Neglected, Vagrant, and Viciously Inclined
The Girls of the Connecticut Industrial School, 1867-1917
by
Sarah A. Leavitt
Class of 1992

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 from American Studies

Middletown, Connecticut  April, 1992
The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls is designed as a temporary home and school for neglected, vagrant, and viciously inclined young girls...it is not a prison or a place of punishment...but a house of refuge, to which they are sent as the unfortunate, exposed, and friendless children of the State. They are there to be physically, mentally, and morally trained and fitted for positions of honorable self-support, usefulness, and respectability.

(Report of the Directors, 1874.)

Young as these girls are, they are extremely hard to deal with, for most of them, even at this age, have become hardened to a life of crime or vice. For such a girl an institutional experience is apt to be the only thing which will save her.

("Girl Delinquency in New Haven," 1915.)
table of contents

acknowledgments
i

introduction
1

one
Pests to Society: historical answers to juvenile delinquency
12

two
Homeless and Friendless: social backgrounds of the inmates
32

three
In Danger of Vice: methods of incarceration
49

four
It Pays to be Well Trained: life at the industrial school
70

five
Doing Well: parole and the outside world
98

conclusions
112

appendix
119

bibliography
126
acknowledgements

For my parents, Judith and Lewis Leavitt:
thank you for believing in me, and for your strength, support, and love.

Special thanks to Dione Longley for suggesting this topic, and for her encouragement in every aspect of my life. Her interest in and knowledge of history have motivated me to succeed in this research; her energy and excitement have propelled me to demand high standards from myself; and most of all, her willingness to listen, her capacity to understand, and her bottomless cups of coffee have given my spirit new hope for humankind.

Thanks also to Patricia Hill, my advisor, for excellent advice over the past three years, for her consistent encouragement and interest in my academic endeavors, and of course for her interest in and dedication to this project.

I am indebted to Long Lane School for allowing me to have access to the files of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls; especially to Douglas McAvay and Laurie Schultz who took time out of their busy schedules to help me locate the materials and find a quiet place to work.

Thanks to the Middlesex County Historical Society for giving me access to the Board of Directors' reports and various other papers of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls; to the 1991 Historic Deerfield Summer Fellows; to the Wednesday Club; and to the Fonsters.

Special thanks to Jessica Feierman, Tamara Petronio, Michelle Elisburg, Susannah Beals, Laura Schiavo, Jackie LaPoche, Heather Rhoads, Suzy Clement, Kim Gayle, Tembi Locke, and Beth Shaskan -- may these women who have energized and sustained me over my four years at Wesleyan not disappear from my life.
At the May session of the Connecticut Legislature of 1866 numerous and respectably signed petitions were presented to the legislature praying for the creation of a State Industrial School for young girls, similar in its general design to the Reform School for Boys at Meriden....Their statements let forth that there were large numbers of young girls found in the streets of New Haven and of other cities and in all parts of the state -- in circumstances of desertion, vagrancy, and great exposure.

In 1868, the state legislature approved the plans for the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls and began to search for a location. Middletown won the small contest -- Farmington provided the only serious competition -- in part because of its easy access by steamer down the Connecticut River, and its position halfway between the major cities of Hartford and New Haven. The industrial school joined other institutions which had previously been located in Middletown: the small city already housed the Connecticut Valley Hospital for the Insane and Wesleyan University. The locale pleased the new trustees, boasting a "retired farm,

---

2 CVH opened in 1866: Wesleyan in 1831.
sufficiently large to give isolation and vegetables and milk,"\(^3\) and they quickly began to plan construction on the 45.71 acres of the former Sweet and Henry Hall properties. When the first inmate arrived at the end of that year, only a few scattered buildings pierced the landscape and the school must have looked more like a farm than a prison.

Sarah K., the first girl delivered to the door of the institution in 1869, had no idea that when she was arrested in Ridgefield for petty theft she would be sent to an industrial school. Indeed, the school had not officially opened when she arrived in Middletown. If she had committed her crime only months or even weeks earlier, she would have found herself in jail or the workhouse. Instead she was the first in a long progression of girls to be subjected to the nineteenth-century's experiment in juvenile institutionalization. The founders of what is now called Long Lane School were in the vanguard of popular thought on social control. They framed their school in the boundaries of a new American ideal of institutionalization wherein deviant members of society -- the poor, the insane, and the criminal -- would each find their place within the four walls of a government building. The new trustees knew that theirs was an original undertaking in the state of Connecticut. "We recognize our obligations to provide asylums for orphans, for the deaf and dumb, and imbecile," they explained to the citizens of their state in an appeal for monetary support. "The State has nobly provided a Reform School to which vicious boys can be sent rather than to the jail or State Prison. Are

these hundreds of homeless girls alone beyond the pale of human sympathy and help?"\(^4\)

The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls celebrated its grand opening in June of 1870; the response showed large public support for the new institution. Twenty-four inmates, "who, but for the school, would have been uncared for, and exposed to a terrible future,"\(^5\) were already in residence at Middletown, and the superintendent expected the enrollment to soar past capacity levels. Contributors and dignitaries paraded around the grounds on a tour of the new buildings which had been funded by private donors, and listened to the words of several members of the new Board of Directors. Their discourse centered around the supporters of the school, praising them for their diligence and empathy in the lending of themselves or their pocketbooks for the creation of the institution. "In Connecticut have been found the minds to conceive, the hearts to desire, and the hands to build this place of refuge,"\(^6\) read Mayor Hubbard in his formal address. Sarah K. and the other inmates attended the ceremony, but their presence was peripheral to the abstract discussion and laudatory speechmaking. The fanfare was restricted to the realization of the ideal of the institution.

Only five years later, in 1875, the school began to raise money for a new cottage to house its overflowing population. Girls came to the school from Wallingford, from Norwich and from Saybrook. Officials in

\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Ibid.
Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport incarcerated their young female offenders in Middletown rather than in the larger, adult-oriented state prisons. They arrived from New London, New Milford, New Britain, and Essex. All over Connecticut, judges and selectmen utilized the new option and changed their pattern of sentencing to include the industrial school. An article in Middletown's *Penny Press* reported on a visit of the state's Committee on Humane Institutions, claiming that "it was a pleasure that the citizens of Connecticut could stand up in praise of [the new school], and among other of her liberal benefactions, they could point to this as one of the most noble." The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls changed the ways in which state citizens thought about and dealt with female juvenile crime. The school became home to thousands of girls who would have otherwise slept in the street, at the county jail, or in an impoverished home.

In providing such an original institution to the Connecticut communities, the industrial school contributed to the national discourse on juvenile delinquency, social control, and female vice. The 'deviant' girls whom the school incarcerated began to define a threatening undercurrent to nineteenth-century standards of decency. Reformers described the girls as "unfortunate, vagrant, and vicious." The female delinquents spoke "improper language," grew up "amid scenes of filth and debauchery," and were "taught, by precept and example, falsehood, profanity, and impurity." Existing in an antithetical relationship to the Victorian ideal, inmates of the school were deemed deserving of pity and pardon.

---

7 *Penny Press*, Middletown, CT, June 1, 1874.
in need of rehabilitation. The proponents of the institution proudly provided the service of industrial and domestic training for these girls, and tried to cure them of their social diseases. The success of the school in the eyes of the reformers reveals itself in reports to the state legislature in which they exalted that the new institution had made new women out of their inmates. "They have been cleansed, fed, and properly clothed. They have been brought under the gentle and salutary influences of a Christian home, with its daily worship, and sweet songs, and regular occupations." In their modest way the directors concluded their report: "They have an excellent school."9

The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls became a permanent institution in Middletown. Whether or not the original Board of Directors vastly overestimated their abilities to cure their population, the school survives as a testament to their ideals. In 1921 the state of Connecticut took over the school and changed the name to Long Lane Farm. Still a counterpart to the Reform School at Meriden, the institution continued to house delinquent girls. Gradual modifications in its program changed some of the goals of the school, and all of the old buildings were razed by the 1930s to make way for more modern structures. However, the basic program of removing potentially deviant children from their families and relocating them to a wholesome environment at the farm remained a constant and static feature of the institution. Whereas the nineteenth-century reform schools had placed a high priority on the separation of boys and girls, attitudes of the late twentieth century alleviated concerns about gender mixing. The State

9 Ibid, p.15.
Reform School for Boys at Meriden merged with Long Lane in 1976, and the school now provides social services for juvenile delinquents of both sexes. Changes in the grounds for commitment, toward a stricter definition of crime, have altered the make-up of the population. If Sarah K. were to reappear and wander around the grounds of her former home, she would perhaps be shocked at the changes in the school, but she would also be struck at the extent to which Long Lane continues to operate in the basic tradition of benevolent institutionalization that was such an innovative idea in her time.

* * *

In order to understand the specific factors which precipitated and sustained the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls, the historical context of reform schools, the motivation of the founders, and the gender bias inherent in their mission must be examined. These volatile subjects have provoked many scholarly arguments as historians struggle to respond to Foucault's haunting assertion that: "after a century and a half of 'failures,' the prison still exists, producing the same results, and there is the greatest reluctance to dispense with it."\(^{10}\)

David J. Rothman's seminal work *The Discovery of the Asylum* argues that the idea of the institution was an unfortunate, if not tragic, mistake. He uses evidence of abuse of inmates, unsanitary conditions, and unfair incarceration policies to suggest that institutions were not an acceptable way to solve the problems of insanity, poverty, and crime. He rejects the assertion that institutionalization was an inevitable step in

American progress toward reform, concluding that "by incarcerating the deviant and dependent, and defending the step with hyperbolic rhetoric, [the reformers] discouraged -- really eliminated -- the search for other solutions that might have been less susceptible to abuse."¹¹ Many anti-institutionalists echo Rothman and agree that the reform schools quickly "deteriorated into warehouses.... becom[ing] places to hold those segments of the population viewed as troublesome and dangerous to the wider social order."¹² Such scholars as Anthony Platt, Mimi Abramovitz, Stephen Schlossman, and Alexander Pisciotta write about institutions within this model.

Historians who disagree with this anti-institutionalist view offer evidence of a more complex understanding of the context and process of incarceration over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nicole Rafter, in her important work Partial Justice, describes the development of prisons for women. Her emphasis on diversity among prisons rather than the similarity between all institutions leads her to conclude that juvenile reform constituted an entirely separate aspect of penal history. She points out that reformatories for children were based on quite a different concept from adult prisons, indeed suggesting that "the new reformatories for juveniles were... 'anti-institutional institutions.' They shed features of the penitentiary in favor of those associated with the common school and the home."¹³ Rafter's dedication to a specific examination of the differences

between prisons encourages historians to refrain from judging each institution on the basis of an overarching theory of deficiency.

If the institution is not often the hero in historical analyses, neither are the reformers who brought it to life. Anthony Platt's work, The Child Savers, is a scathing account of women and men who created their own definition of deviance and punished innocent children by unfair standards. His assertion, that "the child savers should in no sense be considered libertarians or humanists," violates the traditional vision of nineteenth-century reform advocates. Platt criticizes those who have suggested that the child savers' platform was benevolent by insisting that these reformers were concerned only with themselves and their own social agenda. He claims that the child savers invented the concept of delinquency to protect their society's social order. He rejects the conceptualization of reform as a positive initiative to save children from poverty and vice.

Most historians who write about juvenile delinquency and the advent of nineteenth-century reform cite Platt's research as irrefutable evidence of foul play. Susan Tiffen, however, attempts to vindicate the child savers by suggesting that "calls for social justice cannot be seen as merely a hypocritical or self-delusive front for class interest." Speaking directly to critics of the Progressive-era reform movement, Tiffen insists that the reformers were genuinely interested in caring for wayward children. She reminds the anti-reform alliance that the child savers did

---

not invent poverty and crime. Indeed, the late nineteenth-century urban centers were filled with children in need of help. John Sutton, in his *Stubborn Children*, joins Tiffen in a complex reading of the reformers' platform and asks "if juvenile justice is simply a means of repression, how do we explain the elaborate discourse of treatment and rehabilitation?"¹⁶

These scholars do not refute the contention that reformers were paternalistic agents of the middle-class: instead, they refine these criticisms by providing a more complex vision of their motives and results.

Historians of penology tend to obscure gender difference in their discovery of institutionalization. Rothman and Platt ignore the difference entirely, except to note occasionally that boys were taught trades while girls learned domestic skills. The study of women and girls in prison has become a separate field of inquiry, as if completely removed from other trends in penal history. Estelle Freedman and Nicole Rafter provide the best discussions of the advent of separate prisons for women. Barbara Brenzel provides the only major study of a separate reform school for girls with her analysis of the Lancaster, Massachusetts Industrial School in *Daughters of the State*. These works are a necessary addition to other studies because they illuminate a completely new aspect of prison history. Freedman begins her discussion by explaining the shift in conceptualization of female criminality by which women were incarcerated for crimes that were not considered crimes for men. "Only after certain categories of female crime emerged within a sexual ideology

of female purity," she suggests, "were more women punished in jails and prisons." The sexual aspect of crime for women is a major facet of the invention of juvenile reformatories for delinquent girls. From the nineteenth century to the present, girls have been held accountable for different violations of the moral code than boys. Meda Chesney-Lind outlines the perception of juvenile crime officials who assume that "young women are more likely to violate their sex roles and act out sexually while males are likely to violate the law." Although it would seem important for analyses of female delinquency to accompany the general discussion of juvenile crime, the virtual absence of comment on this issue in any comprehensive study has necessitated this separate literature.

This paper, an account of the advocates and inmates of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls, will consolidate and utilize the research of the varied historians who have studied institutionalization, reform, and gender bias in American penology. After an historical overview of the context of nineteenth-century institutional reform, the paper will proceed to analyze the unique evidence of the Connecticut school. In 1867 the legislature first formed a committee to investigate the need for a girls' reformatory: fifty years later, in 1917, over 2,400 girls had lived and worked at the institution. This paper will use data from a representative 300 of these girls -- 100 consecutive inmates from three

different time periods -- to examine the inmates' early lives, the process of their incarceration, their experiences at the school, and their fates upon leaving Middletown.

The focus on the policies of one specific school should not obscure the reality of variation among institutions. Rather, the story of this school is meant to widen the base of knowledge about female reformatories by adding to the small sample of histories currently available. An aggregate assessment and evaluation of these institutions is impossible without further research in the field, but a limited scope provides a valuable look at turn-of-the-century America by its very specificity. The expectations and subsequent accomplishments of Long Lane School do not speak for every juvenile reformatory. Instead, the trends and aspirations of American child reform speak through the school. Whereas previous literature would assume that the school should be criticized by virtue of its context and predecessors, this paper will seek a more complex understanding of the institution through an inquiry into the goals, processes, and results of its existence.
chapter one
Pests to Society:
the historical response to juvenile delinquency

From the earliest days of American law the child has been considered a dependent who can be punished without enjoying the rights of a full citizen. Although records are quite sparse for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, historians have posited family control as the colonial norm. When parents failed, local governance determined the fates of disobedient children in the same ways as they dealt with the poor, insane and criminal members of society. "The colonists attributed no special virtues to institutionalization," writes David Rothman, "they certainly did not believe that incarceration could, or should, alter the character of the poor."¹ Instead of hiding deviants behind high fences and sturdy walls, the colonists preferred to rehabilitate them within the realm of civilized society. Since colonial villages were relatively self-contained and family oriented, this reliance on community control was viable. Criminal children posed no overwhelming crisis to the colonials, in part because their secondary status allowed parents to exert total control over their behavior, but also because the stability of the colonial culture kept them within the boundaries of that control.

¹ David Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum, p.31.
When family supervision broke down, and a child managed to escape the tight bind of the colonial system, the jails, prisons, and almshouses provided an alternate punitive option. Although never an ideal solution, since adult institutions did not provide education or counseling to children, prisons did incarcerate both boys and girls in the eighteenth century. Because colonists still relied on the family to educate and punish children, the numbers of young offenders who found themselves incarcerated was probably quite small. They did not attract the attention of social activists. Housed within the walls of colonial prisons, delinquent children became largely invisible to society. They were vastly underrepresented and usually overlooked. The public did not become aware of the situation until the early 1800s when the numbers of children in prison multiplied, and "urban growth and anonymity quickly diminished the efficacy of [previous] policies."²

Benevolent organizations coalesced in the nineteenth century with the intention of reforming existing institutions. Removing children from adult prisons quickly became one of their primary goals. Anthony Platt identifies "child-savers" as those who "viewed themselves as altruists and humanitarians dedicated to rescuing those who were less fortunately placed in the social order."³ Usually members of the middle and upper classes, these women and men tried to rescue children from what they considered to be out-dated methods of imprisonment. The rise of reform in the nineteenth century resulted from a growing divergence between

³ Platt, The Child Savers, p.3.
social groups, and a genuine, if flawed, desire of the elite to reach down and help the poor.

Philanthropists began to pay unprecedented attention to the dilemma posed by delinquent children in the nineteenth century. Stemming from the development of the American city, several factors came together to prioritize juvenile prison reform for the influential people who had the power and inclination to change existing methods of control. Eastern cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia became the locale for huge waves of immigration throughout the nineteenth century, creating new classes of people who vied for jobs and housing within limited geographical space. The cities also provided intrigue and opportunity for Americans, and migration to urban centers from farmlands and country villages swelled the population beyond controllable levels. Housed in low-income tenements and working at low-paying jobs, the new urban poor overflowed from their neighborhoods and created new subcultures and new traditions. Their sheer numbers insured that American society could not escape a metamorphosis. The creation of the city marked a watershed in the American ideology of community responsibility, since it appeared that the local community could no longer be depended on to protect the social order.

Urban populations rose throughout the nineteenth century, and the rapid advent of industrialization provided employment for thousands of new city dwellers. Entrepreneurs built their factories all along the Eastern seaboard, and hired vast numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Between 1790 and 1830 the population of New York increased five times,
and these figures were echoed to a somewhat lesser extent in the New England and mid-Atlantic states. A breakdown of the traditional family structure was inevitable within the context of such massive dislocation. Children who had once helped their parents farm, living with three generations of a rural family, suddenly found themselves in crowded tenement buildings, forced to sell newspapers, work in factories, or hire themselves out as servants. Those who had grown up in a different country carried the extra burden of foreign languages and customs to learn. Parents without the assurance of steady employment could not give their children the benefits of warm housing and nourishing food, forcing many children to search for other means of survival. Heads of families could not afford to spend the time needed to supervise their offspring, and these children escaped the traditional mechanisms of control.

