How to Get to Long Lane School: 
An Ethnography of a Place

by

Beth Davies
Class of 2009

A thesis submitted to the
faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Departmental Honors in Anthropology

Middletown, Connecticut
April, 2009
How To Get To Long Lane School

End of Parkway

RT 6A From New London

RT 6A From Groton

RT 6A From Waterbury

Waterbury - Dayville

Middle Town

Newtown - Hartford

Avery - Glastonbury

Avery - Glastonbury

Avery - Glastonbury

Avery - Glastonbury
Contents

List of Images  5
Acknowledgements  6
Introduction  8
1. An Abandoned Institution  17
2. Perceiving the Landscape  32
3. An All-Girls Institution  53
4. Crossing Boundaries and Maintaining Distance  84
5. A Co-ed Juvenile Detention Facility  104
Epilogue  122
References  137
Images

All photos listed below, unless otherwise stated, are from the Long Lane School collection in the Connecticut State Library in Hartford. I took all other photos found in the text between the fall of 2005 and the spring of 2009.

P. 2 “How to Get to Long Lane School” in folder 8, box 131

P. 3 “Long Lane School Map. 1956” in folder 8, box 131.

P. 11 “Main Entrance to Pratt, the Chapel, School House, Rogers, and another building. Undated” in box 136.


P. 40 “Industrial School for Girls” The Robin Bros Co., Boston, Mass. [Purchased on e-bay].

P. 43 “The Fairbank Recreation Building” Artvue Post Card Co. [Purchased on e-bay].


P. 57 “Porch on a House with a Tree and Swing Set. Circa 1900-1910” in box 134.

P. 58 “Girl Scout Meeting. 1961” in box 133.

P. 65 “Five Staff Members Sitting Around a Table in the Intimacy of a Dining Room. Circa 1945-1965” in box 144.

P. 72 “Restraining Chair,” shown to me by Mark Jones, head archivist at Connecticut State library.

P. 80 “Ethyl Mecum” from an undated article in The Middletown Press in folder 6, box 131.

P. 108 “Ariel view of building construction” in box 136.

P. 117 “Basketball Game. Undated” in box 134.
Acknowledgements

This project first began with my fascination with the abandoned buildings of the former Long Lane School. This curiosity was transformed into the beginnings of a thesis with the encouragement of Betsy Traube and Gina Ulysse who both urged me to submit a thesis proposal in the spring semester of my junior year. I was able to do fieldwork over the summer of 2008 through a grant from the anthropology department and in these few weeks, I spoke with many people about their experiences and feelings towards Long Lane. I am tremendously grateful to all the people who were willing to open themselves up to me and to share their stories. The librarians at both Wesleyan’s Special Collections and Archives and at the Connecticut State Library further helped me to begin to discover Long Lane’s history. During the fall semester, while taking the course Cultural Analysis, Betsy’s questions, comments, and suggestions helped me to begin to transform the fieldwork that I had done over the summer into a burgeoning thesis. This spring semester, my thesis advisor, Daniella Gandolfo, has been wonderful in helping me to push my ideas further and to articulate myself in my writing. I would also like to thank Gina Ulysse, J. Kehaulani Kauanui, Margot Weiss, Sarah Croucher, and Mark Jones for their input at various points during the process. Throughout the year, my fellow anthropology majors have been great in offering their encouragement and suggestions. I also thank my family and friends for all their love, patience and support.
Introduction

“Every story is a travel story—a spatial practice.”
(Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. P.115)

This is a story about a place. It is a story set in the center of a residential area, on a piece of land in Middletown, Connecticut. These two hundred acres have held a school for wayward girls, a juvenile detention facility, and now hold university offices, storage space and turf fields. In telling this story, I draw on people’s memories, feelings, and experiences of this place. This story is about the layers of meaning that these individuals have inscribed onto a bounded landscape, and the different ways in which a single physical site can be imagined and re-imagined.

If you walk along Cross Street, past Wesleyan’s Freeman Athletic Center, past the fire department, you will come to a chain link fence beyond which you will see athletic fields, two old, imposing brick buildings, and a few enormous piles of dirt. Keep on walking. Follow the chain link fence around the corner and you will be on Long Lane, the road. If you continue to walk a few more paces, you will arrive at the entrance to the property. A sign on your left indicates that the land enclosed by the chain link fence is undergoing environmental remediation to remove hazardous substances from the soil. There is a small, weathered brownstone wall on either side of the entrance. The wall looks as if it has been there forever and contrasts harshly with the metal chain link gate. If you come on a weekday, the gates will be open. Feel
free to walk in. At first glance, it appears as if there is not much left on the property. All of the buildings, save a handful, were demolished when Wesleyan took over in 2004. One of the remaining buildings will be ahead of you, slightly to your left, the Cady School building. It is a two storey, red brick building with a white bell tower emerging from the building’s roof; its clock hands stuck at a quarter after twelve. An engraved stone above the entranceway indicates that the structure was built in 1939. As you continue to walk through the property, you will see the cracked concrete roads that lead to piles of dirt and stone where buildings once stood. The remnants of the institution’s past are scattered everywhere. If you
wander long enough, you will eventually come across an old shed, a murky pond, and a dilapidated ropes course. Yet other features of this landscape—the manicured flower gardens in front of the Cady School and the new Wesleyan turf field—indicate that the property is now beginning to be re-appropriated for a new use.

When I first came across this site as a first-year student at Wesleyan, I was at once captivated by these abandoned buildings seemingly frozen in time just minutes away from Wesleyan’s campus. Here was a space that was noticeably different from the surrounding landscape. I felt compelled to explore and uncover the stories behind these derelict structures and to reveal the clues to the past that I felt were hidden within the landscape. I took photos to begin to preserve the physical reminders of the site’s past. Yet in the months following, I did little to find out more about the space, although I continued to think about this deserted property. The photographs that I had taken that day remained taped to my dorm room wall for weeks. Months later, I was again reminded of the site when I discovered on one of my walks that most of the buildings on the property had been demolished. A little over three years later, as I was finishing my third year at Wesleyan and choosing the subject of my senior thesis, I once again remembered my initial excitement and fascination with this landscape and built environment that had once comprised the former Long Lane School.

The Industrial School for Friendless Girls was built on this site and opened in 1870. It was a privately run, charitable institution for girls who had committed misdemeanors—for example, running away, being truant, or keeping “inappropriate
company”—or who had simply been neglected or abandoned by their parents or
guardians. In 1921, about fifty years later, the institution was transferred from private
hands to the State of Connecticut and renamed Long Lane Farm. In 1943, it was
renamed again, and became Long Lane School to emphasize the institution’s function
as a place of learning. In 1972, the institution merged with the Meriden School for
Boys to decrease the two institutions’ operating costs. Then, in 2003, after years of
reported abuse and neglect, and problems with outdated facilities, the Long Lane
School officially closed. The property was subsequently bought and taken over by
Wesleyan University whose boundaries, hereto, had been adjacent to those of Long
Lane School.
Long Lane School was an institution for youth who had committed transgressions, either by defying societal norms, as was usually the case in the institution’s earlier years, or, as was typically the case following 1972, by committing criminal offenses. As an institution and as a physical place, Long Lane School may be described using Foucault’s term “heterotopia of deviation,” with which he describes spaces that are “other” and where “individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed” (Foucault 1967: 24). Within Long Lane’s confines, youth slept, worked, ate, attended classes, and received medical treatment. These youth were socialized to follow the institution’s rules and to comply with its values, which changed as Long Lane transitioned from an all-girls institution to a co-ed facility. As Long Lane attempted to mold individuals through a re-creation of a normal, daily routine, individuals’ experiences of life within this total institution may seem to mirror life outside its confines. Yet these seemingly mundane practices of daily life would have been distinctive from life outside of Long Lane because they were performed within an institution and under coercive conditions.

While I was still considering whether Long Lane School would be the subject of my thesis, I met my first contact by chance outside her home on Pine Street. I told her about my interest in Long Lane School and she offered to speak with me more formally at a later date. After our conversation, Patricia gave me the names of people she knew who had also lived close to Long Lane for some years. I wanted to know whether these neighbors looked at the landscape across the road and were as fascinated by it and its history as I was. Had they too inscribed the landscape with
meaning? Did they still associate the site, now a part of Wesleyan’s campus, with the institution’s past? As I soon discovered, their connections, memories, and ideas about the institution were diverse and very different from my own. To them, the former institution had been and continued to be a familiar part of their everyday landscape. They did not see the site as disrupting the surrounding landscape in the same way that I did. I often left these conversations feeling disappointed that they had not said what I had wanted to hear. I had expected these outsiders of the institution to view the site as a space that was set apart from the ordinary and that carried a charged meaning. I later approached Wesleyan’s Physical Plant employees, who now use the former Cady School building as office space, and asked them similar questions that I had posed to neighbors. They acknowledged that initially, Long Lane had felt like an unusual place to work; however, they admitted that with time the space had taken on the atmosphere of a normal work environment. Later, I had the opportunity to speak with several individuals who had spent years at the institution as employees or residents. Rarely did the people I speak with tell the stories that I had anticipated. Yet months later, after I had transcribed all of my conversations and had the chance to read them through, I found these conversations were infused with much more meaning than I had initially assumed. I would often come across anecdotes that I had forgotten soon after the telling that gained new significance in the context of other conversations and the research I had done. Whereas some of these anecdotes aligned to create linear, coherent narratives about this place, other accounts I heard directly contradicted previous ones in interesting and ultimately productive ways, creating a more multidimensional portrait of this intricate landscape.
While doing research, it soon became clear that the goal of this project was not to create a single, linear narrative of the institution’s past and present history. Instead, I found that my research produced a complex portrait of this site that would show the multiplicity of meanings it has held and generated over the years. This thesis, then, tells the story of the institution and its landscape from several perspectives: from the perspective of Wesleyan students, including myself, who explored the grounds of the former institution and its abandoned buildings out of curiosity; from the perspective of Wesleyan’s Physical Plant employees, whose offices were recently relocated to the site and whose work environments are surrounded by remnants of the site’s past; from the perspective of neighbors who have lived opposite the institution for years and for whom the institution has assumed a place in their everyday awareness; and from the perspective of former employees and residents of the institution. Each of these people are in some way connected to this site and also have some awareness of Long Lane’s history, either through hearsay, speculative musings or lived experience.

The multiple narratives this thesis assembles and weaves together are all based on a single landscape. The array of memories and fantasies that I have learned have been inscribed onto this place have taught me multiple ways of reading it. Now, when I walk through the property, I find myself imagining many landscapes in addition to the one I see in front of me; I see “exits, ways of going out and coming back in” (Certeau 1988: 106). I am briefly taken into stories; memories of interviews,
of photographs, of staff manuals, that at once seem distanced yet also connected to my own experience of the landscape in the present. This single bounded site has, at various moments, been represented and imagined in seemingly contradictory ways—as at once unremarkable and charged, as a school and as a prison, as acceptable and forbidden—and has been both a praised and as a condemned institution. The photographs that I include throughout the text aim to further demonstrate the multiple and oftentimes contrasting ways that the landscape and the institution have been portrayed in visual representations.

In the first chapter, “An Abandoned Institution,” I discuss my initial discovery of the Long Lane property and my enchantment with the abandoned buildings therein, which I go on to contrast with the everydayness that the landscape has now assumed for Wesleyan Physical Plant employees who work in offices in the recently remodeled Cady School building. Chapter two, “Perceiving the Landscape,” describes changes to the landscape over the time period that Long Lane operated as an institution and corresponding shifts in public perception of this place. In chapter three, “An All-Girls Institution,” I discuss Long Lane’s multiple identities as an all-girls reformatory—as both a benevolent, nurturing school, and as a punitive and oppressive institution. Chapter four, “Crossing Boundaries and Maintaining Distance,” explores the diverse ways that individuals living in the surrounding community perceive the institution and its residents, perceptions that are oftentimes framed by these neighbors’ racial and class backgrounds. The fifth chapter, “A Co-ed Juvenile Detention Facility,” focuses on Long Lane’s changing practices and
ideology after merging with the Meriden School for Boys in 1972. The epilogue
closes with a discussion of the preservation of the landscape and plans for future uses
of the property.

In addition to interviews, my research process also involved archival research.
I visited the Connecticut State Library in Hartford several times where I looked
through the institution’s former staff manuals, publications written by residents, and
historic photographs. I also used the online database, Proquest, to search through
archived Hartford Courant articles related to the institution. I want to note here that
there are no recent photos of former residents of the institution in order to protect
their privacy. The names of all the people that I spoke with during my fieldwork have
been changed and replaced with fictitious, first name pseudonyms. As this narrative
unfolds, I will go on to introduce these individuals and their perceptions and
experiences of the institution and the landscape.
An Abandoned Institution

An Abandoned Place

My first memory of Long Lane School: I was walking along Long Lane and I saw one of the old brick buildings that sits on the edge of the property, which overlooks the arboretum, and beyond that, the road. The building caught my attention—it was a grand building, red brick with white window frames. A set of stairs led to the front doorway above which was elaborately carved stone ornamentation. The building was connected to the path by a walkway that was abruptly blocked by the chain link fence, an obviously marked entranceway but no possibility of entry. The sign posted at the chain link gates read: “RESTRICTED AREA AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY.” I stared at the buildings beyond the
fence longingly, but was too afraid to venture in. The old buildings drew me in with silent promises of the stories their rooms might tell. The following weekend, with a friend and camera in tow, I crossed beyond the gates to explore and record.

The chain link fence and sign clearly marked the property as off limits, as a space that I was not supposed to enter. The day I passed through the gates, careful that no one was watching, I distinctly felt my transgression—not only had I crossed the site’s physical boundaries, but I had also entered into a seemingly abandoned place. By violating the boundaries surrounding this site, I had created what Michael Taussig refers to as a “charged space” that, according to him, is opened up by the transgression of forbidden limits (Taussig 1998: 350).

My friend and I first explored the building that had initially caught my attention on previous walks. I was apprehensive to find out what was inside, and I was also scared of being caught. But still we went in. I remember seeing the front desk above which was posted the names and office numbers of the administrative staff. Behind the desk, there were two or three dusty packages of New
Years’ Party invitations, unopened. In the rest of this building, I found various odds and ends: rows and rows of empty filing cabinets, a small white ribbed vase, an old letter written by a staff person, a wooden chair with a green vinyl seat, a photograph of a young boy, a black telephone sitting in the middle of a room, and a clock dangling precariously off the wall. While tentatively exploring the building, I was drawn to even the most mundane objects—chairs, telephones, clocks—which gained new significance in this context.

Despite the familiarity of the objects that filled the buildings and the ordinariness of the buildings themselves, Long Lane was not an ordinary space. My initial transgression, the illicit crossing of the property’s bounds, physically marked my entry into a space separated from the surrounding environment. As I entered the buildings of this deserted property, my senses were heightened and I hungrily took in the seemingly minutest details. I was fascinated by this space that still felt so connected to the institution’s history. Inside the property’s limits, everything seemed significant, and in this way bore similarities to what may be defined as a sacred space. The categories of the sacred and profane are not intrinsic to certain objects or places; instead, as Durkheim states, “anything can be sacred” (Durkheim 1961: 52). Thus what makes something sacred or profane is determined by the boundaries and prohibitions surrounding these places or objects, boundaries which can change over time and in different contexts (Taussig 1998: 349): the categories of sacred and profane are “situational or relational categories, mobile boundaries which shift according to the map being employed” (Smith 1993: 291). What marked this property
as a sacred space was twofold: the chain link gates that I had to pass through to enter as well as the prohibitions surrounding this space of an abandoned institution.

When one enters a space that is separated from the ordinary world, the experience of this space is shaped by a sense that “at least in principle, nothing is accidental; everything, at least potentially, is of significance.” Jonathan Smith goes on to explain that such a space is like a “temple [that] serves as a focusing lens, marking and revealing significance” (Smith 1988: 54). Within this sacred space, “the ordinary (which remains, to the observer’s eye, wholly ordinary) becomes significant, becomes sacred, simply by being there. It becomes sacred by having our attention directed to it in a special way” (Smith 1988: 55). With this “focusing lens,” even the most mundane objects at Long Lane gained meaning. For, as I will go on to show, within an abandoned space, ordinary, seemingly familiar objects lose their familiarity.

I spoke to two Wesleyan students, Travis and Kendra, both now seniors at Wesleyan, who had explored one of the buildings at Long Lane together on a Saturday morning during their sophomore year. Both Travis and Kendra spoke of the strangeness of the rooms they had explored and the abandoned state of the institution. For Kendra, the wallpaper of one of the rooms vividly stood out in her memory: “I remember the wallpaper was creepy. It was creepy because it was old and peeling off. It was this baby blue or turquoise color, and I just remember that that was such an odd color to choose to decorate the inside of the building.” When I asked her why the wallpaper made such a strong impression on her, she responded, “I think because
when we went into it, because it was in such disrepair, and that seemed like such a cheerful color, and it was clearly falling apart, and it was such a stark contrast, and it was also… I don’t know…” Kendra was struck by the distinction between the joyful color of the wallpaper in contrast to its context in a deteriorating institution. Travis, referring more broadly to why abandoned places generally make him feel strange, said: “It’s weird to be in an abandoned building because you’re used to everything being neat. It’s just not what you’re used to seeing, it’s destroyed a little bit and run down. Your normal schema thing is wrecked… It’s just empty space.” Travis, too, expressed his feeling that there was something contradictory about vacant buildings—his idea of what the inside of a normal building should look like is disturbed by these uninhabited structures filled only with “empty space.”

Thus there is tellingly something about an abandoned building and the objects within them that seem distinctly out of place and that disturb our usual definitions of objects and spaces. The prohibitions that surround deserted spaces, which, earlier, I used the concept of the sacred to invoke, also mark that which is taboo. In Purity and Danger, Mary Douglas discusses our apprehension of dirt, of that which “offends against order” (Douglas 1966: 2). “Our pollution behavior,” that is the actions and emotions elicited by that which threatens our social world, “is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications” (Douglas 1966: 37). Thus to Travis, a deserted space challenges his classificatory scheme by disturbing his understanding of what the inside of a building should look like. In a similar way, Freud, in the essay, “The Uncanny,” describes the unsettling
feeling evoked by particular objects and places. Here he cites Jentsch, the individual who first discussed the uncanny and who believed that “a particularly favorable condition for awakening uncanny feelings is created when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not.” (Freud 1953: 233). Thus this feeling that something is uncanny may arise as a result of that which does not easily occupy a stable category.

