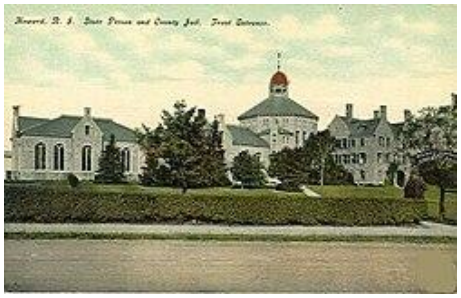
Does Your Brick Wall have Barbed Wire on Top?
Institutions and the State

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⊗ In lower left corner of slide:
Indicates info included on this handout



Postcard of the Howard Prison in Rhode Island, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=162020141 Public Domain

"'Are there no prisons?' . . . 'And the Union workhouses? . . . Are they still in operation?'"
Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, °1843

(Examples of what Scrooge was asking about) - (SOME) INSTITUTION TYPES:

- Prisons, Jails, Penitentiaries
- Poorhouses/Workhouses
- Homes for
  - Unwed mothers
  - Orphans
  - Patients
  - Elderly/ill/handicapped
  - Veterans
  - Juvenile delinquents

America was built & progressed, literally, on the backs of criminals; for England, America was a penal colony.
"Over 52,000 British prisoners were shipped off to colonial America. . . From 1718 until 1775, convict transportation to the American colonies flourished. Some estimates claim that almost 10 percent of migrants to America during this time were British convicts. Typically, getting banished to America was for a term of either seven or fourteen years, after which the convict could theoretically come back the Britain. . . British convicts came over in droves, and free Americans weren't too happy about it. In fact, even before the Transportation Act of 1718 really opened the doors for Britain's dumping of undesirables in America, some colonies tried to pass laws that would prohibit the practice." - Detailed in "British Convicts Shipped to American Colonies" by James Davie Butler (see references)

A PRISON, OR SUITABLE(?) SUBSTITUTE, WAS USUALLY BUILT SHORTLY AFTER A COMMUNITY WAS FORMED . . . LEARN ABOUT THEM BY:

- Checking mug books that deal with the history of the community to learn when and where jails were erected
- Considering a jail might be connected to a courthouse, but that was not the norm
- Considering a jail might be part of the officer's residence

FIRST US PRISON: WALNUT STREET JAIL, PHILADELPHIA, 1773

- All ages and sexes and categories of prisoners, kept together
- Deplorable conditions
- Converted to a penitentiary in the 1790s



Walnut Street Jail, Philadelphia James Peller Malcolm, engraver Library of Congress, 1789

HOW DO I KNOW IF AN ANCESTOR WAS LOCKED UP?

- If your ancestor seems to have disappeared at a particular time, do a broader search to see if he/she was held in an out-of-state facility
- Check the census, when you find your relative in a "strange place," see if that location happens to be a poorhouse, prison, or other institution
- If an ancestor is imprisoned, the rest of the family *may* move to be nearby (or may abandon their "loved one")

CONFINEMENT, BY ANY OTHER NAME, WE CALL:

- House of detention/detention center
- Jail (or, earlier, gaol)
- Keep
- Prison
- Bastille
- Dungeon
- Stockade
- Lock-up
- Workhouse
- Correction or rehabilitation facility
- Penitentiary (meaning a place for the "penitent" – well, ideally)
- Confinement (not to be confused with medically needed confinement)

AND "THEY" CALL (JARGON):

- Can
- Clink
- Cooler
- Joint
- Big house
- Calaboose
- Hoosegow
- Pokey
- Up the river
- Slammer
- Spike (for workhouse)
- Pen (short for penitentiary)

LIFE IN A POORHOUSE

- A carryover from England where the poor, indigent, or others with no means of support were housed
- If a family was held in a workhouse, the members would be separated
- Harsh conditions were employed to inspire those who were able to care for themselves & discourage incarceration
- The Poorhouse replaced the workhouse, ut both institutions required the inmates to work
- In America, the number of facilities began to diminish when the Social Security Act of 1935 was passed

POORHOUSES BY ANY OTHER NAMES:

- Almshouses
- Asylums
- County Homes
- City Homes
- Houses of Industry
- Poor Farms
- Town Farms
- Workhouses

DID YOUR ANCESTOR GO TO PRISON OR COMP.? CHECK OUT:

- Newspapers
- Court records (all types)
- Letters, journals, family stories
- Draft registrations
- Obituaries
- Tax lists (or absence from them)
- Documents of other family members (e.g., wills, deeds)
- Apparent disappearance from city directories and then a return
- Spouse living elsewhere, but one or both still claiming "married"

