The Eastern State Penitentiary: the original seven cell blocks.
MAY 22, 1823 was a significant date for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania although it is doubtful that many of its citizens were aware of the fact. But to the penal reformers throughout the state, more especially those living in Philadelphia, it was a day which had long been anticipated.

For it was on this memorable day that the cornerstone of the massive and famous Eastern State Penitentiary was laid. At last the dream of a quarter century was on the threshold of realization. The huge pile of masonry which would soon cover some ten acres of what had only recently been a cherry orchard was to become the apotheosis of a concept of penal treatment which was to stir the entire world.

The reformers of Philadelphia, many of whom belonged to the Society of Friends, had long been deliberating prison reform. As far back as 1787 some of them had banded together to clean up the city's jails and to discuss the methods of dealing with criminals. Their quaint organization, known for a hundred years—from 1787 to 1887—as the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, has become famous in penal circles throughout the Americas and Europe. Its name even today is uttered with respect.¹

¹This organization, which will be referred to throughout this paper as the Philadelphia Society, is still functioning in Philadelphia but since 1887 it has been known as the Pennsylvania Prison Society. For a history of this society see Negley K. Teeters, They Were In Prison, Winston, 1937. Even prior to its founding, an earlier volunteer organization had been formed for the purpose of assisting prisoners. It was started in February 1776 and bore the name of
The philosophy of this organization envisaged the complete separation of prisoners, one from the other, so that they could not contaminate each other. It was believed that this separation would stimulate the prisoner's conscience, that he would repent of his evil ways, and would eagerly embrace the good life so acceptable to God-fearing people everywhere.

Separation of prisoners had been attempted in the old Walnut Street Jail which had been designated a state penitentiary in 1790, but there were few facilities for this plan to be put into successful operation. True, a small cell block with separate cells had been erected in the yard in that year but only a few of the more confirmed criminals were confined to it. The bulk of the inmates milled about in the yard during the day and were herded into "night rooms," each holding from twenty to thirty, after a fashion, for sleeping. Those that were furnished work in the shops had been obliged to pursue their tasks in silence, but with gradual overcrowding, which is the inevitable curse of penal establishments, there was little chance of any privacy or reformation.

So in 1801 the little group of reformers begged the legislature to separate the convicts from all other types of prisoners. Two years later they again urged the legislature to adopt the mode of punishing criminals by solitary confinement and hard labor. By 1818, with the gradual increase in population, it was found necessary to petition the legislature—which had done nothing to relieve the prison situation—to erect penitentiaries in suitable parts of the Commonwealth where prisoners could be given employment in solitude so that in the end reformation could take place.

But the legislature continued to be dilatory. However, eventually a prison, begun in 1818, was erected in 1826 in Pittsburgh to take care of the criminals in the western part of the state. In 1821 the legislature authorized the construction of a penitentiary for the eastern part of the state and, in due time (1829) it was finally opened.

Philadelphia Society for Assisting Distressed Prisoners. It was disbanded after nineteen months upon the entrance of the British into Philadelphia in 1777. For an account of this earlier organization see Teeters, Prison Journal, October 1944, pp. 452-460.

For a history of the early days of the Walnut Street Jail see Teeters, op. cit., chapter 2; also Rex Skidmore, Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, July-August, 1948, pp. 167-180.

We shall not go into the preliminary discussion regarding the establishment of these two prisons. This has been reviewed adequately by Harry Elmer Barnes in his Evolution of Penology in Pennsylvania, Bobbs-Merrill, 1927.
The laying of the cornerstone of the Eastern State Penitentiary was therefore a significant event. The ceremonies were presided over by Roberts Vaux, noted Philadelphia Quaker philanthropist, who played an important part in the negotiations which led to the creation of this unusual institution for criminals.

On this 22nd day of May, 1823, at six o'clock in the afternoon, a small group of interested persons assembled to hear Roberts Vaux speak at the dedicatory services. The several commissioners under whom the penitentiary was being erected were present. So was John Haviland, the distinguished architect, who gave to the world a new concept of prison construction. Jacob Souder, the master of masonry, was there as were also the many workmen who were engaged in setting up this Bastille stone by stone.

The remarks uttered by Roberts Vaux were sober and brief. He stated at the outset that he had been pressed into service at the last minute to serve as a substitute speaker in place of the president of the commissioners, Mr. Thomas Sparks, who had been unable to be present. He continued by stating that the occasion of laying the stone was calculated to awaken reflections at once "painful and gratifying." Painful because such was the erring character of man, so ungovernable were his passions and so numerous his propensities to evil that it was necessary for society to provide means for the punishment of those who transgressed its laws; gratifying because a correct view of human nature, coupled with the indispensable exercise of Christian benevolence had led to the amelioration of punishments. Justice, he continued, was mixed with Mercy and whilst the community designed to teach offenders that the way of the transgressor is hard, it wisely and compassionately sought to secure and reform the criminal by the most strict solitary confinement.

He congratulated his fellow citizens because their state was the first to abolish cruel and vindictive penalties which were in vogue in European countries such as the pillory, the whipping post and the chain, which, far from preventing crime, merely familiarized the mind with cruelty and hardened the hearts of those who suffered such penalties as well as those who witnessed them. The substitution in Pennsylvania of milder correctives had excited the notice and respect of nations abroad, as well as of our own sister states.4

4 Digested from an account of the ceremony by a "bystander" and published by Poulson's American Daily Advertiser, Saturday morning, May 24, 1823.
He concluded with these words: "It only remains for us to express our desire that this institution may truly answer the important purposes for which it is founded." 

2. THE SITE AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE NEW PRISON

Considerable thought was employed by the Philadelphia reformers concerning the site for the new prison. The choice was finally settled on a tract of land consisting of "ten acres, nineteen perches" situated about two miles from Center Square, now known as City Hall. The land was owned by the Warner Brothers. It commands the crest of a slight hill, known locally at the time as Bush Hill. There was a street cut through even at that early date known as Francis Lane. This thoroughfare was later designated as Coates Street and is now known as Fairmount Avenue. Contemporary accounts refer to the prison as situated "on one of the most elevated, airy and healthy sites in the vicinity of Philadelphia."

Today as one walks through the dingy streets encompassing the huge gray pile of stone he finds it necessary to stretch his imagination to fantastic limits to visualize the neighborhood as a once healthy and elevated section of the city. Remnants of Bush Hill appear in the slight rise of the topography and as one starts down Twenty-first Street toward the main east-west Market Street, a mile to the south, he is conscious of a slight descent only.

Perhaps no prison in the world demanded so much reflection so far as architecture was concerned. The philosophy underlying this experiment called for a bold and unique set of plans. It is important, then, that a somewhat detailed description of the buildings be set down here.

The Philadelphia reformers were frustrated by the arrangements of the old Walnut Street Jail and were convinced that only in a judiciously designed prison could their cherished system of prison discipline be realized. There was in the city an architect who gave promise of understanding just what they expected of a prison where each inmate could be separated one from the other without fear of

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6 One of the mysteries of old Cherry Hill is the whereabouts of this cornerstone. It has never been found and it is not known whether it is in the wall or in part of the cell-block construction.

contamination. This man was John Haviland, perhaps the most famous architect of whom this country boasted during the nineteenth century. Many of the prisons he designed are still being used, notably the state prison at Trenton and several Pennsylvania county jails. Haviland submitted a plan for consideration when the earlier Western State Penitentiary was being considered for Pennsylvania in 1818, but it was rejected in favor of one drawn by another Philadelphia architect, William Strickland. In 1821, when the institution at Philadelphia was under discussion, Haviland's plan for this prison was accepted. Others who submitted plans for the Eastern State Penitentiary were Charles Loss of New York City, Samuel Webb of Philadelphia, and Strickland.\(^7\)

3. The Wall and the Front Building at Cherry Hill

While the mode of discipline of the new prison was one designed to strike terror in the heart of the prisoner—although the full effects of such loneliness seem never to have been fully realized by the good philanthropists of Philadelphia—the outer great wall surrounding the enclosure, together with the central towers fronting on Francis Street (Fairmount Avenue) and midway between the two east and west towers, was likewise intended to deter. Haviland must have enjoyed a grim sense of satisfaction when he labored over the plans for the wall, gate and towers.

A contemporary enthusiast of the separate system of penal discipline, George Washington Smith (1800-1876), described the institution as the most extensive building in the United States. He stated that “large sums of money have been expended for the purpose of giving an unusual degree of solidity and durability to every part of the immense structure.” With keen admiration he explained: “This Penitentiary is the only edifice in this country which is calculated to convey to our citizens the external appearance of those magnificent and picturesque castles of the Middle Ages, which contribute so eminently to embellish the scenery of Europe.”

The best method of describing the walls and façade of the institution is to employ the language of the contemporaries. The front of the building is composed of large blocks of hewn and squared granite; the wall, thirty feet high and built of Falls of Schuylkill

\(^7\) State Prisons, etc. Vol. I, p. 23. Strickland's plan was initially adopted and he was employed as architect. However, he was later replaced in favor of Haviland and his plan.
stone, is twelve feet thick at the base, and diminishes to the top, where it is two and three-quarters feet thick. At each corner of the wall is a tower for the purpose of overlooking the establishment; three towers, described below, are situated near the entrance gate.8 The façade is 670 feet in length and reposes on a terrace which, from the inequalities of the ground, varies from three to nine feet in height. There is a basement which runs the entire length of this front and is scarped, or cut down, directly from the outer wall.

The central building is 200 feet in length and consists of two projecting massive towers fifty feet high; it is crowned by projecting embattled parapets, supported by pointed arches, resting on corbels or brackets. The pointed munion windows in these towers contribute to a high degree to their picturesque effect. The space between these towers, known in architectural parlance as a curtain, is forty-one feet high and is finished with a parapet and embrasures. The pointed windows in it are long and narrow.