While exploring Long Lane, such ordinary objects as the telephone and clock became significant. Like the wallpaper that Kendra described, they somehow seem out of place in this context. There is something haunting about such everyday objects in this milieu. Both a telephone and clock are practical, everyday items, but in an uninhabited institution and in their clearly broken state they are no longer useful or able to serve their original function. Although in appearance these objects can certainly be categorized as a telephone and a clock respectively; the clock, dangling off the wall with hands frozen at eight to seven o’clock, and the telephone sitting in the middle of the room are out of place and can only uneasily occupy their definition as telephone and clock. Thus these objects evoke feelings of the uncanny; of an object that should be usable, but which has clearly ceased to work; this object then is neither “dead” nor “alive.”
As I explored the buildings more, there was a sense, however vague, that something had happened here. Although all I knew of the institution was that at one point it had been a reform school; everything about and within the place suggested the lives that had once filled the buildings. This means that the broken telephone is not only out of place; it is also significant because it was once used, and, despite the passage of time and the decay of the buildings, remains connected to the lives of those who once used it in the past. In the introduction of *Ghostly Ruins*, a book featuring photographs of abandoned hotels, factories and institutions, the author describes one of the main reasons that abandoned places captivate people: “Paradoxically, the most important thing about an abandoned structure is that at one time it was not abandoned. A building that was constructed but never used is sterile …It has no soul…[But] we recognize a building, consciously or not, as a place within which there is life. That is what we care about, and that is why we are fascinated by abandoned places” (Skrdla 2006: 17). Lives no longer fill these deserted buildings but traces of past uses still remain. Thus these unoccupied sites awkwardly occupy this in between space; they remain tied to the lives that passed through the buildings yet these places, now derelict, can no longer be inhabited by human life.

*A Former Institution*

Travis, Kendra and I were Wesleyan students who had ventured from the university campus to that of another institution. However, this space, unlike that of Wesleyan, was deserted, in a state of ruin, and was a place where nonconforming individuals had been forcibly confined. Exploring such an environment gives rise to
particularly eerie feelings as one begins to imagine being trapped in such an institution and what might have happened there. As I walked around the old residential buildings, I remember feeling nervous, compelled to interpret the meaning of everything I encountered, like the dead crow lying splayed in the entranceway of one of the buildings. Upstairs, I remember walking down the long hallways lined with small rooms with barred windows. One of the rooms in particular stood out—unlike the other rooms, this one had cinderblock walls, a small, rectangular window, and what looked like a wooden bench from whose edges stuck out metal loops. The first thought that came to my mind was that residents had been forcibly restrained here. I felt scared. This was more than simply a sense that something was out of place. It was a deeper sense of disquiet that pervaded the building, and of the transgressions that may have occurred within.
In a short essay, “Afflicting the Afflicted: Total Institutions,” the author, William May, likens institutions to symbols of death; in particular, he speaks about institutions of confinement such as prisons and mental institutions (May 1998: 853). In such places, the physical boundaries, the admissions “rites,” and the institution’s own ideology create a space where the defective individual enters possibly to be remade into a more normal, productive member of society (May 1998: 854-855). Thus such total institutions, even before they are abandoned, occupy an uneasy space, as they contain individuals who have symbolically died to the outside world. Furthermore, it is the transgressions that these individuals have committed that have resulted in their placement outside of society’s bounds. In The Archaeology of Institutional Confinement, Eleanor Casella citing Mary Douglas describes the confined individual as an anomaly that does not neatly fit into society’s classificatory scheme. Society deals with the anxiety that such an individual causes by placing them into an institution and out of sight (Casella 2007: 65). As May suggests, we oftentimes avoid such individuals because they remind us of our own weaknesses and transgressions (May 1998: 857), and also perhaps of the fine line between the confined individual and the seemingly normal outsider.

Prohibitions surrounding these total institutions have helped to create a multitude of fantasies about such places in popular culture, particularly surrounding the transgressions that may have occurred within. There are countless novels and movies that negatively depict institutions. For example, in One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Nurse Ratched represents the controlling and oppressive aspects of
institutional life; in Gothika, a horror movie, the line between patient and doctor is blurred when a former psychiatrist at a mental institution is committed. Furthermore, news coverage of past or current abuses that have been committed in institutions also draws attention to what may have occurred within these spaces; for example, in December of 2008, there was significant media attention covering the brutal physical abuses that residents of an all boys reform school in Florida had been subjected to in the 1950s.

Thus such stories and fantasies informed the ways that Travis, Kendra, and I interpreted our explorations of the Long Lane property. When Travis and Kendra first explored Long Lane, both had thought that this place had once been a mental institution. I asked Kendra if she had been scared when she was exploring the buildings, and she replied: “I think I was scared in the way you scare yourself to have fun, ‘I can’t see what’s around that door,’ or scared ‘Oh crap, what if Physical Plant comes and we get in trouble?’ It wasn’t actually scary… and it was the middle of the day too, maybe if you went at night.” Travis also remembers how afraid Kendra was: “I remember Kendra was really scared because she said it reminded her of some scary movie with all the rusted paint and chairs and random trash.” During our conversation, Travis later recalled, “It just wasn’t as cool as I thought it would be,” adding that he would have liked to find “relics of whatever was there before, whatever that may be, old books, whatever,” although he added, “I didn’t expect to find the shock therapy room.” Institutions are often expected to be frightening and perhaps haunted places; however, Travis and Kendra’s anecdotes reveal their
multilayered experience exploring the building. Both had expected Long Lane to evoke a strong emotional response: Kendra admits to only acting scared; Travis admits that the building wasn’t as “cool” as he had expected.

When I first explored Long Lane, I was also wrapped up in the fantasy of this abandoned institution. I asked the friend who had volunteered to explore the property with me to dress in old fashioned clothes and to bring a small suitcase with her. As we walked through the buildings, she posed as though she were perhaps a new resident of Long Lane School or a ghost of this now deserted space.

Three years later, after I had chosen Long Lane as the topic of my senior thesis, I began reading about this institution in archived Hartford Courant articles. In
the process, I continued to find accounts of abusive guards, inadequate facilities, and suicide attempts by inmates. It made me feel sick to my stomach. I felt as if these articles realized some of the unsettling feelings I had had when I explored the buildings in my freshman year. Long Lane began to lose its sense of mystery, and instead this feeling was replaced by fear and sadness towards a place that seemed so seeped in suffering.

A Space in Transition

Yet as I began doing research on the physical property itself, I pushed these feelings and images towards the back of mind, and once again found myself captivated with the physical landscape. Over the summer, I decided to ask permission from Wesleyan to look around the old Cady School building, currently the office space for Physical Plant employees. The space on the first floor of the building has been newly renovated, or, in the words of the project manager, Stu, “refreshed.” Stu, a solidly built man with a shaven head, told me, “We put a little carpet in, we patched the walls, we puts some ducts in… it worked out well.” The walls have also been painted a cheerful yellow and the space has been neatly divided into office cubicles. When I asked for permission to further explore the building, the Assistant Vice President for Facilities, Kathleen, agreed to let me wander through the building’s second floor.

There, things were different. As I walked up the stairs, I noticed that the paint was peeling off the walls and ceiling. At the top of the stairs, there was a doorway
beyond which was a large hallway with rooms on either side. These rooms had at one point been classrooms. A couple of the spaces were being used for storage; one contained confiscated bicycles; the other, items that violated the university’s fire safety code. The rest of the rooms were generally empty, although there was evidence of their past use: the brightly painted walls and the old blackboards still mounted on them. Some of which still had chalk etchings of formal lesson plans or of residents’ signatures. Someone had written on one of the blackboards, “110 days!!” I wondered, 110 days until what, until the institution closed? What of the 109 days that had presumably followed? There was also a couple of haunting lines written in black ink above one of the doorframes that read, “I lay here frozen as I watch the execution//of my dying inspiration.” I felt captivated by this sharp contrast between the buildings’ lower and upper floors, only levels apart. One space was completely renovated with little trace of its former use; the other space had been barely touched, left seemingly
suspended in time, allowing for glimpses into the institution’s past. I was very curious whether or not the Physical Plant employees ever thought about this odd contrast, or more broadly, about the history of the place they came to work everyday.

A few of the Physical Plant employees that I spoke with expressed awareness of the “strangeness” of their work environment, or at least admitted that when they first relocated to the building they had been conscious of the building’s unique history. Lea, an administrative assistant, told me: “We kiddingly call this room right here the time-out room,” which, incidentally, is currently the Physical Plant employees’ break room. “We’re all convinced that there’s ghosts on the third floor, and there’s a couple of windows broken, and a lot of crayon etchings still on the blackboards and stuff like that, nothing mean, [but] some of us are convinced there’s ghosts on the third floor.” Yet she also went on to admit that she likes her new work environment because of its aesthetic details which, in her words, make the Cady School building a “special” and “different” place to work. Lucy, the construction project coordinator, remembers originally feeling odd about working at a former institution. “Ok I’m driving into Long Lane, I’m thinking, weird things went on here, and that was weird. Now it just feels like a regular building, I don’t think about it anymore.” To both these Physical Plant employees, this space had ceased to be extraordinary. As they became increasingly familiar with the premises, the buildings on the site entered into the realm of the ordinary, becoming a part of their everyday routine.
As I entered Long Lane the first time, crossing through the chain link gates, I found that I had entered a different space—“a focusing lens”—where even the most mundane objects, out of place, were at once fascinating and disturbing. However, like the Physical Plant employees that I spoke with, over time Long Lane lost some of its original allure. The chain link fence was no longer a boundary that I was afraid to cross, I had been given permission to explore the old school building, and Long Lane had become a site of research with an increasingly familiar landscape and history. I too began to see the site as unremarkable, mundane and ordinary. Although I may have lost much of my initial sense of fascination with the property, I soon found myself enchanted with a different aspect of this place, with what I considered Long Lane’s distant past. I saw the years in which Long Lane had operated as an all-girls institution as an era where the prohibitions surrounding this place in its later years were seemingly absent.
Perceiving the Landscape

*Discovery*

When I wanted to escape campus during my first year at Wesleyan, I would explore the areas near the Long Lane property. On one of these walks, I remember venturing into the field opposite the road from the Cady School building, beside the house now used by Wesleyan University Press. That day (or maybe another one, I don’t remember), I decided to wander further—beyond the field and down a grassy slope into a small wooded area. There were paths leading through the trees encircled by vines and wooden bridges in various states of disrepair laid across a narrow stream. This rural landscape felt distinctive from the crowdedness and constant cacophony of the Wesleyan campus.

As I began doing research, I discovered that these places that I had explored in my first year at Wesleyan also had been part of Long Lane’s expansive landscape, and were now a part of Wesleyan’s property. The field and woods on the other side of Long Lane were at one point a part of the institution’s grounds, the field was farmed and the woods had served as a bird sanctuary. Girls from one of the cottages had built the little bridges that I had crossed over several times on my walks. According to Len, a current property owner on Long Lane, there’s an old sign kicking around that has
the name of the cottage whose residents had constructed the bridges. The Wesleyan Press building near the field was once the superintendent’s house, which, many years later, was used to house girls from the institution who were soon to be released. In the fall of 2008, I noticed a sign nailed to a tree reading, “Pike’s Ravine,” beyond which was a path leading into a wooded area, located just off Pine Street. It was a nature sanctuary only minutes away from my house and which I guessed had been named after a former principal of Long Lane School, Anita Lee Pike. As I learned more about the institution’s extensive farming operation, and as I walked through the expanse of the property, including through the undergrowth that has now taken over parts of the landscape, I noted where the old fields had been located, I speculated where the apple orchard might have been, where the strawberries were grown and where cows might have grazed. I found the old pond
towards the back of the property; walking around its circumference, I saw a single broken lamp post and a decrepit ropes course in the trees.

Creating a Landscape

When the directors of the future Industrial School for Girls were searching for an ideal location for their new institution, they wrote to The Hartford Courant seeking proposals from people willing to sell or donate land. From their requests, it is clear that they had an image of a particular landscape in mind. The directors expressly requested “a farm of one hundred acres of dry, rich, well watered land” and noted that “a southern exposure is preferred.” They went on to state, “the situation should be pleasant, healthful, somewhat isolated and retired, but not too remote and inaccessible—in an intelligent and moral, but not too populous neighborhood” (Fessenden 1868). Middletown, hoping to attract the institution, paid nearly twelve thousand dollars to purchase forty-six acres of land on the southern edge of the city for a tract of land that had formerly served as the town’s race course (June 29, 1870).

Both Middletown and Farmington, another Connecticut town, offered land. However, Middletown’s bid was accepted by the directors of the school, and the city became the future location of the reformatory (Leavitt 1992: 1). On June 29th, 1870, a day before the Industrial School for Girls opened, a newspaper article in The Hartford Daily Courant described the school’s grounds, which, from the account, seemed to realize the image of the landscape that the institution’s directors had envisioned two years earlier.
The grounds of the institution occupy the summit of a gentle elevation… The location is a most admirable one. The view from thence is one of the finest to be found in the Connecticut Valley, giving an extensive prospect in every direction of the most beautiful section of country in New England. In point of healthfulness, no better situation could be desired… The lands belonging to the school are good and can easily be put in a high state of cultivation. A stream of water runs through them, which it is proposed in due time, by applying a dam there to expand into a miniature lake… The buildings are visible for a considerable distance before reaching the grounds… The principal buildings are three in number, two houses, as they are termed, and one school edifice… They present a most antique and pleasing appearance.

“Connecticut Industrial School for Girls”

During the early 1800s, legislation was passed which mandated that delinquent youth be placed in separate institutions from adults in an effort to shield youth from the harsh conditions of adults prisons, leading to the creation of reformatories for youth throughout the United States. This separation of facilities reflected the emergent category of adolescence, which, at around the turn of the century, had become recognized as a life stage distinct from both childhood and adulthood (Lesko 2001: 88). At this time, the newly created juvenile courts that sentenced these young offenders were granted the power to intervene in youth’s lives, regardless of whether or not these juveniles had committed criminal offenses (Steinhart 1996: 90). Thus youth would often be committed to such institutions not as criminals but as status offenders for misdemeanors such as “truancy,” sexual deviancy, for being “beyond control” or simply because they had been neglected at home (Sutton 1992: 93). At this time, parents in Connecticut could send their children to such institutions without going through any legal proceedings (Sutton 1992: 94).
That separate facilities had to be constructed for these youth meant that a new set of ideologies and treatment methods specific for wayward adolescents, too, had to be created. It was widely believed at this time, as evidenced by the requests of the directors of the Industrial School, that institutions for young offenders be located in the countryside (Platt 1969a: 61). The countryside provided an environment away from the corrupting influences and overcrowding of the city slums “with their promiscuity and squalor” which were cited as one of the main causes of crime (Rothman 1980: 210). Reformers perceived the countryside as a “natural” location for a reformatory because they believed that children were innately drawn to nature. Howe, an advocate of the nineteenth century child saving movement, wrote, “the child loves and pants for freedom… his every contact with nature is but his communion with a second mother” (Platt 1969a: 64). By removing the child from his or her original, polluting environment and placing her in what they perceived as a sheltered and more benevolent one, reformers hoped to put children on the path towards a moral life. By placing reformatories in rural environments, reformers were trying to instill these youth with “the virtues of rural life” in a society where these values were believed to be in decline (Platt 1970: 16). It is ironic that this “rural” isolated site on which the Industrial School for Girls was located, had, in fact, once been Middletown’s race course—a use which had surely fostered the vices from which the school was trying to protect its students.

Reformers’ desire to build these institutions in rural settings reflects a new, romanticized view of nature which was becoming increasingly prevalent in the
nineteenth century, particularly amongst the middle classes. In *Culture Builders*, Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren trace the consolidation of bourgeois values, ideologies, and practices in Sweden during the nineteenth century as Swedish society transitioned from a largely peasant to a more industrial and urban society. In particular, their discussion of the changing views of the natural environment held by the Swedish middle class bears a strong connection to the importance the founders of the Industrial School placed on the setting in which the school was built. The process of industrialization and urbanization of nineteenth century Sweden meant that growing numbers of individuals were no longer living in a rural setting and were becoming increasingly detached from the natural world. As a result of this disconnection, two distinct fantasies of the natural landscape emerged: “The landscape of industrial production…ruled by rationality, calculation, profit, and effectiveness” and “[the] new landscape of recreation, contemplation and romance” (51). From this latter view of the natural landscape, the bourgeoisie derived a view of the natural world distanced from modern, urban life and which led to “the nostalgic search for a utopian past and an unspoiled natural state,” as members of the middle class expressed their longing for the simpler ways of rural life (51). The common perception was that outside of their urban environment, individuals could again become “complete and genuine people living a full life” whereas in the cities, their lives were unfulfilled (68). Archived photos from the early twentieth century often depict residents of the Industrial School for Girls outdoors in picturesque settings, enjoying this rural environment. At the institution, youth could live in a rural setting, with its open view of the valley and access to water and arable land, where they
would be able to realize their true
and inherently pure selves that
had been polluted by their lives in
the cities.

A Pleasant Institution

The effort the directors of
the Industrial School for Girls
invested in choosing the
institution’s location and their
desire to maintain its pleasant
outward appearance would have
helped consolidate the Industrial
School’s respectable reputation. A pleasant, well-kept landscape may have connoted a
pleasant, well-run institution. At the time of its opening, charitable institutions such
as the Industrial School were oftentimes well integrated into the communities in
which they were built. As was the case with the Industrial School, the institution’s
creation was the result of the contributions of many benefactors from surrounding
cities and towns. In fact, a Hartford Courant article in 1870 listed those who had
contributed at least one hundred dollars to the school in descending order—at this
date, the largest donation had been made by Mrs. Esther Pratt, who had contributed
five thousand dollars to the school (August 11, 1870). At the inauguration ceremonies
of the school’s official opening day, attended by over 250 individuals, Daniel C.
Gilman, Professor of the Yale Scientific School, stood in front of the guests and delivered an address entitled “The Relations of the State of Connecticut to the Forlorn and Unfortunate.” His speech was evidently directed towards the members of the audience who had financially and otherwise supported the creation of the new institution, as throughout he appeals to and commends the virtues of these audience members. The speech begins with the following words: “We are assembled on this occasion, from various parts of the commonwealth, to testify our interest in the forlorn and the unfortunate.” Gilman went on to remark that a town needs religious, educational and charitable institutions to “engage the sympathy of all the inhabitants” and to create a “happy” town (Gilman 1870: 4) as such institutions would express the citizens’ support for the educational, spiritual, and philanthropic ideals that these institutions embody.

