INFORMATION TO USERS

This was produced from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure you of complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark it is an indication that the film inspector noticed either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, or duplicate copy. Unless we meant to delete copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed, you will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed the photographer has followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For any illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and tipped into your xerographic copy. Requests can be made to our Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases we have filmed the best available copy.

University
Microfilms
International

300 N. ZEEB ROAD, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106
18 BEDFORD ROW, LONDON WC1R 4EJ, ENGLAND

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

8104103

KLIPS, STEPHEN ANTHONY

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE POOR: THE NEW YORK CITY ALMSHOUSE, 1825-1860

City University of New York PH.D. 1980

University Microfilms International 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Copyright 1980

by

Klips, Stephen Anthony

All Rights Reserved

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

PLEASE NOTE:

In all cases this material has been filmed in the best possible way from the available copy. Problems encountered with this document have been identified here with a check mark ✓.

1. Glossy photographs _____
2. Colored illustrations _____
3. Photographs with dark background _____
4. Illustrations are poor copy ✓
5. Print shows through as there is text on both sides of page _____
6. Indistinct, broken or small print on several pages _____
7. Tightly bound copy with print lost in spine _____
8. Computer printout pages with indistinct print _____
9. Page(s) _____ lacking when material received, and not available from school or author
10. Page(s) _____ seem to be missing in numbering only as text follows
11. Poor carbon copy _____
12. Not original copy, several pages with blurred type _____
13. Appendix pages are poor copy _____
14. Original copy with light type _____
15. Curling and wrinkled pages ✓
16. Other _____

University Microfilms International

300 N. ZEEB RD., ANN ARBOR MI 48106 (313) 761-4700

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE POOR:

THE NEW YORK CITY ALMSHOUSE, 1825-1860

by
Stephen A. Klips

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1980

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

© COPYRIGHT BY

Stephen A. Klips

1980

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

5/19/80
date

Richard C. Wade
Chairman of Examining Committee

5/19/80
date

Abraham Aschs
Executive Officer

Richard C. Wade

Eric Foner

Herbert Gutman
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

PREFACE

The problem of poverty in large cities like New York was as real and vivid in past centuries as it is in the twentieth, even more so. This has not been lost upon historians who have begun to unearth the vast record of the growth of poverty, the sufferings of the poor, and the social welfare reform responses of the nineteenth century. But most historians have all but ignored the public sector, confining their attention to the abundant private philanthropic efforts of the period. Some discuss the public sector without differentiating it very much from the private sector. Much attention has been spread over many cities, states, and counties. Thus, not only has the public sector been ignored, but no one city's experience has been examined in depth. It is almost as if there had been no public role in charity until the New Deal which is simply not true. The New Deal first created a Federal role in public welfare. There had always been an extensive public social welfare apparatus at the state and, more important, the municipal level.

This study attempts to build upon and compliment the works of many scholars by presenting the problem of poverty and the public municipal response of New York City from 1825 to 1860. At the commencement of research it was expected that New York would be found to have had a serious problem with public dependence and an important

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

public poor relief function, that it was probably a fairly noticeable expense, that there was probably a degree of politics and perhaps controversy involved in its administration, that interesting institutional patterns and practices may have developed, and that it might provide a good case study in reform. As the City fathers often said about their growing metropolis, this researcher's most sanguine expectations were entirely surpassed. It took little time to discover that the City did indeed have an important public relief function, that it was generally the largest budget item, that it was intimately embroiled in City politics and was frequently the subject of bitter, often ludicrous controversy. Not only was it an important City function, it actually comprised the first and therefore the model municipal executive department. When it became an administrative scandal, it was the subject of model reforms which were later applied to other organs of government. There were also easily found many fascinating institutional customs and problems at all levels and in all activities of New York City's first bureaucracy.

Prior to 1830 services were performed by volunteers and a few paid staff supervised by Common Council Committees. The new Charter of 1830 mandated distinct executive departments to perform the details of City business but for years afterward the Council was loathe to relinquish its executive prerogatives so the only actual Department they created at first was the Almshouse Department, organized as

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

such in 1832, but otherwise little changed from before, still governed by five amateur Commissioners. In 1845 the Department was reorganized under a single professional elected Commissioner and in 1849 it was again restructured under ten unpaid Governors serving staggered terms. In 1860 the Almshouse Department was abolished, reorganized, and renamed the Department of Public Charities and Correction.

Concurrent with this administrative history was a physical and geographical expansion to accommodate a growing array of institutions. Congregate facilities became the dominant mode of assisting the poor in line with a new science of social control and uplift. The Bellevue Almshouse opened in 1816 but was soon inadequate. The poor were supposed to be kept separated from the surrounding city. Therefore the City acquired new real estate: Blackwell's and Randall's Islands and farms on Long Island. As the poor grew in numbers, the institutions became bigger and more specialized. Bellevue Almshouse was a generic institution with wards for children and the insane and a Bridewell. The Hospital opened in 1825. From then until 1860, functions which formerly necessitated only a few wards grew in size and complexity so as to necessitate whole buildings and islands. With differential modes of treatment seen as necessary for the various types of dependents, specialized social sciences based on the cardinal principle of classification of the poor evolved. The members of the New York City Common Council and their

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Almshouse administrators and staff soon became leaders in the march of enlightened, experimental social reform.

The Almshouse Department is a study in reform turning upon itself: as a City function, it was subject to the spoils. Its very function, however, was that of reform - of the poor. When it became corrupt and therefore the object as well as the subject of reform, it became two case studies of reform in one.

The institutions operated on people: the poor - thousands of aged, infirm, unemployed, immigrants, blacks, children, lunatics, vagrants, and petty criminals. Cash or kind assistance - "outdoor relief" - also grew during this period despite a clear policy of attempting to minimize it. The City was truly overwhelmed by its poverty problem and strove desperately and unsuccessfully to control and manage the poor. The results of both deliberate policy and official ineptitude often included amazingly bad conditions for the people. It is attempted here to show something of how the institutions operated on the inside and who the poor were and how they reacted to institutionalization.

In order to give an overall picture of the Almshouse Department as part of City government as well as the operation of the institutions on the people, it has been necessary to forego temptations to explain the poverty problem theoretically be relating it to developing capitalism in depth, to delve into the whirlwind of public opinion regarding public welfare, to engage in extensive

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

evaluations of every point of the reformers' philosophies or of parliamentary debate, or to do many other things which others may attempt in the future with profit. Primary attention is focused on how the institutions were built, how they grew, and how they operated. Starting with basic ideas and with the physical, the process of institution building is examined. The politics and economics of public welfare are sketched; an entire volume could have been devoted to each of these areas. The poor themselves and their various modes of admission and discharge are examined in broad demographic terms with an emphasis on immigration which was perceived as the main welfare problem of the day. The Almshouse Department is examined as an administrative bureaucracy, an employer of hundreds by the 1850s. Then the institutions - Almshouse "proper," the Workhouse, hospitals, prisons, Nurseries, and the Potter's Field - are examined in some depth with an emphasis on their basic purposes, their daily physical and moral routines and standards of living, their attempts at character reform, and, especially, attempts to enforce labor upon the inmates. Each institution also had special problems and accomplishments of its own. There were also the thousands of outdoor poor.

This study is based very largely on the printed Minutes and Documents of the Common Council, the Minutes and Annual Reports of the Almshouse Governors, and the internal manuscript records of the Almshouse Department. These sources are

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

supplemented in some degree by private writings, newspapers, directories, and selected secondary sources. Basically, the public business was to be found in public documents.

The historian owes many debts. Many librarians, teachers, and friends have been of great assistance to me in many ways. The staff of the New York Public Library, the Municipal Reference and Research Center, the Municipal Archives and Records Center, the Health and Hospitals Corporation, the Department of Health Library, the New York Hospital Archives, the Museum of the City of New York, and the Queens College Historical Documents Collection generously made their valuable materials available to me and provided much aid in their efficient use. Several friends read and discussed the manuscript at various stages. My mother and father assisted financially during the initial period of research.

Finally, Professor Richard C. Wade saw the project through from beginning to end with the most amazing patience, firmness, and calm encouragement imaginable. His confidence and enthusiasm made the work a joy even in its most difficult moments. His own enormous contributions to the field of urban history were a constant inspiration to me. Perhaps only his other grateful students can know fully what I mean when I say that working under his direction has been a great privilege.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CONTENTS

	Preface	iv
	Frontesquotation	xi
	Illustrations	xii
	Abbreviations used in Citations	xxv
1.	The Building of Institutions	1
2.	Almshouse Legislation and Politics	57
3.	Almshouse Economics	110
4.	Almshouse Demographics	155
5.	The Almshouse Department Bureaucracy	206
6.	The Almshouse Proper	264
7.	The Imperative of Labor	308
8.	The Outdoor Poor	351
9.	The Sick and the Hospitals	376
10.	Malefactors and Prisons	425
11.	Children of the Republic	460
12.	The Lunatic Asylum	493
13.	Potter's Field	536
14.	Conclusion: The Failure of Institutionalization	554
	Bibliography	572

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

There is not in the annals of any country
such a condition of things as our Alms House presents.

Board of Assistant Aldermen,
Charity and Almshouse Committee,
Dr. John R. Rhinelander,
Samuel Dunshee, William W. Holly,
Report on Ophthalmia, Document,
I, #69, March 9, 1832.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ILLUSTRATIONS

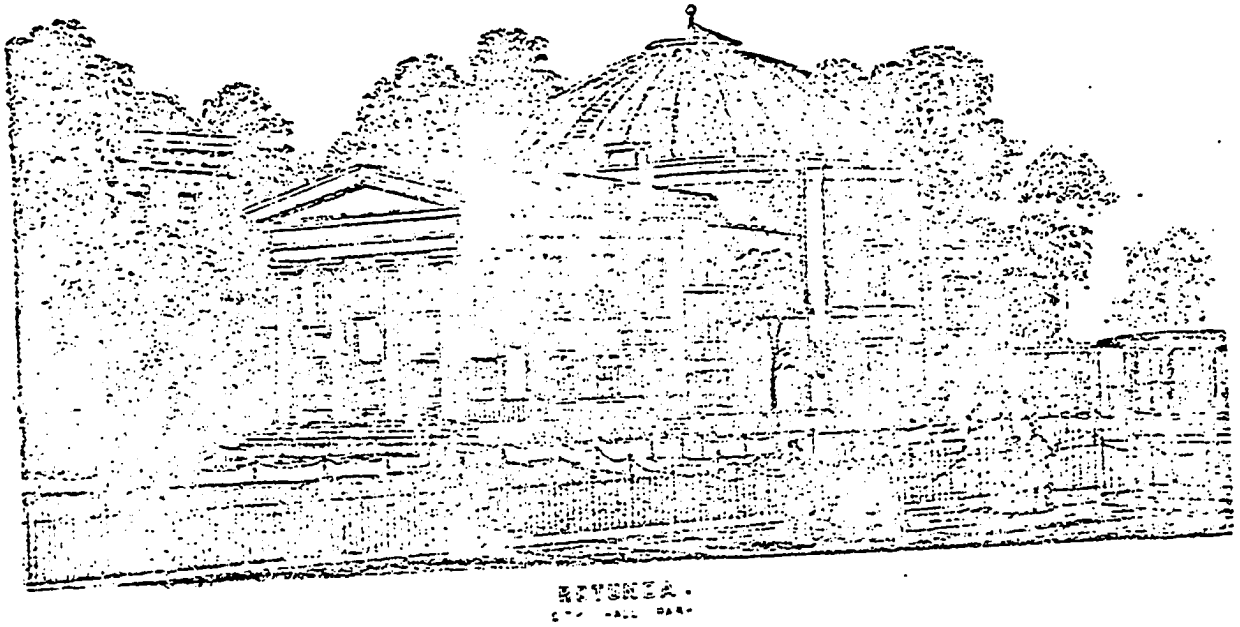
All illustrations are taken from the Annual Reports of the Governors of the Almshouse Department, 1849-1859.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



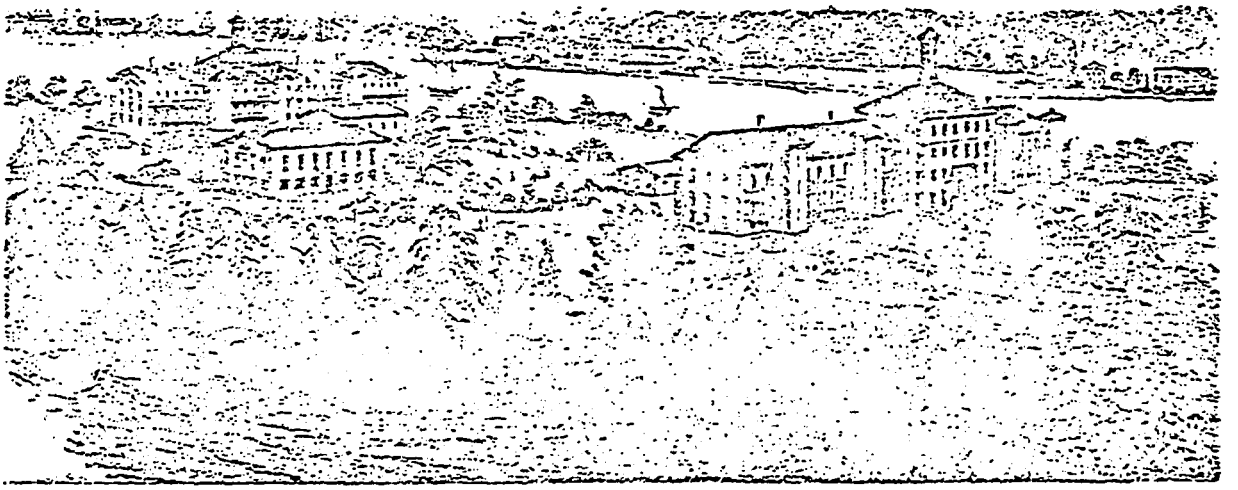
LOGO OF THE GOVERNORS OF THE ALMSHOUSE OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



ROTUNDA, CITY HALL PARK

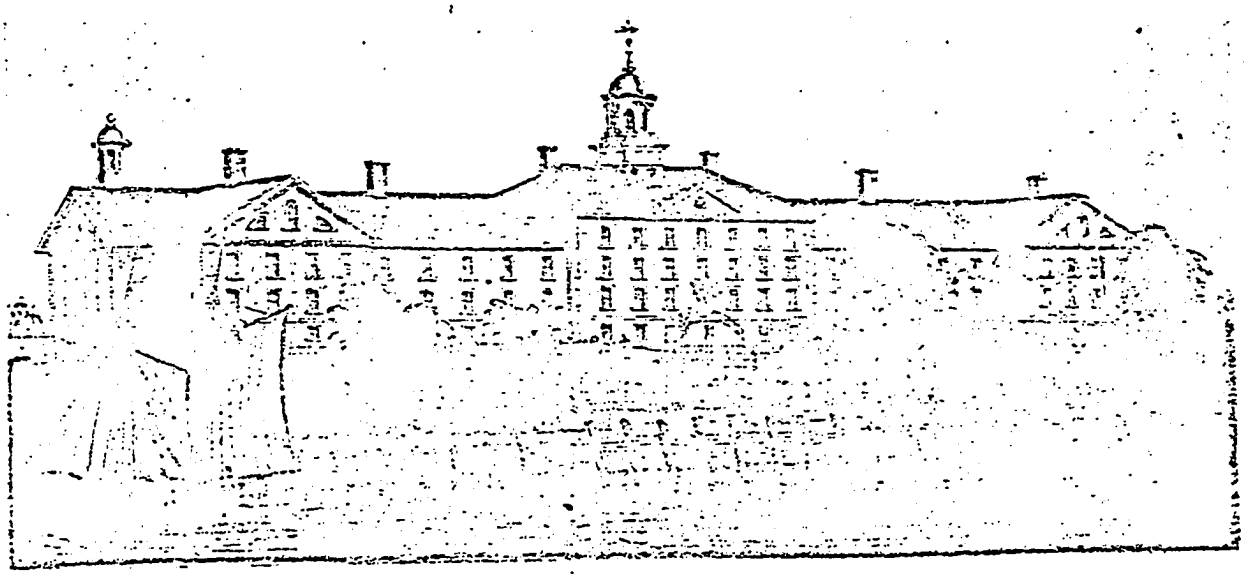
Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



ALMS HOUSES. BUILDINGS.
BLACKWELLS ISLAND.

