warden Lewis Lawes tried to resist the state's interference with the *Sing Sing Bulletin* and his feud with the Superintendent made headline news. The *New York Times* covered the press conference on August 25, 1920, at which Lawes and Rattigan explained that they had resolved their differences and that that Sing Sing, and not Albany, would be exercising editorial control over the *Sing Sing Bulletin*.[102] This victory was short-lived, as in February 1921, just over six months after the administrators' entente, Rattigan withdrew all funding for the newspaper claiming as he had when he reduced the print run, that the prison could no longer afford to produce the paper. Upon hearing about the paper's cessation, many members of the public and in the prison reform community sent in financial and equipment donations, which Rattigan refused on the grounds that the state is not allowed to accept donations.[103] The paper had initially seemed aligned with the reformist goals of turning the criminal into a productive worker and citizen. Over time, however, the state prison officials were becoming more and more frustrated with high-profile prisoners gaining attention through the prison paper and came to believe that the whole enterprise undermined their authority.

The editors

The editors for the *Star of Hope* sometimes managed to parlay their position at the prison paper to a writing career upon their release, while another inmate used his newspaper experience

from the outside to secure a position with the *Star of Hope.* 1500, the *Star*'s founder and first editor, had gained a certain prominence in the public arena. The *Star of Hope*'s novelty sparked interest in the paper, and this interest extended to its editor. The articles about the *Star* that appeared when the paper first appeared often referred to 1500 as the inmate who came up with the prison newspaper concept and discussed his role as editor for the paper. After his release, 1500 decided to capitalize on his experience and write an exposé about his time in prison that included all of the details that he could not include in the *Star of Hope.* Given that he had made a name for himself as 1500, he kept that identity for his book, *Life In Sing Sing*.[104] He did not reveal his true identity or the crime that put him behind bars.

Publications across America favourably reviewed 1500's book. Some of the review articles took up two-thirds of a page on a broad sheet and included illustrations. Many of the reviewers commended 1500 for his "even-handedness" and "unprejudiced view"[105] in describing prison life. They reached this conclusion despite the fact that 1500 expressed outrage about prison conditions and accused the guards and keepers of being abusive, corrupt, and responsible for getting prisoners addicted to opium. 1500 also argues that prison reform was an illusion. He points to the example of the administration abolishing the close clipped hair and allowing the prisoner to grow his hair to prove his claim. He said that like other changes designed to restore prisoners' self-respect, it did not achieve its aims. The barbers were, he said, overwhelmed with the demand for particular hairstyles and eventually went back to using the clippers to shave the men as they had done before. In addition to casting doubts about the extent of prison reforms, he rejects the idea that prison is a place for reforming at all. The changes in prison were, in theory, to enable the prisoner to reform, but 1500 claimed that prison has never reformed anyone. He concluded that administrators' efforts were misplaced and that it was the keepers and guards who need to be reformed. The reason that reviewers considered 1500's analysis of prison life balanced was because he had high praise for Sing Sing's warden James Connaughton, which the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* argues "amounts to worship," and that he expressed great respect and admiration for prisoners' advocate Mrs. Ballingtoon Booth. In discussing *Life in Sing Sing*, the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* reviewer explains that the book changed the way that he thought about prisoners, which was precisely what the *Star of Hope* was aiming to do. The sections on the literary efforts of the female population of Auburn Prison, he claims "is particularly edifying, inasmuch as it sheds a new light on the lives and characters of these poor unfortunates, whom the

average person of respectability is too prone to condemn as ignorant termagants."[106] 1500's purpose with both his book and with the *Star of Hope* was to humanize prisoners and to show that many of the people locked up in the state are not the scourge of society, but rather are capable and intelligent people who have much to contribute to their society. The *Star of Hope* was his springboard in being able to bring this message to the public, but it was only when safely on the outside that he could expand his mission to include a scathing critique of prison management and operations.

A later editor of the *Star of Hope,* Sing Sing number 65,368 had different aspirations for his post-prison writing career. Instead of using his understanding of prisoners and prison life to expose a corrupt system or to change public perceptions of prisoners, 65,368 applied his expertise to writing pulp fiction about a character named "Big Scar," a hard ex-con. He started writing crime stories for pulp magazines while he was in Sing Sing and was lauded for creating characters that were real and scenarios, according to one reviewer, that were "true in every detail of underworld and prison life." Harold Hersey, a pulp magazine editor, visited 65,368 while he was in prison. Hersey describes that in his cell

> he had pictures of Joseph Conrad, Kipling and other well-know authors on the walls. There was a small library on a shelf over a tiny table where he kept his typewriter. He was turning out thousands of words a week. Like so many experts, he seldom revised a page once it left his machine… nervous, wiry, energetic, with eyes sunk deep in his head and a habit of restlessly moving his legs and arms as he talked, he soon convinced me that he was a serious author.[107]

From this account, it is clear that 65,368 used the privileges he gained as *Star of Hope* editor*,* such as the typewriter and his contacts with publishers, to carve out a career as a writer. When he was released from prison he continued to write for pulp magazines. He did not keep his prisoner number as his moniker, but used his real name, Henry Leverage, which he had, in fact, began printing his name on the *Star of Hope's* masthead in 1916. Out of prison, Leverage was interested in expanding beyond the pulp market and so altered his style to be more sophisticated. His short stories were eventually published in major magazines like the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Cosmopolitan*. His story "Whispering Wires," about a rich couple living in a mansion on Fifth Avenue in New York whose new telephone gets them caught up in world of crime, was

particularly successful. Originally published in the *Saturday Evening Post,* the story was turned into a play and ran on Broadway for eleven months and was later adapted for a Hollywood film.

The prison paper's final editor, Charles Chapin, did not use his time in prison to build a career, but rather used his over thirty years' experience in the newspaper industry to secure a position as editor at Sing Sing after he was sentenced to twenty-five years to life for killing his wife. Chapin began working at newspapers when he was fifteen. He quickly rose in the ranks to become one of the highest-paid reporters in Chicago. In 1899 Joseph Pulitzer headhunted Chapin for the city editor position at his paper *Morning World*, which later became *Evening World.* Over his thirty years in the newspaper business, Chapin had developed a reputation as an authoritarian and temperamental editor who fired writers for minor mistakes. Outside of work, Chapin maintained a lavish lifestyle, complete with a yacht, luxury cars, and high-end hotel apartments. He speculated on the stock market and eventually lost all of his money. According to his confession to police, Chapin shot his wife in the head to spare her the shame that would come with the public discovering Chapin's economic downfall.[108] Because of his high social standing, Chapin was able to secure a meeting with Lewis Lawes, who was considering accepting the position of warden at Sing Sing. After their meeting, Lawes promised Chapin that once he became warden he would be set up as the *Sing Sing Bulletin*'s new editor, a plan that came to fruition shortly after their meeting. As editor, Chapin shifted the paper's focus to have it more overtly advocate prisoner's causes. He wrote articles recommending increased pay for convict labour. Also in need of increased pay, Chapin argued, were the keepers. A higher salary, he claimed, would attract a higher calibre of workers who would be less inclined to abuse the prisoners.

Even as he advocated for causes important to prisoners, under Chapin's editorship of the *Star-Bulletin* and later the *Sing Sing Bulletin*, other prisoners were silenced. The prisoners' writing was not up to Chapin's high standards and so, shortly after becoming editor, he refused to publish their submissions. He eventually produced virtually all of the paper's content himself. He used pennames to make the paper appear more representative, but his most popular column contained his reflections on his own experience in prison. Chapin's notoriety and his prior position at the *Evening World* meant that the prison paper was back in the news. The drama rekindled the public's interest in the prison newspaper, which was now in its third iteration. Demand for the paper increased and many national newspapers and magazines reprinted

Chapin's short remembrances were reprinted in many newspapers and magazines. Circulation rose to 5,000, its highest ever number. Building on his own memoir's popularity, Chapin enlisted another inmate to supply memoirs to the paper. He chose the infamous polygamist Charlie Wilson. Wilson's sensationalist stories about how he managed with eight wives were wildly popular, and like Chapin's own stories, were reprinted in major publications. The *Sing Sing Bulletin*'s more political content and its increasing popularity ultimately led to the paper's downfall. The State prison officials in Albany, particularly Charles Rattigan, the Superintendent of Prisons, were nervous about the paper's new direction and influence and in took steps to limit its reach before finally cutting off all avenues for funding the paper's production.

Unlike 1500 and Henry Leverage, whose editorship of the prison paper ended upon their release, Chapin's ended while he was still behind prison walls. Not being able to continue his life's work was devastating to him. As a sort of compensation for losing his livelihood, the prison Chaplain, Father Cashin, allowed Chapin to tend a garden on the prison grounds. The outside press took up this story and Chapin once again became a man of renown. A full-page article in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in 1925, titled "The Convict Who Transformed Sing Sing with a Garden: Charles Chapin Spends Prison Days Tending Roses that Border on the Death House," details how he transformed the prison grounds from a depressing gravel and dirt-covered lot to an acreage covered with thousands of rose bushes and other plants, which members of the public donated to him when they learned of his new project. This project, too, however, ended badly for Chapin. While changing some drainage pipes for the prison the maintenance workers dug trenches through his garden and steamrolled through the rest of it. A few weeks after realizing that his garden could not be restored, Chapin died in his cell.

The *Star of Hope,* the *Star-Bulletin,* and the *Sing Sing Bulletin*, covered an impressive range of subjects, but their presentation of prison life was always limited. One day after the *New York Times* published the headline "Fire and Mutiny Again in Sing Sing; 'Traitor' Stabbed: A new Day of Terror Ends with Cutting Up of Negro by Enraged Convicts", the *Star of Hope* had on its front page a story called "The Girl,", about Elwood Walker meeting the sister of his old sweetheart.[109] The *Times* piece explains that a number of the inmates, except for a "big negro known as Texas Jack" had refused to work in order to demand that fellow-convicts locked up for insubordination be released and to protest prison food. After being locked-in as punishment for their rebellion, one of the inmates set fire to a mattress and the prison had to be evacuated. The

Times reported that large numbers of reporters and photographers came to the scene. According to the *Times* writer, the evacuated prisoners yelled to the reporters, saying "Come up here and write us up. They are starving us. Give it a good write-up in the paper. They have locked us up and won't let us out." It was clear that the inmates' only chance at getting their complaints to the public was through the outside press, and not their own. The *Times* also indicated that this was not the first prison strike at Sing Sing, that they happened several times a year, though the one being reported was the most extreme they had seen. In addition to not covering prison strikes or riots, the *Star of Hope* did not cover the prison drug trade that was making headlines in the outside press. Sing Sing's Ex-Warden James M. Clancy held a special hearing in 1914 in which he details how a well-organized political ring was controlling a vast drug trafficking operation in the prison and that rampant drug use was as much a menace to the prison population as tuberculosis and pneumonia. Writers in the *Star* did not directly address issues about drug use, though they occasionally alluded to the plight of drug addicts in a general sense. The other topic that was notably missing from the pages of the prison papers were the scandals related to prison administrators. It is particularly glaring that when Thomas Mott Osborne was suspended from his job as Warden of Sing Sing and indicted for perjury, neglect of duty, and unlawful sexual acts with inmates, none of this appeared in the *Star of Hope*. The scandal was only mentioned after Osborne was found not guilty and resumed his position, and none of the details of the charges were revealed.

Conclusion

The *Star of Hope* founder, Sing Sing 1500, knew that he had started something revolutionary when he distributed the first prisoner-produced newspaper to inmates across the system and to readers beyond prison walls. The paper allowed the prisoners to craft their own image and to speak directly to the public. The *Star of Hope*'s circulation, its exchanges with dozens of newspapers and magazines, and the attention that it received in mainstream press speaks to the interest that the public had in what the prisoners wanted to say. People were eager to know about the prisoner experience and their interest was sustained for two decades. Part of the reason that the prisoners got so much attention was because they had always been silenced. That the prisoners could now speak made people want to listen. In the paper's early years, the prisoners focused on presenting themselves as respectable citizens with a broad range on

interests. They also presented themselves as experts on a variety of topics. This change in prisoners' public profile was, I contend, critical ground-laying for more profound reforms in the 1910s. The reforms also loosened the editorial control that the administration took over the newspaper's content. The inmate writers used this opportunity to argue for more extensive reforms and to promote prisoner self-government. The paper's power in giving inmates a public platform is also evident in the fact that after several attempts, the *Sing Sing Bulletin* was shut down in 1920 when the prison administrators sought to assert more control over the discourse around prison and prison reform.

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Chapter Two: Entertainment and Leisure

On Thanksgiving in 1906 the inmates at Auburn prison hooted and applauded and tried to encourage Mr. Coughlin to perform an encore of his club swinging act. Coughlin had just finished writing fire rings in the dark with the clubs that he had fixed with electrical attachments. There was not enough time for an encore because of the packed program. The YCMA team had already trounced the Auburn Theological seminary team in a basketball game. The chaplain, who acted as referee, was left with broken glasses as he got caught in the middle of a pass and took a ball to the face. When the ball players got off their specially-built stage, the guests from Auburn's leading opera company, guest vocalist Miss Laura Millard, and an unnamed violinist entertained the inmates with character songs and violin solos. It was after their performance that Coughlin thrilled the audience with his electrical club routine. When he left the stage, more singers took his place there. The evening ended with moving pictures, including one about a German picnicker who had his pants stolen. The *Star of Hope* covered the days events and the prisoner-writes declared that it was the best entertainment that they had ever had, though the paper tended to make that declaration after every show.[1] Over the first decades of the twentieth century, fire juggling, Italian opera, phonographic concerts, and other such entertainments were being held at the prisons in the New York system. Some, including a *Washington Post* journalist,[2] criticized the entertainments for making prisons attractive destinations rather than places for punishment. On the whole, however, the prison reforms that allowed for increased entertainment and leisure activities behind bars met with widespread approval. Prison reformers, including and especially Thomas Mott Osborne, viewed entertainment and cultural activities in prison as a way to connect prisoners to the outside world to allow some cheer in an otherwise bleak setting.

Prison administrators were not purely interested in providing entertainment for prisoners for compassionate reasons. They benefited from the vaudeville acts and popular singers going to Sing Sing, Auburn, and Clinton in multiple ways. Morale in prison tended to improve when inmates were allowed even the briefest entertainments, making it a better environment for everyone in the prison, including the guards and the keepers. The entertainments also improved the prisons' image. The cheery newspaper articles about prisoners enjoying shows put on by

local talent countered the typical narratives about prison riots, escapes, and corrupt management that regularly appeared in the press. It was not just the prison administration that was interested in generating positive public relations stories. In addition to giving inmates a break from their grim prison routine, the entertainment programming and planning gave the guards and prisoners a chance to work together on projects and to temporarily change the prisoner-guard dynamic.

When the prisoners had a larger role in organizing prison entertainment, their events became newsworthy and generated positive press for prisoner self-government. Entertainment did the important work of humanizing prisoners to the guards and the outside world. Entertainment let prisoners became entertainers and audience members instead of prisoners. The vaudeville programs at the prison also allowed the prisoner community to forge relations with local communities by having local entertainers come to the prison and local community members to attend the events. The programs generated the good-will and community-building that was a necessary pre-cursor to the acceptance of reforms in prison that gave inmates more freedom and control in the institution. Once the inmates had greater control, they expanded the entertainment programs and put them in the service of advocating for even more radical reform.

Early Entertainment at Prison

As industrialization was shifting the American population from rural areas to urban centres, large numbers of immigrants were landing in cities on the East coast. Population density in the cites meant that there were ready crowds for a wide variety of cultural and leisure activities. Organized sports emerged and became a central part of life for American men and women, both as participants and as spectators. Entertainment options were also expanding in American cities. By the end of the nineteenth century, theatres, music halls, museums, parks, fairs and opera houses were fixtures of public life in the city. Vaudeville theatres, dance halls, saloons, and amusement parks were equally rooted in the urban landscape. Not having access to entertainment or leisure pursuits was becoming unimaginable. That prison officials in New York introduced entertainments for prisoners in 1899 indicates the degree to which entertainment had come to be an integral part of modern life. The new penologists saw themselves as bringing prisons into the modern age, and entertainment was part of their vision. Prison reformers at the turn of the century believed that they could shape entertainment into a tool for reforming prisoners.

When prison administrators decided to introduce recreation into prison life, the superintendents tasked the prison chaplains across the New York system with determining how it would take shape in the different institutions. In placing the chaplains as cultural animators, the administrators were linking entertainment with prisoners' moral development. Denying prisoners access to amusement came to be associated with the old system's cruelty, alongside head shaving and the lock-step. Discussing entertainment in Auburn prison, inmate number 25,818 explained that when inmates are not given some relief from their work routine, their mentality lowers. The chaplain, he explained, has to find a way to improve their mental state while at the same time maintaining the rules of discipline. According to 25,818 the present Chaplain secured "legitimate mental recreation"[3] in the form of musical and semi-vaudeville entertainments. "Full" vaudeville, one could surmise, might put the legitimacy of the mental recreation in doubt. These entertainments were sometimes entirely inmate-produced and performed. Other times entirely put on by volunteers from outside the prison. Administrators framed entertainment as being important for inmates' mental condition, but they limited entertainment programming to major holidays. In the first decade of the 1900s, there were only about five or six entertainment programs in the year. Between holidays, the inmates would occasionally be treated to singers and guest speakers from the outside who were invited to participate in the regular Sunday services.

By 1907 prisons in the Auburn system had instituted major reforms. Labour unions in New York successfully campaigned against prisons benefitting from exploitative labour practices. Labour unions argued that prisons were winning contracts because of their low production costs and were driving down wages for workers outside of prison.[4] The profit-driven contract labour system in prisons was gruelling work for the inmates who had no choice but to perform the labour. For decades after the prisons abolished contract labour, prisoners referred to its elimination as marking a transition from the brutal old system to the more enlightened new system. Other significant changes from 1899 to 1907 included abolishing brackets, lock-step, closely-cropped haircuts, and prison stripes, establishing schools in prison and a prison newspaper, introducing a physician-determined diet, an honor bar system with built in rewards, and finally, enacting a parole law for all prisoners.[5] What remained in place until 1913, however, was the rule of silence. The rule of silence was the Auburn system's signature feature. Enforced silence had a dual purpose; to force prisoners to reflect on their misdeeds and to maintain discipline.[6] Prisoners explained that the rule of silence led to feelings of isolation, despair, and

sometimes even madness. They were profoundly grateful to have any break in the silence that pervaded their existence behind bars. Articles in and inmates' letters to the *Star of Hope* expressed deep appreciation to guests for visiting them because the visits made them feel that they were still part of society.

One of the early ways that the administrators introduced entertainment in prison was through music. Clinton prison, the system's maximum-security prison, had the most regular musical events among prisons in New York. Except for Auburn's Prison for Women, all of the prisons had an inmate band. Clinton, unlike the other prisons whose administration only allowed the orchestra to perform during religious services or on holidays, held orchestra concerts twice a week - on Saturdays and Wednesdays. Inmate number 3,197 reviews the concerts for the "Clinton Gleanings" column in the *Star of Hope*. He explains that the concerts, which take place courtesy of the officials, are greatly enjoyed and appreciated. He declared that the Clinton band "is one of the best, in very particular, that can be found in any institution in the country."[7] Also unlike the other inmate bands, the Clinton orchestra was not limited to playing religious music. The program for the concert reviewed in September 1899 included mostly popular material, including a variety of marches and waltzes as well as a piece called "Ethiopian Carnival," a Cake Walk song called "Southern Hospitality," a dance song titled "Meet a Coon Tonight Schottische," and a new song called "Hello, Ma baby."[8]

For the inmates in the other prisons, weekly religious services in the chapel, whether Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, were the only non-work related activities on offer in a typical week in the prison. While many inmates no doubt attended religious services out of religious conviction, the services offered a chance for inmates to sing and play instruments or simply listen to the music that others were performing. Inmate bands and choirs were permitted to organize, and though the musicians and singers had limited practice time, they were permitted time during the services to do their best with the hymns. The *Star of Hope* regularly published ads encouraging the musically-inclined to see the chaplain about joining the inmate choirs and bands. Reviewing the musical interludes at the services, the writers subtly revealed that the musicians were not always top quality, claiming that the bands or singers were good considering how little time they had to practice. It was a particular pleasure for the inmates when choirs and musicians from beyond the prison, who could devote time to practicing, joined in the services.

The chaplain also used the time allotted to religious services to have visitors address the inmates to offer advice and to preach self-improvement. Local religious leaders frequently took over services at the prisons. The *Star of Hope* reports on their guest pastors', rabbis', and priests' visits to the prison show that these religious leaders were in line with the chaplains in championing the virtue of hard work and strong faith in their sermons to the inmates. Even the guests who were not religious officials focused on encouraging prisoners' to work hard to reform themselves while incarcerated. Maud Ballington Booth, a beloved figure among prisoners, regularly came to visit the inmates at the prison chapel. Auburn 25,678 describes that for some days prior to her visits, there is "a sort of vibration – which might not inaptly be termed magnetic – has made itself felt among the prisoners."[9] The writers in the *Star of Hope* again and again use this kind of language when they write about Booth, or "Little Mother," as the inmates often called her. She devoted her life to trying to inspire prisoners to better themselves in prison and created the Volunteer Prison League (VPL) to that end. Being part of the league allowed the prisoners the chance to talk with other prisoners, though their conversations had to be limited to pledging their commitment to prison discipline and promising the do good when they left prison. Along with the offering a space that was not governed by the rule of silence, joining the VPL secured help for the inmates upon their release from prison. Booth established the Hope Halls, rooming houses for new prisoners, to make ensure that the men who had joined the VPL and made a commitment to improving themselves after serving their sentences had a support system to help them follow through on their promises. With Hope Halls, Booth provided new ex-convicts with food, clothes, a bit of money, and employment. The prisoners appear to have welcomed these visits. The guests made them feel that they had not been completely forgotten and that people were working on their behalf outside of the prison. It would be a stretch, however, to call these visits entertainment.

Holiday entertainments in the prison, in contrast to those that took place during the religious services, did not come attached with an explicit prisoner self-improvement agenda. For non-Clintonites, holidays were the only times reserved for entertainment for the sake of it. The inmates could expect special holiday programming on Thanksgiving, Christmas/New Year's, July the Fourth, and Lincoln's birthday. Over time, the prisons increased the number of holidays celebrated at the prison, though these were not consistent from year to year. The sometimes-celebrated holidays included Washington's Birthday, Columbus Day, St. Patrick's Day,

Decoration Day, Labour Day, and Easter. For some of these days, the chaplains arranged for outside talent to entertain the inmates. When they did not have guest entertainers, the chaplains worked with the inmates and prison staff to have an entirely in-house-produced entertainment program. Whether featuring inside or outside talent, the programming followed a vaudevillian structure, drawn from popular forms form the nineteenth century like minstrelsy, concert saloons, variety theatre, and burlesque. Acts that audiences could expect to see at a typical vaudeville show included a diverse mixture of popular songs, operatic solos, acts from Shakespeare plays, acrobatics, magic lantern shows, cake walks, and magic tricks. They also usually included film.

Inmates in the New York system watched stereopticon views in the early years of the 1900s and by 1906, were watching moving pictures behind bars. In 1905 the inmates at Auburn were shown stereopticon views of photographs taken by J. Reed Powell, which included pictures of America from New York City to California. 25673, the inmate reviewing the Christmas entertainment at which the stereopticon featured, pronounced the images a revelation to those who, "lacking means and opportunity to travel, had no knowledge of the many natural beauties of this continent."[10] These pictures were intended for audiences to experience virtual travel. When films were screened in prison, the imagined travel was more poignant. Alison Griffiths explains in her article "Bound by Cinematic Chains," scholars have often connected film-watching in prison with metaphorical escape.[11] Some films screened in the prison, however, served to remind the inmates that they were still trapped. On July 4th 1909, Mrs. Hatch, along with her three small children came to visit the prison. Mrs. Hatch, one of the three women in the United States, worked the moving picture machine and presented pictures showing the wonders of Ceylon, street fairs in India, a Ludlow aeroplane in motion, and the Paris Zoological gardens. The writer who covered the event for the *Star of Hope* remarked that "the audience expressed a particular sympathy with the animals behind the bars in the zoo cages."[12]

The inmates were watching films in prison that were being screened contemporaneously in the local urban centre and in major metropolises around the country. As was the case with early film exhibition, the films shown in prison from 1906 were placed within the context of a vaudeville production. The Thanksgiving entertainment in 1906 at Auburn prison which featured the basketball game between the local YMCA and the Auburn theological seminary, club swinging, vocal solos, violinists, fire ring juggling, rounded out the program with moving

pictures. It was in fact the promise of motion pictures that finally got the inmate audience to abandon their demands for the fire juggler to "do it some more."[13] Mr. Moore, the proprietor of the Theatorium of Auburn furnished the five films that were screened for the inmates on this occasion. The films were all, according to 25,818, the Auburn local editor, "humorous playlets" and included the (now famous) film *Dream of a Welsh Rarebit Fiend*, directed by Edwin S. Porter.[14]

Inserting film into vaudeville productions continued into the 1910s in the prisons, even though film exhibition outside of the prison was shifting away from this format. By this time, film was beginning to be separated out of other entertainment programs as purpose-built theatres were constructed that were designed to screen film and to provide live entertainment that centred around the film being played. Washington's birthday show in Sing Sing prison in 1913 continued with the same vaudeville format as was common in the early 1900s. On this occasion the inmates were ushered into the chapel, which Sing Sing 57,355 explains had been transformed into a moving-picture and vaudeville theatre. The program alternated between the live entertainment and the moving pictures. Inmates provided the live entertainment for the show, with the prison orchestra providing the prelude and postlude. 57,355 expressed a sense of pride among the prisoners at seeing their comrades singing and dancing like professionals who would have pleased an audience of strangers[15]. Prisoner number 52,301 was the stage manager for the vaudeville portion of the entertainment. Warden Kennedy secured the films for the show from Mr. Otis, the proprietor and manager of the Oliver Opera House in Ossining. The films included *A Ten-Carat Hero*, a story about a man named Zeke who triumphs over a bully and regains his lost love. Following this film prisoner number 60,876 sang two songs, then the moving picture *The Line at Hogan's* was shown, telling the story of a bothersome clothes-line. Inmate 62,422 then took the stage and delighted the audience with his "coon shouting". The program closed with a third film, one about a car that had escaped from a psychopathic institution and drove erratically despite the driver's best efforts to control the vehicle. When the film was over an Italian inmate took to the stage to perform a comic version of an Italian classic. A final film was screened, after which the inmates were ushered out of the chapel.[16]

Holiday programming at the prisons typically included five reels in between other live entertainment acts. Employees from the Theatorium of Auburn went to Auburn prison to show moving pictures and illustrated songs several times a year for several years. In July 1907 the

Theatorium provided the inmates with a film about the life Christ called "The Passion Play of Oberammergau." The editor, 25,818 claims that the inmates had never seen anything before that equalled this film. 25,818 connects the inmates' viewing experience with those of thousands of people on the outside who saw the film in the City of Auburn. He refers to newspaper reports that described how the "grandness of the subject and the realism of the portrayal"[17] had led audiences to become hysterical. In comparing the similarities between the inmate viewing experience and that of regular Auburn folk, 25,818 was emphasizing prisoners' commonality with people on the outside as well as letting people know that the inmates are reading the local papers and are maintaining interest in civic affairs. He was also pointing to film being a collective experience.

The entertainment programs in prison showcased a mixture of high and low culture. Like film, other cultural forms were being separated out and ranked hierarchically.[18] Vaudeville was ranked as a lowbrow popular form of entertainment, though it continued to include elements from the highbrow canon. What came to be known as "legitimate" theatre, emerged as a sacrilized art form as theatre managers strove to set their productions apart from vaudeville. By the late eighteen hundreds, theatres were putting on performances with clear narrative structures and expected their audiences to follow middle-class codes of behaviour, including being silent during the performances and expressing appreciation for the shows in a subdued manner. Vaudeville theatres in working class neighbourhoods in urban centres rejected these rules and continued to stage a mishmash of different types of performances with no narrative connection and encouraged audience participation. In prison, the entertainment followed the more working-class vaudeville program model, but held to middle-class models of behaviour and decorum. Despite vaudeville being considered lowbrow lowbrow entertainment it was the most significant and ubiquitous stage form and employed over 25,000 people across the United States from the 1880s to the 1920s.[19] Vaudeville theatres claimed to be offering "something for everyone", which was a significant selling point for the ethnically, racially, and socially diverse population in New York City. Recognizing vaudeville's undeniable popularity, reputable newspapers and journals like the *New York Times,* the *New York Dramatic Mirror,* and *Variety,* began to include vaudeville productions in their theatre sections, though they had separate columns for "legitimate" theatre and vaudeville.

Prisoners putting on vaudeville shows earned them a new respect from the prison officials in the audience. When the inmates produced the day's events, they modelled their programs on typical vaudeville productions. The inmates were so skilled at mimicking the form that outside critics were favourably comparing the prisoner productions to professional productions in the city. Clinton inmate 4995, reviewing the Christmas entertainments in 1900, reported that out-going warden Mr. Baker and the newly-appointed Warden, Mr. Deyo, both spoke in "unqualified terms of approbation"[20] about the entertainment program that they saw rehearsed a few evenings prior to its final staging. 4,995 describes Mr. Deyo as being especially emphatic in his praise. Deyo, a self-professed vaudeville connoisseur who explained that he frequently pays high prices for seats at vaudeville performances in New York City, claimed that the shows that he sees in the city were "much inferior to the one which graced the Clinton stage on Christmas Day."[21] Clinton number 5,162, the other reporter covering the Christmas entertainment story for "Clinton Gleanings" declared the show a "red letter performance."[22]

5,162's article focuses on the show being the "best and cleanest"[23] entertainment ever seen at Clinton, using the word "clean" on three occasions in his short article. In highlighting the show's moral purity, 5,162 reveals that the prison has a structure in place to ensure that the entertainments presented to the inmates meet with certain moral standards. Though these standards are not made explicit, 5,162 explains that E. E. Davis Junior, the censor and the official director of the entertainment, can feel justly proud in having shaped the day's program. Whether E. E. Davis wanted 5,162 to emphasize that the production was clean or the writer himself wished to stress this point, the *Star of Hope* readers within and outside of the prison were assured that the entertainment at the prison was wholesome. The *Star of Hope* was not alone in assessing vaudeville according to its moral tone. The writers in the new vaudeville columns in the major New York dailies and the Theatre publications all praised productions for being "clean". This way, the papers could maintain their respectability even though they were covering a morally suspect cultural form. Vaudeville historian Rick DesRochers argues that despite vaudeville's immense popularity, vaudevillians were "cast as lowbrow, ribald, and a threat to the American way of life" and that popular comedians were particularly held out as "dangerous, immoral, and hazardous to the process of Americanisation."[24] Prison administrators and the inmates therefore had to be especially careful to be seen to be adhering to moral guidelines.

Progressive reformers were cautious in supporting popular entertainments. Reformers wanted to improve living and working conditions for the urban poor, but they were also concerned with uplifting the poor in a moral sense. Jane Addams, who established settlement houses for poor and immigrant women in Chicago, encouraged young people from the underclasses to go to the theatre. She argued that the theatre offered relief from their daily stresses and anxieties, claiming that "the theatre is the only place where they can satisfy that craving for a conception of life higher than that which the actual world offers them."[25] Addams believed that it was possible to find this conception of a higher life in vaudeville stages but that the vaudeville houses had to be monitored, restricted, and regulated to ensure an acceptable moral standard. To meet this standard, productions had to be free of offensive behaviour and language that might stimulate the audiences' baser instincts. Some progressive reformers tried to create their own popular entertainments that were in line with middle class morality.[26] After successfully campaigning for laws banning liquor sales in entertainment venues and making venue owners responsible for monitoring behaviour at their events, Belle Israels Moskowitz, a New York City progressive reformer, switched her emphasis from criticizing the form to creating vaudeville-type shows that fit with her criteria of decency. These shows included spectacle, like confetti showers, and prize dancing, but did not include what she considered to be vaudeville's baser comic and satiric songs and dances. Auburn inmate 25,673, writing about the Christmas festivities at Auburn in 1905, expresses scepticism about the possibility of creating a clean entertainment program that is actually entertaining, saying that

> to make interesting and amusing a morally clean and wholesome theatrical performance, wholly free from anything even suggestive of evil, would most likely, be considered doubtful of accomplishment by amusement promoters in general. [27]

He goes on to say, however, that prison chaplain Herrick managed to achieve this seemingly impossible task. 25,673, to highlight the entertainment's decency, describes the orchestra's costumes, selected and arranged by Auburn's local editor, number 25,818, as being "neat and tasteful."

Vaudeville business pioneers Benjamin Franklin Keith and his partner Edward F. Albee thought that there was money to be made in creating vaudeville productions that would align with the reformers' vision of clean entertainment. This led them to create a chain of clean

vaudeville houses. Performers hoping to make it on one of the Keith-Albee stages had to stick to clean material that would not scare away potential middle class patrons and be appropriate for women and children and their perceived delicate sensibilities. Their industrial model for vaudeville was successful and made the entertainments acceptable to mainstream audiences. Those active in prison reform in New York shared their fellow progressive reformers' commitment to combining moral uplift with their reformist mission. Because of this, it was important that entertainment at the prison, itself a product of progressive reform, could not be seen to be subverting the reformers' mission to elevate prisoners' morality. For Keith and Albee, keeping their shows clean meant high profits and control over market share, while for prisoners, keeping their shows clean ensured that the entertainment program would survive.

For the inmates, the entertainment program at the prisons allowed them to temporarily forget that they were prisoners. Inmates who wrote about the entertainments at their prison often refer to the entertainments as being a rare break from their misery. Number 5,162 credited the music, song, and laughter on Christmas day at Clinton with piercing the "sombre shadows of the prison."[28] Auburn 25,673, described a similar phenomenon in his article about the Christmas entertainment held at Auburn in 1904. He noted that

> one had only to note the happy expression on the faces ordinarily wearing a look of abnormal gravity and sad seriousness, to be convinced of the success of the effort the entertainment represented, to introduce something of brightness into the dim-coloured lives of the confined body of men composing the audience.[29]

The inmates especially appreciated when people from outside the prison came to entertain them. The writers in the *Star of Hope* often focused on the effort involved on the part of the entertainers to come to the prison and put on a show. The inmates wrote about feeling deeply moved that people would sacrifice their time to entertain them. Sing Sing 60,601's review of the Labour Day entertainment in 1912 typifies this sentiment. He wrote that

> Unselfishness – kindly service for the benefit of others, is so rare that too much cannot be said in appreciation of it. And yet, how difficult it is to convey appreciation in mere words, to those who at the personal expenditure of money, valuable time, thoughtfulness and energy travelled from New York, sacrificing their own holiday in order to bring to us an hour or more of respite form discipline, and forgetfulness of hated environment. To provide a period of keen enjoyment for those whose lives contain little of pleasure, was Mr. Barry's object in appearing at Sing Sing on Labour Day.[30]

He also, perhaps strategically, always thanked the warden and the prison officials who organized the entertainment and highlighted the inmates' appreciation for their involvement. Sing Sing 60,601 reported that the Labour Day entertainments opened with a picture of Warden Kennedy and that image was met with "vigorous and long applause"[31] to recognize his part in the day's events.