The great gateway in the center was a conspicuous feature of the prison. It was twenty-seven feet high and fifteen feet wide. “It is filled by a massive wrought iron portcullis and double oaken doors studded with projecting iron rivets, the whole weighing several tons; nevertheless they can be opened with the greatest facility.” Thus this gate was described by a contemporary writer. It was demolished in 1938 and was replaced by a modern iron gate operated by electricity. The oaken planks were burned in the prison enclosure and the hundreds of large handwrought rivets were distributed among the officials as souvenirs.

On each side of the main entrance, which G. W. Smith referred to as the most imposing in the United States, are enormous solid buttresses diminishing in offsets and terminating in pinnacles. An immense tower, eighty feet high, containing an alarm clock, surmounted this entrance, forming a picturesque center. On each side of this main building are screen wing walls pierced by small, blank, pointed windows and surmounted by a parapet. At their extremities are the high octagonal towers also terminating in parapets pierced by embrasures.

The wing walls form a central passageway or foyer leading to the inside yard. On either side of this passage are two apartments

consisting of basement, first and second floors, each with several rooms. In one basement on the right or eastern apartment were, when the prison was designed and first put in operation, quarters for washing and ironing to be performed by the female prisoners. [Today this basement area contains a guards’ dressing room, toilet facilities for visitors and a long visiting gallery.] On the first or ground floor were the keepers’ rooms and stores. [Today, the right first floor is used for offices of purchasing agent, warden’s office and personnel office; the left first floor has the board of trustees rooms and interviewing rooms.] On the second floor were the warden’s apartment, the meeting room of the inspectors, and an infirmary, or hospital. [Today on the right, second floor, are the accounting offices and classification offices; on the left are two apartments for resident physicians.] Here is what Rev. Louis Dwight, secretary of the Boston Prison Discipline Society, wrote concerning this ill-conceived portion of the front:

The usual and most convenient approach to and egress from the family rooms of the keeper, is through a narrow, inconvenient, winding stairway leading from the arched way to those rooms. By these arrangements, the family of the keeper or warden, is literally subjected to imprisonment; surrounded by impervious walls and immovable grates, and can only enjoy the unobstructed light of heaven, by groping their way through a passage, better fitted for an entrance into a subterranean catacomb than to the residence of a civilized and Christian family. Yet all this is a trifling matter, when compared to the horrors of a hospital within the walls of a family dwelling, where the shrieks of the insane and the groans of the dying are mingled, with the yells and curses of abandoned and profligate female convicts in adjacent apartments.9

In order to maintain the separate nature of the discipline, the sick were usually isolated in cells suitably fitted for the purpose. These were located in Block 2.10

9 From Third Annual Report, 1828, pp. 41 ff. The present warden, C. J. Burke, chooses to live away from the prison.

10 McElwee’s Report, p. 22. This report is known officially as A Concise History of the Eastern Penitentiary of Pennsylvania, together with a Detailed Statement of the Proceedings of the Committee Appointed by the Legislature, December 6, 1834. Thomas B. McElwee was a member of the minority of the joint Legislative Committee making the investigation; he was from Bedford County, Pennsylvania.
In the basement, on the left, or western apartment, were the facilities for baking and cooking for the prisoners. [Now used for guards’ dressing rooms, telephone exchange, mail room and officers’ dining room.] In the central tower, over the entrance, was the apothecary’s shop. Immediately inside the enclosure, on either side of the main entrance, were gardens, one “appropriated to the warden and one to the domestics.” The space used for these gardens has long since been utilized for segregated exercise yards for those undergoing discipline and for additional cell blocks. There is little open space in the Eastern Penitentiary today.

4. The Interior of the Prison

The original plan of the prison called for seven cell blocks. It is this original plan that concerns us at this time. A visit to the prison today would give little evidence of the Haviland imagination, especially after one passes through the gate from the outer façade, which is without doubt a monument to his genius.

After passing through the front building and traversing the area reserved for the warden’s gardens, the visitor sees before him a central rotunda. It is from this center building that many of the cell blocks emanate. In those early days there were seven blocks; today there are fourteen.

As Haviland described the center building, its basement formed a general guard house, and in the room over it—that is, above the ground floor—accommodations for the under-keeper and the watchmen. For some years this room was used as the prison library. Outside this second floor room was a platform designed for the purpose of keeping watch over the entire prison. A bell was hung in the observatory roof for alarm and for general utility purposes. Under this building was the reservoir from which the institution drew its water.

The rotunda, or ground floor was, and still is, the real hub and nerve center of the prison. The warden spent much of his time there in the early days and today it serves as a post for the deputy and his men on guard.

The seven cell blocks which radiate from this common center represent the original prison. In later years, with the gradual addition of several more blocks, an ingenious system of mirrors was installed so that one guard, standing in the center of the rotunda,
can see throughout all the corridors. Pictures of the cell blocks as early as 1897 show these mirrors. At that time there were ten blocks.

The original of Haviland's plan of this prison is lost but copies have been published by interested writers. In 1824 the architect wrote that he planned to construct seven blocks, each of which was to contain thirty-eight rooms or cells, 12 x 8 x 10, with exercise yards joined to each cell, eighteen feet long. This plan was based on the Act of March 1821 which called for the erection of 250 cells. But ten years later, after the prison was partially completed and opened for use, an act, dated March 28, 1831, empowered the Board of Inspectors of the prison to increase the housing to 400. By this time three cell blocks, subscribing substantially to the original plans, were completed. To provide for the extra cells it was decided to construct the remaining four blocks of two stories. By the time the seven blocks were finished many alterations had been made. For example, in Block 1 there are 8 cells measuring 14 x 17 x 11½; while 42 are 16 x 8 x 11½. Cells in Block 2 are all 12 x 7½ x 14. In the report of the building committee dated December 31, 1832, it was stated that "an additional length of three feet to the lower cells" was made to offer greater facility in certain branches of manufacturing performed by the inmates. One may well imagine the frustration and despair of the architect in being forced to change his plans so often.

As to Blocks 4, 5, 6 and 7, all of two stories, we find Charles Dickens writing in his American Notes (1842), that prisoners housed in second floor galleries which, of course, had no exercise yards, were provided with two cells to compensate for this handicap. Nothing in the annual reports of the wardens substantiates this two-cell luxury and those familiar with the Eastern Penitentiary have often wondered how the inmates housed in the upper stories of these cell blocks were provided with exercise.

In the first few annual reports the building committee was forced to record many delays. Aside from the difficulty of procuring materials such as stone, brick, lime, etc., the weather at times was too inclement for outside work. In addition, there was much building

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\ F. H. Wines, Punishment and Reformation, Crowell, 1895, p. 148 and Barnes, op. cit., p. 142.\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{12}}\ John Haviland, "A Description of the Plan for a New Penitentiary," Philadelphia, 1824.\]
activity out in the city which competed for materials. A cholera epidemic in New Jersey also slowed down shipment of material to be used in construction.

The plan of this prison most frequently seen in texts and books dealing with prison architecture is taken from the completed prison—that is, of the first seven cell blocks. One of the best of these is that designed by Demetz and Blouet, commissioners of France who visited the prison and published their report in 1837.\footnote{For a view of their plan, see Alfred Hopkins, *Prisons and Prison Buildings* (Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1930), p. 44. For an etching, see Teeters, *They Were In Prison* (Winston, 1937), p. 69, and reproduced in this article. It is possible that the oldest photograph available was taken prior to the major construction of 1877 and may be seen on page 511, Barnes & Teeters, *New Horizons In Criminology* (Prentice-Hall, 1943).}

Overcrowding has always been a problem at Cherry Hill. The first major building program took place between 1877 and 1879, when Blocks 8, 9, and 10 were erected. In 1894, Block 11 was built. Block 12, three stories high, was constructed by convict labor between 1908 and 1911. A small block, consisting of eight cells was later erected for punishing purposes. This is known as Klondike and labeled Block 13. In 1926, Block 14 was built for incoming prisoners. This is the quarantine block in which each new prisoner is housed until he is studied and his case is disposed of by the classification or diagnostic clinic. Thus we see Cherry Hill today cluttered up with fourteen cell blocks in an area originally designed to house around 400 prisoners.\footnote{Specific data on the cell blocks, number of cells, etc., erected prior to 1925 may be found in Barnes, op. cit., pp. 201-205.}

Since this famous prison was dedicated to the principle of separate confinement, one prisoner from another, the cells were designed by Haviland with judicious care so that a maximum amount of room was available. It is doubtful that any American prison was originally planned with such commodious cellular space. At the time the prison was first occupied, the only opening to the cell was through the exercise yard; there was none from the corridors. There were two doors covering one doorway leading from the yard in to the cell. An inner lattice door was provided to admit air and sunlight as well as to secure the inmate when he was not exercising; an outer door of heavy planking was provided to close over the lattice door. This served to close off the prisoner in his cell. These doors, then, were in the rear of the cell. Ventilation and
sunlight were provided in each cell also by a convex reflector piercing the "barrelled ceiling," thus forming a window eight inches in diameter and called by the architect a "deadeye."\textsuperscript{15}

The bizarre arrangement of not having doors leading into the corridors from the cells proved anomalous shortly after the practical details of running a prison were realized. The overseers, whose job it was to instruct the prisoners in their cellular labor, were obliged to enter the cells from the rear yard which, in inclement weather at least, was a nuisance. Then, too, religious services, advocated by the founders of the institution to an almost fanatical degree, were seriously hampered since the ministers were obliged to call on each prisoner one at a time to impart the gospel. It was soon appreciated that if there were doors to the cells opening on to the corridors, the minister could preach his sermons at the head of the cell block nearest the central rotunda and all the prisoners could hear his voice at one time. The doors were accordingly added in 1831.\textsuperscript{16}

One innovation became imperative with this new door arrangement. In order to prevent the prisoners peering across the corridor into the opposite cells as the doors were opened for divine services, an opaque curtain was stretched down the middle of the entire corridor lengthwise, thus shutting off the view.