To the middle class, poor children roaming the streets looking for food, housing and entertainment, free from the confines of family structure, represented nothing less than a national crisis. Historians have emphasized the threat posed by these children, who seemed to embody the forces that were reaching to rip apart the structure of American society. Troubled by the presence of so many poor people in their cities, middle-class philanthropists began to think of new forms of social control. Reliance on the family had proven unsuccessful. Rothman writes of the reformers' contention that "the society had lost the stability and cohesion of the colonial period, that ideas and organizations that had once worked to bind members together were without effect." Frightened by the vast

---

4 Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum*, p.57.
5 Ibid., p. 171.
numbers of immigrants who lived in abject poverty and raised their children under the influence of alcohol and questionable moral judgement, the white middle class revolted against old methods and rushed to new conclusions about public responsibility. Their decision, that state protection of children is a fundamental component of a decent society, continues to inform the construction of juvenile delinquency.

In the 1820s, public outrage over the condition of children in adult prisons resulted in the formation of several separate institutions for delinquent youth. The movement that led to the opening of the New York House of Refuge in 1825 arose from the belief that the future of society rested in the children. According to reformatory historian Robert Mennel, "the presence of children [in prisons and almshouses] seemed only to guarantee a future supply of paupers and deviants." Since prisons of the period offered no educational facilities or rehabilitation programs, incarceration guaranteed that children would be unable to rejoin society as productive citizens. The emphasis of the prison style was isolation, virtually eliminating any attempt to reform inmates or encourage them to learn new habits. Stephen Schlossman has pointed to the early nineteenth century as a period of "growing support for a rehabilitative program relying less on punishment and isolation than on discipline, religion, and hard labor." The ideal of the reformatory movement rested on the children, since early elimination of criminal tendencies could

---

allow young offenders to reevaluate their behavior before they had children of their own.

In addition to the pro-active step of placing children in a situation which would encourage educational and religious methods of rehabilitation, the movement for the juvenile reformatory also embodied a re-active step to remove children from the unsavory influences of hardened adult criminals. The prison was seen as a virtual school of vice, where children who might have been incarcerated only for status offences or minor crimes would learn complicated techniques of robbery or violence. "No theme emerged with greater clarity in the correctional thought of the period," writes Schlossman, "than the dangers of housing children with adult offenders." Prisons in which children learned more about crime than they knew when they first arrived contradicted the goals of the reformers. Far from promoting social order, these institutions were an affront to society. A related problem was the reluctance of judges to commit children to adult prisons, deciding to set the youths free rather than subject them to this troubling situation. Philanthropists searched for a solution which would punish children for their crimes and at the same time teach them morality instead of vice.

The New York House of Refuge was the first juvenile reformatory to open in the United States. It was not the only one for long, though, since the idea spread quickly up and down the Eastern seaboard, and reformers in Philadelphia and Boston jumped at the chance to correct societal ills by rehabilitating children. These early co-educational reformatories were based on the congregate prison model, which dictated

---

8 Ibid., p. 23
the basic architecture of the institutions. The inmates lived in huge concrete blocks called dormitories, and performed their daily tasks alongside the entire population of the school. Attempts to segregate the children according to their crime or level of culpability were impossible within this model. The early reformatories emphasized a military-like program, with highly regimented daily activities. Religion, education and vocational training comprised the basic components of the incarceration experience, teaching inmates the basics of the middle-class value structure of piety, literacy, and work.

Problems were not scarce in the early reformatories of the large cities. Children who had never experienced such repressive discipline did not appreciate the efforts of superintendents to subdue their characters. "The early years of the New York Refuge," writes Mennel, "were especially marked by numerous conspiratorial escape attempts and inmate uprisings." Reforatory officials quickly created elaborate punishment routines, but this necessarily switched the focus of the schools from education to discipline. Philanthropists became disillusioned with the reformatory's ability to correct juvenile offenders, and tried to tighten their control over children by widening the boundaries of the status offence. Society would be even better served if juveniles could be arrested before they had actually committed a crime, decided the reformers, and to this end they began to incarcerate a wider spectrum of the children of the poor. Blaming the destitution of America's children on the lack of parental guidance, the reformers reasoned that if parental neglect led to juvenile delinquency then neglected children should be saved before they  

---

9 Mennel, *Thorns and Thistles*, p.19
had the chance to follow their fate. The houses of refuge then became both school and prison, both almshouse and asylum to hundreds of impoverished children in the 1820s.

The nineteenth-century philanthropists who helped to develop and sustain the reformatories found support for their agenda in the legal system. Whereas colonial law had depended upon the parents to determine the guilt of their children, the 1830s introduced a new concept in juvenile protection. In 1838 the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Ex Parte Crouse* that the parents' rule could be usurped by the state. "May not the natural parents when unequal to the task of education, or unworthy of it, be suspended by the *parens patriae* or common guardian of the community?"\(^ {10} \) By invoking the doctrine of parens patriae, the court alluded to a medieval English practice which allowed the king to act on behalf of a child whose safety was threatened by parental neglect. In the 1838 case the king was the Philadelphia House of Refuge and the child was Mary Ann Crouse, whose father appealed to the court when she was committed to the reformatory against his will. The court ruled that the Bill of Rights, which would have provided Mary Ann the privilege of a fair trial, did not apply to minors. This precedent allowed for the incarceration of a child in reform schools without the permission of the parents, and without a trial. Agents of the middle class -- reformers, judges, and superintendents -- now had complete control over the inmates of their refuges.

---

The influence of parens patriae stretched over more than a century of penal history, and was not officially questioned in the courts until *Kent v. U.S.* in 1966. By claiming that the refuge was a school rather than a prison, the court justified stripping children of their citizenship. Leaving aside the issue of whether it indeed served as a benevolent parent, it is important to realize that the state's overarching privilege to act *in loco parentis* was a creation of the nineteenth century reform movement and not a traditional right. The endurance of parens patriae was a result of the monopoly the reformers held on the country's opinion about the role of child control in the greater social order. Alexander Pisciotta, in his discussion of the doctrine, claims that "justices across the country, throughout the nineteenth century, invoked parens patriae on premises which were, at best, questionable."¹¹ He suggests that judges tended to commit children to reform schools with no evidence of criminal activity or vagrant acts, simply because they thought the school would serve as a better parent. This became a highly subjective process, since middle-class reformers were likely to consider poor, immigrant parents who worked all day and occasionally patronized a bar to be negligent in parental duties. The perception of neglect was a cultural construction, and historians are skeptical that all, or even many, of the children admitted to houses of refuge posed any great danger to society. The success of the reformatory in collecting and punishing 'neglected children' would have been impossible without *Ex Parte Crouse*.

Early houses of refuge usually incarcerated both boys and girls. The daily activities and living arrangements completely separated the sexes.

¹¹ Pisciotta, "Saving the Children," p.413.
however, so they may as well have been living in two different institutions. "Girls were assigned to live in a separate house," points out Barbara Brenzel, "thereby making it virtually impossible for the two sexes to mix." The vocational training which boys received differed greatly from the domestic classes of the girls. The girls of the New York House of Refuge "spent their time doing institutional chores -- cooking, sewing, and washing -- under the watchful eye of a matron." Whereas boys could work in reformatory shops and contribute revenue to the school, girls simply carried on the everyday chores of the institution. In most cases girls made up a considerable minority of the reformatory populations, and their needs did not dictate the policies of the schools. Although many reformatories committed both girls and boys, their expectations and objectives for each sex radically differentiated the treatment the children received.

The presence of girls created a separate purpose for the reformatory, since nineteenth-century courts tended to commit girls for sexual offences rather than crimes against person or property which were the primary charges against boys. Female inmates carried the double stigma of the 'neglected child' and the 'fallen woman.' While reformers and school officials could blame neglect on the girls' parents, the fall from social morality was harder to excuse. Estelle Freedman, an historian of women's prisons, has suggested that "the female criminal was [considered to be]"

---

13 Mennel, Thorns and Thistles, p. 16.
more depraved than her male counterpart." Simply put, girls were arrested for violation of the sexual moral code while boys were not. Female inmates of reformatories fell victim to a severe double standard which held women and girls responsible for sexual crimes because of a perceived biological difference. Since girls were thought to be inherently pure and chaste, any immoral act was seen as a signal of severe deviation. These 'chastity offenders' existed in deliberate opposition to the Victorian ideal. Coramae Richey Mann, an historian of female delinquency, notes that most girls in reformatories were imprisoned for such indistinct crimes as 'lewdness' and 'promiscuity,' suggesting a gender bias since these were not considered punishable crimes for boys. The sexual discrimination legacy in juvenile justice, and indeed the entire justice system, began in the nineteenth century, when "certain categories of female crime emerged within a sexual ideology of female purity." The fundamental difference between male and female crimes led to a split in the method of treatment. Because girls were committed for less violent crimes than boys, physical punishment and hard labor did not seem to be appropriate. Instead, the philanthropists looked to new models of rehabilitation which would emphasize different aspects of reform. By creating separate foundations for the treatment of women, reformers solidified the national dedication to a penal double standard. The female reformatories "were based on acceptance -- indeed willing embrace -- of differential standards for imprisonment of women and men," writes

14 Estelle Freedman, Their Sisters' Keepers, p.17.
16 Freedman, Their Sisters' Keepers, p. 10.
historian Nicole Hahn Rafter. "Reformatory advocates and administrators believed they were doing women a service by providing special care." Different prisons for female offenders institutionalized the nineteenth-century belief in separate spheres. They insured that women would be punished "more severely than men who had committed the same offences," since they were incarcerated while men went free.

In order to design an institution which would provide a new type of penal care for women and girls, reformers chose to disassociate themselves from the current vanguard of reform. Revolting against the impersonality of the congregate plan currently in use in all American houses of refuge, the creators of the female reformatories turned to Europe for new models. The Fay Commission, given the mandate to organize a girls' reform school in Massachusetts, found its ideal in several institutions which followed the family plan. Europeans had embraced this style, which emulated family life in a way that congregate systems never could. The 'family' or 'cottage' plan provided an entirely new architectural landscape for the reformatory. Instead of concentrating all activities inside one huge multi-story building, family institutions housed smaller numbers of inmates in 'cottages' with matrons to simulate parental figures. Although European schools, such as the much discussed Mettray agricultural school in France, emphasized military training rather than the American tradition of common schooling, their model of family-style institutions provided a welcome change from the American congregate institutions which had proven inadequate to the needs of delinquent girls. The Fay commission "recommended unanimously [to

17 Nicole Hahn Rafter, Partial Justice, p.35.
the state of Massachusetts] the cottage-style institution for the reconstitution of potentially wayward children, especially girls."

The result of the Fay commission's findings became the Lancaster Industrial School for Girls, which opened in Massachusetts in August of 1856. Coming slightly more than a quarter of a century after the first separate reform school for children, Lancaster holds the distinction of being the first separate reform school for girls in North America. The school set new trends for American social reform in the realm of female delinquency by seeking to "blend reformism and the social ideal of womanhood through a healthy balance of religion, common schooling, and domestic training." Barbara Brenzel illustrates Lancaster's origins within the context of the nineteenth-century prioritization of female morality. She emphasizes the importance of religious and moral training to the early administrators of the school. Bradford Pierce, a career reform advocate and Methodist chaplain, served as the first superintendent at Lancaster. He supported the efforts of the school to inculcate the girls with a new value system that would displace deviant tendencies. "Does not public security demand that those who will become the women of the country should receive the protection, the training, and the culture of the state?" wrote Pierce in an early report to the state of Massachusetts. "Her life and conduct give tone to the family circle, and by a thousand influences make the character of the young and so of the race."

The remote location of Lancaster, Massachusetts, was not incidental to the overarching plan of the industrial school. Fear of urban locales only

---

18 Brenzel, Daughters of the State, p.63.
19 Ibid., p.72.
increased with heightened levels of immigration throughout the nineteenth century, and middle-class reformers decried the dirt and desolation they found in American cities. Moving reformatories to rural landscapes would remove inmates from the temptations of urban vice, and separate the children from their influential and deviant families. Freedman points to the similar rural relocation of adult reformatories, commenting that reform advocates "reasoned that if offenders were removed from crime-inducing cities, given healthful doses of fresh air, and forced to exercise, they might be cured of the disease of crime."21

Women's prisons and girls' reformatories were the first American institutions to embody the belief in the primacy of farmland, perhaps because nineteenth-century sensibility equated the country farms with the last bedrock of purity in the United States.

The Lancaster Industrial School for Girls did not achieve the ideal in juvenile reform. Even its own trustees wrote disparagingly about their institution only ten years after their triumphant discovery of the female reform school. Reformers admitted that education could not cure the ills of society, and that many children would never be saved according to their standards. Instead of believing in the doctrine of environmentalism, which would insure the positive outcome of children rehabilitated within a religious and morally pure setting, the philanthropists turned to the new theory of hereditarianism espoused by Charles Darwin and his successors. By 1865, says Brenzel, reformers "were no longer voicing the belief that all children were salvageable."22 Despite this switch, however, Americans

21 Freedman, Their Sisters' Keepers, p. 35.
22 Brenzel, Daughters of the State, p.91.
did not cease to incarcerate their children. Brenzel insists that most reformers were disillusioned with the feasibility of their mission, but they certainly continued to spend money on the juvenile reform school. Anthony Platt and other historians who show contempt for the ideals of the nineteenth-century reformers suggest that the switch to hereditarian beliefs simply encouraged the middle class to agitate for tighter mechanisms of control. If children of the immigrants and the poor could not be saved, then at least the children of the middle class could be protected from coming into contact with such deviant individuals.

The female reform school was sustained throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because it appeared to be a convincing step toward the alleviation of juvenile crime. The schools removed thousands of indigent girls from the streets. By placing deviant and sexually active girls behind fences and outside of the public eye, industrial schools succeeded in placating fears of urban degeneration. Hiding criminals from society was a basic tenant of nineteenth-century penal ideology. The public could be fooled into believing the reform school served as a suitable and humanitarian mechanism for rehabilitation, since they did not personally confront the inmates. Despite the disappointment of Pierce and other reformers over their perceived failure at the Massachusetts school, the public did not discard the concept. The search for the ideal reform school for girls continued after Lancaster.

Whereas children's reformatories in the first half of the nineteenth century had been centered in the Northeast, the growth of cities in the Midwest and South provided for the outward spread of this institution. Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, and Indiana, along with Maryland and Connecticut,
were the six states after Massachusetts to fund schools for delinquent girls. Although the growth of boys' schools was quite rapid after the initial institution, philanthropists took longer to catch on to the idea of reform schools for girls. In the decade between Lancaster and the 1865 opening of the Chicago Home for Girls, Massachusetts had already experienced failures, perhaps causing reformers to hesitate before making the same mistakes. Despite disillusionment with the school, however, Lancaster served as a model for several decades. American reform schools, including the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls, based their architecture, curriculum and ideals on the Massachusetts school well into the twentieth century. Because the Fay Commission had chosen the cottage plan, scores of other schools decided that this method was integral to the rehabilitation of wayward girls. As a precedent-setting institution, Lancaster perhaps outlived its viability as a reform school.23

Margaret Reeves conducted a comprehensive study of girls' reform schools under the auspices of the Russell Sage Foundation from 1921 to 1929. She surveyed the fifty-seven schools then in existence across the country, including Long Lane Farm, and spent a week living at each school interviewing staff and inmates. Her findings remain a valuable document of the state of girls' reformatories in the 1920s and detail the ways in which the ideology and methodology had changed in the seventy years since Lancaster. Institutionalization of girls peaked between 1910 and 1920, with 23 schools opening across the country during that decade. Reeves found that these schools had overwhelmingly accepted and

23 Lancaster did survive until 1973, but Barbara Brenzel has concluded that it became a vocational placement service and no longer met earlier rehabilitative goals.
sustained the cottage plan, and continued the work of domestic training. Although there were certainly changes in the schools, the basic organization remained quite static. Reeves wrote about the necessity for single rooms, since "the majority of the girls are easily excited, unstable, and emotionally high strung."  

This is an echo of the founders of Lancaster who had likewise insisted on single rooms, in a direct contradiction of the dormitory method used by boys' schools. Other basic similarities existed as well, suggesting the overwhelming influence the decisions at Lancaster continued to have on the progress of girls' reform.

Reeves and the Russell Sage Foundation noted many problems in the industrial schools for girls. While praising the 57 schools for their work in child welfare, Reeves was quick to judge them and suggest ways to improve their success rate. She emphasized the need for schools to follow up on their inmates after discharge; and had praise for only the few schools which hired people to visit homes of the girls after their incarceration. She criticized some institutions for failing to provide proper sex education and others for forcing girls to wear uniforms and perform drudge work. Despite the similarity and constancy among schools and across time, Reeves was able to pinpoint specific differences and need for change. However, more important than Reeves' particular agenda of reform was the way in which the world of the 1920s took for granted the existence of separate reform schools for delinquent girls. Once considered a drastic solution to a new problem, the girls' institution had become a respected and fundamental component of social reform.

---

24 Margaret Reeves, Training Schools for Delinquent Girls, (Russell Sage Foundation, 1929), p. 150.
25 Ibid., pp.217, 387.
The decision to open an industrial school for girls in the state of Connecticut originally resulted from a 1860 request for a women’s prison. The coalition of women’s groups did not convince state officials of the need to separate women from men, but the legislature did determine that a home was necessary for delinquent girls. The state formed a committee in 1867 to investigate the problem of wayward girls in Connecticut and to study the precedents of girls’ reform schools. The result of their investigation began the public outrage over female delinquency which eventually led to the founding of the industrial school. The committee found hundreds of girls wandering the streets all over Connecticut who had escaped incarceration because of pity or lack of a proper institution to house them. "Their impunity emboldens them in their evil way, and thus in early girlhood they become habitual thieves and vagrants," wrote the founders. "Can it be otherwise that the great majority should be early steeped in crime and become life-long burdens and pests to society?" By suggesting that a delinquent girl could be rescued by an industrial school, the state hoped to convince the public that a girls’ school would prevent the need for a women’s prison.