Holiday festivities at the prison not only transformed the space for the inmates, but changed the prison for the guards, keepers, and wardens as well. The inmate-generated entertainments required planning and practice. All prison departments were enlisted to bring the entertainments to fruition. After the July the Fourth events in 1904, Auburn 25,673 wrote in the *Star of Hope* about what it took to put all of the events together.[32] 25,673 described that the deputy warden ordered the carpentry department to construct scenes, which, once completed, were handed over to the State Shop Painters to complete. The designs were a joint effort between Mr. Delos Compton, the foreman of the School Furniture Finishing Department and "C. R." the inmate-foreman of the State Shop Painters. They also designed and painted scenes for what 25,673 deemed a "very fine" drop curtain measuring fifteen by twenty feet. "H. F," an inmate electrician produced the electrical effects for the stage setting. The inmate tailors, led by their captain, Mr. Holmes, sewed and pressed the costumes, which had been designed by Auburn's local editor. 25,673 prised the local editor for the "perfect symphony of colour" in the costumes and for how they perfectly suited the characters' being portrayed. Aside from the technical preparations, 25,673 explains that Chaplain Herrick devoted about eight hours a day over two weeks to coach the inmate musicians and actors. Herrick was assisted in his task by the "coloured violincellist" who orchestrated a large portion of the musical program for the day. "La R," the foreman of the barber team, and "T. H." the librarian did the make up and hair for the production. There were over twenty-five acts in the program ranging from orchestra selections and vocal solos, to acrobatics, to jubilee singing, trick banjo playing, monologist pieces, and sketch comedy. As this article makes evident, the inmates and prison staff took on tasks that were vaguely linked to their job descriptions to put the shows together.

In addition to all of the prison departments working to put on the shows, the prisons and prison staff often had some professionals assisting them in their preparations. A number of outside people were thanked in the piece for their contributions to the day's entertainment. Mr.

James A. Madison, was thanked for his help in enlisting vaudeville company *Budget* to arrange the "Rain Makers" sketch, and Mr. Leo Feist, also of New York, was thanked for supplying the song "Uncle Sammy." These outside professionals can be credited with helping to make the production "up-to-date," which the reviewer credited as being one of the production's strengths. There were also professionals among the performers, including "L----," who performed the piece "Only a Monologue." Auburn 25,673 claimed that L had few peers as a monologist, indication that he was "quite at home" in presenting the monologue as it is "his business outside."[33]

25,673's pride in his fellow inmates and in the prison staff for having created a professional program that rivalled entertainment outside the prison is evident. That he repeatedly refers to the performances and the stage as being professional and not amateurish he is emphasizing that the people in prison are talented, hard-working, and capable. In 1910, a writer in the *Star of Hope* connects prisoners' entertainment work in the prison with future career opportunities. He suggests that the time that members of the band spend rehearsing and performing while in prison was not a waste of time because they would be able to use their musical skills to make money when they are released from prison.[34] The writer was thus echoing the reformist idea that fun was best when it was useful and productive.

The entertainment programs encouraged collaboration between prison officials and the inmates and provided opportunities for bringing together the prison world and the wider community. For the times when the prison chaplains invited outside talent to provide the entertainment for holidays in the prison, they drew from local vaudeville and minstrel companies. The chaplains tapped into the vaudeville circuit and developed relationships with company directors who arranged for their troupes to visit prisons in the system several times a year. The Auburn minstrels were regulars at Auburn prison (both the men's and the women's prison), and The Murdock Brothers company, and the Perry Vaudeville and Dramatic Company frequently made appearances at Clinton Prison and Sing Sing for special events. The programs for the shows put on by these professional troupes look much the same, in terms of the types of performances, as those that the inmates and prison staff produced. Reviewers in the *Star of Hope* always praised prison-produced shows, but they expressed particular gratitude when they were provided with entertainment from outside of the prison. Many of the inmate writers explained that having outside talent come to the prison made them feel that society had not forgotten them. Occasionally, major productions put prisons on their travel circuit, thereby keeping the inmates

current on popular culture. In 1910, Colonel F. William "Buffalo Bill" Cody brought his famous "Wild West Show" to Auburn prison. 28,813 details how the elaborate production featured nineteen different nationalities, including "troops from the far east, from India, some from darkest Africa, Japanese jugglers, Russian dancers, Turks, Egyptians, Hindoos and American Indians."[35] The production also included a waltzing horse that danced the "hoochey koochey" and performed a variety of other stunts. While these performances and attractions impressed the inmates, according to the writer, it was the children in the production who "caused much mirth among the inmates."[36] Children were often brought in to entertain the inmates in the New York system. The Holy Family Orphanage of Auburn, for example, brought children to the local prison to sing songs and put on short plays.

The guests were often professional entertainers, but often the prison workers' friends and families came to entertain the inmates. The entertainment programs served to integrate prison community and broke down some of the barriers between the inmates and the non-inmates who spend a large part of their lives behind prison walls. Clinton's warden F. D. Cole, in 1910 invited his friends from the Troy Vocal Society to come to the prison to sing for the inmates. In gratitude for the visit, Clinton 8413 wrote a poem titled "The Warblers of Troy," published in the *Star of Hope* as a tribute to the warden for having arranged the performance and the singers for bringing some joy into the prison.[37] While most of the people entertaining the inmates were either inmates themselves or guests brought in from the outside, occasionally prison officials themselves performed for the prisoners. Thomas Mott Osborne, before his 1913 prison experiment, played the violin for inmates at Auburn at one of the holiday concerts.

Whether the productions were inmate-produced or produced by outside groups, most of the entertainments included ethnically- and race-based humour. Such humour was prevalent on the vaudeville stages in American cities. By the first decade of the twentieth century, European immigration to the United States had changed from being predominantly from northern and western countries to being mostly from southern and eastern nations. These new immigrant groups were not as warmly welcomed as prior immigrant groups had been. Native-born Americans widely assumed that new immigrants from Italy, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Greece, Portugal, and Romania were ignorant and backward and as such, posed a threat to what they saw as their modernizing and forward-looking American culture.[38] Perceived ideas about the new immigrants' unassimilatibility were at the heart of the nativist movement that pervaded

middle class American culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many progressive reformers made "Americanisation" a key part of their reform activities. Given that most of the reformers in the progressive era were native-born and from the middle classes, they often conflated "Americanness" with middle class values. For new immigrants to successfully "Americanize," they thus had to conform to middle class codes of behaviour.

As vaudeville grew out of working-class, immigrant neighbourhoods, much of the humour in vaudeville dealt with assimilation. Vaudevillians unsettled middle-class values as they mocked immigrants' efforts to assimilate. Ethnically-based humour made fun of people using gross stereotypes, but they also turned xenophobia into a joke.[39] Vaudeville shows were derided as being unsophisticated, but many vaudeville acts were performing important social critique. Part of the reason that the middle-classes regarded vaudeville with suspicion was that it seemed to gleefully reject their values and their cultural practices. As Stuart Hall argues, popular cultural forms that spring from what he calls "excluded classes" constitute a "culture of the oppressed"[40] and as challenge the dominant culture. When vaudeville shows were performed in New York prisons in the early years of the twentieth century, the humour about immigrants' inability to assimilate and succeed in the dominant culture become particularly significant. Over half of the inmates at Sing Sing were either non-native born, (with representatives from fourteen different countries) or native born African Americans and "Indians", though it is not clear if the 'Indians' to which they refer are men originally from India or if they are Native American. Less than a third of the inmates were Protestant. Even in Auburn prison, a maximum-security prison, two-thirds of the men in Auburn prison were not violent criminals but were in prison for committing crimes against property not involving large sums of money. Most of those in prison for these crimes came from working class or poor backgrounds, were illiterate, and did not speak English fluently.[41] Their crimes were often motivated by desperation, a fact that many in the prison reform movements acknowledged. The inmates were part of Hall's "excluded class" before they entered prison, but became more fully excluded upon entering prison.

Vaudeville, as a culture emerging from the oppressed, gave marginalized people and their stories centre stage. Though the stories were often exaggerated and farcical, they nonetheless gave a voice to people who were ignored or feared in the wider culture. Vaudeville shows promoted a kind of Americanness that did not erase cultural difference. This was also true of the Vaudeville shows in the prisons. A typical program for an entertainment at any of the prisons

included skits about different ethnic groups. The skits trafficked in stereotypes, complete with drunken Irishmen, hyper-emotional Italians, and manipulative Hebrews. Accent-based humour was also a regular feature in the entertainment programs, with Hebrew, Italian, and Irish impersonations appearing most frequently. The program for Clinton prison's Christmas celebration in 1905 was entirely composed of ethnic-based comedy. The play that took up half of the day's entertainment was called "A Hebrew's Busy Day," advertised in the program as "An Every Day Trifle Illustrating how a Thrifty Pawn Broker Gets Worked by 'The Gang'.[42] The second half of the production included songs in broken "Kaiser" and dialogues in Irish. Scholars like Michael Rogin and Werner Sollors argue that ethnic stereotyping in comedy was part of a process of Americanisation. According to Sollors, comedy offered a way for people to engage with a culture different from their own.[43] While ethnic comedy highlighted differences between ethnic groups, Rogin argues that ethnic difference disappeared when the performers donned blackface.[44] Through blackface, the ethnic performers highlighted their whiteness. Ethnicity was a barrier to being considered American, but in differentiating themselves from black Americans, ethnic whites were trying to use racial status as a way of gaining currency in American society.

Blackface performances were standard fare in vaudeville inside and outside of prison. When one minstrel show was put on in Auburn prison in 1910 without the guest performers being in blackface, two different reporters expressed their disappointment in the *Star of Hope.* Negative reviews of entertainment at the prison almost never appeared in the paper, likely because seeming ungrateful about the entertainment would threaten the inmates' chances of having entertainment at all. That two writers criticized the performance for its lack of blackface underscores how blacking up was considered a non-negotiable component of an entertainment program. Number 31,117 points out that "it is a well-known fact that character sketches need both costume and make up to bring them out."[45] He does not blame the performers, but explains that lack of time and room prevented the cast from the Knights of Pythias from appearing in full costume and blackface. The Auburn editor, number 31,147, said that "we were sorry that circumstances were such that the minstrel men could not appear in costume and black-face; more than half the comedy was lost."[46]

As was standard in vaudeville, the black-face comedy was presented in three parts. The first part had the performers arranged in a semi-circle, with the master of ceremonies, called the "interlocutor" in the centre. The two end men, "tambo" who plays the tambourine, and "brudder

bones" who plays the bones, act as comedians and interact with the pompous interlocutor. The songs in the first section were usually sentimental ballads. The second act was called an "olio," included a variety of songs, dances and stand-up routines. "Coon shouting" was an olio staple, though this type of performance sometimes stood on its own and not as part of a three-part act. The "coon shouter" sang popular "coon songs," which were meant to be funny. The humour relied on caricaturing African Americans as watermelon- and fried chicken-eating lazy, drunk, and thieving imbeciles. The third part, the "afterpiece" was usually a one-act sketch that purported to be a realistic representation of plantation life. The plantation scenes were so integral to blackface performances, that when actual black people performed without using the plantation setting they were still understood in that context. At Auburn prison in 1904, four African-American jubilee singers were part of the July the Fourth entertainment program.[47] 25,818 reviewed the entertainment and said that of the jubilee singers' performance that "it lacked only the environment of Southern cotton field to complete the illusion of witnessing a typical plantation scene."[48] Eric Lott in his book *Love and Theft*, argues that blackface minstrelsy both embodied and disrupted racial ideologies of America in the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries.[49] Rogin builds on Lott's argument and maintains that thinking about blackface only as an expression of bigotry is to ignore its positive qualities. Rogin posits that when white people put on black face make-up that it was meant to express appreciation for traditionally black cultural forms. The blackface performances in prison were among the most appreciated by the prisoners, which shows an element of the reverence for traditionally black cultural forms that Lott describes. However, the blackface performances in prison appear to have almost exclusively depict black people as complete buffoons. Given the racial divisions in prison, whereby black inmates were relegated to non-skilled labour and had only limited access to educational programs, the subversive meaning that existed in minstrelsy in the wider society was muted in the prison context. [50] The white inmates either preforming in blackface or watching guest performers acting out gross stereotypes in blackface may well have reinforced the prisons' racial hierarchy.

African-American inmates had fewer opportunities to offer their fellow inmates a broader perspective on their history and culture than did their white prison-mates. There were, however, some notable occasions when the black inmates led special programming and when important African-American figures came to the prison. In May 1912, five graduates of The Tuskegee

Institute, Booker T. Washington's school in Alabama, came to Auburn to perform as a vocal quintet for the prisoners. Washington's vision for the Tuskegee Institute was for it to train African-Americans to be self-reliant and to take pride in hard work. Washington was more interested in uplifting black people than he was in critiquing the racism at the heart of American government and its institutions. Auburn's librarian, Mr. Woods, accompanied the Tuskegee graduates and spoke about the "great work that is being done among the coloured people, in educating and preparing them to become good, self-sustaining citizens."[51] In this way, Mr. Woods was drawing a parallel between the Tuskegee Institute's mission and that of the prison. 31,936, the Auburn local editor, saw made his own parallel between the sentiments expressed in the quintet's performance and those of the prisoners at Auburn. The guests sang plantation melodies that depicted "the gloom and sorrow of slavery before the war; the hopes and faith kindled by the end of the war, and the joy and gladness of freedom."[52]

Another occasion at which the entertainment focused on African-American themes was on the fiftieth anniversary of the Proclamation of Emancipation at Clinton prison on October 22nd, 1913. The *Star of Hope* covered the day's events and provided the program, but noted that the because of space constraints, the paper could not offer a lengthy report of the show.[53] There was not such a lack of space when the paper covered St. Patrick's or Columbus Day. The paper did include a short review of the concert that the principle keeper and Chaplain Pierce organized to mark the end of slavery. The review was fairly insubstantial, saying that everyone involved put in a good effort and that everyone enjoyed the show. Typical reviews of entertainment at the prison are much more detailed and describe most of the acts in a given performance. Without a thorough review, the readers are left with the program alone to get a sense of the day's events. The program had two parts. The first half of the program featured the prison band and inmate singers performing "negro folklore" songs. The second part was a one-act comedy called "Uncle Zeke's Return," which was set on a plantation in Alabama and told a story related to the Emancipation Proclamation that featured both Abraham Lincoln and T. Washington. The play included musical numbers "Cotton Picking Song" and "Plantation Song" and ended with a cake walk and dancing. The *Star* reporter Clinton 9,772 indicated that the "coloured residents of Clinton" wanted to use the column in the paper to extend their thanks to the administration officials for their kindness in permitting the celebration.

Post-Reform Entertainment

Thomas Mott Osborne wanted to restructure the prison so that its environment would be more conducive to transforming the inmates into productive citizens. The week he spent living as a prisoner in Auburn in 1913 convinced him that the conditions in prison only served to degrade men, make them unhealthy, promote immorality, and crush their spirits. In *Within Prison Walls,* his book about his time in prison, Osborne argues that the men could not be productive in the prison or outside of it under existing conditions. Osborne was particularly upset by the rule of silence and the isolation that it enforced.[54] At the core of his reforms was an attempt to reduce this isolation and to foster a sense of community among the inmates to make the inmates responsible for maintaining their community through self-government.[55] The Auburn system was designed to isolate the prisoners from one another. Breaking this core tenet required rethinking prison structure. The reformers aimed to break down prisoners' isolation. They therefore urged prison officials to allow inmates to get to know one another and to have fun. To address the prison administrations' concerns about how such social gatherings would impact discipline, Osborne argued that his system would actually improve discipline in the prison. He believed that prisoners would be motivated to behave well if they were rewarded for good behaviour. With Committee for Prison Reform's support, Osborne convinced Superintendent Riley and Auburn Warden Rattigan to experiment with prisoner self-government and to dramatically expand the amount of time that prisoners were allowed to socialize. At a chapel service in 1913, Riley and Rattigan allowed the prisoners to discuss their ideas about prisoner-self government. At that gathering, the inmates named the organization the Mutual Welfare League and agreed upon some general principles. With the prison administrator's approval. On December 26th, Auburn held free elections in all of the different shops of the prison to choose a committee that would be responsible for determining the League's structure and direction.

From its first meeting, the Mutual Welfare League showed that it was committed to creating a festive atmosphere in the prison. In *Within Prison Walls*, Osborne describes how the Mutual Welfare League members transformed the prison's dreary assembly room into a setting that "everywhere indicated hope and truth."[56] With help from Auburn townspeople, the inmates erected a properly boxed and curtained stage, decorated all of the posts with coloured paper, and "gaily decorated"[57] the front of the gallery. On the stage curtain the inmates painted a large shield with the League's monogram and motto "Do Good. Make Good" above. At the back of

the stage the inmates hung the American flag and a portrait of Lincoln. Osborne, keen to link his prison reforms with Lincoln's achievements, suggested that Lincoln's portrait was smiling upon this "celebration of new emancipation."[58] This connection was only reinforced by the fact that the Mutual Welfare League's inaugural meeting was held on Lincoln's birthday. The Mutual Welfare League's Executive Committee planned for a two-hour classical violin and piano recital that included works from Bach, Beethoven, and Strauss. Between sets, several people made speeches to celebrate the League's founding. The League's secretary addressed the inmates to explain the League's objectives and what they had accomplished to date as well as to praise Thomas Osborne for initiating the league and for securing institutional support for the league to actually have some decision-making power in the prison. Two members of the Commission on Prison reform took to the stage to express their joy about the historic change that the Mutual Welfare League represents and to encourage the League. Osborne asserted that even without a guard or keeper present at the meeting, that "no such perfect discipline has ever been seen before in Auburn prison." He downplays the presence of the new Principle Keeper and the deputy Warden, explaining that they were only there in unofficial capacities. Without the being constantly watched, Osborne claimed that the men were able to sit easily and naturally and to chat with their neighbours.

The entertainment at the League's first meeting, with its classical music recital and official speeches, was a fairly reserved affair, and showed, at least once, that a completely inmate-run and monitored event did not lead to chaos. The inmates' good behaviour at the event meant that the League was allowed to move forward with planning future entertainments. Article four, section one of Auburn's Mutual Welfare League by-laws lists the League's standing committees.[59] Four out of the ten committees relate to prison recreation: athletics; entertainments; decorations and celebrations; and visitors. For the first three months, the entertainment committee had to limit their productions to Sunday afternoon entertainments in the chapel. By May 1914, the entertainments became much more elaborate and boisterous, and were allowed to move out of the chapel and into the yard. By the end of the summer of 1914 all of the prisons in the Auburn system introduced prisoner self-government and allowed prisoners to organize regular athletic and entertainment programming. The September12th edition of the *Star of Hope* devoted an entire page to "Clinton's New Freedom,"[60] in which Clinton's local editor details the radical changes in prison life since these reforms were introduced. Prior to 1914,

articles about holiday entertainment across the system included a mention of how holiday times were hard for prisoners because the couple of hours of entertainment would follow or proceed an extended lock-up period, because of prison staff taking their holidays. These periods often lasted for two days. Many *Star of Hope* reporters covering entertainment after 1914 remarked that post-reform holiday festivities were no longer associated with isolation and suffering. The atmosphere at holiday festivities was also markedly different because the inmates were allowed to talk to one another. Writing about the Labour Day celebrations as part of the "Clinton's New Freedoms" piece, the editor asked the reader to

> picture about fourteen hundred grey-clothed men, all ages and all nationalities – men whom some people call desperate and hopeless criminals who while inmates of this institution have been subject to the severest discipline – picture these men marching in a military manner into the yard; given a few words of warning from the different keepers, and then told that they were free to enjoy themselves in any way they wished, to see old friends, friends whom they have seen every day, but were forbidden to converse with; to laugh, joke, howl till there throats became hoarse. It is beyond my power to describe the looks of pleasure which shown upon the face of each smiling man. A few stood stock still for several minutes unable to comprehend, thinking it was all a dream and fearing the awakening.[61]

He explains that the keepers, too, could not hide their joy at witnessing the prisoners' playful antics. According to the editor, the principal keeper, at all times a very distant man, was compelled to smile at the scene. He claims that the keeper was pleased at how the prisoners appreciated "what was being done to make their life in here more cheerful."[62] Emphasizing that the prisoners were grateful and that that the new freedoms made everyone, including the guards, happy, the editor was trying to show that the inmates can be trusted and that the new the changes improved relations between officials and inmates. It was important for the inmates to highlight that giving the prisoners more freedom did not lead to anarchy, as officials and the public feared. The writers had to tread carefully when making this point, however. Showing that prisoners were not wild animals and that they were able to maintain discipline on their own was good public relations for the Mutual Welfare League. However, prisoners maintaining discipline on their own risked alienating the guards, many of whom believed that increased freedoms for prisoners encroached on their professional duties and thereby put their jobs at risk.[63] Another writer covering the day's events at Clinton suggests the inmates and the guards are working together. He claimed that at no other time in the history of Clinton had their been such co-operation

between the officials and the inmates. He also focused on how the prisoners were grateful to all those who "laboured patiently and persistently"[64] to bring about the much-needed prison reforms.

Press across the country published articles about the inmates' new freedoms. Most of the articles emphasized that the prisoners appeared happy and that they maintained perfect discipline. The *New York Times* coverage of the Sunday activities at Sing Sing on August 2nd, 1914 explains that the men at Sing Sing were for the first time allowed to "roam at will" within the prison yard from 7 a.m. until 4:30 in the afternoon, when they returned to their cells. The writer reported that the experiment was a success, citing Warden McCormick's claim that the weekly recreation periods resulted in a 33% increase in productivity in the prison shops.[65]

The MWL entertainment committee dramatically expanded the programming for holidays linked to ethnicity, like St. Patrick's Day and Columbus Day. These days honoured the inmates' ethnic heritage and culture, thus providing a counter to the crude characterizations of different ethnic groups in popular ethnic-based comedy. St. Patrick's Day was given over to Irish-themed entertainment in 1912 at Sing Sing and Auburn prisons. The Auburn band kicked off the celebrations and was followed by talks about St. Patrick, ragtime songs, and performances by the inmate choir.[66] The Clinton celebrations followed much the same pattern, and featured a dozen Irish songs.[67] The St. Patrick's day celebrations became much more elaborate once the Mutual Welfare League was in charge of the event. In 1915 the Irish inmates assembled outside of the Principal Keeper's office and paraded around the yard several times to music played by the Tom Brown Aurora Band, which was on this occasion entirely composed of Irish musicians. The parade's grand marshal, who the *Star of Hope* did not identify, was dressed in a green costume and rode a green-saddled horse. Other marshals came on foot and carried huge green umbrellas. Men in the crowds were also wearing green, having improvised green trim on their coats and shirts, and also affixing large green shamrocks to their outfits. The day's festivities came to a close with an Irish feast in the dining room.[68]

Columbus Day became a major day of festivities celebrating Italian culture in prisons across the state. As with St. Patrick's Day, the celebrations that the prison officials organized were fairly sedate but were more boisterous and varied when the MWL took over the proceedings. After the sport-filled activities that took up most of the day, for the 1915 celebration, the inmates were treated to Italian performers from outside the prison.

Representatives form the Garibaldini del Mare society came with their band, to speak to the inmates. The noted Italian artist Paolo Mondillo then took to the stage that was specially erected for the occasion and presented what the *Bulletin* called a "sparkling farce"[69] entitled "Il Brillante Dissocupato" (The Brilliant Loafer). A concert directed by an Italian maestro and selections by a well-known Italian baritone singer and entertainer rounded out the evening.

These days devoted to national pride allowed the men to present themselves as part of a heritage that has contributed to art, culture, and world affairs, as opposed to just being part of a punch line in a vaudeville show. While these holiday celebrations showcased Italian and Irish culture in limited and laudatory ways, they nonetheless enabled the inmates to have a broader understanding of their fellow inmates' backgrounds. Combined with substantial articles in the *Star of Hope* that covered current events, history, politics, and culture of countries across Europe, the ethnicity-centred celebrations made the inmates, who were recent immigrants from Europe, or were first generation Americans feel that their ethnic heritage was afforded some respect in prison. Catering entertainment to the different language and ethnic groups was not only reserved for special holidays. There were often portions of entertainments that would be given in Italian, German, or Polish. As the writer in the *Star of Hope* noted about the performance of "T'Amo Ancora," "one did not have to be a native of sunny Italy to enjoy it, for it was sung sweetly and very musically." In April 1915 at Sing Sing, the inmate entertainment committee invited the Hebrew Actors' Club of New York to perform at the prison, and the performance was almost entirely in Yiddish.

Two years later, and after reforms were instituted in the prison system, the actual Booker T. Washington came to Auburn prison to speak to the inmates. Unlike W. E. B. DuBois, Washington focused more on uplift than on civil rights. But Washington was the one who travelled across the country to connect with poor and working class people. His visit to the prison was indicative of his commitment to helping the most marginalized people in American society.[70] Thomas Osborne introduced Washington, and linked the struggle against slavery with the creation of the Mutual Welfare League. Osborne suggested that it was not mere coincidence that the Mutual Welfare League held its first meeting on Lincoln's Birthday, pointing to Lincoln's assertion that all men should have an equal chance. In introducing Washington to the inmates, Osborne claimed that no man in the world outside has done more than Washington to bring about "the square deal of this equal chance." Washington and Osborne shared the view that

disadvantaged people can rise out of their circumstances through education and hard work. Washington summed up this idea when he said, as quoted in the *Star of Hope* "I know what prejudice means; I also know, in this great country of ours, if a man works he will be, must be respected, and he will, he must succeed."[71] Osborne's vision of prison reform is in line with Washington's ideas about racial uplift. Prisons, in Osborne's view, should be safe and clean so that prisoners, envisioned as students needing training, could develop labour and democracy-related skills so that they could productive citizens upon their release.

As the wardens and chaplains had before them, the Mutual Welfare Leagues' entertainment committees developed relationships with local entertainment companies to secure outside entertainment for the inmates. One of the first major productions that the Auburn League organized was for the Baylis-Hicks players to come to perform scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and a popular one-act comedy called *Box and Cox*. The League even convinced one of the officers to bring his children to the prison to entertain the inmates on May 24th,1914.[72] Reports showed that guards and officers often brought their families to entertainment and athletic events at the prisons. As well as programming the entertainments, the League members worked to brighten up the chapel. The *Bulletin* for May 23 reports that the men were in the process of painting the chapel benches.[73]

The Mutual Welfare League was given a small operating budget but they also fundraised for their cause. Many prison reformers, including Thomas Osborne, donated money to the MWL. He also hosted dinners and parties to fundraise on behalf of the MWL. Writers in the *Star of Hope* got involved in fundraising as well, urging their outside readers to donate to the Mutual Welfare League. The Mutual Welfare League accepted all manner of donations, from money to equipment to decorations. The *Bulletin* and the *Star of Hope* regularly included thanks to the individuals and companies that donated to the League. The *Bulletin* from July 11th 1914 indicated that the League has sent a letter (via the prison clerk) to Mr. Thomas Walsh of Auburn for providing the decorations for Auburn prison's July the fourth celebrations, which the writer estimates to have represented an outlay of a couple of hundred dollars. They also thanked Mr. Benjamin for painting a 'ship scene' drop curtain for the production of "Madam Sherry," and for leaving the curtain as a gift to the inmates.[74] This curtain was referred to many times in reviews of later productions. The donations did not just come from people and companies from the surrounding areas. People across the country who wanted to encourage prison reform sent money

to the Mutual Welfare League to put on entertainments. Major film companies, including Vitagraph and Pathé provided the prisons new releases at no cost. Another significant source of funding for League activities came from former prisoners. These former prisoners donated money and also attended many of the League's entertainment and athletic events.

Beyond soliciting and accepting donations to fund their activities, the entertainment committee also used their activities to generate funds. One of their revenue streams came from presenting entertainments for a civilian audience and charging admission. The civilian audience at Auburn on Thanksgiving evening in 1914 was treated to the premiere of the holiday entertainments, which included musical selections from the Mutual Welfare League orchestra, the Mutual Welfare League minstrels, a one-act comedy called "High Finance," Irish wits, buck and wing dancing and a plantation scene. The second night of the production was open to both the inmates and the public. After the Thanksgiving show in 1914, a writer in the *Bulletin* concluded that the response from the public at the entertainment went a long way toward achieving the League's primary goal, to spread the word about the Mutual Welfare League and prison reform. The writer saw the willingness of the public to promulgate the League's views as evidence of widespread support for their overall mission and an acknowledgement that prison reform had to be a collective effort. He said:

> not the least satisfactory feature of our show was the readiness on the part of the extramural community to share the responsibility of the Mutual Welfare movement […] there seems to be a unity of purpose on the part of the public to give dignity and momentum to our movement which was reflected in the attitude of the assembly on thanksgiving evening.[75]

Because the Thanksgiving entertainment was such a success, in that members of the public actually turned up at the prison and paid for the show the MWL continued to offer shows for inmates and shows for outside audiences for other holiday entertainments. The league charged a fifty-cent admission fee for the Christmas event. All of the proceeds went into the League fund.

Prisoners themselves also contributed to the entertainment fund. They took money from their prison wages to give to the fund. Inmates' friends and families contributed as well. Even the prisoners from the Honor Camp, who were not physically at the prison to enjoy the entertainments the MWL organized, raised money for the League. The Honor Camp was an Osborne-initiated program through which prisoners with the best conduct records were selected

to work outside the prison on state construction jobs. The December 26th issue of the *Bulletin* explains that the 'Honor Camp' men put on an entertainment in the summer that netted $44.19 above expenses. This amount plus cheques for $5.75 and $5.52 that men received for their position on the honor camp base ball team were sent over to the League. The league thanked their (away) fellow inmates saying "the efforts of the honor camp on our behalf are greatly appreciated, both from[sic] their deportment on the road and the financial assistance rendered. Boys, we wish to thank you and may you or your successors do as well in the years to come."[76]

The article in the *Star of Hope* about the completely inmate-produced and performed Christmas show in 1914 made it clear that the public audience was treated to a professional show that could rival those in "first class theatres."[77] The inmate ushers wore grey uniforms in a style used in by attendants at such high-class venues, while the minstrel men were attired in white shirts, black ties and trousers. Included in the entertainment program were pictures of the interiors of the prison shops and the road camps. These pictures showed the assembled crowd that the prisoners were hard workers as well as fine entertainers. The inmates linking their entertainment with evidence of their hard work was a way of telling the audience that they earned their new privileges and that they were increasing their productivity as a result of more humane treatment in the prisons.

That prisoners were running these shows without incident gained them the trust of the prison keepers and the guards. The inmates' surprise entertainment for Warden Osborne on Christmas night in 1914 dramatically evidenced the degree to which Mutual Welfare League had changed the keepers' relationships with the inmates. Sing Sing 61,550 reported on the entertainment in his *Star* article "Surprising the Warden."[78] The inmate choir at Sing Sing spent Christmas morning practicing in the band room. They then made their way to the chapel where they attended the premier performance of Mr. William A. Brady's production of Owen Davis' four-act drama *Sinners.* This performance marked the first time that a play had ever premiered at a prison, and the first time that prisoners were presented with what the *Star's* editor-in-chief referred to as a "regular play."[79] In his review of the production, the editor commended the play for its sympathetic depiction of vice. He also announced that that Mr. Brady was offering a prize of one hundred dollars for the best criticism of the play and that scores of inmates were competing for it. The prison approving staging a play that treats sinners with compassion is indicative of the change in prison managements' treatment of prisoners. Increased contact

between inmates and officials that did not result in increased conflict engendered a new trust between them. This new trust made it possible for the officials to even consider allowing the inmates to organize a surprise entertainment for the warden. The choir performed for the men confined in the death house before going to the principal keeper's office to sing for him. Without officer accompaniment, the members of the choir then went to the warden's house, where the butler hid them in the conservatory. When warden Osborne came to the conservatory a dozen inmates greeted him singing *Silent Night* and other carols. After the choral performance they all retired to the parlour and drank coffee and ate sandwiches.

The bands in prisons in the pre-reform days were expanded in the reform period both in terms of their numbers and in their opportunities to practice and perform. The writers in the *Star of Hope* often wrote articles praising their bands' professionalism. Under the heading "Good Times at Sing Sing," the *Star of Hope* featured an article about the newly formed "Aurora Band," which was composed of thirty-two men. The writer starts with a description of the band's appearance. For inmates, who were limited to wearing the same ill-fitting and drab prison uniform day in and day out, the sight of their fellow inmates in dapper outfits would have been striking. Members of the band wore uniforms that were cut to measure and fit their wearers perfectly and that matching caps were in the process of being made. Number 57,881, the band-leader, designed the suits, which were made in Sing Sing's clothing shop. Only after the uniforms were thoroughly detailed did the writer move on to assessing the band in terms of their performance, which, he claimed, was "the lesser part of the story."[80] The writer declared that the Aurora Band played like veterans even though it had only been weeks since they formed. This is remarkable, given that many of the men who joined the band had no experience in playing the instrument that they were given to play. The band was able to perform a "marvellous"[81] set for their fellow inmates because they had spent the previous weeks training with Mr. Alfred R. Dalby, a musician from New York who volunteered to help the inmate band get up to scratch. They had been training five times a week for eight weeks with Dalby. The members of the band had more freedom than other prisoners. The prison reports often note that members of the band were permitted to leave work or the mess hall early so that they could practice.

The musicians called themselves the "Aurora Band" after the name Homer used to refer to "the daughter of the dawn" and the harbinger of the day. The name had several references, the broader idea of the inmates looking forward to a new dawn beyond prison walls and the more

direct reference to the band signifying a new dawn at the prison.[82] The inmates at Sing Sing had been hoping and expecting to have a band for more than two years. Warden Clancy finally allowed the band to form as part of the reform experiment. After their debut performance in February 1914, the Aurora Band was a regular feature at most prison festivities. The Aurora Band reorganized and renamed itself the Tom Brown Aurora Band in January 1915, just after Thomas Mott Osborne was appointed Sing Sing's warden. Osborne dedicated a large room in the upper level of the new powerhouse for band to rehearse, and announced his intention to have the musicians form a separate work company. Number 57,871 was the Tom Brown Aurora Band's first leader, guiding the twenty-eight men in the band. Osborne often displayed a keen interest in music, and often played with inmates at prison concerts.