An ingenious arrangement was devised by Haviland by which the prisoner could be fed in his cell. In the front of each cell, facing the corridor, the stone construction was broken by a feeding drawer and peep hole. The drawer was of cast iron, six inches deep and sixteen inches wide, projecting into the cell to a depth sufficient to form a table when closed. This table extended twelve inches from the wall and was used by the immured convict for eating his meals. This gadget was so cleverly designed by the architect that when the guard, or keeper, inserted food or any other object into the cell, the inmate could not see him. The keeper, however, could peep through the aperture and see the inmate. When the corridor doors, mentioned above, were installed, other arrangements for serving meals in the cells had to be provided.

In Block 3, today, there are seven cells that do not have doors leading from the corridor. Apparently quite early in the history of the prison, undoubtedly before the doors were installed, some

\textsuperscript{15} From Haviland's description of his plan, 1824.
\textsuperscript{16} Fourth Annual Report of the Inspectors, December 31, 1832, pp. 12-13. The doors leading out into the yards were retained.
cells were expanded or enlarged by tearing down the partitions between two of them. Thus when the doors were installed only one was needed for the two cells. The other cell still retains small doors with peep holes similar to the description above. However, it is difficult to visualize the feeding drawer arrangement even from the vestigial remains as seen today in this block.

The walls of the cells were whitewashed and the floors were of stone. Later, because of dampness, plank floors were laid down over the stone. This made the cells a trifle more comfortable, especially in winter. Each cell was furnished originally with a hammock or an iron bedstead. Later these were found inexpedient and wooden beds were installed. The bed was so constructed that the prisoner could rear it against the wall when not in use and fasten it with a staple, thus providing more room in the cell.

Other furnishings in the cell included a clothes rail, a stool, tin cup, wash basin, "victuals" pan, mirror, scrubbing and sweeping brushes, sheet, blanket, and straw mattress. In addition, a work bench was included to keep the prisoner busy at his appointed task. The occupations, most of which were adapted to the small confines of the cells, were: shoemaking, spinning, weaving, dyeing, dressing yarn, blacksmithing, carpentering, sewing, wheelwright, washing, wood turning, brush making, tin working, shuttle making, and last making.

The labor policy adopted by the Commonwealth for the prisoners was relatively simple, compared to those in practice in adjoining states. Work and trade training were considered salutary and highly important by the inspectors and officials of the institution but there was no thought of exploiting the inmates for profit. It is significant that the Pennsylvania prisons were erected when the industrial revolution was getting underway throughout the world yet no one seems to have given any thought to the installation of power machinery or congregate shops. In fact prison labor was to be handcraft in its nature. As stated above, the types of labor selected were those that could advantageously be pursued in the narrow confines of a cell.$^{17}$

Prisons throughout the East at the time were operated, so far as their prison-labor policy was concerned, under the contract or

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$^{17}$ For an account of labor policies in the prison, both in its early days and later, see Barnes, op. cit., pp. 222 ff.
"piece-price" system. Not so at Cherry Hill. From the meager data of labor policies, we gather that the warden himself negotiated the sale of prison products. Since most of the prisoners were shoemakers or weavers, their products found a market in downtown Philadelphia. We note, for example, that shoes were sold by Warden Wood to George W. Richards & Co. (McElwee's Report, p. 174); a "case of brogans" to a Baltimore merchant, etc. Not until 1844 were adequate statistical data compiled that tell us more than a few bare facts about the system of labor in the Cherry Hill institution.  

Warden Wood was somewhat naive regarding the productivity of his inmates. He wrote in his early reports that the prisoners would be able to pay for their maintenance. He wrote in his Third report: "It is satisfactory to find . . . that under all the disadvantages of a new establishment, the convicts have, with a few exceptions, maintained themselves; proving that prisoners can, in many branches of business, work to quite as great advantage in separate confinement as together."

5. Methods of Heating and Supplying Water

Two problems confronted the early management; one was the heating system and the other was the water supply. The first warden, Samuel R. Wood, wrote in his first report that the warming hot air furnaces called for on Haviland's plan had not been installed, so he had purchased six small stoves which he found "troublesome, expensive, and dirty." He further added that he had made arrangements to purchase an air heater sufficient to warm twenty cells. However, a hot air system was eventually installed but certain defects were encountered, each of which had to be remedied by ingenious modifications.

The stoves, or cockles, in which the air was warmed and conveyed to the cells, were located in a "subterranean chamber." The temperature in the cells was rarely ever more than 60 degrees. While there were no records of the temperature kept, the Journal of Prison Discipline and Philanthropy, publication of the Philadelphia Society, spoke quite favorably of the heating apparatus and consequent comfort of the cells in the British Pentonville prison which was copied after the Pennsylvania system and erected on

See Barnes, op. cit., p. 234 f.
plans similar to those of Cherry Hill. In the Journal article a record of the day-by-day temperature of the Pentonville cells was reproduced for February, 1844 and 1845, and on not one day was the temperature more than 56 degrees. In fact, on many days it was as low as 49 degrees and on a few days 47 degrees.19

Thus we are entitled to believe that the prisoners were none too warm at Cherry Hill. In fact, many complaints on this point were raised in the monthly meetings of the Society, which attempted through the years to keep posted on the affairs of management of the Philadelphia prison. In one instance (March 13, 1849), it was reported that “there was much suffering among the prisoners during the late severe weather, so that many were obliged to wrap themselves in their bed blankets and pace their cells to keep from more severe suffering.”

We wish to call attention at this point to the management’s concern with communication between inmates which was possible by means of the plumbing and heating pipes. One of the criticisms hurled at this prison by those not friendly with the system was that it is physically impossible to eliminate communication between prisoners. Wines in his Punishment and Reformation makes much of this practice and ridicules the prison physician who attempted to minimize the practice. The physician (Dr. Robert A. Given) stated in his report for 1850: “I have heard various estimates of the amount of intercourse afforded to our prisoners, but they were all very much exaggerated. My own observation and the opinion of our most intelligent officers satisfy me that the average daily conversation of each prisoner does not exceed, if indeed it equals, ten minutes.”20 There can be no doubt that resourceful prisoners were able to communicate by means of tapping on pipes, floors and walls.

Furnishing adequate water for the prison was another serious problem. Due to the elevation of the prison being approximately the same as that of the city reservoir at Fair Mount, it was difficult to get an adequate supply of water. Enough was pumped to “carry off and cleanse the pipes of the prisoners’ water closets” but the “reaction of the contaminated air after the water is discharged from the pipes causes the cistern to be impregnated more or less with it”

19 Cf. the Journal article, October 1845.
so that there was no water for drinking purposes. Hence, a large well was dug in the prison yard. A horse working two hours each day pumped the well water to supply tanks installed in the second story of the center building which was deemed ample for the personal use of the prisoners and staff.

But from the very opening of the institution the sanitary conditions were deplorable. There was a woeful lack of sufficient water to flush the prisoners' cell toilets and cess-pipes oftener than twice a week even as late as the forties. For example, Dr. Robert A. Given (1844-1851), the physician at that time, and a most conscientious and capable man, said: "I have known the clothes of persons walking through the corridor to become so saturated with the odor that it was perceptible to others even after a walk of some miles in the open air." When Dr. Given resigned in 1851 he was happy to report a creditable list of improvements in this field.

6. The Cost of the Eastern Penitentiary

How much money has been poured into the Eastern Penitentiary during its existence of over a hundred and twenty years could probably be ascertained by perusing the records of appropriations. It has been recently estimated that over $3,000,000 have been spent on the structure to date. But it is interesting to note what it cost for the original building and cell blocks.

The site of the prison was bought of the Messrs. Warner for $11,500. The legislature made its first appropriation on March 20, 1821, and it was still making annual additions as late as 1835. The entire sum, up to and including that date, was $772,600. Part of that sum, amounting to $99,476.60, came from the sale of certain city lots and the site of the old Walnut Street Jail.

During the investigation of the management of the prison in 1834, which we shall discuss later, the charge was made that serious fraud had been perpetrated in the construction of the institution. One member of the legislature, Thomas B. McElwee, insisted that if the work had been done by contract it would not have cost more than half the sum.

Whether this charge of fraud is true or not, it is certain that it was an expensive structure for the time it was erected since it was the most elaborate penitentiary plant which had at that time ever

\[a\] Barnes, op. cit., p. 201.
been built. Visitors from various parts of the world came to Philadelphia to admire it and all were greatly impressed by its massive wall and architecture.

As stated earlier, the original Haviland plan called for the construction of 266 cells in the seven blocks but it was later decreed that more cells would be necessary. In 1835 there were 311 cells completed.\(^2\) The last of the seven blocks was completed in 1836 making presumably 532 cells.\(^3\) In 1845 the *Journal of Prison Discipline* records that 535 cells were in use. With later construction to these original seven blocks the prison was able to house 600 inmates in 1911.\(^4\)

Today there are over 900 cells with a fluctuating population of over one thousand. Since 1928 the Graterford annex, near Philadelphia, houses about two thousand additional prisoners.

If we may state that the prison in 1835 consisted of 311 cells and the monies appropriated up to that time amounted to $772,600, it would average a cost of $2,500 per cell. Compared with prison construction costs of today this is not excessively high. Maximum security prisons with their tool-proof steel and expensive gadgets cost today as much as $5,000 per cell.

In the investigation of 1834 it was brought out that the cells cost $300 each in the two-storied blocks and $400 each in the one-storied blocks.\(^5\) Of course such an estimate does not consider the overall cost of a prison and in addition, we have no way of knowing how such figures were obtained.