That the Industrial School was at one point a well accepted part of the Middletown community is further evidenced by multiple postcards depicting the institution’s landscape and built environment. In the early twentieth century, postcards were produced portraying the buildings of various institutions within Middletown such as the Middletown High School, Wesleyan University, Connecticut Hospital for the Insane, and the Industrial School for Girls. At this time, the institutions displayed on these postcards were “a matter of civic pride” and were used to advertise the modern facilities available in a town or city (Hook 2005: 387). Although sending a postcard with the equivalent of an institution like the Industrial School or the Connecticut Hospital for the Insane would be unusual today, it was not
considered remarkable at the turn of the century. This postcard, postmarked on February 1, 1909, features a few rather mundane lines on the back: “I am working in the Thread Factory and enjoy it much better than housework. I am tired of that, can do much better in the Factory.” The label on the front of the postcard simply reads “Industrial School for Girls, Middletown, Conn,” above an image of two of the institution’s buildings. Since the front of the postcard depicts a scene devoid of human activity with only two buildings as its focus, the purchaser and receiver of this postcard would be able to more easily associate the institution with the pleasant aesthetic of the buildings, with the idea of Middletown as a modern city or with the Industrial School’s abstract charitable ideals, rather than with the working class girls who were sent to the institution and their alleged transgressions. Or, perhaps even more tellingly, an individual during this period may have sent such a postcard without any thought about the institution it featured on the front. Unlike today, such institutions of confinement were considered a normal feature of the landscape, built to be a visible and accepted element of a city or town.
“I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes Unto the Hills”

Over the next hundred years, the institution whose name changed twice, to Long Lane Farm in 1921 and then in 1943 to Long Lane School, continued to be portrayed in Hartford Courant articles as a kind and nurturing place. A newspaper article from 1918, “Fifty Years of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls,” describes the institution as “not that of a prison to which criminals are sent for punishment, but that of a temporary placement of custody and instruction. Its object is prevention and reformation by giving the children that special physical, mental, moral, social and industrial training necessary to fit them for life” (June 23, 1918). A 1945 article, “Harvest Time at Long Lane Farm,” praised the rehabilitative qualities of the institution as it discussed the girls’ excitement at their harvest dinner: “For them, it is the culmination of a summer’s work, and only one who has attended the Harvest Supper can realize how rewarding the program actually becomes to the little community sharing, often for the first time, the thrill of being participants in work that is constructive, healthful and productive” (October 21, 1945). Even into the 1960s, the institution was depicted as one that benefitted the young women sent there: “The girls develop positive social attitudes, good work habits, spiritual values, self-confidence and the ability to conform to socially accepted community standards” (July 16, 1962).
Throughout this period of time, the institution, in addition to maintaining its reputation as a benevolent one, also appeared to continue to link itself to the Industrial School’s founding ideologies, particularly through continuing to associate Long Lane’s rehabilitative project with the institution’s rural setting. Thus tellingly, well into the twentieth century as this excerpt from a 1968 summer staff manual suggests, the institution continued to infuse its physical landscape with value.

The original 46 acres provided for the school have been increased to well over two hundred. Most of this land is cultivated or used for pasture or campus, and was purchased by the Directors for the State of Connecticut for the purpose of providing healthful outdoor activities for the students and protection from city encroachment.

The site on which Long Lane School stands exemplifies its ideals and standards. The plan of the school buildings, the care of the grounds, and the beauty of the surrounding country have all made Long Lane School one of the most beautiful schools in New England. The rolling hills surrounding it inspired the selection of the 121st Psalm at the School Psalm—“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills.”

The implication of the above excerpt is that the institution’s staff still believed in the rehabilitative qualities of a rural environment that provided residents both “healthful outdoor activities” and an environment that was sufficiently distanced from the perceived polluting effects of the city. Furthermore, this manual explicitly states that the school’s grounds reflected the institution’s ideals. Well maintained grounds were a manifestation of pride in the institution and perhaps also of the proper, carefully controlled, and “cultivated natures” of the girls who lived there.

An Idyllic Landscape

As I explored Long Lane’s landscape, I found myself drawn to what I imagined Long Lane had been like in the days before the institution had become co-ed. As I pieced together what had made up the Long Lane property, I was also clearly
seeing that much of this landscape was in ruin. I was learning about this place in the context of what had been; that at one point there had been fields and a nature sanctuary, but no longer. I began to perceive Long Lane as a once idyllic landscape—

akin to a summer vacationing spot with its pond, expansive fields, trees, rolling hills, and farmland. As I looked at the landscape, I, too, was drawn to the ideals this environment had perhaps once connoted. I found myself thinking of this place as removed from mundane daily life and associated with the enchantment of summertime and with a simpler past (Frykman and Lofgren 1987: 64). I found myself unthinkingly but wholeheartedly agreeing with depictions I had heard and read about of Long Lane as a wholesome, nurturing institution. This ostensibly idyllic period in Long Lane’s history seemed to offer a pleasant substitution for what had eventually become of the institution. David Lowenthal, in explaining such nostalgic feelings, writes, “The past offers alternatives to an unacceptable present” (Lowenthal 1999: 49).
The founders of the school, by creating a landscape that reflected middle class values and aesthetics, provided another means for girls at the institution to learn to internalize those values. Furthermore, specific features of the landscape such as the bird sanctuary would have provided the girls an opportunity to engage in a typical middle-class leisure activity; while perhaps also teaching the girls the moral values embodied by songbirds who were seen as innocent, monogamous creatures (Frykman and Lofgren 1987: 79).

Although the young women at Long Lane had the opportunity to enjoy this landscape during their leisure time and some perhaps found their work fulfilling, for them, this landscape, unlike for the middle-classes, would have also been associated with coerced labor. It is possible that to an outside observer, the girls working the fields embellished the image of a rural utopia, evoking ideas about a simpler life connected to the earth. However, I am sure that to the girls working the land, farming was a far less idyllic prospect. Ellen, who was sent to Long Lane in 1941, remembers weeding the fields, gardening in the greenhouse and working with the animals in the barn; as Ellen asserted, “It was hard
work.” Ellen’s perspective is important to note since uncritical views of the institution’s farming practices easily overlook the coercive and exploitative aspects of life at the institution.

A Declining Institution

After Long Lane merged with the Meriden School for Boys in 1972, Long Lane was no longer an accepted or integrated institution in the Middletown community. As one looks through Hartford Courant articles that cover the opening ceremonies of various buildings erected on the institution’s campus over time, there is an evident shift. The articles that I looked at published before 1972, “Girls Cheer as Cottage is Dedicated” (November 28, 1926), “Long Lane Dormitories are Opened” (June 5, 1931), and “New Interfaith Chapel at Long Lane Dedicated” (May 25, 1969), all noted that whichever facility or building had just been opened was named after an individual who had served the school for a number of years: Rosemary O. Anderson Cottage; Fabrique, Russell and Pratt Homes; and the Ethyl D. Mecum Interfaith Chapel. When the new Diagnostic and Secure Treatment Unit was opened at Long Lane in 1976, and then, fourteen years later, when an addition to this facility was built, opening ceremonies were still held, but there is no mention that these new facilities were dedicated to notable individuals in the institution’s development. By this point, Long Lane was seen more as a punitive and abusive rather than rehabilitative and nurturing institution. Hartford Courant coverage of the institution during this time period featured headlines such as “Beaten at Long Lane” (April 4, 1979), “Long Lane Brutality Downplayed” (May 17, 1979), and “Red flags at Long
Lane” (October 12, 1999). By this time, Long Lane had become an unwanted institution in the Middletown community.

**Shifting Meanings**

As the institution ceased to hold the same place it had once held in the community, it appears as if the landscape also came to play a less central role in the institution’s rehabilitative project. From the staff manuals of 1974, 1981, 1984, 1985, and 1990, the period after the institution had become co-ed, it appears as if the landscape had lost its relevance to the school’s rehabilitative project. The first four of these manuals did not even mention the physical site on which the institution was placed; and only one, the 1990 staff manual, very briefly mentions the physical space itself: “Located in Middletown, Long Lane is a 200-acre non-secure institution, although it does contain a secure unit, housing 36 beds…” What I infer from this absence is that at this point, the institution was no longer trying to instill the residents with middle class ideals in the same way it had before 1972, and with this change in the institution’s goals, the landscape no longer held the same importance as it had years before.

However, while looking through archives at the Connecticut State Library, I found a scrapbook of images from Long Lane dating from 1973 to 1980. The album seemed to have been assembled for public relations purposes rather than as someone’s personal memento of the school with type written captions on each page touting the rehabilitative programs run by the institution. Next to the heading on one
page, “Gardening is Therapeutic,” were several photos of boys tending to plants on a small plot of land. The caption on this page read: “Allyn Cottage students extend the Guided Group Interaction Program to ‘home gardening.’” While by this time large-scale farming had been phased out at Long Lane, outdoor activities were still incorporated into the school’s rehabilitative project. The page from the scrapbook entitled, “Gardening is Therapeutic,” described gardening as an extension of the Guided Group Interaction (GGI) program rather than as a continuation of the school’s past farming tradition. Rehabilitation now emphasized innovative psychological programs, such as GGI, which was described in a 1985 staff manual as a program in which “daily group meetings are held” and where “guided peer influence becomes a major agent of change.” This contrasts with the institution’s previous emphasis on “traditional” values which stressed the importance of life in a rural environment, previously central to Long Lane’s rehabilitative project. Other pages of the scrapbook show scenes of students involved in similar outdoor activities, like the “Youth Challenge Program,” which used “the outdoors and a variety of outdoor activities to help students at Long Lane School achieve some successes.” The photos surrounding
this caption showed the residents navigating the outdoor ropes course beside the pond on a corner of the property and helping one another climb a vertical wall made of wooden planks in a team building exercise. During this later time period, nature and the outdoors were recognized as a means of instilling confidence in the students, which reveals a different perception of nature compared to previous romantic ideals, which had believed the environment was capable of instilling youth with moral values.

_Nostalgia and the Landscape_

The two people I spoke with who had lived or had family members who had lived near the institution for long enough to remember Long Lane when it was as an all-girls facility had somewhat nostalgic memories of this period, which contrasted sharply with their feelings towards the institution after it merged with the Meriden School for Boys. I spoke with Dorothy in her home on Long Lane while sitting around her kitchen table, drinking tea, as classical music played in the background. Dorothy had moved to Middletown with her husband in 1963, and in 1967, they bought the house where they currently live. Dorothy remembers that at the time they purchased their property, they were an anomaly in the neighborhood; whereas most of the people living on the street worked at Long Lane School, Dorothy’s husband was a psychology professor at Wesleyan. Now, she notes, the vast majority of her neighbors are in some way affiliated with Wesleyan University. Dorothy recalls that when she first moved into her home, she was unaffected by living so close to a reform school. “That really didn’t make much difference to us because at the time the school
was still a school for girls,” she said. She went on to say, “it was very low key, non-punitive,” echoing a common perception that during this time period, the institution was harmless and did not punish the girls there. Dorothy went on to add, “The girls, they raised cows down there, and they took care of the cows and the barns and they grew strawberries down by the field. For many years, you could go down there and pick the strawberries that remained.” Dorothy’s voice trailing off, she said, “[but] after, the school changed… it became a boys’ school.” Towards the end of the interview, Dorothy spoke again about this earlier period in the school’s history. “I think it’s kind of wonderful that, you know, the school was raising all these gardens while the girls were there” she remarked, noting that “now [Wesleyan’s] Long Lane Farm is part of the property,” an appropriate physical reminder of an apparently more pleasant time in the school’s past.

Len now lives in his grandparents’ former home on Long Lane, just minutes away from Wesleyan. As far as Len knows, the house where he now lives was the first one built on the street and was once part of an expansive, privately owned farm. Len has been visiting the area since the 1950s when he would visit his grandparents’ house as a child. He vividly recalled his childhood impressions and fantasies of Long Lane.

I sort of had this vision of the ‘20s, ‘30s, ‘40s. [The school] looked like a plantation sort of thing where you’ve got the big, fancy house for the superintendent, you’ve got the fields where the girls would work day in and day out, and they had a greenhouse on the site itself. At one point, they were largely self-sufficient… Certainly the tradition to the ‘40s or ‘50s, whether mental patients or reform school students, they put them to work growing their own food. It may or may not have been therapeutic or rehabilitative, but it was really remarkable when you think about the operation. To me, those were probably the glory days, if you want to call them that, when they had the full blown operation.
In Len’s mind, the school’s extensive farming operation was worthy of admiration. Both Len and Dorothy’s wistful memories of the institution’s history are associated with Long Lane’s former landscape and past farming practices. One might speculate that Dorothy and Len’s attachment towards this landscape is linked to their longing for a past when individuals were more self-reliant and life was more connected to the natural world. However, Len, by drawing parallels between the institution and a plantation is also clearly aware of the potentially exploitative practices of Long Lane School.

After the institution became co-ed, Len describes the ways that the physical landscape’s decline after the institution became co-ed mirrored the decline of the institution itself. He said:
The school seemed to close in on it itself. I think it had to do with budget; they didn’t have enough money to maintain the property. The backfields, everything is overgrown…even the hill that goes towards the stream is completely overgrown. We used to sneak down there and sled sometimes because it was all open down there, but all the brambles and saplings grew up, and it’s all overgrown now… I’m not sure when they stopped… probably in the ’70s, stopped paying attention.

Thus from conversations with Dorothy and Len, it appears that as the institution’s ideology and practices changed, and as the institution fell out of public favor, the landscape itself also deteriorated. However, this ostensibly abrupt change that occurred in the institution and in its landscape after 1972, may, in fact, have been less straightforward. Although farming practices at the institution did not cease until 1979, judging from later photos, it is clear that after the 1950s farming had become a less central feature of daily life at the institution, and the school’s landscape, too, less important to its mission. This photo, taken between 1950 and 1970, depicts three girls
wearing casual clothing, one wearing sunglasses, working in a garden on Long Lane’s
property—it contrasts sharply with earlier photos taken of girls farming the fields. A
1970 newspaper article in The Middletown Press reports that at this time, much of the
school’s grounds were unused—“Long Lane has a large, attractive campus, most of
which critics says [sic] is never used for fear girls will take advantage of chances to
run away.” This article suggests that even before the institution became co-ed, the
landscape had already become less central to its rehabilitative project, the physical
site had already begun to deteriorate, and perceptions of the institution had already
begun to shift in the public’s eyes.
An All-Girls Institution

A Pleasant School

“As they left Wilcox, the office building, Mary noted again the wide expanse of green grass, the beautiful large trees, the bright flower borders, and the attractive-looking red brick buildings. “Why, it looks like a college campus,” she thought with pleased surprise. Maybe it wouldn’t be quite so dreadful a place as she had feared.”


Long Lane did look like a college campus—brick buildings in a rural setting amongst fields and trees on a property without fences. From its outward appearance one would not have been able to tell that the institution was a reform school. The buildings’ innocuous aesthetics may have contributed to the public perception of Long Lane as a benevolent establishment rather than an institution of confinement. In fact, the philosophy of the superintendent, Ethyl Mecum, who served from 1955 to 1968, was to view Long Lane as a residential boarding school. The booklet quoted above, besides deemphasizing the fact that Long Lane was a reformatory, said little about the reasons most of the girls were sent to the institution—that they had committed so-called status offenses, misdemeanors for which only juveniles could be legally charged. Thus there is evidence to suggest that the institution emphasized its role as a “normal” school, rather than an institution to which delinquent girls were sent. The “Housemothers’ Book,” a 1950 manual for female employees who lived in cottages with the girls, directed the staff to avoid mentioning the girls’ pasts.

Although this may have been policy to help the girls’ rehabilitation, as explained in
the following excerpt; the effect was also that the institution’s purpose was
deemphasized.

Do not encourage the girls to talk to you or to other girls about their unpleasant
experiences or circumstances leading to commitment, their family or their
background. Tactfully change the conversation from subjects concerning the past to
ones concerning the girl’s future, and then direct the girl’s interest away from herself.
You can do much toward rebuilding a girl’s self-respect, her faith in other people,
and her hope for a happy life.

Although the institution may, at times, have appeared to deny its reforming
mission, Long Lane had been founded on the principles of the child-saving
movement, which aimed to rescue “those who were less fortunately placed in the
social order” (Platt 1969a: 3), which oftentimes meant youth who had transgressed or
were in danger of transgressing social mores. In the increasingly urban and industrial
society of the late nineteenth century, girls’ womanhood and sexual purity were
perceived to be in danger (Odem 1995: 24). Primarily white, working class girls were
targeted by this reform movement—the sexual purity of young African American
women was typically not of concern to reformers (Odem 1995: 10); however, Long
Lane, from its opening, did admit African American girls (Leavitt 1992: 38).

Compared to male juvenile offenders, the young women who entered the juvenile
courts were more likely to be judged “in terms of their moral welfare rather than in
terms of their status as delinquents” (Campbell 1983: 7). For example, up until 1972,

law in Connecticut stated: “Any unmarried female between the ages of 16 and
21…who is in manifest danger of falling into habits of vice, or who is leading a
vicious life, or who has committed any crime…may be committed to…an institution”
(Campbell 1983: 7). Reformatories such as the Industrial School provided an
environment that aimed to both physically and also ideologically distance the girls
from their urban and ostensibly working class homes (Platt 1969a: 177). For example, at the school’s formal opening in 1870, the speaker of the day, Daniel C. Gilman, contrasted the institution with its “comfortable homes,” “self denying teachers” and “friendly overseers,” with the “wretched tenements, the grim and gaudy ‘saloons,’ the cheerless poor-houses, and the ghastly jails” which had previously “offered their sheltering arms to such friendless girls” (Gilman 1870: 5). Long Lane then was supposed to provide the girls with a better upbringing than their parents would ever be able to offer them.

Ellen and her younger sister were sent to Long Lane in 1941 when Ellen was thirteen years old because, in Ellen’s words, there were “too many kids” in her family. Lucy, a Physical Plant employee, gave me Ellen’s contact information, which she had acquired when Ellen had travelled to Middletown to visit the grounds of the institution where she had spent several years of her adolescence. Although I was able to speak with Ellen over the phone, I never had the opportunity to meet her in person. However, Lucy, who had walked with Ellen around the Cady School building, described Ellen’s most distinctive physical trait to me, her height: “She was only about four foot two, and she kept on looking up at me. I had to sit down just to make eye contact with her while she was standing.” Years before, when Ellen had been sent to Long Lane, she had committed no status offenses; her parents just did not have enough money to raise her and her five siblings. Ellen, like most of the other girls at Long Lane, came from a working class background. When I asked her whether her experience at Long Lane had significantly impacted her life, she replied, “I think it was for the better. We got the training we wouldn’t have gotten were we living at...
home. I learned a lot—learned to sew, to can, to bake pies, make different meals, wait on tables, learned all of that…” At Long Lane, girls learned skills that would make them good homemakers as well as hirable in working-class occupations such as seamstresses, maids, or servers. The institution itself was set up to imitate a home-like setting and was organized according to a cottage system, which created smaller communities of girls each living in a home headed by a housemother (Rothman 1980: 265). The booklet for new girls that I quoted above, which would have presumably been given to girls upon their arrival at the institution, aimed to make the girls feel more comfortable at Long Lane by familiarizing them with the institution’s practices and also by demonstrating that Long Lane in some ways might provide better care than their homes had. For example, by describing the delicious meals the girls would be having at the institution, the booklet implied that although many of the girls sent to Long Lane had not received sufficient nutrition at home, they would be properly fed and cared for at Long Lane: “The meals were exceptionally good. Of course there was plenty of fresh
milk from the School’s herd of cows, eggs from Long Lane’s own hens, and all
varieties of vegetables grown right at the School. Mary had never had so much to eat.
(In a week she gained three pounds.)”