That Osborne would prioritize music in giving the band a prime location in the prison and giving musicians more freedom to move around the prison likely stems from his interest in music. In *Within Prison Walls,* he recalls feeling lonely in the darkness and stillness of his cell. His loneliness temporarily abated when he heard the sound of someone playing Mendelssohn's Spring Song on the violin, who was eventually accompanied by jewsharps, harmonicas and other instruments. Osborne reviewed this distant violinist's performance, saying that he has "unusually good tone and plays with feeling" and "wonders if he knows that I am near him, and is trying to send me his message of good will."[83]

While the other wardens in the system may not have had the special interest in music that Osborne had, they nonetheless promoted music at their prisons. At Auburn, the inmates organized two different musical groups, a band and a Mandolin and Guitar club. The band played at prison events, while the Mandolin and Guitar club played every Sunday in the chapel during service. As with the other endeavours at the prison, the band gave some inmates the chance to train for a career as professional musicians. "Teddy," who played the alto horn and viola for the Auburn Band told the *Star of Hope* that he intends to pursue a career when he leaves the prison.[84] The Mutual Welfare League orchestra played alongside a pianist and professor Herbert Treyer of London, England who came to Auburn prison at the Mutual Welfare League's invitation, for the league's inaugural evening of entertainment. Professor Treyer gave an oral and musical lecture on classical music masters. After his presentation the prison orchestra played "Il Trovatore" and the dance "Ivoletta." The Mutual Welfare League choosing to have a British

professor deliver a lecture on classical music and be accompanied by the prison's own musicians, was an effort set a sophisticated tone for the league's entertainment programming.

Prison officials did not merely tolerate the inmate-organized entertainments; they seemed to actively support their endeavours. The Executive Committee report to the *Bulletin* in September 26, 1914 explains tat the entertainment committee was ordered to meet with the warden to discuss whether the entertainments that they were in the midst of preparing could be given one night to the officers and their friends, and one evening to the "business men's'" and fraternal organizations of Auburn.[85] While it is not clear if the officers or the guests from business and fraternal organizations were going to pay for admission, the warden was actively securing audiences for inmate productions. Having a show for the officials and their friends also changed the dynamic in the prison between the officials and the inmates. The inmates were now event co-ordinators and entertainers, not just inmates. This dynamic shift began in when inmates and officials collaborated on events in the early 1900s, but now the inmates were in charge. This was not the first time that the Mutual Welfare League had put on entertainment for the officials and guards. The Mutual Welfare League did this early on in their existence. The Auburn MWL organized an evening of entertainment for the officers and employees of the institution in March 1914. Auburn 32,915 explained that putting on a three-hour program for the prison workers was a way for the League to show their appreciation for the workers' co-operation with the league. He argued that everyone coming together for the show demonstrated that men come together "almost unconsciously"[86] for mutual welfare and for mutual enjoyment.

With the money that they collected and the material donations that they received, the Mutual Welfare League was able to secure equipment for more regular "phonographic concerts" and film screenings. Phonographic concerts and films had been part of the entertainment programs in New York prisons starting from 1906.[87] The local Clinton editor in 1913 explained that the prison now held these concerts every Sunday afternoon. That Clinton prison had weekly phonographic concerts and bi-monthly prison band concerts even before the 1914 reforms suggests that at least one person with power at Clinton prison was committed to making music part of prison life. Describing the phonographic concert in 1913, the *Star of Hope* writer claimed that the officers enjoy the music as much as the inmates. Indeed, prison officials were quite involved in planning phonographic events. A concert review from 1906 indicates that the event was held in the chapel on a Sunday. The prison librarian manipulated the machine and played

twenty-eight records, which amounted to an hour and a half worth of music.[88] The reviews always include thanks to either the warden or to the Principal Keeper for allowing the concerts to take place, with one reviewers writing "Many thanks, warden. That phonograph entertainment on Sunday the 21st was a peach."[89] The articles do not specify how they came to possess the records. The concert reviews from 1914 and 1915 provide more of these details, though they may only reflect how the phonographic concerts were organized after prison reforms were instituted at Clinton. The 1914 and 1915 reviews indicate the that at times the prisoners were wholly responsible for choosing and supplying the records, while at other times the selection was a collaboration between inmates and prison officials. The concert in January 1915, for example, included private records from the warden's residence and a selection of records that prisoner numbers 8268 and 11345 loaned for the occasion. It is not clear how the inmates records came to be in the prison, however. The selections for this concert were "grand and light opera records."[90] The February 1915 concert highlighted operatic music, but the musical selections were not always so highbrow. While describing the inmates' enthusiasm for the music, the writer, Clinton number 9,772 is careful to mention that the audience was attentive and well-behaved.[91]

At Clinton, the phonographic concerts were often given twice, once to the regular inmates and once to the patients in the Tuberculosis and receiving wards. Having concerts both in the chapel and in the hospitals was something that Clinton had been doing since before the reforms, again indicating that Clinton was committed to providing music to the inmates. At Sing Sing, phonograph concerts were one of the few entertainments in which those awaiting execution were allowed to take part. An article about music in the *Star of Hope* in April 1915 explains that they are still in possession of a diamond disc phonograph that the Edison Company had loaned to the prison, though the date for its return had long passed. While they still had the machine, the writer explains, concerts were given almost nightly in the Death House "and thus a little pleasure is brought into the lives of these men who are experiencing the acme of human woe."[92] Auburn prison did not hold phonographic concerts with as much regularity as Clinton or Sing Sing. An Auburn inmate writing in the *Star of Hope* covered the summer activities for the paper. In his column he reports that the Auburnites enjoyed an open-air victrola concert in July. Chaplain Herrick later that month brought in a phonograph and told the inmates that they could have music from it at any time, explaining that they just have to wind it up.[93]

While phonographs were often given central billing through the phonograph concerts, music from the phonographs was often used to accompany films. The phonographic accompaniment to film was a source of wonder at Great Meadow prison when the two technologies combined as part of celebrations for Washington's Birthday in 1914. In this instance, the phonograph was playing a record that had been specially designed for the film, and included both music and dialogue. The writer marvels at how the words were uttered just as the mouths of the people in the pictures were forming them and that the two machines were perfectly synchronized, leaving the inmates "amazed by their mechanical perfection."[94] Prior to using the phonograph to accompany film, inmate musicians or guest entertainers generated music to go along with the action on screen.

The prison reforms coincided with the prisons acquiring their own moving picture machines. The reforms and the increased time allotted for leisure meant that watching film became an integral part of prison life. By 1913, all of the prisons in the New York system had their own projectors. It appears that the warden at Clinton prison had bought a new moving picture machine for the prison and hoped to showcase the prison's new technology at the Thanksgiving celebrations in 1913. The Clinton local editor, writing about Thanksgiving for the *Star of Hope* said that the plan had to be abandoned and that the inmates had a quiet day instead of enjoying a day of moving pictures.[95] The inmates were finally able to debut their new machine at the Christmas entertainment. Before the films commenced, a portrait of the prison superintendent John B. Reilly was projected on the screen. Clinton local editor, number 9,772 claimed that when his image appeared, loud applause resounded through the chapel, "demonstrating the warm esteem in which he is held by the inmates at the institution."[96] Though 9,772 does not mention it, the likely reason for the enthusiastic response to Reilly's image was because he had just recently approved the creation of the Mutual Welfare League, which was going to give inmates unprecedented powers in prison administration. The warden's image also appeared on screen and met with an equally vigorous response. The prisoners were also no doubt excited that the prison now had its very own machine, which held the promise of more regular film screenings. 9,772 provided a lengthy plot synopses of the films that were screened. He also emphasized the technical skill that Mr. Norman I. Burdick, the correspondence clerk, and his assistants, numbers 8,468 and 10,391, demonstrated in managing the movies. Great Meadow too, hoped to showcase their new moving picture machine for the Thanksgiving entertainment, but

like Clinton, had to wait until December to inaugurate their new purchase. Great Meadow local editor explained that Warden Homer had secured the $195 machine and had placed an order for five films a week. This meant that Great Meadow inmates were assured a weekly film performance. He suspected that the wait for their machine's first run would lead to disappointment when the event finally took place. He wrote that

> in most instances, anticipation is sweeter than realization, but in this particular instance, the rule was proved by the exception. To begin with, every person in the happy audience seemed to wear that sort of an air that one seems to associate with a group of stockholders who are assembled for the purpose of getting their slice of a nice big melon that is about to be cut. [97]

Like Clinton 9,772, the Great Meadow editor highlights the inmates' technical skill in operating the machine. He claims that they avoided all possible mishaps. Though mechanical mishaps were never mentioned in the *Star of Hope*, the fact that inmate writers routinely mentioned the lack of such mishaps serves to emphasize the inmates' skill and professionalism. The movie operators in prison were frequently favourably compared to operators in the best movie houses on the outside. Despite the fact that the Great Meadow editor's article was about the "long-heralded and eagerly expected"[98] movie show with their own machine, he writes that the most exciting part of the show was not a slick, professional moving picture, but a slide show of images created by and about the inmates themselves. Calling the slide show the "most interesting event of the whole evening," he reports that every slide shown "convulsed the audience with roars of laughter." Local artists, prisoner numbers 1,040 and 841caricatured Great Meadow's local celebrities, the prisons' 'poltish' fraternity (a Yiddish word for political) and blue-uniformed men as well. Allowing light-hearted jabs at authority figures, whether they be members of the prisoner government or the guards, speaks to a change in the prison culture that encouraged more congenial relationships between inmates and prison staff.

Prisoners 1,040 and 841's artwork became a regular feature at the motion picture shows. Even when in December 1915 heralded the films the screened as being the highest quality they had seen, it was the cartoon that 1,629 cartoon that brought the inmates the most joy. The cartoonists at Great Meadow continued to produce cartoons based on prison life. A cartoon screened at their prison in 1915 entitled "What the Public *Thinks* We Are" showed a man in prison stripes who looked hard and threatening. The next image, captioned "As We Really Are"

which showed an ordinary man with the goal of liberty and the star of hope ahead of him. The cartoonist also depicted the difference between the prison "as it used to be," showing grey clad zebras marching in lock-step, with the prison "as it is now" which showed the prison band marching to a baseball game with the cell black in the background. The final images in the series were of Warden Homer, Thomas Mott Osborne, and Superintendent Riley. The Great Meadow editor claimed that "we have never heard such cheering as accompanied the showing of the pictures of these officials, and that which succeeded Mr. Reilly's only ceased when he rose from his chair and acknowledged it by bowings."[99] The Great Meadow inmates' cartoons were such a hit at their own prison that they were circulated at the other prisons in the system. [100]

Like the inmates at Great Meadow, the prisoners at Clinton had other uses for their moving picture machine than simply screening films. For their Fourth of July entertainment, the Clinton entertainment committee planned to show films, but they had also planned to show coloured slides to illustrate the hit songs of the day. The reel that they needed for the event "That's a Real Moving Picture From Life" did not arrive in time. While the inmates were disappointed they did see ten reels of film as part of their entertainment. Films were taking up more time in the entertainment programs. Mr. Burdick was again thanked, as were his two inmate assistants, numbers 7,653 and 9,151.[101]

Auburn got its own projector in April 1914. 32, 915, who often urged inmates to make use of all the time they had and read, saw in movies an opportunity to promote his cause. He wrote in the *Star of Hope* reading the books on which some of the films were based would make for a more enjoyable viewing experience. He announced that the prison would be screening *The Odyssey*, which was billed as one of the most expensive of all movies, Dante's *Inferno,* and Dickens' *Oliver Twist.* 32,915 explains that all of those books are in the library and available in many languages.[102]

The entertainment sections in the *Star of Hope* expanded in 1914 to accommodate the expanded entertainment programs in the prisons. The entertainment editor in *the Star* explained that every Sunday they had entertainment programs that featured performances by the prison orchestra, the glee club, the guitar and mandolin club, and, finally, motion pictures.[103] The films ranged in genre and subject matter. Most of the films were narrative fiction films, though they did screen the occasional newsreel. At Auburn in 1914, for example, the inmates saw a moving picture that showed the movement of troops massing in front of La Have Saint. The inmates at

Sing Sing continued to see motion pictures as part of variety shows brought to the prison. On Decoration Day, in May 1914, Sing Sing prisoners saw moving picture reels after seeing the Sing Sing band and nine cabaret entertainers from the Bronx. In September, Sing Sing local editor, number 57,355, wrote an article called "Will You Help?" in which he explained that the Golden Rule Brotherhood would like to buy a motion picture machine and to hold entertainments in the chapel but does not have the funds to do so. The Brotherhood's chairman claimed that he would be able to borrow films but that the machine will run the organization between two hundred to two hundred and fifty dollars. 57,355 explains that the warden had approved the purchase and the screenings, but that no state money was available for the moving picture machine. The money required must come from contributions from the inmates and by their friends. The editor assured readers that the *Star* promises to acknowledge all of the contributions in the paper as soon as the money is received. If the Brotherhood did not secure enough funds to buy the machine, they promised to return all of the donations. The article ended with "let us own our own motion picture machine and have a perpetual means of enjoyment." Having the machine would mean that the inmates would have ready access to entertainment and would not have to make complicated arrangements in order to screen films in the prison.

Regular film screenings were a welcome addition to the prison routine, but they took second place to the outdoor activities and sporting events that were, by 1914, the most highly anticipated breaks from the prison routine. The day that Sing Sing finally inaugurated their own motion picture machine illustrates how movies were often used as a fall-back plan when outdoor activities were not possible. The Sing Sing local editor 57,355 describes how the inmates were feeling down on a Saturday afternoon because the bad weather was going to prevent them from exercising in the yard. Their spirits were lifted when they found out that they were going to have their first moving picture show with their own machine.[104] The Golden Rule Brotherhood had collected money for the machine, but they did not ultimately have to use the proceeds to pay for the equipment. A few weeks prior to this event, Mr. Cass and Mr. W. Frank Persons, of the Prison Association had visited the prison to learn more about the Golden Rule Brotherhood. During this visit they learned of the Brotherhood's fundraising campaign to secure a moving picture machine. They decided to help the Brotherhood in its endeavour and managed to convince Miss Ella H. Davidson of New York City to donate a machine and enough films to make possible weekly screenings for three months. The way that the Brotherhood had pitched

their need for a film machine had been to frame it as a way for prisoners to pass the time pleasantly when the weather was cold and inclement and play in the yard was impossible. Mr. Cass was present for the inaugural screening and the inmates gave him a hearty round of applause and a representative from the Brotherhood announced that their membership had unanimously elected Mr. Cass an honorary member. It was a particularly good day for the inmates at Sing Sing because after seeing seven film reels, the weather cleared up and they were able to go out into the yard.

It was not long before the Brotherhood got an upgraded machine. In February of 1915 the Strand Theatre of New York presented the Brotherhood with a $360 Simplex motion picture machine, the most up-to-date machine on the market. The *Star of Hope* thanks number 64311, the Chairman of the entertainment committee and his associates, numbers 62886 and 63778 for working night and day to secure the latest technology and the most current films for the prisoners.[105] Once they had their own machines, most of the prisons had weekly film screenings. This was the case in the cold months when the inmates were not able to have outdoor events. Writers in the *Star of Hope* often present film screenings as a consolation for the end of the baseball season.

Many of the films that they screened in the prisons across the system were donated. Film exhibition houses got involved with the Mutual Welfare League and shared their films with the prisons. Film studios also donated films to prisons in the system, including The Reel Film Studio, The World Film Company, and Pathé. The studios mostly sent fiction films, but Pathé also sent weekly newsreels.[106] In addition to donations from people in the film industry, prisoners themselves donated money for films. Former inmates often sent films for those still behind bars to enjoy. Beyond providing films to the prison, the film studios tried to engage the prisoners in film in other ways. The studios often provided magazines to go along with their films, thereby encouraging a broader film culture to emerge in prison.[107] Film studios started to run contests in the prison, giving cash prizes to the inmate who came up with the winning title for a film. In February 1915 an unnamed film company offered fifty dollars for naming a film. The following year, a member of the Mutual Welfare League in 1916 won a ten-dollar prize for suggesting the title “Follies of Desire” for one of the unnamed films.[108]

While most of the films that the inmates watched behind bars were comedies or dramas, prison administrators sometimes used the machines during work hours to screen instructional

films. On January 4th, 1914, the inmates were actually called out of their workshops to go to the chapel to watch a film. Presented in a fictionalized way, *The Workman's Lesson* instructed the audience on the use and necessity of safety devices for modern machine shops to protect the workmen.[109] The story features an old experienced worker who mocks new work methods that account for worker safety. This worker tells a young, foreign worker that there is no need to use the safety features on the equipment that they are using. Following the old workers' advice leads the young man to badly injure his arm when it is caught in the machine. The film that followed was the workplace safety classic *The Crime of Carelessness,* about the dangers of smoking in factories, blocking fire escapes and neglecting to properly dispose of flammable garbage. The final screening was a recruitment film made by the Steel Corporation. The film features a young Polish immigrant who becomes an American by working for the company.

Film's prominent place in prisons meant that inmates came to see working in the film industry as post-release career option. Some inmates had been in the film industry before the came to the prison. One such inmate at Sing Sing had been a theatre owner before he entering prison. He became the resident expert on the industry and provided advice in the *Star of Hope* in 1913 for people thinking about staring up a theatre business when they leave prison. A number of prisoners were gaining hands-on skills in running the machines for the prison screenings. By 1916 the editor of the *Star-Bulletin* reported that there were several inmates who had already made progress in their film industry careers. According to him, a member of the Mutual Welfare League had invented and sold three film machine patents while incarcerated, another inmate had sold ten patents and had more pending and was making a five figures besides royalties for his inventions. One inmate working on the creative side had made money selling ten short stories and two five-reel scenarios while in Sing Sing.[110] Writers in the *Star-Bulletin* were also working as film critics for the paper. Even the prisoners who were not regular writers for the *Star of Hope* tried their hand at film criticism and introduced a new regular column called "At the Movies." The Harrisburg Pennsylvania *Courier* in 1919 included a column about 300 Sing Sing inmates who sent their opinions about the film *Mickey*, with their names and prisoner numbers attached, to the film magazine *Motion Picture World. Motion Picture World* assembled the cards on which the reviews were written and published selected quotes from the prisoners' analyses. The *Courier* acknowledges that the prisoners were an "unusual type of motion picture audience," but

the article's overall message is that film in prisons is a source of joy in prisoners' lives. The article ends with a quote from 60,830's review, "After seeing 'Mickey' I forgot where I was."[111]

Starting in 1914, inmates at Sing Sing were even starting to appear in films. When Osborne became warden of Sing Sing, he allowed film crews into the prison to shoot feature films. Maurice Tourneur's *Alias Jimmy Valentine*, was shot in the Sing Sing and the prisoners served as extras for scenes in the yard and in the mess hall. The film was eventually screened at the prison and appeared in the "At the movies" column. The inmate reviewer applauded the film for the realism of the scenes set in prison, and noted that their comrades were easily identifiable.[112]

Prisoners at Sing Sing, Auburn, and Great Meadow got involved in film production when Katherine Russell Bleecker produced her seven-reel film on convict life in New York State. Bleecker had answered the call from the Joint Committee on Prison Reform for someone to make a picture that would become part of the campaign for improving prison conditions. She used actual inmates in her movie. Prisoners at Auburn who were willing to be filmed dressed in the old prison stripes and had their heads shaved to show prison life as it was before the reforms. A twenty-year old prisoner even agreed to take part in a flogging scene in which he was put in iron bracelets and hauled several inches from the floor and beaten with a leather strap. As the prison was turned into a film set, the prisoner-actors were able to interact with the director and the crew. The prisoner from the flogging scene was able to talk with Bleecker about how he came to prison (he claims that when he was drunk he grabbed someone else's bag, thinking it was his) and about the Mutual Welfare League. Bleecker proudly explains that she was made an honorary member of the league and that a murderer pinned the league button on her sweater. The prisoners were so supportive of Bleecker's project that they wanted to contribute to it financially. The League organized a minstrel show and charged admission. 1,200 people attended the event and the League raised $800 for Bleecker.

Bleecker wanted her film to expose the New York prison administrations' barbaric practices pre-reform and to give audience a sense of how prison reforms had made prison life more humane. Her film crew was there for the second annual "Tom Brown Day" festivities, which marked the anniversary of Thomas Mott Osborne's incarceration at Auburn and the changes that this visit wrought. From Bleecker's description, it sounds like what had come to be a typical post-reform holiday program, complete with a parade, races, music, sport, and

recitations. The *New York Times* published details about food options available for the inmates to purchase that did not appear in the *Star of Hope*. The *Times* quotes Bleecker as saying that she had never "beheld so bewildering a display of comestibles."[113] Among the notable food items on offer were lobster salad and lemon pie. At Great Meadow, Bleecker filmed the prisoners farming, building roads and working on a conservation plot, and playing their weekly ball game.

Bleecker had been heartened by the changes at Auburn prison, but did not feel the same sense of uplift when she went to Sing Sing. According to Bleecker, the men were less enthusiastic about getting involved in her film. Fewer men were willing to pose for photographs and they only grudgingly heeded a call for volunteers to help doing the physical work of carrying film paraphernalia. She does not elaborate on how she came to her conclusion, but Bleecker claims that discipline at Sing Sing is not maintained as it is in Auburn. She suggests that the 3x3x7 foot cells are responsible for the overall gloomy atmosphere and spirit at the prison. She describes that this gloomy feeling transferred to her and that she "was most dejected all the time I was there."[114]

Overall, the inmates were pleased to have the opportunity to watch films and take part in a film culture that connected them to the world outside the prison, but there were inmates who threatened the film program's continuation with their unruly behaviour during the screenings. As with the rowdyism that put prison baseball in jeopardy, prisoners behaving badly in the chapel revealed just how precarious the new programs were. The Mutual Welfare League itself, as well as the sport and entertainment programs that fell under the League's purview, were contingent upon the inmates' good behaviour. Any hoot or grunt was cause for concern. The Mutual Welfare League *Bulletin* routinely included reminders to inmates to behave appropriately at the prison entertainments, stressing that their failure to behave could lead to prison officials reverting to the way they used to run the institution, and leave the inmates without the regular entertainments that the Mutual Welfare League had worked so hard to establish and sustain.

The polite requests for good behaviour at events appeared in the *Bulletin* early on in the Mutual Welfare League's ascendance in the prison. The *Bulletin* was first issued in April, 1914 and the first notice about inmate behaviour was printed in its second edition in May 1914. These notices reveal that the entertainment programs, lauded in the *Star of Hope* as being professional and incident-free, did not always run smoothly. The May 16th, 1914 *Bulletin* requests that men "refrain from groaning" when the film breaks, explaining that neither the machine nor its

operator is to blame. In the same notice, the writer asks members of the league to refrain from "giving voice to loud comments when certain pictures are shown."[115] Unfortunately, the writer does not specify which films inspired the loud comments. In an effort to not come across as a killjoy, the writer urges the inmates to "laugh as much as you want, the more the merrier, as a good laugh is a sure cure for our troubles."[116] The final section of his notice, however, asserts that the Mutual Welfare League insists that the inmates follow the same rules of decorum at the League events that they do at the ones that the prison officials oversee.

This statement makes it clear to the prisoners that though the Mutual Welfare League is composed of inmates and acts in their interests, league officials also have authority over them. The writer points to some inmates having made a habit of leaving in the middle of entertainment programs, behaviour which would not be acceptable during the Sunday services overseen by prison officials. This indicates that some of the inmates did not perceive the Mutual Welfare League as having the right or the power to control their behaviour. Through the *Bulletin,* the League continued to nudge the inmates to behave politely in the chapel. Later that month, *the Bulletin* announced that the League was taking steps to make refresh the chapel, first painting the walls and then the benches. They asked that the inmates not put their feet against the back of the benches so that their work to make the chapel a more pleasant place is not in vain.[117]

League notices regarding behaviour in the early months were polite and gentle, but became decidedly sharper as the months went by. In response to the inmates continued groaning when films broke, the *Bulletin* writer in June 1914 first assured the prisoners that they would soon be receiving a moving picture machine in good working order, then insisted that the recalcitrant inmates "cut out the chirping and improper remarks."[118] By the September issue of *the Bulletin*, League officials were clearly exasperated with several prisoners who persisted in disrupting their events. The warnings in the notices started to include warnings in capital letters and with threats attached. The writer explains that there is a rule in force that inmates may not leave the chapel during Sunday services, and that "THIS RULE WILL BE PUT IN FORCE" in the afternoon. In the same notice, the writer bemoans the fact that quite a number of men are spitting on the floor.[119] He tries to appeal to the spitters as gentlemen and asks them to refrain from chewing tobacco during the Sunday entertainments in the chapel. He says that if the behaviour does not stop, that it will be necessary to appoint a committee to examine the floor before the men leave the chapel and "REPORT all cases to the grievance committees and the men doing the spitting

may have a chance to REMAIN in their rooms."[120] The writer explains that this would only be a last resort approach and that he would prefer that the men stop their behaviour out gentlemanly duty, but suspects that the appeal to gentlemanly duty might not be effective in some cases.

In November, the writer tries a different tack, this time emphasizing the link between inmate behaviour and their public perception. The notice encourages the men to march to and from the yard in an orderly manner, rather than the "careless and slipshod"[121] manner in which they currently get from place to place. He again tries to appeal to their pride as men and that they should strive to make as good an appearance as possible at all times. He reminds the inmates that it is important to make a good impression on the many visitors who come through the prison. A notice in the following *Bulletin* stresses that the League's success is dependant on the "interested co-operation of the superintendent of prisons, our warden and our 'Tom Brown' and the many friends whom he interested in our behalf." He concludes that the prisoners need to get along with "the least possible friction"[122] and to live up to the league's "do good, make good" motto, to show their appreciation to those who have helped them.

Even the *Star of Hope,* which tended to not publish any criticisms of prisoners, included some short pieces that admonished prisoners for their bad behaviour at recreational events. At the end of the editor's review of films and the "coloured quartet", who he describes as being dressed as concert-hall waiters, the piano players, and the comedians, who were part of the July 4th entertainment at Clinton, he mentions that the men behaved themselves very well. He said that their good behaviour "speaks volumes in their favour." He went on to explain that "good things will follow as soon as we show our appreciation and trustworthiness, but there's always a 'wise guy' in the bunch who knocks. Be a booster – there's more in it for us all."[123] That writers in the *Star of Hope* would acknowledge prisoners' misbehaviour knowing that people on the outside were reading the paper, speaks to the inmates' sense that the small pleasures that they could now enjoy were dependent on the officials' whims and that upsetting the prison staff could easily lead to reversing the newly implemented reforms.

The Mutual Welfare League saw entertainment as an important propaganda tool and used some of the funds that they raised to keep the prison officials onside. The leagues usually put the money that they earned through their entertainment programs to fund the leagues themselves, but they frequently used their funds to offer assistance to prison officials and their families. In September 1914, a Sing Sing inmate escaped. The Golden Rule Brotherhood contributed money

for a reward for the escaped convict's capture.[124] This was, no doubt, strategic, as the relatively newly-formed Golden Rule Brotherhood did not want to be blamed for security lapses, which would likely have led to the organization being forced to disband and having their powers retracted. In line this type of strategic charity, the Mutual Welfare League in 1916 created a fund they called "The Guard's Widow Fund," the proceeds of which would go to the wife and children of a guard who died 'in the discharge of his duty' at the Prison. There was also a fund for a guard who killed himself in the woods near Clinton.[125]

The Sing Sing and the Auburn Mutual Welfare League extended their charitable reach beyond the prison. In 1915 the prisoners decided to do their bit for the war effort. They formed a knitting group, called the Tom Brown Knitting Society, and met every night after their work day to knit socks, mittens, mufflers and other accessories, which they sent to what they called "unwilling victims of war" or non-combatants living in a war zone.[126] It was Thomas Mott Osborne who proposed the idea of knitting class to the Mutual Welfare League after visiting with master pianist Ernest Schelling and his wife at their home. After dinner Mrs. Schelling sat down to knit for Polish war victims. At Osborne's request, Schelling taught him to knit. Realizing that the skill was fairly easy to pick up, that it was a productive way to pass the time, and that the activity had a calming quality, Osborne thought that knitting might a perfect pastime for prisoners. He invited Mrs. Schelling to give a knitting lesson to the inmates at Sing Sing, and the prisoners came in droves. Auburn had sixty regular knitters and Sing Sing had 235 enrolled in the club. Sing Sing's knitting circle had an average daily attendance of 150 men.[127] There were so many men wanting to join the class that there was a waiting list for membership because the class did not have enough needles or yarn to provide all of the willing knitters. In a letter to the editor in *the New York Times*, suffragette and supporter of prison reform Paula Jakobi wrote about the knitting class' popularity among prisoners. She claimed that the men in the class prefer knitting to watching movies. While she supports the new initiative, Jakobi bemoans the fact that women in prison do not have the same variety of activities from which to choose, saying that in women's prisons "a choice of diversion is unheard of."[128]

The knitting society was in full force when Katherine Bleecker came to Auburn prison to get footage for her film. In the feature on Bleecker and her film, the *New York Times* quotes her as saying that the prisoners "really do very good work, but to one seeing for the first time those big men sitting around knitting in their spare time it comes as rather a shock." After seeing them

knitting in their group, she got to see all of the woollen goods that they had produced at the festivities for the Tom Brown Day celebrations. The knitting society decorated a float for the parade with some of the gloves and stockings that they had knit for those suffering through wartime conditions. Each branch of the Tom Brown Knitting Society had a president, a secretary, a stock clerk, knitting and crochet instructors (inmates who had proven themselves expert knitters and crocheters), yarn winders and, finally, the members who did the knitting and the crocheting.

The American Polish Relief Committee provided the yarn and Mrs. Schelling, who became the class's co-director along with Thomas Mott Osborne, provided the needles.[129] To try to secure other direct donations of wool, the Tom Brown Knitting classes at Auburn and Sing Sing produced thousands of business cards, which the were distributed to people and organizations who visited the prison. They also produced buttons advertising the class, hoping that visitors would wear them outside the prison to bring attention to the society. Between June 1st and July 1st 1915 the Sing Sing prisoners delivered 343 finished pieces to the American Polish Relief Committee, and produced fifty-three items for exhibition in the classrooms. Their output that month had been lower than in past months because they were preparing materials for the San Francisco Fair.[130] In his letter to Mrs. Schelling, Sing Sing's Tom Brown Knitting Class president Isadore Blum explains that the Tom Brown Knitting Class' presence at the fair has generated great public interest, noting that "the wheels of progress in our individual efforts are working out finely."[131]

The knitting club provided quite a bit of publicity for the Mutual Welfare League and prison reform more generally. The image of male prisoners knitting was hard for newspapers to resist. Articles about the knitting classes in New York prisons appeared in newspapers across the country. Most of the articles feature a large photograph of the inmates knitting and focus on how the knitting class is part of broad ranging prison reforms. The articles explain Thomas Osborne's humane approach to reforming prisoners and how the prisoners in New York have been given more liberties, which include the power to democratically govern and guard themselves. In the full-page article that appeared in Kansas' *Winfield Daily Free Press*, the article entitled "Sing Sing Prisoners Knitting Socks for Soldiers,"[132] the article was devoted almost entirely to prison reform and only includes one sentence on their knitting project.

The knitting class showed the prisoners to be generous and good members of society, using their time to better the world, thereby running counter to the general presentation of the prisoner as society's scourge. The fact that the inmates were trusted with knitting needles, which could easily act as deadly weapons, and that the knitting class took place with only their fellow prisoners as their guards reinforced the league's message that the prisoners were worthy of trust. Katherine Bleecker found that many of the prisoners were eager to help her with her documentary film production, but that they were reluctant to be filmed or photographed in their regular prison routine. The men in the knitting society, in contrast, were willing to have journalists take their pictures, knowing that their image would be published and that they would be identified as prisoners. The journalist writing about the knitting class for the *Wichita Daily Eagle* explained that the prisoners were given the opportunity to leave the room if they did not want to be photographed but that only a handful of men actually did hide from the camera.[133] They wanted to be associated with the positive feelings that the public had toward wartime knitting. Knitting generally is associated with goodness and moral purity. So for hardened criminals to be shown knitting softened their image and linked them to philanthropy, wholesomeness, usefulness, and comfort.

In enrolling in these classes, the men in New York prison were joining a long established American tradition of organized wartime knitting. Historian Susan M. Strawn in her article "American Women and Wartime Hand Knitting" explains that when America is at war, that knitting suddenly appears in newspapers and magazine articles, advertisements, photographs, pattern books, personal diaries, and even popular songs.[134] Strawn argues that American women used knitting to establish a wartime role for themselves. During the Civil War, women in the North and the South knit gloves for soldiers. The knitters were praised for their work and the *New York Times* promised women that their efforts would no go unrecognized, declaring "great will be your reward" to the women knitters. The men knitting in Sing Sing and Auburn likely believed that their own reward for their wartime knitting would be equally significant. Knitting provided a way for the prisoners to repair their tarnished reputations while doing their part for the war. In making scarves and socks for overseas victims of conflict, the prisoners were part of a long American huge domestic knitting campaign for World War one. The American Red Cross was one of the major organizers and distributors for the knitting program, which benefitted soldiers and civilians in Europe. Among those knitting for the Red Cross were 11 million young

people who were part of the junior Red Cross, 5,000 American Indian adults and 30,000 Indian students.[135] Beyond the Red Cross-organized knitting, public school girls in Washington knit blankets for soldiers, members of the African-American women's organization in Seattle knit for African American soldiers and female students and faculty wives at the University of Washington knit every day for war relief. The YMCA in New York City also taught knitting to army and navy wives so that they could earn money through their knitting. Suffragettes across the United States too started knitting. The Navy League Comforts Committee sponsored a three day knit in Manhattan's Central Park mall, charging each contestant a fifty cent entry fee, which would be used to fund yard for needy knitters.[136] Anne L. MacDonald, in *No Idle Hands: The Social History of American Knitting* explains that shut-ins who couldn't attend the knitting festival in the park competed for their own special prize.[137] Knitting also featured prominently in a parade when President Wilson marched down Fifth Avenue with Red Cross workers. Knitters in the procession walked behind the president beating drums with knitting needles and holding up large poles that showcased the socks that they knit for the soldiers overseas.[138]

Photographs of wartime knitters regularly appeared in national newspapers. When they had the chance, New York prisoners were keen to get in on the action.[139] Like women in wartime, men in prison were not able to join in active duty. They were limited to contributing to the war from the domain in which they were confined. Women thus did their bit from the home, while the inmates did what they could from behind bars. In this way, knitting offered both women and inmates a way to connect to the world outside of their restricted domains and to take part in a larger co-ordinated war effort.[140] The inmates likely felt a sense of kinship with the Polish war victims as both groups were living in harsh conditions. The inmates could appreciate what it would mean for someone in such circumstances to have someone knit a cosy garment for them.

In addition to being an excellent marketing tool for the prisoner leagues, the men in prison were learning a valuable skill, which Blum argues would, and indeed already had, served the men well after their release from prison. Having learned the "genteel art of knitting" some discharged prisoners had contacted Blum to tell him that they were now making "pretty garments for their wives, children and immediate relatives." Blum declares that this is

> proof that our Wardens [sic] new system, of which the Knitting Class is one of its main features is making great progress among our members for it is teaching

> them the value of spending their spare hours in making some useful articles, and will tus [sic] kep [sic] them out of trouble.