7. THE RECEPTION OF THE PRISONER

The reception of the prisoner to the Eastern Penitentiary in its early days was not much different than that today. The same preparations for his sojourn in the institution were as necessary then as now. The same data were desired except that in modern times more details regarding his early life, family connections and interests are assembled. The clerk of the prison (John Halloway, later warden) was required by law (Art. 8, Sec. 8 of the Act of April 3, 1829) to keep a record "respecting the history, instructions, as-

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\(^3\) Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
sociations, general habits, predominant passions, and prevailing vices—as also the intended residences of the departing convicts. If this was ever done there has thus far been found no such records.

The prison staff is more specialized today with its psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, educational director and others interested in understanding the prisoner. In the early days no such specialists, other than the medical doctor (Dr. Franklin Bache, grandson of Benjamin Franklin), were available. There was a chaplain but he served in a volunteer capacity until 1838 when a salaried "moral instructor" was appointed. The procrastination of the Commonwealth in employing a chaplain drew the following retort from the celebrated Scotch phrenologist, George Combe, who wrote of his visit to America in 1841:

No single circumstance in the history of Pennsylvania indicates the low state of general information among the people more strongly than the extraordinary fact that after erecting this penitentiary at great expense, the Legislature continues insensible to every entreaty of its legal guardians to be furnished with adequate means of moral and religious instruction of the prisoners.

We get our description of the preparation of the prisoner from McElwee's Report. He wrote that on the arrival of the convicted man he was first examined by the warden. Then he was taken to a "preparing room" where he was "divested of his usual garments, his hair closely trimmed and [where he] underwent the process of ablution." Certain physical data were recorded [color of skin, hair and eyes; scars or physical blemishes; height and length of foot] and he was then given a "uniform and a hood was drawn down over his eyes and was conducted to his cell."

The hood [See below for discussion of the use of the hood in the prison.] was removed and he was "interrogated as to his former

\[26\] McElwee's Report, p. 85.

\[27\] The law of 1829 provided for an unsalaried chaplain but the administration found it impossible to fill the position. However, Philadelphia ministers visited the prison in a volunteer capacity for almost ten years. These were: Rev. Charles Demmé of the Lutheran Church, Rev. Samuel W. Crawford of the Reformed Presbyterian Church and Rev. James Wilson of the Associate Reformed Church. The first "moral instructor" was Rev. Thomas Larcombe, a former Baptist minister. The Philadelphia Bible Society furnished the early convicts with Bibles.

\[28\] Notes on the U. S. of North America during a phrenological visit in 1839-40.
life.” Next, one of the “functionaries of the establishment uttered an address in which the consequences of his crime were portrayed, the design of his punishment manifested, and the rules of the prison amply delineated.” He was then locked up and “left to the salutary admonition of a reproving conscience and the reflections which solitude usually produces.” McElwee went further by speculating on the reactions of the immured prisoners:

They reject, from sad experience, the daydream of the sages who, amidst the very bosom of society, have prated about the charms of loneliness. Existence has no charms unless witnessed by, or enjoyed with, our fellow men. The convicts feel it so. Ennui seizes them, every hour is irksome, and they supplicate for the means of employment with the most abject humility. They consider labour as a favor, not as a punishment, and they receive it as such. They are also furnished a Bible, some religious tracts, and occasionally other works, calculated to imbue their minds with moral and religious ideas.29

The question as to whether prisoners under the separate system were to be furnished labor was sharply debated for a decade prior to the opening of the institution. It is not our purpose to review this issue here. Suffice it to state that by the time the first prisoners entered the Cherry Hill establishment it was decided by the commissioners to provide the means of labor in individual cells.30 Usually the prisoner received this work favor after the first week. That some type of occupation was regarded as a privilege is demonstrated by the fact that one of the penalties in the prison was the withdrawal of the recalcitrant inmate’s tools for a period of time.

The prisoner’s clothes were made of coarse cotton cloth. In winter the uniform was described as “a roundabout, a vest, and a pair of pantaloons, made of cassinet, or sometimes very thick roundabouts, lined all through.” Stockings were of wool to be changed “every two weeks.” The inmate was shod in a pair of “stout shoes.” A cap finished his wardrobe. In summer, the mate-

30 The labor controversy is ably handled in the Journal of Prison Discipline and Philanthropy, April, 1846, pp. 120-121. See also, Richard Vaux, A Brief Sketch of the Origin and History of the State Penitentiary of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1872, p. 87.
rials were lighter in weight. Certainly there was no attempt to humiliate the prisoner with a garish or degrading type of uniform as was done, for instance, in the early Massachusetts prison where, in 1812, for example, red and blue uniforms were issued, later of red, black, blue and yellow stripes. The only word regarding colors coming from the early Eastern Penitentiary was "such colours as are deemed suitable and convenient."

The food given the prisoners compared favorably in quality, quantity, and variety with other prisons of the day. For breakfast, it consisted of one pint of coffee or cocoa "made from the cocoa nut." For dinner, three-fourths of a pound of beef without bone or one-half pound of pork, one pint of soup and as many potatoes as the prisoner wished. Occasionally boiled rice was served instead of potatoes. For supper, Indian mush was the main dish. One half-gallon of molasses was the lot of the inmate per month. Salt was given when asked for and vinegar as a favor. Turnips and cabbage "in the form of crout" were sometimes distributed. The daily ration of bread per inmate was one pound. They were, of course, fed in their cells. The prisoner-waiter (one William Parker) conveyed the food in three little wagons which he named "Washington, Franklin, and Lafayette—one for potatoes, one for beef and one for soup."

Nothing appears in the first annual reports of the inspectors or of the warden indicating just how the prisoners were bathed or how frequently. But in the sixteenth annual report, dated March 1845, we get some notion from the following:

The daily escape-steam from the steam engine is passed into a tank containing about eighty hogsheads of water, which thereby is maintained at a temperature of about 90°; ten separate cells, each having a bath, receive the prisoners that are brought separately by their overseers, and are allowed fifteen minutes for bathing; soap, fresh water, and a dry towel are furnished each. By this means 40 can be bathed per hour without any infringement of the separate system,—an officer walking in front of the grated doors of the bathing cells effectually preventing any possibility of communication.

21 McElwee, op. cit., p. 208.
The report states that these baths were given weekly but in the Minutes of the Philadelphia Society for 1845 it was recorded that the prisoners were bathed once every twenty days. The physician at the time, Dr. Robert A. Given, speaks of "the weekly use, by the prisoner, of the warm baths, now in operation." So today we are not sure just how frequently baths were actually indulged in by the inmates.

Perhaps the most unique feature of the housing of the prisoners in old Cherry Hill was the exercise yards attached to individual cells in those blocks which were not two-stories in height. These yards were surrounded by a wall eleven-and-a-half feet high and varied in area according to the block construction. The only opening to the cells in the original plans was through the exercise yard wall, as we pointed out earlier.

Prisoners were given an opportunity of exercising in these yards one hour daily, in two half-hour shifts. In order to make supervision easier, only alternate prisoners exercised at a time. Thus prisoners 1, 3, 5, etc. were out of their cells at the same time, with prisoners 2, 4, 6, etc. exercising at a later time. A guard, or keeper, patrolled the walls while another surveyed the entire establishment from the central tower. Every effort was made to restrain the exercising inmates from conversing or throwing written notes over the walls.

Later records of the prison indicate that prisoners were permitted to use the yard for the cultivation of vegetables or flowers. There is also evidence that some men were permitted to keep small pets such as birds or rabbits in their cells and cell yards.

Naturally in the official reports, every effort was made to convince the legislature and friends of the system that complete separation was in effect. For example, it was stated above that inmates were taken individually from their cells to the bathing cells and allowed fifteen minutes for the purpose. No mention was made of the mask. In 1845 the warden, George Thompson, reported that he was employing, separately, some of the invalid prisoners in the "cultivation of the large yards between the blocks." These inmates

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Dr. Franklin Bache resigned as attending physician to the prison in 1835; he was succeeded by Dr. William Darrach who served until 1843 and was succeeded for one year by Dr. Edward Hartshorne. Dr. Robert A. Given served from 1844 to 1851.
were under the supervision of "a careful officer, skilled in horticulture who takes special care that no two should approach or recognize each other; the yards being divided by the buildings makes this task easy, and the prisoner being aware that the privilege so highly valued would be lost by violating the rule, has no inducement thereto." Again no mention was made of the mask.

The warden continued by stating that six gardens were thus cultivated and between 400 and 500 bushels of tomatoes "were one of the many descriptions of vegetables furnished." In addition these gardens furnished, "under the physician's orders, separate employment for twelve invalids half a day each" demonstrating that the "plan was not only humane, but important in a pecuniary point of view,—both in restoring health, and making those productive who were formerly the contrary."

In 1845 Warden Thompson described the religious services in one block of one hundred inmates. No mention was made of a curtain or of the use of masks. But the doors apparently were open and the inmates were apparently in their individual cells. The Rev. Mr. Crawford instructed them in singing and the warden remarked that "during this exercise there has been no attempt at communication. I confidently assert this, as, if such attempts were made, detection would be almost certain. Two officers with woolen socks are passing constantly in front of the cells during service." There can be no doubt that if the doors were open and the inmates were standing up, they would scarcely have seen across the corridor into the cell across the way and, with the fear that the guards wearing woolen socks might detect any attempt to communicate with their fellow prisoners, the rules were probably not violated frequently.

However, prison administrators, then as now, always had to be on the alert against violations of the simplest rules. No rules are completely unbreakable, especially in prison where men have much time to devise ways and means of breaking them.

8. The First Prisoners

The Eastern Penitentiary of Pennsylvania was turned over to the warden and the Board of Inspectors by the Commissioners who were in charge of its erection, on July 1, 1829.