I asked Ellen directly if she was happy at Long Lane and she replied, “Yes. People don’t realize, they say, how can you be happy in an institution? But I was.” Ellen recounted several of her pleasant memories of Long Lane School to me, “We had what you would call a harvest supper in the fall, absolutely beautiful, held in a big barn.” She also remembers watching movies every Friday night in the auditorium, going roller skating around the property and visiting the beach. There were also extracurricular clubs that the girls could join; a 1962 edition of The Tower, Long Lane’s student published magazine, listed the clubs at the school which included the garden club, girl scouts, and choir.

When I first saw the auditorium inside the Cady School building in the fall of 2008, I looked beyond the piles of boxes, the broken chairs, and peeling paint, and focused on the architectural details of the space. I found myself thinking that at one
point Long Lane must have been a pleasant school and I felt a surge of nostalgia for this more idyllic period in the institution’s past. At the entrance to the auditorium, I was surprised by the ornate molding around the arched doorframe, and upon entering the theater, was further surprised by how grand the room was. The stage was carved into the wall at the bottom of a gentle slope where the audience would have the sat on chairs. Although the seats were now gone, I could still see where the aisle would have cut between the audience’s chairs through the center of the room. The ceiling was high and arched, and above all of the six floor-to-ceiling windows were wooden panels on each of which was carved two stars painted a rosy pink. Marilyn, the project manager at Long Lane who was giving me the tour of the building, remarked that it wouldn’t have been a cheap building to build and I agreed. Implicit in her comment was that at one point Long Lane had been a place in which people were willing to invest time and money.
A Reformatory for Girls

Even in 2008, I saw Long Lane’s buildings as connoting a respectable institution. Presumably in years past, these buildings would have carried similar meanings and would have appealed to outsiders of Long Lane School. Yet the buildings’ pleasant aesthetics and the seeming normality of the institution did not take away from the fact that Long Lane was indeed an institution of confinement for youth. This is a fact that Ellen acknowledged as she expressed her awareness of how much her adolescence had occurred within Long Lane’s confines, and her awareness that her teenaged years were atypical ones. Ellen remembers how hard it was to be separated from her family members when she was just thirteen. Only after she had been at the institution for six months were her parents able to afford to come from Norwich, Connecticut to visit her and her sister. While under Long Lane’s care, Ellen recalled that even on their trips to the beach, the girls were confined to a sectioned-off area and that everyone wore the same bathing suit, which was “black and plain and drabby looking.” Ellen wondered what the rest of the people at the beach thought of all these girls wearing the same bathing suits. From the tone of her voice as she said this, it seemed clear that she knew that the group of Long Lane girls was visibly marked as different from the rest of the beach-goers. At another point in our conversation, Ellen recalled having dances in the basement of her cottage where she would dance with the other girls. “…Of course, there were no boys,” she said, “so we’d dance with one another, a big thrill.” She later added, “It’s a wonder none of them turned queer from dancing with one another…” At an institution where girls’
sexual purity was carefully guarded, the girls had minimal contact, if any, with the opposite gender. When I asked Ellen jokingly if there were many illicit affairs between girls at the school and male employees; she replied, “No, didn’t have a chance. They watched you like a hawk.” As a total institution, Long Lane created a carefully monitored social world in which the girls led their daily lives (Wallace 1971: 1). Ellen’s anecdotes convey her awareness that she had experienced an unusual adolescence—one that was marked by confinement and carefully regulated play within the context of an all-girls institution.

When Long Lane opened as the Industrial School for Girls in 1870, and as adolescence was emerging as a life stage distinct from both childhood and adulthood, discussions of this new developmental stage reflected anxieties over “the threats to nation and empire, the erosion of Anglo Protestant values and morals in urban areas, and fear of racial suicide,” (Lesko 2001: 49). These fears reflected perceived threats to society’s traditional values and hierarchy which were being challenged by white women and African Americans, and also reflected anxieties surrounding broader social changes resulting from urbanization and industrialization (Lesko 2001: 20). The turn of the century was therefore uniquely marked by concerns over the control and regulation of adolescents, for it was believed that if young adults’ time was not vigilantly governed, adolescents’ moral characters would deteriorate and this would subsequently threaten the values upon which society was based. Young women, it was seen, were at risk of becoming sexually precocious and young men at risk of becoming weak and effeminate (Lesko 2001: 81). Outside the context of institutions
like Long Lane, regulating adolescents’ time typically consisted of a well structured school schedule as well as planned and regulated after-school activities. But within the context of a total institution, girls’ behavior could be watched and regulated constantly. The “rehabilitative ideal” of the institution presupposed that the girls were not inherently bad, but that through proper environment and instruction could be rehabilitated (Platt 1969a: 45). Not only were girls’ activities throughout the day carefully planned, but the institution also had access to the most minute and intimate details of their daily lives. For example, a notebook labeled “Girls Monthly” recorded the duration of each girl’s period with the exception of those who were pregnant. A note written on January 1st, 1969 requested that the housemother of a particular cottage “notify the nurse on duty when this girl experiences her menses. That nurse on duty may check her pad.”

Creating Femininity

As already stated, girls could be confined to Long Lane for not only breaking the law, but also for transgressing social norms, and perhaps, even more surprising, like Ellen, simply for being poor. Young women committed to Long Lane had crossed, or threatened, if only by virtue of their class background, social norms and values, in particular, women’s proper place in society (Casella 2007: 65). Given the range of reasons girls could be sent to such institutions, what perhaps more broadly connected these girls was their overwhelmingly working-class backgrounds, which, in turn, oftentimes marked these girls as deviant (Leavitt 1992: 38). Thus regardless of why they had been sent to the institution, their working-class backgrounds already
indicated a particular form of womanhood, one oftentimes associated with sexual promiscuity, and more broadly, with lax moral codes (Skeggs 2002: 312). As a result of urbanization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, working class women had gained greater social and sexual autonomy as a result both of new employment opportunities, for example, in factories and department stores, and as the result of commercialized forms of entertainment, for example, dance halls and movie theaters, which allowed young women to socialize without adult supervision (Odem 1995: 2-3). Fears of working class women’s increased autonomy was made manifest in reform movements in the United States that aimed to protect the sexual purity of society’s young women.

Thus at Long Lane, girls were taught to internalize the values of middle-class respectability and domesticity (Brenzel 1983: 8), in other words, they were taught how to become feminine in an effort to make up for their working class backgrounds (Skeggs 2002: 311). These young women then were also taught a woman’s proper place in society, a place which they could fulfill through leading moral, domestic lives and thereby ensuring not only familial but also perhaps social stability (Brenzel 1983: 4). This process normalized middle class morality and behavior and pathologized working class norms (Platt 1969b: 30). The femininity that girls at the institution were taught to embody was oftentimes understood through ideas about control and restraint of bodies, behavior, and space.
Staff manuals from the period between 1940 and 1970 presented a myriad of seemingly trivial rules to modify the girls’ behavior and self-presentation. A 1962 announcement notified all housemothers that girls were allowed to leave their hair up in pin curls only inside their cottages only during the Saturday afternoon recreation period. On July 19th, 1963, the then superintendent sent out a notice to housemothers that read: “Beginning Monday, July 22, girls are not to be allowed to wear earrings or stubs to their field assignments. These are not appropriate with work clothes.” Another rule from 1963 required that “shorts and slacks be worn only at picnics,” while a 1968 notice from the then Superintendent Mrs. June C. Tanner declared that girls were not allowed to wear fishnets or window pane stockings in the Cady School building. In 1972, rules for the Russell Home prescribed that in the living room and basement, “responsible lounging on the floor is permitted. This does not include sitting, lying, or putting hands on each other.” An undated staff manual reports that girls at Long Lane could also be punished for using profane language, chewing gum, talking out of windows, or having a messy room.

Pierre Bourdieu writes that institutions that “seek to produce a new man [sic] through a process of ‘deculturation’ and ‘reculturation,’” put considerable emphasis “on the seemingly most insignificant details of dress, bearing, physical and verbal manners” (Bourdieu 1987: 94). In this process of managing the body, the institution’s residents came to embody certain values, internalizing them in ways that are “beyond the grasp of consciousness” (Bourdieu 1987: 94). Likewise, through the regulation of such trivial details of everyday life, Long Lane compelled its residents to embody a
certain version of womanhood that was neither too sexual (as connoted by fishnets and window pane stockings), too disorderly (wearing earrings during field assignments and having an untidy room) or too threatening of femininity (wearing shorts and slacks out of context and talking out of windows), thus attempting to “reculturate” the young women, in Boudieu’s words, according to the values of middle-class femininity. However, it is important to note that although the girls at the institution were taught how to become feminine women, the institution trained girls in skills they would need for working-class jobs. Thus girls were taught to adopt middle class morals, while at the same time being trained for jobs that would ensure their working-class status.

At Long Lane, girls were given the opportunity to perform their internalization of the institution’s values. Ellen remembers how once a week, the girls from each cottage went to the Beverley Tea Room where they had a proper meal,
which was cooked and served to them by other residents; an occasion for which girls were expected to be on their best behavior. The above photo shows staff in a room that I believe was the Beverley Tea Room; Ethyl Mecum sits at the head of the table facing the camera. From looking through the articles in the institution’s magazine, *The Tower*, I saw that through their writing, girls were attempting to demonstrate, at least outwardly, their desire to remake themselves and to become “nice girls.” For example, a 1961 edition of the magazine contains “A Recipe for a Delicious Personality” in which the author calls her peers to “Mix honesty, kindness and thoughtfulness until light and fluffy. Then fold in tact, poise and neatness. Again mix thoroughly. Add sense of humor and you should have a most satisfactory product.”

*Transgressions*

That Long Lane was in some ways an oppressive institution was a fact that was mostly ignored by newspaper articles that depicted the institution as a benign one. The fact that the girls sent to Long Lane had transgressed social norms, too, was oftentimes absent from *Hartford Courant* articles. Although these articles did not depict the girls at the institution as model young women, they also did not portray them as bad girls. Instead, the young women in these articles were depicted as lacking character, values, or appropriate home environments, all of which the institution, with its rehabilitative mission, could provide the girls through its nurturing atmosphere and moral teachings. In various newspaper articles, the girls are referred to as “the homeless and exposed girls of the state” (February 9, 1885), as “unfortunate, untrained, undisciplined and uneducated,” (January 25, 1929), as “merely impetuous,
thoughtless” (October 21, 1945), as “unfortunate girls who have been neglected or misled at a very crucial period in their lives, adolescence” (September 24, 1956), and as “young girls with adjustment problems” (July 3, 1968). Thus although not yet complete individuals, girls sent to the institution, as depicted in these articles, could be re-created and molded to comply with the institution’s ideals and its middle class standards of femininity.

Even when girls’ sexuality was invoked in newspaper articles, they depicted the girls as victims rather than as sexual deviants. In 1956, construction of a vocational school for boys was proposed for a site directly on the Long Lane property, adjacent to the institution’s buildings. Numerous editorials published in The Hartford Courant passionately opposed the idea—these editorials represented the girls as victims rather than as perverse individuals. The language of many of these editorials was vague and evaded directly stating why a trade school should not be located so close to the institution, with statements such as, “[A trade school] would disturb the quiet work being done there” (September 24, 1956), “nothing could be more disturbing than to have a large group of adolescent boys located near the school” (January 19, 1957), and that a nearby state trade school “would demoralize this work [being done by the institution]” (March 5, 1957). Others editorials were more direct, arguing that the proximity of the two institutions “would create a temptation to both the boys and girls which may be more than they could withstand” (March 6, 1957) and which would cause “the girls’ lives to go down in defeat before such strong temptation” (February 16, 1957). Although the author of one editorial
with the sensational and telling title, “The Proposed Rape of Long Lane Farm” (March 5, 1957) never explicitly stated why the trade school should not be built next to Long Lane; everything is suggested in the title which hints that the girls at the institution would become sexual victims to the male students at the vocational school and that the boys’ presence would pollute the space of Long Lane itself. Thus in these articles, the girls were depicted as vulnerable to the whims of others and as helpless victims of either their circumstances or of seemingly unmanageable impulses.

The portrayed of Long Lane’s residents in these editorials makes sense in light of the fact that one of the institution’s primary aims was to instill the girls there with middle class values, and, as I have already mentioned, was viewed by the superintendent at the time as a residential boarding school rather than as a reformatory. Considering this depiction of the institution as a middle class(ing) enterprise, one might speculate that the girls too were portrayed in the way middle class, young women might be and thus with the passive sexuality that this implied (Skeggs 2002: 312).

As I spoke with people who currently live close to what used to be Long Lane School, I found that these individuals often assumed that girls had been sent to Long Lane for sexual misconduct. Yet only one of the comments that I heard from these neighbors portrayed the young women as sexually forward and promiscuous. Rob, a Wesleyan professor, commenting on Long Lane’s location adjacent to Wesleyan remarked: “Basically teenage prostitutes in a functioning farm next to a boys’
school,” chuckling heartily at his portrayal of the situation, he then added with irony, “so you know, great planning.”

I also found that outsiders who had lived in Middletown for years before the 1972 merger remembered that girls at the institution were spoken about as “bad girls,” not as victims as they were portrayed in newspaper articles. Patricia’s friend told her that as a child she was often warned by her mother; “If you don’t behave, you’re going to Long Lane.” Ruth, Len’s mother, who grew up in the 1930s in a house opposite Long Lane School, remembers similar threats from her mother who would tell her: “You behave yourself or you’ll go over there and live with those girls.” Two other women that I spoke with in a retirement center in Middletown reiterated this idea, repeating throughout our conversation that girls sent to Long Lane had been “bad, naughty girls.” Through such depictions, girls at the institution were not depicted as victims who through no fault of their own had been sent to the institution, but instead as individuals who had made immoral choices that had led to their confinement. Such a depiction may be connected to these young women’s working class backgrounds and the moral laxity that this often implied. This discussion suggests that before 1972, Long Lane residents were seen by the public at various moments as both helpless victims and as social deviants.

Hierarchies and Punishment

Upon entering the institution, the young women at Long Lane were expected to enter into and respect its hierarchical system which aimed to align their behavior
with the institution’s rules and values. Such a hierarchical system was common to institutions from the late nineteenth century onwards as it allowed residents, at least in theory, to take control over their fate rather than be blindly subjected to the institution’s rules (Platt 1969a: 47). When girls first entered the school, they were referred to as “new girls” and were temporarily subjected to special rules. In 1950, for example, new girls were required to wear either pink check or striped dresses, presumably so they could be easily identifiable and so that their lower status within the institution would be visibly marked. They also had limited privileges, for example, they had to be escorted everywhere on campus and were only allowed to attend movies every other Friday. After three months at the school, if they had behaved well, the probationary rules could be lifted and the new girls had the opportunity to become council girls. To become a council girl, a new girl would have to go before the Council of the cottage where she resided; she was then asked a series of questions to test her knowledge of the institution and its values. The interview could include some of the following questions: “What are the school’s colors?” Yellow and white. “What is Long Lane’s flower?” The daisy. “What are the institution’s seven ideals?” Self-control, self-respect, loyalty, honor, obedience, appreciation, and courtesy. If the new girl answered all questions correctly and if she was subsequently voted in by her peers, she would make the following pledge. “I pledge my loyalty to the United States of America and to Long Lane School. On my honor, I will assume my responsibility as a citizen, promote an interest in the welfare of others, and do everything in my power to uphold the ideals for which self-government at Long Lane School stands.” In doing so, this new council girl
voluntarily aligned herself with the school and perhaps in the process began to internalize the school’s overarching mission while also asserting herself as a good citizen of both the institution and of the nation.

Young women who did not adhere to the school’s rules were labeled “discipline girls.” For minor offenses, girls were sent before the council girls of their cottage who judged their case and dictated a punishment. Runaways received particularly harsh punishment and remained discipline girls for six months. In addition to the punishment offending girls received, they were also required to wear black socks indicating their status as discipline girls. This form of punishment was only phased out in 1970 when the program committee at the school decided that the “black sock procedure causes shame and engenders hostility.” Although girls at Long Lane, if they had not transgressed themselves, were perceived, at least based on their treatment at the institution, to be in danger of making immoral choices, also were given the opportunity to redeem themselves and to confirm their good characters through conformity to the school’s expectations. Alternatively, these young women could transgress again, thus marking themselves as transgressors within the institution.

Despite Long Lane’s attempts to prevent transgressions, there is evidence to suggest that girls certainly resisted the institution’s values. For example, the specificity of the rules regulating girls’ interactions with male employees suggests that girls had had “inappropriate” relations with male staff members in the past. A
1950s Housemother’s book declared: “Any girl sent to a department where men are
working (boiler room, greenhouse, barn, paint and carpenter shop or plumber’s shop)
must be escorted by a staff member,” and on April 16th, 1964, a notice was sent to all
staff informing them that male employees are “not to have coffee or other
refreshments in any of the cottages.” A “Girls’ Council Notebook,” dating from the
late 1950s to early 1960s, listed various transgressions girls had committed and the
punishments that they had been administered by the council girls for their offence.

On April 4th, 1959, Doris was “noisy in the dining room” and was given a week
of bedtime at 7:30pm
On April 22nd, Essie continued to put pins in her mouth after she had been
warned and had to go to her room at 4:30pm for two afternoons.
On April 30th, Nancy was accused of “endeavoring to attract attention as
Wesleyan boys approached” and was given two nights at 5pm
On May 5th, Sandra and Tina were accused of “unladylike behavior in the
hallway” after being caught “embracing in the hall when they should have been
in class” and were indefinitely sent to their rooms.
On July 28th, Essie “still refused to wear bra to field” [no punishment was
listed]

These transgressions, trivial from our standpoint, and the punishments that
they elicited show the extent to which Long Lane sought to regulate the young
women’s bodies, actions, and attitudes. The institution’s rules then were not
exclusively enforced by authority figures but also by its residents, thus encouraging
residents to internalize these values. Yet as I was reading the Council Girls notebook,
I couldn’t help but wonder; who were these girls who had broken the institution’s
rules? Why, for example, had Essie refused to wear her bra and why was this
considered such a serious offense? And why, more broadly, were girls punished so
harshly for these misdemeanors?
Throughout the period that Long Lane operated as an all-girls institution, some of the school’s practices certainly showed that Long Lane was a more punitive environment than the institution’s rhetoric would have made one believe. Although it was never mentioned in the institution’s documents, the girls’ rooms in the cottages were belled from the nineteenth century onwards, notifying the housemother if a girl left her room in the middle of the night (Leavitt 1992: 77). Before 1917, girls at the institution could be punished for acting up by being locked in a wooden restraining chair, a horrific looking contraption that I imagine would have terrified the girls who were placed inside it. When Ellen attended the school, the institution’s practices were certainly less harsh than they had been years earlier, yet Ellen was still sent to “lock up” for running away. The space Ellen was locked in was euphemistically labeled a reflecting room. Ellen remembered that inside, there was a bed and chair; however, she also recalled that “if you acted up too much, they took those away.” However,
Ellen also remembers that even though she was punished, “they never touched us, they never beat us, they were good to us.” During this time, Long Lane may have avoided being labeled a prison, yet some of its practices certainly connoted a prison-like environment.

