

rather the greatest loss of life resulted from disease outbreaks and this omission is disappointing. For instance, the cholera epidemic of the early 1830s in virtually every town and city in the state killed more citizens in just its first visitation than all the deaths in all the disasters Siegel recalls combined. Outbreaks of smallpox, typhoid, and the influenza pandemic of the early 1890s should have at least received some mention as each of these medical disasters provoked awful suffering, opportunities for bad actors and heroes to emerge, and regulations to be passed. In short, epidemics fit seamlessly into just the sort of narrative Siegel compiled.

Siegel's *Disaster* is an outstanding addition to a young reader's library and the lay reader's bookshelf, its illustrations and descriptions of human suffering and the triumph of the human spirit gripping the reader to such an extent that, at times, the skin crawls. The academic will find source material, but little contextualization. Siegel did not set out to write a treatise, but rather a compilation of his beloved state's worst (with the exception of disease) travails and in this narrow field he succeeded.

JAMES HIGGINS

*University of Houston—Victoria*

Joseph F. Spillane. *Coxsackie: The Life and Death of Prison Reform* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014). Pp. 296. Notes, essay on sources, index. Cloth, \$44.95.

Joseph F. Spillane's study of the birth and death of prison reform begins with a gripping description of the December 1977 hostage crisis at New York's Coxsackie Correctional Facility. When Coxsackie opened as a reformatory for adolescent male offenders in 1935, liberal-minded staff members hoped that social-educational and vocational programs would transform young offenders into law-abiding men. However, external and internal factors made it almost impossible to implement the facility's initial mission. The inmates who took eleven staff members hostage may not have known the institution's initial goals, but they knew that racism and brutality defined its day-to-day life. The hostage takers felt that they had no other recourse to protest devastating cuts to the prison's educational and vocational programs. Although the crisis ended peacefully, it marked the end of the facility's focus on reforming offenders and ushered in an era

of discipline-focused custody. Spillane's goal is to explain why and how the Cocksackie facility, which began as a reformatory, transformed in the span of forty years into a custodial warehouse. His case study of Cocksackie also sheds light on the historical origins of mass incarceration in the late twentieth-century United States.

Divided into three parts, the book begins with an analysis of the birth and expansion of prison reform in New York from 1929 to 1944. Chapter 1 examines the liberal reformist vision that guided the founders of Cocksackie. Artist Ben Shahn's proposed mural for New York City's Rikers Island Penitentiary, Spillane suggests, provides a window into the "liberal penal imagination." Although Shahn's mural was not created, it depicted the importance of social citizenship and adult education, the challenges of youth, and the failure of punitive incarceration. In chapter 2, Spillane turns his attention to the context of New York prison reform in which Cocksackie was established. During the 1920s and 1930s, New York's prisons suffered from two management crises—prison labor and overcrowding—thanks to the Great Depression and tough-on-crime Baumes Laws. It was in this atmosphere that the supporters of punitive incarceration begrudgingly gave way to the reformist recommendations of the Lewisohn and Engelhardt commissions.

Spillane next focuses on inmates and their worlds outside and inside the reformatory. Chapter 3, built upon a 5 percent sample of the approximately 7,500 inmate case files housed at the New York State Archives, argues convincingly that a perfect storm of conflicts—family, education, and work—pushed "adolescents adrift" and into Cocksackie. Chapter 4 analyzes the world inmates entered while confined at Cocksackie. In this chapter, Spillane brings inmates' voices to life to highlight their perspectives on the facility's racial segregation and inmates' masculinities and sexualities, as well as their views of guards, to illustrate that confinement at Cocksackie was a "transformative experience, but only in a profoundly negative sense" (113). Chapter 5 details the difficulties reformers faced implementing their ideas because of external and internal constraints, such as underfunding and conflicts over educational and vocational programs.

In the final section, Spillane explains the factors that led to the end of prison reform in New York State between 1944 and 1977. In the years following World War II, Cocksackie became overcrowded. Jaded officials began to refer to inmates, especially gang members and heroin addicts, as "uneducable" and "ungovernable." In hope of establishing order and stemming inter-racial conflict in the institution, officials transferred "troublesome" inmates

to the Great Meadow Prison at Comstock. In chapter 9, Spillane again shifts his attention outside the institution to an examination of state-level prison politics. During the 1960s and 1970s, due to the actions of guards, their unions, and tough-on-crime politicians, incarceration regimens focusing on custody, control, and discipline replaced reformatory regimens. In a suggestive epilogue, Spillane shows how the failures of liberal prison reform help explain the origins of mass incarceration, and how reformers' obsession with "objective" measures of success, such as recidivism rates, led to their own undoing. Finally, Spillane reminds us of the human consequences of New York's prison experiments.

Spillane has written a wonderful book peppered with lively prose and poignant vignettes that bring reformers, inmates, and prison staff to life. His analysis rests on a solid foundation of archival research and engages with the literatures of prison history, criminal justice, and corrections. His brief essay on sources at the conclusion of the text provides a valuable overview for scholars and students of incarceration in the twentieth-century United States.

Like all good books, Spillane's *Coxsackie* left me with a few unanswered questions, mostly about context. How did New York's Coxsackie and its regimen compare with other states' reformatories and their regimens? Likewise, how might have officials' efforts at Coxsackie informed the treatment of female juvenile offenders at other New York facilities during the same period? Finally, might it have been possible to collect and incorporate oral histories from former inmates who are still alive today? Although answers to these questions would not have changed Spillane's argument significantly, they might have enriched it.

Historians working in numerous fields will find Spillane's book of value. Historians of prisons will find his case study of Coxsackie and its relationship to the beginnings of mass incarceration in the late twentieth-century United States of interest. Likewise, historians of drugs will find Spillane's analysis of the postwar heroin epidemic of significance. Similarly, historians of reform and public policy will appreciate Spillane's nuanced analysis. Spillane's *Coxsackie* will also be a welcome addition to twentieth-century US history classes at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

JONATHAN NASH

*The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University*