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The first prisoner, No. 1, was a Negro named Charles Williams. The prison records describe him as “a farmer; light black; black eyes; curly black hair; 5’ 7½”, foot 11”; flat nose, scar on bridge of nose, broad mouth, scar from dirk on left thigh; can read.” He was sentenced on October 22, 1829 by the Court of Oyer and Terminer of Delaware County for burglary with a sentence of two years. His crime was committed on July 31 at 10 p. m. He broke into the house of Nathan Lukins (Dowling House) and stole: 1 silver watch, value $20; 1 gold seal, value $3; 1 gold key, value $2. Williams entered Eastern Penitentiary on October 25. He was born in Harrisburg and was eighteen years old when admitted. His duties in the prison, according to McElwee, included working in the yard, cleaning up, taking care of the horses, and attending the mortar and stone carriers. In 1831, the two French commissioners, De Beaumont and De Toqueville, who visited the prison, talked with this first prisoner and disclosed that he was a shoemaker; that he made as many as ten pairs of shoes per week. They described him as follows: “This man works with ardor. His mind seems tranquil; his disposition excellent. He considers his being brought to the Penitentiary as a signal benefit of Providence. His thoughts are in general religious. He read to us in the Gospel the parable of the Good Shepherd, the meaning of which touched him deeply; one who was born of a degraded and depressed race, and had never experienced any thing but indifference and harshness.” Warden Wood says of this same first prisoner: “The first prisoner, a negro boy of twenty years of age, brought up on a farm, made a shoe, on the fourth day after the commencement of his instruction in the trade, which passed with others and was paid for by the contractor.” This first prisoner, Charles Williams, was discharged from Cherry Hill prison on October 22, 1831, two years from the day of his sentence.

Prisoner No. 2, John Smith, was twenty years of age, sentenced from Chester County for horse stealing, for one year. He entered the prison November 7, 1829 and was discharged at the expiration of his sentence. Prisoner No. 3 was Richard Jones, from Philadelphia, aged twenty-eight. He was born in Fayetteville, North Carolina. His crime was highway robbery and this was his

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30 This information has not been verified and comes from one of the present employees of the prison, Mr. Tom Collins.

37 In his First Annual Report, p. 11.
third offense. Committed to the prison on November 21, 1829, his sentence was eleven years but in spite of this he was pardoned by the governor on July 6, 1832. Prisoner No. 4, John Lavrow, was eighteen years of age. His home was in Philadelphia. He entered the prison on the same day as Jones. His offense was also highway robbery. He was sentenced to eight years; this was his fourth offense. Apparently this John Lavrow had some special privileges; at least we may surmise this from testimony brought out at the investigation of the management of the prison in 1834.

One prisoner, William Parker, stated at that time: “I have seen No. 4 sitting in center house alongside William Baen (a keeper or guard) reading newspapers. He was a white convict and had more privileges than any other prisoner—breathing the fresh air, walking about the yard on a Sabbath day particularly during divine services.”

These four prisoners, together with six others comprised the first group of inmates in the new prison. They were the “guinea pigs” upon whom the advocates of the strange system of separate confinement were to experiment in order to establish a new philosophy of penal discipline. Thousands more, both here and abroad, were to experience the rigors of this system before it was finally abandoned. Five of the first ten prisoners to enter Cherry Hill were convicted of horse stealing, with burglary, highway robbery, counterfeiting and forgery making up the remainder of the offenses.

The first females sent to the prison were No. 73 (Amy Rogers) and No. 74 (Henrietta Johnson). Both were sentenced from Philadelphia courts for manslaughter. The former received three years and the latter, who became a cook in the prison, six. They both entered the prison on April 30, 1831. It was the second offense for No. 73 and the third for No. 74. On December 10 of the same year, two more females, Nos. 100 (Ann Hinson) and 101 (Eliza Anderson), were sentenced from Philadelphia for manslaughter, the term

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89 On October 5, 1835, 59 men and 10 women were transferred from Walnut Street Jail to the Eastern Penitentiary.
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By 1836 there were so many females in Cherry Hill prison that it was deemed necessary to secure a matron for the women's block (No. 2 cell block). Mrs. Harriet B. Hall, a woman of “Christian character and discipline” was appointed by the inspectors who “felt confident that many of the unhappy females would be reclaimed from vice and wretchedness and restored to paths of virtue and true happiness.” Women were sent to Eastern Penitentiary until 1922, when they were transferred to the State Industrial Home for Women at Muncy.

9. Early Escapes from Cherry Hill

The first reports of the inspectors of the prison were strangely silent on the matter of escapes from old Eastern. Yet we know there were some during the first years the prison was open. All were apprehended soon after their getaways; thus none was recorded.

The first convict to escape was No. 94, one William Hamilton, a Negro. He was employed in the institution as a baker and also waited on the warden’s table. One Sunday, during the absence of Warden Wood from his apartment, Hamilton secured a bedcord to which he affixed a block of wood. He got out on the octagonal tower and thence dropped to the roof of the front building. Placing his stick of wood across one of the embrasures in the battlement, he let himself down to the ground, a distance of fifty feet, and walked off. He took with him some clothes, razors, and silver spoons—property of the warden. He was subsequently arrested in Montgomery County for larceny and was returned to the prison and restored to his old quarters.

The second escape was No. 127, Washington Taylor, who made his getaway in 1832. He had been permitted to leave his cell to whitewash his yard. He reared his shoemaker’s bench against the yard wall and thus was free in the main yard. Carpenters at work on the tower had gone off for dinner and had left the door open. With his bedclothes, a towel and a rope, he ascended the tower and

\textsuperscript{40} It should be stated here that only recently has the journal book for these early days been brought to light. The writer of this article is indebted to Mr. John Shearer, psychologist in the Eastern Penitentiary, for permitting him to examine this book which gives both the name and the number of each convict. In the early days even the keepers were not supposed to know the names of the prisoners. Their numbers were hung on their cell doors and sewed on their garments.
came out onto the roof of the wall. He drove a large spike in the wall, attached a long rope to it, and started to descend to the ground. But he met with an accident; the rope gave way and he was precipitated to the ground and was badly hurt. He was soon discovered crawling along the outside of the wall and was returned to the institution.

The third escape was No. 143, John Kennedy, a stone cutter, in the summer of 1833. A temporary shop had been made for him. He simply left his shop, put on one of the workman's hats and walked out the front gate with the other workmen. He was arrested in the city and returned to the prison the same day.

Another escape was that of William Johnson, also in 1833, whose absconding was not marked with any peculiar details. He was soon apprehended in Trenton and was returned by his captors, who received a reward offered by the prison authorities.

The most ingenious escape was that of Samuel B. Brewster, No. 145, the third to abscond in 1833. He was a carpenter, and was permitted on occasion to leave his cell to grind his tools. He was thus able to size up his prison with a discerning eye. On the day of his escape he took off the lock of the exterior or plank door, and by placing a small block of wood under the tumbler, he prepared the bolt for pushing back without the aid of a key. He inserted a thick piece of iron into a rod three feet long, with which, after the keepers had retired for the night, he forced back the bolts and by cutting a hole in the door, threw off the bar. The iron lattice door was fastened with a spring padlock and he had taken care that the spring should not catch when it was closed so that he had no difficulty with this door. He was then in his yard and without much trouble scaled the wall surrounding it. His next job was to scale the thirty-foot exterior main wall. He had foreseen this task by constructing a stout ladder made of three parts, which he had concealed in his cell. He procured these sections and screwed them together. At the top of the ladder was a board attached to the sides on which were a number of sharp points for the purpose of affixing the ladder firmly to the top of the wall. This board also insured against the ladder's swerving as he climbed it.

Upon reaching the top of the wall, Brewster affixed a long spike in the masonry to which he attached the ladder which he had drawn up after him. But he had not reckoned with the layout of the land on the other side of the wall. At that particular point the wall was
ten feet higher on the outside than on the inside. He had no way of knowing just how far the end of his ladder was from the ground. He was obliged to jump and could not brace himself against the fall. Accordingly he sprained his ankle as he jumped. He was able to effect his escape, however, but foolishly went to his home in Kensington where he was apprehended a few days later. The story is that his wife betrayed him by notifying the authorities. As our contemporary informant stated: "He was betrayed by one, who, in accordance with the laws of Nature and its God, should 'shield him and save him, or perish.'"

10. Efforts to Keep the Prisoners Apart

The philosophy of the Pennsylvania System was obviously to keep prisoners apart. Separation, one from the other, was the real objective and not, as the critics contended, solitary confinement. While the term "solitary confinement" was frequently used by advocates and friends of the system, the very fact that the legislature legalized visiting of the members of the Philadelphia Society in 1829 is enough proof that prisoners were to be afforded the privilege of outside contacts. It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the philosophy of this unique system except to allude to it as it bears upon other aspects of the administration in those early days. The writer does, however, take the position that the founders of the Pennsylvania System did not countenance uninterrupted solitude although there were those at the time who believed this type of discipline was the most efficacious.

The first warden of the prison, Samuel R. Wood, whose qualifications we shall discuss later, was wont to tell a story which illustrates the efficacy of the system. He stated that he had gone down to the wharf of the city of Philadelphia and as he mingled with the laborers there he recognized and spoke to three different men who had been incarcerated in his prison at the same time and none recognized the others as having been contemporaries in Cherry Hill.