*Resistance*

Newspaper articles from the 1920s through the 1960s consistently maintained that Long Lane was a respectable institution while the girls at the school, on the other hand, although portrayed as harmless and often as victims, were irrational human beings. A 1926 newspaper article, “Girls Easier Prey to Vice than Boys,” noted that ninety percent of the girls at Long Lane had been sent there for sexual offenses. Miss Penniman, the then superintendent of the school, commented on the various misdemeanors that girls sent to the institution had committed, “I am still daily being astonished to learn of the things girls sent to us do,” she said. “It is not understandable. They have standards, when they come to us, absolutely foreign to what we recognize as rational, and I say that it is utterly impossible to understand their views on life and why they do the things they do” (February 10, 1926). A little more than twenty years later, on August 23rd, 1947, the girls at Long Lane started “a near riot.” They refused to enter their rooms. They shouted and yelled. They threw small objects out of the windows. The director of the school, Mrs. Alice B. Sells, called the police to subdue the uprising. She explained that the girls’ behavior was a result of “the heat of the day.”

---

1 This was one of the only mentions I found in articles in *The Hartford Courant* that associated the young women at the institution with sexual promiscuity.
These newspaper articles consistently negated the girls’ voices, and offer a very limited context to the girls’ actions, tacitly deeming this context as unimportant by referring to their behavior merely as irrational and incomprehensible. But as Meyers and Sangster argue in their article, “Retorts, Runaways and Riots: Patterns of Resistance in Canadian Reform Schools for Girls,” there is much that such newspaper articles obscure about the reality of reform schools like Long Lane. “Girls’ retorts, escapes and rebellions,” they write, “may appear to have been spontaneous, diffuse, uncoordinated, simply reflex actions to the exertion of power,” but the “girls’ protests and anger were clearly directed towards their stigmatization as ‘bad’ girls, the subservient work roles they were expected to cheerfully embrace, and the schools’ attempts to reshape their sexuality and femininity into the dominant norms of passivity and purity” (688). Through the article, Myers and Sangster highlight the oppressive nature of the juvenile system and the methods that young women used to resist this system—for example, breaking rules, running away, or starting riots (669). Acts of resistance could range from small acts of defiance in “attempts to salvage autonomy and self respect” “to more organized, collective acts of violence” (669). Through breaking the institutions’ rules, girls in reformatories such as Long Lane may have been rejecting the institution’s total control of their lives and the regulations that demanded their transformation into proper, respectable women (675). One might speculate that Essie’s refusal to wear her bra was a blatant opposition to the institution’s attempts to instill her with middle-class respectability. Furthermore, as Meyers and Sangster go on to explain, some acts of resistance may not have even
violated any of the institution’s rules, and thus would have gone unreported, but were performed through the girls’ “barely disguised reluctance” while following the institution’s regulations (676).

In her recollections of her life at Long Lane School, Ellen painted a portrait of herself as a young woman who did not unthinkingly comply with the school’s rules, recounting several instances when she broke these rules or acted contrary to Long Lane’s mission. When Ellen first entered the school, she was placed in a cottage with her younger sister. One day her sister was washing the floor on her hands and knees, and Ellen took the pail away from her and said that she would wash the floor for her. As a result of Ellen’s gesture, the girls were separated. As Ellen remembers, “I stuck up for my sister…They realized I was going to defend her so they separated us and moved me to another cottage.” Later on in our conversation, Ellen told me: “I rebelled. I wouldn’t pay attention. I wouldn’t listen to what they wanted me to do. I wanted to work in the barn because I liked the animals, and I said, ‘Put me in the barn [and] I’ll stay out of trouble,’ and so till they put me in the barn, I made trouble.” As Ellen described the ways she reacted to the institutions’ rules and its attempts to control her life, it is clear that her actions were rational reactions given the situation at hand. Ellen, through her determination, eventually succeeded in being allowed to work in the barn, showing not only the effectiveness of Ellen’s resistance, but also that the institution’s rules and regulations were not unyielding.
At one point during our conversation, Ellen told me about her experience running away from Long Lane, another anecdote which demonstrates Ellen’s gumption as a young woman and her seeming determination to challenge the institution’s authority:

Most of the runaways happened at night. We would wait until one of the staff members was taking a shower. I remember one time my girlfriend wanted to run away with me, and I said, “How are we going to do that?” She said to me, she said, “Watch the staff member. I’ll put a whole lot of bluing in her hair; she’ll be trying to get that out for half an hour so we’ll be able to take off.”

Ellen and her friend ran away to New York for several months before they were caught trespassing on private property. Ellen was returned to Long Lane and was sentenced to spend time in the reflecting room as punishment. When Ellen was locked in solitary confinement, a marked off room at the end of the hallway, she remembers receiving support from her peers. Girls sentenced to solitary had all of their meals in this small room and dinner there was always bread and milk. However, one of the girls in the kitchen before sending the meal up to the discipline girl would put peanut butter on the bottom of the cup and then pour milk on top, a small gesture of compassion and solidarity. This anecdote begins to suggest that at the institution, young women did not resist the school’s rules in isolation, but were instead often supported by fellow residents.

Yet Ellen spoke about the time she spent at Long Lane optimistically, despite the fact that her anecdotes about her exploits at the school seem to show that at various moments she was treated unfairly and that she also resisted the school’s rules and defied its expectations. At one point, Ellen described her experience at the school as “bittersweet.” There seems to be a tension in her constructions of her past at Long
Lane as she views her experiences there in a mostly positive light, but also tells anecdotes that indicate that her experience at the institution may not have been an entirely pleasant one. It is possible that Ellen’s mostly optimistic interpretation of her experience at Long Lane, from the vantage point of the present, shows some of the ways in which she came to align herself with the institution’s values. In our interview, she discussed Long Lane the way the institution itself would have wanted her to talk about it—as a place where she was sent “for the better,” where she “learned a lot,” where the staff were good to her, and where she was also happy—thus, at least outwardly, she signals her acceptance of the school’s mission and values. In *Landscape for a Good Woman*, Carolyn Steedman explores the stories of the childhoods of working class women, and argues that members of the working classes are expected to fit their understandings of their own history into the dominant paradigm as if they were lacking the means to produce and interpret their own histories (Steedman 1987: 13). Viewed from the perspective of Steedman’s argument, Ellen’s retelling of her experiences at the school would be presenting the institution as it would have been portrayed by school officials or by the neighbors I spoke to during my research who are part of the general public that glorified and continue to glory Long Lane during this era. Yet this uncritical, even romanticized perspective of the school is complicated by some of Ellen’s anecdotes which do not fit the image of Long Lane as a benevolent, nurturing institution.
“The End of an Era”

As I looked through staff manuals dating specifically from the 1940s through the early 1970s, it appeared that in its practices, Long Lane had seemingly changed very little throughout this thirty year period despite societal changes such as the Civil Rights Movement, the rise of second wave feminism, and the Vietnam War protests. Over these decades, more career opportunities and service jobs were available to women, yet the 1968 staff manual proudly declares, “Practically all of the girls marry and become homemakers.” In fact, looking through staff manuals, the only blatant indication that I could find that time was passing outside of Long Lane was the mention in a 1968 staff manual that “Stonehenge” a “psychedelic band” was coming to play at Long Lane on July 24th, 1968. During this time, Long Lane further consolidated its traditional values by praising the institution’s history. One 1968 staff manual recounts the story of how the Industrial School for Girls was founded.

One afternoon in October of that year, Mr. Charles Fabrique, then Police Commissioner of New Haven, was passing through the Green in company of the Mayor, Honorable Morris Tyler. Their attention was arrested by the conduct of a young girl of fourteen years who was in the company of two soldiers from a neighboring army camp. Upon being arrested and brought to the police station, the girl responded that she had come from the town of Guilford without the knowledge of her parents. She was at once sent back to the town from which she came, but with nothing to prevent her speedy return to her vicious companions and to a dissolute life, as many girls of her age and class had done before her.

This staff manual later goes on to commend these individuals mentioned in the story above for expending “their best thought, their time, and their money unselfishly for the benefit of unfortunate children, having faith in the eventual results of their efforts.” From such staff manuals it appears that well into the 1960s, the institution continued to praise the institution’s history and also continued to associate itself with
some of the values and aims that had originally prompted the incarnation of the Industrial School for Girls.

Based on the institution’s publications, it may seem that Long Lane had changed little up until it became a co-ed facility, yet there is also evidence to indicate that Long Lane was attempting to engage with a changing present, which became clear during my conversation with Raymond, who had worked as an English teacher at the institution. I met with Raymond at his law office in Middletown where he told me that he initially found out about the job teaching English at Long Lane from his thesis monitor in college. When she informed him that if hired, he would be teaching at an institution for delinquent girls, Raymond remembers thinking, “Oh goodness, this isn’t what I had in mind.” Raymond was offered the job and taught at Long Lane for six years from 1964 to 1970; as he recalled, “I was an experiment as were the two other men there they hired.” Raymond remembers that apart from himself and the two other male staff members, the employees at Long Lane were predominantly female, many of whom had spent much of their lives as part of the school staff. One might speculate that a job at Long Lane, particularly before the 1960s, would have provided respectable employment and a stable career for middle class women. However, upon the employment of several male staff members, it appears that Long Lane was beginning to break with this tradition and was shifting its values to conform with those of an increasingly liberal society. The institution was now hiring men, who unlike years before were not distanced from these girls’ lives in jobs working the
fields or in administrative positions, but were directly interacting with these young women on a daily basis.

However, Raymond’s characterization of Ethyl D. Mecum, who served as the superintendent of the school from 1955 to 1968, suggests that Long Lane was still an institution rooted in tradition. Ethyl had first worked at Long Lane as a summer staff member in the 1920s and was part of the institution’s practice where young women who were hired as counselors for one summer often stayed at the institution and became part of its permanent staff. “Ethyl,” Raymond said, “just stayed there her whole life; [as] many of [the young women] did.” Since so many of the staff members spent much of their adult lives working at the institution, it is less surprising that through the 1960s, Long Lane remained rooted in its traditional values as it continued to try and instill the young women at the institution with middle class morality. From Raymond’s description of Ethyl, it seemed as if she in fact embodied the model of propriety that the institution was trying to instill in the girls; as Raymond said, “she
was her name.” I took this to mean that Ethyl was a respectable woman in both appearance and behavior—she was later described to me as “short and thin and kept her hair in a bun, always proper.” During our conversation, Raymond’s accounts of Ethyl’s practices created an almost mythic portrait of a woman who exemplified middle class ideals. Raymond seemed particularly fascinated by one of Ethyl’s traditions during the holiday season where she sent each staff member a holiday card inside of which was a smaller card that simply read, “at home,” with a specific time on it. According to Raymond “that was the card, [that] invited you to Ethyl’s house, the Mansion, on Christmas Eve, to come and share wine or sherry, that’s all she ever served. You’d come in the door, and you’d place the card in this little brass bowl the ‘at home card.’” This was one of her traditions which, Raymond said, “just tells you everything.”

During this same period of time, although the institution certainly maintained some of its traditional values; society too retained some of its more conservative beliefs. For example, as late as 1970 Raymond mentioned that pregnant girls were still being sent to the institution, incredulous, I exclaimed, “Up until the ‘70s they put kids there because they were pregnant?” “Yes,” he replied, “her family wouldn’t care for her, so the state would. That’s what they did. I have lots of kids named after me…so did every teacher that was there.”

However, by 1967, legal changes in the juvenile justice system were underway that would significantly change institutions such as Long Lane. Following
the ruling of the 1967 Gault case, a series of legislations made it more difficult for youth to be sent to institutions for status offenses (Sutton 1989: 212), which was the charge upon which most of Long Lane’s residents had been sent to the institution. After this definitive court case, Raymond remembers meeting with Ethyl and asking her what she thought of the Gault decision. As he remembers, “she just shook her head and said it will all be different now. And she was right.” A year later, in 1968, Ethyl Mecum retired.

In 1969, the Connecticut State Department of Children and Youth Services (DCYS) was created, which took over the formerly autonomous Long Lane School as well as the Meriden School for Boys. Raymond remembers that when the DCYS took over management of Long Lane “it took all those wonderful women who had spent their lives there and replaced them with us, college degrees, smart, knew everything, [it] put us in charge…such a disaster, and has been since then.” He added, “I should have recognized the significance of the school, or that I was there at the end of an era, for sure, [that] it was all coming to an end. And so it did, and it never got replaced with anything as effective, and still isn’t replaced by anything as effective.”

When Long Lane became part of DCYS, the institution came under criticism for its many rules that governed the girls’ behavior. When the then director of the school, Mrs. June Tanner, was confronted with this accusation, she responded, “It’s difficult to break tradition when things have been done the same way for so many years” (Bart 1970). The institution’s longstanding traditional values which only years
earlier had been praised in a summer staff manual were now condemned as it was implied that it was time for Long Lane to advance its practices along with a changing society.

When Long Lane School merged with the Meriden School for Boys in 1972, any connection Long Lane had maintained with its history soon disappeared from staff manuals as the institution’s ideology shifted to adopt new values and practices. Following 1972, the institution began to primarily confine youth who had committed criminal rather than status offenses. In turn, during this time period Long Lane began to adopt higher security measures to deal with a more criminal population, creating a more prison-like institution with tightly controlled boundaries. Compared to years past, Long Lane School was no longer portrayed as a pleasant, well-maintained institution with an accepted place within the community.
Affinities

I met my first interview contact by chance. She was playing with her dog outside her house which was located opposite the former Long Lane School campus. I introduced myself and explained my interest in Long Lane to her. In response, she gave me her full name and offered to meet with me to speak about my thesis project. Patricia lives on Pine Street in a middle class neighborhood and is a Wesleyan professor. My conversation with her led to other contacts, mostly Wesleyan-affiliated people living on the streets that run parallel to the former institution. Of the eight individuals I spoke with, two were Wesleyan professors, two were homemakers, one a high school teacher, one a former superintendent of Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH), one a free-lance writer, and one an information services technician. All were white and, if it can be assumed from the neighborhood they live in and their occupations, also middle class. Three of the interviews took place in the interviewees’ offices and the remaining five in their homes.

I was certainly nervous during these conversations since this was my first experience conducting interviews and I was speaking with people I was oftentimes meeting for the first time. However, I never felt out of place in any of these settings,
these homes and offices on Wesleyan’s campus were surroundings with which I am familiar and in which, socially and culturally, I feel at home. Furthermore, the people that I spoke with were usually more than willing to meet with me—since most were affiliated with Wesleyan, they were very familiar with the thesis writing process. After several of the interviews, I remember contemplating whether or not I should write down some of the details of the encounter I had just had: for example, I wondered whether I should take notes on what these individuals looked like, how I felt during the interview, if I was offered cookies or iced tea or anything else to eat or drink, what the furniture looked like, and if we chatted before the interview. I also remember thinking that somehow these details seemed insignificant since the type of people I was speaking with were familiar enough to me that recording such details would have been redundant—I felt as if there was nothing remarkable about these conversations. Later during the research process, as I spoke with individuals from a working class neighborhood close to the former Long Lane School, I found that I was much more attuned to the minute details that I had so quickly forgotten during my previous conversations with middle class neighbors.

**Boundaries and Runaways**

As I spoke with these middle class residents, the theme that continuously reoccurred was that during the time Long Lane had been in operation, these individuals had had very limited contact with the institution and its residents. For the most part, the institution had faded into the landscape, becoming a part of the everyday and entering into what Taussig refers to as the “peripheral vision” of the
residents of the neighborhood (Taussig 1992: 141). As Dorothy remembered; “it really was removed from people’s awareness, from their daily life,” she said, adding, “aside from kids who escaped, and you’d see security cars going through the neighborhood.” These individuals, who had lived opposite Long Lane for at least seventeen years, were reminded that their homes were located next to an institution in two specific instances—as a result of boundary crossings and as a result of threats to the institution’s landscape, specifically when plans were made for the construction of a new, high security facility for juvenile offenders on the Long Lane property.

At other points in Long Lane’s history, there had been more contact between the institution and the inhabitants of the surrounding neighborhoods. For example, in the ‘30s and ‘40s, Ruth, Len’s mother, remembers interacting with Long Lane School and its residents. “We used to go over and visit the girls. Nobody kicked us out. They’d be sitting out and they had picnic tables, and we’d go over and talk to them. One nice feature was that they used to have movies every Friday night for the girls. So we’d go too and sit in the back and nobody cared.” During the years that Ruth lived opposite the institution, most of the houses beside Long Lane were inhabited by Long Lane employees. However, years later, in the ‘80s and ‘90s, many of these properties were bought by Wesleyan staff members. By this point, interactions with the institution and its residents such as those that Ruth recalled would have been unimaginable. Over the years, particularly after Long Lane’s merger with the Meriden School for Boys, the institution’s boundaries had become more tightly patrolled. The interactions that neighbors did have with Long Lane’s residents and
employees were mainly the result of border crossings: instances where either neighbors had trespassed onto Long Lane’s land or when runaways had escaped and crossed paths with these neighbors just outside the boundaries of the school. Apart from these interactions, as Len succinctly remarked, “You saw rather than interacted.”

During my conversations with these individuals, I heard several anecdotes about instances when my interviewees or members of their family had walked onto Long Lane’s property, and had been caught in the act by the Long Lane Police, also known as the APO or Agency Police Officers. The Agency Police Officers patrolled the institution’s boundaries, watching for runaways and intruders. Len recalled that one day while his daughter was walking the family dog on the backfields of the Long Lane property, she was warned by an APO what would happen if she ever returned to the area: “If you come down here again, I’m going to have you arrested,” the policeman had said. For years after the incident, Len’s daughter did not dare venture onto Long Lane’s property for fear of being caught. However, her father did not have the same reservations and oftentimes walked the dogs on the less used areas of the Long Lane
campus, which, as he remembers, “was always sort of a secretive endeavor.”

Dorothy, for her part, remarked that the school’s boundaries became more tightly enforced in the institution’s later years. “They got a little bit stressed out near the end if you walked on the property,” she said. “I remember cutting across the field and somebody stopping me and being unpleasant about it saying, ‘This is state property.’”

After Long Lane had become co-ed, there was a significantly greater number of runaways from the institution compared to the years when Long Lane was an all-girls facility. For example, in 1976, only four years after the conversion, there were 664 instances of runaways. However, the majority of these runaways were often caught and returned to the institution within an hour of escaping (April 4, 1979). The frequency of these runaway cases meant that people who lived close to the institution, particularly those living on Long Lane itself, often saw and sometimes came into contact with these escapees. The individuals I spoke with expressed feelings towards the runaways that ranged from sympathy to frustration. Rob, who has lived on Pine Street adjacent to Long Lane’s property since 1992, said that although the runaways generally did not stay in the neighborhood, their high numbers meant that they were “kind of a pain.” Lisa, another neighbor I spoke with, remembered that the institution’s officials “weren’t keeping [the residents] locked up and they were causing havoc in the community.” In response, Lisa had the Long Lane security number by her home phone. Whenever she saw runaways she would call and report the direction in which the runaways were headed. Lisa has lived on Long Lane since 1980, I first met her through another contact and we arranged to speak at her home. In
light of Lisa’s comments, my first interactions with her seem telling. When Lisa
opened the door to let me into her home, her anxiety at having a stranger in her house
was revealed when she asked me to leave my bag at the door. I was taken aback; I
wondered if she thought I would steal something. After being invited in, my initial
defensiveness soon subsided and Lisa’s guard was let down as well. She offered me a
glass of lemonade, and she introduced me to her daughter, Ray, who had graduated
from Wesleyan the year before and who was making cookies in the kitchen. As Lisa
and I discussed the numbers of runaways in her neighborhood, which she believed
may have been related to the high numbers of burglaries at the time, she stopped and
said, “but there are also some funny stories,” and then proceeded to tell one.