ALMSHOUSE, BLACKWELL'S ISLAND

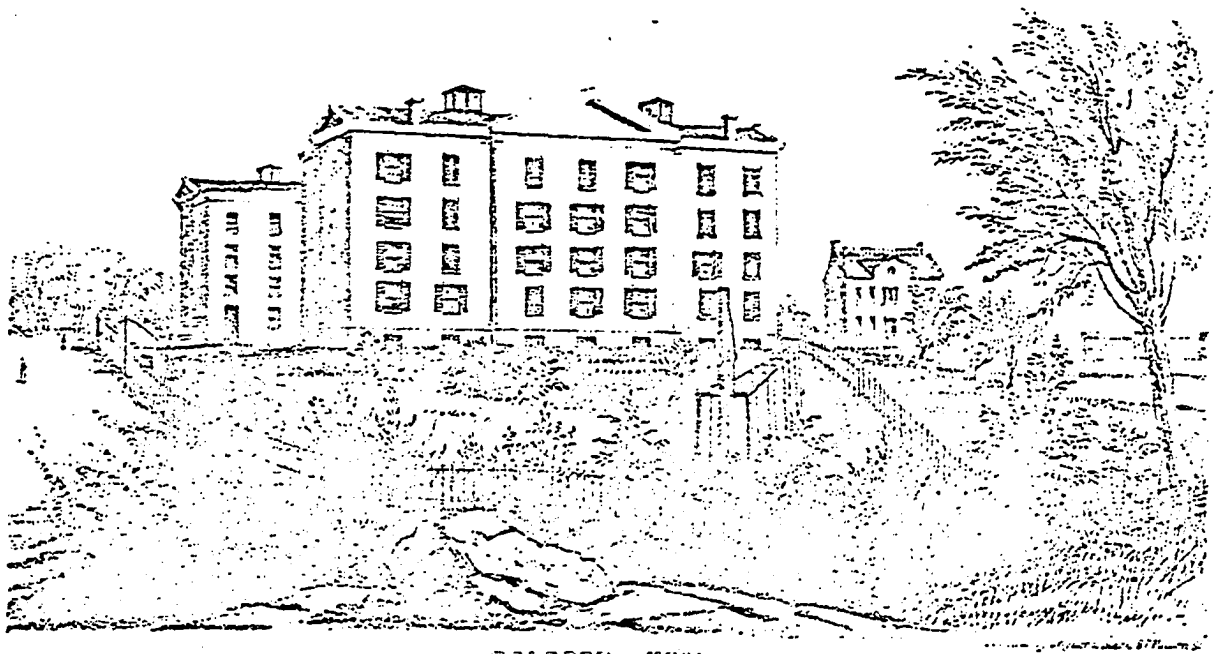
Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



ALMS TOWER HOSPITAL.

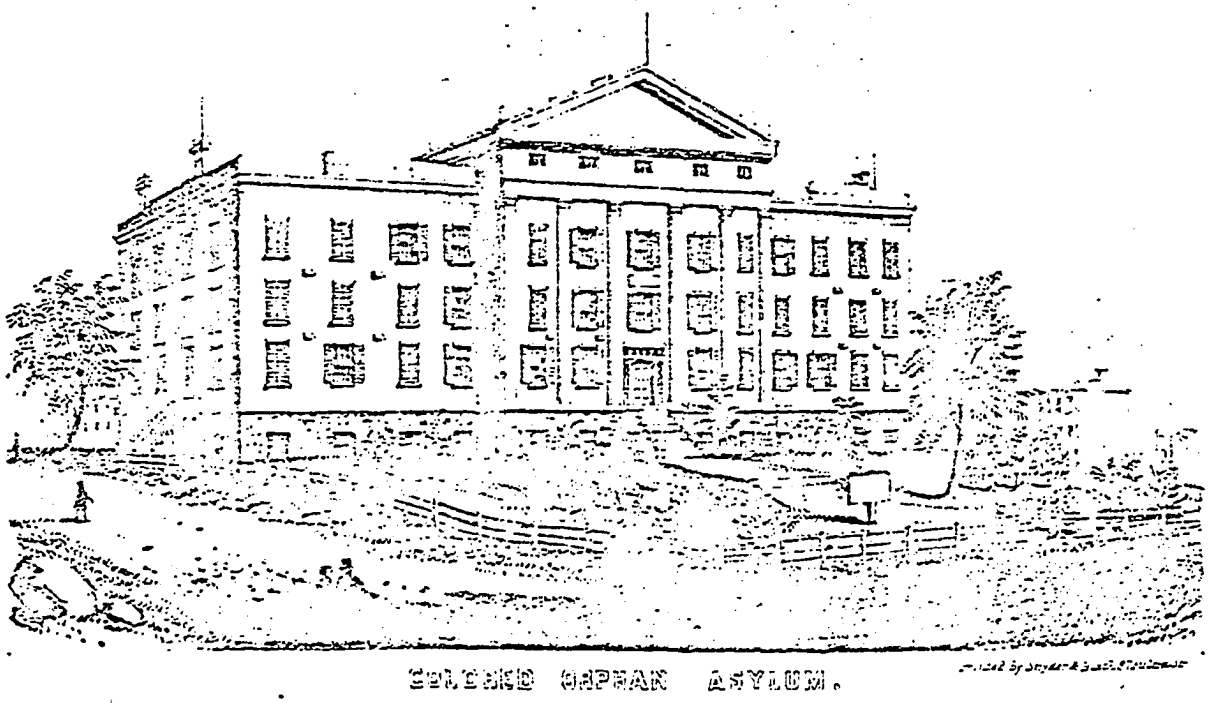
BELLEVUE HOSPITAL

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



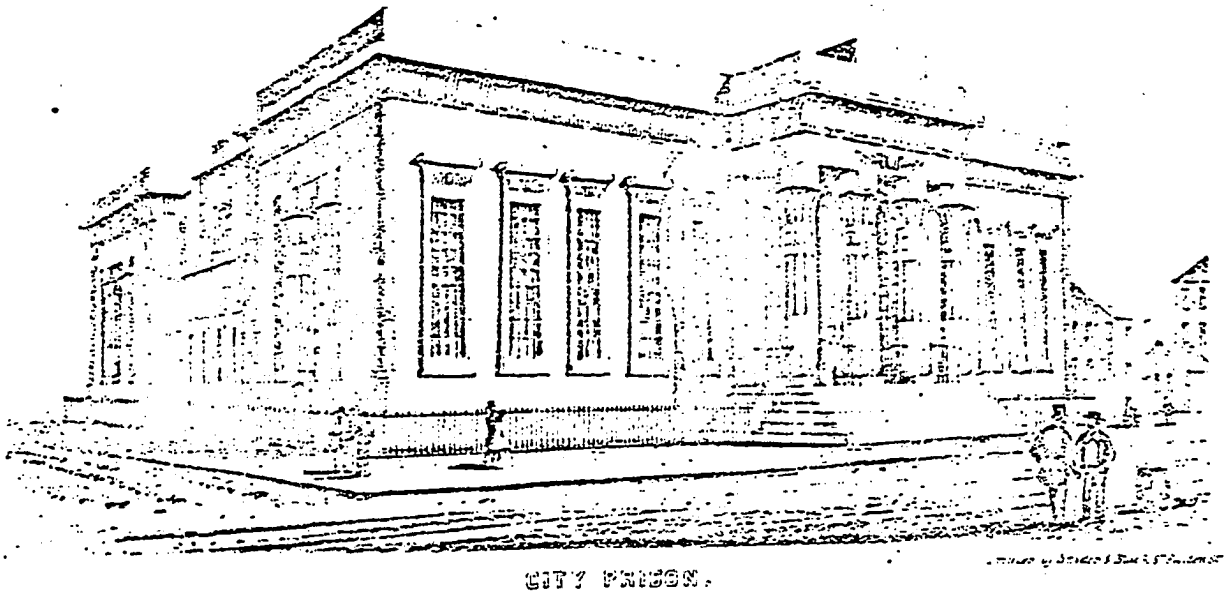
COLORED HOME

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



COLORED ORPHAN ASYLUM

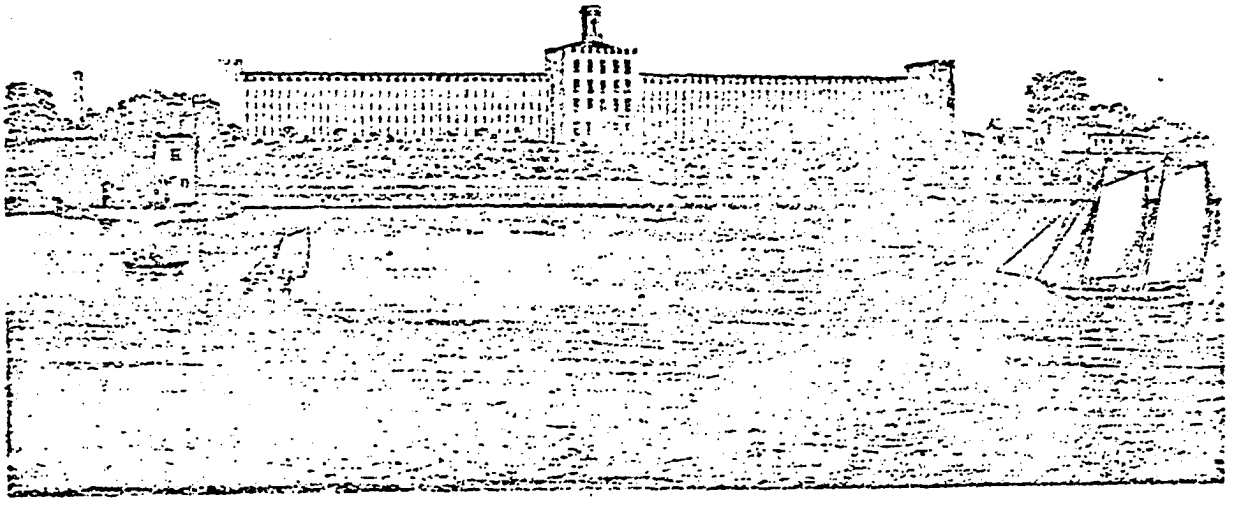
Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



CITY PRISON.

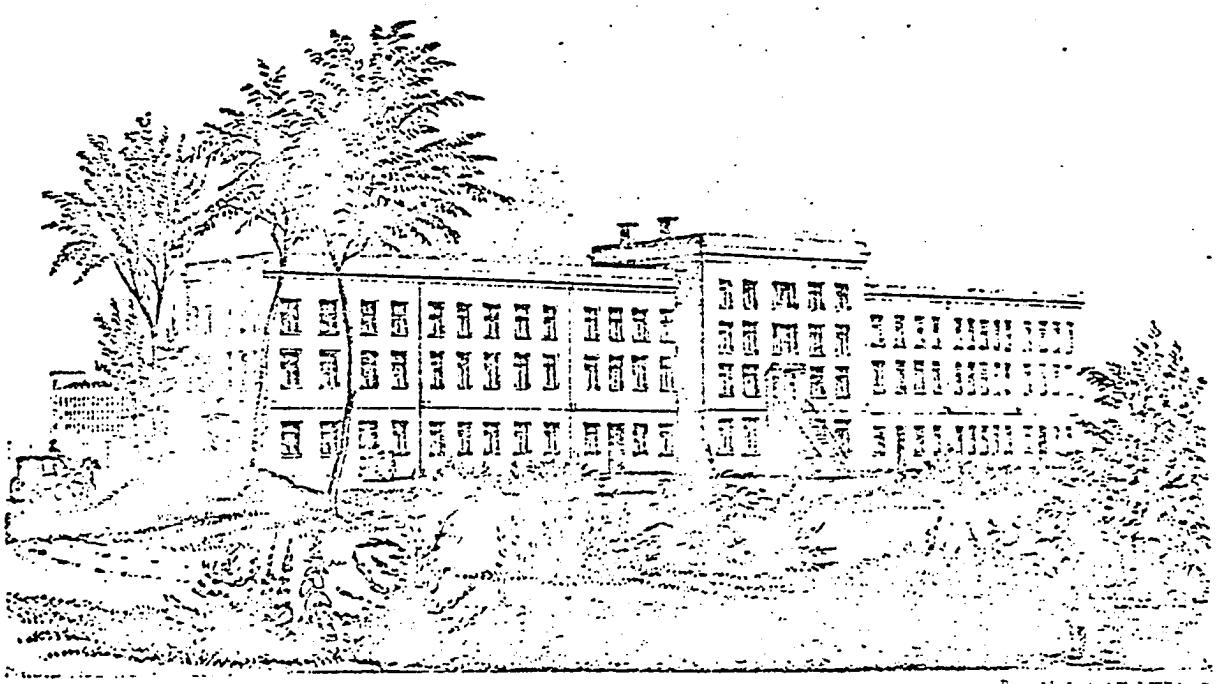
CITY PRISON

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



PENITENTIARY, BLACKWELL'S ISLAND

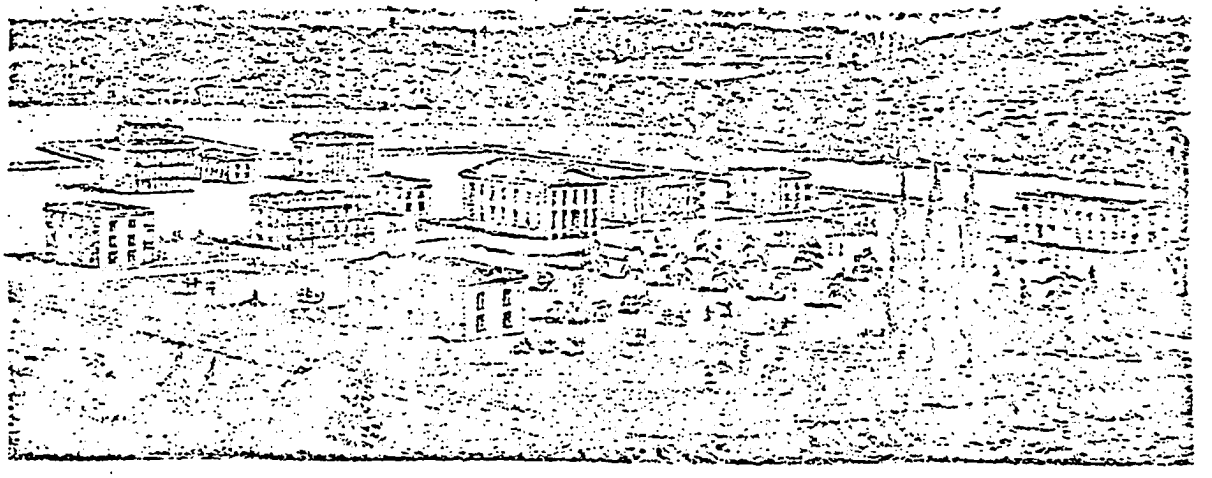
Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



PENITENTIARY HOSPITAL, B.I.

PENITENTIARY HOSPITAL, BLACKWELL'S ISLAND

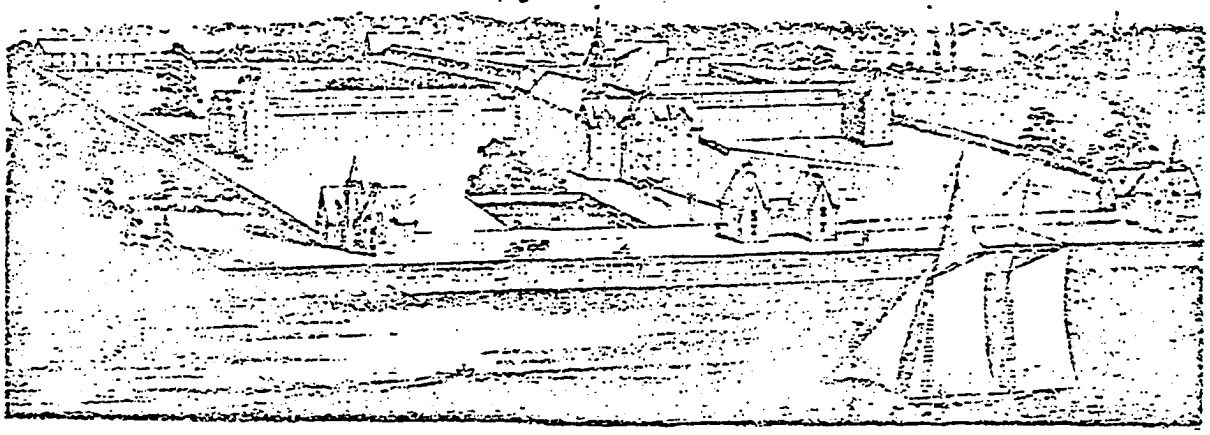
Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



NURSERY ESTABLISHMENT.
RANDALLS ISLAND.