In European prisons where the separate or Pennsylvania System was adopted, great use was made of the mask or hood which each convict pulled down over his face when he left his cell. Inmates were taken in small groups to work, to exercise, to chapel, with their masks over their faces. In chapel they sat in little coffin-like stalls, all facing the chaplain. After they had entered their booths, they could take off their masks but were unable to see one another.
But in Cherry Hill there was really very little use for the hood or mask. The inmate rarely left his cell. The writer of this article has never seen an allusion to the mask in any of the annual reports of the institution but there are a few other sources which make reference to the use of the head covering. In the McElwee report there are a few references to the mask and Charles Dickens in his *American Notes* mentioned the hood as follows: "Over the head and face of every prisoner who comes into this melancholy house, a black hood is drawn; and in this dark shroud, an emblem of the curtain dropped between him and the living world, he is led to his cell from which he never again comes forth, until his whole term of imprisonment has expired."

There is a tradition in the Eastern Penitentiary that hoods or masks were worn in the early days. Occasionally (up to a few years ago) some old-time convict sent to the prison for his second, third, or fourth offense, will vaguely relate how in the old times under Warden Michael Cassidy (1881-1900) all prisoners wore masks. This is, of course, not correct at all since in Cassidy's time two prisoners were often found together in cells and there is no reference to the mask. The writer of this article has in his possession a picture presumably of the later Warden Robert J. McKenty (1909-1923) wearing a hood drawn over his face which is alleged to have been found in one of the inner reaches of the old Bastille.

11. Early Wardens of the Prison

It would seem that the first warden of the new prison was groomed for the position. He was astute Samuel R. Wood, a Quaker and member of the Pennsylvania Society who had joined that organization on April 8, 1816. He was also one of the inspectors of the Walnut Street Jail. Great trust was placed in him, if we are to believe contemporary accounts of his knowledge of penal matters and of his personal ability.

Warden Wood was born August 25, 1776, in the quaint little hamlet of Blue Bell, Whitpain Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, son of John and Catherine Wood. There are few known facts about his life, aside from what is known after he assumed charge of the new penitentiary. De Beaumont and de Tocqueville, the French commissioners who visited the Eastern Penitentiary in 1833, spoke very highly of Mr. Wood. They wrote
that he was "a man of superior mind, who, influenced by religious sentiments, has abandoned his former career [sic], in order to devote himself entirely to the success of an establishment so useful to his community."

A further word of testimony regarding this first warden came from the distinguished political scientist, Dr. Francis Lieber, who translated the report of the commissioners mentioned above, *On the Penitentiary System*. Said Dr. Lieber: "I have never found a superintendent of any penitentiary of a more human disposition, and clearer mind on all subjects of the penitentiary system than Mr. Wood; I must add here that I have received from no one more sound and practical knowledge of the penitentiary system, generally, than from Mr. Wood. I have for my part never become acquainted with a person whom I thought equally fitted for that station."

Five years later, when the good warden's régime was under fire, the account of which we shall review later, the majority report of the legislative committee had the following to say about his attributes:

His mind seems to have been devoted with much earnestness to the cause of humanity, and the improvement for this purpose of what is now appropriately called the Pennsylvania Penitentiary System. Without any other compensation or reward than "the luxury of doing good," this gentleman devoted his time and means to this interesting, but to many, revolting subject. Not satisfied with the knowledge acquired in his own country, like the celebrated Howard, he visited the prisons of foreign countries, and there added to his already great experience. Such untiring singleness of purpose in the pursuit of knowledge for the alleviation of human misery, and the improvement of the moral condition of mankind, without any selfish motive to actuate it, is certainly indicative of a sound head and a pure heart.

This report continued by stating that the inspectors of the prison "with great earnestness pressed upon Mr. Wood the acceptance of the situation of warden. . . . After some hesitation and reluctance he yielded to the importunity of the friends of humanity, who were anxious to place under his direction an institution which would carry into full effect, the great system so long urged by philanthropists and to which he himself had been so much devoted."
A word of rebuttal to these encomiums should be appended here in order to be on guard before we, at this late date, look upon Mr. Wood as one of those rare souls who goes about doing nothing but good. The minority report of the investigating committee of the legislature spoke with considerable feeling:

The biography of Mr. Wood is totally gratuitous. He did not, like "the celebrated Howard, visit the prisons of foreign countries, without any other compensation or reward than the luxury of doing good." He went to England for the purpose of improving himself in a particular branch of his profession, and from thence to Russia with Clymer's printing press, not as a Howard. While in England he conversed with some of the benevolent society of friends from whom he acquired some knowledge of the discipline of English prisons, and on his return was appointed as an inspector of the Walnut street Prison, and was subsequently appointed Warden of the Eastern Penitentiary. This is the sum and substance of the matter.  

The writer has tried on numerous occasions to learn more about Warden Wood but has been unsuccessful except to gather a few isolated and unrelated facts about his life. He is supposed to have lived at one time at 244 Wood Street, Norristown, Pa., and to have had a brother named Thomas Wood. He owned a farm at Plymouth Meeting, a hamlet near Norristown, was in business with a Thomas Mervine on Ridge Road, about three-quarters of a mile from the penitentiary (a stone and lead mill), and was also in the "mahogany business" with another partner named Jacob Zigler. Wood resigned as warden in 1840. The last we hear of him is from his farm near Catawissa, a small town in upstate Pennsylvania.

Wood was succeeded by George Thompson whose term of office extended from 1840 to 1845. The third warden was Thomas Scattergood who administered the prison from 1840 to 1845. He was succeeded by John Halloway who had been a clerk under Warden Wood. Halloway served at two different times: 1850-1854 and 1856-1870. Nimrod Strickland, of Chester, was warden between Halloway's two terms.

Upon the appointment of Samuel Wood as warden, he called upon one William Blundin, an employee of his in the "stone mill"  

41 McElwee, Report, p. 123.
and who lived in Norristown, to be “underkeeper.” Blundin and his wife lived at the prison and the fact that the woman had free run of the establishment brought her into the investigation which shook the prison in 1834. Warden Wood was a bachelor and her name was linked with his in the charges.

The principal keeper of the establishment, on its opening, was William Griffith. Those in charge of instructing the prisoners in their handicraft cellular work were called “overseers.” Those in charge of what we today call custody were known as keepers.

The Philadelphia Prison Society, originators of the separate system of penal treatment, and in a sense “watch-dogs” of the régime at Cherry Hill, were ever mindful of their responsibility to the citizens of the Commonwealth and discussed the management of the prison at many of their meetings. However, two charges may be made against them. First, they were so moralistic and devout themselves that they often failed to impute wrong intent to others, especially if such persons were clothed with authority. Second, they were gullible. Both the wily convicts and the astute administrators could hoodwink them. The convicts simulated religion and posed as repentant and the Philadelphia reformers tended to believe them.

At this late date we have no way of knowing what the members of the Philadelphia Society thought of the startling revelations brought out against Warden Wood and his staff during the investigation of 1834. But we do know that not one word was set down in the Minutes of the Society’s meetings relative to this investigation. From the time the prison was opened until the investigation, not one word against the management of the prison involving punishments, escapes, violations of the separate system nor of irregularities in the financial operations of the institution appeared. Surely they should have known of the rumors that were current at the time. This is one aspect of the Society that cannot be explained.

The first recorded complaints appearing in the Minutes of the Society appeared years after the investigation: February 11, 1842 “some of the cells appeared to be neglected;” February 10, 1843: “several prisoners were out of their cells and might communicate with each other and some of the prisoners complained that their cells were too cold and a few that their food was not clean.”

The Society approved of the “shower bath” as a form of punishment in September, 1843; May 9, 1945, it was “reported that the
old floors were in bad condition;" in June of the same year it was reported that on Sundays when the usual number of keepers was not present "much noise takes place in the three single blocks." On March 13, 1846, a rather lengthy report was submitted stating that the institution was cold and that the labor conditions in the prison were unsatisfactory.

Apologists of the separate system who may also have been apologists for the Prison Society also have contended that early irregularities in the prison management were inevitable; that the years between 1829 and 1849 were "experimental" years. This theme was expanded by Richard Vaux, son of Roberts Vaux who made such a contribution to the building of the penitentiary. Richard Vaux was for forty years the president of the Board of Inspectors. He stated that the attention of the Inspectors was directed to the construction of the buildings and their practical management without much regard to the workings of the system upon which the penitentiary was established.

If we had all the facts it would doubtless be true that the prison never subscribed one hundred per cent to the philosophy of separate confinement. Consistently throughout its history from 1829 to 1913, when the Pennsylvania legislature at the urgent request of Governor John K. Tener repealed the law under which the system operated, violations of separation were in existence. Long before 1913 the system was hopelessly broken down. The governor's message to the legislature is here appended:

The congregate method should be made a part of our penal system; and hence I recommend the passage of an act providing that the inspectors, commissioners and managers of penitentiaries, jails, houses of correction and refuge and reformatories shall be authorized, in their discretion, to have the inmates of such institutions congregated for the purposes of worship, labor, learning and recreation.

Here, officially, was the end of the separate system in Pennsylvania.

It is of interest to record here that one prisoner was taken from Cherry Hill to be hanged, accompanied by fifty marines. The procession left the prison at eleven in the morning and the trap was sprung in county prison less than an hour later. This one prisoner was a federal offender who had committed "murder on the high
seas.” He was James Moran, No. 750, aged 19, a native of Southampton, England. It is recorded in the prison journal that he was hanged May 19, 1837 “till dead” with the word “dead” underscored three times.

12. THE FIRST INVESTIGATION OF THE EASTERN PENITENTIARY

It is amazing that there were scarcely any critics of the separate system in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Public officials and distinguished citizens throughout the entire state all were either enthusiastic or satisfied with the philosophy underlying the penal discipline as delineated by the system. Critics there were in high places in other states, but not at home in Pennsylvania. To use the popular hackneyed phrase of today, they were completely “sold” on the idea.

There were ugly rumors of graft in the building of the huge structure at Cherry Hill. We are not concerned with that in this story but it should at least be recorded that human nature was little different in 1829 than at present, especially in the erection of public buildings. The structure probably cost twenty-five per cent more than it should. There is no record however to cast the slightest suspicion on any of the members of the Philadelphia Society. Their hands were clean when the institution was finally thrown open to begin its gruesome task of regeneration.