There was a moment when these kids came skulking, going across the street and then
they hid behind our hedge. We weren’t home at the time but the neighbors were
sitting out on their porch. Then, after hiding behind the hedge, they sauntered
casually over to the guys on the porch, “Do you know where Main St is, where we
could maybe catch a bus?” So the fellow on the front porch said, “Go around this
corner and head straight down the hill. It’s four blocks; it’s an easy walk,” and so
they headed around the corner and he, who is a policeman, went into the house and
called the police department which at that point was on Church Street, and said,
“Three runaways from Long Lane.” They said, “Oh, we’ll be right up” and he said,
“No need they’re going to go right past you. They just left my house, and they’ll be
right there.” They had no idea they had been sent right by the police station.

     In this instance, the runaways were duped; their foolhardiness revealed as they
are directed straight to their capture. Other neighbors recalled brief exchanges with
runaways where they had the opportunity to turn the runaways in, but in the end,
chose not to. Once, Len came across runaways in his backyard: “One time we were
sitting out and we saw three girls running into our yard, and I just said, ‘No, you can’t
go this way,’ and they were baffled. One of them was clutching a teddy bear, no less.”
Dorothy, too, recounted an experience of encountering runaways: “I think that once
there was a pair of girls who came by, and they asked if they could use the phone. It was so obvious. [But] I wasn’t going to turn them in. I just said, ‘I don’t think so.’” In all three of these anecdotes, the runaways are seen merely as children who are oblivious to the fact that to the neighbors they asked for help, they unmistakably stood out as runaways. The Long Lane residents in both Dorothy’s and Len’s stories come off as pitiful rather than dangerous. At one point they both noted that the runaways were girls; in Len’s story, one of them is holding a stuffed animal. From these stories, it seems as they were too pathetic and vulnerable to be turned in. Such a characterization of the runaways is interesting in light of trends that suggest the middle classes’ growing fear of crime (Macek 2006: 3) in addition to the increasingly prevalent treatment of juvenile offenders as adult criminals. Yet despite these trends, neither Dorothy nor Len saw these runaways as hardened criminals, but instead as innocent if somewhat foolish children.

There seemed to be a distance the neighbors placed between themselves and the runaways, although neither Dorothy nor Len turned the runaways in, they also did not help the runaways in their escape attempts. When I asked these neighbors if they had ever felt their safety threatened by living so close to a correctional facility, the general consensus was no. Although frequent runaways from the school may have been a nuisance, they were never any substantial danger. What prevented these neighbors from helping runaways may have had more to do with these neighbors’ affinity to the law rather than a sense of fear. Len told me, “Runaways were frequent, but there was never any real sense of a threat.” Later in the interview he added, “I
never felt threatened by the students or anything.” Likewise, Patricia, who has lived on Pine Street since the late 1980s and has raised her son there told me she was unaffected living so close to Long Lane: “You can see how close we live, but it never bothered us. It was only after the school had been closed that someone broke into my car. We didn’t have any trouble with them.” Lisa was the only person who spoke of the institution’s residents as posing a threat to her safety. Like the others, she expressed mostly frustration with the runways, but she also said that her family had taken safety measures because of their proximity to the institution. I asked Lisa if she had ever felt nervous living so close to Long Lane, and she replied, “We had two big dogs. Without them, we would have been scared. Every door [in my house] has a dead bolt lock. We definitely have security measures we wouldn’t have had otherwise.”

Class Boundaries

After having had conversations with several people who were part of, as I was aware, a very select group of neighbors, I decided it was important to try to speak with people who lived in a different neighborhood that was also in the vicinity of the former institution and who were in no way affiliated with Wesleyan. So I decided to venture past the intersection where Long Lane meets Wadsworth Street and where there are several subsections of mainly state-subsidized housing. This was the first time that I was on my own in the research process. Now, I had no institutional point of entry and was going door to door, blindly knocking and introducing myself to people, asking them to volunteer information for my research project. The people I
had already spoken with were generally individuals who were aware of the thesis-writing process and familiar with the idea of research for its own ends. I had no need to justify my curiosity about Long Lane to them. However, as I entered this new neighborhood I was afraid because I felt if anyone asked I would be unable to validate my research: my project was not driven by the desire to help or reveal some problem that plagued society, instead, I was driven by pure intellectual curiosity—by an interest in finding out as much as I could about the multiple ways in which a single place may be perceived. At the time, however, I did not feel that this was a good enough justification.

When I crossed Wadsworth Street, I almost at once felt out of place. I had crossed into a space where I felt that I clearly did not belong. I wondered if everyone was looking at me and thinking, “What is that white girl doing here, knocking on people’s doors? What does she want?” As I went from door to door my fears subsided slightly—no one was rude to me or demanded that I justify my project to them. Mostly, I found that the people I spoke with had not lived in the neighborhood long enough to know of the impact the institution had once had on the area. But while walking around, I came across a group of women sitting on lawn chairs and chatting in the front yard of one of the houses. I stopped and inquired if any of them had lived in the neighborhood when Long Lane was operating as a correctional facility. Two of the women said yes and told me that the kids who ran away were never interested in hurting anyone; they just wanted to go home. They described the runaways’ habitual escape route, which led them right by their neighborhood. One of the women who
identified herself as “the last of the Mohicans,” told me that once her grandmother had mistakenly invited a runaway into her house believing that he was one her granddaughters’ friends. She had apparently even offered him something to drink. It was on this same trip that I was introduced to Mitchell, who had been sentenced to the Long Lane facility in the late 1970s, who I will discuss in chapter five. After a couple of hours in the area, I left to return to the Wesleyan campus. While in this neighborhood, asking people questions about their knowledge, if any, of Long Lane, I felt myself under a persistent gaze. Whether people were in fact staring at me or whether this feeling was simply my discomfort in crossing class boundaries, I was relieved to be free of it as I crossed Wadsworth and headed back toward campus.

Over the next few months, I came into contact with a young man who had grown up in this neighborhood, and another man who had grown up in a home adjacent to it. I met the former of the two outside of Dunkin Donuts one morning while he was waiting for a ride to a skateboarding competition in New Haven. I, too, was waiting for someone, and we ended up chatting. He told me that he used to live in public housing on Long Lane. When I asked what it was like living so close to the correctional institution; he simply said that it didn’t bother him much. He then added that people there would often hide the runaway kids in their houses or backyards for a day or so. The second person I met was Eddy, an African American man who had worked as a Youth Security Officer at Long Lane. I was introduced to Eddy after visiting the A.M.E. Zion church in Middletown to see if the pastor knew of anyone who had formerly worked at Long Lane. A member of the congregation upon hearing
about my project, gave her son, Eddy, who had once worked at the institution, my phone number. I then arranged to meet him at a coffee shop on Main Street in Middletown. During our conversation, he described his experiences both working at Long Lane as well as growing up near the institution. Eddy grew up near the Snow School, in a house that was close to the runaways’ typical escape route. As a teenager, years before he had become a correctional officer at the institution, Eddy also knew several of the youth who had been sent to Long Lane: “I had a couple of friends in Long Lane who would run to the house. And I’d be like, ‘Guys, you can’t stay. My Mom’s going to have a fit. If my Dad comes home, you’re dead.’” When I asked what his friends would do then, he responded: “They’d stay a little while, I’d give them something to eat, but yeah, they would run to the house…”

In the above anecdotes about Long Lane escapees, the runaways are depicted as neither as pitiful nor as incompetent. It seems as if there was a degree of empathy with the runaways and oftentimes, people in this neighborhood seem to have been willing to help them if they could. In these stories, the runaways, if not actual residents of the neighborhood to which they had escaped to, are spoken about as if they were familiar enough to be treated like a friend or neighbor—as in the case of the runaways’ mistaken identity. In these anecdotes, the lines between the residents of the institution and outsiders are blurred. Eddy was friends with some of the residents of the institution as perhaps were other people in the neighborhood who occasionally hid runaways. The point is that there was an expressed solidarity between the residents of Long Lane and the inhabitants of this neighborhood. I was surprised by
their comfort with the runaways, which reminded me of my position as a white and middle class person. Like the white middle class neighbors that I had spoken with, housing a runaway would have been unthinkable; for me, it would be considered breaking the law.

In the article, “Race and Perception of Police Misconduct,” the authors note that white people in the United States are more sympathetic to the forces of law and order than African Americans. They write, “whites tend to hold a favorable opinion of the police, favor aggressive law enforcement, and are skeptical of criticisms of the police” (Tuch and Weitzer 2004: 306). On the other hand, African Americans are more likely to have had negative experiences with the police, either personally or vicariously through family members, friends, neighbors or the media (Tuch and Weitzer 2004: 307). In disadvantaged and minority communities, where crime rates can be high, relations between individuals who live in these neighborhoods and the police, who perceive the inhabitants as troublemakers, are often tense (Tuch and Weitzer 2004: 309). The authors also argue that both African Americans and Hispanics are in favor of crime control but they are also more likely to see the police as “a visible sign of majority domination” (Tuch and Weitzer 2004: 306); a view that is consolidated by the fact that in 2000, 70 percent of incarcerated youth were African American (Stevenson 2004: 61). Thus these varying perceptions towards law enforcement officers may be reflected in neighbors’ responses to runaways. Residents who lived or had lived in this working class neighborhood may have been more likely to view law enforcement negatively as a result of their class and racial background.
Thus hiding an escapee may have been a gesture of solidarity with the residents of Long Lane against the law. For Eddy, who knew several of the residents at the institution, providing a friend who had run away something to eat may also have been a gesture of loyalty and compassion. However, what of the grandmother who mistook an escapee for her granddaughter’s friend? I do not know whether or not the runaway she invited in was African American, although the grandmother was. Yet here still there is this implication of familiarity, of the commonplace occurrence of someone seemingly familiar showing up at your door and the equally unremarkable act of asking them in, an action that appears to have been inconceivable to the white middle class neighbors I spoke with.

While speaking with Eddy, he later told me a story about successfully deceiving and making fun of the Long Lane police as a teenager. His story, it is interesting to note, strongly contrasts with Lisa’s anecdote about the neighbor who tricked Long Lane runaways into virtually turning themselves in.

E: The APOs used to chase me when I was little because they thought I was a…it used to be a joke you know what I mean, making the cops chase you.
B: Was that in the ’70s?
E: Yep, early ’70s, it used to be a game. We used to play basketball for a while, and then see an APO and just take off running and they would chase you because they thought you were one of the [Long Lane] kids.
B: So what would they do when they caught you?
E: They had to let us go.
B: How would they know?
E: Oh, once they catch you, “I live around the street.” “What are you doing? Why’d you run?” “Why’d you chase me?” Pretty much they never caught us. It used to be a game.

By pretending to be a runaway, Eddy not only succeeds in tricking the officers, but also in implying his solidarity with the incarcerated residents of Long

96
Lane against the law. In this anecdote, Eddy and his friends play cat and mouse to undermine the authority of the Long Lane police. Upon their capture, the officers soon discover that they have no authority or cause to apprehend them. In the act of pretending to be a runaway, Eddy momentarily entered into the institution’s milieu as he simultaneously crossed into and left the institution’s authority.

*Aesthetics*

One might speculate that for individuals connected to Long Lane through their personal relationship with residents or vicariously through their racial or class background, maintaining distance from the institution would have been more difficult than for the white, middle class neighbors who lived surrounding the institution. For these middle class neighbors, apart from instances of boundary crossings, Long Lane, for the most part, slipped into their “peripheral vision” until 1994 when plans for a new high security facility were proposed. The vast majority of property owners whose homes were adjacent to Long Lane were strongly opposed to the construction of these new facilities. A newspaper article from 1994, “Middletown Residents Enraged over Long Lane Report,” stated that the primary concern of these residents was their safety (Miano 1994). However, conversations I had with these neighbors suggested that although safety may have been a concern, other reasons were more prevalent in their opposition to the construction of this new facility.

While I was speaking with Dorothy, she told me what had concerned her most during the years that she had lived opposite Long Lane School. “It was mostly there
being the possibility of a high security facility [built on the site] that really got us upset,” she said. I asked her, “Were you involved in that [in the opposition to the construction of the new facility]?” She replied, “In the sense of activism to keep it from happening? I went to a lot of late night council meetings.” I wanted to understand what her actual concerns were with having a high security prison so close by. What kind of threat did that kind of facility pose? She first said, “It’s partly a safety issue, to have something like that [close to my home].” She then went on to emphatically add, “It’s even worse than what the plans were. It would have been completely inconsistent with the neighborhood—[a] high security fence and lights—and we were concerned about [the value of] our property, so thank goodness we had the right [Wesleyan] president at the right time.”

During our conversation, I was struck by the fact that the possible deterioration of the aesthetics of the neighborhood figured so prominently in Dorothy’s concerns—it was worse than the threats the facility might pose to her safety—this was a concern reiterated by several other residents I spoke with. When I spoke with Len, he discussed how Long Lane School’s unremarkable aesthetics contrasted sharply with the design proposed for the new correctional facility. He said, “It really was a residential school. If you didn’t know better, you wouldn’t have known it was a reformatory.” The higher security detention facility, on the other hand, would have had no regard for the surrounding landscape and existing built environment. “The idea was that, you know, really create a secure area surrounded by razor wire. They said they would try to make it look good… [but] the whole campus
surrounded by a ten foot stone wall… It [would have been] clear it was a secure facility, I think at that point people began to question, was it appropriate in revamping that?”

Other conversations reaffirmed that the institution’s appearance indeed blended into the landscape, misleading outsiders of the institution about Lane’s real purpose. While I was speaking with Patricia, I asked her what Wesleyan students thought of Long Lane School. “I think most Wesleyan students didn’t know what it was. There were stories of Wesleyan parents who would go to the Long Lane administration building because they thought it was Wesleyan admissions. The students just looked like our students. You couldn’t tell the difference.” In another conversation, I was explaining to an acquaintance that I was writing about Long Lane School. As I was describing where the institution had been located, he suddenly exclaimed, “Oh! I always thought that that was some fancy New England prep school, I never realized…” He then added, “Those are nice buildings, nicer than most of Wesleyan’s anyways.”

The concern neighbors expressed over the aesthetics of these new facilities seems to have been a way in which they could express their fears of depreciating property values. Owning a home is an important indicator of middle class identity. For many middle class individuals, it is one of if not the greatest economic investment they will make during their lives (Woodward 2003: 394). A survey of residents who lived close to a maximum security facility for young adult offenders in
Pennsylvania found that many of these neighbors too were concerned about the 
depreciating effects such an institution would have on the value of their homes 
(Martin 2000: 265). Whereas the appearance of Long Lane School did not connote a 
correctional institution, these proposed facilities certainly would have. Thus it makes 
sense that neighbors living near Long Lane would have opposed the construction of a 
higher security facility in the interest of maintaining the residential quality of their 
neighborhood and the value of their properties.

However, a conversation I had with Patricia suggests that a change to Long 
Lane’s appearance would mean more to her than just a decline to her property’s 
value. Patricia told me that she saw Long Lane School as an innocuous institution; “It 
didn’t seem so bad, just like a regular type of school,” she said, and then added, “I 
never gave it too much thought.” However, despite this remark, Patricia was indeed 
aware of the poor conditions within the facility. For example, she remembers being 
troubled when her church asked members of its congregation to contribute clothing, 
especially jackets, to Long Lane. Despite this awareness, Patricia seemed particularly 
upset by the thought of the proposed institution being constructed opposite her house. 
“If it did look like anything it looked like now, it would be so sad,” she said, 
“basically their lives are over.” Patricia recognized a connection between the 
institution’s appearance and its practices. Thus Long Lane School, inoffensive in 
appearance, may have been seen as harmless; however, an institution whose 
arhitecture clearly connoted a correctional facility would have seemed more 
insidious and would have distressed her.
In the article, “The Aestheticization of the Politics of Landscape Preservation,” James Duncan and Nancy Duncan discuss the efforts of residents in an upper class community in Bedford, New York to preserve the rural landscape surrounding their properties. The authors argue that this rural landscape allowed the residents of the community to distance themselves from social realities, letting the members of the community “spatially and visually isolate themselves from uncomfortable questions of race and poverty.” Through maintaining this landscape, residents are able “[to] keep out of sight any reminders of the social consequences of what has been referred to as “painless privilege” (398). Thus one might speculate that because Long Lane School in appearance did not resemble a prison—there were no fences, only old brick buildings—there was not a blatant reminder of the poor conditions at the school or of the inequality between the neighborhood’s inhabitants and Long Lane residents. From their outward appearance, Long Lane’s buildings, (with the exception of the maximum security unit, built, as Dorothy noted, “down in the hollow,” and thus concealed from the road) had largely remained unchanged since their construction in the 1930s. Thus it is possible that to the neighbors of the property, Long Lane School’s aesthetics continued to evoke a more pleasant, untroubled time in the institution’s history, or at least a time when Long Lane was accepted within Middletown as a benevolent rather than as a harmful institution.

Furthermore, as my conversations with Rob and Patricia made clear, neighbors were not only concerned with their own well-being, but also with the well-
being of the youth to be sent to this new institution. For example, Rob, who played a leadership role in the opposition to the new facilities, argued that scatter-site housing was a more effective way of treating juvenile offenders in comparison to large correctional institutions. He explained, “Scatter site housing really made the most sense... they’re located in the cities were the kids came from so they could maintain connections with their families.” Patricia, as I quoted above, lamented on the futures of the youth sent to this high security institution. During other conversations, neighbors described their feelings towards the facility that was eventually built to replace Long Lane, the Connecticut Juvenile Training School, located near the Connecticut Valley Hospital. Several people that I spoke with compared the appearance of these new facilities to Alcatraz and Dachau.