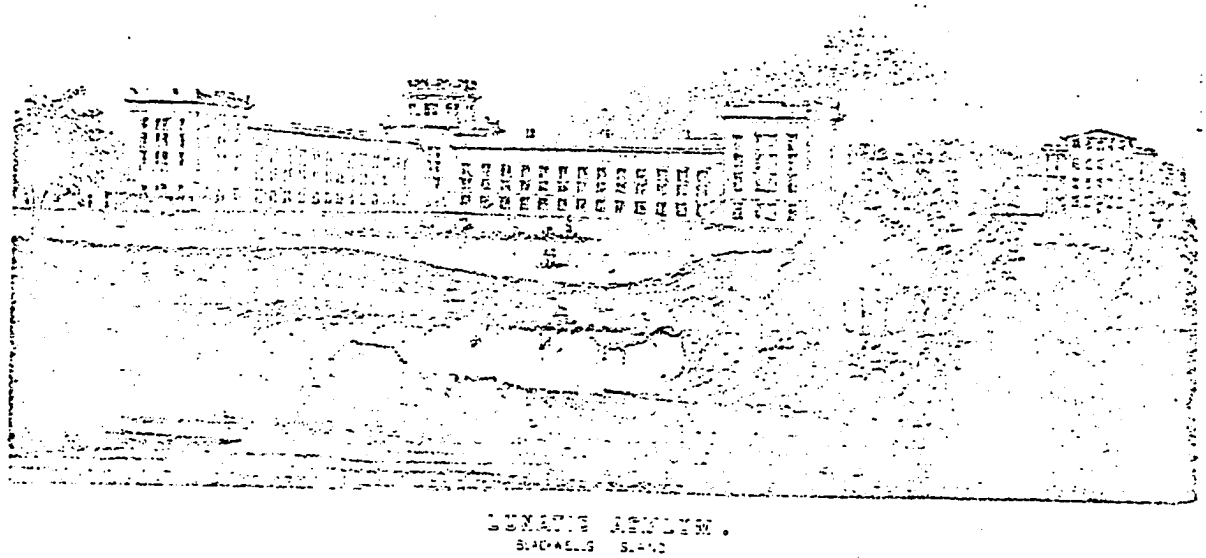
NURSERY ESTABLISHMENT, RANDALL'S ISLAND

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



WORKHOUSE, BLACKWELL'S ISLAND

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



LUNATIC ASYLUM.
BLACKWELL'S ISLAND

LUANTIC ASYLUM, BLACKWELL'S ISLAND

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CITATIONS

Admsns	Admissions
AH	Almshouse
Aldmn	Alderman, Aldermen, Aldermanic
Ast(s)	Assistant, Assistant Alderman, Assistant Aldermen
Blvu	Bellevue
BI	Blackwell's Island
CCAH	Committee on Charity and Almshouse
Cmctn	Communication
Cmsr(s)	Commissioner(s)
Cmte	Committee
Dept	Department
Doc	Document
Dschrgs	Discharges
Dth(s)	Death(s)
Gov(s)	Governor(s)
Jnl	Journal
LA	Lunatic Asylum
LI, LIF	Long Island, Long Island Farms
MCC	Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, 1784-1831 (New York, 1917).
Ord(s)	Ordinance(s) of the City of New York
Phycn(s)	Physician(s)
Proc	Proceedings
Rept	Report, including all Annual Reports
RI	Randall's Island
Rsdnt	Resident
Supt	Superintendent

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 1

THE BUILDING OF INSTITUTIONS

The perceptive visitor to the United States, Alexis de Tocqueville, made the "general equality of condition among the people" the theme of his optimistic analysis of American democracy. But in a footnote he also presented his bleak forebodings of the threat posed to this democracy by the concentration of a growing poor class in the nation's great cities: "a rabble even more formidable than the populace of European towns." Consisting mainly of "freed blacks...condemned by the laws and by public opinion to a hereditary state of misery and degradation" and a "multitude of Europeans...driven to the New World by their misfortunes or their misconduct," this element rioted in the streets and posed a danger to the very security of the New World. Perhaps the only solution, mused the liberal French nobleman, might be the creation of an armed force "independent of the town population and able to control its excesses."[1]

The growth of the lower class was particularly acute and noticeable in the nation's leading immigrant port and urban center, New York City. The population of Manhattan increased dramatically from 166,000 in 1825 to 202,500

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in 1830 to 313,000 in 1840 to 515,500 in 1850 to 814,000 in 1860,[2] exceeding "all, even the most sanguine calculations."[3] Property which had once been situated far from the central settled city now lay at or within its borders and proved inadequate to the expanded service needs of the growing and advancing population. Bellevue, the site of the public poorhouse complex, was just such a piece of real estate.[4] Every municipal service strained to meet the social, political, economic, and environmental problems arising from this uncontrolable urban expansion: police, fire protection, water supply, sanitation, and, by no means least, poor relief.

Indeed, the public assistance system was the City's first line of defense against the threat of social disruption by the lower classes. In many respects New York's experience with poverty was typical of that of the nation's large cities but in some ways it was unique. Manhattan was an immigrant port, a world metropolis, and a key business center particularly subject to periodic economic fluctuations. Very cold winters caused massive seasonal unemployment on the docks and construction sites. Poverty, or more correctly, pauperism - the dependence of people on others, especially the public for financial support - was one of New York City's most pressing and persistent problems during the period from 1825 to 1860. The municipal government and the general public paid it constant attention.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Though the actual number of residents of the Almshouse "proper" generally did not exceed a couple of thousand at any one time, activist Department Commissioner Moses G. Leonard estimated the total number of persons in all the City institutions, recipients of outdoor (cash or kind) relief, and beneficiaries of private charities over a typical year's span at over 100,000 people or a quarter of the population. Like most of his contemporaries who supported themselves as well as the paupers he found this "alarming...What a picture."[5]

New York City approached its problems with a curious blend of creative inventiveness, precise exactitude, and helpless confusion which often proved awesome in its implications for the poor. David Rothman has noted the important nineteenth century trend in poverty reform from humanitarian concern to custodial neglect as institutionalization became the primary tool of relief.[6] New York City's Almshouse Department offers a striking case history of this process. It also constituted an application of a spirit of scientific experimentalism and salvage. Everybody's primary goal was to convert the useless into the useful.[7] Institutionalization of the poor was, in part, an expression of the American tradition of converting nuisances into benefits through architectural, mechanical, scientific, and social miracles. In this

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

case the nuisances were people.[8]

Institutionalizing the poor might provide an alternative to de Tocqueville's outside armed force. The basic idea of such a policy was to remove dependent and deviant persons from the outer society, insofar as was possible. The innocent and virtuous poor would be granted a beneficient asylum from the threatening or corrupting influences of the urban jungle or, conversely, the lazy and indolent poor, vagrants, and criminals would be isolated from decent society. Each type of social problem would be treated in a sanitized, specially structured environment. This led to a second separation: the internal differentiation of these groups of poor from each other and further classifications within subgroups. This goal necessitated, not just one facility, but a variety of specialized and intricately designed institutions and an elaborate bureaucratic system to classify and manage the people. Institutionalization led inevitably to a large bureaucracy.

Designing and managing the vast and growing pauper system fell to some poverty reformers, City politicians, Almshouse Department officials and employees, and building architects and contractors. The policymakers agreed easily on several basic assumptions but disagreed markedly about particulars. Their conflicts, interacting with the increasing size and complexity of the poverty

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

problem, made the common goal of social order ever more elusive.

The most basic axiom was that of the permanence of a pauper class in society accompanied by a realization of its disproportionate impact on New York City. Nobody had any illusions that they could abolish poverty. "All the efforts of man's wisdom have failed in preventing pauperism," wrote the Board of Almshouse Department Commissioners chaired by Phillip W. Engs, "and, we aver, ever will fail. The lip of truth has told us, 'the poor ye have always with you'; and our city is peculiarly burthened with them, from causes not operating, in most respects, in sister cities."[9] Moreover, poverty reformers were aware that anyone, not only members of the lower classes, might become publicly dependent at some point in life. Pleading for attention to the overcrowded Bellevue lunatic department, outgoing Almshouse Commissioner John R. Peters admonished the Common Council that "many of our maniacs were once enlightened and useful citizens. One lady is now suffering the extreme of madness, by reason of confinement in these dreaded cells. She is the widow of one of your immediate predecessors, who fell a victim to his zeal in the cause of benevolence in the awful epidemic of last year."[10] Commenting on Bellevue Hospital, Commissioner Leonard noted that "few seem to be aware how many have resorted to this asylum for medical treatment

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

who have in the pride of their day been numbered among the most respectable classes."[11] The Medical Board of the Lunatic Asylum stressed that "no one, however born, is exempt from poverty and disease" and claimed that many institutionalized paupers were "born to wealth and expectation, and numerous will be the descendents of the richest families now among us, whom inevitable destiny will doom to seek a refuge in the Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island."[12]

Such realizations guaranteed an explicit and total acceptance of government responsibility for poor relief. Public support of the indigent was required by State law in any event, but nobody questioned the wisdom and morality of providing from the tax levy for "that class of our fellow citizens, who may, by any fatality or misfortune in life, be compelled to ask alms from the public charities of our city."[13] No one would deny aid to orphaned children with their "claims of absolute want, innocence and virtue"[14] nor to the insane, "a class more deserving of commisseration than any other among the afflicted catalogue of humanity."[15]

This raised a thorny problem: the very existence of any system of relief seemed to generate more pauperism by inviting "the lazy dependent, who prefers 'a shilling given to a shilling earned'"[16] and the careless, "persons whose poverty arises from their own neglect."[17] How to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

assist the deserving poor adequately while discouraging applications from the unworthy was an age old problem which the institutionalization policy might help solve. Reformers like Commissioner Leonard tried to take a bold, hard line against the undeserving poor:

> The opportunities of relief to this class are now too easily obtained by them, and are certainly too eagerly sought. Change the system and the reverse would be the case. The child (unprotected,) the lunatic, the aged, the infirm, and the demented may be, and many are, unfortunately paupers: worthy subjects of our charity, entitled to all the sympathies and provisions, now made for and exercised toward them. But beyond these, none. Exceptions there may be to all rules, but in our highly favored country, where labor is so much demanded and so liberally rewarded, and the means of subsistence so easily and cheaply obtained, poverty need not and ought not to exist, save among the classes above described.[18]

Institutionalization might help confine public assistance to the deserving by lessening the need for "outdoor" relief, the mode of charity which had predominated in the previous century. Cash and kind assistance in the community at large was never even nearly abolished; like the institutional sector, it grew despite all efforts to control it. But institutionalization did help make the prospect of public assistance unattractive and provided for the moral discipline of its recipients. By the 1850s the reformers began to realize that outdoor relief was ineradicable and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to suspect that institutionalization did not minimize but did perpetuate dependency. Noting that one fifth of the expense of the Almshouse Department was for the outdoor poor, the Board of Governors felt "at a loss to remedy this evil" which had been "bequeathed... by their predecessors and has had existence from an early period." They believed that to "drive this class to the Alms House and other Institutions" would be "at war with a proper philanthropy" and might make permanent and total a dependency which, with timely and minimal aid, might be only temporary and partial.[19] By this time, however, the City's institutions were largely built and the policy of using them as a first resort was well entrenched, outdoor relief notwithstanding.

The goal was to make outdoor help marginal, to limit to to very respectable families or to extraordinary short term situations. Much of the outdoor relief that was given resulted from the overcrowded condition of the Almshouse proper, especially prior to its transfer to Blackwell's Island from Bellevue in 1848. Indeed, one of the most persuasive arguments for removal of this facility from the city stressed this point and illustrated the cat and mouse game that the municipality played with its poor:

> Again, the present accommodations are entirely inadequate for the demands upon the public charity. During the past winter, the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> establishment has been crowded to its utmost capacity. This renders necessary the distributing of relief and support out of the institution. The undersigned have before intimated their doubt of this mode of dispensing charity, and their experience during the past winter has tended to strengthen that doubt. A knowledge of the crowded state of the Alms-House very soon extends among those who do not either require or deserve relief; they instantly press their applications in such numbers as to prevent the possibility of a sufficiently minute investigation of each claim, and with such urgent protestation of willingness to accept an asylum within the Alms-House, as to raise the presumption in their favor that their want is real and their claim meritorious, while the overburthened state of the house prevents the testing of their willingness, and the result is, the allowance of a very large aggregate amount of money, fuel, and provisions, which would be entirely saved if there were sufficient accommodation to give admission to every applicant who appears to need and merit relief.[20]

The corollary of institutionalization was classification. Once the poor were removed from society, they were to be separated among themselves, allocated to and within the various institutions, each facility extending a specialized approach toward treatment of each class. Scientific categorization was a virtual mania among all poverty reformers. The attempt to separate meticulously the deserving and undeserving, prisoners and noncriminals, sane and insane, adults and children, employable and infrim, black and white, male and female, even Nativist and Loco

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Foco, was the dominant theme of most reform activity. Such an agenda led to demands for intricately designed architectural wonders that would assist in providing thorough segregation and the correct type of guidance and discipline for each group. In treating the insane, especially, as the Common Council Special Building Committee stressed, "not only considerations of convenience in superintending them, but the probability of their restoration to reason requires a classification based upon scientific principles, according to the various degrees of insanity or forms of violence which their maladies may assume." No effort could succeed without "skillful adaptation of the form and interior arrangement of the edifice in which they are placed."[21] Commissioner Leonard spoke for reformers in general in his explanation of the importance of classification for all of the institutions:

> There cannot be, under the best managers to be found, with all the diligence and devotion to duty, by principal and inferior officers, a well conducted Alms House without a proper classification of subjects - I hold it to be all important, the foundation, in fact the only basis upon which a proper system of Alms House relief can be instituted, that a regular classification be first made and the rules suitable to the government of each inmate applied respectively. No one will contend that the man of misfortune...momentarily deprived of his sustenence and forced to become the inmate of an Alms House, should be forced to sit side by side with the debauchee, or the drunkard...or that the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> deserted wife, with her little ones... should be compelled to associate with her who has voluntarily disgraced herself...[22]

Following logically from the classification principle were several physical and moral remedies for the various categories of dependence. The first requisite for any institution was a healthful geographic and architectural setting. Accordingly planners paid great attention to beauty and ventilation while evaluating Blackwell's and Randall's Islands as possible Almshouse sites and comparing alternative building designs.[23] Many reformers thought that imposing buildings conveying an impression of grandeur would be therapeutic for lunatics.[24]

Sharing primary importance with the proper physical setting was a close supervision of the subjects and a prudent overall management of the discipline and economy of the institutions. The insane, for example, needed steady light employment and "constant care and watchfulness, and treatment, both medical and moral," as their physicians expressed it.[25] A proper balance of gentleness and discipline for each group was essential. In complaining of the persistent anomoly of using convicts as orderlies and nurses, Lunatic Asylum Resident Physician Moses H. Ranney commented that they were

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"wholly unfit to have in charge the insane; they cannot be made to comprehend that kindness is to be the restraining power."[26] The degree of gentleness used varied with the group or even the individual, but each class of paupers was subject to a careful blend of carrots and sticks. In addition, all were subject to the same set of panaceas: labor, religion, moral education, temperance, and overall social control that Raymond A. Mohl found uppermost in the minds of the poverty reformers of the earlier period of 1783 to 1825.[27]

Poverty reformers shared certain assumptions about public welfare economics. New York City's assistance expenditure rose sharply from 1825 to 1860, even out of proportion with the population increase, causing concern to all except perhaps the recipients. Experts on the problem joined the public in condemning this increase and seeking ways to reduce it. They maintained, as an article of faith, that the adequate support of the deserving poor was not only compatible with, but indeed even necessitated an attitude emphasizing strict cost effectiveness. "It becomes a duty to appropriate a benevolent fund in such a manner as shall compass the greatest good for the greatest number with the smallest means," claimed Bellevue Resident Physician

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Alexander B. Whiting.[28] However, unlike the general public, they also condemned false economies like delaying or denying investments in their institutions which would later pay off in terms of rehabilitation. Most reform proposals were cast in terms of both pecuniary and human benefits; seldom was there any acknowledgment of a possible conflict between economy and policy or a need to choose between these values. Calling attention to the problems of the Lunatic Asylum, Dr. Whiting criticized false economy and defended his requests in monetary terms:

> I would suggest here the necessity of some changes in the organization of this institution, in the appointment of a suitable number of attendants, instead of criminals and vagrants...workshops and other means of employment and amusement; matters of first importance in facilitating care, and consequently (as every lunatic restored to reason is prevented becoming a burden for life), a direct pecuniary saving... 'Tis no wilful neglect that has prevented proper action on this subject heretofore, but considerations of economy and policy... The economy and the policy, like MacBeth's ghosts, come in a questionable shape.[29]

Removing the Almshouse proper to one of the city's subislands would result in great savings, according to the reformers.[30] Nearly every other proposed reform also featured a heavy element of cost effectiveness. Nobody questioned whether the elaborate and expensive system of institutionalization itself did not cost

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

too much, both in financial and in human terms.

The reformers shared a suspicion of the long tradition of political interference in Almshouse management even though they were usually themselves politicians. There was some hypocrisy in this regard as well as politics masquerading as antipolitics. In a Democratic city, the Whigs stood to gain in the long run from the removal of the relief structure from political dominance. The American Republican Nativists campaigned against the two party patronage system successfully but then applied it as well as had anyone before them. Conversely, Tammany stood to benefit from the status quo - usually - but also therefore sponsored limited reform measures to forestall more radical ones and also spawned some sincere critics of the prevailing order. Thus the political picture was complex and reform applied to itself must be read in context but, regardless of party, the managers of the poor were vitally concerned about the choas that resulted from frequent personnel changes, undue interference in Almshouse affairs, and improper electoral exploitation of the institutions.

There was also honest admiration for the emerging honest, professional Almshouse manager. Commissioner Phillip W. Engs wondered how anyone of his experienced Superintendent's ability might ever, if necessary, be

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

replaced "with no more certainty of tenure than a year."[31] Once the former members of the Common Council, who had designed the poverty apparatus, became Almshouse Commissioners they wrote, typically, that the "evil exists in the system adopted for its government rather than in the officers who administer that system." Yet, because of the annual possibility of a complete turnover in management, there officials often found themselves "unable, during the short time they have been in office, fully to mature a plan for the better government of the Department." By the time they knew what was needed, they were out of office perhaps to be replaced by novices.[32] Often political argument combined with this instability to delay improvements that everybody knew were needed: "Much has been said, intended, and proposed, on all sides, but nothing done; while, amid all the oscillations of party, the poor maniac has received the 'go-by.'"[33] Few would openly defend the spoils system as applied to poor relief.