Blum explained that one of the men knitting in Sing Sing was totally blind and leaned to knit using his sense of touch and has become an expert knitter.[141]

The knitting society earned the prisoners positive press coverage across the country but improving prisoners' public image was not the knitters' only motivator. As Thomas Mott Osborne learned when he tried knitting at the Schelling's, the repetitive activity had a meditative quality. Joanne Turney, in her book *The Culture of Knitting*, argues that knitting can be understood as "'homely', as a comforting series of objects and activities that emit a sense of calm, safety and security."[142] Given that prisoners would rarely have experienced a sense of calm, safety or security while incarcerated, it is no surprise that the knitting classes were so popular. In her inquiry into knitting, Turney came across a scientific study of knitting's physiological effects, which credited the repetitive sound that knitting creates with mediating the heart rate with inducing a sense of calm and with creating a semi-hypnotized state that encourages contemplation. Other subjects did not use the space for contemplation but rather as a way to escape their thoughts. Whether using knitting to reflect or to check out, the test subjects reported that engrossing themselves in knitting during times of stress significantly reduced their anxiety levels. The combination of rhythm and concentration that knitting involved would have given the inmates a chance to channel their minds to something other than their loneliness and despair.

The action of knitting itself is calming, but so too are its associations with the home and the familial. Knitted garments provide warmth and comfort, both of which were lacking in prison life. Having a psychological and sensory experience of comfort would have been a welcome respite from the anxiety that prisoners often wrote about in the *Star of Hope*. A central theme in many prison narratives, which can be seen in the *Star of Hope* and in prison memoirs, is the idea of marking time. Cartoons in the prison paper often feature cells with lines measuring how much of their sentence the prisoner has served carved into the walls. Knitting offered the inmates another tangible and measurable way to mark their time in prison. Also, knitted objects maintain the identity of the person who knit the object. Prisoners were then marking time, while also leaving their mark through the knitted object. There is a sense in which the scarf or the mittens that the inmates were stitching for Polish war victims were also a way for the prisoners to be

remembered in a positive light. Their labour knitting was also markedly different from the industrial production that inmates did during their work hours. Prison labour in the workshops (including the knitting workshop) was part of a capitalist enterprise in which their labour was exploited. Their knitting for war victims is outside of this system. They are thus granted agency in choosing to labour for their own purposes and for a personal, rather than an industrial goal. The knitting class's social setting also make it less like work and more of a collective project. All of these factors led the inmate knitters to feel a sense of pride in what they were creating as well as the purpose that their creations served when they left the prison.

Conclusion

When the prison administrators decided to allow some entertainment in the prison in the early 1900s, they were, at the same time, introducing changes in the way that the prisoners, prisoner officials, and prison administrators related to one another. The entertainment programs were infrequent at first, but they served to turn the inmates and the prison staff into event co-ordinators, performers, stage crew, and audiences. The vaudeville shows and film screenings temporarily transformed the prison from places of punishment and suffering into entertainment venues and thereby changed the atmosphere for all who spend time behind prison walls. Entertainment was also a gateway for integrating the local community with the world of the prison, something that later expanded when the prison hosted baseball games. When Thomas Mott Osborne proposed re-organizing prison and having the prisoners take on more responsibility in prison operations, the prison administrators did not agree to this proposal blindly. They had positive experiences of prisoners working with the prison staff and putting on complicated productions and so trusted that this could translate to other domains. The prisoners took control of the entertainment programming in 1914 and used the entertainment program to generate support for the reforms that were taking place at the prison. The attention that the prisoners received through their entertainment, and later through their knitting, meant that they could spread the word about their cause. When Lewis Lawes became the warden at Sing Sing, he kept the entertainment programming but removed the inmates' capacity to use the events to promote prisoner-self government. The programming lost its political dimension for the prisoners and the entertainment became instead a tool for the prison administrators. The

entertainment programs did, however, continue to improve the quality of life for all of the prisoners; improvements which are still part of prisoners' lives today.

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Chapter Three: Masculinity, Sport, and Physical Culture

In prisons in New York state at the turn of the century male prisoners' bodies were scrutinized and analysed at the same time as they were neglected and maltreated. By the early twentieth century, the body had become a locus for ideas about modernity. The so-called "physical culture" movement that emerged in this period and which swiftly became an American obsession, drew from social Darwinism and eugenics. Along with this thinking, the strong and fit body was linked to efficiency and success as well as moral purity, while the weak body was blamed for weakening the national character and leading to overall moral decline. It is no surprise, then, that prisoners' bodies would be a source of fascination for those seeking to understand the physical dimension of deviance and for those dedicated to reforming the deviant. In the first decade of the 1900s, prisoners were able to keep abreast of the latest physical culture exercise regimes through articles in the *Star of Hope,* though they had little opportunity to apply these systems. Many of the reforms in the decade that followed centred on developing the prisoners' bodies in order to mould them into productive citizens. These reforms also coincided with the rise of professional sports and baseball's particularly rapid ascension. The prisoners engaged in debate about baseball in the 1900s, and by 1913, they formed prison leagues and played against professional, corporate, and local teams several times a week. In print and on the field, the men in prison were able to assert their masculinity despite being physically and psychically confined in a system that largely sought to deny it. More than any other activities at the prison, the games that the prison sports teams played brought attention to prisoner self-government and prison reform.

The physical culture movement and the sports movement, which emerged in urban areas in the North Eastern United States, were meant to be antidotes to the de-masculinizing effects of modern life. As American life became more urbanized and industrialized, people across professional, political, and popular circles came to perceive the physical body as being in crisis. Medical doctors began to diagnose increasing numbers of patients with what Dr. George M. Beard, a prominent nineteenth century physician, termed "neurasthenia," a disease caused by depleted energy. The disease came to be known as the "American disease" and afflicted urban, middle class men in particular. According to Beard, modern city life and bourgeois lifestyles

were leading men to suffer from fatigue, headaches, impotence, and to have weakened, feminized bodies. Sports and a strict regime of physical culture were cited as ways to both treat and prevent their neurasthenic decay.[1] By the end of the century, America had moved into the Progressive Era, and physical fitness was a central component in the reformist movements that shaped the era. The nation's fitness came to be connected to Americans themselves being physically fit. Physical culture, with its emphasis on quantitative analysis and technical mastery, married well with progressive ideas about change through organized systems. Creating and preserving a new political and social order in the face of the dramatic economic, political, and social changes wrought in the nineteenth century required creating new experts across a wide range of fields to teach people how to navigate the modern era. Early into the Progressive Era, experts and professionals emerged to train men on physical culture regimes.[2] Courses on the subject began to be taught to children in elementary and secondary schools. Magazines like *Physical Culture,* started by renowned physical culture guru Bernarr McFadden in 1899, proliferated in this era. These publications provided men with guides on how to get and maintain their bodies in top physical shape. Images of strong, virile men pervaded the culture, as adventurous and fit men in the wilderness regularly appeared in popular literature and film. Boxers and strongmen became physical culture idols and acted as spokesmen for the movement.

One of the greatest champions for the physical culture movement was Theodore Roosevelt. He embodied physical culture ideals and became a potent symbol for how men could transform themselves through their bodies. Roosevelt's identity was bound to his physicality. As a child he was a sickly asthmatic and as a young adult he was diagnosed with a heart condition. Doctors told him that he would not be able to handle work that was too strenuous or demanding. Roosevelt interpreted these diagnoses as something of a challenge and worked to prove his doctors wrong. He took up boxing as a young teen and after graduating from Harvard he took up multiple sports, including rowing, tennis, and polo. Far from accepting a quiet life, he campaigned and won the governorship of New York state in 1899. When he became governor of New York, he famously boxed with sparring partners several times a week. When a boxing bout left him blind in one eye, he began to practice jujutsu and continued to skinny dip in the Potomac River in the winter. With his commitment to physical development, Roosevelt served as a model for all American men.[3] While governor, he made his famous "the Strenuous Life" speech, in which he makes a clear connection between individual Americans' physical strength and the

strength of the nation. He urges American men to fulfil their patriotic duty by becoming strong and fit, saying

> I preach to you, then, my countrymen, that our country calls not for the life of ease but for the life of strenuous endeavour. The twentieth century looms before us being with the fate of many nations. If we stand idly by, if we seek merely swollen, slothful ease and ignoble peace, if we shrink from the hard contests where men must win at hazard of their lives and risk all they hold dear, then the bolder and stronger people will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world.[4]

For men living and working in urban, industrial and corporate environments, recreational and professional athletic associations offered them a way to counteract the feminizing effects of modern life. Prior to the civil war, 88% of American men were farmers or self-employed businessmen. With the rural to urban shift, men who were previously independent were now placed in hierarchical corporate structures that limited their autonomy. Gaylyn Studlar points out that by the 1870s middle-class, white-collar work was equated with imprisonment in a corporate bureaucracy.[5] Working-class men's work environments were just as stifling, though they were much harsher than those of office workers. Growing numbers of men, working- and middle-class alike, began to turn to sport to escape their perceived work-life prisons and created a modern self through sport.[6] Physical culture tended to concentrate on individual development, while sports encouraged men to bond with one another through physical activity. That sporting events were held outdoors in fields allowed men to feel liberated from their confinement in offices, factories, and crowded city neighbourhoods. As the future of the nation was thought to be at stake, there was an increasing effort to engage young boys in manly pursuits. Organizations like the Boy Scouts and the YMCA taught boys wilderness skills, (though they would not be particularly useful in an urban setting), and self-reliance. They organized regular physical games and activities for boys to train them to become men.[7]

The late nineteenth century informal sporting culture quickly transformed into organized and managed enterprises. This was the case with many sports, but baseball developed most quickly. Baseball was initially played by middle-class men in the American northeast, but by the end of the nineteenth century people across the country and across classes were playing the game. Amateur leagues sprang up and men formed teams from within their workplaces, from law firms to plumbers' cooperatives. In this period, baseball became professionalized and turned into

a massive industry. Several national professional leagues were established and millions of people attended the games. Newspapers began devoting pages to reporting and analysing baseball games. People across the country started collecting and trading baseball cards, which served to enhance the players' new status as national heroes.

While men were embracing physical culture and sport (or at least the idea of both) as ways to assert their masculinity in the face of a modern culture that threatened their manhood, progressive era experts began to see physical development as a way to increase productivity and efficiency. A prominent feature in progressive era discourse is the idea of "character" and "character building."[8] Physical discipline was thought to be indicative of strong personal character and was as important in character analysis as mental and moral health. Character development became closely associated with corporate management strategies at this time, just as physical culture was becoming an integral part of Taylorism and scientific management.[9] Katherine Blackford, a leading figure in the human resource management field in the early twentieth century encouraged companies to apply scientific research in their hiring policies. In what came to be known as the "Blackford Plan," she argued that applying the latest principles of phrenology and eugenics would enable companies to reduce their workforce by half, while maintaining the same productivity level.[10] The Blackford Plan, which incorporated many of the popular theories of the day, became standard business practice in companies across the country. Her advice was, however, not solely meant to benefit companies. Blackford pitched her plan as being equally beneficial for individuals seeking to meet their full potential personally and professionally. According to Blackford, individuals could transform themselves into "thriving, enterprising selves."[11] Self-assessment and self-knowledge was the first step in her program. Her four pillars of success (honesty, courage, prudence, and physical fitness) required hard labour and physical effort. Blackford recommended that this labour and effort be combined with regeneration to ensure that the experience be pleasurable and generate satisfaction. The fullest sense of satisfaction, Blackford claims, would be reached when an individual finds "self-expression in useful work."[12] She was linking physicality with pleasure, but this pleasure had to be connected to productivity. Connecting pleasure and productivity was a particularly American approach to physical culture. American physical culture experts warned that attention to sport and exercise should not become an end in itself, lest it become a time waster and a frivolous pastime. Blackford thought that such negative potential outcomes would be avoided as long as

people engaged with sport and physical culture in a proper manner. According to her, the best and most important way to train mind and body was through sport, which, she argues, test, trains, and shapes creative energy.[13]

As much as the American preoccupation with physical culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was based in fear that modernity was feminizing men, fear of racial degradation also drove the physical culture movement. White, middle-class men in the North east were particularly obsessed with physical culture because they feared that they were losing power and virility. Using social Darwinist ideas prevalent in the era, popular journalists, writers, reformers, and academics linked white men's loss of power and virility to racial decline. The Northeast was the entry point for the influx of immigrants coming from Europe and as also a destination for African Americans moving north during the Great Migration. Maintaining white male power and dominance through physical strength was seen to be particularly important in this period as American demographics were changing.[14] Katherine Blackford's grounds her book *Analysing Character*, in ideas of racial hierarchies. She includes phenotypic sketches and images to help the reader distinguish between active and non-active men as well as the different types of active men. The ideal type that she describes and depicts is a high-cheekboned, broad-jawed, blond, white man. When she argued that following her plan would lead people to achieve their full potential, it was based on the belief that different races had different potentials, and that white men had the maximum potential. Blackford considered race to be, in fact, the most significant variable in assessing overall character.[15] She was not alone in this thinking as these racialized ideas were widely assumed and firmly established in America in this period.

Physical Culture in Prison

Social Darwinism, reform through the body, physical fitness as a path to productivity and efficiency, and the growing sports culture were all at play in the prisons in New York State in the early years of the twentieth century. The latest scientific and social scientific theories were central to the ways in which prisons were reforming at the turn of the century. The progressive era commitment to data collection was in evidence across they prison system, informing the way that prisoners were conceived and understood and guided how prison officials and moral reformers managed prison life. As prison historians Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson point out, criminal anthropologists from the late nineteenth century assessed law-breaking "by using

the human body as fundamental data."[16] From the 1870s to the early twentieth century, prisoners were treated as specimens to be studied. Criminologists of the era, including Cesare Lombroso, drew heavily on social Darwinism in classifying the criminal as products of "bad stock". These individuals were thought to be less evolved than the rest of the population. Lombroso maintained that criminality was mapped in criminals' biology. According to his theory, criminals were men of lesser stock with lower human potential than non-criminals. Lombroso correlated unusual skull sizes and asymmetries in facial bones with what he termed "stigmata," which was, essentially, a criminal physiology.[17] In the 1870s, influenced by contemporary anthropological theories about the criminal, French criminologist Alphonse Bertillon, developed a system for identifying the criminal body. His method was to use anthropometric measurements, quantifying the head, arms, and torso to ascertain a subject's criminal traits. He claimed that "every measurement slowly reveals the workings of the criminal." Lombroso was impressed with this system, calling it an "ark of salvation" for criminal identification.[18] By 1887 "Bertillonage" started to be practiced in the United States. His method came to be widely used in American prison systems, with the "Bertillon Room" becoming the mark of a modern prison.

Prisons in the New York system were early adopters of the Bertillon technique in the United States. Auburn prisons, both men's and women's, Clinton, Sing Sing, and Elmira all had Bertillon Systems of Measurement installed in 1896, with the first measurements being taken on August 1st.[19] The primary measurements were of head length, head breadth, length of middle finger, length of left foot, and the length of the forearm from the elbow to the end of the middle finger, all of which were noted on the prisoners "Bertillon card." The Bertillon card included frontal and profile photographs, which came to be commonly referred to as "mug shots." The length of the little finger and right ear, eye colour, distinguishing characteristics, and standardized notes about the prisoner's background, aptitudes, progress, and regress were also included in their Bertillon record. The cards created a record of unique identifiers that could be used to track suspects and inmates. Prison administrators filed the information in a complex way, which allowed for cross-referencing identifying characteristics. The records were constantly updated to record information about the prisoners' behaviour in prison, including whether or not they followed rules, and whether they worked or refused to labour.

Inmates wrote about the Bertillon Room in the *Star of Hope*. In 1901 the paper published a history of the room in a two-page article. In the article, inmate 51,119 claims that their new

Superintendent of Prisons Cornelius V. Collins was drawing national attention for his work in perfecting the Bertillon system at Sing Sing. He provided a straight-forward history of the Bertillon system in the prisons, but played with the idea that criminality could be inferred from the measurements taken.[20] Writing about the Bertillon Department at Auburn, inmate 25,818 discusses the table of averages that John N. Ross, the Director of the Bertillon Bureau of Auburn furnished for the *Star of Hope*'s editors and in so doing, 25,818 undermines contemporary theories about the criminal. He explains that the director had personal contact with more of the "so-called criminal class" of both sexes than, perhaps, any other man in the state. The writer notes that contact with the prisoners led Mr. Ross to hold humane opinions about prisoners, including the idea that none are too base to be beyond redemption. In pointing out that the table of averages indicates that most of the prisoners have blue eyes, 25,818 ridicules the biological approach to criminality, saying that "if statistics are of any value blue-eyed people, as the following table shows, must be just naturally wicked, or else the major portion of the state's population possesses azure-tinted optics."[21]

Thomas Mott Osborne and Madeleine Z. Doty, who lived in prison as part of their undercover investigations into prison conditions, were both Bertilloned upon admission to Auburn prison. They saw the process as the first step in dehumanizing the prisoner. They both deeply resented having their bodies scrutinized and catalogued in the Bertillon method. Osborne describes having every possible measurement taken, every characteristic of his eyes, nose and mouth noted, and being minutely checked for any distinguishing characteristic. In *Within Prison Walls,* he recalls that "no blemish or defect is over-looked – until I begin to feel like a sort of monstrosity."[22] Perhaps in an effort to reassert his masculinity after admitting to feeling weak, he immediately follows this statement with a bravado comment about the scars on his left arm that would be familiar to Harvard men of his generation. He wants it to be clear that he is a sporting man and not, in fact, a monster. Doty was equally ambivalent in her attitude toward criminal phenotyping. Prior to entering prison, Doty had been warned that "coloured convicts with vicious characters" might harm her during her stay at Auburn. That she admits in her memoir that she felt "a little shiver of excitement" at the thought of the danger in which she was putting herself, shows that her initial instincts were to believe in the race-based criminology theories. In spite of this, she later argues that the theories about biology and criminality were unreliable. Her experiences with the black prisoners, particularly her workmate Minerva, proved to her that

physical traits did not dictate a person's character or their propensity to criminal behaviour. Doty reveals, however, that these ideas remained deeply engrained in her thinking. The day that Doty was Bertilloned, she felt a kinship with a woman who was going through the process at the same time, saying "She was the Russian Jewess who the day I was Bertilloned had attracted my attention by her bitter grief at the shame of being pictured and catalogued as a criminal."[23] Doty goes on to describe how the woman was small and well-built, suggesting that the Russian Jewess did not have a criminal physiology. Throughout her stay at Auburn, Doty was surprised that she was not immediately recognized as a non-criminal. She never fully arrived at the conclusion that it was a person's presence in prison that defined a woman or a man as a criminal. Officials continued to link physical characteristics with character traits. These connections informed the ways that guards treated prisoners.

While prison superintendents and wardens were intensely focused on measuring and cataloguing their prisoners' bodies, they had little concern for prisoners' bodies once they left the Bertillon room. Unlike the inmates in the women's prison, men in the New York system were confined to their cells, which measured three feet and six inches wide, six feet and eleven inches long, and six feet and seven inches high. With a tiny bed, a small shelf, and a chamber pot, there was barely enough room to stand. The cells had no sewage system and no proper ventilation. In Osborne's words, "to call them unfit for human habitation is to give them undeserved dignity; they are unfit for pigs."[24] Prisoners spent most of their sentence locked in their cubby hole, with little opportunity even to stretch. When the prisoners were not working in one of the prison shops or at a meal (which did not last more than half an hour), the prisoners were kept in their cells. In *Within Prison Walls,* Osborne recalls seeing prisoners walk back and forth a very short distance on the shop floor when work was wrapping up. He discovered that this is one of the only chances that inmates have to exercise. Their other chance to exercise were occasional walks around the prison yard.[25]

In many ways, prisoners' physical environment worked against new penology's goals. New penologists aimed to use prison as a way to reform the prisoner and leave him better able to function in the world outside of the prison when he was released than when he arrived. A prison commissioner in New York in the late 1890s claimed that

> it is the duty of the state to keep the prisoners in as good physical condition as possible, so that at the expiration of their terms they may be able to engage in

> some occupation which will afford them a livelihood and enable them to support themselves and their families.[26]

In concluding that "this is not only a matter of great importance to the prisoners themselves but is of economy to the state,"[27] the commissioner reveals that the prisons' concern with inmates' well-being is tied to an economic logic rather than a moral one. The only times that prison managers were concerned about prisoners' physical well-being was when diseases like tuberculosis and cholera threatened to wreak havoc and turn the prison into a hospital ward. If prisoners were ill, naturally, their productivity would go down. Early progressives in the prison reform movement were chiefly focused on labour, and they used labour as a way to structure discipline in the prison. Activities like education and physical exercise were understood as being useful, but not as a priority.

Though the prison allowed little space for physical activity, the inmates demonstrated a keen interest in physical culture. From the *Star of Hope*'s first issue, the editors devoted at least a page to physical culture. The *Star of Hope*'s writers drew from the prison libraries' newspapers and magazines to compose their columns. In September 1903, the Physical Culture editor, Sing Sing 55,747 makes plain that the *Star* editors are not always presenting wholly original material, but assures the readers that they will credit the original source when ideas presented are not their own. In the first decade of the paper's run, there were dozens of articles attesting to physical culture's physical and mental benefits. The articles often included quotes from "great thinkers and leaders," like Cicero, Napoleon, and Emerson on the importance of exercise. The physical culture editor noted, in 1903, that prisoners' physical condition had improved since the turn of the century. He cited the decision to abolish the lock-step as having led to an inestimable improvement to prisoners' general health. The editor acknowledged that prisoners were still limited in what they can pursue in terms of physical culture, but nonetheless encouraged his fellow inmates to follow an exercise regime.[28] The physical culture editors positioned themselves as experts in the field and urged their readers to write in with any questions they had related to the subject. Along with their questions, the readers were asked to submit their measurements. The readers responded to the call and their letters, which could be anonymized upon request, became an integral part of the column. Inmates asked technical questions about particular exercises, requested exercises to achieve particular fitness goals, and enquired about physical culture regimes that their physical culture idols might be following. The column allowed them to

feel that even though they were being confined and their physical bodies neglected, that they could take some control over their bodies. The column also covered the latest trends in physical culture to keep inmates abreast of the physical culture realm beyond the prison. One such article provides details about Jui Jitsu, the Japanese martial art that was growing in popularity in America at the turn of the century. As Americans feared that they were becoming a nation of weaklings, they began to look for inspiration from other cultures. The Russo-Japanese war in 1904-1905 brought Japan into international consciousness. Their complete military victory over Russia drew particular admiration among Americans. Japanese physical culture practices therefore became an inspiration to the physical culture experts in America. Jui Jitsu was heralded a model of scientific, systemic rigorous physical culture regime.[29] For prisoners, the Japanese were offered as useful models because, the physical culture editor explained in 1904, "the Japs are most abstemious in their eating and in case of emergency can sustain life and strength on a small ration of rice or other simple diet."[30] Even if they never did any of the exercises described in the column, the paper offered prisoners a way to think about their bodies and to imagine themselves as being part of the wider social and cultural physical culture movement.

Testimonials quickly became a prominent feature of the physical culture column. The editors wanted to show their readers that physical culture was yielding positive results for prisoners in their midst and that the column was not simply generating fantasies. The success stories were meant to inspire the inmates into taking on a physical culture regime and to convince them that they should not let their confinement be a barrier to their physical and mental fitness. Auburn prisoner number 26,717 submitted his own testimonial, claiming, as most of the testimonials in the *Star* did, that he was initially sceptical about physical culture's purported benefits. He describes himself as having entered the prison in 1901 as a "physical wreck" suffering from phthisis, a disease similar to tuberculosis. He says that after following a physical culture regime he

> developed my chest three inches, biceps two inches, and every part of my body has been enlarged from half an inch to two inches and more, and it is all due to exercise. I arise at six o'clock each morning, fan out my cell, and then commence my exercise; at night I repeat the performance.[31]

He appended his measurements table to his letter to show how he developed. The doctor who had previously labelled him a hopeless case, was impressed with 26,717's dedication to the

regime and for curing himself through regular exercise. Such stories were meant to motivate even the men who were more inclined toward intellectual pursuits than those related to the body. In 1904 the editor reports that after months of prodding from one of the Sing Sing's strongmen, the man who edits the "World Over" page, a page devoted to international current events, converted to physical culture. He claiming that the World Over man can be found "at most unseemly hours going through all kinds of stunts and physical culture charts, books and diagrams."[32]

The testimonials from prisoners about their transformation from being physical wrecks to models of health and fitness reveal, however, that not all of the prisoners were on board with the physical culture project. Most of the prisoners' stories about triumph over adversity include descriptions of how other prisoners ridiculed them for attempting to reshape their bodies. The inmate who managed to convert the World Over man to physical culture proudly calls himself a "physiculture crank," a moniker that is more typically used to insult those who proselytize on behalf of the practice.[33] The Auburn man who suffered from phthisis recalls that

> the boys used to laugh when they would see me taking the breathing exercises down by the wall, and would remark to each other: "Look at the 'bug'; he thinks he can swim the river. Watch him when he raises his hands over his head. Did you see that? Oh, he's a 'bug'[34] alright!' But I had one on them and would only smile at their jeers."[35]

Editor 54,598 uses his June 1908 column to decry the prevalent scepticism about physical culture among prisoners. He bemoans the fact that prisoners are not adequately concerned about their health and are in denial about their low levels of physical fitness.[36]

Despite some of the prisoners' resistance to adopting a physical culture regime, the *Star of Hope* highlighted inmates who were deemed perfect physical specimens. In his letter to the editor, 26,717 points to other prisoners who he has witnessed performing impressive feats of strength, including one who he saw lifting a one-hundred pound dumbbell straight overhead eight times with one hand, lifting six hundred pounds of pig iron three inches from the ground, and pulling a thousand pounds of pig iron in a wheel-barrow.[37] Clinton 7,384 wrote in to the *Star of Hope* in 1907 to tell the story of prisoner 6,777 who entered the prison physically run down through "excessive dissipation," and became the prisoner with the "best developed physique"

that 7,384 had ever noticed among the prison population. He described 6,777's body in vivid detail:

> every muscle of his body is as hard as steel, and every line of his sinewy frame denotes the power of strength lurking there. The breadth of his shoulders is remarkable for one of his height and weight, and the muscles of his back stand out in bold relief and look like nuggets; likewise the muscles of the neck and legs; in fact, his whole body is proportionately well-developed and has assumed an Apollo-like appearance.[38]

The stories about prisoners' physical prowess and their attention to their physical bodies was important as a way of inspiring those within their ranks, but it was also a way for them to assert that they were still men, and fit ones at that, to the world outside. The prisoners were acutely aware that their paper circulated and was widely read beyond prison walls. Their many references to readers on the outside makes it clear that they are using the pages of the *Star of Hope* to present themselves positively to the general public. The inmates were trying to change the public perception of prisoners. They may have been locked up, they could still have god-like proportions and bodily strength that inspires awe. The *Star* gave them a chance to emphasize their masculinity in a place that offers few opportunities for prisoners to exert the aspects of masculinity linked to power, control, or strength. In the *Star,* inmates were not diminished men, they were making the best of their situation and were managing to maintain their dignity and pride while behind bars.

Physical culture in the prison linked the men in prisons to the manliest American men: soldiers in the army and the navy, and Eugen Sandow, the pioneering body-builder and physical culture idol. In 1904, the Physical Culture editor for the *Star* announced that he was hoping to publish regular "setting-up exercises," designed by Dr. Poole, and used in the US army, which consist of thirty illustrations. In a 1906 edition of the paper, the editor notes that a kind gentleman whose interest in the prisoner is well-known to the inmates of Sing Sing, had distributed the Army's exercise charts to three prisons in the state. He explains that it is through this anonymous gentleman's kindness that the editor was able to reprint some of the exercises in the *Star* for the benefit of all of the prisoners in the New York system.[39] In 1907 the *Star* also published exercises that the US government adopted for use in the Navy.[40] In using the exercise charts, the inmates could imagine that they were not the nation's shame, but were rather on par with the nation's most heroic men. The editors regularly and happily reported that high numbers

of prisoners were requesting the charts in all of the prisons in the system. The *Star of Hope* reports that Clinton was housing a professional boxer who had been boxing champion Joe Bernstein's sparring partner. He was a physical marvel who could fasten an ordinary belt across his chest and burst it in two simply by expanding his chest. The editor claims to have the busted belt in his possession as proof of this feat. The article explains that the boxer continues to do regular physical exercise and began to instruct his shop-mates in exercise techniques.[41]

For those not able to have a personal tutorial from a professional athlete, the *Star of Hope* offered expert advice from Eugen Sandow. The physical culture editors included pieces devoted to Eugen Sandow and detailed instructions for exercises that Sandow advocated in his physical culture programmes. Sandow is described in the paper as "the most perfectly developed specimen of physical manhood that has ever lived,"[42] and his measurements were reprinted on several occasions. Though he remained a mysterious figure, the man identified as being "deeply interested in our welfare," provided Sandow's "light dumbbell drill" to the Physical culture editor.[43] The letters to the editor reveal a deep interest in Sandow, with many of the inmates expressing admiration for his physique and asking for advice on how they might come to achieve a measure of his physical greatness. The inmates and the physical culture editor saw Sandow as a marvel, but the editor kept with the current thinking about physical culture that it is important not to push exercise too far. Prisoner 50,747 notes that Sandow's measurements are abnormal and that an ordinary man need only concern himself with the ideal measurements that he provides in the paper, which he insists "are all possible of attainment by every individual if persistent effort is made along the lines of intelligent exercise."[44]

Indeed, given the conditions in the prison, it would have been difficult for inmates to push themselves very far with their exercise regimes. Many inmates wrote to the editor to say that the prison conditions were simply too poor to allow them to pursue physical culture at all. They cited the cells being too small, the fact that they were exhausted when they finish a day's work, the lack of proper ventilation or fresh air, and the lack of equipment as reasons why they believe that they cannot exercise. Many said that they would study the exercises and practice them when they are released. The editor declared that these are simply excuses and that the people writing in with them are pessimists or "knockers." In 1909, the editor, Auburn 50,256, claimed that "such people ought to be compelled to undergo a good going over by a phrenologist to find out if their mental powers are evenly balanced,"[45] while 54,598 mocks an inmate who

said that he needed a gymnasium to properly exercise, saying that "he forgot to mention a Turkish bath; a masseuse and an alcohol rub; but I suppose those too would be absolutely essential to him."[46]

Despite their sarcastic tone over excuses for not committing to an exercise regime, the physical culture editors tried their best to adapt and design programs for inmates that took into account the prisons' limitations as a space for physical fitness. In 1903, inmate editor 50,747 notes that contemporary physical culture experts and their thinking on fitness practice is in line with prisoners' opportunities behind bars. The experts had rejected the idea that men needed any kind of apparatus to build their bodies, and instead advocated that men use their own body weight to achieve their ideal measurements. Dr. Charles Emmerson of Boston, though initially ridiculed for doing so, developed exercise programs that did not use equipment. 50,747 presented many of his exercises, which he argued were especially advantageous for those who do not have a great deal of time or money to devote to physical exercise. He subtly suggests that these barriers are present for most of his readers, saying that equipment being unnecessary "especially recommends them to our requirements, as we are somewhat handicapped by restricted conditions."[47] The editors encouraged inmates to make the most of any opportunity they had to stretch out, to walk around, and to breathe in fresh air, though these opportunities were rare as prisoners' movements were tightly controlled and they were seldom allowed outdoors.

Given that prisoners spent most of their time confined in their cells, the editors concentrated on physical culture regimes that prisoners could follow in such tight spaces. The exercises from the US Army and Navy guides and Sandow's methods had to be stripped down, to an almost ridiculous degree, for them to be possible to complete in their cells. While the 1903 editor claimed that the latest trend in physical culture was to develop muscles without using any equipment,[48] many of the exercises in the military guides and in Sandow's method involved using weights. The editor in 1906, Sing Sing number 55,798 responded to the many letters requesting a series of exercises for strength developing and muscle-building by offering an alternative to using weights. He acknowledged that weights were indeed hard to get in the institution, and so advocated using the "tension method" as a way around using weights, which he describes as "motions performed without weight, as tho one had a heavy weight."[49] 55,798's advice was, essentially, to pretend that they had equipment. Other recommended exercises were

running in place and touching toes. Auburn 50,256 even claimed that there is "no greater aid to health, strength or happiness" than masticating thoroughly.

Beyond exercise and effective chewing, the physical culture editors argued that deep breathing was essential to achieving physical culture goals. Prisoner 50,797 claims, in fact, that "cold baths, deep breathing and moderate exercise will cure ninety percent of the ills that effect humanity."[50] Tuberculosis[51] was prevalent in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That the disease was fatal and contagious meant that there was great concern about its spread. Doctors, including the leading consumption specialist Dr. Edward Trudeau, were finding that open air, deep breathing and exercise could strengthen the lungs and help to alleviate symptoms of consumption.[52] This medical advice became incorporated into the physical culture movement and was especially relevant to prisoners. Prisoners were confined in damp, poorly ventilated cells, and shared the air with thousands of other inmates, making the prison an ideal breeding ground for tuberculosis. The physical culture editors, therefore, made breathing exercises a regular feature in their columns. Deep breathing was also fairly easy to perform, even in prison. Editor 55,598 instructed his readers to breathe deeply through the nose and to fill the lungs to prevent lung cells from collapsing and tuberculosis from setting in. He recommended that inmates try to take a thousand deep inhalations every day.

Many reader letters thanked the editors for including information about proper breathing and claimed that the breathing exercises diminished their symptoms and allowed them to take on other physical exercises. In one such letter, prisoner 55,191 claimed that he no longer experienced discomfort from "bad breathing" after having followed the breathing exercises published in the *Star*. Deep breathing, according to the physical culture editors, was not only beneficial for the lungs, but could also be used, by itself, to increase muscle mass and strength. To prove this, editor number 50,747 recounts the story of his encounter with Sing Sing's barber in 1904. While getting a shave the barber asked if the man he was shaving was the "physical culture man." Though he was nervous about displeasing the man with the blade with his answer, the editor admitted that he was indeed the physical culture man. The barber explained that he had followed the deep breathing exercises for six months, as recommended in the *Star*, and that he increased his chest measurement by two inches. The editor explains that "considering the disadvantages of prison life, that is a most wonderful improvement, and what he succeeded in doing can be accomplished by others."[53]

The editors argued that following a physical culture program combined with a regular deep breathing practice would not only lead to good physical health, but to greater peace of mind and preparedness for a productive life upon release from prison. Even though the editors scoffed at men who used prison conditions as an excuse for not taking up a physical culture, they did recognize that the prison conditions were limiting and discouraging. They believed, however, that physical culture offered a way of mitigating prison's miseries. Editor inmate 54,598 devoted his May 1906 column to worry and its effects on the body. He describes worry as the "bugbear" of their lives in prison. "we notice," he says,

> a comrade becoming gloomy, morose and irritable; no need to ask him the cause, we divine it intuitively, we have been there; - he is worrying. It may be bad news from home, or neglect on the part of those from whom he had every reason to expect help, consolation and faithfulness. Whatever the cause he is unwittingly forming the habit of worrying, and no one who is not given to worry can conceive of the power which the habit gains over its victim.[54]

He goes on to detail the physical toll that worry takes, leading the arteries to weaken, the nervous system to breakdown, and the memory to fail. He argues that the way to avoid having worry take hold in their systems is to build themselves up through exercise. In this way, their bodies can develop the "wondrous strength of cheerfulness."[55] 54,598 acts as an apostle for physical culture because of his personal transformative experience with exercise. Focusing on developing and strengthening his body, he claimed, lifted him out of his hopelessness and sorrow. With their bodies strong and their spirits high, the physical culture editors believed that the inmates could begin to have faith in the future and think about how they will become better people in prison and become good workers and providers when they leave the prison gates. The editors point to reading books as a way of developing morality, with 55,798 saying that "reading good books that bring the mind into sympathy the companionship with worthy thought and wholesome ambition."[56] He encourages inmates to go to the library and read history, biography, poetry, science, travel, adventure, or anything else to elevate the mind. He stresses the need for physical, mental, and moral attributes to be brought into harmony so that men can be prepared to counter "the stern realities of life."[57] There were also Christian overtones to the writing on physical culture, with many of the editors, particularly 54,598, pointing to man's obligation to honour god by honouring the body that he gave them. 55,798 used the Physical culture column to present the practice as a Christian duty. He usually frames this as a positive duty, but occasionally veers into

threats and warnings, such as when he said "God help the person who wilfully impairs his manhood."[58]

Linked to the idea of physical culture as a Christian virtue, is the suggestion that exercise will make a man a better worker and better citizen. 54,598 argued that health and purposefulness is the best way to thank their maker.[59] 55,798 was particularly keen on presenting physical culture as a moral and civic duty, explaining that "we all need to 'hold our end up' upon release"[60] and be productive in whatever work the inmates might undertake on the outside. He imagined that physical culture would enable men to be better equipped for a useful and honourable career when the time comes for them to "mingle with the outside world." Inmate 53,882 in a letter to the editor, which he titled, "Physical Culture: An Essential to Success" clearly supports these claims.[61] In his letter, the prisoner argues that men in prison need to learn that a man's capital is his physical and mental ability, and that his fellow inmates must not allow their capital to dwindle while behind bars, even though they are not able to keep up with activities and progress of the business and professional world. Being fit, according to this writer, will be the inmates' gateway back into these realms. Physical culture thus allowed the inmates to imagine that being an ex-convict would not impede their ability to be successful.