During its operation, neighbors who had lived close to Long Lane for several years found that the institution had entered into the realm of the everyday. Generally, they knew very little about the inner workings of Long Lane School. Although Len remembers that over time it seemed as if residents were more frequently locked up; and Ray, Lisa’s daughter, remembers screams coming from the girls’ cottages during the summertime when she assumed girls were confined to their scorching rooms as punishment. Yet most of the interactions that middle-class neighbors had had with the institution were through boundary crossings. To live opposite a total institution Long Lane School, a facility whose innocuous appearance blended into the landscape, and whose tight boundaries meant that neighbors had minimal interactions with the institution, made it easy for this landscape to fade into the peripheral awareness. Thus
it was residents, such as Eddy or the group of women to whom I spoke, who, by virtue of their personal relationship to Long Lane’s residents or through their connection to these youth through their racial and class background for whom Long Lane may have assumed a more central role in their everyday awareness.
A Co-ed Juvenile Detention Facility

“A Warehouse for Kids”

While doing thesis research over the summer of 2008, I met Mitchell by chance. Mitchell was sentenced to Long Lane in 1978 and spent nine months at the institution before being moved to an adult correctional facility. I met him while going from door to door around one of the neighborhoods on Long Lane road with a friend, hoping to find people to speak with who had memories of living close to the institution. A group of boys answered one of the doors we knocked on, and, after explaining my research project, I asked if their parents were home and if they would know anything about the former Long Lane facilities. One of the boys hesitantly volunteered that his Dad had been to Long Lane, and pointed out a house, just across the way, where he said his father lived. When my friend and I knocked on this door, a big, bald, middle-aged African American man answered. I timidly explained my research project and mentioned that some boys had informed me that someone in this house had been sent to the institution when he cut me off and demanded, “Who told you that?”

I thought he was angry that his son had revealed this information or that I had come to pry and was surprised and a bit scared when he responded in a gruff voice,
“You better come in.” He led me and my friend through the living room, past a sleeping woman, a cat, and a television that was turned on and into the kitchen, where we found a spot around a cluttered table. I was very nervous. I knew that he must have been accused of a crime to have been sent to Long Lane, and there I was, inside his house. However, I was also excited and grateful to have the opportunity to speak with someone who had actually been sentenced to the institution.

Mitchell had apparently been sent to several adult correctional facilities after serving time at Long Lane. After being released from one of these facilities, he was required to take part in an alcohol-abuse prevention program in Middletown; although he says the program was a waste of time since he had never been an alcoholic. Soon thereafter, he ended up living in a house just minutes away from the institution where he was once incarcerated. When I asked Mitchell about his experience at Long Lane School, he immediately corrected my wording. He told me, “That was not a school. It was a warehouse for kids.” Multiple times over the course of the conversation, out of habit, I referred to the institution as Long Lane School. Each time I did, Mitchell corrected me and emphasized that the institution was a juvenile detention facility, not a place of learning. “When I went there, there were no classes. They had a big building. I used to go there, and they had an old records collection in the attic, and I used to go up there and listen to Whispers albums…” Later when I asked more directly what he did while living at Long Lane, he replied, “We choked each other till we passed out; used a toilet paper role, covered in a sock, sprayed an
aerosol can in and got high.” He paused here and added while laughing heartily, “That’s the only thing I learned there, the only thing.”

By the late 1970s when Mitchell was sent to Long Lane, faith in reformatories’ ability to rehabilitate youth had largely ended (Schlossman 1995: 384). The philosophy that had prompted the establishment of reformatories such as the Industrial School for Girls was based on a romantic ideal of adolescence and the belief in the “unlimited potential” of youth (Lesko 2001: 171), faith, that by the 1970s, had begun to dwindle. In the same year that Mitchell was sent to the institution, a state legislative committee and the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Youth Services, Francis H. Maloney, agreed that most of Long Lane’s facilities should be phased out in the years following, mainly as a result of the institution’s high operating costs. Most of the youth would be sent to private facilities instead. Those determined in need of higher security would remain in Long Lane’s maximum security unit (Weiss 1978).

Although Long Lane actually continued to operate for another twenty five years, this push to close the institution was consistent with the deinstitutionalization trends of the 1960s and 1970s (Schlossman 1995: 384). Changes to the juvenile justice system during this period, particularly the 1974 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, further supported this shift. This act provided funds for community-based delinquency prevention programs and offered grants to states that separated criminal offenders from noncriminal offenders (Sutton 1988: 214-215).
Youth under the age of eighteen could still be accused of committing status offenses; however, they were more likely to receive treatment within their communities rather than be incarcerated (Furbish 2003). These trends towards deinstitutionalization of noncriminal youth, the decreasing faith in the basic goodness of adolescence, coupled with the concurrent integration of the Meriden School for Boys with Long Lane School, meant that compared to years past, the youth who were sent to the institution were more likely to have committed serious crimes and were subsequently treated more like adult criminal offenders.

The increased criminality of the youth sent to Long Lane is evident in a 1985 staff manual which lists offenses that youth might commit while at the institution and their subsequent punishments. In the order of severity, these included major assaultive behavior, inciting a riot, and destruction of property. A 1984 notice entitled “Rules and Discipline” carefully outlines the proper procedures for secluding or restraining residents who are a danger to themselves or others. Staff manuals published from the 1940s to 1972 never mentioned the use of restraining devices, and in these staff manuals, the list of possible offenses that girls might commit seem trivial in comparison; for example, refusing to work or passing notes.

One of the ways in which the institution responded to the increasing criminality of the youth at Long Lane was through the creation of higher security facilities. During this period, Long Lane created its own police force whose members were referred to as Agency Police Officers or APOs. In addition to patrolling the
institution’s boundaries, these officers also physically restrained uncontrollable residents. In 1973, a fence was built around the yard of one of the cottages housing runaways and “mildly difficult” boys to ensure their containment; and in 1976, the construction of a Diagnostic and Secure Treatment Unit included a maximum security section for up to thirty-six youth. Another cottage, Kimball, was used to discipline residents, and as a former employee recalled, the punishments there were particularly harsh. He said, “When I got there, they were using it [Kimball] for the worse kids, the kids that really did something bad. The kids never came out, only to take showers. It was a little more barbaric than the unit, and they went there for a week, and they were straight, like I ain’t going back.”

During this time, the percentage of African Americans in juvenile detention centers in the United States continued to steadily increase nationwide; from 40 percent in 1970, to 50 percent in 1980 (Schlossman 1995: 384) and to 70 percent in 2000 (Stevenson 2004: 61). This increase in the African American population in youth correctional facilities occurred at the same time as an increasing fear of urban crime which particularly stigmatized young African American men who “had come to personify the explosive mix of moral degeneracy and mayhem” (Wacquant 2001: 71).
As a result, young African American men, even those who had done nothing illegal, were targeted and came to be perceived and oftentimes treated as adult criminals (Stevenson 2004: 73).

**A Treatment Centre, Not a Prison**

Despite Long Lane’s increasingly prison-like practices, staff manuals, similarly to the period when Long Lane was an all-girls institution, continued to assert that the institution’s purpose was rehabilitation *not* incarceration. A 1974 manual declares: “Our purpose at Long Lane School is to change the behavior of youthful offenders in order that they might lead more successful, useful, and rewarding lives” A 1990 staff manual likewise reads, “The intent of the stay at Long Lane is not just to remove the child from the community or incarceration. Rather, the goal is to help the juvenile change his behavior so that he can function in a less-structured setting.” When a 1992 newspaper article questioned why Long Lane did not put a fence around the property to control its high numbers of runaways, officials from the institution responded by emphasizing that “the school is meant as a treatment center, not a prison, for troubled youths” (Sataline 1992). To further differentiate itself from a prison, Long Lane referred to youth sent to the institution as either “students” or “residents,” never as inmates.

The Industrial School for Girls’ founding philosophy, based on the child-saving ethic, aimed to protect the young women sent there from growing up too quickly by preventing the girls “from enjoying adult privileges” and by carefully
regulating and controlling adolescents’ leisure time (Platt 1969b: 21). According to this philosophy, reformatories provided a nurturing family-like environment that certain youth, primarily from working class backgrounds, were supposedly lacking. Using the analogy of the family, the reformatory came to represent a “loving mother” who used “motivational techniques of persuasion, kindness, and empathy” in an “affectional discipline’ that included shame, guilt, but above all, love” (Lesko 2001: 85). In the early 1970s, vestiges of this child-saving ethic still appear in the rhetoric of staff manuals. For example, after the institution became co-ed, cottages housing male residents hired “cottage fathers” to live with and supervise residents. A 1974 staff manual contained the poem “Children Learn What They Live,” which begins with the following lines, “If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn,” and ends with, “If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.” However, the manuals following this 1974 guide become increasingly official and impersonal. There is little indication that the rules and regulations presented in these manuals are for a juvenile population and that the individuals at Long Lane were youth is barely mentioned.

As an all-girls’ institution, Long Lane aimed to instill in its residents virtuous qualities that they had hitherto been lacking. Girls were taught to become “proper” young women through a process of careful regulation and control of the minutest details of their lives. As their speech and habits were condemned and then corrected, so too condemned were the girls’ home environments and communities where they had learned those behaviors. But when Long Lane became co-ed, these invasive
practices were largely stopped, and no longer, it appears, was the institution trying to recreate individuals based on class ideals of appearance, speech, and behavior. Instead, the aim of the institution was much less invasive of the person. Treatment methods such as Guided Group Interaction, which emphasized residents’ accountability to their peers as well as vocational and academic programs, aimed to decrease the likelihood that these youth would offend again (Lundman 2001: 29).

Eddy, who worked as a youth officer at Long Lane for eleven years, believes that GGI was an effective treatment method:

That was pretty good I thought. The kids circled up and talked about their problems. If the kid did something, the group came up with an action plan. Say, you need to write a couple of paragraphs on how you’re going to do better next time or how you’re going to refrain, or you may go need to apologize to that person, or as simple and as big as you need to go spend sometime in your room.

Although similar to the Council that had operated before 1972 in the sense that both programs stressed accountability to one’s peers, the aim of GGI was not for the students to internalize certain classed values but instead stressed accountability for one’s actions and awareness of how one’s actions would affect others. By this point too, youth had more rights within the institution. In 1950, for example, girls were not allowed to speak with their relatives on the phone. In contrast, a staff manual from 1981 states that residents at the institution are allowed to make telephone calls “at reasonable times exclusive of regularly scheduled program activities.”

Although these changes seem to have made the institution a more liberal one, Mitchell’s anecdotes suggest that after 1972 policies were adopted that were the polar opposite of those that were in place previously. In other words, Long
Lane had become an institution that barely regulated and controlled the youth’s activities. However, during one of my research visits to the Cady School building, I saw still posted on a classroom wall a piece of paper that listed the school’s “Six Pillar Words Definitions,”—respect, citizenship, caring, trustworthiness, fairness and responsibility, and which suggest that up to the end, the institution promoted values which urged the individual to be accountable for their actions, to treat others well, and upon being released from the institution, to become valuable members of society. Although the institution was no longer attempting to completely reform residents’ behavior in the same way it had years before, it was still attempting to teach the youth there a particular set of values.

“How Can We Forget About these Little Kids?”

As I spoke with former employees, I found that despite the impression from staff manuals, it was clear that staff members were indeed aware of the young age and also the dependency of their charges. Eddy found a job at Long Lane through his parents’ friends who worked at the institution while Eddy was attending Central Connecticut State University. Soon thereafter, Eddy decided to drop out of college, a decision, which he said, was made easier when he found out that he was making more money working at Long Lane than were his friends who had received their Masters degrees. When I asked Eddy what his position at Long Lane had been, he replied,

Youth Security Officer, YSO, safety, security, counsel. You name it, we do it… Mommy, Daddy. I’ve sat in an operating room while a kid got operated on, he was having a lung operation. Some of the other staff have sat with girls having babies, all kinds of medical stuff… um… counseling, bringing [residents] back and forth to appointments. I can’t even tell you how many funerals I’ve been to. You’ve got to take a kid because his Mom, or grandmother or grandfather has passed away, which is like
the worst. They give them a special showing, they have to come early...ah... it's the worst, yeah.

During my conversation with Phyllis, who was an assistant superintendent at the institution between 1978 and 1985, I found that she was also very much aware of the age of the residents at Long Lane. Although she spent seven years at the institution in a position of authority, she condemned Long Lane’s philosophy which took children away from their homes and communities and placed them in an institutional setting; now she works at a job where she assists helping families to stay together. “[A]ll of the work I do today in my current job reflects my experience at Long Lane School. That was not a model I want to see repeated elsewhere. I saw how we had really let down these youngsters: it wasn’t the fault of the staff, it was really the philosophy at the time.” This philosophy, she believes, should be replaced by one that supports local treatment, including increased community and family involvement. Phyllis’s desire for community treatment of young offenders may reflect Phyllis’s view of adolescence as a time when young people are still vulnerable and dependent on their family and community, and also, perhaps, may reflect her desire to preserve adolescence as a somewhat innocent time in a person’s development. At one moment in our conversation, Phyllis recalled finding out about the graveyard that was used in the early days of the Industrial School for Girl, located several blocks from the Long Lane campus, which, as Phyllis remembers, had clearly been neglected. One day, Phyllis decided to take several Long Lane residents to the graveyard to tidy the space and to place flowers on the graves. She remembers telling the youth who accompanied her, “This is a little sacred place; how can we forget about these little kids?” Phyllis later said, “It was important that we used to do that. I
was very upset that people had forgotten about the place.” Her feelings about this forgotten graveyard seem grounded in the same sadness that she feels because so many youth today have been, in her eyes, abandoned by the system.

The Long Lane Crest

Looking through Long Lane’s archived photos from the period between 1972 and 2000, and through speaking with people familiar with life at the institution during this era, I learned that at Long Lane, sports had occupied most of the residents’ leisure time. The most popular sports appear to have been basketball and football. Within the context of what was now a correctional institution, the potential for aggression and violence during these games was apparently high. During these basketball games, cottages often played against each other. As Eddy recalls, as a result of pre-existing gang allegiances, deciding which cottages could play against each other was oftentimes “tricky.” Mitchell remembers a riot that resulted after a basketball game that his cottage had played against Fabrique Cottage. He said, “Something happened and a fight started. They took us all back to our cottages and we were sitting there and talking and amping each other up, and finally, we ran into their cottage and we beat everybody.”
In the fall of 2008, I was given a tour of the Cady School building by the project manager at Long Lane, Marilyn, who showed me several of the rooms in the building that I had not yet seen, one of which was the old gymnasium. As we were walking down the stairs towards the gym, we passed the bleachers where the spectators would have sat; these were unexceptional compared to any high school bleachers except that here the spectators were separated from the gymnasium below by metal caging. Marilyn suggested that maybe it was to prevent fights between the spectators supporting opposing basketball teams.
When we entered the gymnasium, amidst the chairs and desks that Physical Plant is storing there, I noticed that the digital score clock on the wall was still on—home had five points, the visitors' side was blank. I also saw that one of the entrances to the gym led to a covered staircase which, Marilyn told me, once linked the gym to Long Lane’s high security unit, but which now leads to a newly installed Wesleyan turf field. Then Marilyn pointed out the camera, about two and a half feet in length and encased in a white metal box. It was still so white. It had been installed in one of the corners of the gym, Marilyn guessed at some point in the ‘80s or ‘90s. The camera brought these old and decrepit buildings into a narrative that was closely attached to the present, disturbing my conception of Long Lane as a part of the distant past. The physical signs: the caged-in bleachers, the doors to what had once been the maximum security unit, and the security camera, made it clear that this was not a high school gym, but a gym in a correctional facility—where it was assumed that the youth there could become dangerous and violent at any moment, particularly in the atmosphere of competition and aggression that might arise during a basketball game.

While exploring the space, I was surprised to see a crest painted on the center of the gym’s floor—two yellow L’s, separated by a yellow lightening bolt, surrounded by a blue circle. One expects to see such symbols in high school gyms,
since playing on a sports team usually indicates one’s loyalty to one’s school and demonstrates one’s support for the institution (Lesko 2001: 175). Yet I could not imagine any of the residents at Long Lane feeling such loyalty to an institution where they were forcibly confined. In this context, the crest, along with the security camera and caged in bleachers, reflected the institution’s historical ambivalent identity as school, reformatory and prison, and also spoke of sports as another means for the institution to remind residents of its authority and surveillance powers. To have known that the school’s crest was there when Long Lane was an all-girls institution would have been much less startling. During that period, Long Lane taught its residents to internalize loyalty to the institution and its ideals, thus, at least in theory, making the “right” choices would have been based more on this loyalty rather than on the fear of being caught and reprimanded. Yet it is also important to note that as an all-girls institution, the punishments that girls could be administered would have also likely influenced whether or not they broke the school’s rules.
“I Kind of Liked Long Lane”

From Mitchell’s anecdotes and from other conversations, it seems that after Long Lane became co-ed, the institution’s practices became increasingly neglectful and, at times, abusive. This perspective fits into the dominant narrative trajectory that when the Meriden School for Boys merged with Long Lane School, the institution, in its practices, conditions, and ideals, declined. Whereas before this period, Long Lane was depicted in newspaper articles as a benevolent institution; after its merger, portrayals of the institution soon became more negative. Individuals living in the surrounding community felt that after 1972, there was a drastic shift to the institution’s ideology and practices. Several of these individuals saw the years following 1972 as an end to innocence for the youth sent to Long Lane; Rob’s recollection of seeing *My Pet Pony* books—illustrated stories for young children—in the institution’s cells epitomizes this view of Long Lane.

My conversation with Eddy, however, represents an alternative narrative of the institution’s decline. Eddy, who now works at CJTS, preferred Long Lane over the new institution built beside the Connecticut Valley Hospital, as he said, “I kind of liked Long Lane.” At Long Lane, he enjoyed the open campus, the spacing between buildings and the lenient attitude; he said nostalgically: “It used to be a fun place to work.” However, like other people I spoke with, Eddy saw that over time, the institution became increasingly impersonal and less able to meet youth’s needs:

We don’t have as much leeway as we used to with the kids. When I had my group, it was my group. We’d go out and play football, and let them be kids. But now we’re like, “it’s getting dark, come in.” Everyone’s real cautious; kids are having a hard time being kids. We used to be able to play full court basketball, we’d take them
swimming. Now we don’t play with the kids; if they get hurt… It used to be a fun place to work, but everyone’s a little more anal…

At CJTS, employees are expected to treat the youth there more carefully: “[At Long Lane] they allowed much more…If a kid was disrespecting you, you could just say go to your room. But now, you tell a kid ‘go take a time out,’ and every five and ten minutes you go and check on them, but at the other place, it was like when I get a chance…So yeah, it was good in the beginning.” From his anecdotes, Eddy seems to long for the time when he had greater authority over his “group”—a time when he was less accountable and had more freedom in his job, and when employees could freely play with the residents, instead of carefully maintaining their distance.