In place of the spoils Almshouse managers tried to substitute their own developing expertise and distinguished themselves from both the politicians and the lay public. Commissioner Leonard said that "few of the public who are happily placed in comfort and competence, even among the most generous, liberal and sympathizing, have any knowledge of the amount of assistance required in our

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

community,"[34] with the implication that only he and his professional colleagues could serve as the source of such knowledge. By the 1850s reformers began to realize that they lacked some of the answers, but rather than returning to political control, they advocated continuing scientific experimentation directed by experts. The general public did not understand the operations of the Department and their difficulties, said the Almshouse Governors. There were no "set rules of philanthropy and discipline" but rather only "experience, obtained by laborious attention and continuous effort" could guide reformers in their efforts.[35]

While they agreed about the public obligation to support dependents, the preference for institutional relief, the necessity of classification, discipline, moral treatment, labor, and cost effectiveness, and the advantages of professionalism over the spoils, reformers disagreed markedly over important particulars. The most crucial controversies centered on building location and design. Nine years of argument preceded the opening of the Lunatic Asylum, thirteen the removal of the Almshouse proper. There was much conflict over administrative reform and reorganization. The City fathers fought over whether to procure a tiny piece of real estate wanted by the Almshouse Department. Agricultural and mechanical labor

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

each had partisans. Therefore, when it came to specific measures, there was seldom prompt agreement or timely action.

The end result of the interaction of the unstable political process with the increasingly complex poverty apparatus was a series of curious and ironic contradictions. The more intricate were the theoretical procedures developed to insure order and accountability, the more chaotic and uncontrolable they became in practice. With all the attention paid to separation and classification of paupers and the huge investment in institutions for this purpose, misclassification prevailed in every institution throughout the period. Intricate systems designed to produce or save money were subverted because of fraud or confusion. Elaborate statistical procedures were followed, but using different categories over short periods of time and the data was often fabricated. Looking at the entire system in theory, an observer might think it quite efficient and orderly. But examining it in practice, especially in some detail, one finds it full of holes.[36]

In 1825 New York City quartered its dependent poor at the "Bellevue Establishment" situated between Twenty-third and Twenty-sixth Streets on the shore of the East River. The facility fell under the administration of five, unpaid

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Commissioners of the Almshouse, Bridewell, and Penitentiary" appointed by and serving at pleasure of the Common Council. There existed, at this point in time, the Almshouse "proper," a newly built "Fever Hospital," two smaller hospital buildings, and a Penitentiary, all at Bellevue, as well as a Bridewell and Prison complex downtown in the City Hall area. The Fever Hospital had been in construction since 1823.[37] The City hoped that the new facility would prove larger than necessary just to treat fevers[38] and concluded that its name was "inapplicable to the use...intended." Rejecting the possibility of calling it "City Hospital" because it might be too easily confused with New York Hospital, the Council settled on the new name of "Bellevue Hospital."[39]

The City faced an immediate problem with the contractors, Gideon Tucker and William Westervelt who had built the new hospital and asked an additional $850 "for not being furnished convicts as laborers" as promised. The Almshouse Commissioners told the Council Fever Hospital Committee that "no demand was ever made" upon them for any convicts and that they had been "not only ready to furnish them but desirous to do so and were informed that they were not wanted as the Masons and other laborers would not work with them." The Council denied the claim.[40] The contractors sued and recovered $525.[41]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

With the new hospital completed, the Commissioners proposed a reorganization plan to the Council. They would allot the two lower stories to the "insane paupers," formerly mixed in with the general Almshouse population, but "subject to removal, in the event of fever, to some other place." The two small hospitals would transfer their patients to the top two stories of the new facility and convert into children's shelters, one for each sex. The Fever Hospital could accomodate 100 insane and 150 sick and the small hospitals 350 to 400 children.[42] This would mark the beginning of a more perfect internal separation of all the residents.[43]

It soon became obvious, however, that Bellevue was insufficient for the City's long term institutional needs. Accordingly, in 1828 the Council began a long series of vital real estate purchases. That year the Corporation acquired two new sites: the Greenwich State Prison and Blackwell's Island.[44]

The latter was the City's most significant purchase for Almshouse purposes in its entire history. The Council bought the elongated island in the East River in July 1828 from James Blackwell for $32,500.[45] The title proved imperfect and in 1844 the Corporation had to pay an additional $20,000 to one Mrs. Bell, widow of another former holder, for her legal interest in the property.[46]

The Common Council then formed its first "Special Committee on Blackwell's Island" or "Building Committee;"

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

its annual successors would oversee that and additional site acquisitions, sometimes conflicting bitterly with Commissioners of the Almshouse over policy. The Committee surveyed the new island and selected a southerly site 1500 feet from shore for a new Penitentiary, planning an imposing edifice on the Sing Sing model. They projected a cost of $16,000 to $20,000 "added to the labor of the prisoners" and hoped to complete it by January 1, 1829.[47] The convicts quarried the stone for their own new Penitentiary and built it from scratch as they would, in the near future, the numerous other Department buildings.

It took nine months longer than originally expected to complete the facility and transfer the prisoners.[48] The final cost exceeded $29,000 including nearly $6,000 for "erection of out buildings, purchase of boats and pay of guards, Keepers, &c." The new structure accommodated 300 convicts but the Building Committee anticipated an increase to at least 400 within a year and therefore proposed an expansion in accordance with "the intention of the Board to remove all our prison establishments to Blackwell's Island and introduce into them the advantages of separate confinement." They believed that "with the experience now among the Keepers and prisoners," such a facility could be ready in "two seasons" and would be "sufficient to accomodate all the male prisoners of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

City for many years" and would permit more exact classification of court and vagrant prisoners and separation of the vicious and virtuous poor. There would be an additional "main" building on the East end of the "present prison" for the Keepers, a hospital, a chapel, and an additional 300 cell prison wing. All this would cost an estimated additional $12,000.[49]

At this point a precedent might have been set to keep the innocent poor and the prisoners clearly, definitely, and forever separated. However, a fateful decision was made to remove the main branch of the City Prison and Bridewell from downtown to Bellevue. This meant that prisoners and the innocent poor would still share the same physical site. This rendered it more plausible later to remove other Almshouse institutions to Blackwell's Island where the Penitentiary had been situated. In 1829 the options regarding location were still open.

In the summer of 1829 the City was seeking a new site for its overcrowded Prison and Bridewell mainly because its fireproof building was needed to store municipal records. After much debate over alternatives[50] the Council determined that since the old Penitentiary at Bellevue constituted "a Bridewell already built," the facility should be removed there.[51] Prisoners and the poor would continue as neighbors.

Among other difficulties, moving prisoners awaiting

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

trial to Bellevue, three miles from the courts, meant that the Almshouse Commissioners had to "procure a stage" for their "safe conveyance" to and fro at an initial cost of $600.[52] In 1834 the Commissioners predicted that this transportation alone would eventually cost $10,000 a year.[53]

From 1831 to 1848 there was a gradual geographic shifting in focus from Bellevue to Manhattan's subislands, accompanied by the related institutional growth and functional specialization. It was during this period that the City made its crucial decisions about the location and arrangement of its general Almshouse, as well as its new specialized facilities for children, for farm labor, the insane, for burial of the dead. Since the Almshouse proper was still the main institution and was yet at Bellevue, these years can best be characterized as a time of physical bifocalism. In 1848 the City finally removed the Almshouse proper to Blackwell's Island with a smaller farming branch on Randall's. This signalled the end of Bellevue's dominance of the institutional map. The new old Almshouse there was converted into an expanded hospital, as it was known to succeeding generations. Except for that facility, and the branch City prisons, the entire treatment apparatus was located on the subislands after 1848.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In 1831 the City purchased four farms on Long Island's southern Astoria shore facing Blackwell's Island from Messrs. Painter and Totten for $27,000.[54] There was immediate controversy over the details of the purchase which had been the proudest achievement of Commissioner John R. Peters. It was said that the Commissioners and the sellers had engaged in collusion and that the land had initially been offered at a lower price than was ultimately paid. The Board of Assistants appointed a Select Committee which included members of its Standing Charity and Almshouse Committee to investigate.[55] The Committee vindicated the purchase. The Totten farm, they said, had been advertised at auction and purchased for $10,000 and the Painter farms for $17,000 by Peters "in his own name" with no knowledge on the vendors' part that he was acting for the Almshouse. The farms were never offered for less as had been rumored and witnesses said that the "value of the farms far exceeded the price paid." Charges of collusion had "given mere suspicion a character of more importance than it actually deserved" and were "entirely without foundation."[56]

The air cleared, the City designated the new site for an expanded farming operation to supplement the Bellevue vegetable gardens and for a new children's nurseries. Martin Rapelie was hired as a farm Superintendent for $75

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a year plus house rent and "other priveleges."[57] In March 1832 the Council delegated to the Almshouse Commissioners "full power" to complete a new Smallpox Hospital on Blackwell's Island and "to erect any new buildings" there or on the Long Island Farms "submitting the estimates and plans...to the Common Council, prior to contracting" and to exercise "general superintendence and management of said island and farms," subject to overall legislative direction.[58]

In August, however, the new Council referred to its Building Committee, also "with power," a resolution that the Commissioners should "erect one or more frame buildings on the Long Island Farms, for the accommodation of the female children; also a building of wood...for a Hospital, but which is not to be an opthalmic hospital."[59] The Committee interpreted the phrase "with power" to include the authority to contract without any further reporting to the full Council and hired the firm Topping and Price "just at the close of the political year" to do the building. Thompson Price was a lame duck Assistant Alderman and avoided a legal conflict of interest only by postdating the contract to May 27, 1833, a few days after the expiration of his term of office. This did not impress the new Board's Finance Committee who thought that Price had "evade[d] the express prohibition of the Charter" against a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Councilman being "interested in any contract."[60]

The action violated the Charter in other ways which went to the heart of City government and raised sensitive questions about the borderlines of authority between the traditional Council committees and the emerging executive bureaucracy. The Finance Committee defended the interests of the latter, noting that there had been an improper bypassing of the proper parties: the contract had been negotiated and concluded not with the Commissioners, but with the Superintendent of the Almshouse, Jameson Cox, "not comprehended in the terms of the resolution." The Commissioners' Agent, Josiah Mann, told the Committee that the buildings were going up "under the direction of the Common Council, which Committee advertised for proposals and have already made contracts for their erection. The Commissioners of the Alms House have had no control over it."[61] The Finance Committee recalled that the Charter of 1830 mandated "distinct departments" to administer the City's daily business instead of legislative committees as in the past. "If the public business is to be conducted in this manner, of what beneficial use are the executive departments of the City Government?" they asked.

> And if an ordinance or resolution, authorizing one of these departments to perform a certain act, which being

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> referred to a Committee, with power, and if such Committee may assume the whole authority themselves, without even consulting the department who, in law, are intended to be the responsible parties, of what force or effect is a resolution or ordinance of the Common Council thus executed?[62]

Finally, the Finance Committee objected to any contract without a full discussion in the Council. The Charter's intent was to "control expenditure" by requiring a process consisting of three steps before any money could be authorized: cost estimates, debate on the merits of the project, and an appropriation. "Instead of which," lamented the Committee "by the operation in the instance under consideration, buildings unlimited are authorized, without any estimate of the cost whatever, and a debt incurred without an appropriation to meet it."[63] Though disclaiming any charges of "improper intentions" on the part of the previous Board's Building Committee, the Finance men thought that "this whole business has been conducted with such irregularity" that they were "at a loss what to recommend." At very least, the action should be "discountenanced by this Board" but, on the other hand, since building was already in progress, the Assistants should "acquiesce" in the contract and appropriate the necessary $4,858. They should also repeal the grant of "power" for construction not yet

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

begun and permit no more contracts without full discussion.[64] The Council passed the appropriation only without the cautionary caveat.[65]

As building continued on Long Island, New York City took up the peculiar question of its territorial jurisdiction over the site which was part of Queens County. The City applied unsuccessfully in 1832 to the State Legislature for "concurrent jurisdiction" over the Farms and for a tax exemption.[66] In 1834 it adopted another approach and tried to "unite" with the Supervisors of Queens to request cojurisdiction which also failed.[67] Though farms enthusiasts minimized the problem because no taxes were yet being asked for the land,[68] this situation changed by 1843 when the Council had to appropriate $150 for the "tax on Long Island Farms," indeed a dubious poor expense.[69]

Long Island served as the agricultural and children's branches of the Almshouse Department until 1847 when these operations were transferred to Randall's Island. The Farms, as well as much of Bellevue, were sold by the Nativists in 1845. The City then leased back the Long Island property for its continued use until the completion and opening of the new institutions.[70] By 1847 the "old and wretched 'Long Island Farms' Hovels," as Commissioner Leonard called them, were in total

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"delapidation" and the children were therefore placed in the new Blackwell's Island Almshouse to await the completion and availability of the new Randall's Nurseries. Leonard recorded the grim ultimate fate of the Long Island hovels in his plea for decent new facilities:

> Has not the City of New York been for years disgraced in the possession of the unsightly barracks of "Long Island Farms?" The neighbors on Long Island thought so, and having more regard for us than we had for ourselves, eventually burned them to the ground, however unwarrantable the act may be deemed.[71]

In 1835 the City purchased "Belle Isle" from David Randall for $60,000.[72] By this time there was a consensus in favor of removing the Almshouse proper from Bellevue but none on where to move it. Aware that "some time may be required to determine which of the establishments under the care of the Commissioners" would go there "more properly," the Council leased out the land until a decision could be reached.[73]

As this controversy prolonged and intensified, the City also began searching for a new Potter's Field. In 1843, for want of anything better, the Council chose Randall's Island for this purpose, at least while institutional decisions were still being argued.[74]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

This reckless decision resulted in a dire threat to the Nurseries, once they were also removed to Randall's, since the City was unduly slow in effecting its next transfer of the Field.

The most chaotic Almshouse building project was the Blackwell's Island Lunatic Asylum. The tangled history of this mammoth hospital illustrated most clearly the tragic effects of annual political changes and the resulting shifts in policy and design. While the lunatics languished for years in conditions that everyone had always called an immediate emergency, various competing and contradictory plans were approved and aborted. The political parties, the Council Boards, the Almshouse Commissioners, and the consulting physicians fought out their assumed prerogatives largely over the Asylum, stopping each other's previous work and rearguing endlessly all the details of location and design.

Though there was similar delay and controversy in removing the Almshouse proper, at least, except in 1845, disputes were settled before building commenced. The Lunatic Asylum was unique among all construction projects: it was an intricately designed complex of "centres," "octagons," and wings of which only a part would be completed at first. The direction and extent of future building could be left open and flexible even after completion of the initial buildings. Thus there was endless debate over the direction of the wings alone. The extreme concern with proper classification,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

supervision, and treatment of the most special and perplexing group of public dependents and the availability of several European models opened the way for a similarly protracted struggle over internal design.

After much debate, turmoil, and obstruction and a "Public Building Loan" of $500,000,[75] the new Asylum opened in June 1839. Though only half of the larger potential plan, it was the largest insane asylum in the nation.[76] Thus far it had cost $125,000.[77] Still, it was immediately seriously overcrowded and by the following year the City had constructed a small separate outbuilding or "Mad House" for the more difficult patients. At this point severe conflict again erupted between Commissioners and Council over whether to just improve existing facilities or to extend the building in accordance with the total design. The Council contracted with Mack Oakley for a wing extension and a second, "female" Madhouse at a cost of $51,000 but the State would only allow a tax levy of $40,000 to cover the project.[78] The Council resolved that since its funding was thus deficient, the Oakley contract would have to be cancelled.[79] Only minor improvements were made, a triumph for the Commissioners, but probably not for the patients.

In 1847 the Council successfully addressed the question

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the wing extension and the construction of a second Madhouse.[80] Actually, two new Madhouses were built: one to replace the old one and another for additional accommodations.

The Lunatic Asylum complex dominated the northern part of Blackwell's Island. The new Madhouse stood on the eastern shore near the main Asylum and cared for the "more turbulent and unruly of the lunatics." The second small building was soon styled the "Lodge House." Commissioner Leonard said that this "refuge for the wilder and more unmanageable class of lunatics, affords a much more comfortable receptacle than the old and delapidated structure known as the Old Mad House, so long a disgrace to the institution."[81] He rejoiced that it would soon be "among the abandoned rookeries of our municipal possessions" and that its replacement formed "an ornamental as well as useful improvement." The northern part of the Island had too long been "disfigured by unfinished designs and unsightly structures."[82] Best of all, Dr. Moses H. Ranney, the Resident Physician, had put the patients to work removing "surplus earth to the lowlands in the immediate vicinity," a reclaiming venture for both the island and the lunatics, such employment being "of vastly more service than all the drugs and medicines known to the Faculty."[83]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The City built its other hospitals with far less trouble. By 1840 a Nursery Hospital was in construction on Blackwell's Island.[84] The Penitentiary had its associated Hospital complex: in response to urgent pleas from the Commissioners, a second wing was added to the "Female Hospital" there in 1842 to accommodate the increased number of prostitutes.[85] There was a Smallpox Hospital or, rather, "a pile of poor out-houses"[86] on Blackwell's southeast shore.

In addition to this large scale construction the City made numerous incidental improvements both at Bellevue and on the developing islands. In 1838 an additional "Dead House" to that at Bellevue was planned for the Old Almshouse yard.[87] In November 1842 a fire destroyed the Bellevue Bakehouse which then had to be rebuilt at a cost of $10,000.[88] After completing its massive Croton Aquaduct, the City ran pipes into Bellevue for $1,500.[89] A stone wall went up on Blackwell's Island to separate male and female convicts; this cost $300.[90] With the increased boat traffic to ths islands, the City improved the wharf at Blackwell's and extended the dock at Randall's.[91] Many subsidiary facilities were needed, such as a blacksmith's shop,[92] or a washhouse,[93] to note typical examples.