Women, too, could take part in physical culture and reap all of its attendant rewards. 54,598 was committed to providing the women at Auburn with physical culture advice that was particular to them in addition to the more general physical culture instructions that women could already find in the column. The paper generally wanted to be inclusive to the women in the system, and physical culture was a way for them to form a common cause with women in the name of physical health. He believed that "there is no reason why every woman at Auburn who has no organic weakness or defect, should not become strong, hearty and well-built, with bright eyes, clear skin, and a degree of personal magnetism always found with a superb physique."[62] He was clear, however, that he did not advocate that women develop "unusual muscular strength" as this would be undesirable. His reservations about women pursuing physical culture too aggressively mirrored the fear expressed in physical culture literature outside of the prison. While women and men shared the goal of being fit and healthy, women's expressed goals were connected to calming hysteria and enhancing their natural grace and beauty. 54,598 would only endorse a regime that would keep women in good health, enough to eliminate nervous disorders and to enable them to develop a zest for life. 54,598 also tried to procure charts that would be

appropriate for women, but there is no evidence that these charts ever materialized. He admitted that he had no knowledge of the conditions at Auburn prison for women, but assumed that they were similar to the men's prisons and so featured exercises that could be practiced within the women's rooms rather than the horseback riding, rowing, gymnastics and walking that he would have recommended if his audience were women at Vassar or Smith College. Running in place, he argued, was a good option, as was practicing good posture. The physical culture articles specifically devoted to women prisoners stopped appearing when 54,598 left his position as physical culture editor.

For both male and female prisoners, physical culture was a predominantly solitary undertaking. Besides the single-file walks in the yard, the men who tried their hand at physical culture did so in their cells and the women did their exercising in their rooms, if it wasn't too disruptive. The *Star of Hope* allowed them to feel a part of a community of health and fitness experts even if they never took a deep breath or lifted a pretend weight. The physical culture column encouraged the inmates to focus on their bodies. The male prisoners were constantly asked to think of their body in scientific terms, to measure their bodies, assess their progress through measurement, and to compare their own measurements to those of the ideal developed male form found in the charts available to all prisoners. The men were meant to put the chart and the setting-up exercises charts on their cells walls as a constant reminder to develop their bodies according to a particular norm. Additionally, particular male bodies, like Eugen Sandow, were fetishized and were the subject of numerous columns and letters to the editor. Even inmates had their bodies scrutinized and celebrated in the pages of the *Star*. The editor describing Clinton no. 7,384 illustrates the ways that inmates were assessing each other's bodies.

> The writer has had the pleasure of observing Clinton no. 6,777 in his practice of the exercises and has also made an examination of his well-developed body, and I can say without exaggeration that he has the best developed physique that has ever come under my notice among the prison population.[63]

With the rules that prisoners had to be silent, looking at other prisoners was one of the only ways to feel connected to the people with whom they were sharing their space. Elevating the male form and paying such attention to every detail of men's bodies could have contributed to the "immorality" that was reported to be rampant in prisons across they New York system. Regina Kunzel's *Criminal Intimacy*, her book about sex in prison in the twentieth century, demonstrated

that the prison work environments were less monitored than the cellblocks. Whether in the laundry, woodshop, metal shop, or the mine, the prisoners took advantage to the opportunity the environments offered to engage in sexual activity.[64]

Thomas Mott Osborne was especially concerned with the widespread "perversion" in the prisons and his proposals for increased activities for prisoners was part of his solution to this perceived problem. In his report on prison reform in 1913 he argues that "it is difficult for a young man of good morals, if of prepossessing appearance, to avoid being corrupted; while one of bad character corrupts others."[65] Because he believed that men were driven to perversion through confinement and solitude, Osborne argued that the men needed to engage in physical activities, like sport, to rid them of their perverse impulses. During his prison stay in 1913 he discovered that there were few options for physical activity in the prison. He met with a Captain Lamb, who told him that he would like to give his company setting-up exercises as he once did but that he abandoned because he received no administrative encouragement to do so. Prison management, Lamb explained, had come to see exercise as subversive to discipline.[66] Even the physical culture column had disappeared by 1909. Osborne believed that rather than being detrimental to discipline, that exercise was the "first and best means" of getting real discipline. He pointed to the fact that men in prison stand or sit listlessly at their work all day and when they are not working, they are shut in their cells for fourteen hours. Osborne says that this routine does not give the inmates a chance to work off their "superfluous energies" or to keep themselves in proper physical condition. He sees this arrangement as inevitably resulting in prisoners' "steady degeneration, not only of body, but of mind and soul as well."[67] In his 1913 report he recommended that, so far as possible, athletic games, races, and sports should be employed to furnish prisoners with exercise.[68]

It was actually the desire for athletic activity that led Osborne and his prisoner advisor, Jack, to come up with the idea of a prisoner league that would enable inmates to have a say in how the prison was run. Sundays were the worst days for prisoners because men were locked in their cells from between ten thirty and eleven o'clock Sunday morning until seven o'clock Monday morning, amounting to over twenty hours. They were locked in because the officers had Sunday off and there was not enough staff to manage the prisoners with the officers not there. Jack, a prisoner advisor to Osborne, said that the long lock up is a "fearful strain" on the inmates, both mentally and physically. Imagining possible alternatives to the twenty-hour lock up, they

had the idea that the afternoon could be a time for some sort of exercise or recreation. Believing that "the big majority of the fellows in here will be square if you give 'em a chance […] Now if you trust a man, he'll try and do what's right; sure he will'," Jack argued that the inmates could be trusted to have unsupervised activities.[69] He acknowledged that there are a few "degenerates" in prison who would always make trouble, but that they are part of a small minority. The way to develop activities in the prison, Jack believed, would be to ensure that the degenerates are excluded so that prison management would not have to worry about activities disrupting discipline in the prison.

Jack suggested that prisoners could form a Good Conduct League as a way to control who could take part in activities. Activities would be reserved for those in the Good Conduct League, and only those with good conduct records would be eligible for membership. Their fellow prisoners would elect league leaders, so that the leaders would be men that the inmates trusted and who would not, therefore, be considered management lackeys. This way, the Good Conduct League leaders would be able to manage the activities and deal with any disruptions that might arise. Jack believed that with athletic sports as the Sunday afternoon activity, that "we'd have everybody wantin' to join the League, all right" and that no one would get out of line because the 1400 men in the prison would ensure that no one jeopardized their chance at having sports on Sunday.[70] On December 26, 1913 Auburn prison had free elections at all of the different shops in the prison to form a committee of forty-nine to determine the nature of the Mutual Welfare League and how it would be organized. Those elected represented a range of men in the prison, sentenced for all kinds of offenses and who were serving their first, second, and third terms. In the Mutual Welfare League constitution and by-laws, it stipulates that there would be ten standing committees, one of which was the Athletics committee.[71]

Sport and prison reform

Prisoners taking part in athletic games was part of the Thomas Mott Osborne's program for radically transforming prisons in the New York system from a place for contemplative solitude to a place that more closely resembles the community outside of the prison. Along with films, theatre, music, and other entertainments, sports were introduced in prison to allow prisoners to interact with one another, to improve their physical fitness, and to make them better citizens upon release. Regular athletic programming began in the Spring of 1914. This was just

before the newly established Mutual Welfare League published their first *Bulletin*. The weekly bulletin reported on League meetings and informed members about upcoming activities. The May 2nd edition of the *Bulletin* announced the first Athletic Games, which were to be held at Auburn prison on Decoration Day.[72] The Athletics committee was working on a program for the day which included the following events: Tug of war, Fat Man's Dash, Three-legged race, sack race, potato race, shoe race, Irish-style shot put, three standing jumps. The *Bulletin* writer solicited entries for the events, warning people that with the volume of entries that they predict they will receive, inmates should not feel slighted if they are not selected to compete in the day's events.

Osborne's colleagues at the Commission for Prison Reform supported Osborne and the Mutual Welfare League's efforts to bring Athletic programs into the prisons. Commission member Richard M. Hurd wrote a letter to Osborne to express his thanks at being made an honorary member of the Mutual Welfare League and the members' giving him a league button to signify his inclusion in their league.[73] As well as sending the letter, Hurd bought the League a Challenge Cup, which would be engraved and awarded to the winning wing (as the North and South wings at Auburn were competing against each other). Hurd enclosed a $100 cheque with his letter to be used as the league saw fit, either for individual prize of badges or tobacco, baseballs for prisoners to use in the yard on Sundays, moving pictures, or anything else that the League might like. In the May 30th issue of the *Bulletin*, the League members expressed their thanks to Hurd and indicated that a photograph of the cheque, letter and cup has been taken and will be hung in the League office.[74] The reformers and the prisoners were on board with introducing athletics into the prison, but it would be the prison officials who had significant power in determining how the games would unfold.

Reporting on Decoration Day, the *Bulletin* explained that the officials got in on the fun of the day's events, contesting in a race around the yard, a distance of nearly half a mile. Superintendent John B. Riley in responding to a letter from a prisoner thanking him for allowing the Decoration Day events to take place, stated that "You may assure the members of the league that they have, in my view, earned some special consideration. I am sure that the prison officers derived as much pleasure as the members."[75] That the events for Decoration Day did not lead to any disruption in the prison and made the prison better for both prisoners and officials, led the officials to permit more outside activity in the prison. Shortly after, though not connected to

Decoration Day events, the prison was forced into a quarantine because of a small pox outbreak. In a letter to the secretary of the Mutual Welfare League, John Martin, the Principal Keeper and Warden Rattigan point out that with the quarantine, the prisoners and the prison officials are in some ways in analogous circumstances and that what benefits the prisoners could also benefit those working in the prison.

> Owing to the fact that the officers are necessarily detained at the prison, and feeling that it might be well, under the present circumstances to give the inmates some fresh air after work this afternoon, we are going to let the men in the yard in the same order as they were out on Decoration Day afternoon, from the time of closing to six-fifteen this evening.[76]

The League saw the quarantine as an opportunity to build bridges between the prisoners and the officers and to alleviate some of the resentment that the guards had toward prisoners after the Mutual Welfare League was formed. Because the Mutual Welfare League now had a role in prison discipline, guards and other officials began to resent the new arrangement as they felt that prisoners were encroaching on their territory. The *Bulletin* declares the quarantine "one of the best things that could have hit this old bastille, for the prisoners, as it is bringing opportunity closer to us. We are, however, sorry for the officers for being confined. We trust that this can be made an occasion for both officers and inmates getting in closer touch and coming to understand one another."[77]

That Decoration Day was a successful test run for athletics in the prison meant that the League and the prison officials could go forward with planning regular athletic events. These athletic events gave the prisoners a compelling argument for spending more time in the yard doing exercises outside of the day of the event. Prisoners gained more yard time to practice for the competitions. The *Bulletin* did recommend, however, that prisoners training for competition do so during the evening because it would not be good for morale if men hard at work in the shop were to look out the shop window and see men doing athletic stunts in the yard. The Mutual Welfare League held its next day of athletic events on July the Fourth. They added a couple of events, including the standing broad jump and the eight-legged race and renamed the "fat man's dash" the "heavy man's dash." The *Bulletin* included a notice to inmates about how to behave at the events. They were to keep off the courses that had been set up and to sit on the ground to

watch the events, spreading out as much as possible, which would allow more men to get a better view than if everyone stood up crowding around the course.

It was crucial that the inmates behaved well at the games as bad behaviour would likely lead to cancelling activities altogether and possibly derailing prison reform efforts. The *Bulletin* announcing the event indicated that several members of the Prison Reform Commission, including Mr. Hurd, would be attending the battle for the cup, saying that "the impression that we make on July fourth will go down in history. The same rule will prevail, that was suggested on Decoration Day – behave like gentlemen. You did that day – keep it up."[78] The July 11th edition of *The Bulletin* reported that the day's events went smoothly and the writer thanked the members of the Commission for Prison Reform for officiating in the sports. They also thanked Thomas Walsh of Auburn for spending a couple of hundred dollars on decorations for the events. The report indicated that Superintendent Riley and Warden Rattigan had arranged for several "former residents" of the institution to join in the days festivities, stating that "it certainly helped to get us away from some of the old traditions, it did the men good to see our former brothers."[79]

Athletic events came to be held on holidays, including Labour Day and Columbus Day, with more events added each time. Among the new events were the egg race, the wheel-barrow race and a pie-eating contest. They even added four side attractions to these events: a greased pole, open until prizes were won; African dodger – hit him and get a cigar; a 75-yard dash – Sam Miller versus Mat Maroney; and a doll hitting gallery. The *Bulletin* did not explain whether the African Dodger game, which was also known as 'Hit the Coon' used an actual African-American man with his head through a canvas curtain trying to dodge what was thrown at him or if it was the more humane version that had a wooden head instead of a live target, or a dunk tank which would dunk the African-American man if someone hit a target.

The athletic events on holidays and the regular Sunday afternoon exercise in the yard was a success for all connected to the prison. The games elevated the mood for the inmates and the prison officials, with fun being the focus of the day rather than punishment and discipline. The prison reformers were pleased with these effects, but they were also pleased that athletics and physical recreation were having a positive effect on inmate productivity. The National Committee on Prison Labour argued that a physically well inmate would be more productive when released, but the results touted in the *Bulletin,* suggest that physically well inmates are more productive even while in prison. According to the *Bulletin,*

> The papers have been heralding the fact that since the men at Sing Sing have been getting out in the yard they have produced 33% more work in the shops.[80] Fellows, don't let them best us out. We started this game and we have to keep up our end." In addition to being more disciplined and more productive, the Mutual Welfare League reported that under the new system, fresh air and exercise" have greatly reduced the desire for fighting and dope.[81]

They came to this conclusion through hospital records, which indicate that wounds, resulting chiefly from fights, have decreased sixty-four per cent in the year after exercise became part of prison. The accompanying picture shows a group of prisoners in a swimming pool.

After just two of the athletic events days, the inmates, many of whom had shown a passion for baseball in the *Star of Hope*, got the chance to actually play the game. *The Star of Hope* had a baseball editor by its fourth edition in 1899. The baseball editor who reported on games, wrote articles about the history of baseball and great baseball players, analysed the particulars of the game in what he called "baseball criticism," and covered the controversies surrounding the sport. Auburn 23, 591 edited the column for several years. He had a declinist narrative about baseball, claiming that baseball's best years were 1876-1878.[82] This argument provoked numerous inmates to write in to disagree with the editor and to explain their position on baseball's heyday and when exactly it was, with one inmate saying that 23,591 had been in prison for too long and did not know about the current state of baseball.[83] There was fierce debate between the inmates about details of particular games and particular plays. Many wrote in with questions about baseball's history and about baseball strategy. Sometimes the pages devoted to baseball amounted to about a quarter of the entire paper. Auburn inmate 26,357 wrote in to the *Star of Hope* to express his appreciation for the baseball column, saying that "the spirit of baseball enthusiasm which 23,591 has imbued within some of us has become so contagious that even the automatic spinning mules in cloth shops two and three make a run after every strike."[84] The pages included up-to-date standings and statistics for the national, American, and local leagues so that prisoners could feel like they were still in the know about what was established by this point as America's national pastime. In 1908, Sing Sing inmate 56,003 wrote an article for the *Star of Hope* entitled "The Pride of the Prison League," which was essentially a fantasy about inmates at Sing Sing founding a prison baseball league that became world famous.[85] In the story, the games had huge audiences and were reported on in the press. The players became heroes and after the games and the fans broke onto the field and lifted them onto their shoulders while a Sing Sing string and brass band played. The fantasy ends with the

governor of the state, who had attended the game, granting pardons to each player of the Sing Sing team.

Amazingly, much of 56,003's fantasy came to pass just six years later. Thanks to Thomas Mott Osborne's pressure on the prison to expand physical activities in the New York prisons, in the summer of 1914 the Athletic Committee organized five baseball teams, two of which were named after Osborne – The Tom Brown Stars and the Osborne Giants. The teams were organized according to race and nationality. Sing Sing held its first baseball game on July 18th, 1914. The prison set up a press box in the chapel and invited local press and the *New York Times* to cover the story. The writer for the *Times* explained that prisoners had not experienced as much freedom as they had for four hours that afternoon than any prisoner had exercised since the prison opened in 1825. The articles claims that Warden Thomas J. McCormick's friends heard about the new program at the prison and donated $150 for him to spend on athletic equipment for the prisoners.[86] The warden did his bit, according to the article, by tearing down the wash lines and rooting up the trees in the south yard to make a baseball diamond. Almost all of the prisoners tried out to play. Sixty-four were chosen and they were divided into six teams. On the day of the first game, the Warden could not be there but William J. Watson, the secretary to the new Warden, threw the first pitch and Abe O'Neil, a popular keeper at the prison, was the umpire. According to the reporter, the keepers looked "aghast" at the chances they were taking, but that they could not deny that Osborne's new self-government scheme was a success. Every inmate, except those condemned to die and those in the prison hospital who were too ill to leave their beds attended the game. The reporter described how the prisoners had the absolute freedom of the yard; they were allowed to talk to each other, and they smoked cigarettes and pipes and shouted during all the games. The *Times* article covered some of the games' highlights, reporting that a "negro", convicted of second degree murder hit a home run and received the loudest applause of the day. The reporter was struck by how baseball brought disparate groups together, saying that

> the spectators on the ground were an interesting lot. An analysis showed that no fewer than 135 life term men, each one of whom was convicted for second degree murder, were in the group. There were highway robbers, pickpockets, and gunmen, mingled with cashiers and bankers. Third termers sat on the grass with first offenders, but all were 'fans' for the afternoon: there were no distinctions.[87]

Baseball was the main event that day, but the inmates were also playing hand ball, medicine ball, tennis, and the Italian inmates were even playing bocci. The writer in the *Times* noted that the prisoners were well-behaved and when the festivities were over, that they went in an orderly manner back into the prison. The only suspicious activity that the press corps could surmise was that the prisoners might have "let a good many apparent outs go by the board, thus increasing their time allowance on the diamond."[88] The reporter concludes that baseball and other athletic games were the best enticements for behaving well and the missing out on such activities as a powerful deterrent from behaving badly. This point was driven home for him when he learned that when Sing Sing officials announced that they were accepting transfer applications from prisons to fill the 118 vacancies at Great Meadow, a lower security prison only thirty-five men applied for a transfer. Men interviewed about this said that they wanted to stay at Sing Sing because of the baseball games. Great Meadow did not yet have a baseball team when the call went out for transfers.[89]

By 1915 all of the prisons in the New York system were playing several games a week, even playing games in the winter. Teams within the prison, formed from each of the shops, played against each other, while prison-wide teams played against amateur and professional teams from around New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Given the circumstances, the prison baseball players were not allowed to travel and all of the games were held on the prison home ground. All of the fields had bleachers for spectators and they always drew large crowds. Outside of the prison, professional and union workers formed teams and played against each other in amateur leagues. Many of these teams travelled to prisons to play the inmate teams. For example, in 1915, the Mutual Welfare League baseball team defeated a team composed of employees of the New York Stork Exchange, who brought with them over one hundred supporters, including thirty women. Professional teams, including the New York Yankees and the New York Giants also came to the prisons to play on their off-season. In 1916 Giants star Patrick J. Dorsey came with an aggregation of ball players from the State and National Leagues, drawing hundreds of fans from outside of the prison. The MWL Stars beat out Dorsey and his all-star team, claiming that "it was a great surprise that our boys trimmed his team and sent them home with a white wash."[90] The prison leagues even generated baseball stars. One such star was a "crack pitcher" known as "Giggles." After Governor Charles S. Whitman commuted Giggles' sentence, the Mutual Welfare League held a baseball game to honor their departing resident. The

Aurora Band (the Sing Sing orchestra), of which Giggles was a member, opened the games. The Warden presented Giggles with what the *Star of Hope* reporter covering the event described as a "beautiful bronze statue of a ball player in action, encased in flowers and the American flag." The reporter noted that Giggles had already signed a contract to play with the Brooklyn Yankees.[91]

When the first games were played, the Mutual Welfare League was nervous about how the inmates would behave at the events. In 1901, 23,591 noted that "rowdyism" was being blamed for baseball's decline. Though the baseball editor argued that it was in fact baseball management that was ruining the game, newspapers across the country deemed rowdyism to be a growing problem.[92] Rowdyism was general bad behaviour at games, including yelling at the umpire about perceived bad calls, drinking, spitting, and fighting. It was no surprise then, that the league members would have been worried about the crowds at prison games. In August, 1914 the *Bulletin* said that it had received numerous request from delegates that a note be published in the *Bulletin* about language men were using in the yard, especially at the ball games. The *Bulletin* again implores the inmates to conduct themselves as gentlemen and to keep a close watch over their tongues and tempers. He advised the spectators not to "indulge in too much coaching on the base lines when you are not playing in the games. Remember fellows we didn't have ball games last year. It is up to us to have them next year and the years following." Rowdyism in baseball in general, and prison baseball specifically, continued to cause upset into the 1920s. In 1915 the Village Trustees in Ossining wrote to the Warden to ask him to prohibit Sunday baseball on Sing Sing grounds. The Trustees wanted to impose the ban because residents complained that "rowdyism" at the games was disrupting the peace in the neighbourhood. The warden did not immediately respond to their request, however officials of the league went around to the inmate fans throughout the game to ask that they not root too loudly. Warden Osborne claimed that he had spoken with many Ossining citizens who were not opposed to Sunday ball playing. Osborne told the *New York Times* that he would eliminate baseball at Sing Sing if the trustees or any of the people in the area around the prison will suggest some other outdoor activity for the inmates.[93] The newspapers in Ossining are somewhat sympathetic to the complaints, but the *New York Times* writers, who do not live in the regions, were more interested in seeing baseball continue in the prison than in noise complaints in Ossining. Though prison administration and many on the outside supported baseball at the prison, the *Bulletin* and the *Star of Hope* continued

to issue reminders to inmates that their behaviour at the games would either ensure that the games continue or justify the games being cancelled.

Minor objections from a small number of locals notwithstanding, baseball at the prisons drew large crowds and integrated the prison into community life. Baseball at the prison was a fun social event for local citizens as well as the prisoners. The prison band played before the game and during the breaks, and other special events frequently took place around the games. At one of the games, for example, aviator George West flew over the field, giving many of the convicts and the visitors their first glimpse of an airplane. It also gave the local citizens a chance to see major baseball stars in action. Seeing the prisoners playing a sport that they love, with players that they admire, or reading about games at the prison in their local paper and in other prestigious publications changed the way that the public perceived the prisoner. Prisoners were no longer only associated with their crime or only thought of as prisoners. They were now athletes and sports fans too. Inmates were also proving themselves trustworthy, as they did not, aside from some typical baseball rowdyism, cause any trouble at the games. With only a minimal amount of official supervision, the inmates effectively policed themselves.

One case of an inmate pickpocketing a visiting baseball fan from the village, did, however, make national news. In the days that followed the incident, the *New York Times* published a letter to the editor that Thomas Mott Osborne had sent to the paper decrying the story's coverage in the *Times* and in other papers. He said that there was "considerable pleasant satire" printed but that most of the papers neglected some important facts about the case.[94] The neglected fact was that before 9 o'clock that same evening, one of the prisoners, the sergeant at arms of the Mutual Welfare League, had recovered the money and paid it in to the warden, who returned it to its owner the next day. The *Washington Post*, did make this fact the focus of their coverage of the incident, calling the article "Redeems Sing Sing's Honor: 'We Don't Want to Give Place Bad Name', Says Convict'.[95] *The Post*'s version is slightly different from Osborne's, as the *Post* claims that it is when the complainant started for the warden's office the young man in a convict's uniform told them that their valuables would be restored if they would not 'squeal' because such a story would give the prison a bad name. That there was only light ribbing in the press and that there was not a call for banning the games because of the incident, meant that the prisoners were not thought to be out-of-control malefactors and could be trusted to take part in activities with the general public. An article from the O.E. Library Critic from 1914 concludes

that baseball games at the prison show that prison reforms had been a success in terms of both reforming and disciplining prisoners. The article claims that "when out enjoying the game of ball you would not think they were inmates of a prison if you did not know it. They visit each other and laugh and cheer just as outside citizens enjoy the game."[96] The author notes a significant improvement in discipline at the prison since baseball was introduced, concluding that "this diversion has filled the place for which it was intended and has fully justified its continuance."[97]

As important political and cultural figures routinely showed up to catch a game, baseball gave the institutions and the inmates a certain amount of prestige. The games were also a good advertisement for the Mutual Welfare League and prison reform more generally. Arizona Governor George P. Hunt attended a game at Sing Sing in June 1915 after which he made a speech to the inmates praising the Mutual Welfare League and the Sing Sing administration, stating "your experiment in self-government is planting the standards of modern democracy on the enemy's last strongholds. It is the boldest sociological adventure in the human race." In 1917 ex-US Attorney General George W. Wickersham and Mr. J. J. Mallow from the Department of Industry attended a game, along with the prison warden Moyer, prison chaplain Father Cashin, and Dr. Barry, the prison physician. The prison keeper's son was the mascot for the game. The inmates knew that baseball was a way to generate support for prison reform and they were savvy in the way that they associated their playing baseball with worthy causes. In 1917 the Mutual Welfare League organized games to benefit various local and national charities. One such game was in August 1917, when the Sing Sing team played a game to benefit the American Red Cross. A *Star of Hope* journalist reporting on the game said that "'it pays to advertise' but as we have no funds for such a purpose, therefore we must secure publicity through clean and high class baseball playing."[98] The Spelke Baseball Club of Stamford, Connecticut, the best professional team in the State, responded to the advertisement in the *Star of Hope* for a team to play against the Sing Sing team for the charity game. The Spelkes brought with them hundreds of fans and a fair amount of national and out-of-state publicity for the Mutual Welfare League and their recreation program.

An extensive article in the *Star-Bulletin* covering the opening game at Sing Sing in April 1917 frames prison baseball as a way to prepare the inmates to join the war upon their release. In this way, baseball became a noble undertaking. The author argues that victory in great wars of the past, like the Battle of Waterloo and the current victories of the Allies over the Germans, are

down to soldiers being physically fit. The author claims that the soldiers' training on the baseball, cricket, and football fields would be the deciding factor of any war. By playing baseball, the inmates were gaining strength and health and were battle-ready, whereas under the old system they would have been wasting away and unfit for war. He notes that Sing Sing's record has only improved since Osborne introduced his reforms and that the public has supported the baseball team.[99] In a previous edition, the *Star-Bulletin* encouraged readers to donate money to support the team, focusing on baseball as a "clean, healthy sport"[100] and one that brings the inmates happiness and a break from a grim routine. The public heeded the call and combined with donations from the Warden's friends on the outside, the Mutual Welfare League had enough money to support the 1917 season. The season started with the flag being raised and the inmates saluting and cheering for their comrades overseas who are fighting for justice and democracy. The writer in the April edition thanks the donors for their contributions and assures them that their money was well-spent. About the health gained by all the inmates through baseball, the author declares that

> It is an asset to the state. It is a strength to the government. It is a credit to the administration. It is a noble thing. It is the epitome of the new understanding. It fits the men for the work the state has in store for them in the great struggle now under way. To call inmates from the slime and the darkness of the past would have been folly. To summon inmates who have had exercise, sunlight, good food and mental freedom, to any work that the sate and the country have for us to do, is to secure a valuable reinforcement. The great American wars will be won on the baseball fields, as the Battles of Waterloo and the Mare were won at rugby.[101]

The inmates were playing baseball as part of their patriotic duty and in solidarity with their brethren on the battlefield. The 1917 season ushered in a new recreation schedule, work would end at four o'clock, after which the inmates can exercise in the yard, and the men would have half a day on Saturdays and all day Sunday for recreation. In December 1919 the baseball editor for the *Sing Sing Bulletin* wrote an article to mark the end of the 1919 baseball season. He thanked the people who made it possible for the inmates to play and watch baseball during their confinement. He remarked that "baseball has been the key to many a day of happy enjoyment spent, which in days gone by was denied our fellow inmates."[102]

Baseball in prisons in New York continued into the 1920s. A widely reported race riot at a baseball game at Auburn prison in 1921 threatened the program at the prison, but ended instead

with the only the rioters being punished and the games proceeding as normal. The incident occurred during a game between the Mutual Welfare League and a local team. According the *New York Evening World*, a "group of negroes" standing to one side were rooting for the local team and not for the prison team. Members of the Mutual Welfare League team and their fans picked up ball clubs and sticks and started attacking the black spectators, who tried to repel the attack with nearby bricks. The prison guards eventually managed to repress the disorder using heavy clubs. Six inmates wound up in the prison hospital and thirty others were placed in isolation cells.

Lewis E. Lawes, who became the Warden at Sing Sing in January 1920 and ran the prison for twenty-one years, expanded the athletic programs at Sing Sing, believing them to be the best way to rehabilitate prisoners. Under his wardenship prisoners were allowed between three and four hours a day in the yard for exercise during the summer months. While he added football fields and handball courts to the prison grounds, baseball remained the central sport at the prison. Some of the games played in prison yards made history. In 1929 one of the games played at Sing Sing became part of baseball history and legend. That spring Babe Ruth played with the New York Yankees against the Sing Sing "Black Sheep." After already batting two home runs, Ruth hit a ball that went over the forty-foot prison wall, above the machine-gun toting guards, and past the York Central Railroad Tracks and landing just below the prison administration building. At 620 feet, it was the longest hit in baseball that had yet been recorded. Wire reports were sent out and newspapers across the country covered the record-breaking hit. A 'black sheep' infielder famously said "Gee, I wish I was riding out of here on that one!" about the hit.[103] The Louisville Slugger bat that Ruth used to make the hit was put up for auction in 2011[104] and sold for $110,000.[105]

Conclusion

The expanded sporting program and the attention that it received in the 1920s served Lewis Lawes' interests more than the prisoners'. In the period prior to 1920, the prisoners were running the show at the baseball and other games. The Mutual Welfare League athletic committee made it explicit that their mission was to use sports to raise awareness about prisoner self-government and prison reform. Lawes believed that the prisoners should be able to be more physically active and that they should have better conditions in prison, but he did not fully

support prisoner self-government. Once he became warden, he shrank the Mutual Welfare League's sphere of influence. The Mutual Welfare League persisted until 1929, but their power was limited to planning sporting and entertainment events. They no longer had their own courts or say over how the prison was run. Lawes also restricted the Mutual Welfare League's ability to promote its interests as Lawes himself became the spokesman for the prison. Lawes promoted his vision of prison reform on the radio program that he taped at Sing Sing and in his many public appearances. The inmates were happy to have the chance to spend more time playing and watching sports, but the prisoners were no longer able to use the platform that they had previously had through sport to advance their own vision of what prison could be.

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Chapter 4: Women in Prison

Writing in the *Star of Hope,* on April 4, 1903, the Auburn Editress, prisoner number 321, claims that the Auburn Prison for Women in New York State "has no history."[1] Compared to the institutions for male prisoners, which were established in the early nineteenth century, the Auburn Prison for Women, incorporated in 1893, was fairly new. The prison's newness married well with the idea among prison administrators that they were forging an institution that was distinct from the prisons of the past and from prisons in other states in the country. Theirs was a prison that was to be modelled according to the latest developments in new penology. This new approach to prisons and prisoners was to think of those within prison walls not as degenerates to be punished, but as wayward souls to be reformed and reintroduced into society as productive citizens. The prison housed mostly working class, immigrant women as well as a significant number of African-American women; between 1900 and 1920 black women made up a third of the prison population at Auburn.[2] The prostitutes, fortune-tellers, petty thieves, and murderesses in Auburn Prison for Women were to be moulded and trained by representatives of some of the most prominent progressive era reformers of the day. These women and men made frequent appearances at the prison, encouraging the inmates not to give up hope. They pointed to Christ as an example of strength in the face of adversity. Life in prison, however, was not limited to listening to lectures about self-improvement through work and earnest appeals to Christian virtue. Inmates in the Auburn prison were also given occasional tastes of the cultural activities that were popular in the city. Though physically excluded from what city life had to offer, the women at Auburn were watching films, reading magazines, listening to popular music on phonographs, and trying to shape their bodies using the latest techniques in physical culture. While the women and men who introduced leisure and cultural activities into the prison for the inmates considered many of these pursuits potentially dangerous for women in the city, the prison neutralized their threat. The sober and closely monitored environment meant that potential for music, film, and dancing's corruptive influences could be mitigated.