The state of Connecticut agreed to supply partial funding and support to a reform school in 1868, and the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls officially opened two years later as the fourth such

26 A separate prison for women did eventually open in Niantic in 1917, almost 60 years after the original request.
27 "Appeal," MCHS.
school in the United States. The first superintendent of the school, Reverend James H. Bradford, had previously served as assistant superintendent of the Massachusetts Reform School for Boys, and other early employees had similar qualifications. The state treasury paid $3.00 per week per girl, the same amount then paid for the support of each girl in the local jails or state prison. An appeal to private donors for contributions asked: "Can [Christian people] more fittingly express their gratitude to God for His mercy to them and theirs, than by giving the aid desired to rescue hundreds of poor girls from the future of crime and shame and inconceivable woe now impending over them?" Couched in these terms, the appeal was difficult to refuse, and donations came in from all across the state. Within two years the founders had raised $20,000 and collected furniture, clothing, and recreational equipment toward the opening of the school.

Armed with money and resources, an enthusiastic public and a prime location, the Board of Directors proceeded to create a reform school. The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls would utilize existing theories of incarceration, and strive to invent its own methodology within those constraints. Always operating in the context of its times, Connecticut's school was nevertheless unprecedented in its balance between adherence to social trends and original contributions to the field of reform education. The first fifty years of the Connecticut Industrial School, from its origin in 1867 to the resignation of its most influential superintendent in 1917,

28 Previous schools had been: Lancaster Industrial School for Girls, Massachusetts, 1856; Chicago Home for Girls, Illinois, 1865; and Montrose School for Girls, Maryland, 1866. Reeves, p.38
29 "Appeal," MCHS.
provide a unique look at turn-of-the-century social history through the lens of the labeling and treatment of a deviant class.
Mary R. was 16 years old in 1874. She lived with her mother and sister in New Haven and occasionally attended a Roman Catholic church. She had dropped out of school three years previously but did not work, so she must have had a lot of free time. Mary's father, an immigrant from England, had deserted the family and was presumed dead. Her mother, who had come to the United States from Ireland, worked in a laundry. Roseanna R. was frustrated with her daughter's refusal to work or to help with the housework. She probably disapproved of Mary's friends or her social choices. Perhaps she simply could not afford to take care of two children with the small salary she earned as a "washer woman." She decided that getting Mary out of the house was the best solution.

In June of 1874 Roseanna R. complained to the selectmen of New Haven that her daughter had been "staying out nights," and was guilty of "general disobedience." Philip Reilly, a New Haven police officer, was called upon to deliver the young woman to Middletown. There she became the 165th inmate at the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls, committed to stay until she turned eighteen. Superintendent Rockwell remarked that Mary was a "bold, bad girl. Very vile and profane." She
was undoubtedly resentful of her mother for subjecting her to forced incarceration, and had little reason to be polite to school officials. Three months after her committal to the industrial school, Mary discovered she was pregnant. This may have confirmed many of her mother’s worst fears about her, and the school rushed to determine the paternity of the child and arrange a wedding. Mary was married in New Haven a few months later, but the marriage fell apart in 1878. Citing her husband as a drunk, Mary left him and returned to the school looking for employment. Now twenty years old, with at least one child and no money, Mary turned to the Connecticut industrial school for solace. The institution which had once been the object of derision and disrespect now figured as Mary’s only hope for sustenance and support.¹

Mary R. was not unusual among the girls who were admitted to the industrial school during its first decade. The pattern of her life matched that of hundreds of other girls throughout Connecticut who were incarcerated during the 1870s. The institution was created specifically for these girls, who were “from infancy...familiar with profanity, falsehood, and scenes of revolting debauchery and vice.”² Mary’s tendency to stay out late with her friends, her neglect of household duties, and her active sexuality each contributed to her committal. But perhaps the largest factor in determining her placement at the school was her socio-economic status. The daughter of immigrants who grew up in poverty in a single-parent home, Mary could not escape the background which contributed to the

¹ Record Books of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls, LLS, inmate #165. The record books include notations by the superintendent, correspondence, and newspaper clippings. Inmate numbers in all future notes refer to these records.
² “Appeal,” MCHS.
institutional review of her behavior. Her disregard for social mores only accentuated an already volatile conglomerate of circumstances. These girls were "born to a heritage of poverty, disease, and crime," according to the 1869 appeal to the citizens of Connecticut. They were "thrown upon the world homeless and friendless." The record books of the industrial school help to both prove and qualify these assumptions.

In order to quantify and analyze the life stories of the girls of the Connecticut industrial school, three groups of 100 consecutive inmates from three different periods in the early history of the institution will be examined. The first group resided at the school under the superintendency of S.N. Rockwell from 1874 to 1877. The second two groups were committed to the school during the long reign of Superintendent William Fairbank, one group between 1895 and 1897 and the other between 1912 and 1913. As the years passed and the school built more homes and more facilities, the enrollment grew considerably. The three samples are 15 to 20 years apart and the changes in the school's population mirror some of the demographic changes in Connecticut during the first fifty years of the industrial school. The 300 histories are representative of the hundreds of young women admitted to the school during this period.

Immigration to Connecticut followed most national trends, and this pattern is reflected quite clearly in the regional backgrounds of the girls. Strong linguistic and cultural barriers impeded the immigrants, and the high number of foreign-born or first-generation Americans among the urban poor is not surprising. From mid-century when huge groups of

---

3 Ibid.
Irish arrived through the century's end when Eastern and Southern Europeans dominated the influx, the United States received hundreds of thousands of new immigrants each year. In 1850, for example, 215,000 immigrants from England and Ireland arrived. In 1900 there were 190,000 from Southern Europe alone. These statistics are fundamental to the history of America, and helped create the diversity of American cities today. In many cases the urban centers of the northeast were created by the immense infiltration of the foreign-born. In 1900, over 60 percent of the population in the three largest cities of Connecticut -- Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven -- had foreign parentage. Many of the problems which led to poverty were directly linked to overcrowding and job dislocation caused by the rapid increase in immigrant labor. Certainly not all immigrants or immigrants' children ended up in reform schools, but social factors beyond the girls' control certainly contributed to their incarceration. These girls did not begin their lives with monetary or social advantages; their backgrounds seemed to dictate their lives with a sharp accuracy that was difficult to escape.

In the first group of girls, almost a third were daughters of immigrants. Over half of the immigrant parents were from Ireland, a country raked with starvation and poverty in the nineteenth century. In the second group, over forty percent were daughters of the foreign-born; again, most of these were from Ireland although there were increased numbers from Germany, Italy, and northern Europe. By 1912, in the third

---

4 7th Census of the United States, 1850, as tabulated in Brenzel, Daughters of the State, p.12.
group of girls, more than half of the girls were only first-generation Americans; their parents were part of the huge upsurge in immigration around the turn of the century. Over 25 percent of these were from Italy, with several from Germany, Ireland, and increasing numbers from Russia. (See Appendix A).

Angelina C. was born in 1899 in Potenza, Italy. She came to Connecticut with her mother and siblings several years after her father had moved here to begin earning money to transport his family. Neither of her parents had learned English, despite having been in Hartford for over five years. The family lived on the third floor of a tenement building in a "very dirty; disordered, and confused" apartment. Angelina was accused of fornication, but upon examination by a doctor was found to be "chaste and unviolated." She was in the fifth grade at Hartford's Brown Elementary School, despite being already 15 years old at the time of her arrest and eventual committal to the industrial school at Middletown. The report filed with the school's superintendent promised that Angelina would "develop normally under favorable conditions;" conditions which apparently could never be found in her home. Removing Angelina from her Italian neighborhood was perceived to be her only hope for an honest and respectable future.6

European immigrants escaping persecution and poverty came to Connecticut to find discrimination and often more poverty. When immigrant girls found themselves in situations that could lead to committal -- staying out late, wandering the streets, or frequenting "houses of ill-fame"-- they were often helpless against the emerging

6 CISG, inmate #2205.
bureaucracy of juvenile delinquency. A newspaper account of the
committal of Barbara W. in 1894 illustrates the difficulty immigrant
parents had with the American courts. Barbara was accused of sleeping
with a Yale student, and appeared in court on this charge. "Mrs. W.,
Barbara's mother, was present at the hearing, but she is German and did
not understand much of what was going on," claimed one account. "The
girl's parents...are very deeply grieved over their daughter's downfall."7
Despite, or perhaps because of, her parents' severe inability to grasp the
situation and the lack of attempt by any court official to help them, Barbara
was committed to the industrial school for the next six years of her life.
Her German background did not induce her to become intimate with
men, but it influenced the reaction of the courts to her crime.

The ethnic backgrounds of the girls had various effects on the
philosophy and structure of the industrial school. One major change was
the gradual shift in religious emphasis. Whereas the institution had been
founded in a tradition of New England Protestantism, the influx of so
many Irish and Italian Catholics demanded a modification. (See Appendix
B). Mandatory Sunday services led by a local Protestant minister remained
an important component of the girls' education, but by 1895, when 21
percent of the girls were admitted as Roman Catholics, a Catholic mass
became a regular feature on the Sunday schedule as well. Diverse
immigrant backgrounds must have also had an effect on the daily
organization of the school. With inmates whose parents came from ten
different countries with ten different cultural and linguistic heritages,
thorough assimilation would have been impossible.

7 CISG, inmate #1152; newspaper clipping.
The girls of the industrial school were not all immigrants, of course. The school admitted black inmates from the outset, suggesting an interesting facet of segregation techniques in state institutions. Although black people were not welcomed into many public schools or universities, they were gathered into reformatories and prisons with little difficulty. Integration among criminals and deviant juveniles was apparently less threatening than integration in the broader society. The gender-specific nature of the Connecticut Industrial School may also have facilitated its integration: perhaps the absence of a threat of miscegenation inherent in a single-sex institution alleviated the fears of the reformers. The numbers of African-American inmates actually decreased during the first forty years of the Connecticut Industrial School, so that by 1912 only 5 percent of the girls were black, down from 16 percent in earlier years.

Chloë A. was born in South Carolina in 1861 as the daughter of two slaves. Her family was released from enslavement by the Civil War, and she came to Connecticut with her parents and sister in 1870. Chloë's father drank too much, and died at an early age. Her mother died soon after, leaving Chloë alone in a strange city with no means of survival. She hired herself out to the Clark family of Chester, and did housework for them for several years. Although the Clarks provided Chloë with housing and food, their home was not her own. At fifteen years of age she had lived in slavery, survived a war, lost her parents, and relocated across the United States to a community vastly different from the South Carolina of her youth. That she was not able to conform to the social propriety demanded of her by the Clarks was probably a direct result of her tumultuous and insecure life. Julia Clark reported her inappropriate
behavior to the industrial school, and Superintendent Rockwell traveled to Chester to meet Chloë and transport her to Middletown. She was committed to the Connecticut industrial school for "insubordination and unruly habits," and sentenced to three years. Chloë was placed out with a different Chester family in 1878, and lived there for two more years until she returned, dissatisfied, to the school in 1880. Since her sentence had already expired, the superintendent pronounced her "out of place," and she was returned to the selectmen of Chester.8

There were only a scattered number of children of slaves admitted to the industrial school. But Chloë's story illustrates the pattern of dislocation and alienation experienced by people who migrated within the United States and were not prepared for life in the northeast. Confronted with unfamiliar customs and values, recent newcomers to Connecticut shared consequences of urban poverty with their foreign-born counterparts. The decades following the Civil War were hardly easy for black Americans. Chloë A. and the other African-American inmates, whether they were former slaves or not, came to the school with a burden of alienation that probably never left them.

While the children of the Anglo New Englanders did not always make up the majority of reformatory inmates, daughters of the white urban poor always remained a steady component. The link between poverty and perceived crime -- or between poverty and incarceration -- did not adhere to racial boundaries. Whatever the ethnic background of the girls, they were without exception members of the lower class. The numbers of girls coming from the large urban centers of Connecticut rose

8 CISG, inmate #221.
consistently through the early years of the school. In 1874 thirty-six percent of the girls came from either Hartford, New Haven, or Bridgeport; in twenty years time 56 percent of the girls were from one of those cities. Most of the girls' fathers were employed simply as day-laborers in the factories or on farms. If their mothers worked, it was usually in a steam laundry or as domestic servants. Many institutionalized girls had lived their lives as wards of the state in public almshouses. The industrial school did not commit girls who lived in financial security. Perhaps parents with money were able to pay for good lawyers and win an alternative to incarceration. Perhaps selectmen and police officers were more likely to arrest impoverished girls because these girls habitually loitered on the streets for lack of any place else to go. Whatever the reason, the girls of the industrial school unanimously represented the poor of all racial, religious, and ethnic backgrounds.

One category of alienated and impoverished white New Englanders whose daughters appeared with some regularity during the first few years of the school were former United States soldiers who had returned from the Civil War almost a decade earlier but had not yet assimilated back into their communities, and soldiers who had never come back at all. The military men who returned with great fanfare and exultation often resumed business obligations and prominent positions in their towns, and remained proud of their service for the rest of their lives. But these men do not tell the whole story. The opening of the Veterans' Orphans home in Mansfield soon after the end of the war was one direct result of the mass family displacement that occurred because of the thousands of losses sustained by Connecticut families. Another result was the incarceration of
many veterans' children in reformatory institutions like the Connecticut industrial school. Minnie S. was committed to the school in 1876 at the age of fifteen. Although this was over a decade after the end of the war, the conflict continued to have a profound influence on Minnie's life. Her father, a Civil War veteran, had turned to alcohol upon his return. He was periodically arrested for drunkenness, and for drunken abuse of his wife and daughter. Minnie's brother had also been arrested for public drinking, which served to further disintegrate the family structure.

Minnie was arrested in Hartford for "being out at night;" perhaps she felt that she had little reason to stay at home.9 The industrial school girls whose fathers were Connecticut soldiers were too young during the war to understand the national crisis. Their connection to the Civil War was through the death and desertion it caused in their families.

Family death was overwhelmingly prevalent for the girls in the first two sample groups: almost half of the girls had at least one parent dead. Over 10 percent were orphans. (See Appendix C). When added to separation, divorce, desertion, and illegitimacy, these numbers indicate that most of the girls came from broken families. Single parents living in impoverished conditions with many children to support were forced to make family discipline a low priority. Throughout the first decades of the school, almost one-fourth of the incarcerated girls came from families with more than four children. These children had much more freedom than those who grew up under strict guard; family surveillance is a luxury when basic survival is not secure. Jessie H. grew up in Suffield with five sisters. Her father had deserted the family many years previously and was

9 CISG, inmate #228.
presumed to be out West; her mother did not work. The "ladies of Suffield" eventually placed Jessie and some of her sisters in the Hartford County Home, to prevent them from falling into bad habits when not under the watchful eye of caring parents. In 1897, at fifteen years of age, Jessie was incarcerated by the selectmen of Suffield at the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls. She was arrested for "manifest danger of falling into vice," a common catch-all which avoided the necessity for Jessie to commit a specific crime. Jessie joined an older sister who had been previously committed to the school because her mother had been unable to provide for six children on no salary. She joined the ranks of the industrial school because she came from a broken home, and because she was poor, and because somebody decided that this combination was likely to result in perverted or deviant behavior.10

Family tragedy and social dissolution often led to or proceeded from substance abuse; the correlation between a family history of alcohol use and incarceration is striking in the records of the industrial school. The tendency for drunk adults to lose their jobs and be arrested frequently was perhaps one precursor to the delinquency of their children. The appeal for donations to the Connecticut Industrial School in 1869 cited alcohol as an accurate predictor of the disintegration of family and morality. The girls most in danger of succumbing to vice were the children of "intemperate, illegitimate, and criminal parentage....sent forth by drunken parents to beg and steal for a livelihood,"11 (emphasis mine). This obsession with connecting criminal behavior with alcohol is not unique; the moral

---

10 CISG, inmate #1259.
11 "Appeal," MCHS.
crusaders who advocated prohibition were also convinced that moral behavior would be restored through temperance. It is not clear what criteria were used to determine alcoholism for the parents of industrial school girls, but throughout the first forty years at least thirty percent of the parents were consistently listed as intemperate.

Mary H. came of age in 1874 and Superintendent Rockwell was forced to release her to her mother, against his better judgment. Since Mary's mother was drunk when she came to pick her daughter up, Rockwell was more than wary about the life Mary was about to re-enter. The mere scent of alcohol on Mrs. M.'s breath had settled Mary's fate, according to the superintendent. All the work of the school had been worthless since she was about to embark on the rest of her life with a drunk mother, a woman who was "by appearance and language one of the vilest and most debased of her sex." Rockwell was angry and frustrated that he could do nothing to control the inevitable downfall which alcoholic influence would bring to Mary. He wrote in his journal that Mary was returning to "the most evil influences conceivable."12 This moral outrage about alcohol was founded in some truth; the record books show that indeed many of the girls were raised by parents who had trouble with drink. But the vast majority of the cases were caused by other factors, and alcohol abuse was probably as much a result of poverty as a cause. Locating alcohol as the sole agent of evil among the poor was an exaggeration, if not a total misconception. Superintendent Rockwell and the other temperance advocates of his time were reacting to a standard

12 Superintendent's Journal, October 23, 1874, LLS.
that demanded total abstinence from alcohol in order to demonstrate social morality.

The industrialization of American cities is visible through the occupations of the girls' parents, but more so through the jobs the girls themselves worked at prior to their incarceration. Whereas the shift is harder to see in the older generations, since they were more likely to remain in jobs such as farm work and service positions, the jump from housework to factory work was blatant among the girls. (See Appendix D). In the first group of girls, who were committed between 1874 to 1877, close to eighty percent of those who worked served in a domestic capacity before their incarceration. Whether doing housework on a day-to-day basis, or living out as a permanent maid, these girls were trained in cleaning, cooking, and child care. Among the third group of girls, in 1912-13, less than 25 percent of those who worked were household servants. Instead, the Progressive-era girls worked in factories or shops. Their work places ranged from garment and textile mills to iron, brass, and electric wire shops. They worked as 'cash girls' in retail stores, and as unskilled labor in factories across Connecticut.