There was one very small, but strategically important

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

piece of real estate which the City refused to buy. With the removal of the institutions to the islands, ferry service became necessary to transport the inmates to the new homes. The visitors' end of the long East River pier was near Eighty-fourth Street but the poor were deposited en masse at the Sixty-first Street end, just adjacent to the home of Jeremiah Towle. Quite a "public nuisance" developed as the various classes of dependents waited hours on end for the erratically scheduled ferryboat. In 1840 Towle offered to trade his dockside land to the City for some choice downtown property. The Almshouse Commissioners supported his proposal because they wanted more pier space in order to build a holding house to permit classification and separation of the inmates as they awaited the boat. The Assistants Charity and Almshouse Committee recommended the swap[94] but the Aldermen Committee blocked it, stating that the "property proposed to be given in exchange...is solemnly pledged...for the redemption of certain debts of the Corporation" and that to trade or sell it would constitute a "violation of the public faith and injurious to the credit of the city, and the more so at this time when that credit should be maintained unsullied and unsuspected."[95]

In 1848 Towle tried again to adjust the matter. Now he claimed ownership of the wharf and a ferryhouse he

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

had built "some fifteen years hence" and tried to charge the City back rent for their use. He marshalled the testimony of some "surviving" Commissioners appointed years before to open Sixty-first Street but it conflicted with existing documentation. The Aldermen Street Committee split over whether to deal with him, the majority maintaining that he had no valid claim to the wharf and was due nothing from the City.[96] Alderman Thomas Spofford, however, thought that Towle had been patient and generous with the City and accepted his contention that the "benevolent and praiseworthy undertaking of the Commissioners" of 1840 to trade parcels had been thwarted only "to gratify some private hostility toward himself."[97] As Spofford was a minority of one, the Almshouse went without its wharf and Towle was left to decide whether to carry out his threat to "abandon my property and seek a residence elsewhere."[98]

Discussion about removing the Almshouse proper from Bellevue started in the late 1820s, growing more serious in the next several years. With the acquisition of Randall's Island, a thirteen year stalemate began over which institutions to place on which sites.[99] The Nativist Corporation sold most of Bellevue and the Long Island Farms in 1845 for about $225,000 and contracted with W. W. Wetmore and Amos Woodruff for an Almshouse and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Nurseries on Randall's Island.[100] The new Mayor and Council halted this work,[101] disallowed the Wetmore-Woodruff contract, and told its Building Committee to select a "proper site" for the Almshouse proper.[102] They then purchased the Almshouse building materials for $8,000 and shipped them to Blackwell's for use on an Almshouse there to be built by the convicts.[103] Bellevue was rented back for temporary use during construction.[104] The Council confirmed the Woodruff-Wight Nurseries contract and ordered that project to proceed.[105] The State Legislature authorized "Building Loan Stock No. 2" to raise up to $150,000, repayable in annual installments of $50,000 starting in 1849.[106] A Special Joint Committee reported detailed Almshouse plans in September[107] and new contracts were signed in October with Andrew Brady for masonry and with Edward Shortill and Wetmore for carpentry.[108]

Construction proceeded through 1847. As soon as a portion of the facility could be occupied, the children were transferred there from Long Island as a temporary emergency measure.[109] This prevented removal there of the Bellevue paupers even after completion until the Nurseries were finally ready. In May 1848 the long awaited removal of the Almshouse paupers was at last accomplished.[110] The new institution dominated the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

central portion of Blackwell's Island, opposite the foot of Seventieth Street. Commissioner Leonard was pleased, but with reservations: "although they have cost the department a large sum, since delivered up by the contractors, to fitly complete them for Alms House occupation," the new buildings would "answer, for the present, the purpose of their erection, but doubtless will ever continue, from faulty construction and design, to be a channel of perpetual expense."[111]

The Randall's Island Nurseries followed the cottage plan of small detached buildings in an attempt to systhesize a family like environment for the children. The first set was completed in 1845 at a cost of $50,000 but was immediately destroyed by fire prior to occupation. The City had intended to introduce Croton water there but had procrastinated because of the building taking place. If water had been introduced promptly enough, thought the Aldermen Charity and Almshouse Committee, perhaps the structures might have been saved.[112]

The second set of Nurseries cost $84,500. There were twelve "plain and substantial" buildings in the center of Randall's Island. The children were transferred there from Blackwell's on April 17, 1848.[113] This time the City did not hesitate for a moment in introducing Croton

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

water to the Island.[114] With the opening of the Nurseries and the Blackwell's Almshouse, the dominant focus of Department operations shifted forever from Bellevue to the subislands.

Planning for both a new Penitentiary Hospital and a better Smallpox Hospital commenced in 1848. The former began immediately and proceeded smoothly pursuant to contracts with carpenter Richard Cairow for $19,000 and masons Samuel Strong and Bartlett Smith for $17,500.[115] In 1857 the Almshouse Governors ordered it "separated" administratively from the Penitentiary "proper" and renamed the "Island Hospital."[116] They also discovered that it was shodily constructed and structurally insecure and were about to pull it down when it burned on February 13, 1858. Its replacement, the "Charity Hospital," was New York City's largest hospital institution.[117]

Smallpox plans were tabled until 1853 when construction finally began on a "large and commodiously furnished" new facility on the extreme southern tip of Blackwell's Island, decently separated from the Penitentiary Hospital. It cost $38,000 and opened im 1856.[118]

The final new building project and one of paramount importance to all reformers was the Blackwell's Island Workhouse. This vital institution would permit a more precise classification of dependents and inaugurate an organized system of exacting labor from the able bodied.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Most institutions only facilitated removal of inmates from smaller predecessor facilities in Manhattan and a further internal classification within already established categories. The Workhouse was unique in providing a new basis of classification between two institutions. The idea had germinated since the early 1830s. No reform plan dared omit it from 1833 to 1848. But there was no action and Mayor William F. Havemeyer only echoed the exact words of many of his predecessors when he said: "I recommend the establishment of a Work-House for the large class who do not deserve to be supported at the Alms-House, and yet ought not to be in the Penitentiary."[119]

The Council rushed a plan to completion[120] and the State authorized another Public Building Stock Loan, this one for $75,000, repayable in 1870.[121] Surveying began north of the new Almshouse in October 1850 and Mayor Caleb S. Woodhull laid the cornerstone the following month.[122] Construction lasted until January 1855 and cost $164,000, well over double the capital loan.[123]

There were many small projects and incidental improvements both at Bellevue and on the islands in the final years of institution building. Bellevue Hospital expanded into the vacated Almshouse building

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

but needed improvements in ventilation, iron bedsteads to provide "freedom from vermin," bathrooms, painting, roofing, and furnishing.[124] These were provided, some sooner than others, as well as a new operating theater[125] and, in 1856, a new wing.[126] If the City bothered little with the Sixty-first Street pier, the Visitors' Ferry at Eighty-sixth Street was at least kept in repair.[127] Croton water finally came to Blackwell's Island in 1850.[128] In 1852 the ambitious project of building an outer sea wall around the Island was in progress.[129]

The City bought one final piece of real estate for use of the Almshouse Department: Ward's Island. When the Nurseries were removed to Randall's Island in 1848, nobody acted to replace the Potter's Field there. After four years of fruitless pleas from Almshouse officials, freshman Alderman William M. Tweed took up the problem.[130]

Tweed's first official act was to introduce a motion to appoint a special Committee to find a new Potter's Field location. Aldermen Daniel Tiemann and Oscar Sturtevant served on this panel with Tweed.[131] The Assistants appointed a parallel Committee under Edwin Bouton who worked smoothly with the Tweed Committee. Bouton examined Riker's, Berrian's, and the "Two Brothers" Islands, as well as some Westchester sites[132] but thought Ward's Island the best place for a new graveyard. The "beautiful

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

island" could be "improved" by ornamenting it with shrubbery and walks which would "dispell the gloom and sad reflections associated with a Potter's Field, and leave upon our minds" the comforting feeling of having buried the poor with decency. The Committee proposed to purchase sixty-nine acres of land there from Abraham R. Lawrence for $103,000 for conversion to a new "City Cemetery."[133]

The Assistants readily adopted the proposal. Alderman Tweed gave an oral report in favor of the purchase which was unanimously adopted by his Board.[134] Two weeks later both Boards also voted to acquire additional land on Ward's Island from the House of Refuge in exchange for a parcel on Randall's southern tip.[135]

Mayor Amos Kingsland then vetoed the Lawrence purchase. Both Boards promptly passed it again over his veto: Sturtevant's override motion carried in the Aldermen fifteen to one.[136] The sale was consummated in July and Tweed sponsored the resolution to transfer the land to the Almshouse Governors.[137] The latter were duly grateful.[138]

The deal soon began to look suspicious. The Civic Reformers took over the government and got Alexander McCotter, another Ward's landowner who had acted as Lawrence's agent in dealing with the City, to reveal

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

some of the background to the purchase. He had negotiated the sale with Aldermen Tweed and Tiemann and Assistant Alderman Bouton. Tiemann was objecting to the price being asked, $1,500 per acre as excessive; Tweed and Bouton also urged McCotter to "take less." A Mr. De Mott approached McCotter showing familiarity with the "delay" and offered to "guarantee" a bargain for a $10,000 commission. De Mott was a member of the Bureau of Assessments of the Corporation. Lawrence declined at first, then reconsidered, and paid De Mott and refused to lower his price for the land. Shortly thereafter the favorable reports were issued. It was not made clear exactly what the sequence of all the events were, whether any of the Aldermen were influenced to agree on too high a price by receipt of any money, or who even received the $10,000 ultimately.[139] Another landowner testified that he considered "the price given for the whole property, to Mr. Lawrence a high price."[140] This and other capers eventually earned the Aldermen of 1852 the nickname "Forty Thieves," whatever their actual culpability.

In December 1853, a few months after these revelations, the Aldermen Finance Committee proposed purchasing McCotter's Ward's island land: eighteen acres for

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

another $46,000. McCotter's ground happened to be so hopelessly "interspersed" with that of the City as to make a "very unsightly appearance." A graveyard would decrease the value of his parcel; in turn he would be free to perhaps "appropriate his property to a purpose entirely unbecoming to a burial ground, and thereby destroy the whole appearance of the cemetery."[141] After this episode the gloom and sad reflections associated with Potter's Field in the minds of the citizenry must have involved a realization that one good land deal deserved another and that successful bribery whetted the appetite for open blackmail and extortion.

Whatever the difficulties, controversies, or even dishonesties involved, by 1860 New York had at least succeeded in building a minicity for the poor on its outlying subislands. Though there would be further building projects and incidental improvements,[142] the basic institutional fabric was completely woven. The City had finally classified and removed its poor in accordance with a scientific reform vision a generation old.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (New York, 1945), I, 3, 299-300.

2. David T. Valentine, Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York for 1861, 446.

3. Asts Cmte on Lands and Places, Daniel P. Ingraham and John Cleaveland, Rept on Several Resolutions, Memorials, and Cmctns on Public Burial Ground, Doc, II (Second run), #95, May 2, 1836, 731.

4. Mayor Cornelius W. Lawrence, Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, III (Second run), #1, June 13, 1836, 5.

5. AH Cmsr Moses G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, Aldmn Doc, XIV, #44, February 14, 1848 (Separately paginated), 7.

6. David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic (Boston, 1971), xix, 235-6, 265-95 passim.

7. The spirit of inventive salvage knew no bounds as enterprising inventors devised dazzling projects for which they sought Council aid in the form of financial assistance or modification of ordinances. It was no mere coincidence that future Commissioner Moses G. Leonard, the most creative of public reform thinkers on Almshouse matters, served as an Alderman on the Arts and Sciences Committee and lauded the establishment of "a certain works" by the Hudson River for "converting the carcasses of dead animals into various useful materials." Aldmn Cmte on Arts and Sciences, Calvin Balis and M. G. Leonard, Rept on Establishment of Messrs. Collon and Cantel, Doc, VIII, #79, March 21, 1842, 609-10. On the Committee's recommendation the Council entered into an agreement with Collon and Cantel for the removal of dead animals which the contractors failed to fulfill. Aldmn Proc, XXV, May 22, 1843, 52. A similar proposal involved a "manufactory for the making of Urate and Poudrette from the contents of Sinks and Privies." Asts Law Cmte, David Graham, Jr., James Pollock, John Spader, Rept on Petition of New York Urate and Poudrette Company, Doc, XV, #19, December 9, 1839, 67-70.

8. The concept of institutionalization, as employed here, embodies four distinct but related meanings, the last three of which derive logically and historically from

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the first. It denotes, primarily, the social policy of placing dependent or deviant persons in congregate facilities separated from the community at large. Though in the twentieth century the term is used more in a nonliteral fashion, for the nineteenth century, this aspect is basic. Institutions were not wispy webs of abstract social relations but were grounded on real estate and housed in buildings. Secondly, however, and very soon in time, the term also comprehends the growing acceptance of the permanence of a given situation and the room made for it in the social order, as opposed to a radical effort to change or abolish it. In this case the situation is urban poverty and the institutionalization of the poor (in the first sense of the word.) There is also the complex of social, political, and economic relations that arise in response to and in furtherance of the permanent situation and the growing dependence of large numbers of people, other than the subject group, on the system evolved to deal with the problem. Vested interests emerge - primarily, the development of a bureaucracy. Finally, there are the psychic and physical effects on the institutionalized persons themselves: their increasing dependency, their adoption of the dominant society's definitions of them and their prescribed roles, their development of subtle techniques to negotiate the system. The entire process can best be understood if all of these derivative meanings are borne in mind in the context of studying institutionalization as removal from society. The best psychosociological contribution to critical institutionalization theory is Erving Goffman, Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates (Garden City, 1961).

9. AH Cmsrs Phillip W. Engs, William A. Tomlinson, Zebedee Ring, James H. Braine, Peter Palmer, Rept upon Entering Office, Aldmn Doc, IV, #32, September 11, 1837, 212.

10. AH Cmsr John R. Peters, Letter upon Resignation, Aldmn Doc, III (First run), #18, July 1, 1833, 116.

11. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 15.

12. LA Visiting Phycns Medical Board, Alexander H. Stevens, James MacDonald, Abraham V. Williams, Benjamin Ogden, Rept for 1847, Aldmn Doc, XIV, #48, March 30, 1848, 675.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

13. Aldmn CCAH, David Banks, Issac Varian, Aaron Clark, Rept in Favor of Removal of AH to BI, Doc, III (Second run), #104, February 27, 1837, 674.

14. AH Cmsrs William Mandeville, Samuel Stevens, Joseph Hoxie, Rept upon Entering Office, Aldmn Doc, I (Second run), #20, September 29, 1834, 175.

15. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 208.

16. Ibid., 212.

17. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 5.

18. Ibid., 6.

19. AH Govs, Rept for 1855, VII, xv.

20. AH Cmsrs Peter S. Titus, William W. Todd, Richard S. Williams, Revo C. Hance, Hamilton Fish, Rept on Removal to BI of AH Establishment, Aldmn Doc, IX, #118, May 8, 1843, 1394-5.

21. Joint Special Cmte on BI and LIF, Samuel Dunshee, James Palmer, Henry P. Robertson, Stephen Allen, John I. Labagh, Cornelius C. Jacobus, Rept on Erection of LA, Aldmn Doc, III (First run), #93, February 17, 1834, 760.

22. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Establishment for AH Children, in Aldmn CCAH, James D. Oliver, George H. Purser, Washington Smith, Rept on same, Doc, XIV, #21, May 24, 1847, 327-8.

23. Aldmn CCAH, Banks, Labagh, George Nixon, Rept Against Rept and Resolutions of Asts Recommending AH and LIF Establishments be Removed to RI, Doc, II (Second run), #113, April 11, 1836, 599.

24. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 232.

25. A. H. Stevens et al., 695, 700.

26. LA Rsdnt Phycn Moses H. Ranney, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 61.

27. Raymond A. Mohl, Poverty in New York: 1783-1825 (New York, 1971), 173-237 passim.

28. Blvu Rsdnt Phycn Alexander B. Whiting, Cmctn in Titus et al., Cmctn to Council, Aldmn Doc, IX, #28, October 5, 1842, 224.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

29. Ibid., 226.

30. AH Cmsrs James H. Cook, Daniel D. Crane, Tighe Davey, Gerardus Boyce, Gideon Ostrander, Rept in Answer to Certain Resolutions of Inquiry, Aldmn Doc, X, #23, July 24, 1843, 253.

31. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 227-8.

32. Cook et al., 254.

33. A. B. Whiting, Cmctn in Titus et al., Cmctn to Council, 226.

34. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 38.