History of women's prison in New York

The separate Auburn Prison for Women was established after almost a century of scandals stemming from the women being housed alongside the male inmates and supervised by male guards. Contrary to the prevalent notion at the time, conditions for female inmates were harsh and physical punishment was common practice. Shortly after female inmates joined with the men's prison at Auburn in 1825, severe cases of cruelty against female prisoners became public. The Rachel Welsh case in particular became something of a cause célèbre for those who advocated for a more humane prison system. Rachel Welsh entered the prison in January 1825 and died a year later after having given birth to a child who had clearly been conceived while she was in solitary confinement. Public outcry over Welsh's death led to a Commission of Inquiry to be appointed to investigate the circumstances of her death and the conditions of her imprisonment. That she became pregnant was clear evidence of sexual abuse. The inquiry established that Ebenezer Cobb, a guard at the prison, had whipped Welsh frequently and severely. The commissioners concluded, however, that "the punishments inflected upon Rachel Welsh has no connection to her death."[3] Cobb was convicted of assault and battery and was fined twenty-five dollars, but was allowed to keep his job. A more pressing concern for the prison commissioners and government officials was what New York Governor DeWitt Clinton described as the "gross impropriety" of females being confined in quarters connected for prison for males. It took almost a decade for the state to offer a corrective to this impropriety. The delay was in part because of the valuable labour that female inmates provided to the men's prison and in part because the state did not have anywhere else to house the women. When the asylum for the criminally insane closed at Auburn in 1894, it solved one of the government's problems. The state authorized that the building be transformed into a prison for women that year. The women's new prison had 125 rooms and could accommodate as many as 250 women, enough to serve the entire state.[4] Shifting the female prisoners' locations gave the appearance that the state was addressing the problems that had been brought to public attention in the earlier years of the century, but the abuses and mismanagement persisted.

Prison Labour

Their state's other problem with moving women out of the men's prisons was solved by having the female inmates continue to do work that benefitted the whole prison system. Work

was one of the continuities between life for women in prisons adjacent to prisons for men and life in their own, separate institution, though their labour was structured in different ways. The early days of the new prison maintained the contract system that characterized prison operations in the northern states throughout the nineteenth century. The prisoners were essentially brutally exploited sweated labourers. Just as the public was outraged at the physical abuse prisoners suffered in the previous century, the public was now turning its attention and outrage to the appalling labour conditions in prison. The prisons were making enormous profits off of the backs of their captive workers, but mounting public pressure and the intense battles with organized labour forced the prison directors to abolish the contract system.[5] This meant that female inmates now had the choice as to whether or not to work. If they chose to work, their working conditions were much improved. Under the new conditions, the inmates were not as blatantly exploited as they had been under the old system. Their work was also restricted to that which would benefit the state. Labouring for private companies was no longer allowed.

Prison officials were concerned that lack of work would lead to moral degeneracy among the prisoners. Officials and reformers believed that labour had the potential to reform prisoners and to train them for jobs on the outside. As prisoner 321 points out, "on this account, the prison officials have always endeavoured to keep its inmates busy."[6] It would not have just been the inmates' moral character that worried prison officials. They were worried that without labour, managing the prison population would be a challenge. As much as prison officials promoted work as experience that would benefit the women when they left the prison, officials needed the inmates to work to maintain a certain structure to prison life. The work may have been optional, but the number of women working in prison shops suggest that the option to not work was perhaps not as optional as prison management claimed. In 1903, of the 119 inmates, 100 of them were working in the one of four areas, the work room, the laundry, the farm, and the kitchen. In the work room, called "the shop", the women produced furniture, mattresses, towels, and blankets for state institutions.[7] They also made clothes for women to have upon their release from prison. The inmates took the most pride in this particular task. In the laundry, women did all the washing for the warden, the matron, their assistants, and the inmates. Perhaps to draw a distinction between the old shop work and the shop work in the new environment, prisoner 321, in describing the work environs, emphasizes the seventeen large windows that provide both light and ample ventilation. As if to assure readers the sweated labour of the contract system was a

thing of the past, 321 claims that "it is as cool a place as can be found even when the thermometer is mounting up in the eighties."[8] She notes that discipline in the shop is very strict, but that it is justifiable because of the large number of inmates working together. While she gave details about the windows, the air quality, and all of the items produced in the work room, she did not provide details about the nature of the discipline in the shop.

Another change in prison labour was the creation of an elite group of workers who could labour outside of prison walls. In 1900 Superintendent C. V. Collins proposed that women take on farm labour.[9] Before the superintendent made his proposal, workmen from the Auburn prison were sent to do all of the garden work and lawn care. There were two large vegetable gardens as well as several flower gardens. Once the option was open to them, many women signed up to be part of the farm team. Women who took on this work became known as the "Farmerettes". The "farmerette" moniker was a badge of honour for these inmates. They even got a public profile when the *Star of Hope* devoted a column to their work called "Notes from the Farm." When writers reported on official visits to their prison, they frequently mention how the visitors are impressed with the beauty of the gardens. Those who worked on the farm and also wrote for the paper included "farmerette" in their by-line next to their prison number. The "farmerettes" remarked that they appreciated time outside of the prison and the chance to get fresh air. Prisoner 321 claims that "while the work of the farmerettes benefits every inmate, it does so in a greater measure, those who are employed in the work. Girls who were almost chronic invalids, after a month in the open air picked up, and grew strong and healthy."[10] The Farmerettes' improved health was a much-highlighted side benefit of the physical labour that they performed for the institution. Their work was not simply self-improvement. In addition to maintaining the prison's vast grounds and beautifying the prison landscape, the farmerettes provided food that was meant to feed the prisoners year-round. The women in the kitchen prepared all of the food for the inmates and the prison staff.

Prisoner Associations

As was the case in the prisons for men, abolishing contract prison labour forced prison administrators to think of new ways to structure prison operations. Physical punishment was officially forbidden, but the rules that governed the prison were cruel nonetheless. They were expected to exist in prison in total silence. The wardens feared that allowing the prisoners to

speak to one another would lead them to conspire with each other to plan escapes or rebellions. The inmates had to wear prison stripes, which indicated the prisoners' conviction record. Like the men, the female inmates were forced to march in lockstep when they moved around the prison to get to the mess hall or to the chapel. The lockstep was another way to prevent prisoners from communicating. While many prison reformers campaigned for the prisons to do away with these demeaning and psychologically damaging practices, many persisted in the new prison for almost a decade.

Despite the cruelty embedded in prison regulations, Mrs. Booth, the prison reformer to whom the Sing Sing prisoners affectionately referred as "Little Mother," proposed that a branch of the rule-oriented Volunteer Prison League (VPL) be instituted at the women's prison. The VPL was a system that would reward inmates for adhering to prison rules. Mrs. Booth promoted her League as potentially benefiting both prisoners and their caretakers. The Volunteer Prison League that Mrs. Booth founded with the inmates at Sing Sing in 1896 extended to the Auburn Prison for Women in 1900. Mrs. Booth had the prisoners come up with the name for the organization. The prisoners decided that the organization would be called The Volunteer Prison League, and that their motto would be "Look Up and Hope." They worked with Mrs. Booth on establishing the criteria for and benefits of membership. The principles worked out at Sing Sing became the guidelines for all chapters of the VPL across the country. Joining the VPL at the Auburn Prison for Women simply involved prisoners giving their names to the chaplain and agreeing to obey the VPL rules. The rules stipulated that the prisoner had to pray every morning and night; faithfully read the VPL daily spiritual guide; observe all prison rules and discipline; refrain from using bad language; earnestly seek to cheer and encourage other well-doing and right living prisoners; and to try where possible to make new members for the league . In prison, their reward for adhering to these instructions was receiving a "handsome" certificate and a little blue and white button emblazoned with a star and the League's motto.[11] According to an article in the *Star of Hope*, the VPL encouraged prisoners to set the intention to lead a better life in prison and when discharged. The anonymous reporter claimed the VPL "had the effect, wherever it has made its way, of aiding prisoners to look at things in a more hopeful, cheerful spirit, and the officials all say it aids the discipline of the various institutions to a marked degree."

Membership in the VPL offered prisoners benefits beyond a brighter spirit. The VPL helped prisoners when they left the prison gates. As part of her prison reform initiative, Mrs.

Booth founded "Hope Halls," refuges for newly released prisoners. Upon their release, men and women could stay at the Hope Hall where they would be given food, clothing, and a job. So whether the prisoners joined the VPL out of a desire to be closer to Christ or because of the substantial advantages that they could gain through membership, is not entirely clear. In 1901, one year into the VPL's existence at the Auburn Prison for Women, just under fifty prisoners, or less than half of the prison population, became members.[12] The VPL was nevertheless frequently covered in the *Star of Hope*. The articles about the VPL usually served to inform new prisoners about the organization and to encourage new inmates to join the League. As the writer covering the VPL for the paper indicates, it was not possible to encourage fellow inmates to become members without breaking prison rules. She does not specify what rule would be broken, but presumably it was the rule of silence in the prison. The *Star of Hope*, then, along with the visible symbol of the button, and Mrs. Booths' occasional visits were the only ways to recruit for the League. The article in the *Star of Hope* appeals to prisoners to join, saying,

> we wish that every girl here who has not already joined the league would do so and then if we all kept to the letter of the promises might we imagine that this prion would be a far pleasant place than it is now. True, a prison is always a prison, always a place where one would rather not be, but we can make it easier to each other if we will but try.[13]

Part of the writers' appeal to her prison-mates was that if they reached a certain number of members that they would be able to obtain permission to hold league meetings as they do in other prisons. She argues that the meetings would be a good source of inspiration and help. The VPL thus offered a way of circumventing the enforced isolation in the prison. Prisoners praised Mrs. Booth's initiatives and thousands of prisoners wrote her personally to thank her for making life in prison more bearable. The VPL, however, placed the onus of a well-functioning prison entirely on the prisoners. There was no equivalent organization for guards and wardens to promise to act humanely toward their wards. Implicit in the VPL message was that any disruption or unpleasantness in prison was the fault of inmates who were not following the rules. The rules themselves were not to be criticized.

While Mrs. Booth was involved in reinforcing prison discipline from the outside, matron Welshe was developing her own initiative from within. In March 1904, the Women's Prison Association of New York reported that matron Welshe organized her own society for prisoners at

Auburn called the "Society of the Red Badge of Courage" in 1903. Women who broke no rules for six months were eligible to become members and members who broke a rule have their membership suspended for six months. The society only offered limited benefits, they got to meet once a month, some kind of entertainment was provided at the meetings and they had a badge to identify them as members. This is one of the first instances of entertainment being used as a way to reinforce discipline. The inmate commemorating the society's first anniversary for the *Star of Hope* said that the inmates who are not part of the society are those who "choose to follow their own inclination to evil and thus miss the pleasure of the meetings."[14] With the reported membership in the society at between 51 and 38, over half of the prisoners were presumably following their inclination to evil and giving the society a miss. The *Star of Hope* writer included quotes from Miss Alice Woodbridge's assessment of the Society, which appeared in the the Annual Report of the Women's Prison Association of New York. Woodbridge claimed that the society was proving to be an effective disciplinary tool. According to her report, entertainment was what motivated the inmates to become members.

Women and the *Star of Hope*

When Sing Sing inmates were given permission to create and print their own newspaper, the *Star of Hope,* the inmates at the Auburn prison for Women were eager to be a part of it. After receiving the first edition of the paper women at the prison wrote to the editors of the *Star of Hope* pleading with them to allow the women prisoners a voice in the paper. On behalf of her fellow prisoners, inmate 189 writes the following:

> it has occurred to me, that, in you multitudinous duties, you may have forgotten that 'over the garden wall' is a bevy of prisoners of the gentler sex. Are they not to have a share of our four pages? […] We want our women's rights. If Auburn has four pages and Clinton four also, can't we have a woman's page? Or a woman's column, to say the least? We can write just as fine articles as the men, any day: and we think, with a little practice, we might do better. All we want is a chance! Aren't you going to give it to us?[15]

The editors of the paper responded to the plea with an enthusiastic

> certainly, 'gals', these columns are wide open to you. As much space as you can fill with original matter is at your disposal. […] the editor of the *Star of Hope* at Sing Sing says he will, if necessary, enlarge the paper to 20 pages for your

> especial benefit. […] Now we pay hear from all the Salomes, Agripinas and Messalians among you. We guarantee you a square deal.[16]

By the next edition, the "Women's Writes" column was introduced. The women's prison had a section in every edition of the paper until February 1917, when the *Star of Hope* transitioned into the *Star-Bulletin.* The *Star-Bulletin* was half the size of the *Star of Hope* and no longer had pages devoted to the different prisons in the system.

The severe restrictions on inmates communicating with anyone meant that, as with the prisoners in the rest of the system, the *Star of Hope* became a lifeline to the women at Auburn. Prisoner 591 expressed this sentiment in her letter to the editor praising the paper. She explained that the *Star of Hope* helped her to pass many a lonely hour, "for there are times when life seems sad, no matter which way we look at it, especially so in our present quarters."[17] In 1899, Superintendent C. V. Collins had conceived of the paper as a way for the prisoners to become civically-minded citizens of the world. The topics about which the female prisoners chose to write indicates that they were engaged in world events, popular culture, and, naturally, issues relating to prison reform. The writers and the inmate readers were enormously proud of their involvement with the paper. Equal in number to the comments about the *Star of Hope* reducing their isolation in prison were the comments that expressed the prisoners' gratitude for the chance to be made aware of current affairs and political issues around the world.

The writers and the readers' letters to the paper frequently pointed to the high quality of the writing and analysis that the paper offered. They also boasted about the quality of the paper's design and typography. Prisoner 321 was the editor of the Women's Writes section for its first several years. Her editorial, published in January 1901, she describes the hard work involved in putting the paper together. She claims that "no cleaner printed or better made-up paper is issued than ours. No other prison publication comes anywhere near it, and many first-class magazines printed in the outside world, are far inferior to the *Star* in these respects."[18] The comment that followed indicates another central purpose that the newspaper served for all inmates. She remarks that "as to the contents [of the paper], they certainly go to prove that many men and women of intelligence are behind the bars."[19] The *Star of Hope* gave prisoners an opportunity to present themselves to readers outside of the prison as respectable, well-informed, and, perhaps most importantly, normal. The paper provided a way for them to humanize themselves and to

counter the popular image of the prisoner as degenerate. Prisoner 274 details the sense of pride that she has in writing for the *Star:*

> Here I am writing for the *Star*. Though behind bolts and bard, forsaken and forgotten by all our fair-weather friends, yet we have the privilege and pleasure to write of the *Star*, and, sometimes seeing ourselves in print, it makes us feel mighty big. Why, you can scarcely believe it, but there was a time when our name in print made us feel smaller than a three-cent piece, and that's quite small, you know.[20]

The inmates' views and opinions were widely distributed, as the *Star of Hope* had exchanges with dozens of publications, including, the *New York Times*, *Scribner's, Ladies' Home Journal, McClure's*, *Century*, *Harper's*, and *Cosmopolitan.* She goes on to thank the Honorable Cornelius V. Collins for "giving a voice to those who hitherto have been unable to speak for themselves."[21]

Prisoner 321 regularly solicited articles from her fellow-prisoners, arguing that they needed to have their voices heard by people in the outer world to avoid being misunderstood by the public. This was their platform and they had to seize their opportunity to shape the public image of the prisoner. Inmates at the women's prison heeded 321's call for submissions, but it was a special notice appearing in the paper six months later suggested that not all of the articles sent in were actually written by prisoners. She urged potential writers to steer clear of pirating material and warned that those attempting to pass off the work of others as their own would be caught and would appear in the "plagiarist's rendezvous" section. 321 wanted to ensure that the paper maintain its integrity, and thus its solid reputation. She also wanted the paper to offer inmates who were not seasoned writers a chance to get published. She tried to use publication in the paper as a motivational tool for people learning to write claiming that "a little practise will enable you to make quite a showing and the study will do you a world of good."[22] She encouraged them to use the dictionaries available in every ward.

321's notice in June 1901 makes clear why the administration would have supported her as editress for the women's prison. She urged her fellow inmates to spend their spare time in something worthwhile rather than spending it "bemoaning your lot."[23] As can be seen in the letters to the editor that expressed gratitude for the paper, writing and being part of the larger community to which the *Star of Hope* gave them access, had a positive effect on the prisoners. The editor urging them to use the paper to prevent them from wallowing in self-pity shows that the *Star of Hope* was not to be a vehicle for criticizing conditions within the prison or prison administration. The tone of the paper was to be generally positive and uplifting. Much of the

praise for the *Star of Hope* from its inmate readers highlighted the paper's self-help quality. Prisoner number 567's comments about the paper expresses this sentiment:

> it is remarkable the uplifting and encouraging influence one derives by reading the many messages contributed to the *Star of Hope* when we, one and all, meet heart to heart on equal ground […] I am sure to find many helpful suggestions, respecting our future needs, from one who is ever willing, by kind words, to assist us in correcting our human errors.[24]

Her emphasis on taking responsibility and being pro-active to improve lot in life was similar to Mrs. Booth's approach to improving prison conditions.

Indeed, the guidelines from the editor in April 1907 specify that the tone must be kept as high as possible so as not to allow an article to appear that might hurt the feelings of any one who might read it. She goes on to explain that jokes relating to creed, race or colour would not be printed. Here we can get a glimpse into the editorial process. While racist jokes were banned, they were submitted for publication. The editress indicates that the rule forbidding racist jokes "may seem like stretching the point, and has led to the rejection of many contributions; but an ill-timed joke has caused many a heartache, as most of us can tell by experience."[25] Her concern seems to be more with the timing rather than the content of the joke. This hints to racial and ethnic conflict within the prison.

From the outset, the women contributing to the *Star of Hope* were announcing the importance of women's voices. Women writers regularly wrote about political and social issues that impacted women. Women's suffrage was extensively covered in the paper. Situated as they were just across Cayuga Lake from Seneca Falls, the inmates at the Auburn Prison for Women were in the geographical heart of the suffrage movement. Advocates for women's suffrage were regular speakers at the prison and the *Star of Hope* covered these events. Prisoner number 253 reported on Mrs. Miller of London's visit to the prison, a side-trip from her main visit to Washington DC for the Women's Suffrage Association convention. Mrs. Miller made a strong plea for women's right to vote. She explains that laws are necessary for keeping social order and that as long as we are bound by laws that "women ought to take equal part in making them with men."[26] Even though she admitted that the prospects of women gaining the vote were not great at the moment, she urged the women in the prison to not lose hope or to despair. Prisoner number 383 took this message to heart in her article "The American Girl in Politics." Mrs. Miller was primarily concerned with the unfairness of women not having the vote. 383, however, forwarded

an essentialist argument for women's suffrage on the basis of women's moral superiority. Though she was writing as a convict in a women's prison, she argued that "women's instincts are on the side of good, clean government, honesty and morality."[27] This was a theme in much of the writing about women gaining the right, with many of the inmates claiming that women voting would generally improve society. There was particular focus on claims that women's votes would bolster the temperance movement.

The articles about women's suffrage tended to highlight traditional notions of femininity, but the Women's Writes pages were filled with praise for women who had achieved in domains beyond the domestic sphere. Miss Leavitt was profiled for her research into magellanic clouds at the Harvard Observatory,[28] Madame Melba for being the first woman to earn a decoration for science, art and music by King Edward,[29] Mrs. H. H. each and Mrs. Knight Wood for their successes as composers,[30] mountain climber Miss Annie S. Peck for her attempt to climb the highest peak in the Andes as well as to visit the crater of Sahama, in Bolivia, the highest volcano in the world.[31] It is important to note that these short reports on women's achievements did not include information about their private life. The focus was solely on their accomplishments in their given fields. Countless articles advocated for women's increased role outside of the home. Women prison reformers, particularly Mrs. Booth, were roundly praised for their work on behalf of prisoners. While her nickname "little Mother" links Mrs. Booth with maternal qualities, it is her fierce determination to create social change that won the prisoners' admiration and respect. The inmates in both the men's and women's prisons had frequent visits from women who were clearly engaged in political and social actions outside of the domestic sphere.

Men and women used the *Star of Hope* to debate issues relation to women's place in society. Not all of the male inmates took a liberal view of women's place in society. Auburn prisoner number 26,640 wrote an article in April 1903 entitled "The Ideal Woman," in which he talks about living in the age of women's emancipation.[32] He sees women taking their places in business, politics, and the church and foresees a time when there will be women commissioners and post mistresses. He claims that women stand on equal footing with men at club or lodge meetings, the race track, the euchre table, the ballot box and the speaker's platform. He also sees women at the saloon drinking beer and cocktails, smoking cigarettes or pipes and staying out until after midnight. 26,640 goes on to discuss women's contributions to in religion and in history. It isn't until the second section of his extensive article that he makes his argument about

these changes clear. He claims that although women can make successful doctors, lawyers, capable sales-ladies or any professional, he "venture[s] to say that it is not their calling and I don't believe that an ideal woman can be found outside the home circle. 'Nobody can serve two masters' is nowhere more applicable than just here."[33] The master, of course, is the husband. He argues that women have lost interest in home life and that everyone is suffering because of it. The solution he proposes is that all daughters be instructed in the science of good housekeeping and that all else should be only a secondary concern. The women at Auburn prison took this article as a provocation and offered a rebuttal in the pages of the paper in the following edition. The women's page editor, 321 points to the 26,640's lack of a coherent argument and points to several contradictions in his article, including how he valourizes women who tend to the home but then names as ideal two women who abandoned home life to live for others. In her scathing critique of his article she claims to speak for modern women when she argues that

> the writer of the aforesaid article is mistaking the ideal woman for a slave, who lives only to serve her lord, and cook his food. She must have no interest of her own, no amusements, no thoughts, in fact must be a machine. Well, if that is his opinion of an ideal woman, it is safe to say, he will have a long hunt in this country before he will find one. Turkey will suit him better.[34]

This was not the first time that women writing for the *Star* used its pages to critique domesticity and gender inequality. In 1902, for example, prisoner 383 wrote an article in which she concluded that the conditions of married life are not conducive to happiness.[35] In her poem "Why?" prisoner 579 uses the biblical creation story to question why men are considered to be superior to women. She poetically points to evidence of male weakness in the story and closes her poem with the line that "even if they're created at first, to say I dare, that we were created with much more care."[36] Many men writing in the *Star of Hope* took a progressive view of women's roles. Auburn Prisoner 22,117 wrote an article in 1904 entitled "Women's Have a Right to Preach," in which he argues that women should be recognized for the work that they do in carrying god's message in slums, hell-holes of the earth, prisons and to "heathens in far distant lands."[37] Perhaps due to the active debate about women's rights between the male and female prisoners, the editor of the *Star of Hope* in 1904 made an editorial decision that he would reject all articles which "in any shape or form have a tendency to hold up to ridicule, or to condemn women."[38] While showcasing women as being capable, intelligent, hard-working and

accomplished, and criticizing men who disputed women's abilities outside of the home, the articles in the *Star of Hope* avoided critiquing systemic classism, racism, and nativism that did and would prevent many of the inmates from success outside of the prison. In staying true to the name of the paper, the writers tended to present an idealist version of American society that focused on the aspirational rather than the real.

As is the case with much of mass culture, the "Women's Writes" pages was full of contradictions and competing voices. While there is ample evidence of women being encouraged to engage in world affairs and to enter domains previously dominated by men, writing praising women for their special "feminine" qualities can also be found throughout the paper. There was an on-going tension between the rejecting traditional notions of femininity and commending women for adhering to these traditional ideals. For female inmates, reading about women climbing the world's highest peaks and achieving in science and politics must have been a peculiar experience. Achieving success in the public sphere was challenging for even white, native-born American women with the most social advantages. The inmates at the Auburn Prison for Women, most of whom were poor, recent immigrants or African-American with only the most basic education, and all of whom would be re-entering society as ex-convicts, the chances that they would match, or even come near the success championed in the pages of their own paper were slim.[39] The prison newspaper, however, gave many of the women a chance to take part in public civic discourse that they would not have had outside of prison.

One of the key areas that the writers avoided in the *Star of Hope* was criticizing conditions in the prison. They criticized how prisons operated in the past and often used conditions in their own prison as a counterpoint to the barbaric carceral practices of earlier times. The writers in paper, however, took credit for positive changes in the prison. A 1907 editorial explains that since the *Star* was founded the prison introduced parole law, abolished lock-step and hair cutting, did away with stripes and gave out honour bars. The editor argues that "the *Star of Hope* has been a potent influence in all these changes, no one can doubt."[40] Those who were reading the *Star of Hope* from their living room and who had no experience or knowledge of prison conditions would get an image of prison life that obscured its ugly side. No doubt the writers knew that an article criticizing the prison or those working within the prison would never get published, and that writing such an article might be interpreted as insubordination and therefore be a punishable offence.

One of the safe topics was fashion; and discussing the latest trends and giving style advice was a regular feature in the Women's Writes column. In 1901 an inmate writer advises her fellow prisoners not to neglect their looks while at Auburn and explains that it is still possible to look respectable behind bars. She notes that "the latest spring styles are stripes, as usual, but girls, that need not prevent us from trying to present a neat and tidy appearance at all times. A woman who wears her clothes as though they have been thrown on, will look slatternly even in silk and laces."[41] One of the ways that they could engage in fashion in a practical sense is when they imagined the released prisoner leaving the institution and being able to wear the clothes that are not out of date. Making clothing for their prison-mates was a way for them to help the newly released ex-convict present a proud face to the world. Some of the sewing in the shop was, in fact, for prisoners who were going home. The report from the shop in 1901 stated that five dresses, made of black cloth and trimmed with silk were made for the lucky women leaving Auburn.

Mostly, however, the fashion columns in the *Star* focus on the latest trends. They are not only offering this information to the inmate readers of the *Star of Hope* but also to the women on the outside who are reading their column through the newspapers exchanges with other publications. This is made evident when writing about spring fashions. The inmate writer notes that "of course, all the lady readers of the *Star of Hope* have already secured their Easter bonnets and dresses, but as they will undoubtedly require others before the season ends, the following fashion notes will probably be found useful." Here she is declaring herself to be an expert in fashion who is giving valuable advice to the lady who, while sorted for holiday-wear, needs insight as to the trends for the remainder of the spring. The writer and the intended reader are in remarkably different circumstances. The inmate writer, however, is able, through the exchanges with other publications, to keep on top of trends. The fashion writers often reference Parisian fashions and cite Parisian authorities, thereby giving themselves an air of sophistication and cosmopolitanism.

The inmates were presenting themselves as ladies engaged with other ladies on questions of fashion and style. The writers cover fashionable shades (brown, yellow, and orange in 1904, violent purple in 1910, coral and watermelon in 1911) and the trendy fabrics (mummy cloth is described as "*the* material for spring coats.").[42] They also pronounce on what is and isn't on trend. The hobble skirt, which allows the wearer to take steps no longer than three inches, is all

the rage according to the September 1910 column, but is declared to by on the way out in the December edition. [43] They declare that the Spring fashions will change to a Grecian style that will not emphasize the waist.[44] In 1911, hoop skirts were out and they report in the next season that hoops were moved to the sleeves, resembling "an old-fashion gas lamp in reverse."[45] The *Star of Hope* writers were not only informing readers about shifting styles, they also warned women against certain fashion fads. They provided stories of women who were ridiculed when they ventured to try out a new design, such as the account of a Parisian actress who wore what the writer in the *Star* declared a "fashion not" and a "freak garment," the harem skirt.[46] The actress had secured special permission to wear the item but was met with a storm of hisses which forced her to retreat backstage and change into something of more popular taste.

Hats were a particular obsession for the fashion columnists at the *Star.* They delighted in describing their colours, fabrics, and styles. In 1911, the writer advised that the most beautiful hats were adorned with buttercups, potato blossoms, and beet tops, but she was perhaps more excited about the double hat, which was, of course, of French origin, and featured an outer hat and a close fitting turban. This hat solved the problem, previously discussed in the paper, of the large hats in confined spaces, like elevators, hallways, and subways.[47] These areas were danger zones in which women regularly collided hats. In addition to providing women with information on up-to-the minute styles, they offered women on a budget creative ways of emulating the fashions. The grenadier hat, for example, was described as the chicest bit of headwear in 1911. The writer indicates that the hat, a rich dark velvet chapeau topped with a pompom made of 'bird of paradise' feathers – long pliable golden feathers tipped with specks of rich red, brilliant green and deep brown - is intended to be worn by young and pretty girls. She notes that "a very effective substitute may be made" using an antiquated policeman's helmet and a feather duster, the savings of which would amount to over fifty dollars.[48] The helmet and the duster would be transformed using liquid gold and red, blue, green and yellow paint, procured for little or nothing from any house painter. The writer promises her readers that "when the hat is put on the feathers will fall over the crown and the effect will be most charming."[49] Her message was that even those with limited means could be fashionable.

The women writing for the *Star* and their inmate readers used the fashion column as a way to vicariously experience living as an upper class lady or, at least, dressing like one. Kathy Peiss, in *Cheap Amusements,*[50] and Nan Enstad, in *Ladies of Labour, Girls of Adventure,*[51]

address the ways in which working class women in the early twentieth century used popular culture to expand their presence in the public sphere, which had previously been a largely male domain. Both are seminal texts but they focus on different cultural practices. For Peiss, leisure, which included going to dance halls, movie theatres, and Coney Island, offered women the chance for women to forge new identities. She argues that these new identities were a mark of independence as they were not dictated by their families, and that they symbolized a reaction against the exploitative conditions of their labour. Enstad focuses her attention not on popular culture as a means of escaping their exploitative working conditions, but rather on how popular culture, including fashion and dime novels, provided women with what she calls a "working ladyhood" that challenged middle class arrogance and emboldened them to form or join labour unions and actively protest their working conditions and demand change.

The women locked up in Auburn had a relationship with popular culture that falls somewhere between these two perspectives. Most of the inmates were from working-class backgrounds, and over ninety percent of the women in the prison were, indeed, workers. They worked in the shop, the laundry, the farm, and the kitchen. This was hard, repetitive, and unsatisfying work. The prison offered only a few entertainment opportunities, especially in the first decade of the twentieth century, but prisoners were grateful to have any access to popular culture or entertainments. The prisoners eagerly awaited these opportunities and relished them when they were held. Like the women that Peiss describes, leisure offered them the chance to temporarily take on a different identity. The prisoners were closely watched and their leisure time tightly regulated, but they could, for a brief time, be an audience member, a singer, or a dancer, athlete, or a party-goer rather than simply a prisoner and a labourer. Musing or reading about the latest fashions in Paris and New York, watching a movie, playing baseball, or dancing the cakewalk, allowed them to forget about their miserable lives in the prison and have a little bit of relief from their near total subjugation. Peiss claims that in the city, working women used fashion in a playful way, inventing their own versions of both rich women's fashions and prostitutes' wardrobes. Enstad argues that when working women were wearing French heels and elaborate hats as they took to the streets to strike or to demand the vote they were asserting their respectability, despite the fact that the middle-class women interpreted their fashion choices as evidence of working women's frivolity.

In prison, there is evidence of both of these possibilities. The inmates enjoyed dressing up whenever they had the chance, and the *Star of Hope* writer's instructions for making the grenadier hat show that when they wore non-uniform clothes or interpreted fashion trends, it was certainly playful. When inmates wrote about fashion for the *Star of Hope* they did attempt to align themselves with the rich women who could afford to shop for the latest fashions. In assuming the role of expert, doling out advice to ladies about bonnet styles for spring when they are locked away, covered in kerosene and forced to wear clothes that make them look like overgrown children or slaves, they were trying to create as much distance from their wretched lives as they could. They were, in essence, declaring themselves to be respectable. In much the same way that the women in Enstad's analysis were trying to counter pre-conceived notions about working women's lack of respectability, the prisoners at Auburn were determined to counter prevailing notions about female prisoners as being dangerous, dirty, and crude.

Unlike the women workers in the city, who could leave their workplace at the end of the day, the workers in the prison making mattresses and sewing blankets obviously had no such option. They also could not choose their amusements, as they were at the mercy of the matrons and what they deemed to be acceptable entertainment. Part of the freedom for working women in the city was in choosing how they spent their time. They were choosing places like dancehalls, movie theatres, and amusement parks, all of which were linked to sex and alcohol. Middle class reformers tried to put a stop to women's carousing. Fuelled by panic, they organized wholesome and educational activities to try to lure working women away from the dangers and the corruptive potential lurking in popular entertainment venues. It should not be a surprise that these safe and tame amusements were far less popular than their edgier alternatives. Much like the Volunteer Prisoner League, the reformers tried to make joining in their activities more appealing by attaching benefits to attendance at their events. Women who became members of church groups or respectable secular groups for working women could, in addition to attending social events that they put on or entertainments that they showcased, could also have access to insurance coverage and employment referrals. In terms of entertainment, the prisons were in a quasi religious/secular social group. The inmates' had to accept that their social life in prison would largely be on the matron's terms. Their choices were limited to whether they would join the activities or remain in their rooms.

The matron did not limit recreational activities to the purely educational or the pious, though many of the events were designed to provide moral uplift. In comparing Auburn prison to a institution in Los Angeles for reforming discordant girls, which had become known for their innovative practices, the Women's Writes editress, prisoner 321, in 1901 found that Auburn was just as innovative in its approach to reform. She explains that music, both instrumental and vocal, and physical culture training are two of the Los Angeles' institution's principal reformative measures. Music and physical training are cited as being recognized as being particularly helpful in alleviating "nervous hysteria."[52] Prisoner 321 claims that Auburn and the reform institution on the opposite coast are operating on parallel lines, as matron Welshe agrees with the reform principles and has instituted these measures at Auburn. Music, she claims, is where Auburn has excelled. She explains that the inmates were always spirited when singing at church, but really shone when matron Welshe organized all of the inmates into a choir. The core choir, was composed of eight prisoners. The inmate chorists had one hour of practice in the week and the sang hymns for an hour on Sundays during the church service, led and accompanied by Miss Copp, the organist.[53] They also performed at special services for Easter and Christmas. The choir served an additional public relations purpose. 321 claims that "the result is surprising to strangers who attend the chapel"[54] and that visitors "invariably mention" the choir during their visit. By 1902, though, the organist and choir leader was an inmate. Prisoner 387, writing in the "Higher Life" column for the woman's page of *Star of Hope* credits the choir with providing uplift to all in the prison.[55]

Outside reform organizations also visited the prison to provide what they believed would be wholesome and uplifting diversions. Members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union came to Auburn twice a year and provided them with entertainment and presents. An article in the *Star of Hope* from January 1905 details the holiday entertainment that the women of the WCTU curated for the prisoners. Every Christmas, the WCTU provided gifts for each inmate, usually consisting of a box of candy and a calendar featuring biblical passages and inspirational quotes. The article reported on the visit and provides the program for the entertainment. In keeping with the idea that music had reformative powers, the program highlighted singing. Several of the WCTU women sang solos but Mrs. Beckman entertained the crowd by whistling hers. They were at some point were joined by children who sang amusing songs, including "Tommy was a Bad, Bad Boy." In between the singing there were some recitations, one of which

the inmates insisted be recited four times. A WCTU member reading a chapter from the bible and a young gentleman from the theological seminary in Auburn led the women in prayer rounded off the evening's entertainment.[56] Though no doubt pleasant, this was hardly a rollicking good time. Their second visit of the year was sometime in the summer, and the occasion came to be known as 'Flower Day'. On 'Flower Day', the WCTU women bring baskets of flowers for the prisoners and provide entertainment, very similar to that provided at Christmas. There was singing and usually children came to join in the festivities. To put a positive spin on the fairly tame entertainment, the inmate reviewer notes that "no fireworks were indulged in and consequently there were no serious accidents in our big family."[57] The Salvation Army occasionally sent representatives to the prison to 'entertain' the inmates. The entertainment was always linked to their religious mission. In June 1907, for example, Captain Kemp of the Salvation army came to the prison with the Jones sisters. Kemp conducted a religious service and the Jones sisters sang liturgical songs. The entertainment portion of the day involved a illustrated lecture on the salvation army, its founder and work, which the *Star* writer claims was "most interesting, instructive, and entertaining."[58]

Other visitors went to the prison to give inspirational speeches to the inmates. One recurring guest was Mrs. Kimball. She came to the prison and offered her counsel about how to improve their lives, and outside of the prison she worked to provide clothing and employment for released prisoners. The writers in the *Star* speak highly of her and recount being moved when she came to speak, but it is clear that she rarely came to the prison. In 1901 a *Star* writer writes about her fond memories of Kimball's visit in 1900.[59] In 1907, when eulogizing Mrs. Kimball, the author remembers when she was last in the prison, in 1905. Though she was not often at the prison, she was an important figure therein, partly because almost every autumn for a ten years, she sent each prisoner a basket of grapes.[60]

Some of the other visitors provided secular diversions that were not linked directly with reforming the prisoners. Mrs. Ida B. Judd, a renowned elocutionist, provided, according to prisoner 321, "one of the most pleasing entertainments ever given at this institution."[61] Perhaps the reason that it was so entertaining was because it was organized, in collaboration with matron Welshe, by a former Auburn inmate. The event was an Easter surprise for the prisoners. The former inmate chose Mrs. Judd for her ability to give happiness to others. She delivered what she called an "old-fashioned bouquet of stories,"[62] designed to cheer and encourage, included a story

by Rudyard Kipling and an selection from George Eliott's book *Adam Bede*. 321 explains that it would be "impossible for us to […] express how much we enjoyed the performances." The inmates were so excited to have visitors that they even reported on visitors that they did not actually see. Marietta Holley, an author, visited the prison in 1903. The *Star* reported that "the State Prison for Women had recently the honour of a visit from one of New York's most distinguished residents, and one who, all unknowingly, has given the inmates of this institution many pleasant hours."[63] While the *Star* indicates that while Miss Holley was impressed by the prison, she did not have time to address the prisoners. Even though the prisoners did not get the chance to meet the author, her visit nonetheless lent the prison some prestige and the prisoners some connection to the distinguished guest, both of which explain why the writer chose to report on a visitor that the inmates did not meet.