While most girls could count on utilizing domestic skills in their own families, factory work served simply as a way to make money. The social reformers who promoted domestic work for poor girls hoped that respectability would come from cleanliness and order; dirty, unregulated factories could only foster perversion and vice. The box shop was discontinued at the industrial school in the 1890s because of worries that it was not promoting or leading to a respectable lifestyle, whereas domestic work such as laundry and sewing was more conducive to decency and
chastity. Although factory training had been considered appropriate for girls in mid-century, the growth of industrial cities changed this perception. In 1900 the Board of Directors' report to the state of Connecticut outlined the philosophy which demanded domestic education: "Girls are to be the future mothers and makers of homes, and the home in our land is the all-powerful influence that guides, directs, fortifies, and protects Community, State, and Nation."13

Florence B. was one of the hundreds of girls who worked in a factory prior to her term at the industrial school which began in 1912. Her first job was at the Chemical Company; she later moved on to the Mystic Manufacturing Company and was promoted to "forelady" there. Florence's step-father was a traveling salesman and his mobility perhaps ensured that she and her two brothers could usually avoid strict discipline. At sixteen, Florence was arrested for "soliciting" in Orange.14 Her connections to two different jobs probably meant that she had friends in different cities, or at least affiliations that were not tied to her family. The independence that was garnered from impersonal employment meant that Florence did not have to report to a family each night. The factory owners did not care what she did at night as long as she reported to work in the morning; this was opposed to a family who would demand that their employee act with decorum and respectability during her stay. Coupled with the inattention of her own family, the freedom of daytime factory work meant that Florence had the evenings to herself.

14 CISG, inmate #2068.
The increasing numbers of girls who worked before their incarceration could have indicated that they were spending less time in school; however, the literacy rates among delinquent girls committed to the industrial school actually increased. In the first period of incarceration, in the 1870s, only two-thirds of the girls could read and write. By 1912 that number had risen to 99 percent. This may have been because by 1912 the average age of the incarcerated girl was enough higher that she may have been in school before she began to work. In the early period, with the lower rate of literacy upon entrance, close to 40 percent of the girls were under 13 and perhaps had not spent most of their lives in school. In the later period, with the infinitesimal illiteracy rate, over 85 percent of the girls were 13 or older. These girls were likely to be workers in a factory or shop, but they had already had more opportunity to attend school than their younger counterparts.

Most of the industrial school girls had, in fact, spent some time in school. Connecticut law required that children attend school, a demand that may have derived from the strong perceived correlation between truancy and vice. An 1885 Hartford Courant article reported that an agent of the board of education "has been [in Hartford] looking up cases of children who do not attend school, and of manufacturers who employ children that have not attended school the time required by law." This investigation resulted in the committal of Mabel C. to the industrial school, and her brother to the State Reform School in Meriden. Although the journalist admitted that "it may be doubted...whether the commitment was legal in the face of the regulations," since there were no charges filed against Mabel, the court apparently felt that she would be
better cared for at the school. There was no concern as to Mabel's ability to read or write, only the insinuation that leaving the eight-year-old child at home among "deplorable conditions" would encourage her to pursue a life of crime.\textsuperscript{15}

The shift in ages over this fifty year period was gradual but consistent. Whereas the earlier inmates had represented a large age range, girls under ten were rare among the later committals. (See Appendix E). An 1877 law which permitted the school to incarcerate older girls could explain this shift. Superintendent Rockwell had agitated for this law, claiming that "our necessity of sending away girls, however friendless, at eighteen, nullifies much if not all of our previous care and restraint."\textsuperscript{16}

The new law, which affected girls in the second and third sample groups, allowed the school control over its inmates until they turned twenty-one. This tended to raise the average age of the girls at the industrial school, but does not fully explain the virtual absence of young inmates in later years. Perhaps the higher age can also be attributed to other factors, such as occupation. Older girls were more likely to work in the factories and therefore be more likely to live and loiter in areas where the police were predisposed to look for criminal activity.

The record books of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls are an invaluable source of information about the precursors of delinquency and criminal arrest. However, because these records were always taken by the superintendent or one of his assistants, the phrasing is never from the girls themselves. All the information about them is second-hand. Record

\textsuperscript{15} CISG, inmate #650; news clipping from \textit{The Hartford Courant}, January, 1885.

\textsuperscript{16} Superintendent's Journal, April 9, 1875.
books represent bureaucracy and not human aspects of personality traits, attitudes, or political convictions. But understanding the inmates’ social and economic backgrounds leads to an identification of the factors, whether inevitable or contrived, that conspired to bring these girls into the forefront of social reform. The components which led to each individual incarceration were often arbitrary, but the factors were almost predictable in the abstract. Although the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls did not incarcerate every immigrant, every factory worker, or every potential prostitute, those who were committed share some identifiable characteristics. The statistics show that these girls were not chosen randomly, but were part of an entire social network which they had no power to control.
chapter three
In Danger of Vice:
methods of incarceration

Orlana W. was on Saturday committed to the Industrial School for Girls in this city from Bridgeport. She, with a young woman named M., was arrested in New York. Both girls claimed they had been made drunk and then carried to New York on a boat. The young men whom the girls accused will not be prosecuted.

(Middletown Sentinel and Witness, February, 1897)

The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls was never intended for the incarceration of hardened criminals. Instead, reformers wanted to rescue young girls from the corruption of criminal influences. The school aimed to train girls to honor the moral code by sheltering them from debasing environments. "It is proposed to procure for them a temporary asylum, where they may find shelter and Christian instruction, and useful employment," stated the appeal to the citizens of Connecticut. This 'temporary asylum' would serve as an antithesis to the impoverished atmosphere in which most inmates lived prior to their incarceration.

1 CISG, inmate #1275.
2 "Appeal," MCHS.
Because of the nineteenth-century expectation that girls' gentle dispositions prevented them from committing violent crimes, it was deemed unnecessary for the reform school to act as anything more than a temporary home where girls could be taught to change their habits. "It is the proper function of charity," wrote the board of directors in 1897, "to provide against...the evils that follow in the wake of poverty." The industrial school based incarceration on a valiant but impossible attempt to gather the impoverished young women of Connecticut and save them from potential crime.

Orlana W. and her friend, arrested in New York for an ambiguous offense, represent an important theme in the ideology behind committal to the Connecticut industrial school. If Orlana had been over twenty-one, her presence on a boat, even intoxicated, would not have been reason enough to commit her to an institution. The concept of the status offense is vital to an understanding of reform schools for children. Young offenders were held to a different standard and expected to conform to a different morality than adults. Floating on a boat miles away from home, Orlana had perhaps disobeyed her parents or stayed out of school. Based on the presupposition that Orlana had learned these habits of insubordination from her family or neighborhood associates, the state's policy of incarceration was an attempt to remove her from temptation. It was only because Orlana was a minor that they were legally able to do so.

Status offenders made up the vast majority of those girls whose reason for committal stemmed from a specific incident. Superintendent

---

Rockwell, who admitted the girls of the first sample group between 1874 and 1877, was more likely than other superintendents to differentiate between crimes, so that in later years "danger of falling into vice" appears in the records in place of more specific accusations. (See Appendix F). In the first group only nine girls had committed crimes against person or property, eight thefts and one assault. The other 91 percent were incarcerated for crimes against the public order. These included such vague transgressions as "unruly conduct," "vagrancy," "disorderly habits," and "incorrigibility." Eight percent of these girls had "followed corrupt persons" or "kept dangerous associations."

Historian Coramae Richey Mann criticizes the use of these indistinct categories in the American legal system, since "the constitutionality of such concepts...has never been challenged before the United States Supreme Court." Mann shows that this has been a significant influence on the incarceration of girls throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, citing a 1971 study "of incarcerated male and female youthful offenders in Connecticut, [which found that] 18 percent of the boys were originally committed for status offenses as compared to 80 percent of the girls." The continuity of the status offense as the main reason for incarceration among girls is substantiated by the records of the first fifty years of the Connecticut Industrial School.

Deila C., described in the newspaper as "the young girl, thirteen years old, who has made so much disturbance east of North & Judd's shop," became the 525th inmate of the industrial school in 1882. The newspaper account did not specify a specific reason for her incarceration,

---

4 Mann, Female Crime and Delinquency, p. 178.
beyond the characterization quoted above, except to mention that Delia "was one of the girls who was on Main Street one evening lately smoking cigars." The other girls, apparently also well known for their smoking and loitering habits, were not apprehended. It is unclear why Delia was the unlucky member of her gang, although a likely explanation is that the officials who 'rescued' her did not have the facilities or the inclination to incarcerate several girls at once. Delia, since she was only thirteen, remained under the guardianship of the state for eight years.

In part, the Board of Directors and other beneficiaries of the school justified the vague sentencing procedures by insisting that if the state allowed girls to fall into the abyss of vice, moral society would be in jeopardy. In later years the policy of saving society through advance removal of potential criminals was specifically articulated. In the initial appeal of 1869, the board had warned that the girls would become "pests to society" unless they were incarcerated. The 1900 report to the state asserted outright that "the providing for and elevating of the unfortunate born in our midst may be in a certain sense selfishness; for should nothing be done...[the girls] soon will become a vicious and dangerous menace to good morals and good order in the community in which they live." This language points to the primacy of social order in the very essence of the status offense. By incarcerating Orlana W., who got intoxicated in New York, and Delia C., who caused disturbances, the reform school would not only be saving girls from crime, but saving society from dangerous influences.

5 CISG, inmate #525; newspaper clipping.
6 "Appeal," MCHS.
7 30th Report of the Directors, 1900, p.3.
In the third sample group of girls, between 1912 and 1913, fully 82 percent were incarcerated for "being in manifest danger of falling into vice." This crime may have masked other offenses, perhaps because officials did not consider any further articulation necessary for incarceration. For the most part, however, "manifest danger" was a deliberately vague category which allowed officials to incarcerate girls whom they felt to be living in unsavory or debasing circumstances. Since they believed these girls to be in genuine danger of losing moral judgement, it was not deemed necessary to justify the reasoning in any bureaucratic or legal documents. "Insubordinate," "vagrant," and "neglected" girls lived in a world where strict morality was not always the norm, and the reformers believed their duty lay in catching the girls before they fell into a vortex of deviancy. "Being in danger of falling into vice" meant that the girl's character or behavior had suggested to somebody that she must quickly be removed from temptation.

Most girls who found themselves at the industrial school left little record of their past lives. The record books illuminate certain aspects of the individual histories, but the phrase 'danger of falling into vice' limits an understanding of exactly what it was which brought the girls to Middletown. Especially in the third sample group, the girls are hard to differentiate because of their identical crimes. Agnes E. was in danger in Groton, Mamie B. in Winchester, and Madeline M. in East Haven. Theresa S. proved to be in danger of falling in to vice in Norwalk, Leah B. in Stonington, and Hazel P. in Stamford.8 These girls fell victim to the

8 CISG, inmates Agnes E., #2047; Mamie B., #2056; Madeline M., #2063, Theresa S., #2076, Leah B., #2093; Hazel P., #2118.
power of the status offense, temporarily losing homes, families, and jobs because of the subjective and vague incarceration procedure at the reform school. Adults could escape institutionalization, not because reformers believed them to be free from debasing influences, but because there was no legal recourse to prevent them from perceived danger. Reformers did not have to prove actual criminal behavior in order to incarcerate children, so crime became secondary to the construction of danger.

Guiseppina I., incarcerated in 1912, immigrated from Italy with her parents. Living in New Haven at the time of her committal, Guiseppina worked at an iron factory and had learned "a little" English. Her father was a butcher. She was arrested by John Booth, who participated in the incarceration of several industrial school girls in 1912, but the record books do not explain the crime other than to say she was in "danger." The vital statistics of her biography seem to indicate that her family assimilated quite well into New Haven, but Booth apparently thought otherwise. Guiseppina became 'Josephine' at the industrial school, suggesting that Americanization was a high priority in her rehabilitation. Being an immigrant was a perhaps the major factor in her committal instead of an actual crime, which was not even important enough to note in the official records of the school.

Barbara Brenzel, in her study of the Lancaster Industrial School for Girls, writes about the change over time from the belief that delinquency was caused by environment to the belief that the sole influence was heredity. She suggests that this differentiation altered the ideology of the school so that while original founders maintained that the girls could be cured with fresh air, later reformers despaired of ever rehabilitating
children born with tainted blood. This theory implies that the reformers quickly lost their original benevolent motives. They retreated into a social Darwinian model of thought which taught that the weak members of society should not be saved, but only kept from having conjugal relations with the middle class. Herbert Spencer wrote in the 1870s that if people "are not sufficiently complete to live, they die, and it is best they die." Brenzel suggests that, because of the influence of new scientific rationales for poverty, the reformatory became simply an outlet to house the unwanted members of society rather than a school to teach them skills and better their lives.

Evidence from the Connecticut school suggests that the switch to hereditarianism was not so clear. Reformers certainly became disillusioned with their ability to consistently save the girls from vice and simultaneously to save society from the girls. But they blamed this frustration on a more complex understanding of the relationship between family and environment than Brenzel has suggested, and they kept sight of their original goals in ways that she does not acknowledge.

Reformers considered parents to be at fault for their daughters' downfall, from the first appeal in 1869 to the news accounts throughout the early history of the school. "Seventy-five percent [of the debased girls] are the children of intemperate, illegitimate, and criminal parentage," states the appeal. "They are born to a heritage of poverty, disease, and crime." Giving the parents the double blame of bad blood and bad

---

9 For a discussion of heredity v. environment, see Brenzel, Daughters of the State, chapter 5.
10 Quoted in Brenzel, p. 99.
11 "Appeal," MCHS.
influence diffuses the nature versus nurture argument. Instead of a discourse which laments either the influence of heredity or neighborhood, this appeal insists that the heredity and the neighborhood must be considered together. Twenty years later, in 1887, a Connecticut newspaper reported the arrest of two young women claiming that "the parents of the girls are alone responsible for their downfall."\textsuperscript{12} Again, blaming the parents involved an indictment of their deviant ancestry as well as the debased atmosphere in which they raised their daughters. In 1915, a report on the problem of female delinquency in New Haven concluded that "the parents give the girls no moral training, in fact the majority of the fathers and mothers lack a strict moral sense themselves."\textsuperscript{13} It does not seem as if the perception of the locus of delinquency had changed much over almost fifty years.

If parents embodied the vice that girls were in danger of falling into, then many inmates were arrested for having immoral parents rather than being immoral themselves. The methodology of incarceration at the industrial school presumed that girls could not escape the influence of their parents without the aid of the state. "Being in danger of falling into vice" was more than a random term. It articulated a carefully crafted ideology which predicted the inmates' behavior based on their parentage and their circumstances, and constructed delinquency based on a combination of heredity and environment instead of choosing between the two.

\textsuperscript{12} CISG, inmate #813.

Brenzel's concentration on the shift from environmentalism to hereditarianism affects her final judgment of the reformers' goals. Because she believes that the philanthropists' sole concern eventually rested in the removal of delinquent girls from society, and not in the rehabilitation of those girls, she claims that "the original dream of mid-century that all girls could be saved had become by the 1880s a whim regulated to historical memory." Anthony Platt and other historians who have written about nineteenth-century reform agree with Brenzel that philanthropy soon turned to selfishness and disillusion. However, the records of the Connecticut school project a more complicated vision. As was previously shown, the board of directors consistently listed concern for the future of society as a reason for incarceration. But they also continued to show concern for the future of the delinquent girls themselves. Even by 1900, twenty years after Brenzel cites the change in ideology as taking hold, the board of directors commented in their report that the school "is doing a large work for the unfortunate and homeless girls of the state." They did indeed work to save the community, but they also worked to save the girls.

Critics of philanthropists are justified in calling the nineteenth-century construction of danger a paternalistic scheme to incarcerate girls who had little control over the circumstances of their committal. The industrial school did not incarcerate children of the middle or upper classes, which proves that their system of incarceration was biased against the poor. Instead of only criticizing the reformers for this discrepancy,

---

14 Brenzel, Daughters of the State, p.159.
15 30th Report of the Directors, 1900, p.3.
however, historians should realize that the reformers themselves would not have shirked from admitting to this model. Because of their contention that cleanliness, temperance and hard work would lead to morality, they specifically targeted the filth, intoxication, and unemployment they found on the poor side of town. Because they thought that religion and education led to uprightness, they necessarily posited that vagrancy and illiteracy led to deviancy. The reformers never pretended that poverty was inconsequential to their methods of incarceration. Indeed, it was the children of the poor whom they specifically intended to save. The reformers were not necessarily benign, but neither were they hypocritical.

Mabel C. was only eight years old in 1885. An agent of the board of education found her "in a deplorable condition...half starved and scantily clothed." Her father "was trying to cook some corn meal, the only food apparently in the house." Astounded at the poverty he found, the agent immediately notified city officials, and Mabel and her brother became subjects of the state's concern. Mabel posed no real threat to the citizens of Hartford, yet the court decided that the industrial school could provide her with skills and knowledge which would improve her position in society. Although Platt would certainly use this case as an example of outright paternalism, Mabel's story should also be seen as an attempt by the state to provide solace to impoverished children whose families could not save them from hunger or cold.

Status offense charges and reports of impoverished conditions provided the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls with a constant stream of inmates. Girls sent to Middletown under these subjective
circumstances could not counteract the strength of the reformers who dictated the flow of their lives. When considering the policies of these reformers, though, it is important to understand the complexity of their mission. Simply locating them as cogs in a vile machine of nineteenth-century morality does not allow for their genuine concern for the futures of these girls. An explanation of the status offense which posits that it was used only as a restrictive means of restoring social order ignores the possibility that children were actually violating social rules, if not written law. It would be irresponsible to accept the simplistic explanation that selfish paternalism was the only guiding force in late nineteenth-century reform.

Although most inmates of the Connecticut industrial school fell victim to a social construction of criminal poverty, many fell instead to an emerging interpretation of deviant sexuality. Sexual mores of the nineteenth century enveloped a new concept of female purity. Estelle Freedman, historian of women's prisons, suggests that "female sexual desire seemed pathological to many medical and moral authorities; unchaste behavior signalled deep depravity."16 This emphasis on the innate purity of women affected females of every class and ethnic background. Ostracization followed non-conjugal sexual activity among wealthy women as well as their impoverished counterparts. Many reacted to this restrictive social code by leaving sheltered communities and finding a more anonymous existence in large cities or factory towns, but often they could not escape detection.17 Because of the idealization of

16 Freedman, Their Sisters' Keepers, p. 19.
chastity, reformers located 'poor' or 'vagrant' girls who were also sexually active as the highest on their list for rehabilitation and removal from society.