A Loss of Faith

In Act Your Age, Nancy Lesko cites the passage of the 1996 Welfare Reform Bill, which “plunged 60,000 children into poverty,” as the end of the child-saving era (Lesko 2001: 171). Lesko notes that in the past few years, trends have shifted towards emphasizing self-sufficiency as “other people’s children are no longer to be protected by society at large” (Lesko 2001: 181). That this is indeed a period where youth are being neglected by the State is evidenced in Eddy’s description of Long Lane’s facilities. During the last few years of Long Lane’s operation, the institution lacked adequate funding to maintain its grounds or to improve its outmoded facilities. Eddy recalls the conditions of the buildings at Long Lane: “There was asbestos in all of the buildings. They were bad; they didn’t really want to fix them up too much.” Later, Eddy described the cottages further: “They were just old; there was nothing
The end to the child-saving era is also marked by the increasingly prevalent treatment of juvenile offenders as adult criminals in the United States. In 1995, Public Act 95225 was passed which legally permitted fourteen and fifteen year olds who had committed serious crimes to be transferred to adult court. If sentenced, these youth would be placed in a special facility housing only other young offenders. Prior to the passage of this act, the Juvenile Justice System was perceived as “too lenient with serious and violent offenders who posed public safety risks and unresponsive to the treatment needs of juvenile offenders” (“Juvenile Justice Reform Initiatives”).

Thus after Long Lane became co-ed, young offenders were increasingly treated as criminals as the practices and ideologies of institutions such as Long Lane shifted. Yet based on conversations with Eddy and Phyllis, it is also evident that the young age of the institution’s residents was not forgotten by members of the staff. However, over the following years, newspaper articles brought increasing attention to punitive and oftentimes abusive practices within the institution, as well as to the institutions out-of-date facilities, which eventually contributed to the closure of Long Lane School. As a result of neighbor’s opposition to rebuilding new facilities at the same site and Wesleyan’s intervention and purchase of the land, a new juvenile detention center solely for male juvenile offenders was built on the grounds of the Connecticut Valley Hospital. In 2000, following the completion of these facilities, the
boys were relocated to the Connecticut Juvenile Training School. The girls, for whom no new institution had been built, remained at Long Lane until 2003, at which point they were relocated to various facilities throughout the State.
Epilogue

When I first explored the Long Lane property, I had an urge to record everything I could of this seemingly abandoned and derelict site. I knew that it was likely that most if not all of these buildings would be demolished at some point in the near future. I felt as if the institution’s history was stored in its landscape: in the walls and rooms, in what people left behind in a picnic bench beneath a tree, in the security camera in the gym, and in the swing-set in front of one of the cottages. Once these material artifacts were gone, I was afraid that people would forget the history they represented. Years from now, I imagined the site totally empty, all traces of its previous uses completely erased and no memories left that the institution had existed.

In October of 2003, just months after the last of the girls were relocated from Long Lane School, the state auctioned off a random assortment of thousands of items left behind on the school’s property: gas masks, a 1937 John Deere Model A tractor, a nineteenth century mahogany bedside table, antiquated maps, furniture, a dentist’s chair, the chapel’s organ, trampolines, filing cabinets, surveillance cameras, lighting
fixtures, kitchen appliances and medical equipment. Potential bidders moved between the institution’s buildings as the auctioneer sold off all of the building’s contents. Antique dealers, collectors, curiosity seekers, and former residents and staff attended the auction. Mary, an acquaintance in Middletown, told me in passing that she had attended the auction out of curiosity. She distinctly remembers a young man walking away with a set of well-worn leather wrist restraints, leaving a negative impression on Mary. She remembers him as “a bit of a wise guy—smirky, preppy, privileged dude [who] would probably laugh about the crudeness of it all with his drinking buddies.”

The newspaper article, “Treasures, Memories at Long Lane Auction,” quotes a woman who had been sent to the institution in the 1950s and who had attended the auction because, in her words, “I guess I wanted to see what changed and what stayed the same” (Fillo 2003).

Over the next few years, Wesleyan, which had purchased 160 acres of the property for sixteen million dollars in 2000, would continue to recreate the landscape during the site’s transition from a correctional facility to office space for the university’s Physical Plant department, which is responsible for maintaining campus facilities. In 2004, the State finally vacated the property and in December of that year, Wesleyan took it over. In September of 2005, Physical Plant relocated its offices to Long Lane’s Cady School building. Following the removal of hazardous materials from the building, primarily asbestos and lead, the project manager began renovations on the first floor, repairing damage done to the walls, adding air ducts and installing
carpets. On the second floor, a few of the rooms were turned into storage space; however, much of this space remains untouched.

All but three of the buildings on the property were demolished the year that Physical Plant relocated, besides the Cady School building, the other two buildings left in place were the Wilcox and Penhill administration building and a storage shed. Wilcox and Penhill was left standing because its structure was sound, and at the time, Wesleyan was considering converting the building into office space. At present, there are neither plans nor funding to further develop or renovate the structure, and it too may soon be torn down. The buildings that were demolished included the former resident cottages, the interfaith chapel, and the Diagnostic and Secure Treatment Unit. Wesleyan’s president at the time of the demolition, Doug Bennet, was quoted in The Argus saying that the university had considered renovating the buildings because “[they] are actually quite attractive,” however, he had added, “it would be very expensive [to renovate the buildings] to comply with current building codes” (Chuck 2002). The future use of these buildings was further restricted as a result of their “retrofit for their use as a detention facility,” meaning that additions to the facilities over the years, such as alarm systems and confinement rooms, made these buildings unsuitable for everyday use (Patton 2002).

When the State vacated Long Lane, Kathleen, Associate Vice President for Facilities at Wesleyan, recalled the condition of the property: “[The site] looked like a bomb dropped and everyone evacuated,” she said. “Telephones were on desks still
plugged in, there were things in the kitchen set up. The building had been completely abandoned; we had to go through this exercise of cleaning out the buildings: some of the stuff went through a free-cycle program, some of it was donated to charities.”
When I asked Lucy, another Physical Plant employee, what the conditions of the buildings were like when Physical Plant first moved in, she responded, “Horrible. Paint was peeling. All the buildings were really bad”

In 2002, at a special meeting of the Middletown Board of Education, Wesleyan announced the results of a land use study conducted by an architectural and planning firm to determine possible future uses of the Long Lane property: “The study yielded long-term plans for five distinct tracts of land defined by topography and proximity to campus and existing roadways.” These plans included development of one tract of forty acres for outdoor playing fields and indoor facilities for sports. Two tracts of land, deemed mostly unusable because they consisted of wetlands and steeply sloped ground, were allocated as open space “with trails [to be] created for public enjoyment and for instruction related to the arts and environmental sciences.” Thirty acres were designated for future academic needs of the university, and sixteen acres across from Long Lane were designated for development as a future retirement community (Patton 2002). At this time, several Middletown residents were advocating that the city purchase this sixteen acre tract from Wesleyan to be used for the future Middletown High School, a plan which ultimately fell through (Downs 2002).
In the summer of 2008, during a conversation with Kathleen about Wesleyan’s proposed plans for the property, she said that in the near future, Wesleyan had only “soft uses” for the site in mind, for example, playing fields, which would allow for further development if the need or desire arose. She added that at this time, the development of a retirement community on the property is not financially feasible. Where the Diagnostic and Secure Treatment Unit once stood, a state-of-the-art synthetic turf field, finished in 2006 now sits; the covered stairway that led to “the Unit,” now leads to this field. It is used primarily by Wesleyan’s lacrosse and field hockey teams (Bartlett 2006). The fields and forest across the road from the Cady School building are now used by the Wesleyan cross country team and as walking trails by the general public.

Over the course of only a handful of years, the Long Lane site has undergone a radical transformation. However, the past uses and historical significance of the site have not entirely slipped from people’s minds. Several Physical Plant employees
acknowledged that after moving into their new offices, they thought about the site’s history and about the youth who had once been confined to the institution. Greg, a foreperson at Physical Plant, remembered first wandering through the Cady School building after Wesleyan had acquired the property. “I mean, you kind of stopped and thought, what would it have been like to be here? [B]ecause you weren’t here by choice.” He added, “I thought about things then, but since then…”, his voice trailing off, which I took to mean that the institution’s history has since slipped from his awareness. Similarly, Lucy remembered often thinking about what had previously happened at the institution: “I always thought about what happened in there…If I got weird vibes…How did these kids live in these tiny rooms with stainless steal sinks and toilets all in one unit?”

In these statements it is clear that the site’s history was recognized by some staff members. But I was curious as to whether Wesleyan had made or was going to make any efforts to formally recognize the site’s past. While I was speaking with Kathleen, she remarked on the Cady School building’s past use, informing me that her office used to be a classroom; “I still use the bulletin boards and the original chalk board,” she noted. Later in our conversation, when I asked whether or not Wesleyan recognized the site’s history she told me that Wesleyan had considered memorializing Long Lane’s past:

When we originally moved in here, at the stone pillars at the entrance, we talked about doing a memorial garden for what was here once. I didn’t hear a lot of positive feedback on that idea. Some folks didn’t see this as…weren’t fond of institutionalizing children and didn’t think a celebration was appropriate because it wasn’t necessarily a good thing.
When Physical Plant moved into the facility, Kathleen arranged for photographs to be taken of the property. She acknowledged that these photographs “were really more for architectural history, because some folks may have forgotten the state the campus was in when Wesleyan inherited it, and it was really nothing to be proud of.” Kathleen added that Wesleyan’s recognition of the historical significance of the property would be limited to the fact that the Long Lane property maintains its former name, and that Wesleyan now helps to maintain the historic arboretum at the front of the property alongside the road.

In “The Erasure of History,” Deborah Weiner recounts the conversion of the nineteenth century Middlesex County Lunatic Asylum near London, England into luxury apartments in the 1990s, at which point the property was renamed Princess Park Manor (2004). During its conversion, the asylum’s notorious history was erased as developers did little to acknowledge the former use of the site and at times, in the author’s view, committed blasphemy; for example, by converting the former chapel into a swimming pool. Brochures advertising the new apartments failed to mention its past as a “lunatic asylum,” boasting, however, about the building’s “robust thick walls.” The only nod to the site’s history is a plaque that states that the building was once a charity (200). Although the buildings were glorified for their historic architecture, the specificities of the history of this institution that mistreated the mentally ill were ignored and concealed.
At Long Lane, no explicit efforts were made to conceal the institution’s history. All the employees I spoke with were aware of the site’s past, and anyone who climbs the stairs to the Cady School building’s second floor can almost immediately tell that the building was formerly a school. Furthermore, a plaque still at the building’s entranceway, presumably placed there when the building was first erected, lists prominent figures at the institution such as the Superintendent and the members of the school’s Board of Directors at the time. But like the former London asylum mentioned above, little effort has been made to acknowledge Long Lane’s history as a former juvenile detention center. During my conversation with Len, he said that he believed that the history of the school would soon be lost. “For most of the people who live on Long Lane now, the reformatory never existed.” He said, “In ten to fifteen years from now there will be nothing except for a vague history that it had even existed.” This echoes the experience of the Physical Plant employees for whom the institution’s past has gradually faded out of awareness as they acknowledge that the property, which once held a haunting aura, has now entered the realm of the ordinary. In Lucy’s words, “it’s an office feel now.”

Other comments from Physical Plant employees that I spoke with focused largely on the aesthetics of the buildings. As with the marketing of apartment units within the former London asylum, by focusing on the buildings’ appearances, something about the former usage of the place is forgotten. The project manager at Long Lane, Stu, while speaking about the history of Long Lane, focused on the once high standards of State buildings:
They’re relatively grand, robust buildings… They [the State] don’t have a big budget to maintain these buildings, so they build them with relatively durable materials. You know, concrete foundations, the windows were probably the best they had at the time, slate roofs. They know the buildings will be here for a long time. They build up an inventory. The state is not a developer; they don’t build buildings for ten or fifteen years. They build buildings to be used for fifty to hundred years; there’s a lot of wisdom in that.

Later during our conversation he added, “So they’re good old buildings, they serve their purpose for sure.” Lea, an administrative assistant at Physical Plant, was aware of the history of the Cady School building, but, like Stu, she now sees the building more in terms of its appearance, rather than its history. She remarked that it was the building’s historic details that made Long Lane a “special” place to work:

When you walk in, the old woodwork, it’s gorgeous. That’s the stuff that makes it special here, you know, you kind of see the cracks and all that stuff but you also see the nice woodwork, so the combination of the old and the new, and you also have the new cubbies, and the new machinery, and the alarms and cameras and that type of thing. Overall I think everybody is happy here. It’s special, it’s different.

The former Long Lane residents and employees that I spoke with expressed varying degrees of emotional attachment towards this physical site. Ellen had returned to Long Lane over the summer of 2008 to visit the place where she had lived from the age of thirteen to sixteen. Upon returning to the former institution, Ellen walked through the old Cady School building, remembering what it was like to have lived at the institution. Mitchell, who was sentenced to Long Lane in 1978, currently lives in a house on Long Lane, the road, and often drives by the former juvenile detention center. Mitchell expressed his emotions when he sees Long Lane now, “I feel sad, that was not a great… stage in my life, you know. I remember all the kids there, sitting there in the attic listening to records…. and nothing.” After Raymond stopped teaching English at Long Lane in 1969, he would sometimes return to Long
Lane; however, following the institution’s changing administration and culture, he stopped visiting. When I described to him the state of abandonment of the second floor of the Cady School building, a building that he once knew intimately, he remarked, “God, I don’t know if I could look at it…” One might associate Long Lane’s conversion to Wesleyan offices with the conversion of former asylums into housing developments in the United Kingdom. Former patients of these institutions have paralleled this loss to “the obliteration of all concentration camps, leaving no trace behind” (Weiner 2004: 205). In contrast, individuals that I spoke with who had widely disparate experiences at Long Lane, expressed no desire to preserve the property in order to memorialize their experiences, either good or bad, at the institution. It seemed as if I was the only one who feared that the institution’s history was on the brink of being lost forever.

For the past several months, there have been large piles of dirt on the property as the State is in the process of removing hazardous materials from the soil. These hazardous materials are the result of former practices at the institution. For example, in the past, the remnants of demolished buildings were often buried in the ground leaving high concentrations of lead and asbestos;
much of the topsoil is contaminated with hazardous pesticides; and there are high concentrations of ash, a legacy remaining from the time that coal was the institution’s main source of fuel (Patton 2002; “Public Evaluation of Soil”). As I carried out my research, I felt saddened by the prospect of the institution’s complete disappearance from the landscape: not only had most of the buildings on the property been demolished but now the remnants of the buildings buried in the soil would soon be unearthed and then gone. I was afraid that what would eventually be left was a seemingly empty landscape, devoid of any trace of the institution; and that in the process, the institution’s history would be lost. My feelings towards this landscape changed with time as I first saw Long Lane as an abandoned place, then as a once idyllic institution, and then later as a landscape that I now saw as saturated with significance but which evaded a single characterization. Yet in all these readings, even the ones full of contradictions, I always saw Long Lane as a place that was infused with significance; it was never simply an “empty” tract of land. That is why as my understanding of this landscape changed, I nevertheless remained enchanted by Long Lane. I saw the many meanings inscribed onto this landscape and the built environment as connecting this place to the people I had met and the stories I had heard. These made this landscape seem rich and I feared that in the process of Wesleyan’s re-appropriation of this landscape, it would become space devoid of stories, simply real-estate to be developed.

I asked individuals who lived close to Long Lane how they hoped the property would be used in the future. Many of them expressed a desire that the property would,
in Scott’s words, “maintain its rural feel” rather than be further developed. Scott hoped that Wesleyan would “manage the area as a habitat, and try to bring back woodcocks.” Len hoped that they would “restore the grounds, and stop them from being overgrown;” Rob mentioned on three separate occasions during our conversation that he would like to see an arboretum on the property. These neighbors were suggesting a beautification of the landscape that I was afraid would erase Long Lane’s history from this environment: “People today so intensively occupy the land, filling inhabited places and investing every inch of those places with cultural meanings, that we have come to associate empty landscapes with nature” (Gavin-Schwartz 2008: 25). Thus a rural, “natural” landscape may be perceived as a landscape that lacks history. In this way, the neighbors that I spoke with are proposing to return the property to a condition similar to the one it was in before the Industrial School for Girls was ever established, and, at least visually, to erase the remnants of the institution’s history from the property, perhaps restoring the landscape “to the more pleasant times of the past” (O’Frake 1996: 251). By expressing the desire to create a rural landscape, these individuals were also expressing their wish to create an environment that they could enjoy and actively use, in contrast to the landscape from which they had been restricted from using for so long. This desire expressed by these middle-class individuals for the re-creation of a rural landscape may also be paralleled to the wishes of middle-class reformers who over a hundred years earlier had wanted to build the Industrial School for Girls’ in a pastoral setting because of the believed rehabilitative qualities of the natural environment.
While researching Long Lane, I felt as if the landscape was opening up to me as I learned its history; who had been here, what they had thought of the institution, and how the place had changed over time. I was learning to see the details that hinted at the site’s former use and to think about the history of the property; the bridges still left in the former bird sanctuary; Pike’s Ravine which had been named after a former principal; and the fields used for farming towards the back of the property. Although, of course, I had never seen or visited the institution while it was operating, I tried to learn to read the landscape the way that someone long familiar with it could. Without hearing people’s stories and doing archival research; this landscape would have remained an escape from Wesleyan and a mysterious, abandoned place instead of a site seeped in stories and significance as it later came to be. The many meanings that I have inscribed onto the landscape at various moments are just some of the multiple significances attached to this place. Even in the present, people are continuing to construct and reconstruct this site in new ways.

Long Lane’s history as a reformatory and a detention facility is over. Yet this landscape is far from dead as it continues to gain new meaning with the Cady School’s conversion to office space and the creation of athletic fields on the site. The property is now a work environment for Physical Plant employees, athletic facilities for Wesleyan students, and recreational space for people living near by, granted they come to the property during daylight hours before a Wesleyan staff person locks the gates for the night. For former employees and residents of the institution, Long Lane
is a place still infused with memory and the physical site itself has yet to be totally re-appropriated by Wesleyan as vestiges from the institution’s past remain. However, it is also clear from wondering around that this too is a place in transition. Walk just steps past the new turf field and you see piles of stones and dirt and branches. And in the present, the neighbors’ hopes for a well maintained, recreational landscape have not yet been realized. The only evidence of any landscaping work done on the property are the flower beds by the Cady School building where daffodils are now beginning to bloom. And so for the moment at least, the past and present unsteadily co-exist in this physical landscape. One day this past summer, while Len was going on a walk at Long Lane, he remembers seeing two men from Wesleyan’s landscaping crew fishing. They were sitting by the pond towards the rear of the property where, above their heads, bits and pieces of the old ropes course dangled precariously from the trees.
References

Primary Sources

“3 Long Lane Dormitories are Opened.” *The Hartford Courant*, June 5, 1931, 19.


“Girls Cheer As Cottage Is Dedicats; Inmates of Long Lane Farm Sing Lustily in Exercises Participated in by Governor.” *The Hartford Courant*, November 28, 1926.


“Long Lane to Erect Fence.” *The Hartford Courant*, December 5, 1973, 71A.


“Miss Mecum Heads Long Lane School.” *The Hartford Courant*, July 16, 1962, 16F.


“The Proposed Rape of Long Lane Farm.” *The Hartford Courant*, March 5, 1957, 12.

Weiss, Gary. “Long Lane Brutality Downplayed.” The Hartford Courant, May 17, 1979, 1B.

Secondary Sources


Smith, Jonathan Z. *Map is not Territory.* 1978