35. AH Govs, Rept for 1855, VII, xi.

36. The controversy as well as the complexity, confusion, and carelessness of City government, especially the Almshouse Department, is thoroughly documented throughout the chapters below. It must be noted that for many reasons these complications generate problems for historian and reader alike. One cannot assume, for example, that the more important issues were more carefully debated, that elaborate reports were accurate or even honest, or that legislative actions were necessarily implemented by the bureaucracy. Categories in reports changed and overlapped making meaningful comparisons over time difficult. The City's confusion did not disentangle when presented in neat tabular form which disagreed with the same supposed information elsewhere in the same document as in Aldmn Special Cmte Chairman Thomas G. Talmage, Rept on Causes Which Have Tended to Increase City Expenditure, Doc, VI, #5, June 3, 1839 which cites different total Almshouse Department expense figures for 1834 to 1838 in the text, p. 45 and "Table J," p. 89. Also, there were both calendar and political reporting years and all reporting was inherently political. Or, the historian might try to follow the myriad amendments to the Almshouse Reorganization of 1845 until discovering that the Commissioner threw up his hands in despair at the same task; see below, Chapter 2. Therefore not all in the story will fall neatly into place but the important trends and many lesser details in building, finance, politics, and all other areas of public charity operations emerge clearly, the difficulties appearing often as part of the story itself.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

37. Issac N. Phelps Stokes, Iconography of Manhattan Island (New York, 1915-28), V, p. 1654, d. 1826; J. F. Richmond, New York and Its Institutions, 1609-1872 (New York, 1872), 386; Mohl, 84-5. Bellevue was the City's third Almshouse but the first on a large institutional scale rather than a small family style home model. The first Almshouse sat upon the Commons by City Hall from 1736 to 1797. The second was built directly behind the first which was then razed to the ground before the eyes of its residents. In 1816 the City removed the Almshouse and Penitentiary to Bellevue, then well beyond the outskirts of settlement. The City Hall building then became known as the "Old Alms House" or "New York Institution" and housed, first, several private organizations and, later, United States Courts and offices. It also served as the central office headquarters of the Almshouse Commissioners and Outdoor Poor division until these operations moved, in the late 1840s, into the "Rotunda" building. The Old Almshouse burned down in 1854. Stokes, VI, 209; Mohl, 81-8; Richmond, 536.

38. Stokes, V, p. 1635, d. 1823.

39. MCC, XV, December 5, 1825, 56.

40. Ibid., 52.

41. MCC, XVIII, June 29, 1829, 171.

42. MCC, XV, December 5, 1825, 49-50.

43. Within the twenty-six acre Bellevue enclosure, the Almshouse proper spanned 325 feet in length and comprised a center building with a wing at each end extending back 150 feet, by fifty feet wide. The center building was seventy-five feet deep, four stories high including the basement; the wings were one story less. Residents were lodged about twenty to a room in forty-two rooms, each twenty-two by forty-five feet. The new Hospital spanned 180 feet in length, the center portion fifty-five feet with wings each sixty-five by fifty. Its three stories and basement consisted of thirty-two rooms with various divisions for the different classes of patients: the insane in eighteen foot square wards, the sick and surgical cases in twelve wards, each fifty by twenty feet. There was also a 200 foot long combination

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

manufactory and schoolhouse, a makeshift smallpox hospital, a vagrant reception area, and a small garden-farm. Philadelphia Board of Guardians of the Poor, Rept of Cmte Appointed to Visit Cities of New York, Providence, Boston, and Salem (Philadelphia, 1827), 8-10; James Hardie, Description of the City of New York (New York, 1827), 269.

44. The Greenwich State Prison purchase affected the Almshouse only incidentally. The City and State began negotiating the sale in 1826 and agreed on a price of $100,000. When the City took possession in 1828, the State still had no other provision for its female convicts so it paid the City to board them. In May 1829 they were removed to Bellevue and, shortly thereafter, to Blackwell's Island. MCC, XV, April 3, 1826, 310, XVI, February 11, 1828, 737-9, XVII, May 5, 1828, 163-4, XVIII, May 1, 1829, 31-2, May 4, 1829, 39.

45. MCC, XVII, July 14, 1828, 294.

46. Ords, VIII, May 7, 1841, 151-2; Stokes, V, p. 1678, July 14, 1828.

47. MCC, XVII, August 11, 1828, 325. The new structure would be 150 to 200 feet long by fifty feet wide.

48. By November 1828, 125 of the prisoners were lodged in a temporary building on Blackwell's Island. There was also a stonecutter's shop and a blacksmith's shop; these cost an additional $3,000. Almshouse Superintendent Arthur Burtis and Penitentiary Keeper J. O. Woodruff met "disappointments and delays... incident to the introduction of the new order of things among the prisoners" which, they reported, would retard the project until "an early period of next season." MCC, XVII, November 27, 1828, 458-9. The Building Committee praised Burtis' "zeal and ability" and paid him an extra commission of two and a half per cent on monies expended. MCC, XVII, December 29, 1828, 550-1.

49. MCC, XVIII, October 19, 1829, 319.

50. Assistant Alderman James Roosevelt (a future Almshouse Commissioner) proposed the Old Almshouse for the new Bridewell but the Joint Committees on Police and on Jail and Bridewell rejected this option since it would have displaced the Almshouse Commissioners and other tenants. Instead this Committee proposed

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

purchasing ground on Houston Street for $23,000. MCC, XVIII, December 21, 1829, 436-8. The full Council rejected this. The Committee's successors wanted to buy land bounded by the Bowery, Fifth Street, Broadway, and Pearl Street but the new Council voted this down as well. The Committee then proposed, "from the difficulty of selecting any other location which the Board would probably accept of," taking over the Corporation Lot on the Collect Ground, then occupied by the City Superintendent of Repairs. This was also defeated. MCC, XVIII, March 8, 1830, 591-3. Then Assistant Alderman Phillip W. Engs (also a future Almshouse Commissioner) revived this plan. During debate Alderman Benjamin M. Brown amended Engs' resolution to change the proposed location to Bellevue, the first mention of that site. The Council rejected the Brown Amendment and carried the Engs Resolution but then reconsidered at the next meeting and referred the question to the Joint Committees on Public Offices and Repairs and on Jail and Bridewell. MCC, XIX, May 3, 1830, 29. Then the Engs plan was defeated and the Joint Committee directed to find another site. MCC, XIX, June 28, 1830, 137. When the Committee recommended and the Council adopted Bellevue, Alderman Samuel Stevens (another future Commissioner) moved to reconsider; his motion failed only by the tie breaking vote of Mayor Walter Bowne who thereby bore a high degree of responsibility for keeping the poor and the prisoners close together in this early but crucial period. MCC, XIX, August 23, 1830, 193-4, XIX, September 9, 1830, 222.

51. MCC, XIX, August 23, 1830, 193.

52. MCC, XIX, October 4, 1830, 260.

53. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 180-1.

54. Ords, I, July 2, 1831, 38.

55. Asts Proc, I, July 22, 1831, 129, September 5, 1831, 169.

56. Asts Special Cmte, Robertson, James R. Whiting, Dunshee, Mandeville, Dr. John R. Rhinelander, William W. Holly, Rept on Purchase of Farms on LI, Doc, I (First run), #19, September 19, 1831, 61-3.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

57. Ords, I, January 3, 1832, 113-4.

58. Ibid., March 22, 1832, 152.

59. Ibid., August 10, 1832, 258.

60. Asts Finance Cmte, Stephen Allen and John August Smith, Rept on LIF Contract, Aldmn Doc, III (First run), #15, July 15, 1833, 91-2.

61. Ibid., 93, 96.

62. Ibid., 94-5.

63. Ibid., 94.

64. Ibid., 95.

65. Ords, II, July 22, 1833, 26.

66. Ords, I, February 17, 1832, 134.

67. Ords, II, November 12, 1834, 263.

68. Banks, Labagh, Nixon, Rept Against Rept and Resolutions of Asts Recommending AH and LIF Establishments be Removed to RI, 595. The possibility of taxation figured into the argument for selling the Farms on Long Island. See also Chapter 6 below on Almshouse removal.

69. Ords, XI, December 30, 1843, 127.

70. Mayor Andrew H. Mickle, Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, XIII, #1, May 12, 1846, 12.

71. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, Aldmn Doc, XV, #44, March 5, 1849 (Separately paginated), 16-7.

72. Ords, II, March 31, 1835, 365. The money came from an "excess" in the Sinking Fund used to redeem City stock so that no new loan or tax was necessary. Controller T. J. Waters, Rept on Sinking Fund, Aldmn Doc, I (Second run), #61, April 13, 1835, 635-7; Ords, II, April 13, 1835, 378.

73. Ords, II, April 15, 1835, 379. The original Ordinance called for a leasing at public auction but an amendment struck out this requirement. Ords, II, April 23, 1835, 385. James Bell rented the land until it was taken for a burial ground. Ords, VIII, May 7, 1841, 151-2.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

74. Ords, X, April 28, 1843, 246-7. In June the Council authorized construction of a Keeper's house there and the following Spring they instructed the Almshouse Commissioners to "furnish the necessary boat or boats for the transportation, daily, of the dead from Bellevue to the City Cemetery, Randall's Island." Ords, XI, June 17, 1843, 16, May 9, 1844, 259.

75. Mayor Aaron Clark, Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, V, #1, May 14, 1838, 6. This loan was also to cover costs of building new Halls of Justice and a House of Detention, as well as a lumber dock.

76. Titus et al., Cmctn to Council, 217, 221; A. H. Stevens et al., 684. This Report summarized the history of the Asylum until 1848, largely from the viewpoint of Dr. James MacDonald. For details of the controversy see this report, also below, Chapter 12.

77. Ibid., 683.

78. Asts Special Cmte, William D. Waterman, Henry Brevoort, George F. Nesbitt, William D. Murphy, Rept on Contract to Extend LA and Erect Female Mad House, Doc, XVIII, #11, July 7, 1841, 43-54.

79. Ords, VIII, April 29, 1841, 141.

80. Aldmn CCAH, George H. Purser, William A. Walker, Egbert Benson, Rept on Englargment of LA and Erection of Mad House, Doc, XIII, #27, January 18, 1847, 281-6.

81. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 29-30.

82. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 21.

83. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 31.

84. Ords, VIII, October 26, 1840, 60.

85. Titus et al., Cmctn to Council, 212; Ords, X, November 25, 1842, 96.

86. Ords, XII, May 8, 1845, 273-4; M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 26.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

87. Ords, VI, August 1, 1838, 36.

88. Ords, X, November 23, 1842, 86.

89. Ibid., November 25, 1842, 93.

90. Ords, XII, September 14, 1844, 111-2.

91. Ibid., November 29, 1844, 191.

92. Ibid., December 26, 1844, 221.

93. Ords, XIII, October 23, 1845, 214.

94. Asts CCAH, Samuel Bradhurst, David Vandervoort, Edward Penny, Rept on AH Cmsrs' Cmctn on Purchase of Property at BI Ferry, Doc, XVII, #101, April 26, 1841, 487-8.

95. Aldmn CCAH, James Ferris and Egbert Benson, Rept Against Rept of Asts on Purchase of Property at Foot of 61 Street, Doc, VII, #101, June 11, 1841, 1054-5.

96. Aldmn Street Cmte, James Kelly and William Adams, Majority Rept on Petition of Jeramiah Towle on Bulkhead and Wharf at Foot of 61 Street and East River, Doc, XIV, #30, January 3, 1848, 459-77.

97. Aldmn Street Cmte, Thomas Spofford, Minority Rept on Petition of Jeremiah Towle..., Doc, XIV, #42, February 14, 1848, 628.

98. Jeremiah Towle, Letter to Council in Kelly and Adams, 479. Towle had once been an Assistant Alderman and an Almshouse Commissioner, holding the latter post for only a very short period, April to August 1833, curiously, just about the time he said he built the ferry house. Aldmn and Asts Joint Proc, I, April 3, 1833, 124, August 7, 1833, 132.

99. For details of the controversy, see below, Chapter 6.

100. Ords, XIII, May 22, 1845, 35. The City received $176,180 for the Bellevue land and $49,894.11 for the Long Island Farms. The Nativists estimated their Nurseries contract at $42,990 and the Almshouse cost at $117,195, to show an anticipated profit of nearly $60,000. This turned out to be unduly optimistic. Aldmn Proc, XXVIII, May 12, 1845, 749. In October 1847

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the City was involved in a lawsuit against William C. Haywood and others over "Bill relative to land at Bellevue formerly belonging to the Alms House, sold, April 1845." Corporation Counsel Willis Hall, Rept with List of Suits in Which the Corporation of this City are Interested, Asts Doc, XXX, #9, October 14, 1847, 116.

101. Mayor William F. Havemeyer, Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, XII, #1, May 13, 1845, 12.

102. Ords, XIII, May 22, 1845, 35.

103. Ibid., July 2, 1845, 113.

104. Ibid., June 20, 1845, 67.

105. Ibid., June 12, 1845, 66-7.

106. New York State Act to Authorize Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonalty of City of New York to Raise Money by Loan, Aldmn Doc, XII, #2, May 15, 1845, 27-8.

107. Joint Special Cmte, Bernard J. Meserole, William V. Brady, Joseph A. Divver, James D. Oliver, Lyman Candee, Nathan Roberts, Rept on Plans for Erection of New Buildings for AH Dept, Asts Doc, XXVI, #9, September 9, 1845, 91-102.

108. Special Contracts A, Ms Vol., October 8, 1845, 3-48. This volume also contains several other Almshouse Department building contracts. Structurally, each consists of specifications of work, articles of agreement, and sureties' pledges for each craft (carpentry and masonry) on each improvement. Work was spread around: different contractors were used in each craft on the different parts of a project, sometimes. Shortill did the main Almshouse carpentry, for example, while Wetmore did the chapel. Some contracts were signed for the City by the Mayor, others by the Comptroller and Corporation Counsel, still others by the Joint Building Committee.

109. Mayor William V. Brady, Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, XIV, #1, May 11, 1847, 8; M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 11.

110. The record does not make clear exactly what the largest mass transfer in Department history was like. It may have been quite chaotic. Theere was an influx of immigrants, a serious problem with epidemics, a shortage of boats, and a political war within

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the bureaucracy all going on at this time. See below, Chapters 2, 4, 5, 9, 13. Commissioner Leonard did not describe the transfer process directly. Mayor Havemeyer just said that "the Alms House proper and Nursery being in process of removal...no opportunity was afforded of forming a correct judgment of their condition." Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, XV, #1, May 9, 1848, 11. The Department admissions record has a couple of pages showing dozens of names with the notation: "Nearly all of these patients [persons] were received direct at Randall's Island in April 1848 but the tickets were not sent until this day." AH Admsns, Ms. Vol. 107, May 20, 1848.

111. The new Almshouse consisted of two twin "edifices," one for each sex, each with a center building and two wings, standing 650 feet apart. Each center building was fifty feet square, fifty-seven feet high "to the roof cornice," eighty-seven feet "to the top of the cupola." The wings were sixty by ninety-five feet and forty feet high. The chapel was on the western shore midway between the two Almshouses and there was a bakery on the eastern shore. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 11-2. There is also a description in Richmond, 537.

112. Joint CCAH, James D. Oliver, John P. Cuming, Washington Smith, George H. Purser, Amos F. Hatfield, Morris Franklin, Linus W. Stevens, Rept on Introducing Croton Water to RI, Aldmn Doc, XIV, #25, December 20, 1847, 403-6.

113. Five of the buildings were "situated irregularly yet symmetrically on a line at intervals of one hundred feet." Two others were advanced 260 feet on the left and right of the first five. An eighth was placed eighty feet to the rear of the central one, the "Nursery proper." Six of the structures were children's dwellings, one was a school and a Superintendent's residence, and one was a kitchen. The remaining four comprised the new Nursery Hospital: two for hospitals "proper," one for a kitchen, and one for an "Idiot's Dwelling." Valentine, Manual for 1849, 219-22.

114. Ibid., 222-3.

115. Ibid., 223. It consisted of a main building sixty feet

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

square and three stories high and two wings, each 124 by fifty feet and two stories high.

116. AH Govs, Minutes, December 15, 1857, 675-6.

117. Richmond, 527-8.

118. AH Govs, Minutes, December 18, 1856, 622-33, December 15, 1857, 673-4; Richmond, 529. The Hospital was three stories tall, 104 by forty-four feet, and accommodated 100 patients.

119. Havemeyer, Message for 1845, 14. See also Mayor Robert Morris, Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, VIII, #1, May 31, 1841, 6.

120. On the Workhouse movement, see below, chapters 4, 7. The immediate father of the Workhouse was nativistic Whig party leader and Alderman Clarkson Crolius, Jr. but the project was universally demanded and by no means a political issue.

121. New York State Act to Authorize Loan for Workhouse, Aldmn Doc, XVI, #30, April 10, 1850, 568-9.

122. Valentine, Manual for 1851, 296.

123. Workhouse Architect J. Renwick, Jr., Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1854, VI, 197-202. The institution consisted of a center building, part three and part four stories high, 150 by forty-five feet, with kitchens, storerooms, chapels, and Superintendent's quarters, plus two wings, one for each sex, each 291 by fifty feet and four stories high. A set of transversing cross-T workshops projected thirty-eight feet on either side of the wings. The length from north to south of this monument to moral discipline was 627 feet.

124. Asts Jnl, XXXII, May 16, 1848.

125. Ords, XVI, November 1, 1848, 204.

126. B. W. McCready, M.D., Address Delivered upon Opening of New Wing of Blvu Hospital in AH Govs, Rept for 1856, VIII, 17, 30.

127. Ords, XVI, July 8, 1848, 59.

128. AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 16-7.

129. Workhouse Supt Harmon Eldredge, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 156.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

130. On problems caused by the proximity of the Nurseries to the graveyard, see below, chapter 13.

131. Aldmn Proc, XXXXV, January 7, 1852, 44.

132. Asts Special Cmte, Edwin Bouton, Sam R. Mabbat, Timothy O'Brien, Rept in Favor of Purchasing from Abraham R. Lawrence 69 Acres on Ward's Island, Doc, XXXXVI, #6, April 16, 1852, 52-3.