Sexual promiscuity was not perceived as an acceptable reason to incarcerate males. Reformers constructed their notion of deviant sexuality based on the supposition that women had farther to fall, and therefore should receive more of the blame. Nicole Hahn Rafter, in her history of women's prisons, concludes that "gender-stereotyping has affected the handling of women at all stages of prison development."¹⁸ Not only were girls more likely to be incarcerated for a status offense, but they carried the burden of sexual deviancy as well. The original statement of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls specifically mentioned sex as one of the many debasing temptations which must be purged. These girls were "spurned from the door of purity," wrote the Board of Directors. "The brothel alone stands open to receive them. Those alone welcome them who make merchandise of their virtue."¹⁹ Through incarceration at the reform school, the founders hoped to rescue that virtue before it was irretrievably lost.

Orlana W. was committed to industrial school in 1897 while the men who accompanied her to New York and got her drunk escaped any retribution for their actions. This was a common feature of incarceration for sexual offenses. Anna K. became inmate #1057 in 1892 because she

¹⁸ Rafter, *Partial Justice*, p. xxv.
¹⁹ "Appeal," MCHS.
"fell in with a sportive class of young men" in New Haven. Although the news account mentions that these men "were pale with fright while being questioned," the reporter is careful to spare them any further inconvenience. "Your names are known," he teases them, "but withheld out of respect for your friends." Significantly, the names of three women involved in the incident did not receive the same sympathetic gesture.20 Although men certainly participated in, if they did not indeed precipitate, the event which trapped Anna into a lengthy sentence, the courts and the press allowed them to evade responsibility for their actions.

One hundred inmates later, in 1894, Barbara W. was convicted in New Haven for being intimate with two Yale students. The news account reported that Barbara "was sadly depraved," and "had led a dissolute life since last winter." Indeed, the article began with the exclamation that "a shocking story of depravity came out in the city," suggesting that the reporter considered Barbara a worthy candidate for reform school. The men she slept with were named in this article, and their case was even investigated by the Yale faculty. However, the students "laid some facts" before the dean which caused the charges to be dropped. The reporter failed to mention the nature of these 'facts,' but Barbara had already taken full blame for the incident, and was the only one of the three to suffer incarceration.21

In the first sample group of girls, between 1874 and 1877, the record books show that 13 percent committed some sort of sexual crime. This number decreased through the next two groups, but this can probably be

20 CiSG, inmate #1057, newspaper clipping.
21 CiSG, inmate #1152.
explained by the cessation of differentiation between crimes in the notation. Deviant sexuality ranged from "lewdness" to "fornication," encompassing a full range of activity or perceived promiscuity. Girls incarcerated under this rubric led an "immoral life," but only a few worked in "houses of ill-fame" or actually engaged in "soliciting." Again, it is difficult to generalize from these statistics the full extent of perceived sexual deviancy since in many cases this offense was joined with vagrancy or disobedience in the language of the books. The Board of Directors' reports, however, consistently discuss the ideal of purity, since "girls are to be the future mothers."\(^{22}\) Fears of sexual deviancy did not die with the end of the Victorian era. In a 1915 study of female delinquency in New Haven, investigators isolated many locations of high sexual activity. "More extreme and vulgar forms of dancing should be prohibited," they suggested, and the shore resorts should be more carefully guarded against their reputation as "hot-beds of immorality."\(^{23}\) Sexual activity remained a basic component of the construction of female delinquency throughout the first fifty years of the industrial school.

Newspaper accounts reveal an interesting facet of the sexualization of delinquent girls. Defined by their relationship to the chaste and pure ideal, girls who came before the court necessarily exhibited deviant sexuality in their very existence. Barbara W., arrested for sleeping with two Yale students, was described early in the 1894 article as "a pretty little girl of the brunette type." This would have sufficed to acquaint readers with Barbara's physique, but the reporter was interested in explaining her

\(^{22}\) 30th Report of the Directors, 1900, p.3.
debased character. "She is a very attractive looking girl," he continued, 
"and would be taken for at least 2 or 3 years older than she is. She has 
snapping black eyes, wavy hair of the same hue, a beautiful complexion 
and a finely moulded figure."24 This concentration on Barbara's physical 
beauty almost seems to excuse the men for their attraction and sexual 
advances while Barbara is not granted the same understanding.

The men with whom Katie C. had sexual relations are not 
mentioned by name, nor are they physically described. In 1893, a New 
Haven newspaper reported that Katie was one several girls "who stray 
into the path of vice and wickedness in this city." At fifteen she had tired 
of the strict guard at home and had begun to stay out at night, disregarding 
her mother's pleading. The New Haven Police caught Katie out on the 
town when her mother reported that she had not come home. "Katie has 
a pretty face and curly black hair," commented the reporter. "Her eyes of 
deepest brown, bordering on black, are of the kind that set men's minds on 
fire and drown their better nature in a burst of passion." This reporter was 
apparently quite taken with the young woman, concluding his description 
almost poetically: "her cheeks of rosy red resemble more than anything 
else the peach before its bloom has faded."25 Katie was sent to the 
industrial school because the New Haven police, and the press, decided 
she was too attractive to be trusted.

Amid the majority of the industrial school girls who were admitted 
for minor status offences, it is important to note the existence of those girls 
who had indeed committed crimes. The industrial school's main body of

24 CISG, inmate #1152.
25 CISG, inmate #1103.
inmates had violated only unwritten social codes, but the school was also home to young criminals. Founded with the ideal of removing children from adult prisons as well as the almshouses, the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls always carried the responsibility of incarcerating young offenders. Small in number, ranging from 9 percent to 1 percent in the three sample groups, actual criminals were never a major presence in the school. However, these percentages may be smaller than they should be because of the overarching tendency of several superintendents to list a vague offense instead of a more specific crime. For example, in 1912, Amelia J., the 2061st inmate, was committed for being in "danger of falling into vice." A closer look at her record, however, suggests that she had already fallen. Amelia worked as a domestic servant in New Haven and was accused of trying to set fire to her employers' house and poison her mistress. That she was not specifically charged with these crimes in conjunction with her arrest suggests that city officials considered her dubious status more influential than her specific behavior. This case also raises the possibility that other girls who were incarcerated for "danger" had in fact committed more severe crimes.26

News accounts sometimes reveal crimes that escaped notation in the record books. The reported cases, however, were probably unusual in their magnitude, thus creating public interest. They serve, though, as a reminder that not all inmates should be regarded as innocent victims of the system of institutionalization. Annie D. was arrested in 1899 for assault and destruction of property. She had a habit of drinking and using drugs, and frequently got into trouble with her family. In one instance,

26 CISG, inmate #2061.
Annie's mother reported to the newspaper that Annie "had driven her out of the house and had cut into shreds with scissors about $200 worth of her own clothing. When her mother attempted to go back to the house her daughter met her with a hammer and struck her on the head." By the time of this article, Annie had already left the industrial school, but the reporter mentions that she had been originally committed for a similar crime.

Of the 9 percent in the first group who had committed crimes against person or property rather than the public order, most girls were incarcerated for theft. Petty theft seemed to be a common trait among the girls, perhaps since many of them worked as domestic servants in relatively wealthy families. Nettie W. was arrested for "taking $205...from a bureau" with which "she visited Hartford, engaged a room in the American hotel for a week paying $14 in advance, and remaining there only one day. She purchased two dress patterns and gave the same to a Hartford dressmaker." If these actions seem like a desperate attempt to fulfil a lifelong dream rather than the debased performance of a deviant soul, it is still true that Nettie's incarceration for stealing over 200 dollars was not unusually harsh treatment.

Many forces conspired together to create the population of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls during its first fifty years. Philanthropists, for all of their influence on social reform, did not enjoy full control over social policy. Parents, police officers, and legal officials dictated the specific committals and orchestrated complaints and

---

27 CISG, inmate #689.
28 CISG, inmate #553.
incarcerations. Reformers created and funded the school, but they were not the only ones to sustain it.

Early committals at the Connecticut Industrial School often came as a result of parents complaining about the incorrigibility or unmanagability of their children. In the first sample group, 27 percent of the complaints were from parents rather than selectmen, police officers, or concerned citizens. Eva C. appeared in court in 1884 on complaint of her mother "who stated that she was unable to control the child and that she was getting worse every day. She asked the court to take care of her."29 Eva's mother caused her to be sent to the industrial school at eleven years of age. The court's willingness to execute the sentence corroborates the contention that if lower-class parents were not to be trusted with raising their children, at least they should be trusted to know when they have failed.

Historians have accused parents of using the reform school as an opportunity to relinquish responsibility toward their children and as an indirect method of receiving state aid. This charge is difficult to substantiate, since the records would not show this deceptive use of the institution. The complaints from parents to the industrial school decreased over time which may disprove that theory and suggest instead that parents in fact had little control over the fate of their children. By 1912-1913, parents made only 3 percent of the complaints. This number could be deceiving, since parents may have complained to an intermediary official who then made the official complaint, but the vastly

29 CISG, inmate #636.
decreased number certainly does not confirm the theory of parental abuse of the system.

Katie C. stayed away from home too often, and "caused her mother not a little worry and anxiety." To teach her daughter a lesson, Mrs. C. called the New Haven police and reported her daughter missing. By transferring her daughter to officers of the law, Katie's mother lost all control of the situation. "Mrs. C. did not want the girl sent to the [industrial] school, but simply wanted her shown that she could not do as she has been doing," reported the news account of the incident. "The judge, however, thought the school was the best place for her and there she is."30 Parents may have initiated police or court involvement in family affairs in a desperate attempt to warn their children of hypothetical drastic consequences of disobedient behavior. The courts' influence, however, was stronger than many parents had imagined.

Police officers caused the girls' incarceration in the majority of cases. Officers roamed the streets looking for delinquent activity, and reported infractions to the city courts. Prosecutors and city attorneys also had a role in locating the young offenders. Several men distinguished themselves through their dedicated work in locating and prosecuting deviant girls. Assistant Prosecutor Rocco Ierardi was responsible for the incarceration of 6 girls between 1912 and 1913. A news report of his passion for social reform noted that he made a "personal tour of the city...[thinking] that he might get track of some girls falling into evil ways better than the

30 CISG, inmate #1103; newspaper clipping.
uniformed police could.\textsuperscript{31} Ierardi and other city officials prided themselves on this work in delinquent control.

Some of the complainants cannot be identified as police officers or other legal officials. Some were former employers of the girls, who desired to rid themselves of responsibility for misbehaving servants. Other times the record books simply list a name with no explanation. Perhaps these people lived in the same neighborhoods with the girls, or possibly they made the complaint on behalf of a relation or employer. With the exception of mothers, complainants were uniformly male until the last sample group. In the later years, a new occupation for women had developed in larger cities such as Hartford and New Haven, and probation officers often took responsibility for locating, speaking with, and representing juvenile girls in court. Clara Gray delivered nine girls to Middletown in 1913, even more than her contemporary Rocco Ierardi. Gray represents an entirely new aspect of juvenile justice, wherein the delinquent girls received specifically female representation in the otherwise all-male courts.

In 1915, the city of New Haven became the subject of a study on delinquent girls. One of the more significant findings of this investigation was the perceived need for more women to have the power of male city officials. Praising the existence of the female probation officers, the report laments the lack of official support of the program. "The pay given the women probation officer is too low," indicating to the investigators that "the city does not yet realize the importance which this part of their court work should assume." Personnel scarcity demanded that the sole female

\textsuperscript{31} CISG, inmate #2104; newspaper clipping.
officer be present in court every morning to sit with the girls at their hearings. "Until such a time as the public realizes the need for a woman city official to do protective work with girls, the work should be performed by this woman protective officer," recommends the report, suggesting that women would serve as a better influence on deviant girls than men. Since the city only paid for the services of one female officer, she was overworked and could not perform the necessary tasks. The report demanded that New Haven reevaluate its dedication to stopping female juvenile crime, and hire a new staff of female city officials to work directly with delinquent girls.

The power structure which committed the girls to industrial school was not an articulated entity, similar in that respect to the system by which girls could be accused of vague or unsubstantiated crimes. Considering the influence which the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls had over the lives of its inmates, its incarceration policy was remarkably amorphous. Platt points out quite accurately that the child savers "were most active and successful in extending governmental control over a whole range of youthful activities that had been previously ignored or dealt with informally."32 The construction of deviance by reformers, social activists, families, police officers, and the courts in the state of Connecticut trapped delinquent girls in a web of moral regulations and legal domination which dictated the future course of their lives.

---

They are to be washed, clothed, abundantly supplied with plain, but wholesome food; trained to habits of neatness, order, industry, and submission to rightful authority; instructed in the studies usually taught the laboring classes in common schools, and in the useful arts and duties of a woman's life. They are to be daily and hourly brought under the softening and elevating influences of the nearest possible approach to a Christian Home.¹

The first Board of Directors submitted this description of the purpose and program of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls to the citizens of the state as an appeal for monetary donations. The board hoped to convince the public that deviant girls could be saved through proper supervision, a healthy atmosphere, and education. The citizens of Connecticut, with some support from the state, housed and fed the girls of the industrial school. The administration of the school provided for the inmates' medical needs, and taught them to read. The girls learned to sew and cook and clean. They sang in Sunday choirs

¹ "Appeal," MCHS.
and celebrated major holidays. But the state also punished them, and locked them up, and taught them to invalidate their heritage. The girls endured years without their families, homes, or friends. Paradoxes inherent in the reform school will become evident through an examination of accommodations and daily activities designed to both protect and confine. The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls intervened in the lives of its inmates, providing fear as well as solace, and offering imprisonment as well as help.

**supervision**

Although the five superintendents who served from 1870 to 1917 were male, only female employees lived with the girls. The percentages of women working at the Connecticut Industrial School rose consistently until the 1920s when the institution completely phased out all male employees. Concern about sexual misconduct guided the policy of increased gender segregation. Superintendent Rockwell reported an incident in which a male box-shop worker was fired because of accusations that he had engaged in indecent encounters with the girls. "From the testimony of several officers...I find that Mr. Staples has been for some weeks past habitually conducting himself in such a manner...evincing improper relations to the inmates," he wrote in 1874. "To night the matron informed me that she could not prevent what she considered very improper conversations, looks, and actions between him and the girls." Staples was soon fired, and Rockwell placed further restrictions on the male employees' contact with inmates. A newspaper article in August of

---

2 Superintendent's Journal, September 9, 1874.
1876 praised the school for this strict sex-segregation. "There are but three men employed, and they have no duties requiring them ever to even speak with the inmates, who are never without the supervision of a lady in any department." Kristine Rogers, writing about the school in the 1970s, considered this practice archaic. She criticized the "legacy of 'old-maid' administrators and...'female-only' staff policy." Within the context of nineteenth-century reform, however, gender separation was a necessary antidote to the perceived rampant sexuality which had originally brought the girls to reform school.

cottage homes

Based on the model at Lancaster, the Connecticut industrial school was founded as a cottage-style institution. At its official opening in 1870 two cottages had already been funded and built. The homes were named after their beneficiaries, Esther Pratt of Hartford and Caroline Street of New Haven, joining the two largest cities of the state in Middletown. The Pratt and Street "Homes," as they were called, housed between 30 to 50 girls at one time. "Both homes...are furnished with all conveniences necessary for the success of an institution of this kind," reported the Penny Press in 1874. "The kitchen, laundry, dining room, work room, and sleeping rooms are all models of neatness." Separating the girls into homes was an attempt to eliminate the

---

3 Newspaper clipping, August 10, 1876.
5 Penny Press, June 1, 1874.
impersonality found in the congregate dormitories, and inculcate the inmates with an affection for family organization. Due to overcrowding and low funds, however, the homes quickly distanced themselves from the small family ideal.

"A third home is our great want now," wrote Superintendent Rockwell as early as September of 1874. "With it we could separate girls of immoral life from those sent for other faults or misfortunes." The new emphasis on classification of inmates suggests that the superintendents and other school officials were unsatisfied with the progress of their treatment schemes. Blaming ineffectiveness on the architectural structure of the institution, officials decided that another home would solve their problems. This was basically a simple transfer of blame from the influence of parents to the influence of other inmates. Opening in June of 1876, Allyn Home was of "profound interest to every citizen," according to the local press. Rockwell recorded with joy in his journal that classification was finally available, and laid out his new plan for organizing the inmates. "The small girls are placed in Pratt Home -- Those of former impure lives in Allyn Home -- The older girls supposed to be personally pure in Street Home."

Classification of inmates has been identified as a move away from confidence in the cause of rehabilitation. Barbara Brenzel suggests that Lancaster's increased reliance on the separation of inmates by age or by crime was a direct indication of the failure of the

---

6 Superintendent's Journal, September 22, 1874.
7 Middletown Sentinel and Witness, June 15, 1876.
8 Superintendent's Journal, June 17, 1876.
school. Distress over mixing the deviant with the destitute "illustrate[s] the waning of reform zeal that had prevailed...and show[s] that Lancaster's role in the network of state institutions had shifted from reformatory to dumping bin."9 By complaining that older, more depraved girls corrupted the younger inmates, the superintendents admitted that they had failed to save the older girls. Indeed, if girls with immoral tendencies roamed the grounds at all, the school had failed in its attempt to cure its inmates. This negative evaluation of classification as a methodology should not circumscribe the discussion, however. Perhaps classification should be regarded as a natural attempt by school officials to qualify their original assumptions and expectations. If the reform schools incarcerated both the depraved and the neglected, separation among inmates may have been a necessity rather than a fatal flaw.

The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls grew rapidly throughout its first fifty years. New cottages appeared on the landscape at Middletown with great regularity, indicating both the expansion of the school and the increased support for classification as a model. By 1917 there were eight cottages at the school, each classified and filled to capacity. Although the ideal of the family system demanded small groups of girls in each cottage, this was often impractical because of the discrepancy between numbers of inmates and the level of monetary support from the state. When Margaret Reeves surveyed the grounds and buildings of Long Lane Farm in 1921, she found several "old buildings...in poor repair, because the superintendent was unwilling to

9 Brenzel, Daughters of the State, p. 152.
spend any more money on structures which she hoped could be abandoned and replaced with small modern cottages.\textsuperscript{10} The superintendent at the time, Caroline deFord Penniman, voiced her support of cottages housing only 15 girls but considered this an unachievable ideal. The industrial school finally dispensed with the nineteenth-century buildings in the 1930s, but retained the architectural "cottage" language of the former landscape.