The matrons also invited guests who were not so distinguished and entertainments that were more boisterous than the recitations and choral concerts. The matrons and guards working at the prison were not part of the cultural elite. They were working class women themselves and so would have been familiar with working class amusements. Being in charge of cultural programming in the prison allowed them to bring in entertainments with which they were familiar and about which they could get excited. The prison, after all, was a large part of their lives as well. The entertainments in the prison in many ways mimicked amusements in the city. The matrons permitted entertainments that were connected to moral panic in the city – the dancehall, the movie theatre, and the vaudeville show. What was dangerous about these amusements in the city was that they were linked to sex. At the dancehall, working class women's "rough dancing" was considered too sexual. As many of the working women had only minimal spending money, many of these women had to rely on men to "treat" them, and that this "treating" came with expectations attached. At the movie theatre, the darkness provided opportunities for illicit sexual activity.[64] The vaudeville shows were seen as being just as dangerous. In prison, however, these activities did not carry the same risks.

In the first decade of the 1900s, many of the entertainments at the prison unfolded in much the same way as vaudeville shows in the city, with amusements ranging from popular songs, excerpts from stage plays, moving pictures, minstrel shows, magic shows and dancing. An article in the *Star of Hope* in 1900 provides some details about their Thanksgiving celebration. The writer explains that after breakfast they went to the chapel where Miss Grace Copp had

prepared. "Upon the platform with our entertainers were seated the Chaplain and our Matron, both of them being as interested in the forthcoming treat as we were ourselves."[65] There were three guest performers in addition to Miss Copp. The most popular was a young singer, who, though she was too young to have children, more than convincingly sang about the travails of motherhood. She was encored numerous times. Also on the program were old-time Scotch ballads and a dialogue in song about a husband and wife having a violent fight, which is resolved by the end of the piece with the husband giving 'wifey' enough money for a new bonnet. After the guests departed the matron called on the "home" talent to come forward. And, according to the *Star of Hope,* there was no shortage of such talent:

> Volunteers were plenty and we had coon songs, ragtime songs, sentimental songs, and an old-time chorus. A jig was then called for, and three of the 'girls' showed their comrades how jigs are danced. Two brunette ladies form New York, who are temporarily stopping at Hotel Welshe, then tripped upon the platform and produced affine article of the genus cakewalk. […] This overflow entertainment lasted for two hours, and all the girls agreed that the Matron was 'certainly good to us'. And then we went to dinner.[66]

On the menu for their holiday dinner was chicken fricassee, mashed potatoes and brown gravy, white bread and butter, New York state cream cheese, café au lait, pumpkin pie, fruit, nothing like stale bread and gruel that Doty was given during her stay. July Fourth was one of the other days for festivities at the prison. The celebrations for July Fourth in 1901 followed the same pattern as the Thanksgiving Day proceedings in 1900. Miss Copp again organized the guest vocalists, this time including a couple who sang a duet in Italian and again, the more raucous party started when the guests left. Once the guests were gone, matron Welshe "opened the ball" to the prisoners. Prisoner 321 reported on the event for the *Star* and noted that the inmates sang song after song when they were given the run of the chapel. The performance came to a close at noon with the Georgia cakewalk by a couple of the inmates. Welshe maintained this pattern of having the inmates' make their own fun when the invited guests left throughout Welshe's tenure as Matron. As a writer in the *Star* indicates, "Mrs. Welshe gave us the 'cue' and we started in to have a good time among ourselves."[67]

The good time that they had amongst themselves always involved dancing, including waltzes, square dances and jigs. They also did recitations and sang. Writing about the 1901 Thanksgiving celebrations, the inmate writer says that when they are have the floor the women

would talk to each other so much that "you couldn't hear yourself think. We enjoyed this part of the entertainment more because of this seldom granted privilege, and made the most of the time."[68] Inmates babies' who were still living in the prison were also a part of these festivities. Often the parties would last five hours, and they usually took place during the day. In 1906, the varied program, included illustrated songs, moving pictures, piano solos, songs and dances, all interspersed with *The Gypsy Queen* opera, which had recently played at the Burtis Opera House in Auburn. The writer for the *Star* expressed her thanks to the opera singers for "giving us a glimpse of the theatre."[69] The inmates got another glimpse into the theatre world for the Thanksgiving festivities in 1908. Inmate 504 describes the prisoners feeling transported to New York's Metropolitan Opera House as they listed to their guests sing selections from Verdi's "Il Trovatore." These selections were interspersed with clog dancing, a skit involving Mr. Walton imitating several characters of different nationalities approaching the New York harbour and the Statue of Liberty, an impersonation of a slave dancer, and an illustrated story about dogs fighting.[70]

The Auburn City Minstrels and the Monday Musical Club of Auburn were regular guests at the prison. They came a couple of times a year from 1901 to 1909. They entertained the inmates for hours at a time with songs, jokes and dancing. They usually appeared at the women's prison around the same time as they appeared at the men's. Prisoner 321 describes the men in the show as being "four 'coloured' minstrels,"[71] the quotes around coloured indicating that the men were, in fact, white men in blackface. They juggled, performed acrobatic feats, and clog danced. The minstrels tried to involve the inmates in their shows as well by inviting them to sing along to the choruses if they happened to know the tunes to the popular songs that they were singing. Coon songs were another staple in the minstrel shows. 321 describes that one of the minstrels sang "a genuine coon song, 'I'm Going to Live Anyhow Until I die."[72] The Auburn Juvenile Minstrels often joined the regular minstrels on their prison tours. They too sang coon songs and danced the cake walk. In 1901 three-year old minstrel stole the show with his rendition of "Coon, Coon, Coon" and his dancing. The minstrels, including the three-year old returned for a performance at New Year's 1902. That entertainment included an orchestra of five people plus piano accompaniment as well as someone doing magic tricks.[73]

The 1902 Thanksgiving entertainment was less boisterous, but included some race-based comedy, the highlight of which was titled "Mrs. Maloney on the Chinese Question performed by

Miss Owen. Miss Owen was a particular hit for her "side-splitting dialect recitation."[74] Such race-based comedy was always cited as being a particularly amusing part of the entertainment at the prison. One of the performers who came to the prison for a show in the Fall of 1903 was celebrated for his admirable rendition of "negro dialect". "The only trouble with the black-face comedians," the writer in the *Star* notes, "is that they were here too short a time."[75] There is no evidence that any African Americans were invited to entertain the inmates. The first reference to African Americans being brought in to Auburn prison for women was for the Independence Day Celebrations in 1910. The members of the Coloured Zion Baptist Church and their Jubilee Singers formed the second half of the day's programming. After complimenting Mrs. Gard Foster and her company for their fine singing in the first half of the program, inmate 685 gave the Zion Baptist Church singers a positive review, saying that their part of the program carried out the sentiment in the "old-fashioned southern way."[76]

On occasions when outside entertainment could not come to the prison on days reserved for celebrations, the women in the prison had the opportunity to showcase their own talents. The entertainers who were meant to come to the prison for the July Fourth festivities were not able to come to Auburn because there was a quarantine. In place of outside entertainment, the Women's Writes editor, number 321, applied her talents to creating a museum experience for her fellow prisoners. She took magazine images and materials she could find around the prison as well as some items that the matron purchased for the event, to create an exhibit inspired by book titles. Her studies were funny, creative, and intelligent, though occasionally racist, distillations of book titles: for *Fair but False,* a doll with a flaxen wig; *The Pathfinder,* a small shovel; *The Skeleton in the Closet,* a hoopskirt; *A Cause for Tears,* an onion; *Black Beauty*, a hideous black rag doll, dressed in pink. The final piece was called "The Most Distinguished Citizens in Auburn," which would only be revealed when the viewer pulled back a curtain. Behind the curtain was a mirror. Prisoner 387 writes in the *Star of Hope* that the curator was creating a "burlesque" in mimicking an art gallery exhibit. She transformed the Bertillon room, the first site at which prisoners are stripped of their humanity, into the gallery. She provided the gallery-goers with a catalogue containing the names and numbers of the one hundred and forty-eight "studies" that she had set up around the room. The space was small and only a half a dozen prisoners could be in the makeshift gallery at one time. This created a sense of excitement in the prison comparable to the anticipation surrounding an art gallery opening in the city. Those waiting their turn to view the

exhibit or those who had already been through went to the chapel where they sang and danced.[77] While the inmates enjoyed the gallery and the festivities in the chapel, the day's celebrations were short-lived, with everything wrapped up by one in the afternoon, after which time, 387 notes, "the prison was silent and we spent the rest of the day wishing we were at Coney Island."[78] At the end of her report on the days' events, 387 hints that the prisoners' creativity was being stifled behind bars. She claims that "the girls here possess enough talent to have given quite an entertainment, and that would have been done had it been possible to have rehearsed, but circumstances did not allow it."[79] Common refrain in the writing about the events at the prison – that they are surprisingly good despite not having the chance to rehearse.

Not all of the entertainments required rehearsals, as some were delivered through technology. The prison officials were keen to keep their institution modern. Part of being a modern prison was bringing in the latest entertainment equipment. In 1901, Matron Welshe arranged for Mr. E. R. Sevens of the Wegman Piano Company to bring in an Edison phonograph, which the editor in the *Star of Hope* describes as being one of the finest of its kind. The inmates listened to selections on the phonograph for over an hour. The writer described hearing the instrumental music, duets, solos, and choruses as "so plain it seemed impossible, almost, to believe the instrument wasn't alive."[80] Guests often brought phonographs as part of their entertainment offerings, but in September 1910, the Superintendent C. V. Collins provided Auburn prison with a brand new Victor machine. The Superintendent framed the Victor machine as a gift to reward the inmates' good conduct and to offer them a chances to "know pleasure."[81] Matron Welshe was in charge of the gramophone and introduced "gramophone concerts" at the prison. She seemed to enjoy playing the dj. In her report on the inaugural concert in the *Star of Hope* 595 hinted at having been worried that the Matron would only play church music. She remarked on being surprised at the range of the Matron's selections. Besides church music, Welshe played barn dances, rag time songs, military marches, and romantic ballads. In praising the prison's new acquisition, 595 exclaims that the songs "properly freed our minds from the incubus that results from the perpetual monotony" and that with the gramophone, "sunshine has come into the prison."[82] From that point on, the gramophone became an integral part of prison life. The chaplain began to use the machine enhance his talks to the inmates and the chapel became a place where the inmates could hear the latest hits from the world outside the prison and the songs that made them nostalgic for their time beyond the prison walls. According to 595, the

prisoners were happy to adhere to prison rules if gramophone concerts were the reward for their good behaviour.[83]

The prison officials followed the same course with the moving picture projector that they did with the gramophone. Starting in 1906, film screenings became a staple in the prison entertainments. The two technologies were quickly linked. Often, the entertainers who brought the moving pictures also brought someone who played the piano alongside the film. Other times, the gramophone to provided a soundtrack to the moving picture. Just as the early venues for movie-watching were not purpose built, the venue for watching movies at Auburn was the chapel. Films were not shown in isolation, and were interspersed with other entertainment. In the same way that the gramophone selections at the prison were not limited to church music, the film selections were not limited to the educational or the moralistic. The films screened at the prison are the same that would have been screened at nickelodeons or at vaudeville theatres in the city. The first films included *History of a Pair of Trousers, The Election – Black Ballad, The Obstinate Drunkard, Mr. Newlywed Invites Him Out to His Home,* and *Dream of a Welshe Rarebit Fiend*. They were by turns surreal, comical, and romantic. Steven J. Ross argues that when working-class people in the city watched movies "surrounded by people who laughed when they laughed and cried when they cried, movie neophytes felt less alone, less alienated than before."[84] The women in prison, who are not allowed to speak with one another, must have felt this sense of connection even more acutely than the lonely factory workers on the Lower East Side. What would have been different with the prison cinema compared to the cinemas was the sense of danger attached to it. As mentioned earlier, prison had a way of neutralizing the dangers that many middle-class reformers associated with urban recreational activities. Whereas the movie theatre in the city was linked to vice and involved audience behaviour that was an affront to middle-class ideas about decorum in public behaviour, the audiences in prison were tightly controlled. The inmates could not yell at the screen, get rowdy, or engage in any sexual behaviour. If they did, they would be banned from any further movie screenings and could face severe punishments, including isolation. In this way, the movie-going culture in prison had only the parts that the middle class reformers saw as having reformative potential.

Reformers in the city who criticized movie-going culture praised it for at least luring people away from the more dangerous saloons and dancehalls. The prison officials, like the reformers, were trying to lure movie goers away from vice, as what they considered morally

depraved acts were taking place in the prison wards and not in the chapel. This also meant that the control that audiences had in the urban theatre to transgress middle-class boundaries of behaviour, was decidedly absent. One of the other ways in which the prison theatre differed from its counterparts outside of the institution was in having a thoroughly mixed audience. As the makeshift theatres tended to be small and in ethnic neighbourhoods, the theatres tended to cater to particular ethnic groups, thereby creating kinds of community centres. When people ventured to theatres outside of their neighbourhoods, they encountered people of different ethnic groups, but rarely of different races. When African Americans left the theatres in their neighbourhoods, they were usually regulated to the balcony areas, and there was little or no interaction between people of different races in this context. The women at Auburn were racially mixed, with all inmates, watching the film together. However, the prisoners' ability to interact with their fellow prisoners was too limited to allow for any meaningful interaction between them. Indeed, the real integration was happening in the workrooms. It was this problem that the films were partly designed to control.

Prison officials, including matron Welshe, believed that exercise would to help prisoners to stay on a moral path. Like physical culture in the men's prisons, physical culture at the Auburn Prison for Women was in the early years involved more theory than practice. When prisoner 321 claims, in 1901, that Auburn prison was as modern as a new reform institution in Los Angeles, she points to matron Welshe's commitment to promoting physical culture among the prisoners. She does, however, point out the commitment had not as yet been turned into an actual program, though she assures the readers that such a program will be implemented in short order. Meantime, the editress recommends to her readers that the inmates follow the advice, which appeared in the *Star* in an article entitled "Health and Strength," because, she claims, "most of the ills to which humanity is heir are caused by insufficient exercise."[85] The physical culture plan that matron Welshe had reportedly been developing never did materialize. The only references to the practice are in the pages of the paper, and even then, do not appear with any regularity. The articles that did appear generally reported on trends in physical culture without advocating that the inmates take up the physical pursuits. An article in September 1904, for example, informs the readers that Jiu-Jitsu, long practiced by "our Japanese sisters" is now part of being an "up-to-date America girl."[86] She claimed that girls disciplined in the martial art were able to match men of similar builds. The writer goes on to explain that a healthy physical culture

regime would include regular sleep, lots of fresh air, both day and night, an ample diet, regular outdoor exercise, abandoning the corset, and plenty of inward and outward applications of cold water. Besides abandoning the corset, it would have been almost impossible for the inmates at Auburn to follow any of these recommendations. The prisoners got very little fresh air, only walked around the prison yard occasionally, and, aside from special occasions did not have a healthy, varied diet. That the inmate would be writing about the latest fitness fads and giving advice about maintaining a healthy body when she or her fellow prisoners could not hope to take the advice or take part in the trend speaks to the idea that the inmates used the paper as an imaginative tool and as a way of feeling part of the outside world. By asserting themselves as experts, they could also claim some measure of authority that they are denied outside the pages of the *Star of Hope.*

Much of the advice regarding physical culture in the *Star of Hope* was printed outside of the Women's Writes pages. Many of the articles in the physical culture column could be, and indeed were, useful for both men and women. The column explained different exercises including stretching and breathing techniques. In 1909 Sing Sing 57,261 wrote a Physical Culture column specifically for women. In his lengthy article he tries to debunk the idea that women do not need to exercise. He claims that any woman can make herself healthy, graceful and even increase her personal charm through exercise. In describing a physically fit woman he says that "besides escaping the bodily tire and exhaustion, look at the happiness it brings her in the exhilaration which comes with ruddy health, in feeling that she is easily equal to whatever comes, being a stranger to indigestion, nervousness, and all its kindred ailments."[87] The women at Auburn seemed to take these messages to heart. Every April the *Star of Hope* produced an anniversary issue in which they looked back over the year and reflected on how the paper has positively contributed to prison life. The physical culture section is consistently praised as one of the paper's highlights. This is true for the female convicts as well as those in the men's prisons. For the Women's Writes page in 1907, the editor solicited reader comments about the paper and almost all of those who submitted letters mentioned the physical culture column as one of their favourites. The reader entries described how the paper made them feel connected to the rest of the world and that they thought that it was important for them to be informed about current events. The physical culture section, though, is credited with making the prisoners feeling physically fit. Prisoner 567, who calls herself a "student of the physical culture exercises the *Star*

gives" and she claims that they do her "a great deal of good."[88] Prisoner 595 claimed that physical culture was part of her life before she entered prison and that it continued to be part of her life at Auburn. About the physical culture column she asserted that "that page alone is of inestimable value to me."[89] Neither prisoner explains what she meant, precisely, whether the exercises help her mentally or physically, but the page was meaningful in some way. Whether the prisoners did follow the exercise regime detailed in the column is almost irrelevant. In prison they did not have freedom of movement and their bodies were under management's control. The column allowed them to recollect when they had this kind of control or to look forward to a time when they would have this control again. The column was a kind of fantasy of physical culture.

Welshe Exposed

Matron Welshe did not deliver on her promise to provide the inmates with increased exercise, but she did introduce rewards for prisoners in the form of entertainment. Welshe, however, also meted out harsh punishments for perceived subordination. Her brutal methods were not covered in the pages of the *Star of Hope*, but evidence from her trial and dismissal provide details about the side of prison life that the prison paper could not. In June 1900 a writer in the *Star of Hope* provided a brief biography of matron Welshe and explained how she came to be appointed matron at the Auburn Prison for Women. According to the *Star*, Annie Welshe came to the women's prison having worked in the pavilion for the insane at Bellevue hospital for twelve years. Though Welshe had retired and was living in New York City with her daughter, the Superintendent of Prisons managed to recruit her for the matron position at the new prison for women.[90] Reading between the lines of her profile in the *Star of Hope,* it is clear that Welshe ran a tight ship. The writer explains that all letters, both in coming and outgoing, passed through her hands, and that she singlehandedly did all of the clerical work for the institution. She also detailed how Welshe personally attended to the daily accounts of the health, conduct, and work of each prisoner, and "seldom forgets a request or anything that is called to her attention connected with the establishment."[91] The writer credits Welshe with maintaining discipline at a high standard. Putting a positive spin on Welshe's disciplinary record, the writer claims that "any inmate who manifests a desire to reform and keeps her record clean, finds in the matron a true friend indeed."[92] What those who are not seen as having a desire to reform might find in Mrs. Welshe is not detailed in the article. An article in the "Women's Rights" pages from April 1903,

more directly suggested that Welshe's punishments were harsh. The article's author places the blame for these punishments squarely on the prisoners who break the rules, claiming that it is "her own fault if at the end of her time she finds from ten to fifty days must elapse before she can be set at liberty."[93]

Matron Welsh's harsh punishments did not deter, and might have even provoked, a prisoner from brutally attacking her in 1904. The female convict beat the matron almost to death with a chair.[94] Despite, or perhaps because of her experience, Welshe continued in her position as prison matron and became recognized as an expert in prison discipline for women. In 1907 she authored an article on the subject for the National Prison Association wherein she states that twenty years of practical prison experience had taught her that "theory and sentiment have no place in prison discipline."[95] She had no patience for people who had never been in a prison environment theorizing about the ways that prison should run. The lack of sentimentality that she encouraged would have been necessary to impose the punishments that she recommended. According to Welshe, serious infractions must result in solitary confinement with no means of employing mind or body and with a limited diet. She said that this should not be carried too far, as a prisoner with a broken spirit "is soon a fit subject for the insane asylum."[96] While she claimed that it would be ultimately counter-productive for prison management to break a prisoner's spirit, she suggests that the forced isolation should last anywhere from one to several months.

The inmates evidently did not share her view that isolating people for several months with barely enough food to survive was anywhere close to humane. It was this very practice that eventually led to Welshe resigning from her position at the prison. Attorney Patrick McLaughlin was retained by a society in New York to investigate alleged cruelties in the prison.[97] The first involved a "coloured" prisoner who was, as punishment for an infraction, locked in a cell over the heated laundry for over ten days during a hot spell and was only released when she threatened sue the prison for unlawful confinement. The second case was over a "coloured" inmate who was penalized for looking sympathetically at a young girl prisoner. Before McLaughlin submitted an official report, Welshe decided to leave her position at the prison. That she resigned over the allegations suggests that the case against her was strong.

Madeleine Z. Doty and Prison Reform

The fact that abuses persisted at Auburn after Annie M. Welshe had been removed from her position as matron suggests that the problems at the prison were systemic and structural and could not be blamed on one sadistic woman with power. Two years after Welshe left Auburn, Madeleine Z. Doty a young lawyer from New York City entered the prison as Maggie Martin, prisoner 933, as part a covert investigation into prison conditions. Doty was a member of the Prison Reform Commission when Thomas Mott Osborne was chairman. *Within Prison Walls*, Osborne's account of his time at Auburn prison, brought the horrors of prison life into public consciousness. His exposé and the attention that it received meant that his plans for prison reform gained wide support he was able to usher in major changes to prison organization and to greatly expand cultural programming in the prison. Upon hearing Osborne recount his experience in going undercover at the Auburn Prison for men at a Commission meeting in 1913, Doty came to believe that living in the prison was the only means by which to truly understand prison life and the only point from which to develop meaningful reforms. She worked with Osborne to arrange an undercover operation of her own at the Auburn Prison for Women with her colleague Elizabeth C. Watson. Whereas Osborne informed prison officials and his fellow prisoners that he was, in fact, the chairman of a state commission on prison reform, no one at the prison knew that Doty and Watson were not legitimate prisoners. Doty and Watson concocted a backstory that they had both been caught as forgers and given a sentence of between one and a half years to two and a half years.

In *Society's Misfits*, Doty details the harsh conditions at Auburn Prison for Women that the prisoners were unable to discuss in the *Star of Hope*. Though filtered through Doty's perspective, Doty's book gives the female inmates a voice in articulating their grievances about the prison. Articles in the *Star of Hope* tend to depict life in the prison in a favourable light, but Doty, not bound by the same restraints as the legitimate inmates, exposes the daily brutality that the prisoners experience, calling the treatment of the women prisoners "barbarous and unnecessary."[98] In her report to the Prison Commission, Doty explains that from the minute that prisoners arrived at the institution they are dehumanized and treated as creatures to be feared and abhorred. She declares that shortly after her arrival she had become "less even than an animal."[99] This was a very different world from the "gay little dinner party" that she had attended before getting on the train to the prison.[100] From the moment she descended the train and was met by

the police officer who escorted her to the prison, her sense of adventure was replaced with a deep fear about what she was about to face. One of the first things that Doty remarked upon was that the officials do not greet her.

Neglect is a theme that dominates Doty's account. Doty had been used to being recognized and treated with a measure of respect. Feeling invisible or being treated as a pariah was a completely new experience for her. For many of the inmates, this would not have been an unfamiliar feeling. Almost immediately, Doty is forced to confront her preconceived notions about prisoners. She had forgotten to remove her watch, her gold cufflinks, and her overcoat, which had just arrived from London. She thought that these items and the fact that she had fresh white underwear would arouse suspicion among the guards. That they did not made her think that clean and well-dressed women were not unknown at the prison. Doty remained convinced, however, that she would be found out as a fraud, that her education and breeding would be impossible to hide and that she would be treated with the same respect that she received outside of the prison. But it never happened. The reforms that Doty proposes in her report to the prison commission and in her book is grounded in the idea that prisoners' humanity must be recognized.[101] She argues that this would not happen unless all of the prison staff and management, from the guards to the matrons, were replaced or retrained. She believed that no one should work in the prison simply for a paycheque, but that the low pay was partly responsible for not attracting better prison workers, noting that "probably wisdom and nobility are not to be had for board and $30 a month.[102] Doty insists that those who work in the prison approach their work with a real sense of social spirit.[103]

Linked to the theme of neglect is that of a dangerous boredom. The inmates were not allowed to speak to one another, not even during meals, and when they were not working, the prisoners were kept in their cells. Women were in their rooms from 4:30 in the afternoon until 7 in the morning. Holidays were some of the worst days for prisoners because they were simply locked in their rooms as the matrons have the day off. The matrons had a day off for the mayoral elections during Doty's stay and so she got to experience the tedium of being locked in her room all day, with nothing to read, and nothing to see or do. Talking with other prisoners was also forbidden. She wound up pacing backing forth for hours on end to distract herself from her boredom. Her fellow prisoners clearly found other ways to pass the time. In her report to the prison commission, Doty observes that "the result of confinement in the cells for so many hours

produces vice."[104] She made much the same claim in her report to the Prison Commission when she explained that the lack of activities for prisoners had led many women to moral degeneracy and perversion. Though she was not explicit, her meaning is clear. Her recommendations that the prison allow a great deal more activities and that inmates be allowed much greater contact with their husbands was grounded in a fear of women engaging in sexual activity with each other. The activities would, according to Doty, distract them from their sexual desires or from the boredom that would lead them to have relations with other women and the letters from their husbands and children would serve to remind them of their appropriate relationships and desires.[105]

Doty drew much the same conclusion and suggesting the same sublimation technique as those seeking to reform men's prisons.[106] A key reason in allowing entertainments in prison in the early 1900s was because they had the distracted the inmates from sexual desires. The entertainments were a way of getting prisoners out of the rooms that they shared with their fellow inmates. Confinement, as Madeleine Z. Doty reported, was what led to incidences of "lady love." Getting the inmates out of their room was, therefore, an administrative imperative. When they were in the chapel, where most prison activities took place, the inmates could be more closely surveilled, and were therefore less likely to risk engaging in sexual activity.

One of the things that seemed to upset Doty and Thomas Mott Osborne was that prisoners were having sex with each other. Prisoners engaging in homosexual relationships would have made it difficult for Doty and Osborne to conceive of prisoners as decent and reformable, which is the way that they were attempting to recast those behind prison gates. Doty is careful to say that it is prison conditions that "manufacture moral perverts," thereby absolving the inmates and blaming the prison for women engaging in these sexual practices.[107] "We had already learned one of the many unwritten prison rules, which is that any form of greeting between inmates is considered immoral, evidence of what is termed 'lady love' and promptly punished."[108]

For Doty, sexual propriety was what distinguished the good prisoners from those who were bad influences. In her recommendations for changes in the prison, Doty proposed reorganizing the system for determining the institutions to which women criminals would be sent. At the time of her writing, criminals over the age of thirty, those under thirty who were repeat offenders or those under thirty who had committed a particularly serious offense were sent to Auburn. If the criminal was under sixteen, she was sent to the Hudson State Training School

for Girls. The remainder are sent to the Western House of Refuge for Women at Albion or to the Bedford Reformatory. She thought that because the total population of women prisoners in the state was approximately 800, about one-eighth of the population of male prisoners, that experiments could be made as to how women are detained.[109] She came to this conclusion after encountering women whom she considered to be respectable being placed in a harsher environment than those who she deemed less virtuous. It was a twenty-year old Polish "girl" who became the poster girl for her suggested reforms. This prisoner had been convicted of manslaughter for killing her husband, who had betrayed her and then robbed and abandoned her. In Doty's telling of the woman's crimes, the murder was almost justifiable and the punishment of ten to fifteen years for the crime was too severe. Doty explains that "manslaughter is a serious crime, but the girl, except of this one impulsive act, had led a perfectly upright self-respecting and hard-working life."[110] She contrasts the Polish woman's respectability with the street walkers held at the reformatory at Bedford who she judged to be deficient in this regard. The street walker was described in general terms; Doty does not provide a backstory for any individual street walker in the way that she did for the murderer. According to Doty, they were career criminals who had been in their business for many years and had become hardened. Because of her "years of debauched living," the street walker, and not the murderer, was "distinctly a menace to the community and a contaminating influence to those whom they were thrown into contact."[111] She argued that the corrupted women from the reformatory could take lessons from the more serious criminals, who were yet the more honourable types at Auburn. Doty's notion of respectability was grounded in Victorian conceptions of sexual purity and hard work.

Those who did not become degenerates and perverts, according to Doty, were in real danger of going insane through boredom, neglect, and abuse. She argued that the effect of long hours confinement and the intolerable monotony that it entails "renders the average prisoner nervous and irritable, and I think it is often the cause of women becoming hysterical."[112] She described that even she was filled with hate and indignation throughout her time at Auburn. A routine day in prison was practically unbearable, but the "cooler" or the "jail," Doty argued, practically guaranteed that inmates would be driven insane.[113] Women who were sent to solitary confinement were sent to the basement of the prison where there was no window. Prisoners were given only three gills of water and three pieces of bread a day. The only thing in the cell was a

small bag or sack of straw on which to lie. These cells were infested with mice and rats. It is hard to imagine handling this situation with ease. Doty pointed to the fact that a significant number of prisoners get moved from Auburn to Matteawan, the prison for the mentally ill, to bolster her claim that prison conditions were inhumane. Those who did not get transferred to the mental hospital might still have been labelled "dippy" or be described as having gone "bughouse" for losing mental control under these oppressive conditions.[114] Doty also pointed out that the extreme punishment of sending women to jail was a response to even the most trivial offenses. Doty witnessed an inmate be sent to jail for smiling at another prisoner, and still another sent for talking. Doty claimed that the only time that prisoners get relief from the anguish of prison existence was when they were at chapel on Sundays. Here they were permitted to sing for an hour. Though prisoners were not allowed to look at each other during the singing, Doty dared to let her eyes wander and discovered that many of the prisoners in her line of vision were good-looking, intelligent women.

The *Star of Hope* hinted at racial conflicts in the prison when the editor said that she censored the racist jokes that were submitted to the paper to avoid exacerbating racial tensions, but Doty's account provides a fuller picture of these conflicts. The prison wardens and a member of the commission revealed their different conceptions of white and black prisoners in their warning to Doty when she was contemplating her prison experiment. They told Doty that she "might suffer harm from the convicts for some were coloured women of hard and vicious character, occasionally violent, and I must look out for the blows." [115] Doty admits that "a little shiver of excitement"[116] attacked her. Doty first encounters a black prisoner during the admission procedure. The inmate scrubbed her and Elizabeth down before they were given their prison uniforms. This woman was, essentially, the matron's assistant, or as Doty calls her, "the little coloured trusty."[117] She distributed the food during meals and did the clean-up when the dinner hour was over. Doty envied this woman's tasks as she at least has something with which to occupy her time. Doty had a tender, but patronizing attitude toward this prisoner, who she later learns is named Mary. In *Society's Misfit's* section on "Maggie Martin's Friends," Doty tried to provide a more in-depth characterization of Mary. Though she described any attempt to suppress Mary as being as futile as suppressing sunshine, Doty proclaimed that Mary was a "child of nature, with no power of control, she was always in trouble."[118]

Doty goes into prison excited and fearful about being in close proximity to people outside of her race. She, in fact, sees prison as offering an opportunity for people of different races to get to know each other and thus break down prejudices. She hoped that this would happen for her Elizabeth, her partner in this endeavour, who she explained, was from the south and therefore had racial prejudices. Doty developed a friendship with Minerva, a black woman, and she claimed that through this friendship, she lost all sense of race consciousness. She did, however, seem fascinated with Minerva's physical presence, describing her as walking around the prison yard as "striding forward with the power and freedom of some Greek goddess."[119] She also met a "Russian Jewess" named Harriet whom she admired for taking it upon herself to learn several languages, to study law, and to read Shakespeare and Dante.[120] Harriet's problem, in Doty's telling, was that her desires for material goods were beyond her means and that she has an "untrained will," which was not strong enough to curb her desires. Harriet, it seems, wanted the life that Doty had as a lawyer able to have "fine clothes, gay little suppers, and the luxuries of taxis."[121] To acquire all of these things Harriet did the very thing that Maggie Martin had supposedly done, she forged a cheque. Her second forgery led to her imprisonment.

Doty saw herself as being at the forefront of an important social and racial experiment. When she returned to the prison post-release, she was able to meet with her former prison-mates, without keepers or guards, to discuss prison problems and to suggest reforms. They all decided that they needed avenues for self-expression and for companionship. Out of this, Doty established the "Daily Endeavour League," which was similar to the Mutual Welfare League that Thomas Mott Osborne established in men's prisons as it centred on prisoner self-government. The league was to be the prisoners' mouthpiece and the head matron was meant to give the league's voice the same credence as the reports from matrons and keepers.[122] There would be representative from each ward, with a president to be chosen by the prisoners. Like the VPL, there was a visible symbol attached to membership in the DEL – a blue bow to be worn on the prisoners' dress fronts. Unlike the VPL, however, the DEL developed its own oath of allegiance and they all signed the document, which was understood to be a "charter of enfranchisement."[123] Doty describes the DEL as ground-breaking in that it was "the first time in history that prison reform was to come from within."[124]

In the DEL Doty saw, in a small way, the American Dream in action. This sentiment came to her as she shook the hands of the 114 prisoners as they left the meeting:

> Russian and Irish, coloured and Italian scrubwoman and prostitute bound together by a common misery, now joyfully working together for a common cause. Solemnly each woman left the chapel and filed back to her cell and a deep hush of peace fell upon the prison."[125] She then asked herself: "Will there some day be such peace over all the earth?[126]

Besides herself, the type of person that isn't represented in this melting pot was the educated, white, Anglo-Saxon, professional woman. Doty explained that she had taken a risk when proposing prisoner self-government. Again she revealed her preconceived notions about the nature of the prisoner. She said that it was "daring to expect that a group of extreme individualists could bury personal miseries and consecrate themselves to the general welfare."[127] Though there were moments when Doty acknowledged the unfairness that women of colour and immigrant women faced in the world outside the prison, as she did with Harriet striving for a different life and Mary having been sent to prison for stealing the meagre sum of two dollars, part of her could not let go of the idea that the women she met behind bars were there because of some natural tendency toward selfishness and lack of community spirit. She believed that prison had the potential to be a transformative space for them.