We have mentioned Samuel R. Wood in the earlier section. He was the first warden. Great things were expected of him. But, in less than five years his administration was under a cloud. Rumblings of discontent concerning the internal management of the institution were heard in the legislature. Serious apprehension “was excited in the minds of men friendly to the system that wealth and family

\[42\text{This may need qualification: In 1826 the Legislature appointed a commission of Charles Shaler, Edward King and T. J. Wharton to revise the penal code within the framework of a system of imprisonment at hard labor and solitary confinement. While engaged in their work the commission came under the influence of Rev. Louis Dwight of Boston, a foe of separate confinement and a champion of the Auburn silent system. Accordingly the commission recommended that the construction of both the Allegheny and Philadelphia prisons be altered so they might be administered according to the Auburn system. The Philadelphia Prison Society sent Samuel R. Wood to Harrisburg to persuade the chairman of the judiciary committee to throw his weight in favor of the original plans. Thus the act of April 23, 1829, provided for the separate system. The report of the commission may be found in Hazard’s Register, No. 13, March 29, 1828. See also, Barnes, op. cit p. 101.}\]
connexions were about to sanctify fraud, immense and palpable
peculation and cruelty . . . if suffered to be pursued with impunity,
would jeopardize the successful development of the principles on
which it was founded."

Legislative investigations come and go. Some bring about far-
reaching reforms, some merely give lip service to improvements,
and some end in a complete whitewash. Still others manage to
whitewash and reform at the same time. The investigation under
discussion gave the administration a complete bill of health with a
mild reprimand and instituted some reforms. The committee ap-
pointed by the legislature was divided into two hostile camps; the
minority group bitterly assailed the majority findings which we
would today call quite restrained.

The tone of the minority report was naturally bitter and we must
accept it as prejudiced. On the other hand, however, they could
scarcely have made charges that were altogether untrue. In fact,
from the evidence adduced the charges were true or else there was
wholesale perjury. We therefore accept the fact that the admin-
istration of the Eastern Penitentiary at best was decidedly lax.
But one can find nothing in the proceedings of the Philadelphia
Society up to that time that would indicate that the machinery of
the institution was not functioning satisfactorily. In fact, that
splendid group of God-fearing men were almost smugly happy in
the belief that their penitentiary was divinely inspired and that the
Supreme Being was watching over their efforts. It is almost pathetic
to read the Minutes of their meetings. But truth always finds a
way of emerging from behind or under the mass of subterfuge and
selfish debris consciously heaped up by little men in high places.

We are indebted at this late date to Thomas B. McElwee, a
member of the legislature from Bedford County, for insisting that
this investigation be made public. It was due to his efforts that
the entire proceedings were published in spite of opposition.

The official investigation “for the purpose of examining into
the Economy and Management” of the prison began when a joint
committee was appointed from the Senate and House in the early
part of December 1834. However, the preliminaries for the in-
quiry were commenced nearly a year previously. Actual testimony
did not begin until December 16, 1834, in the city of Philadel-

McElwee’s Report, p. 3.
The first hints that things were not well came from disgruntled employees of the prison. Judge Charles Coxe, president of the Board of Inspectors, took down their testimony but from all we can learn, no action was taken by the inspectors. Since nothing came of these informal charges, several men "well-known and respectable" carried the story to the attorney general, George M. Dallas, urging him to ask the governor to order a thorough investigation. Dallas immediately communicated with Judge Coxe asking for the testimony. On March 8, 1834, Judge Coxe sent Dallas the testimony of some sixteen witnesses who had preferred charges against the management. This action had the sanction of the entire Board of Inspectors. After carefully perusing these charges, Attorney General Dallas sent the following letter to Governor Wolf, dated November 26:

I believe it to be my duty to submit the subject to you, that, if deemed necessary, measures may be taken alike to preserve this valuable institution in the esteem of our fellow citizens, to remove all doubts as to its system of discipline and general management, and, if abuses really exist, to reform them before much mischief shall have been produced.

The charges were serious. They embraced a wide variety of loose practices, which, if true, would be inimical to efficiency in any institution and would tend to break down the morale of employees possessing any degree of integrity. That some of the charges were based upon unimpeachable evidence is undoubtedly true; that some were exaggerated may also be true; and that some grew out of a misunderstanding on the part of the complainants of the purpose of such an institution as the Eastern Penitentiary is quite obvious. The mass of evidence paraded before the committee during the five weeks' hearing (December 16, 1834-January 22, 1835) was variously interpreted by the members sitting in judgment. An abridged statement of the charges includes: (1) practices and manners among the officers, both males and females, licentious and immoral in nature, generally known and participated in by the warden and his deputies; (2) embezzlement and misapplication of public provisions and labor for use of the warden and others, some

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44 Meetings were held in "Mrs. Yohe's North American Hotel."
even not connected with the institution; (3) cruel and unusual punishments inflicted on the prisoners by order of the warden, but not authorized by law; (4) known practices and habits inconsistent with the object of a penitentiary such as the giving of large entertainments, "carousing and dancing late at night," etc.; (5) disregard for the principle of separate confinement by permitting some favored prisoners to be out of their cells.\(^4\)

Elaborating on these charges it was testified that prisoners were allowed out of their cells on numerous occasions to wait table in the various apartments of the administrative staff, immoral conduct was practiced between the deputy’s wife and employees, escapes from the institution were never recorded by the warden, work amounting to large sums of money was completed by the prisoners for private gain rather than for the state, etc. Certainly there were enough charges to bring about a thorough change of policy.

Subsequently the investigation brought out the fact that a number of severe punishments were resorted to in certain refractory cases. It was substantiated beyond a question of a doubt that iron gags, strait jackets, the practice of ducking, mad or tranquilizing chairs, severe deprivations of food and more minor punishments were made use of, in some cases with severe results. Space forbids an elaboration of all these charges. But the one dealing with punishments is worth examining since it demonstrates how easy it is for prison administrators, even with the best of intentions to resort to cruelty when fear and vacillating policies characterize a penal establishment.

One of the advantages of the separate system of penal discipline was that those subjected to this treatment need not be physically punished. In the prisons patterned after the Auburn plan in which convicts were associated together during the day for the purpose of employment, various physical punishments were resorted to. The most frequent type of punishment was the whip. However, the water douche, and the dark cell on a diet of bread and water, were also employed. The floggings at Auburn and Sing Sing were notorious, especially under the martinet warden, Elam Lynds. This stern disciplinarian insisted that a prison could not be operated unless the prisoners’ wills were broken. And this could be accomplished only by physical means.

\(^4\) Digested from McElwee’s *Report*, p. 34.
The separate system could, in theory at least, thrive without physical punishments. But, in practice, it was found, according to the charges, that certain barbaric punishments were resorted to, even by the “humane” Samuel R. Wood, the God-fearing Quaker. In the 1834 investigation the members of the committee were obliged to admit that excessive physical punishments were employed to subdue certain inmates.

Separate confinement lends itself easily to certain types of punishment which are certainly practicable. If an inmate in his cell refuses to work his food can be stopped. Or his tools, books and any other article which he may prize may be withdrawn for a period of time. Complete idleness is certainly one of the most effective punishments in a prison and its existence without any companionship whatsoever makes it even more intense. In a very short time the prisoner begs for some form of occupation.

This type of treatment was resorted to on frequent occasions in the early history of Cherry Hill. For example, an instance is reported from the McElwee report. William Griffith, the principal keeper, was having trouble with No. 50, William Napier, a notorious robber. Napier was born in County Down, in Ireland, and at the time of conviction was thirty-six years of age. He had for many years been a “man-of-war’s man,” and was over six feet and “robust and athletic.” He possessed a “remarkable fierce and stubborn temper.”

Becoming careless in his work, he would frequently spoil it, capitalizing on the fact that he was blind in one eye and, with the other eye sore, insisting that he should be placed on the sick list. Griffith immediately removed Napier’s tools and books and restricted his visits to a minimum. Before a week had elapsed he began to grow uneasy. He paced his cell continuously and begged for work. He admitted he had “been playing old soldier.” Nevertheless, his pleas went unanswered. He would explain to the keepers: “Give me back my work or I’ll go crazy,” or “For God’s sake, give me a book or I shall die.” At the expiration of three weeks his work was returned to him and he became “unusually diligent,” and never gave any further trouble.

The common types of punishment were, in addition to withdrawal of the prisoner’s tools and books, deprivation of his exercise, moderate deprivation of food and excessive deprivation of food. One prisoner, No. 66, Kyser by name, a forger, was denied
food for six consecutive days. Three days was usually the limit imposed. But other punishments were inflicted on certain prisoners during the first five years of Warden Wood's régime. There is plenty of evidence to support this charge.

There was first the dark cell.47 This form of punishment can be labeled excessive although it may work little hardship if the cell is normally comfortable and the prisoner is given adequate food and exercise. Evidence at the 1834 investigation showed that often a prisoner was placed in an unheated cell with no bedding except perhaps one blanket, with little and infrequent food and then only bread and water. One instance that came before the committee was that of a "yellow boy," No. 132, Charles Warrick. He was only sixteen years old, from Delaware County, sentenced to five years for arson. The report reads:

One convict was kept in this situation for forty-two days; on the evening of that day one of the keepers was attracted to the cell of this miserable wretch by repeated knockings at his wicket; on looking in at the cell, the convict exhibited every symptom of delirium produced by starvation; he was on his knees, his eyes rolling in phrensy, and his frame reduced to a skeleton by the severity of his punishment. On the keeper inquiring why he had knocked, the miserable boy held out his little tin cup in his hand and exclaimed, "my father told me to knock to get a little mush." The keeper in violation of discipline gave him some bread, and next morning reported his case to the physician (Dr. Franklin Bache) who entered in his Journal, "No. 132, weak from starvation." Notwithstanding this entry, the prisoner was not released, and on the second day after, the keeper again reported the case to the physician who entered on his Journal after having examined the prisoner's health, "suffering from starvation." He was then released by order of the Warden in so emaciated a state that he had to be supported from the dungeon to his cell by two men.