The girls' lodging enclosed daily activities within the limits of a simulated home environment. Cottage life was intended to mask the isolation of the school and provide a mock family within the institution. Inmates lived, worked and studied together under the supervision of a matron, or parental figure. The placement of the sewing room, laundry room, and dining room within the same building as the sleeping rooms reveals the reformers' intention that the girls would learn about the stability of family life through constant interaction with the same people. However, the turn-over rate was high since newly admitted girls arrived while others came of age and left the school, or were temporarily paroled. Although overall numbers of girls remained fairly constant because of the numbers of beds available, the makeup of each cottage must have changed several times a month. Far from emphasizing the family ideal, this consistent permutation of the "family" probably provided only confusion and dislocation for the girls.

\textsuperscript{10} Reeves, \textit{Training Schools for Delinquent Girls}, p. 130.
housing, clothing, and food

The accommodations at the Connecticut Industrial School help to describe the attempt by the administration to provide a family environment. Linked closely with policies of discipline and general theories of incarceration, the living situations of the girls illustrate several important choices of the school. Because the reformers had found the girls in homes which they considered not conducive to moral living, their decisions about living quarters identify fundamental components of rehabilitative ideals.

Furnishings in the cottages, which boasted single rooms for the inmates, included an iron bedstead, a small painted pine bureau, a small looking glass, one chair, and a husk mattress. The school also issued four cotton sheets, one pillow, four pillow cases, four towels, two comforters, and one bedspread to each girl. The decision to house inmates in single rooms rather than a dormitory could have resulted from several factors. Margaret Reeves suggested that dormitories would have provided girls with the dangerous opportunity to share ideas about escapes or other transgressions. Reeves also pointed out that single rooms provide a venue for interior decorating on a small scale, breeding the "natural interest in homemaking." Although late nineteenth-century reformers often voiced suspicions that potential masturbation proved the inadvisability of single rooms, this did not seem to be of concern to the planners of girls' industrial schools.

12 Reeves, Training Schools for Delinquent Girls, p.150.
The security system for the sleeping area insured that the matron, asleep in the same building, would be alerted each time a girl left her room. Superintendents did not write about this arrangement in their journals, and it was not mentioned in the Board of Directors' reports. Annie H., however, corresponding with the school in 1927, wrote about the old system of "bells" which she remembered from her incarceration in the late 1880s. "Do you have tell-tales on the bedroom door[s] now?" she asked the superintendent. "After we went to bed the matron used to turn on the bells and each room was numbered. When we opened the door the number would drop down in her room and in the morning she knew we had been out of our room." These bells were not always effective in keeping the girls in their rooms, yet they survived into the 1970s. Kristine Rogers, who studied Long Lane School in 1971, commented that "When girls are in the rooms, the doors are closed and 'belled,'" alerting a main signal board similar to the one described by Annie H. This system betrays the limited amount of trust bestowed on the girls by the administration, and its absence in any official writings suggests the reluctance to describe disciplinary measures which caused the institution to resemble a prison more than a school.

The industrial school provided girls with several articles of clothing, a necessity in an institution which prided itself on collecting the destitute and neglected. Community members donated their old clothing

13 Annie H. at Lee, Massachusetts to Superintendent Penniman at Middletown, March 11, 1927. Inmate #783, admitted 1887. The correspondence between Annie and Long Lane continued for almost 20 years. Although these letters are used here as a representation of the hundreds of girls who never wrote to the school to describe their experiences, in actuality they represent only the ideas and memories of one inmate.

14 Kristine Rogers, "For Her Own Protection," p. 230.
along with other household items. Superintendent Rockwell often wrote in his journal about clothing expenses, commenting about certain choices he had made. "Purchased hats for the girls," he wrote one summer. "Have been hesitating between these and awnings on the playgrounds, as a protection from the sun, but found the hats would be cheaper, and more useful."15 News articles about the school frequently mentioned the clothing of the girls, noting for example in June of 1874 that "the girls were all neatly dressed in calico gowns."16 Separation in daily activity between vocational work and school-room learning, added to the necessity of nice clothing for special occasions such as press visits, demanded a varied wardrobe for the inmates.

Food consumption was obviously a daily activity for the industrial school, but one that is not mentioned in official reports. Perhaps the boards of directors considered mealtimes too mundane, but the giving and withholding of food was actually a major component of discipline and therefore an important element of everyday life. Annie H., writing to the superintendent in 1927, had vivid memories of her supper menu almost forty years after her incarceration. "Mon Hash Tues meat potatoes gravy Wed beans Thurs soup Fri fish Sat cornbeef and cabbage," she remembered. "Sun best of all."17 She also noted that punishment always meant a strict regimen of "bread and water passed through a transom."18

While superintendents often wrote about disciplinary action in their

15 Superintendent's Journal, July 18, 1874.
16 Penny Press, June 1, 1874.
17 Annie H. at Lee, Mass. to Superintendent Penniman at Middletown, April 6, 1927.
journals, they never remarked upon the accompanying abridged diet. Using food as a privilege which can be forfeited through negative behavior is not unusual for penal institutions, but the reluctance of school officials to openly admit to this policy is an interesting suggestion of concealment.

*sickness and health*

The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls provided several medical services on the campus in Middletown. Nurses visited regularly, eliminating the need for large groups of inmates to be transported to larger cities for routine checks. "The oculist, Dr. Ely was here to test the eyes of the girls,"19 noted Superintendent Fairbank in 1912. "Dentist here to extract teeth,"20 he wrote several months later. In 1917, the visiting physician checked the girls for venereal disease for the first time, and 32 tested positive for gonorrhea.21 Serious illness or injuries required the superintendent to send girls away from the school since there was no infirmary or other medical facility until 1928. Journal entries frequently mention the necessity for girls to be removed to hospitals in Hartford or New Haven. Death was not a common occurrence, but epidemic diseases affected girls in reform school as well as the outside community. Dysentery, diphtheria, tuberculosis, and typhoid fever claimed the lives of many inmates over the first fifty years of the institution. There are 25 graves at the cemetery on the site of the Connecticut Industrial School,

---

ranging from 1878 to 1916. Other victims were sent to their hometowns for family funerals, or buried at local graveyards in Middletown. The first girl to be buried at the school, Emma J., died of consumption. Her record notes succinctly: "Buried here. Episcopal Service. Girls as pall bearers."22

Since Superintendent Rockwell was the only superintendent to write extensively about daily experience at the industrial school, it is hard to learn about medical administration from the journals of later periods. Rockwell himself was often frustrated with the institution's medical system. "Went to New Haven to day for the purpose of taking Maggie N....to the Hospital, she being badly diseased." he wrote in 1874. After Maggie's return to Middletown a few days later, the "asst supt discovered...[she] had been sick with a severe cold, contracted the day she left the Hospital at New Haven...for which nothing had been done." Rockwell blamed this inattention on a particular worker, and lamented that "as we have no professional nurses, and the matrons have always performed the duties of caring for the sick in their homes, this case is somewhat trying."23 The matron was eventually fired for her negligent behavior, and Maggie recovered from her illness, but the case illustrates the difficulty the school often had with handling the break in daily routine caused by sickness.

Pregnancy provided a challenge to girls' reform schools since the chasteness ideal meant that sexually active girls were particularly debased. Margaret Reeves found in the 1920s that 37 out of the 57 girls' institutions then in existence admitted and cared for pregnant inmates,

22 CISG, inmate #209.
23 Superintendent's Journal, May-June. 1874.
but Long Lane was not among these schools. Considering pregnant girls to be bad influences on their population, superintendents referred them to other institutions. Gwendolyn L. was transferred almost immediately after her incarceration in 1896. "Pregnant and has been taken directly to [Hartford] Home for the Friendless" noted Superintendent Fairbank in the record book. Officials at the school usually remained in contact with these girls, and re-admitted them if the pregnancy was terminated or if the baby had been given up for adoption. The institution also arranged several marriages to secure some sort of stability for pregnant girls. Mary R., "claiming and proving to be enciente," was married at the school to "Mr. Mac F. of New Haven, the alleged author of her shame," wrote Superintendent Rockwell in 1875. "Voluminous correspondence...reaches at last this satisfactory result."  

When pregnant girls could not be married or re-admitted, school officials tried to help them in other ways. Charlotte E. was sent home in April of 1874 because she was "enciente," but her family was poor and Rockwell worried that they would not be able to support another child. Charlotte, a black inmate, was "wronged by a white man, who visited the family with which she was placed out." Mrs. Rockwell visited Charlotte in Durham and tried to determine the paternity of her child in order to secure retribution. The man was identified as "the son of the minister," and the Rockwells continued to pursue the case for several months. In April of the next year, Mr. Rockwell "called to see Charlotte E. and child. [Upon] returning consulted...on probability of recovering from the reputed

24 CISG, inmate #1222.
25 Superintendent's Journal, January 11, 1875.
father of the babe, something toward its support. Found it was too late to take legal steps. This dedication to helping pregnant inmates shows that officials did not dismiss their cases even though they were denied residence at the school.

*daily schedule*

Everyday life at the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls was divided between meals, academic schoolwork, vocational training, recreation, and prayer. Annie H., writing in 1927, remembered the daily organization during her incarceration in the 1880s. "We got up 5 am breakfast 6 am 7 am pray meeting after all go to work in different places till noon. after that go up stairs and get dressed for school went over the school Bldg untill 5 pm at eve. 1 hr recess and go to the chappel from 7-9 and go to bed all lights out 10 pm sharp." Regimentation was an important part of reform school existence, since the administrators wanted to give order to vagrant lifestyles. Through a system of uniform activity, the girls would learn to organize their own lives and to value time-management and personal discipline. David Rothman suggests that "the quasi-military quality of the institution was a rebuke and an example to the lax family," and criticizes the reformers for insinuating that disorder was a precursor to deviance. Organization, however, is fundamental to any school which houses hundreds of children. Whatever the motives of the reformers, institutional chaos would have been of little help to anyone.

26 Superintendent’s Journal, August 3, 1874; September 7, 1874; April 1, 1875.
27 Annie H. at Lee, Mass. to Superintendent Penniman at Middletown, March 11, 1927.
28 Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum, p. 236.
Academic education occupied half of each day for industrial school inmates. Taught in subjects as varied as bookkeeping, composition, and neatness, the girls leaned spelling and conquered science and math as well. Since historians have often faulted reform schools with teaching inmates only "lower-class skills," the appearance of botany and geography in the list of courses offered at the Connecticut school is somewhat surprising. Administrators certainly did not consider deviant girls as likely candidates for occupations where knowledge of botany would be in any way useful. Although literacy was prioritized as a necessary skill for civilized people of all classes, study of plant life does not usually accompany a discussion of treatment for debased girls. The completeness of the course of study at the Connecticut industrial school suggests that general education was more important than historians have previously allowed. Barbara Brenzel notes that by 1869 common schooling had already been "pushed aside" at Lancaster, but varied classes at the Connecticut school persisted well into the twentieth century. In fact, Long Lane's adherence to the academic model was cause for criticism in the 1970s when Kristine Rogers studied the school. The "effectiveness of the...academic program may work an extra hardship on the girls in terms of opportunities to return home," Rogers concluded, since girls were kept at Long Lane until they completed their academic program, extending sentences well beyond original lengths.

Brenzel's contention that academic pursuit was always secondary to vocational training remains an appropriate judgment, even given the extra educational emphasis at the Connecticut school. The inclusion of the word "industrial" in the name of many girls' reform institutions was

29 Brenzel, Daughters of the State, p. 142.
not accidental. Administrators expected the inmates to find work after their incarceration either in factories or as domestic servants, and prepared them for these jobs by employing them in a box shop and teaching them skills in the kitchen, sewing room, and laundry facility. Hard work was fundamental to the ideal of the reform school, since, in Superintendent Rockwell's words, "Real fatigue of the body [is] a safeguard from immoral propensities and evil imaginations."30

The box shop at the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls was intended to provide both an opportunity for inmates to work, and a source of revenue for the school. Many boys' reform schools utilized inmate labor as a way to pay expenses, and although the box shop was never successful enough to generate significant income, it did contribute some money each year. Annie H. wrote about the "box factory up stairs where we had to work....I remember [we] made candy boxes and shoe boxes for some Hartford firms."31 Factory work was condoned in the nineteenth century since it gave steady work to idle hands. However, by the 1890s reformers began to see the factory as a negative influence. Urban growth in Connecticut had produced several mill and factory towns where girls lived without family supervision or moral mandates. The increasing rates of young girls working in factories indicated to reformers that domestic learning had been neglected. In a drastic ideological switch, administrators closed the box shop in 1896 and replaced it with a sewing room.32

30 Superintendent's Journal, April 6, 1874.
31 Annie H. at Lee, Mass. to Superintendent Penniman at Middletown, March 11, 1927.
Domestic training at the industrial school consisted of cooking, sewing, and laundry. These tasks would prepare an inmate to be a servant, or to take care of her own home if she were to marry and raise a family. The superintendents rarely mentioned domestic activities in their journals, probably because there was nothing unusual in the daily routine of work in the various departments. In 1938, in the midst of the Great Depression, Annie H. wrote of the important skills she had learned at the industrial school: "My Husband said no wonder every one in Lee and Lenox wanted you for House work rather than any one else because you done their work well...It pays to be well trained." Brenzel and other historians criticize the reform schools for teaching inmates to be servants, and restraining them through limited education from rising above their class. This is certainly a valid critique, since industrial schools never offered training in skilled crafts or middle-class professions. Courses such as "bookkeeping" never led to more specific training for a licensed career. Formalized vocational tracking inhibits upward mobility and helps to create a permanent working class. However, it is also true that this type of training was pragmatic and realistic given the economic outlook and potential futures of the inmates. Girls of immigrant or poor backgrounds did not have overwhelming options in the nineteenth-century occupational world. By teaching inmates domestic skills, the industrial school enabled them to get jobs and support themselves. "I have always looked back to your school of my younger days, and the good it did." wrote Annie H. This may not have been a common sentiment among

33 Annie H. at Lee, Mass. to Superintendent Penniman at Middletown, November 7, 1938.
34 Letter, November 7, 1938.
former inmates, but the viewpoint should not be obscured by an overarching rebuke of domestic training.

recreation and holidays

Special occasions interrupted the regularity of everyday life at the Connecticut industrial school, breaking the institutional monotony. Since inmates were not normally allowed off the grounds, the rare journeys provided a welcome reprieve. "43 girls taken on a sleighride to Meriden," wrote Superintendent Rockwell in his journal in January of 1875, "the children seemed to enjoy this treat very much." In the fall of 1877 he reported that "all the girls but Mary N., who is ill, sent to the woods to gather nuts this afternoon, and greatly enjoyed it." Rockwell cited several occasions in which the inmates collected leaves, played in the sunny orchard, or enjoyed the snow. Superintendent Fairbank's journals of the later periods depict a somewhat more sedentary entertainment schedule, including "an illustrated lecture on Pilgrim's Progress" in 1895. One common event in Fairbank's tenure, however, was when the "girls were permitted a dance in Fessenden Hall." Occurring almost every month, these dances did not receive any further explanation in Fairbank's sparse records, so it is impossible to know any details about musical choice or availability of dancing partners. Other events are noted only succinctly, concealing the nature of the experience, such as Fairbank's reference to "a

35 Superintendent's Journal, January 28-29, 1875.
36 Superintendent's Journal, October 6, 1877.
37 Superintendent's Journal, September 2, 1895.
38 Superintendent's Journal, October 24, 1912.
social time" in February of 1896. Superintendents considered recreation to be a valid part of rehabilitation, as long as they limited the entertainment schedule.

Often, differential treatment for recreational purposes was awarded to those girls who had exhibited positive behavior for an extended period. Used as an incentive, recreation lured girls into good behavior with its promise of free time. "Ten little girls from Pratt Home permitted to play an hour in the orchard," wrote Rockwell in 1877. This was "a reward for good behavior and nice sewing during the week." Inmates who qualified for the "Class of Honor," indicating good grades as well as good behavior, enjoyed regular extensions of free time and special privileges. Entertainment at Superintendent Rockwell's home, which was available to "all girls in the Class of Honor and First Grade, and those in every grade who had lost no marks for a month," treated inmates to "games and singing, and cake, candy and nuts." Girls who had misbehaved or attempted escape were sentenced to sit inside their rooms while their counterparts were rewarded for obedience.

Annie H. remembered "we had our picnic under the trees and playground. over the other side was the pond ice house. In winter we used to skate on the ice!" In a qualification of that statement, though, the former inmate was quick to add that the girls were allowed "no good times." This discrepancy is due partly to Annie's selective memory, but it is also

---

39 Superintendent's Journal, February 24, 1896.
40 Superintendent's Journal, July 14, 1877.
41 Superintendent's Journal, November 4, 1874.
42 Annie H. at Lee, Mass to Superintendent Penniman at Middletown, March 11, 1927.
true that the "good times" did not come often. From the superintendents' journals, it is apparent that recreation was an unusual activity. Even when girls were excused from classes, the diversions existed only under close supervision. The playground is mentioned in one superintendent's journal, but only in relation to an inmate who managed to escape from it. Idle entertainment was seen as contributing to degeneracy, and as such was not condoned nor encouraged at the reform school.

Holidays constituted a different category from privileged recreation, since a major component of the "family plan" was to simulate family activity and normal community life. Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas occupied special places in the yearly schedule, and Middletown residents joined the industrial school staff in providing food and other entertainment for the inmates. On July 4, 1876, the girls "were taken to attend the celebration of the centennial...on the college campus,"43 joining Wesleyan students as well as other members of the community. The Ladies' Committee, a volunteer group of Connecticut women, was responsible for insuring that the industrial school inmates received an elaborate feast for the holidays, especially on Thanksgiving. "The girls have had a happy day," wrote Rockwell in November of 1874. "Dinner of chicken-pie, sweet potatoes, turnips, onions and potatoes, cranberries, 'cole-slaw,' doughnuts, dumplings and squash pie, finished by a supply of nuts and candies."44 For Christmas in that same year, the girls "each received a new collar, and from two to four handkerchiefs, and...dolls, picture books, toys, brackets, pictures, pincushions, tidys,

43 Superintendent's Journal, July 4, 1876.
44 Superintendent's Journal, November 26, 1874.
etc....[from] many very liberal donations...sent in from citizens of Middletown."\textsuperscript{45} Holidays served as a link between the isolation of the Connecticut industrial school and the outside world. By the beginning of the twentieth century the institution was no longer an exciting new experiment, and was only one of many local charities. But even by 1912, the inmates were given a "bountiful dinner" for Thanksgiving, and "gifts from the tree" on Christmas day.\textsuperscript{46}

Family members, close friends, and former inmates often joined the girls in celebrating major holidays at the industrial school. That the girls would want their family with them for these occasions suggests the success of a home atmosphere at the school. Although perhaps the parents came to Middletown simply because the girls could not be released, it is noteworthy that they came at all. The presence of so many families at holiday celebrations shows the perseverance of family relationships despite the reformers' contention that the parents neglected their children. The return of former inmates to spend Christmas at the industrial school is evidence of an attachment to a place perceived as home. Those who had left the school to find jobs or marriage in other cities could have presumably made different arrangements for the holidays, but many chose to return to Middletown. This may not prove loyalty or affection for the institution, but it does show the extent to which the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls had succeeded in providing a haven and a temporary home.