133. Ibid., 54-5. This was the same land which the City refused to buy for about the same price in 1830; it was then also considered too expensive. See below, chapter 6.

134. Aldmn Proc, XXXXVI, April 21, 1852, 237.

135. Ibid., May 5, 1852, 318-9; Ords, XX, May 6, 1852, 217.

136. Aldmn Proc, XXXXVI, May 19, 1852, 511; Asts Jnl, XXXXVI, May 19, 1832, 327.

137. Aldmn Proc, XXXXVII, July 12, 1852, 69; Ords, XX, July 13, 1852, 355.

138. AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, xii.

139. Alexander McCotter, Affidavit #38 in Controller Azariah C. Flagg, Rept with Affidavits Taken Before the Recorder [Francis R. Tillou,] in the Years 1853 and 1854 on Alleged Abuses in City Government, Aldmn Doc, XXI, #55, September 28, 1854, 1282-3. This statement was taken in March 1853.

140. John S. Hilliker, Affidavit #40, ibid., 1286-7. He thought the land worth about $800 per acre.

141. Aldmn Finance Cmte, James M. Bard and Jacob F. Oakley, Rept in Favor of Purchasing Lots on Ward's Island from A. McCotter, Doc, XX, #65, December 16, 1853.

142. In early 1861, $79,000 was budgeted for "building a new Infants' Nursery on Blackwell's Island, extending the building for lunatics, erection of gas works and fixtures on Blackwell's and Randall's Islands, a steamboat for conveying freight and passengers, and towing vessels to and from the city and the several Islands, furniture for New Island Hospitals and washing machinery for the various Institutions." Ords, XXIX, March 11, 1861, 38.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 2

ALMSHOUSE LEGISLATION AND POLITICS

New York City's Almshouse institutions were governed by both State and local politics and legislation. The Almshouse was the first official City Department. It was immersed in local politics and played in important role in party affairs. For these reasons, as well as its connection with the poor, it became the subject of the first concerted movement of administrative reformers and furnished a model for several innovative mechanisms of government.

It was not until the local reform movement had largely failed that the State intervened directly in Almshouse affairs. From the start, however, there were some State policies and proposals which affected the City. All public poor relief depended upon a basic State authorization for its legality.[1] Occasionally State Senators would visit the institutions[2] and, in the early 1840s, the Almshouse Superintendent reported to the Secretary of State on behalf of New York "County."[3] These forms of oversight were minimal and benign.

More problematic were issues relating to settlement requirements and support of foreign dependents. The progressive Yates reform of 1824 abolishing settlement requirements for public assistance[4] would have the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"most injurious consequences" for the City, the Almshouse Commissioners told the Common Council, costing an extra $30,000 annually to support "a great proportion of the poor of this State."[5] Despite intensive City efforts, including a lobbying Committee in Albany, the State refused either to repeal the new law or to increase its meager poor allowance to the City.[6]

In 1830 the Supervisors of Kings County proposed a bill which would have charged New York City for any pauper "suspected" of having landed there on an immigrant vessel within two years prior to becoming a public dependent and been covered by an indemnity bond or commutation fee. Registration of somone in the Mayor's office would be held as conclusive proof of New York's liability. The "similarity of names" between paupers from Europe and Canada would surely result in many improper charges.[7] The City secured the defeat of this proposal as well as of a similar one of a decade later.[8]

The State took a more constructive approach to the problem of the immigrant poor in response to the unprecedented emergency of 1846-7. A new agency, the Commissioners of Emigration, was hastily created to handle the needs of most of the newcomers, largely relieving the Almshouse of their care.[9] Despite imperfections and delays in implementation, the welcome reform benefited both the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Department and the immigrants.

From before 1825 until 1849 the Almshouse structure was the legal creature of the Common Council. The City Legislature framed the Ordinances governing poor relief and appointed the Commissioners and main subordinate officers of the institutions. The City Department was a new invention and the transfer of authority from the Council Committees was a protracted process fraught with conflict. However, Councilmen and executive bureaucrats were really the same people wearing different hats successively: most Commissioners and Superintendents had been or would be Aldermen. Party bosses made it a point to serve on Charity and Almshouse Committees of the Council and also as Almshouse Commissioners. Appointments were subject to a rigid spoils system and the institutions were deeply involved in the raucus party battles of the age. The politicians, whether occupying the Council chambers or the Commissioners' offices, were not bereft of creative reform proposals, some of which were even enacted. But no local effort even began to extricate the Almshouse from the political morass.

The Council worked largely through its Special and Standing Committees which reported on public matters and recommended proposed Ordinances to be voted upon by the full body.[10] Those who shaped the local poor laws and institutions, including many later Commissioners, served on

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a few important Committees. The Standing Committee on Charity and Almshouse regulated the Department, as well as the City's relations with private philanthropy. The technically "Special" but actually annually appointed Joint Committee on Public Buildings on Blackwell's, Randall's, and/or Long Island oversaw construction projects. Finally, there were many truly "Special" Committees formed to address various extraordinary issues which arose.[11]

The first Almshouse Ordinance passed after 1825 was a reiteration of the system in effect at that time. The Law for the Government of the Almshouse of 1827 continued the old administrative mechanism of five, unpaid "Commissioners of the Almshouse, Bridewell, and Penitentiary," one of whom was, ex officio, the Superintendent of the Almshouse. All were appointed by and served "at the pleasure of" the Common Council who also chose the Clerk and the Resident Physician. The Commissioners appointed lower "officers, servants, agents" but there was yet no formal "Department." Some basic House rules were prescribed.[12] The same year there was an Act to Regulate the City Prison and Bridewell[13] and a Law for the Government of the Penitentiary,[14] clarifying the Commissioners' authority over these institutions. In 1828 an Ordinance to Establish City Prisons and Penitentiaries established their responsibility for Greenwich Prison[15] and with the removal

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the Penitentiary to Blackwell's Island from Bellevue, there was a Law to Designate the new facility.[16]

In compliance with the new City Charter of 1830 mandating executive bureaucracies, the Council passed the first Law Creating an Alms House Department and Prescribing the Duties of the Officers Thereof in 1832. This Ordinance maintained the old basic structure but separated the office of Superintendent from that of Commissioner, making him a distinct subordinate employee. This change reflected a concern with dividing policymaking from implementation within the bureaucracy as well as between Department and Council. It also showed the growth of the Almshouse proper and its need for tighter supervision and recognized the birth of parallel specialized institutions needing similar oversight. There was no change in the mode of choosing Commissioners, Superintendent, Clerk, or Resident Physician, all continuing to serve at Council pleasure.[17] This Ordinance was reiterated in 1834 with some minor revisions.[18]

Under this system each election enabled a patronage turnover in which a new bureaucracy would inherit the spoils if the incumbant party lost. There were usually two Almshouse Departments, in fact: one in power and one in waiting, one Democratic and one Whig.

Until 1834 faction rather than party determined City politics and Tammany dominated the Almshouse along with

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the rest of the government. There was thus a degree of stability, occasionally interrupted by some excitement as when Commissioner Thomas R. Smith ran for Mayor against incumbant Walter Bowne and cloistered his Council supporters at Bellevue to prevent a quorum. Ultimately Bowne was re-elected and Smith lost his Almshouse post for the disloyalty.[19]

The two party Almshouse system really began in 1834 when the newly organized Whigs won the Council, ousted Tammany's officeholders, and installed their own Commissioners and staff. The following year the Democrats returned with their old clique supplemented by some new faces. The Whigs came back in 1837 and began a tradition of publishing extensive Department reports in response to Council resolutions of inquiry on "the situation of the Almshouse...at the time of entering office...reviewing acts of predecessors" to embarass them and justify large expenditures to replenish the institutions and restore order. Tammany took the Corporation back in 1839 and held it until the Whig Council victory of 1842. The Hall resurged in 1843. The following year, disgusted with the spoils, the abuses, and the immigrants, the voters elected the third party, nativist, "reform" American Republicans. In terms of patronage, the Nativists behaved exactly like the major parties, putting their leaders in

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

as Commissioners and their followers in as subordinate officers.[20]

The Nativists also issued a blistering expose of past political exploitation by both major parties which went far beyond mere spoils. Democrats and Whigs had long traded charges of the use of pauper and unnaturalized alien voters but since both were equally guilty of the practices, little had been said or known of their extent until the third party victory. The new reform administration's Charity and Almshouse Committee of the Aldermen charged immediately that the Almshouse had long been made systematically "subservient to party purposes" by supporting "sturdy paupers...winter after winter in idleness...for no other purpose than of securing suffrages for the dominant party." No sooner did the fall State election terminate than would "able bodied paupers throng our Alms House" to be "lodged wlll during the inclement season" and "marched up to the polls" again in the spring without paying "a penny in money or labor for their winter's entertainment." Their only obligation was to "vote away the rights and property of the self-supporting laborers and independent citizens."[21]

Shortly thereafter the Nativist Almshouse Commissioners said they could only cite the "most prominent evils" among "numerous abuses" of the past which they claimed to have remedied. Their main reform was "not to allow any of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

inmates to leave the institution for the purpose of interfering in the elections of the people." Apparently the Almshouse poor were not quite people. The Nativists also abolished an old tradition of allowing some convicts to escape and holding others past their inconvenient sentence expiration dates so that they could electioneer and vote.[22]

The Aldermen asked for details, especially the name of "every Superintendent who has allowed male paupers to go out...to vote...and granted to them particular privileges." The Commissioners responded with a vivid description of the semi-annual election day routine, supported in detail by affidavits from dozens of officers and inmates who had "been a long time in the establishment" and could "give accurate information." The misdeeds were timeworn: "if custom can make right that which is morally wrong, then some of these abuses, already gray with age, might plead such extenuation." Information was more "definite" for claims of recent events than those of the more distant past, however, and showed a year of Whig and two of Democratic practices to have been "uniformly reprehensible." They could, indeed, only find "apologists" among those who "make a trade of politics" and whose "consciences have become seared under the frequent repetition of fraud and falsehood."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Commissioners said that they had always suspected, "in common with many of their fellow citizens" that through the Almshouse Department "a larger share of the revenue was discharged than necessary," but they had entertained "but an imperfect idea of the real practices." Election days at the Almshouse were energetic, elaborate, and expensive:

> For ten days or a fortnight previous to an election the paupers were put in training, extra food and clothing were furnished them, and in some cases party papers furnished without charge. The tailor's shop was put in requisition - new clothes were made. The storeroom of the Hospital was ransacked and the clothing of those who had died there brought to light, that the Alms House voters might thus in some measure be disguised, and that the citizens might not be shocked at the sight of hundreds of inmates advancing to the polls, clad in the gray uniform of the establishment.
>
> The morning of an election was a busy time at the Alms House. Officers hurrying to and fro - getting together the inmates...clad in their new dresses - distributing tickets to vote and tickets for grog - putting into their hands nice pieces of silver coin, that they might solace themselves after the arduous labor of depositing their ballots and giving also good advice as to their conduct at the polls, and promising, in case of success, immunities and privileges for the coming year. Then they were carried to the polls with an officer on the step, not to see that no man was deprived of the exercise of his right of suffrage, but to see that none of the troops made their escape until they had deposited the ballots.

Then the voters would go to a tavern and return to the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Almshouse drunk a few days later, their new clothing pawned.[23]

Former Manufacturing Department Superintendent Andrew Henderson testified that "the paupers generally went in stages; some of them were carried from their sick beds - not able to put a foot under them - to the stages; many also walked." Only those who could be trusted to vote properly were allowed out. Inducements for correct voting included not only "greater indulgences, better clothing, better treatment, with promises of its continuance," but also dire warnings of the "evils, that is, tyranny and difference of their treatment - if the opposing party was to get in power."[24] Resident Charles Davis, a former merchant and ship owner, said that he had seen "men who were cripples from the Alms House, carried on men's backs from the stages to the polls... John Fitch, the second Steward, passed the paupers from the stage to the polls."

For the recalcitrant - those of opposing politics - who might somehow also get out to vote, there could be problems upon return. Davis was "turned out" of the Almshouse for voting and promoting the American Republican ticket. He "ascertained" this in a subsequent interview with Commissioners' Agent Alexander Stewart who "called for" Superintendent William Moss. The

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Superintendent

> said, pointing to me, That fellow voted the American Republican ticket and I turned him out. Mr. Stewart asked him if there was anything else. Mr. Moss said, Yes, he made a practice of coming in at late hours and drunk; which was false. Mr. Stewart said I had better go down to the Tombs and give myself up to go to the Penitentiary; I said good morning and left...On Monday evening before the spring election, I met Mr. Miller the Steward at the Bull's Head, at Clinch's Tavern, Third Avenue and Twenty-fourth-street. Miller said to me, I always thought you were a Whig. I said to him that I was an American Republican, and meant to vote that ticket. Miller said to me, Very well sir, very well, sir. This was said to me in a threatening manner...I saw a number of the paupers and asked them to vote the American Republican ticket; they said they dare not do so, or they should be turned out; they said to me, Davis you will be turned out certain.[25]

Inmate tailor James Owens testified that Steward Miller also issued short orders of items ordered by the Resident Physician for nativist resident Stephen Munson. "Munson took a native American paper." Miller asked Owens Munson's political sympathies which had formerly been Whig but were presently American Republican. Miller then "denounced Munson as a damned rascal" and told Owens to "make out a list of the names of the inmates of the Mechanics' Ward, with the politics of each man." Later Owens discovered "a material

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

difference in his treatment of his political friends... by giving them a much better supply of goods from the store room." Once the officers brought in a drunken inmate and graciously helped him to his room "with a great deal of favor" and comments that he "was a good old Democrat." With the Nativists in power, Owens knew of "no favoritism now extended to any of the inmates of the establishment."[26]

William Wade had been an inmate for eight years and traced such abuses back to "Col. [Superintendent Linus W.] Stevens's time, meaning 1838, and said he had "known paupers to be sent out to colonize when Mr. [John] Myer was Superintendent." But under the Nativists "not an inmate of the Alms House went out to vote at the election last fall, and they were consequently all sober."[27]

If anything could be worse than allowing the paupers to vote, it was permitting convicts from the Penitentiary to cast their ballots and electioneer. "On the day preceding the day of the charter election last spring," reported the Commissioners, three officers "left Blackwell's Island in a boat, with seven or eight convicts...officers and convicts went together to a tavern and there the officers drank liquor and treated the convicts." Then the prisoners were dressed in citizens' clothing, boarded in a house on Mercer Street,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and "on the next day several of them voted, and in some instances they were engaged in bringing up voters." After a couple of days they were "apprehended" and returned to the Penitentiary without punishment for their escape,[28] something Keeper Theodore Shadbolt thought "singular."[29] Another Keeper, John Perisianna, testified that he had "known prisoners to remain on the island after their time was out" and that "more than the usual number of prisoners left the island just previous to, or on the days of election, especially in the spring. This arose from their remaining after their times were out."[30] A third, Garret De Groot, added that it was "frequently a subject of conversation among the keepers that such and such prisoners' time would be out, and we must see and have them at election..."[31] The Nativist Commissioners labeled these practices "subversive of discipline, and tending directly to defeat the great end of punishment - the reformation of the prisoners."[32] Perhaps the Keepers thought they had been teaching the convicts citizenship.

The politicians who perpetuated these abuses were by no means bereft of criticisms of the system, nor of proposals for reform and reorganization of the Almshouse Department. The City's first bureaucracy, in fact,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

provides the perfect case study of an early urban governmental reform movement both because it was the earliest department to be created and to exhibit problems and because its very function was, itself, one of reform. As both a public spoils operation and the City's agency charged with the rehabilitative mission toward the underclass, the Almshouse Department thus bore a double relationship to the reform thrust for clean and efficient government. If this Department needed reform, it was the reformers themselves who needed reform, as objects as well as subjects. The Almshouse was a case of social reform turning on itself which, in practical application, meant abusing politicians attempting to reform themselves.

The movement for reform and reorganization of the Almshouse Department emerged in the late 1820s and culminated with the passage of the Single Paid Commissioner Reorganization Ordinance of 1845. Most, but not all of the numerous proposals focused on creating a streamlined, professional executive insulated from Council politics and establishing a measure of institutional autonomy through the formalization of the subdepartments.[33]

The Council mandated several successive Special Committees on Pauperism prior to 1831 to report on how to reduce costs and devise a better system of managing

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the poor.[34] Commissioner John R. Peters offered the first serious critique of the ancient five Commissioner executive and the blurred lines of institutional authority in 1833. He suggested three paid Commissioners and a "guardian" of the poor in each electoral ward who would "examine and recommend as to the dispensation of charity...subject to the decision of the commissioners." The different institutions: Almshouse proper, "Common Hospital," "Lunatic Hospital," and the Long Island Farms, should be "comprised in a separate line" with keepers appointed by the Council but serving under the "general direction of the Commissioners."[35]

In 1837 Commissioner Phillip W. Engs and his Board raised the issue of the need for continuity of administration. With an elegant disclaimer, they outlined the main problem in the Department and proposed a solution:

> Regardless of what may be said as to our desire to continue as your Commissioners, we feel called upon to lay aside all fastidiousness on the subject, and plainly state our opinion that the departments under our supervision can never be properly conducted by any settled policy or system while subject to the frequent and entire changes in office consequent upon elections, "during the pleasure of the Common Council." Under this tenure, an extensive project is hardly perfected in idea, and every branch of the City Government convinced of its utility, when public sentiment directs power into other hands, and unfinished measures of the greatest importance... are made the sport of party...