The boy's only offense for meriting this punishment was "cutting up some upper leather of shoes."

A second type of severe physical punishment used in the early régime was "ducking" or the water douche. This was a frequent

47 The dark cell was an ordinary cell made dark. The skylight was covered with half a keg and a piece of cloth was thrown over it; McElwee's Report, p. 156.
punishment in early American prisons. It had several variations. Water poured on a victim from a considerable height was the usual method employed. The severity of the punishment depended on the temperature of the water or the atmosphere and upon the number of pails thrown. The case alluded to in the Eastern Penitentiary was that of one Seneca Plimly, No. 75. He was nineteen years of age when he entered the prison on May 14, 1831. His home was Bradford County and he had been convicted of horse-stealing. The records show that he was pardoned February 10, 1832. He was supposed to be an idiot but the journal shows that he could read and write. When Plimly was subjected to the water douche "the weather was intensely cold, he was in a state of nudity, and icicles formed on his hair, and his person was incrusted with ice."

A unique punishment was the "mad or tranquilizing chair," a fantastic contraption invented by the distinguished colonial physician, Dr. Benjamin Rush, for the purpose of subduing excitable mental cases in the Pennsylvania Hospital. Known usually as the Mad-Chair, it was a large box chair, constructed of heavy planking. The prisoner was placed in the chair, his arms above the elbows fastened by straps to the back. Another strap was passed about his body, through holes in the chair and was fastened behind. Handcuffs were placed on his hands. Other straps were passed about his ankles and were firmly fastened to the lower part of the chair. The victim had no resting place for his feet. It was impossible for him to move any part of his body or his limbs. The pain was intense yet it is recorded that while in this chair, prisoners were severely beaten. When released from the chair the legs and arms were usually badly swollen.

Other punishments that need no description were the strait jacket and the iron gag. The former was frequently used throughout the nineteenth century in both prisons and insane hospitals. It consisted of a piece of sack or bagging cloth of several thicknesses, with holes for the admission of hands. In the back there were eyelets through which a strong cord was laced back and forth. The collar was fitted about the neck of the victim and the cord was drawn up tight in the back. Oftentimes persons were laced up so tightly

48 McElwee's Report, p. 250, from testimony of the prison physician, Dr. Bache.
in this contrivance that their necks and faces were black with congealed blood.

The iron gag is thus described by the investigating committee of the Eastern Penitentiary: "This was a rough iron instrument resembling the stiff bit of a blind bridle, having an iron palet in the center, about an inch square, and chains at each end to pass around the neck and fasten behind. This instrument was placed in the prisoner's mouth, the iron palet over the tongue, the bit forced back as far as possible, the chains brought round the jaws to the back of the neck; the end of one chain was passed through the ring in the end of the other chain drawn tight to 'the fourth link,' and fastened with a lock; his hands were then forced into leather gloves in which were iron staples and crossed behind his back; leather straps were passed through the staples, and from thence round the chains of the gag between his neck and the chains; the straps were drawn tight, the hands forced up toward the head, and the pressure consequently acting on the chains which press on the jaws and jugular vein, producing excruciating pain, and a hazardous suffusion of blood to the head."

It was while fastened in this device that one convict, No. 102, Matthew Maccumsey, died June 27, 1833. He was without doubt a most obstreperous prisoner. At the time he came to the prison from Lancaster County he was 42 years of age. He was sentenced to twelve years for murder. The physician's verdict was death from "apoplexy." Commenting on the prisoner's death, Dr. Bache stated in his report: "This prisoner was received into the penitentiary in an imperfect state of health, the consequence of habitual intemperance. During the whole period of his confinement, he frequently exhibited symptoms, indicative of a radically diseased and shattered constitution."

Here, then, is the story of the first of many investigations of the Eastern Penitentiary's management. Today it has only historical interest although it is proof that the prison, being a secret place, generally far from the public eye, should not be immune from supervision and control by the legally constituted agents of the public. The investigation of 1834 did serve a useful purpose since devices were inaugurated for closer supervision of the administra-

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49 In *Fifth Annual Report*, p. 12, signed December 31, 1833.
tion and certain policies were revised which made for more efficient administration.

13. CHARLES DICKENS VISITS THE EASTERN PENITENTIARY

When the novelist Charles Dickens made his initial visit to America in 1842 he had already produced some of his most lasting works. At the age of thirty, when he landed in the country, he had to his credit the well known classics, *Pickwick Papers*, produced in 1837; *Oliver Twist*, published the following year; *Nicholas Nickleby*, written in 1838-39; and *Old Curiosity Shop* received by the public in 1840.

To entertain such a distinguished guest was indeed a privilege. He was royally received by Americans everywhere. He seemed pleased with his reception and thoughtfully complimented the people and their institutions wherever he went. But what he wrote about this country in his *American Notes*, published later that same year, shocked the sensibilities of the entire nation to such a degree that it took years for the wounds to heal.

No doubt in many instances he spoke the truth. But it was claimed that he took advantage of his reputation to toy with strict veracity to an alarming degree. Certainly the diatribe he hurled at the penitentiary at Philadelphia did not go unchallenged. The friends of the separate system rallied to its defense heroically, calling in experts whose opinions were even more authoritative than those of the British author. Dickens condemned the system of prison discipline with all the literary vehemence he could command.

It was during the month of March of 1842 that Dickens made his pilgrimage to Cherry Hill. He was within the institution about two hours.50 The warden at the time was George Thompson. It is quite probable that he was accompanied through the institution, however, by Matthew Bevan, president of the Board of Inspectors, and Richard Vaux, newly appointed board member. Dickens was quoted as saying that “The Falls of Niagara and your Penitentiary are two objects I might almost say I most wish to see in America.”51 Every courtesy was extended to him. He was taken from block to block and from cell to cell. He spoke to many prisoners in their separate cells. As he left the prison he was reported to have said: “Never

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50 Philadelphia *Courier*, December 9, 1843.
before [have I seen] a public institution in which the relations of father and family were so well exemplified as this." Richard Vaux, who for forty years was connected with the board of the prison, stated years later that "not one word of criticism or objection was then or there made [by Dickens]. He did not even express a doubt of the success of separate confinement as a system of prison discipline." Nevertheless, what Dickens saw in the prison gave him enough ammunition, aided by his fertile imagination, to indict separate confinement and the Pennsylvania System of prison discipline in such terms of vituperation, that the members of the Philadelphia Society were obliged to try to repair the damage he had wrought throughout the world.

Space forbids an account of the criticisms of Charles Dickens or of the case by case rebuttal of the defenders of the system. The reader may profit by turning to the novelist’s *American Notes* for his criticism and to the *Journal of Prison Discipline and Philanthropy*, January, 1861, for the rebuttal of the Philadelphia Society and its friends. The rebuttal was made by William Peter, British consul-general, stationed at Philadelphia at the time.

The writer has had the good fortune to examine the journal of the prison which has been found only recently. With the aid of clues from both Dickens’ and Peter’s accounts it has been possible to identify the prisoners interviewed by the novelist. Two of these, the German known by Dickens’ devotees as the “Dutchman” and the “poet . . . who wrote verses about ships and the ‘maddening wine-cup’ and his friends at home” have become classics. The others have not been alluded to by those writing on the episode. It is only possible in this all-too-long article to set down the names and numbers of these prisoners. They were:

Case I “the first man;” William Whitley, No. 1066; from Dauphin County.

Case II “the German;” Charles Longhamer, or Langenheimer, alias Carl Morris; this man

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53 *Idem.*

54 See also, Negley K. Teeters, *They Were In Prison* (Winston, 1937), Chapter VII, for entire story.

55 The writer has prepared a more detailed story of the Dickens visit in which he described the cases interviewed by the novelist. This article will appear in a forthcoming issue of *The Dickensian*, published in London.
was in and out of prison many times and finally came to the prison gate in February 1884 and begged permission to die in the institution where he had spent so many years of his life. His request was granted and he died there in the same month.

Case III "the black burglar;" Alfred Shank, alias John Burns, No. 1565.

Case IV "the man allowed to keep rabbits;" Thomas Parks, No. 195, sentenced from Philadelphia to twelve years for murder.

Case V "the English thief;" James Williamson, alias Northwood, No. 1469, a native of London.

Case VI "the poet;" George Ryno, No. 1292; from Trenton; wrote poetry and published a volume of verse entitled *Buds and Flowers, of Leisure Hours*, under the name of Harry Hawser. Mr. James Shields of Philadelphia owns two copies of this book.

Case VII "the accomplished surgeon;" Fred F. Faustenberg, No. 1290.

Case VIII "the pretty colored boy;" David Johnson, No. 1453, 13 years old; sentenced from Philadelphia for arson.

Case IX "the Sailor;" Samuel Davis, No. 58; from Camden, N. J.; sentenced to 12 years from Philadelphia for rape.

Cases X "the three young women in adjoining cells;" all Negroes; Louisa Harman, No. 1174; Elizabeth Thompson, No. 1175; Ann Richards, No. 1176; sentenced from Philadelphia court for conspiracy; all three were prostitutes.

These, then, were the major incidents that occurred during the first fifteen years of the Eastern State Penitentiary. This famous institution served as a model throughout the world, both as to its architecture as well as to its philosophy. In the opinion of the writer, it is undoubtedly the most famous institution of its kind in the history of penology.