\textsuperscript{45} Superintendent's Journal, December 25, 1874.  
\textsuperscript{46} Superintendent's Journal, November 27 and December 25, 1912.
religion

The Connecticut industrial school was ostensibly a public rather than a religiously based institution, but Christianity always occupied an important place in the schedule and methodology of the school. Founded in order to give vagrant girls "Christian instruction," the institution built its ideology on the teachings of nineteenth-century Protestantism. The organizers of the school believed that religion could serve as an agent of morality against the debasement of the secular cities. Brenzel points to the Lancaster Industrial School's desire to "save the children from 'perversion through conversion,'" suggesting a perceived direct correlation between rejection of traditional religion and deviancy. Historians of the child-saving movement often emphasize the religious rhetoric of the reformers, showing the extent to which reform schools and houses of refuge in the nineteenth century were non-secular endeavors. The Connecticut girls' school was founded as a Protestant institution because the founders believed that a religious education was the antidote to sexual immorality.

"The supt used to preach to us. Some of us used to go to sleep listening to him," wrote Annie H. in 1927. This harsh assessment of the usefulness of Christian teaching in the reform school illustrates a discrepancy between the administration and the inmates. Both Rockwell and Fairbank wrote enthusiastically about the successful role of Sunday sermons and holiday prayer in rehabilitation. For the first

47 "Appeal," MCHS.
48 Brenzel, Daughters of the State, p. 75.
49 Annie H. to Superintendent Penniman, March 11, 1927.
few years of the school, a resident minister delivered the sermons, but by Superintendent Rockwell's term the position had been vacated and a different person preached each week. "Rev. Mr. Sawyer, Supt. of Public Schools of Middletown, conducted services in the Chapel," wrote Rockwell in 1874, "the girls seemed greatly interested by his sermon." Whether the inmates did actually appreciate the service is unclear, but weekly journal references to their interest suggest that at least they pretended to engage in various stages of religious fervor.

The administrative bias of the superintendents' journals often prevents an understanding of the importance of religion to the inmates themselves. However, the religious conversion of several girls under Rockwell's supervision shows that Christianity did reach out to some of the inmates. "Six girls attended church in the city this morning and evening by themselves...not the slightest indication of impropriety or indelicacy of deportment," wrote Rockwell in 1876. This may be evidence of a clever mechanism which inmates used to temporarily escape the restrictive boundaries of the industrial school, but the possibility that these girls had found comfort through religious conversion cannot be ignored. Rockwell took all credit for the newly affirmed Christians, pointing out that Rebecca C., who "has given very good evidence of a changed heart," and was baptized by a local minister, "had no religious training previous to coming to the school."51

50 Superintendent's Journal, August 23, 1874.
51 Superintendent's Journal, April 2 and 30, 1876.
The infusion of Roman Catholics into the industrial school caused the institution to re-evaluate its Protestant limitations. The Catholic population increased steadily throughout the first fifty years, from 10 percent in the first sample group to 30 percent in the third group of girls. These numbers indicated to the administration that Catholic services must be added to the schedule, and by 1896 Superintendent Fairbank's weekly notation read "Sunday School and Catholic service at usual hours." In the third sample period, the expanded ritual included "Catholic sisters and priests [who arrived to hear] confession for the Catholic girls." Black inmates who perhaps felt slighted by the Anglo-Protestant services received acknowledgement under Fairbank's superintendency when "Rev. R. Jones of AMEZ Church of this city" preached a Sunday service in 1896. By amending the strict religious policies of Sabbath observance, the administration showed some flexibility in its Protestant mandate, and a willingness to accommodate the population of the school. Jewish inmates, however, may not have engendered the same dedication to diversity, since there is no mention of Jewish services at the school. The record books do not list Judaism as the religion of any inmate, but the third sample group included 8 girls of Russian descent, and several of these girls had no religion listed at all. This introduces the strong probability that the first part of the twentieth century saw Jewish inmates at the industrial school, and it is certainly significant.

52 Superintendent's Journal, December 27, 1896.
53 Superintendent's Journal, May 17, 1913.
54 Superintendent's Journal, January 5, 1896.
that superintendents did not discuss altering the religious schedule on their behalf.

**discipline and resistance**

The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls demanded, but did not always receive, strict obedience from its inmates. The matrons and other officers punished the girls for vagaries such as "grossly filthy conduct," impudence, and disrespect. Since most girls had been originally incarcerated against their will, the level of cooperation was often quite low, and many employees voiced their despair over the lack of effective discipline. Superintendent Rockwell lamented the resignation of a matron in 1875 when he found that her "desire to resign arises from a temporary feeling of depression and discouragement as regards discipline." Rockwell himself often became disillusioned with the success of the school when discipline failed to rescue the girls from evil tendencies. "Further proofs of deceitfulness and vile conduct of Emma P.," he wrote near the end of his first year as superintendent. "Such cases are the most severe trials of our faith in the work of reform."

The most common sentence for disobedient girls was temporary banishment to the "lock-up," a room in the basement or attic of each cottage where the girls found themselves in total solitude. Although Rockwell frequently wrote about the lock-up as a useful disciplinary tool, he never described the punishment in any detail. Fairbank rarely

---

55 Superintendent's Journal, July 20, 1874.
56 Superintendent's Journal, October 3, 1875.
57 Superintendent's Journal, November 6, 1874.
commented on matters of discipline, so it is hard to surmise the particularities of punishment in the later periods. Annie H. wrote about her experiences in the lock-up, providing the only contemporary description. "There was a cell...with a window in the roof to let the sunlight in. 2 big double iron doors locked with a pad lock. This is where we were put for 3 days....No bed or chair. The matteres on the floor. We had to sew towells or sheets and do it well before we came out." The lock-up held offenders for periods of one day to an entire week, with the expectation that inmates would resist temptation in order to evade the discomfort of solitary confinement.

Attempted escape was an overwhelmingly prevalent offence at the industrial school. The inmates were invariably returned to Middletown, but even with the virtual impossibility of true escape, journal notations show that girls ran away almost weekly throughout the early years of the school. A 1889 newspaper article commented on the policy of lax supervision which facilitated escapes, reporting that the girls "are trusted [at the industrial school] to a certain extent by the management, they preferring to do this and await the results, than to keep a prison watch on them and lose the confidence of the girls." Most girls escaped during the day when the staff failed to control their charges, but nighttime escapes were common as well. Bertha L. tried to run away early one morning, only two weeks after her incarceration, "by tying her sheets together and letting herself down from 3rd story window to the roof of the verandah, and jumping from thence to the

---

58 Letter, March 11, 1927.
59 CISG, inmate #895; newspaper clipping, 1889.
ground." She was caught by a neighbor a few miles away, and returned to the school.

Rosa D. was one of several "chronic runaways," and managed to escape five different times within six months. The first time she "ran away...while employed in picking up bits of paper about the yards." Rockwell followed her to Hartford, but found that she was "concealed by the denizens of a low, Irish neighborhood," and called the police to help him re-incarcerate her at the industrial school. The next mention of Rosa in the superintendent's journal was when the young girl "escaped...for the 4th time, breaking out the lock-up window and going away in her underclothes, with a quilt around her." Rockwell continued with an assessment of her character, depicting her as a "strange, uncivilized little being, whom it seems impossible to tame." She was returned by the Hartford police over two months later.

Rosa D. ran away from the industrial school after living in Middletown for less than a week. She had not had the chance to meet the staff, make friends, or learn a skill. This could perhaps clear the institution from blame for her discontent, since she was not well enough acquainted with the Connecticut school to make a judgment against it. In fact, many of the girls who attempted escape had only recently arrived at the school. Perhaps their escapes can be attributed to the disorientation of forced removal from home and family, rather than any specific hatred of the school or its policies. Escape is a guaranteed component of any sort of penal institution, and should be

60 Superintendent's Journal, July 13, 1876.
61 Superintendent's Journal, August 3, October 9, 1875 and January 17, 1876.
expected at Middletown. However, these rationalizations must not obscure the fact that the desire to escape indicates unhappiness and dissatisfaction. Leaving the school was important enough to risk endless days in the lock-up, and loss of special privileges. Through the prejudiced voices of superintendents' journals and Board of Directors reports, attempted escape is one of few opportunities for the girls themselves to be heard. The high rate of escapes is a rare and valuable record of the girls' opinion of their temporary home.

The contradictions of everyday life at the Connecticut industrial school created an overarching atmosphere of conflict between benevolent reform and social restriction. Girls were rewarded for their abilities, but only in the limited context of proscribed domestic tasks and obedient behavior. The philosophies changed over the first fifty years of the institution, as the fundamental ideals hovered between care and control, but the superintendents never stopped believing that reform was possible. With mixed intentions and interwoven visions, the advocates of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls sustained their institution. In its first fifty years the school admitted over 2,400 inmates and taught them various skills they would utilize all their lives. "There is nothing so costly in the world as a ruined life," wrote the Board of Directors in 1897. "Such a life 'produces after its own kind,' and leaves behind it a posterity to curse the coming generations. Such a ruined life is produced by continued evil surroundings and wrong education."62 The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls tried

---

to provide the "right education" and send its inmates into the larger community with the sense and stability to live as productive members of society.
Residence at the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls fulfilled only part of the rehabilitation scheme. Inmates also had to prove themselves capable of surviving in the outside world by living "on trial," either with their parents or as a domestic servant. Superintendents granted parole only to those girls who had achieved the "Class of Honor" status. Since strict housing classification separated these students from chronic misbehavers, a test period in the Smith, or Honor, Home, was required for parole. While out on trial, the girls were closely watched by the assistant superintendent, and later by an entire staff of visiting agents and parole officials. In the majority of cases, representatives of the school continued to follow the girls for at least two years after their incarceration. Some former inmates maintained a correspondence with the institution, but many received no mention in the record books after their residence at Middletown. Early secretaries or superintendents kept full records of the inmates, but in the third sample group, in 1912 to 1913, fully 40 percent of the girls have no recorded follow-up. In the first fifty years of the school,
parole and work patterns changed, as did the recorded perception of success among the girls.

The concept of parole as an ideal emerged in the mid-nineteenth century in reform schools for delinquent boys. Male graduates of reform schools could enter into apprenticeships, learn trades, and receive a valuable education in life skills. "Unlike boys," write historians Steven Schlossman and Stephanie Wallach, "girls did not have places other than their homes in which to spend free time safely."[1] Thus, releasing girls to their old neighborhoods was considered a virtual guarantor of return to vice, whereas releasing boys to the same neighborhoods could engender reform. Parole was instituted in girls' reform schools as a way to place the children in the homes of strangers as domestic servants. By putting the girls to work and keeping them away from old haunts and associations, the reformers believed that the ties to home would continue to weaken.

Parole was a fundamental part of the treatment process at the Connecticut industrial school from the beginning. The founders believed that their institution was a fair simulation of family life, but they understood that a reform school could not provide the personal attention and education of an ideal family situation. They hoped that placing the girls out on trial with "strangers" would introduce inmates to the "normal" family they had been previously denied. "When, by the blessing of God...it is found safe and proper to transfer them to private families," wrote the original Board of Directors in 1869, "no time is to be lost before

---

such a transfer is to be made." Since many girls had been admitted to the school because of the perception that their parents failed to provide them with proper values and resources, transfer to a middle-class family was a perfect solution. The influence of those families could counterbalance the negative upbringing the girls had received.

Families applying for an industrial school girl came to Middletown to talk with the superintendent and meet the inmates. "Mr. Lord of Turnville called to apply for girl," wrote Superintendent Fairbanks in 1895. Many families, such as former employees of the school or town ministers who felt a civic duty to help with rehabilitation, employed a series of girls. Others employed only one girl, perhaps taking advantage of the cheaper labor in a specific moment of need. The language of the contract suggests that the officials at the school were concerned that the girls be welcomed into the families and not simply relegated to servant status. "I hereby agree to receive into my family _____ from the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls," read the agreement. "I will give special attention to her moral training, and surround her with influences favorable to the proper development of her character." Demanding family support, religious education, and vocational instruction from parole families, the industrial school continued to control the lives of its inmates. Families were required to give the girls some of the personal help and attention which the institution could not provide.

Parole was a structured component of the institution's guardianship role, not a relinquishing of responsibility. From the

---

2 "Appeal," MCHS.
3 Superintendent's Journal, May 2, 1895.
4 Contract for Parole, LLS.
inception of the program throughout the first fifty years of the school, parole involved both a serious attempt to inculcate girls with home values and a dedication to insure the success of that endeavor. In the early years of the school the assistant superintendent, usually the superintendent's wife, served as a visiting agent who travelled all over Connecticut checking up on paroled inmates. Superintendent Rockwell's journal is filled with notations about his wife's journeys around the state. A typical entry reads: "Mrs. R. called on Maggie N.,...and on Mary R....Mrs. R. saw the chief of police with reference to the return of Ida S.," the result of one day's visit to Bridgeport in 1875. Mrs. Rockwell spoke with the girls and with the families, trying to determine if the placement was satisfactory to all involved.

The visiting agent of 1878 kept a journal of her travels and findings, indicating the thoroughness of the work in parole regulation. On one day in May she visited twelve girls in New Haven, and travelled to Hartford, Bridgeport, and Worcester, Massachusetts in that same week. When she found a girl who was not succeeding in her employment, she wrote about ways in which the situation could be improved. "Minnie J., with Mr. & Mrs. Fabrique. Has very poor health....Shall try to get her a place in Tucker's box-shop when in Hartford, and get her sister to care for her...Mr. & Mrs. F. have done for her more than could have been expected." Other girls were praised for their diligence and work habits, and encouraged to stay in their places at least until they came of age, when the school would no longer have legal control over their lives.

5 Superintendent's Journal, February 19, 1875.
6 Journal of Visiting Agent, May 11, 1878.
Margaret Reeves praised the devotion to paroled girls in her 1921 study of industrial schools for girls. "Some of the best parole work observed [in 57 institutions] was at Long Lane Farm," wrote Reeves, describing the elaborate system of "three full-time parole officers and one special home investigator....An effort is made...to visit each girl within two or three weeks after she has been paroled; after that once a month for at least the first year." Parole was seen as a necessary link between industrial school regimentation and the chaos of urban life. The transition was often difficult, however, and the industrial school staff provided the girls with continued support. The overwhelming dedication to parole by the administration indicated to Reeves that Long Lane exhibited both compassion and devotion towards its inmates which were not evident at other schools.

In the first sample group of girls, from 1874 to 1877, 62 percent of the inmates were paroled as domestics. Of these, most stayed with one family or transferred once. Only 4 percent of paroled girls lived with three or more families. Over the first fifty years of the school the percentage of girls paroled as domestics decreased, and by the third sample group, from 1912 to 1913, only 8 percent of the girls were paroled to stranger families. (See Appendix G). This downward trend represented the belief that girls should be placed with their own families first, barring major difficulties. In the late nineteenth-century, emphasis was placed on the nuclear family ideal despite worries of inherited vice. However, a strict analysis of that trend is impossible since close to half of the girls in the third sample group cannot be followed through in the record books. Although many

---
7 Reeves, Training Schools for Delinquent Girls, p. 387.
historians have criticized the parole system for forcing girls into constant transit between homes, and have posited that the high turnover rate disproves any notion of success, the percentage of paroled girls who were placed at more than two homes is quite small. Only five girls out of all three hundred of the sample inmates were placed in more than three homes.

Reasons for leaving a parole situation ranged from complaints from the girls about hard work to complaints from the employers about disobedience or laziness. That so many complaints came from the girls themselves, who were then willing to return to the school, suggests a positive aspect of the home atmosphere at Middletown. Indeed, several girls in each sample group stated their reason for returning to the industrial school as "Homesick." Inmates felt more comfortable returning to their lives at the school than running away, or enduring a bad situation for lack of another place to go. Barbara Brenzel admits this indication of positive feeling toward Lancaster, but only in a parenthetical note, indicating that she gives the girls' decisions little weight. This unfortunate omission on her part shows the extent to which she is willing to fully explore indications of failure, but stops short of examining evidence of trust in the school by its inmates.

One important component of the parole situation not satisfactorily addressed in the literature is the prevalence of sexual abuse in the parole families, as well as the fear many girls may have had about returning home to abusive treatment by family members. Young girls placed out to isolated farm families were perhaps especially vulnerable to abuse. Lillian

---

8 Brenzel, Daughters of the State, p. 86.
B., an inmate at the industrial school in the 1880s, wrote to the school in 1930 to ask for pension information, and revealed through her correspondence several important facets of her victimization during her parole. "The woman often went out in the evening to call at some of the neighbors and left me to take care of the supper dishes and children. Her husband would come into the house after the children were put to bed....I had to hide from him at different times he tryed to commit rape on me one night." Lillian "wrote on the sly" to Mrs. Fairbank, the assistant superintendent, "to come and get me," and was returned to the school.9 Although there is little extant evidence to suggest that rape or assault were common occurrences in parole situations, it is probable that Lillian's was not a unique case.

There are several references to pregnant girls who accused their employers of paternity, suggesting that sexual relations often accompanied parole. Whether the intimacy was forced or not is impossible to tell, but the power imbalance in these relationships does point to the probability of nonconsensual sex. As mentioned in the last chapter, Charlotte E. "was wronged" by a friend of her employer, and her family had no money with which to support the child. Superintendent Rockwell tried to help Charlotte get money from the baby's father, but was unsuccessful.10 This case helps to illustrate the alienation that could result from parole. Girls from the industrial school feared sexual abuse and subsequent pregnancy in ways that their male counterparts apprenticed from the state reform school could never understand. The dedication of both Assistant

---

9 Lillian B. at Danbury to Superintendent Penniman at Middletown, April 2, 1930.
10 Superintendent's Journal, August 3, 1874.
Superintendent Fairbank and Superintendent Rockwell to helping Lillian and Charlotte shows that the industrial school administration was aware of the problem. The willingness of school officials to believe these inmates' stories suggests that their situations were not out of the ordinary.