Doty was successful in having instituted changes in the prison, but it was devastating to her that those in charge of the prison were not equally committed to the idea of prison as a place of reform. The DEL experiment was short-lived because, according to Doty, the matrons and the guards were hostile to the project. During its short life, however, the prisoners put into practice a new way of organizing prison life that focused on equality among the inmates. The prisoners claimed that there was a "trusty" system at work in the prison, where the officials' favourites would be given the better and easier tasks and they were placed in sunlit wards adorned with plants and had pillow shams on their beds and tablecloths on their tables, while those labelled "old-timers" were given the worst tasks and the coldest, dampest, darkest rooms. Doty suggested that the "trusties" and the "old timers" switch places as a testament to their commitment to equality. The prisoners unanimously voted in favour of this switch. They were practicing being part of civil society. Doty describes the decision as

> A little deed, this changing of wards, yet the spirit in which it was done had opened a new world and given every woman a glimpse of greatness. We had been lifted out of ourselves by a true democracy and a real unselfishness. To

> those of us who had experienced that radiant vision of big things, it would never quite vanish.[128]

Their democracy was not long-lived. Doty received a letter from Mary explaining that the matron had locked Mary and two of her friends in their rooms for having laughed in the shop. Mary confessed that she did not react well to this punishment and destroyed the table, chair, and window in her room. She had reacted so violently because she didn't think that she could handle another period of isolation. Doty learned that sixteen months in the seven years of Mary's imprisonment had been spent in solitary confinement. She also found out that after she left a a black convict became violent and pulled an iron slat from her bed and threatened to kill whomever approached. It seemed that the woman was , in fact, going insane and was transferred to Matteawan. The officers panicked and reacted by locking everyone up. After that prisoner was moved, Doty claims that readjustments were made to suit the matrons, and favours were conferred upon certain women, destroying the program of equality that the DEL had tried to establish. The matron made herself the league's president and she insisted that prisoner representatives report all misbehaviours among prisoners to the matron and the officers. This went counter to the league's mission and as the representatives wanted to build a system of their own rather than become stool pigeons for those in power. Upon learning about these changes from the letters she received from prisoners, Doty returned to the prison to disband the league and made a public statement in which she laid the blame for disbandment on the matrons.

In the introduction to *Society's Misfits,* Doty's book about her experience in prison, Osborne credits Doty with creating a vivid impression of how women convicts are treated. Saying that it "brought home to us the knowledge that the stupid and brutal system, which was so lamentable a failure in the men's prison, was quite as bad, if not worse, in a woman's prison."[129] He then places the blame for the abuses on the "hopeless, crass stupidity of matrons in control of the prison"[130] who have no desire to see any change at the prison and for doing nothing to take advantage of the reforms that were being instituted at other prisons in the New York system. Osborne declared the Prisoners' League at the Women's Prison a failure because officials were reneging on their duty to institute the League's recommendations. He lamented this failure because he saw that movement as having transformed the men's prison from "a hopeless sink of human failure to a great school of genuine reform."[131] Auburn Women's prison's hollow Prisoner League meant that it remained in the realm of the sink of human failure. Through her

prison experiment, Doty aimed to correct the public perception that women's prisons, though not idyllic, were not as barbaric as the institutions to which male convicts were sent. Doty's stay at the Auburn was therefore not an imitation of Osborne's experiment. Though her method was clearly inspired by Osborne's own, Doty's descriptions of abuses at the women's prison were just as shocking as Osborne's revelations had been.

The DEL prisoner self-government experiment fell apart, but Doty still worked to push through other reforms at the prison. Central to Doty's proposed reforms was the idea that work would transform the convicts into productive members of society who would also keep a proper house. According to Doty, prison labour and training in domestic management would have a civilizing effect on the convicts. Mary's "uncontrolled nature," said Doty, "could only gain balance through service."[132] She also believed that work would prevent the convicts from becoming hysterical, anxious, or temporarily insane. Without giving them training for some sort of employment, the prison system would simply manufacture future criminals. Doty saw the labour structure in place at the prison as an opportunity lost. In her report to the Prison Commission she complains that while the prisoners' labours suited the authorities that they did little to benefit the prisoners. The work consisted mainly of hemming blankets and making mattresses, neither of which would prove to be good training for work outside of the prison.

In the prison that Doty imagined in her dreams in *Society's Misfits* she saw the convicts manufacturing the wrappers and female garments that the men at Sing Sing were currently making. In reality, she saw that prisoners who were skilled were not given tasks that would allow them to use their knowledge and skills. She witnessed, for example, trained stenographers doing the laundry. As it was at the time of her writing, women were given work do, such as a particular bit of scrubbing or cleaning, and each woman was responsible for doing this task day in and day out for years, exacerbating the monotony of prison existence and preventing the prisoners from gaining a broader range of skills. She proposed that work and pay should be supplied to every convict and that the convict should receive appropriate compensation for the work done. Doty argued that there was no other way for convicts to learn the value of work and to develop a desire to do work when released into the community. The work should also be something that women would be able to apply upon their release. Her final proposal, relative to work, was that all women be given a course in domestic work. She had been shocked that the prison had made no provision for every woman to learn general housework, including cooking, washing, ironing,

cleaning, and sewing. Doty met with the prison matron after her release to discuss the industrial program that she had designed that would address some of the problems that she saw in the prison. The matron agreed to let Doty try out her plans, but was not sympathetic to her ideas.

Ultimately, only a few of Doty's proposed changes were adopted long-term. Though Doty was frustrated and disheartened that the prison officials, for the most part, continued to run the prison as they had before, the changes did improve prisoners' lives and helped to reduce their isolation. One change was that the rule of silence was relaxed. The inmates could now talk to each other during meals, at specified periods during their working hours, and could mingle freely for one hour on Sunday afternoons. They were also permitted to write home more frequently and to be receive more letters. In concluding *Society's Misfits,* Doty expressed her disappointment that her vision for radical prison reform did not come to pass saying that

> perhaps I ought to heave been content that Rose could write Ed and her boys, and Christine see her small son twice a month. But except for these flashes of individual happiness the mass struggle blinding on as before beating time until their day of release. In no department is real training being given.[133]

She claimed that when women are released, they often contact her and "their pitiful helplessness is only too apparent."[134] While Doty dismissed the changes that she wrought as being, in the end, trivial, prisoners' lives were improved as a result of Doty's recommendations. Prisoners may not have left prison being more equipped for the work that Doty envisioned the prisoners taking on post-release, but the inmates had an improved quality of life while they were behind prison walls, which is not trivial. They had greater pleasure. The most significant changes in the prison related not to prison labour or discipline, but to recreation.

Post-reform recreation

One of the reasons why reforms relating to recreation lasted where those concerning labour did not, was because the changes to recreation appeared to benefit the warden, the guards, and the inmates. While the Daily Endeavour League was still functioning, its president reported to Doty on the effect of the privileges that the prisoners had newly gained, particularly the Sunday afternoon recreation hour. Perhaps in an effort to play to the guards' interests, the president focused on how the officers in charge declared the afternoon a success. She claimed that the prison officers made many favourable comments, particularly in terms of the inmates'

discipline, with one of the officers declaring that the women "behaved exceptionally fine."[135] Taking on her administrative role, the DEL president focused on logistical repercussions rather than the effect on the inmates' morale. She ended her letter on the following note, "It was a grand success, and I am very happy tonight, for the girls are falling in line as we hoped."[136] She was selling recreation as a means of prisoner control for the officials and the warden. The prison officials must have agreed with the DEL president that prison recreation did not disrupt prison discipline and that it was worth continuing. Not only was the Sunday recreation maintained, but the warden expanded the roster of activities within the prison. The prisoners rejoiced at their new privileges and wrote letters to Doty to express how much they relished the chance to have a little bit of fun. One prisoner wrote to Doty to describe how the St. Valentine's Day dance that the matron decided to give.

> To say we had a delightful time is but putting it mildly. You have no doubt experienced the feeling every girl does when preparing for her first dance. You know what a fever of excitement and expectancy there is. Well, so it was with the 'girls' here. Such 'fixing up' and borrowing of plumage you never saw. The ball opened at 4 and ended at 9pm. I can picture former employees of the institution throwing up their hands in consternation at the 'inmates of a prison' keeping such unearthly hours.[137]

Dances like the one held for St. Valentine's day highlight how many of the inmates were engaged with the world of fashion. Before Madeleine Z. Doty arrived at the prison, the inmates were getting fashion news in the *Star of Hope*'s 'Women's Writes' pages. But it was only after Doty's reforms were instituted that the prisoners were able to occasionally ditch their prison garb and get dressed up. The writers in the *Star of Hope* allude to the prison uniforms being one of the many banes of prison life, but it is Doty who was able to provide a fuller picture of how the prison tries to strip women of any dignity related to their appearance. Doty vividly described the prison uniform. Her underwear and a heavy, coarse petticoat were both too large. The top layer was a one piece of thick white canvas dress that was frayed and grey, was buttoned tightly in front and had sleeves that were much too short and a collar that was too low. This outfit was paired with speckled knit stockings and heavy, round-toed shoes. She claimed that "anything more unbecoming and degrading would be hard to imagine. It reminded me of pictures of clothes worn by slaves."[138]

She recalled feeling degraded by the clothes that she had to wear and it was for her clothes that she reserved some of her most fervent anti-prison sentiment. Doty explained that the old-timers had red or blue disks and white stripes to show their number of previous imprisonments as a mark of shame. The outdoor clothing the prison provided the inmates was just as horrible as the clothes designed for the cells, but the boots were an exception. They were given rubber boots for walking around the yard, which the prisoners took as a luxury and Doty noted that the inmates took pride in having them. The rest of the outdoor attire consisted of black capes and woollen head-pieces called "fascinators". She describes that when outdoors, the prisoners "resemble a group of dejected little orphans suddenly grown old."[139] In addition to their uncomfortable, unsightly, and ill-fitting clothes, the prisoners had their hair covered with kerosene upon arrival in the prison to prevent lice. This meant that the prisoners' hair was always matted and greasy and reeked of toxic chemicals, which no doubt affected their health. It is no surprise, then, that inmates would be interested in reading and writing about fashion and beespecially excited about any opportunity to wear something that made them feel like ladies.

Varied entertainments continued into the 1910s, but there was a steady increase in the number of times they had guests from the outside perform for the inmates. By the middle of the decade the prison held at least two events a month. More and more holidays were celebrated, including Halloween, Columbus Day and St. Patrick's Day. By mid-decade there were specific references to the ethnicity and the race of inmates who were involved in prison recreation. One such reference was to the Columbus Day part in 1916. Inmate 958 thanks her "Italian sisters" for making an Italian feast for the occasion. She then goes on to detail the days' events, which were capped with an entertainment "given by a number of our coloured friends in Auburn."[140] This entertainment, which 958 reviewed as "very good," consisted of vocal and instrumental solos.

More elaborate productions were came to be staged at the prison. Whole orchestras began to come to the prison as did theatre companies. The Women's Writes editor in 1916 explains that their matron Mrs. M. Daly "is ever ready to give her consent and to co-operate with those who wish to entertain us or to uplift us in any way."[141] The Halloween Party in 1916 is indicative of the type of party that Daly hosted. She allowed the prisoners to decorate the chapel with pumpkins and paper, and for the inmates to wear fancy costumes and masks. They danced for hours, while Daly created a makeshift light show by turning the lights on an off at one-minute intervals. "Some of our coloured friends" provided the music and the laundry and shop girls sang

during the intermission.[142] The inmates played games, including bobbing for apples and pin the tail on the donkey. A holiday that the women at Auburn did not celebrate was Tom Brown Day, a day to honour Thomas Mott Osborne for the important positive changes he initiated in the New York prison system. Inmate 958 reports hearing the men celebrate from over the wall and she encourages her "brothers" on the other side to keep up their good work and to prove to the world that Osborne's changes were right.[143] There was no corresponding "Maggie Martin Day" to recognize Madeleine Z. Doty's contributions to reforming Auburn Women's Prison.

After Madeleine Z. Doty's prison experiment and the reforms that followed, prisoners were given more opportunities to be physically active. Doty had been horrified at the women's diet an their lack of physical fitness. She argued that the poor diet combined with minimal exercise produced "unnatural stoutness."[144] The only prison exercise that Doty mentioned in *Society's Misfits* is the brief and silent walk around the yard. The Women's Writes section frequently mentions that the farmerettes were the happiest prisoners because they get to be outside, breathe fresh air and to use their bodies. Doty blamed prison life for making the prisoners physically weak and that this weakness hindered their ability to face life when they left prison. In her recommendations to the Commission of Prison Reform, Doty's first priority was that they change the prisoners' diet so that they get proper nourishment to build up their strength. Restructuring work was her second priority. Third was that the prison encourage outdoor exercise and indoor games. In the section about what reforms had been achieved by 1913, Doty does not mention expanded physical activities as one of the achievements. By 1914, however, the prison did enact changes in this regard.

The prison continued to control the female inmates' bodies, but according to the *Star of Hope,* prison officials began to loosen the reigns in 1914. In February 28th 1914 edition of the paper, the Women's Writes column explains that when Superintendent Riley became head of the prison, the women as well as the men, "have enjoyed privileges that tend to humanize the prisoners and destroy the influences that created automatons."[145] According to the writer in the *Star of Hope,* what prevented the prisoners from becoming soulless machines was being allowed to move in unregimented ways. In 1914, Superintendent Riley allowed for a version of the Mutual Welfare League, founded by Thomas Mott Osborne and already in place across the New York prison system, to be established at the Auburn Prison for Women. The women who were chosen to lead the league at Auburn were considered honorary members of the Mutual Welfare

League. The Valentine's Day Dance was the first event that the MWL of Auburn organized. The Women's Writes page explains that the event allowed the inmates to indulge in "leisure dear to the feminine heart" and declares that "they enjoyed a genuine social time for the first time in the history of the prison."[146] This comment suggested that institution-led entertainments were restrictive. The rationale for having a dance instead of the usual entertainments was that the MWL members thought that prisoners would benefit more from entertainments in which they could take part rather than those at which they would merely be spectators. The *Auburn Citizen* reported on the dance and noted that the "coloured women are talented in musical directions and sowed they were fond of dancing. They took great interest in the cakewalk and the subsequent presentation of a large cake." The inmates' clear interest in dance led to the prison introducing dance classes for the women at Auburn. On June 13th, 1916, the inmates had their first dance class under Miss Paulina Titus of Auburn who was accompanied by pianist Marion Airish. The dance classes took place every Tuesday evening. The Matron's daughter, Mary Daly, regularly came to the dance class and played music for the lessons. Mrs. Daly often invited her friends to provide musical accompaniment and to join in the dancing.

Conclusion

The reforms at the women's prison were never as wide-ranging or headline grabbing as those in the men's prisons, but the trajectory of the reforms in the women's prison was, in the end, identical to the course that reforms took in the men's prisons. The pattern that emerged was that the cultural activities helped to prove that the inmates should be treated better while in prison; there was incremental reform, followed by more extensive reforms; and, ultimately, a readjustment to ensure that the administration maintained power and control in the institution. In the extensive reforms, the administration greatly expanded activities programming at the prison and gave the prisoners more decision-making power. Though this happened more quickly at the women's prison, the administrators at all of the prisons in the New York system chipped away at the prisoners' power, while maintaining the entertainment and athletic programming. The main reason for this was that entertainment programming could serve administrative interests, whereas prisoner self-government challenged administrative authority. Because prisoners wanted to be able to go to plays and concerts, watch movies, and to play and watch sports, the wardens and guards could use granting permission for these activities as a way to maintain discipline. It was

this reason that Lewis Lawes and the wardens at other prisons kept, and even expanded, the entertainment and sport programing. The powers that the women had through the DEL and as honorary members of the MWL, and which they exerted through the prison newspaper, proved to be too much of a threat to the prison authorities. By 1920, prison administrators' attitudes toward activities in prisons became much more pragmatic than they had been originally. Whereas the prison reformers and new penologists early goals were to use entertainment and sport to help prisoners become better citizens, the prison administrators by the late 1910s, were more interested in their disciplinary function rather than their transformative potential.

[1] State Prison for Women 321, *The Star of Hope*, April 4, 1903, vol. 4, no. 26, 428.
[2] The prisoner admission records as well as the 1900 and 1910 census data provided information about the prisoners' race, religion, country of birth, parents' place of birth, years of schooling completed, and the prisoners' ability to read and write.
[3] New York (State) Legislature, Senate, "Appendix A", *Journal of the Senate of the State of New York*, 1827, 8.
[4] Nicole Hahn Rafter, "Hard Times: Custodial Prisons for Women and the Example of the New York State Preson for Women at Auburn, 1893-1933, in *Judge, Lawyer, Victim, Thief: Women, Gender Roles, and Criminal Justice Partial Justice* (Evanston, Il.: : Northeastern University Press, 1982), 245.
[5] Rebecca M. McLennan, *The Crisis of Imprisonment: Protest, Politics, and the Making of the American Penal State, 1776-1941*, 2008, 170.
[6] State Prison for Women 321, April 4, 1903, 428.
[7] State Prison for Women 321, *Star of Hope*, April 4, 1903, vol. 4, no 26, 428.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] State Prison for Women 321, April 4, 1903, 428.
[11] *Star of Hope*, June 15, 1901, vol. 3, no. 5, 98.
[12] Ibid.
[13] *Star of Hope*, September 6, 1902, vol. 3, no. 11, 171.
[14] *Star of Hope*, March 5, 1904, vol. 5, no. 23, 387.
[15] *Star of Hope*, June 29, 1899, vol. 1, no. 8, 49.
[16] Sing Sing 1500, *Star of Hope*, August 12, 1899, vol. 1, no. 9, 2.
[17] *Star of Hope*, April 13, 1907, vol. 9, no. 1, 3.
[18] State Prison for Women number 321, *Star of Hope*, January 26, 1901, vol. 11, no. 21, 363.
[19] Ibid.
[20] State Prison for Women, number 274, *Star of Hope*, July 27, 1901, Vol. 3, no. 8, 126.
[21] State Prison for Women number 321, 363.
[22] State Prison for Women, number 321, *Star of Hope*, June 29, 1901, Vol. 3, no. 6, 114.
[23] Ibid.
[24] State Prison for Women, 525, *Star of Hope*, April 13, 1907, vol. 9, no. 1, 3.
[25] *Star of Hope,* April 13, 1907, vol. 9, no. 1, 8.
[26] State Prison for Women, 253, "A Talk on Woman Suffrage," *Star of Hope*, April 5, 1902, vol. 3, no. 26, 436.
[27] State Prison for Women, 383, "The American Girl in Politics," *Star of Hope*, April 5, 1902, vol. 3, no. 26, 426.
[28] State Prison for Women, 515, *Star of Hope*, September 3, 1904, vol. 11, no. 11, 182.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] *Star of Hope*, December 10, 1904, vol. 11, no. 18, 279.
[32] State Prison for Women 321, April 4, 1903, 404.
[33] State Prison for Women, number 274, *Star of Hope*, April 19, 1902, vol. 4, no. 1, 15.
[34] State Prison for Women, number 321, *Star of Hope*, May 2, 1903, vol. 5, no. 2, 426.
[35] State Prison for Women, 383, "Marriage," *Star of Hope*, February 8, 1902, vol. 3, no. 22, 370.
[36] State Prison for Women, 579, "Why?," *Star of Hope*, September 14, 1907, 184.
[37] Auburn, 22,117, "Women Have a Right to Preach," *Star of Hope*, December 10, 1904, vol. 11, no. 18, 276.
[38] *Star of Hope*, November 26, 1904, vol. 11, no. 17, 263.
[39] The prisoner admission records as well as the 1900 and 1910 census data provided information about the prisoners' race, religion, country of birth, parents' place of birth, years of schooling completed, and the prisoners' ability to read and write.
[40] State Prison for Women, 525, 8.
[41] *Star of Hope*, May 18, 1901, vol. 3, no. 3, 66.
[42] *Star of Hope*, November 4, 1899, vol. 1, no. 15 edition, 12.("brown, yellow, and orange"); "Spring Fashions," *Star of Hope*, April 22, 1911, vol. 13, no. 2 edition, 23.("coral and watermelon"); "Fashion Notes," *Star of Hope*, December 31, 1910, vol. 12, no. 20 edition, 311.("mummy cloth")
[43] *Star of Hope*, September 10, 1910, vol. 12, no. 12 edition, 183.("hobble skirt in"); "Fashion Notes," December 31, 1910, 311.("hobble skirt out")
[44] Ibid.
[45] *Star of Hope*, May 20, 1911, vol. 13, no. 4 edition, 55.("hoop skirts out"); "Fashion Not," *Star of Hope*, February 28, 1911, vol. 12, no .23 edition, 375.("hoop sleeves")
[46] "Fashion Not," *Star of Hope*, February 28, 1911, vol. 12, no .23, 375.

[47] "Fashion Notes," *Star of Hope*, June 17, 1911, vol. 13, no. 6, 86.
[48] "Fashion Notes," December 31, 1910, 311.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985).
[51] Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
[52] State Prison for Women, 321, "An Echo from the Land of Sunset," *Star of Hope*, May 18, 1901, vol. 3, no. 3, 61.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] *Star of Hope*, April 19, 1902, vol. 4, no. 1, 15.
[56] *Star of Hope*, January 21, 1905, vol. 11, no. 21, 331.
[57] "Flower Day Entertainment," *Star of Hope*, June 27, 1903, vol. 5, no. 6, 500.
[58] *Star of Hope*, June 8, 1907, vol. 9, no. 5, 71.
[59] *Star of Hope*, November 16, 1901, vol. 3, no. 16, 274.
[60] *Star of Hope*, November 26, 1904, vol. 11, no. 17, 263.
[61] *Star of Hope*, April 27, 1907, vol. 9, no. 25, 25.
[62] Ibid.
[63] *Star of Hope*, September 5, 1903, vol. 5, no. 11, 179.
[64] Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*, 54.
[65] *Star of Hope*, December 15, 1900, vol. 11, no. 18, 311.
[66] *Star of Hope*, December 16, 1900, vol. 11, no. 18, 311.
[67] *Star of Hope*, December 14, 1901, vol. 3, no. 18, 306.
[68] Ibid.
[69] State Prison for Women, 321, "Thanksgiving Day," *Star of Hope*, December 8, 1906, vol. 8, no. 18, 279.
[70] State Prison for Women, 504, "Thanksgiving Entertainment," *Star of Hope*, January 4, 1908, vol. 9, no. 20, 316.
[71] "The Minstrel Show," *Star of Hope*, December 18, 1901, vol. 3, no. 19, 324.
[72] *Star of Hope*, December 18, 1901, vol. 3, no. 19, 324.
[73] "The Minstrel Show," 324.
[74] *Star of Hope*, December 13, 1902, vol. 3, no. 18, 288.
[75] State Prison for Women, 321, "Thanksgiving Day," *Star of Hope*, December 12, 1903, vol. 5, no. 18, 293.
[76] *Star of Hope*, August 13, 1910, vol. 12, no. 10 edition, 151.
[77] State Prison for Women, 389, "How We Spent the Fourth," *Star of Hope*, July 26, 1902, vol. 4, no. 8, 122.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., 389.
[80] "Thanksgiving Entertainment," *Star of Hope*, December 14, 1901, vol. 3, no. 18, 306.
[81] State Prison for Women, 595, "A Surprise," *Star of Hope*, November 5, 1910, vol. 12, no. 16, 247.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Steven J. Ross, *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 5.
[85] *Star of Hope*, May 18, 1901, vol. 3, no. 3, 66.
[86] *Star of Hope*, September 17, 1904, vol. 11, no. 12, 189.
[87] Sing Sing, 57,261, "Physical Culture for Women," *Star of Hope*, July 31, 1909, vol. 1, no. 9, 134.
[88] April 13, 1907, 3.
[89] State Prison for Women, 595, *Star of Hope*, April 13, 1907, vol. 9, no. 1, 3.
[90] *Star of Hope*, June 16, 1900, vol. 2 no. 5, 87.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] *Oakland Tribune*, 5 Nov 1904, 10
[95] Welshe, Annie M., "Prison Discipline for Women," Proceedings of the Annual Congress of the National Prison Association, 1907 1883, 252.
[96] Ibid., 255.
[97] Special To The New York Times, "Says Matron was Cruel; Annie M. Welshe Quits Auburn Following Attorney's Charges.," *The New York Times*, August 6, 1911, 4,
[98] Madeleine Zabriskie Doty, "Appendix B. Report on the Auburn Women's Prison to the New York Commission on Prison Reform," Report of the Commission on Prison Reform, 1913, 37.
[99] Madeleine Zabriskie Doty, "Appendix B. Report on the Auburn Women's Prison to the New York Commission on Prison Reform," Report of the Commission on Prison Reform, 1913, 23.
[100] Doty, *Society's Misfits*, 10.
[101] Doty, "Appendix B. Report on the Auburn Women's Prison to the New York Commission on Prison Reform," 27.

[102] Ibid., 90.
[103] Ibid., 26.
[104] Ibid., 24.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Thomas Mott Osborne, "Appendix A: Report of Hon. Thomas M. Osborne on Conditions in Auburn Prison to the New York Commission on Prison Reform," Report on the Commission on Prison Reform, 1913, 20.
[107] Doty, "Appendix B. Report on the Auburn Women's Prison to the New York Commission on Prison Reform," 24.
[108] Doty, *Society's Misfits*, 48.
[109] Madeleine Zabriskie Doty, "Appendix J. Memorandum on Women Prisoners," Report of the Commission on Prison Reform, 1913, 39.
[110] Ibid., 40.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Doty, "Appendix B. Report on the Auburn Women's Prison to the New York Commission on Prison Reform," 24.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Doty, *Society's Misfits*, 58.
[115] Ibid., 9.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid., 18.
[118] Ibid., 68.
[119] Ibid., 50.
[120] Ibid., 73.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., 82.
[123] Ibid., 83.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid., 84.
[128] Ibid., 94.
[129] Madeleine Zabriskie Doty, *Society's Misfits* (New York: Century Co., 1916), viii.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid., 69.
[133] Ibid., 100.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid., 85.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid., 86.
[138] Ibid., 49.
[139] Ibid.
[140] State Prison for Women, 958, "Columbus Day," *Star of Hope*, December 1916, vol. 18, no. 8, 27.
[141] *Star of Hope*, August 1916, vol. 18, no. 4 edition, 17.
[142] State Prison for Women, 958, "An Entertainment," *Star of Hope*, December 1916, vol. 18, no.8, 29.
[143] State Prison for Women, 958, "Columbus Day," 27.
[144] Doty, "Appendix B. Report on the Auburn Women's Prison to the New York Commission on Prison Reform," 38.
[145] *Star of Hope*, February 28, 1914, vol. 15, no. 18, 283.
[146] Ibid.

Conclusion

Completely by chance, I found myself working on my final draft of my dissertation at the Brewbird café in London, England.[1] As I settled in, I noticed the coffee shop's mission statement on a board at the back of the room. Under the bold "Serving Coffee and Second Chances," the text explained that Brewbird, which opened in 2014, was part of a non-profit organization that provides training and employment to ex-offenders and young people at risk of involvement with the criminal justice system. It seemed fitting to be finishing my dissertation in that setting. It was in London, England, and not New York, but there, as in the United States, there is a growing awareness about and concern with the economic and racial inequities in policing and sentencing, the difficulties that ex-prisoners encounter when they leave prison, as well as a growing concern about private corporate interests guiding prison policy.[2]

The idea that America is a carceral state is no longer limited to academic discourse or the political fringes. Supreme Court Justice Sonya Sotomayor's dissenting opinion in the Utah v. Strieff case in June 2016 was significant for this reason. The case ruled that evidence found during unlawful police stops could be used in court if the officers discovered an outstanding arrest warrant in the process. Together with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Justice Sotomayor warned against being soothed by the majority opinion's technical language and explained that "the case allows the police to stop you on the street, demand your identification, and check it for outstanding traffic warrants – even if you are doing nothing wrong."[3] Justice Sotomayor went on to argue that the ruling "implies that you are not a citizen of a democracy but the subject of a carceral state, just waiting to be catalogued."[4] Her statement brought carceral studies into the mainstream and to national attention.

Scholars are today grappling with the issues around mass incarceration and the questions that it raises about American democracy. The special issue on carceral history in the *Journal of American History* in June 2015 presented some of the work being done by historians on the subject.[5] These studies on the carceral concentrate on the latter half of the twentieth century. They draw attention to the racially-biased laws, policies, and policing practices that send masses of racial and ethnic minorities into prison as well as the carceral state's economic foundations and implications. The central concerns are outside of the prison rather than the prisoners' experience behind bars. With her book *Blood in the Water,* Heather Ann Thompson expands the

field in examining the appalling conditions at Attica prison that sparked the radical prisoner action that culminated in the Attica uprising in 1971. Thompson examines decades of official documents to track the the uprising's aftermath and to show how it was used to justify more punitive governmental policy. [6] What ties all of the literature together is the question about whether or not criminal suspects, prisoners, and former prisoners are considered full-fledged members of society with rights. My work speaks to the field in addressing these questions in relation to the period when prisoners, reformers, guards, and prison administrators were for the first time experimenting with treating prisoners as (or at least as potential) citizens with rights. Prisoners were also given and made the most of their new opportunities to reinforce the idea that they were part of society and deserved to be treated with respect.

My study reveals that there are possibilities for an alternative vision of prison and its connection with the outside world that have been lost in history. The early years of the twentieth century saw a porous boundary between the prisoners and the larger society. Prisoners had direct and regular contact with members of the surrounding communities and with the reading public though entertainment, sport, and the prisoner newspaper. Creating connections with those outside of the prison led to a brief period of prisoner self-government that gave the prisoners power within the institution. In this period the inmates secured major improvements in the quality of life for prisoners and the guards who worked there. Many of the small things that made life in prison more bearable for the inmates, such as film screenings, creative writing classes, regular yard access, and fitness programs, are still in place.

By the end of the 1920s, prisoner self-government was eroded as overcrowding threw the prisons into chaos. The increased numbers of prisoners led to dozens of prison riots and violent clashes between prisoners and guards.[7] These problems only intensified over the course of the twentieth century. Prisons are more over-crowded than ever before and violence in prison is at its highest level in recorded history. The prison population in New York state today is 53,000 compared to around 4,000 in between 1900 and 1920.[8] The population for women prisoners has experienced an even more dramatic increase. Between 1900 and 1920 the population of women prisoners was around 125, while today the population is 2, 223.[9] Conditions in prison today are dangerous and inhumane, facts which have increasingly come to public attention. When two convicted murderers escaped from Clinton prison in June 2015, the man-hunt brought particular attention to prison conditions in New York state. The prison escape inspired the the *New York*

Times to produce a series of articles about the inner-workings of the state prison system. The reporters found evidence of widespread tensions between between minority prisoners and the almost-entirely white prison staff. The reporters also found evidence of brutal beatings of prisoners by guards. One such case of brutality against a prisoner in New York in December 2015 made national headlines when security video footage of the attack was released. Leonard Strickland, a non-violent prisoner with schizophrenia, was beaten to death by guards while he was handcuffed and barely conscious after they pushed him down the stairs.[10] None of the prison staff faced any charges.

Prisoners today are suffering many of the same abuses that prisoners in the early twentieth century suffered. Solitary confinement continues to be practiced in the United States, with prisoners often spending weeks, months, and years in solitary for minor infractions. While the inmates in the early twentieth century informally described that solitary confinement made prisoners "go bughouse," the United Nations has since declared solitary confinement for over fifteen days to be torture and that solitary confinement for any period of time to be psychologically damaging.[11] Rape and sexual abuse in both the men's and women's prisons is rampant. 80,000 men and women are sexually abused in prisons in the United States every year, even though the US Congress passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act in 2003.[12] Various prisoner rights organizations are trying to bring attention to all of these issues in order for prisons to become more humane institutions.[13] The contemporary prisoner rights movement can learn from the past and take up the little-known era of American prison history as a model for prisoner agency today.

[1] For more information about Brewbird, see brewbirdcoffee.co.uk
[2] Some of the works on what has come to be known as the "prison-industrial complex" include Angela Davis' audiobook *The Prison-Industrial Complex*, (Boulder, Colo." Alternative Radio), 1997; Kevin Wehr and Elyshia Aseltine, *Beyond the Prison-Industrial Complex: Crime and Incarceration in the 21st Century,* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Eve Goldberg, *The Prison-Industrial Complex and the Global Economy,* Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2009.
[3] Utah v. Strieff, 579 __ (2016) (Sotomayor, Ginsburg, Kagan, JJ., dissenting), p. 1
[4] ibid, p. 12
[5] *Journal of American History*, June 2015, vol. 102, no. 1
[6] Heather Ann Thompson, *Blood in the Water: The Attica Uprising of 1971 and its Legacy* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2016)
[7] Rebecca M. McLennan, *The Crisis of Imprisonment Protest, Politics, and the Making of the American Penal State, 1776-1941*, Cambridge Historical Studies in American Law and Society (Cambridge, [U.K.] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 455.
[8] Michele Deitch and Michael B. Mushlin, "What's Going On in Our Prisons?", *New York Times,* January 4, 2016 (for 2016 prison population statistics); the number of prisoners in New York State from 1900-1920 is based on a survey of statistics published in the *Star of Hope.*
[9] State of New York Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, "Under Custody Report: Profile of Inmate Population Under Custody on January 1, 2013", p. ii.
[10] Michael Winerip and Michael Schwirtz, "An Inmate Dies and No One is Punished", *New York Times,* December 13, 2015
[11] Madeleine Z. Doty, *Society's Misfits,* (New York: Century Co. 1916) ("bughouse reference"); For information about solitary confinement see Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, at 2, 7, 22 United Nations General Assembly, A/66/268 (Aug. 5, 2011), available at http://solitaryconfinement.org/uploads/SpecRapTortureAug2011.pdf (describing solitary confinement of longer than fifteen days as torture; and solitary of any duration for children or persons with mental illness as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment).
[12] Chandra Bozelko, "Why We Let Prison Rape Go On", *New York Times,* April 17, 2015.
[13] An extensive list of prisoner rights and advocacy groups can be found at prisonactivist.org.

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