INMATES ON CENSUS RECORDS

- Often inmates are listed alphabetically or by age (but don't count on either)
- You may need to go back a few pages to find out the name of the institution if it is not listed on every page
- Sometimes jails would be listed at the end of a census, so check the last page(s) of the town or county
- There may be errors in inmate information about their ages, former occupations, marital status, or even their names (sometimes info is entered from their incoming documents)

DEFINITIONS (Bureau of Justice Statistics)

Jail

- In early days of America, jails and prisons were pretty much synonymous
- In more recent years, jails have become the short-term holding location of criminals until trial and/or sentencing
- Jail inmates are usually held for less than one year
- Jail inmates may engage in a work-release program, as appropriate

Prison

- "Prison was synonymous with jail/gaol" in the earlier years of America or in locations where only one holding location was available for a prisoner
- Prisons are usually larger facilities than jails
- Prisons are reserved for the more egregious offenders
- Most prison inmates are serving a sentence for longer than a year

Penitentiary

- Initially, penitentiaries were federally operated
- Penitentiaries house those serving the longest sentences
- Most, if not all, states have a penitentiary
- The presumption is that some form of reformatory discipline will be administered in a penitentiary

Correction or Rehabilitation Facility

- Incarceration is due to lesser crimes
- Rehabilitation is a goal
    - Drug counseling
    - Family counseling
    - Anger management classes
    - Remedial education and/or college courses
    - Trade education

If an institution is no longer operating or not even in existence, who ended up with the records? Consider Historical Societies, Libraries, Courthouses, etc.

ACCESSING INSTITUTION RECORDS OF YOUR ANCESTOR

- Odd as it may seem, prison records are public records (this may end up being the only photo you get of your relative, along with information you may regret receiving – proceed with caution!)
- Contact the prison to see if the ancestor had served time there and, if so, how can you get the info (cost, accessibility, etc. – don't expect it to be online, all or in part)
- Fees vary by institution (note: mental institutions follow different guidelines from prisons and you may not be very successful with those records)

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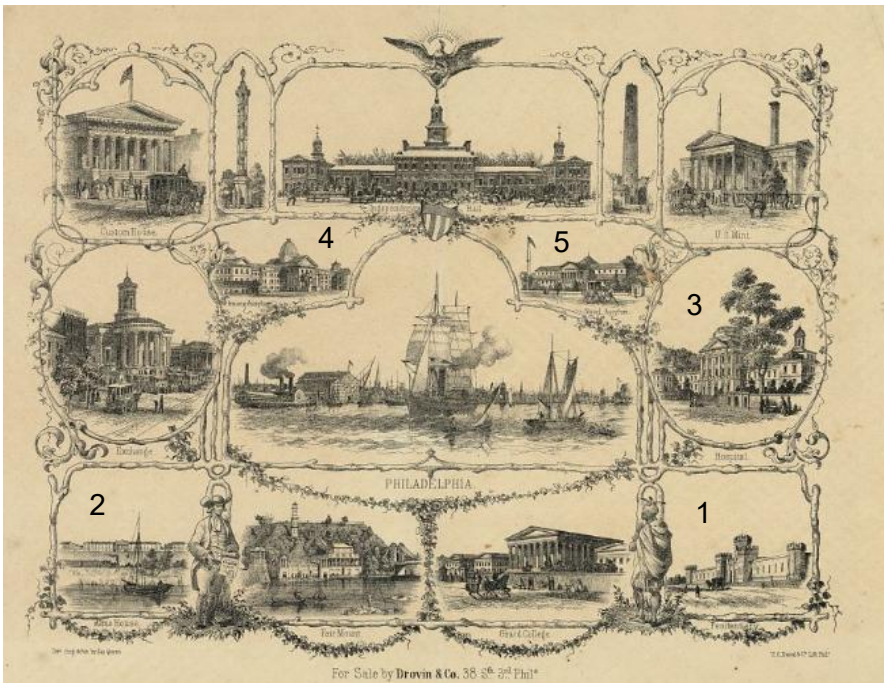
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Title

Philadelphia / des. eng. & pub. by Jas. Queen ; P.S. Duval & Co. Lith. Phila.



Summary

Print shows vignette views of prominent buildings in Philadelphia, such as, the Custom House and the (1) **Penitentiary,** the (2) **Alms House** and the U.S. Mint, also the Exchange, the (3) **Hospital**, Independence Hall, (4) **Insane Assylum,** (5) **Navy Assylum**, Fair Mount, and Girard College. Also shows two tall monuments, a Native, and William Penn holding the charter, as well as a marine view with steam and sailing ships.

Credits

Queen, James Fuller, 1820 or 1821-1886, artist
Queen, James Fuller, 1820 or 1821-1886, publisher
P.S. Duval & Co., printer

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[Philadelphia] : Des. eng. & pub. by Jas. Queen, [ca. 1855] (Phila. : P.S. Duval & Co.)

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