Of the girls who were not placed as servants, most went directly back to their families. The number of girls who eventually returned to their families is high, but at least a third of these lived with relatives other than their parents. Aunts, uncles and sisters were the most common substitutes, and a few girls moved in with their grandparents. This trend was consistent throughout the three sample groups, indicating that parents often could not provide a home even if an inmate would have liked to return. Many girls had only one living parent who may not have been able to afford another dependent. The family strain which had originally caused the girl to be admitted to reform school may not have been assuaged by the years apart, and girls who had been abused at home were probably wary of returning to the same situations.

Instead of returning to their families of origin, some girls chose to get married and start families of their own. Thirteen percent of the girls in the first sample group got married within two years of their incarceration; this number rose to 19 percent in the second sample group and fell slightly in the third. Marriage was condoned by the industrial school as a proper continuation of the domestic female ideal taught in the institution, and often the girls had their weddings on the grounds of the school. Others enjoyed festive occasions in local towns, such as Jessie H. who married Joseph T. in 1902 and received an announcement in the local newspaper, explaining that the young couple "left last evening on a short wedding
tour and upon their return they will reside in Hartford, where the groom is engaged in business as a dairyman.\textsuperscript{11} Superintendent Fairbank noted in the record book three years later that Jessie had become "an excellent housekeeper, [and] has 2 children."\textsuperscript{12} Marriage was often considered a success story for the industrial school, since the girls could utilize their new skills, become productive members of society, and raise their children to abhor deviance.

Married young and expected to handle several children and a household with short funds, many former inmates left their husbands and returned to the school looking for help. The institution was often willing to give them financial and occupational assistance. Maggie N. was married in 1875 under the auspices of the school, and Superintendent Rockwell wrote in his journal that "though married hastily...the couple may do well." Only 11 months later, however, Maggie wrote to the school explaining that her husband had deserted her in New York City, "and asks Mrs. Rockwell to find her employment." The Rockwells sent for her "to come by boat, at our expense, and we will find her a place, and let her pay the debt from her earnings."\textsuperscript{13} Maggie was already 18 by the time she was separated from her husband, and the school had no legal obligation to pay her passage or help her secure work. The continued care given to many former inmates suggests that the Connecticut industrial school was more than simply a "dumping bin," as Brenzel has labeled similar institutions, but was an agency dedicated to the support of its charges.

\textsuperscript{11} CISG, inmate #1259; newspaper clipping, April 3, 1902.
\textsuperscript{12} CISG, inmate #1259.
\textsuperscript{13} Superintendent's Journal, February 19 and December 24, 1875.
The small percentage of girls who ended up in other institutions represent cases which the industrial school was not qualified to treat. Always under six percent of each sample group, these girls did not translate into any vast number of perpetual inmates being transferred between state charities, but rather specific instances of people needing treatment that was not available at Middletown. The most common institutions were the Lakeville Home for Imbeciles and the Home for the Friendless in New Haven. Girls who could not pass simple academic tests, dress themselves or operate machinery could not stay at the industrial school since the staff was not qualified to understand or help them. It is unclear exactly what criteria were used to separate girls into the Lakeville home, but the superintendents mention the failure of an inmate to perform regular tasks as an indication that her incarceration would not be successful. Similarly, pregnant girls could not be taken care of at the industrial school, although this undoubtedly stemmed from a desire to keep obvious promiscuity hidden from the population rather than a serious desire to give the girls prenatal care at another institution.

Available information for the first two sample groups indicates that most girls received follow-up visits and care for several years after incarceration, until the former inmates moved away or the visiting agent was satisfied that the girl was "doing well." Because of the relatively sparse records for the third group, the conclusion might be drawn that Brenzel's analysis of the cessation of benevolence applies to the Connecticut school, and that the institution stopped keeping track of its inmates since it no longer pretended to care about what happened to them. However, Margaret Reeves' survey of Long Lane Farm in 1922, ten
years after the third sample group, states specifically that the Connecticut school had a better supervised parole program than any other such school in the country. The empty record books, then, do not tell the whole story. It is impossible to know what happened to most of the girls five, ten, or twenty years after their incarceration. High demands and heavy case loads made extensive record-keeping difficult, and the school officials should not be faulted for omitting significant details about the lives of former inmates. It is more important to note that the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls did indeed have a consistent and dedicated policy of following up on its inmates.

Several former residents of the industrial school wrote to the institution to inquire about birth information for state aid. These letters, coming often forty to fifty years after incarceration, are valuable records of the lives of former inmates, although they have a natural bias toward those who needed financial assistance, and therefore are perhaps not an accurate representation. "To the Sup. would you kindly look up on your records and send me, the record of my birth if possible," wrote Hattie C. in 1948, "I can't seem to be able to have my birth record traced, but by me being at your school some [52] years ago, I am quite sure you have it all on your books, kindly give me all the information you can in regards to my birth."14 Others wrote briefly of their lives since leaving Middletown, such as Malvina H., writing in 1929: "I married from there [in 1899] and I have six lovely children all grown now of course...I am a laundry matron

and I like it very much." Malvina's letter shows that inmates could gain satisfaction from the working-class life they led after their incarceration. Some former inmates like Annie H. and Lillian B. engaged in extended correspondences with the new superintendents, indicating a desire to continue a relationship with their former school.

Since birth records on file at a state institution could be used to secure social security funds or state pensions in the absence of an available birth certificate, former inmates often wrote in search of a notarized statement verifying their date of birth. Many had only a vague idea of when they were born or where they came from, showing the severed ties between the girls and their homes after incarceration in the industrial school. "I am writing to you in regard to any information about the date of my birth," wrote Eva G. in 1948. "I don't know whether my parents are living or not as I never heard from them, and was never told anything in no way by them in regard about my mother or my age." Eva was writing to secure an old age pension since she believed she would turn 65 on her next birthday. She was probably stunned to receive the return correspondence from Superintendent Sells stating that she had been incarcerated in 1884 at age 9, making her almost 73 years old.

Some of the letters came from mental hospitals or other institutions, suggesting that not all inmates led "successful" lives after their incarceration. Several had been housed in various asylums across the state, and the letterheads of various requests for birth information read ominously: "Department of Mental Diseases," "Welfare Investigator,"

15 Malvina H. at Hartford to Superintendent Penniman at Middletown, December 19, 1929.
16 Eva G. to Superintendent Sells at Middletown, 1948.
"State Infirmary," and "Connecticut State Hospital for the Insane."
Serving time in Middletown probably did not lead directly to these incarcerations, but the stories cannot be ignored. Although the institution claimed to have a high rate of success, defined narrowly in terms of the family ideal, many girls never received the skills or motivation from the industrial school needed to achieve that goal. In 1953 Charles R. Fritzson, welfare investigator, State Aid Division, "called at the school in quest of information regarding Harriet T...[who] has a couple of sons in Hartford but they have been very uncooperative, have no interest in helping their mother, and have been untruthful about their own incomes." Harriet had been admitted to the school in 1897, and was over seventy years old at the time of this inquiry. In 1927 Superintendent Penniman received a letter from the Department of Mental Diseases, Division for Examination of Prisoners, asking for information about Helen A., a new patient at the Massachusetts State Hospital who had been an inmate at Middletown in the 1890s, and was arrested for bigamy in New Haven in 1919. Former inmates who ended up in mental hospitals or prisons illustrate that the industrial school could not save everybody. School officials always admitted that some girls returned to a "dissolute life" and retained nothing from their training.

Spelling, grammar, and stationary help to locate the women who wrote to the school for pension information. Although these women were certainly literate, they lacked penmanship and literary skills of the more refined middle-class style, and they often wrote on small scraps of

17 CISG, inmate #1279.
18 The Department of Mental Diseases at Springfield, Massachusetts to Superintendent Penniman at Middletown, December 3, 1927.
paper rather than full sheets of a note pad. Since these letters represent only a small portion of the total number of former inmates, generalization would be misleading, but the fact remains that these letters provide a rare opportunity to let the women speak for themselves. Amid the poverty and humility evident in the letters which ask for birth information is a strong sense that the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls had figured as a substantial force in their lives. Perhaps these women only praised the school in an attempt to make the superintendents more likely to write back with the valued information, but the expression of such sentiments should not be overlooked. "There has been I suppose a lot of changes since I was there [in the 1880s], I know," wrote Estella S. in 1938, "I still love the school as yet, and have often thought I would write but I have put it off all the time."19 "I have never forgotten the school," wrote Malvina H., "and always regard it and my stay there as the happiest period of my life."20 And Lillie W., writing in 1948 over fifty years after her initial incarceration, added the following words to the end of her letter: "I wish I was as happy as I was when I was there."21

19 Estella S., inmate #775, to Superintendent Penniman at Middletown, Oct. 17, 1938.
20 Malvina H., inmate #736, to Superintendent Penniman at Middletown, December 8, 1929.
21 Lillie W., inmate #832, to Superintendent Sells at Middletown, February 10, 1948.
"The following home conditions were found to be typical of the girl delinquent," wrote Mabel Wiley of New Haven in 1915, "The parents drink and are by turns over-harsh and then careless with their daughters. The homes are not attractive and the girls are not permitted to have company.... Hence the girls are driven from an unpleasant and often immoral home to find their pleasures secretly outside."¹ Half a century after the founding of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls, reformers still struggled with issues of female delinquency. The school had "rescued" several hundred girls from potential vice, but new definitions of danger had already created new populations of delinquents, assuring that the school could never claim victory over female crime. Its contribution to history lies instead in its steadfast dedication to an ideal vision of a restored social order. The institution has changed over time, from a house of refuge to a school of domesticity to a detention center, but it has always been a symbol of decency amidst fears of social degeneration. The legacy of the Connecticut industrial school is important both as a

record of a particular historical response to perceived female vice, and as a representative of turn-of-the-century reform.

The interplay between the definition of crime and the construction of femininity helps to identify important currents in period social thought. It would be impossible to understand the cultural importance of Victorian chastity without a complementary discussion of the results of promiscuity. Interpreting urban immigration demands an analysis of subsequent poverty and dislocation. The history of the first fifty years of the Connecticut industrial school traces the perceived correlation between female impoverishment and immorality, disclosing a new understanding of the social role of young women in turn-of-the-century America. As a specifically gendered institution, the industrial school proves that female delinquency posed a different problem to society than male delinquency, and demanded a different treatment program. The construction of "danger of vice" is especially important, since it was a subjective tool of the middle class used only to incarcerate females. The industrial school for girls had a different agenda than other facilities because its advocates fought against an abstract threat instead of a violent criminal population.

Teaching young women to honor the sanctity of the family was not a new concept to the mid-nineteenth century, but the industrial school targeted a new group of girls. Whereas other attempts to educate girls had inculcated the daughters of the middle and upper classes with the domestic ideal, the female reformatory was the first institution to demand that lower class girls be taught within this model. Instead of ignoring the urban poor, reformers introduced them to a new world of educational goals. The gendered learning at the industrial school was a systematic
response to moral deterioration. Beyond the mandate to control juvenile sexuality lay the expectation that females would be the mothers of the next generation, and must therefore be taught to raise the moral standard of their children. Studies of female education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have shown that society wished to educate women so that mothers would be able to educate their sons. The industrial school was simply an extension of this pattern. "It is believed," wrote the Board of Directors in 1900, "that the true interests of the State are identical with the greatest improvement of the girls."2 The portrait of the school illustrates a new nineteenth-century dedication to the indoctrination of the lower class which resulted from the reformers' new ability to control both the population of the industrial school, and its educational program.

Confronted with rampant urbanization, active sexuality among unwed teenagers, and the disintegration of the nuclear family, the reformers of the mid-nineteenth century could have opened new settlement houses, organized purity education campaigns, or moved to the suburbs and ignored the problems completely. Instead, they created the girls' industrial school. Begun as an innovation in social justice, the reform school has survived into the late twentieth century as the answer to the control of criminal children. Although the definition of crime has shifted and changed, the institution remains an outlet for varied and often conflicting constructions of the juvenile delinquent. Michel Foucault and David Rothman have been important voices in the discussion of the evolution of the reformatory, dissenting from the view that incarceration was a valid or successful method to control human vice. "We still live

---

with many of these institutions," writes Rothman, "accepting their presence as inevitable... We think of them as always having been with us, and therefore as always to be with us. We tend to forget that they were the invention of one generation to serve very special needs, not the only possible reaction to social problems."\(^3\)

Inmate escapes from Long Lane School have recently become a major news item in central Connecticut. In February of 1992 an escaped inmate was shot and killed by a police officer in Hartford, under suspicion of illegal drug use. Public opinion surrounding the incident seems to be that delinquents cannot be cured at Long Lane, and will re-enter society only to spend taxpayers' money either by living in jails or on welfare. In a world where juvenile crime rates spiral beyond retractable levels, the reformatory has failed to provide an antidote to juvenile delinquency. The nineteenth-century institution has proven inadequate to counterbalance the societal factors of the 1990s which pull teenagers away from the family and the public school. Significantly, however, society continues to fund reform schools, and modern reformers still depend on incarceration to curb juvenile disobedience. An angry school principal wrote to Newsweek magazine in March of 1992 to complain about the recent outbreak of guns in mainstream schools, insisting that society must provide "an alternative school system for potentially violent students."\(^4\)

Echoing with almost uncanny precision the platform of nineteenth-century philanthropists, this letter shows that reform advocates of the 1990s continue to discuss the value of the same institutionalization

\(^3\) Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum*, p.295.
procedures which originated in the early nineteenth century as the correctional ideal. The desire to incarcerate "potentially violent" children was exactly the motive which precipitated the founding of the juvenile reform school in the 1820s.

The Connecticut industrial school is an important representative of a moment in reformatory history when incarceration was deemed an appropriate response to perceived female depravity. When reformer Margaret Reeves surveyed Long Lane Farm in 1921 she found it to be one of the more outstanding institutions of the period, a useful answer to female deviancy. When Yale law student Kristine Rogers examined the same school in 1971, however, she judged it to be an unfortunate misuse of power. "The best service any state could offer its delinquent girls is to refrain from 'doing them good,'" writes Rogers in the ultimate critique of benevolent reform. This criticism of the very basis for nineteenth-century philanthropy does not prove, as Barbara Brenzel might suggest, a withering dedication to reform, but encourages modern reform advocates to look beyond nineteenth-century solutions which may no longer be appropriate. "We need not remain trapped in inherited answers," writes Rothman. The city of New Haven recommended several alternatives to incarceration in 1915. Educational work with parents was cited as a primary goal, as were "teaching girls that control of their minds and bodies is necessary for success," and increasing supervision of social recreation. These ideas served as an early attempt to counteract the reformatory as the sole agent of rehabilitative care.

5 Rogers, "For Her Own Protection," p.244.
The Connecticut Industrial School for Girls provides historians with a unique look at the ways in which specific reformers and inmates interacted and persevered. The school reveals important turn-of-the-century ideas about chastity and motherhood, and about social reform and incarceration. It must not be judged by the failure of its modern counterpart, but by its own record of success. It is perhaps impossible to know the extent to which institutionalization worked as a tool to inculcate the daughters of the urban poor with domestic values, but the school can hardly be seen as a failure. Most of the girls who were educated at the Connecticut industrial school found work, got married, and raised families. The institution probably rescued some of them from prostitution or other forms of solicitation. Perhaps the domestic training allowed many to procure employment for which they would have otherwise been unqualified. The academic program may have encouraged some of them to send their children to secondary schools. Opportunities for poor girls in the nineteenth century were limited, and it is likely that the Connecticut industrial school added rather than detracted from its inmates' future options. History can never reveal whether or not these girls would have had the same future with or without the industrial school, but the school probably did not inhibit its inmates' already stagnated social mobility. "I am coming up there sometime to see the place where I spent a large part of my childhood," wrote Malvina H. over fifty years after her incarceration. "I shall never forget it because it did a lot for me."8

8 Malvina H., inmate #736, to Superintendent Sells at Middletown, July 13, 1942.
Seeking to understand past reform endeavors in order to carve a better future is an important historical exercise. Modern reform thought would perhaps locate the Connecticut industrial school within a vision of a gendered, classist society which sought social control through uninvited domestic indoctrination. A more complex analysis, however, can provide an alternative interpretation. There are surely no easy answers to the pain and anger caused by disenfranchised youth in the 1990s: it is important to remember that advocates of the Connecticut industrial school also lived in a confusing world in which delinquent girls seemed to be leading society out of control. The solution was not perfect, but neither was it inexcusably flawed. There is no extant evidence to suggest that the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls was anything other than an honest response to newly emerging perceptions of female delinquency. "The school year closes tonight," wrote Superintendent Rockwell in his journal in 1875. "A year of trials and anxieties, but also of compensations and progress in many respects."9

9 Superintendent's Journal, March 31, 1875.
Appendix B: Religion

![Bar graph showing percentage of Protestants and Catholics over three different time periods: 1874-1877, 1895-1897, and 1912-1913.](attachment:image.png)

- **Protestant**
  - 1874-1877: [High bar]
  - 1895-1897: [Second highest bar]
  - 1912-1913: [Lowest bar]

- **Catholic**
  - 1874-1877: [Lowest bar]
  - 1895-1897: [Moderate bar]
  - 1912-1913: [Moderate bar]
Appendix C: Parental Status

[Graph showing percentages of motherless, fatherless, and orphaned]
Appendix D: Occupation Before Incarceration
Appendix E: Age at Incarceration

- 1874-1877
- 1895-1897
- 1912-1913

123
Appendix F: Reasons for Incarceration

1874-1877

1895-1897

1912-1913

- vagrancy
- disobedience
- danger of vice
- immorality
- theft
- idleness
- corrupt friends
- assault
- running away
- stubbornness
- destitute
- rude, unruly
Appendix G: Placement After Incarceration

Note: The statistics used in the appendix are from the record books of the Connecticut Industrial School for Girls, inmates #160-259; #1177-1276; and #2045-1244.
bibliography

archives


primary sources


*secondary sources*