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Commissioners of the Almshouse... gratuitous public servants, cannot suffer any individual loss by a short term of service; to discharge them from office, is to relieve from an onerous responsibility; but what permanency can there be in the conduct of institutions under their supervision, when a whole Board, without regard to qualifications, may be simultaneously removed and their places filled by novitiates?
>
> We therefore, respectfully, renew the suggestion...that you may be authorized to appoint a Resident Physician and a Superintendent for a term longer than one year, and the five Commissioners... to be divided into three classes electing one for one year, two for two years and the remaining two for three years...their places to be filled for three years, thus making an election of one class every year.[36]

The first proposals to emanate from the Council came from the bipartisan Special Committees on Almshouse Reorganization and a Workhouse of 1841-3 led by Democrat Frederick R. Lee and Whig Robert Jones. Reform, reorganization, and a workhouse would address the "necessity of a radical change in the Alms House Department, in order, if possible to curtail its expenses" and to further the "preservation of the health of the inmates." The Ordinance creating the Department was, due to the "increasing wants of that establishment" and "other causes...defective." Professionalization was urgent in a growing operation; the Committee was

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"unanimously of the opinion that the duty required of the Commissioners is entirely too great to be performed gratuitously." The problems of running the specialized institutions under common and blurred administration had worsened in the decade since Peters. The "Alms House and Prisons should be under the charge of different persons, and be made two separate and distinct departments."[37] The entire Almshouse Department should be divided into five subdepartments: Nurseries, Workhouse, Hospitals, Almshouse Proper, and Prisons. The first four of these should be under a single Almshouse Commissioner supervising "in conjunction with the Committee on Charity and Almshouse of both Boards" who would appoint the subordinate officers. As a paid professional, the Commissioner would "devote his whole attention to the interests of the institution and to the wants of the outdoor poor." The separation of Almshouse and prisons was "highly important" since Almshouse authorities could not possibly pay "proper attention to prison matters."[38] The Committee underscored its concern with the patronage problem in detailing the proposed mode of appointment:

> Your Committee, fully aware of the baneful effects of political influence over our public institutions, have carefully endeavored to divest the accompanying ordinance of all features of that nature,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> and for that reason propose that the principal officers should be appointed for three years, subject, however, to impeachment for improper conduct.[39]

The proposals of the larger Lee-Jones Committee were tabled and revived the following year by a Committee consisting of only Lee and Jones;[40] then the plans were gutted and stalled in the full Board of Aldermen by Democratic leader Elijah Purdy and Whig John Stewart.[41]

In 1843 Mayor Robert Morris revived the Peters idea of Ward officials. He called them "overseers" of the poor, who, he thought, should have authority to issue tickets of admission into the Almshouse.[42] The proposal was referred to a new Reorganization Committee chaired by Alderman Francis R. Tillou. The new Commissioners called for reform: "the evil exists in the system, as established by law...the whole system should receive a thorough revision."[43] There was no action, however.

The Nativists produced some creative reform schemes. That of the Commissioners was close to the Engs staggering plan. There had been few alterations in the now expanded Department since its inception, they told the Council. Commissioners should be appointed for three to five years, some each year, which would "secure to all at times the presence of some members of the Board acquainted with

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

its concerns and management and would be likely to cause the Board to be composed of different parties, which would have a tendency to give the whole public more confidence in its management, and destroy the appearance of party administration." In addition, the Commissioners should appoint all of the officers and the Council should fix all of their salaries instead of the existing patchwork of shared prerogatives in both these areas of personnel management. Then the Commissioners could be "held wholly responsible for the administration of the Department" while the Council, by virtue of its power of the purse, would retain a "check both salutory and effective."[44]

When the Council failed to act, the Commissioners' Chairman, James Van Nostrand, bypassed them and memorialized the State Legislature directly to enact these reforms, which he characterized as "important" but "not completed, by reason of constant changes in the city government." Unlike many, he explicitly opposed professionalization of the executive: there was "no difficulty in the City of New-York in finding men of leisure and competent to discharge the duties of charitable institutions...without charge."[45] Upon learning of the memorial, the Council objected to its consideration without its own "knowledge or assent;"[46] then they studied the issue and withdrew their objection.[47] The State ignored the idea anyway.

Nativist Alderman William B. Cozzens of the Charity and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Almshouse Committee suggested a revival of the auction system abandoned in the previous century. He obtained a mandate to study the expediency of "allowing to any person or society one half of the cost it may or does take to supply any pauper, provided such persons be taken from the Alms House."[48] Fortunately this dubious proposition went no further.

As the Council failed to reform the Department, the State contemplated intervention. Albany began a long series of encroachments on New York City home rule in 1840[49] which culminated in the Metropolitan Police Act of 1857.[50] As the first subject of a State imposed reorganization, the Almshouse constituted the successful test model for the Police reform and for other governmental innovations.

The initial State intervention into the Almshouse was limited. In 1845 a very brief law was passed to professionalize the Commissioners' function and consolidate it in one person. The Council would appoint the first such executive. His successors would be elected annually by the people of the City, just as was the Mayor. The Commissioner would receive an annual salary of $2,000 and could be removed only "on satisfactory evidence being produced of incompetency, insufficiency, or any palpable violation of duty."[51] If popular, citywide election of a single, paid

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

official would not remove the Almshouse completely from politics, it would at least curb the worst excesses of the old spoils system.

Within these limits the Act allowed the City to design its own reorganization. The new Democratic Council wanted just a little reform and accordingly accepted the State mandate as a limit. The Ordinance for the Reorganization of the Almshouse Department provided for the single, elected, paid Commissioner. Prisons would remain within the Department but there would be clearly delineated subdepartments: "Alms-House, a Nursery, a Work-House, Hospitals, the Out-Door Poor, Penitentiary, City Prisons and Jails."[52] Appointments and salaries were a confused patchwork of prerogatives shared between Council and Commissioner, much as under the old system. The important feature was that the Council retained the power to appoint the principal subordinates: Almshouse Superintendent, Resident Physician, Clerk, and many lower officers.[53] This refusal to cede real power to the Commissioner as well as the incompleteness of the hastily concocted measure combined with the continuing series of scandals and increasingly contentious politics of the next four years to undermine the reform, ultimately dooming it to failure and inviting a stronger State intervention.

Meanwhile, as the Almshouse Department as a whole

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

had moved from administration by an unpaid Board to a single professional head, the Hospital subdepartments, while included in this movement, simultaneously underwent their own reform and reorganization thrust in the opposite direction: from a single, professional head, the Resident Physician, to an unpaid Board. The objectives of this movement were largely similar to those of the general Almshouse reform campaign: the concentration of the Hospitals into an administratively rational subdepartment and the insulation of the doctors from Aldermanic influence. But there was an important additional goal: the advancement of science by the development of Bellevue into a teaching hospital.

Doctors were the perfect reformers, personifying the application of scientific expertise, practical experiment, and humane concern to both the physical and the moral aspects of social problems. They were easily seen as the primary guardians of community discipline in a dangerous age and were certainly the most obviously apparent practitioners of special skills to which politics was necessarily irrelevant. Some might defend the party appointment of even an Almshouse Commissioner but everyone agreed that physicians should serve independently of political considerations.

But this could never happen under the system of Council appointment of the Bellevue Almshouse and Hospital Resident

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Physician. Like the other officials, he was replaced nearly annually: the decade of the 1840s "saw a rapid change of physicians; the office having become a prize for political partisans, every fluctuation of party power brought with it a change in residents." Abuses resulted from entrusting "details of the administration... chiefly...to young men...advanced students, or newly graduated physicians, who obtained their appointments by paying a fee to the resident."[54]

Aside from politics, there was great concern for devising "a more systematic economy toward the receptacles of the sick." The objective of a teaching hospital derived from the developmental needs of modern science which demanded an order which only institutions could provide:

> Medicine is yet an uncertain or rather unfinished science; and it is held the duty of medical men not only to follow its prescribed rules, but to endeavor to improve them. Now in private practice there are so many interfering circumstances, that order can hardly obtain between physician and patient; in consequence, the whole medical world looks to improvements made in hospitals as sources which, in an especial manner are looked to for the advancement in professional knowledge.[55]

The first proposal for a hospital reorganization without regard to the rest of the Almshouse Department came from some three dozen doctors, including former Alderman

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

John R. Rhinelander, Joseph M. Smith, James MacDonald, and Stephen Hasbrouck. When the Resident Physician's office fell vacant in 1837 as a result of Benjamin Ogden's resignation, this group memorialized the Council to abolish that post and substitute a governing Board of Visiting Physicians and Surgeons.[56] A Special Assistants Committee studied the plan and recommended a Board of four Physicians and four Surgeons and an unpaid student Resident Physician who would be limited to one year's study and service. This scheme was modeled on Philadelphia's Blokely Hospital system except that the student would not have to pay for his residency as in the Quaker City.[57]

David Rogers, James R. Wood, Jonathan Griscom, and about fifteen other doctors remonstrated against the plan,[58] as did the New York Medical Society,[59] and the Almshouse Commissioners. There was no quarrel with the idea of a teaching hospital. Indeed, as Engs and his Board had already pointed out, medical men had long found Bellevue "unsurpassed as a field for the exercise of their skill, and advancement of that science." Like Philadelphia, New York could offer great opportunities to students which, besides serving education and science, could save $3,000 a year. "With such facilities for the encouragement of science" as the City had in its Almshouse Hospital, it should "not long forego their use."[60] But the way to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

evolve a successful teaching hospital was not to abolish the head Physician's governing role: on the contrary, a "competent resident" should be appointed at once. It was an "absolute requisite; without responsibility of this kind in one man disorder and confusion must ensue."[61] Although Assistant Alderman Murray Hoffman argued "at great length" in Council for his Committee's plan, it was tabled and died.[62]

The second Lee-Jones Reorganization Committee revived the Medical Board concept as part of its proposals of 1843. This plan called for six Physicians and six Surgeons to govern the Hospital. There was continuing concern with both the development of medicine and the financial savings that could result from the use of student doctors. "It is certainly the duty...to render this institution (if consistent with its first great purpose of relief to the poor,) an instrument for the promotion and enlargement of science." There could be "no better opportunity afforded for instruction" of young doctors, thought Lee and Jones, than existed at Bellevue.[63]

In 1846 the Council tabled a proposal to amend the Almshouse Reorganization by splitting the Medical Department into four sections: Bellevue, the Lunatic

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Asylum, the Penitentiary Hospital, and the Nursery Hospital, each headed by a separate Resident.[64] This emphasis reflected a growing concern that the expanding specialized hospitals were anachronistically constituted as mere administrative appendages to Bellevue and were inappropriately governed by "Assistants" to its Resident.

In 1847 the Council finally passed a comprehensive Organization of the Medical Department of the Almshouse. The Aldermen's Charity and Almshouse Committee convened a special consulting Committee of eleven physicians who resolved that Hospitals appointments should be made "irrespective of any political considerations," that the medical institutions should be separately administered, and that particularly the Resident Physician of the Lunatic Asylum should hold a five year appointment "in view of the peculiar qualifications necessary in that department; and the disastrous results of frequent changes in the medical and moral treatment of the insane." The doctors then appointed a subcommittee of Drs. David Meredith Reese, Benjamin Drake, and James R. Wood to "draft a plan of reform for the Medical Police" of all Department hospitals.[65] Their "Plan for the Better Organization of the Hospital Department" called for appointment of Resident Physicians by the Common Council and their service to be at the pleasure of their respective

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

governing Medical Boards which would be established for each institution.[66] Though it gave no five year tenure to anybody, the full Committee of physicians adopted it unanimously[67] and the Charity and Almshouse Committee recommended it to the full Board of Aldermen.[68]

The final Ordinance divided the Hospitals into four sections. At Bellevue, two "Consulting" Physicians and two Consulting Surgeons would render "honorary" and "gratuitous" service. There would be a governing Board of six Visiting Physicians and six Visiting Surgeons. The Resident Physician would be retained and could appoint eight student Assistants. The Blackwell's Island Hospitals would fall under three new Resident Physicians and Medical Boards of varying numbers for each, totaling ten Physicians and Surgeons and three Assistants. All Visiting, Consulting, and Resident Physicians would be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Common Council.[69]

Despite the Council's retention of the patronage, the reformers were optimistic. "Let us hope that the Medical Board of Blackwell's Island will be the means of...fearlessly taking from the shoulders of political men all the responsibilities that with propriety they can assume," commented the first Lunatic Asylum Board.[70] Commissioner Moses G. Leonard mused that "none who

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

believe that 'in a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom'" could fail to welcome the "learned, skillful, and scientific board of Medical and Surgical Officers."[71]

After only a year the doctors appreciated the limits of the reform. Since the Council still appointed attendants, these important employees remained the worst political hacks. The Resident Physician should have full appointment powers over his staff. The Medical Board of the Lunatic Asylum suggested this without their Resident's knowledge: "We do not know that he would like the responsibility of hiring and dismissing them, but...he should be made to assume that duty and then be answerable for their acts."[72] Political shoulders had indeed proven strong.

In 1845 the Democrats repossessed the Corporation and appointed James H. Cook, who had served as Chairman of their Commissioners of 1843-4, as the first single Commissioner of the reorganized Almshouse Department. Most of the abusers accused by the Nativists were also returned to their customary posts. The following year the parties nominated their candidates for Almshouse Commissioner at "Alms-House Conventions" supplementing the Mayoral Conventions and Ward nominating meetings. In 1846, 1847, and 1848, Democratic former Alderman Moses G. Leonard was elected Commissioner.[73] During

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

first of these years, he and a Tammany Council retained the Cook bureaucracy. In 1847, however, the entire Corporation, except for Leonard, fell under Whig control.[74] The Council immediately repealed all of the Commissioner's appointment power over lower level employees and delegated it to the Joint Charity and Almshouse Committee,[75] though several important incumbants were retained in their posts for the moment. All of the institution heads and many other officers were replaced with Whigs.

In 1848 the Democrats won the Mayoralty and achieved a perfect tie in the Board of Assistants. The Whigs held the Board of Aldermen. This would mean that their dominance could prove precarious and, in any case, the status quo upon the change in administration was likely to remain. The Joint Charity and Almshouse Committee could well go Democratic. Accordingly, the lame duck Council repealed the Committee's appointment powers and vested them in itself[76] and extended the purge throughout all vestiges of the Tammany bureaucracy.[77] Democrat Leonard now had to manage an entirely Whig Department.

The Commissioner appears to have had good relations with Dr. David Meredith Reese, the Whig Resident Physician. But the new Superintendent, Marcellus Eells, sabotaged operations and launched a political war of charges and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

countercharges against Leonard who could scarcely secure any redress from his refractory subordinate's party colleagues.[78] The conflict undermined the Commissioner's authority and the functioning of the Department during the most crucial emergencies of Almshouse removal, heightened immigration, and rampant epidemics.

Meanwhile, Tammany Alderman George R. Purser launched a calculated political assault on the Resident Physician, charging that "the corpse of a person who had died at Bellevue was recently removed down town...offered to one or more surgeons for purposes of dissection...with the consent of Dr. Reese...at five dollars."[79] He tried to have this allegation - one of the most serious which could be raised against a nineteenth century doctor - investigated by his own Charity and Almshouse Committee but the Whigs carried a motion to refer it to a special Committee chaired by Abraham R. Lawrence.[80] The testimony established some strange practices at Bellevue, but not those charged by Purser. The overall political atmosphere was vividly indicated by Dr. Lyman H. Stone in an unconvincing denial of certain quotations attributed to him and Purser:

> Alderman Purser never stated to me after hearing the charges, that he could now put Dr. Reese down; nor did he say that he would accuse Dr. Reese of stealing dead bodies, and that he would crush him and the Whig Party together, for this Alderman Purser knew would not agree with my political views.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I never said I could ruin Dr. Reese by exposure if he dared dismiss me from Bellevue...Alderman Purser never made any reference to this subject as a party matter...and I never could tell from his conversation whether he was sanguine of proving the charges.[81]

The Lawrence Committee found Purser's charges "entirely unfounded" and unsupported except by the gossip of dismissed or disgruntled employees and rebuked their Tammany colleague for his "assault upon the reputation of a faithful public officer."[82] Whatever the truth of the charges, they showed that the Almshouse was still mired in Aldermanic politics and even the doctors were nearly immune to its dangers.

The Reorganization Ordinance had serious administrative defects that went beyond its failure to insulate the Department from politics. Even with both a Democratic Council and bureaucracy, Commissioner Leonard found the law sadly wanting in terms of preventing confusion and conflict:

> It is certainly to be regretted that, in the multiplicity of your deliberations, it has escaped your attention to suitably provide for the correct administration of the Alms-House Laws. So many obstacles are continually presented to a perfect arrangement of the matters over which I am clothed with the privilege of a controlling supervision, without the definite authority to act in an effectual manner, that I doubt not, when you have

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> reached the subject of this Department, you will at once freely admit the pressing necessity of remedial legislation, in order to place the Institution in a situation commensurate with its importance, and permit it to possess a capacity to fulfill the design of its establishment.
>
> I referred to the absence of intelligibly defined powers pertaining to the heads of the various Institutions, and to the consequent occurence of conflicting action...[83]

In response to this plea, to various scandals, to honestly perceived defects and omissions, and, of course, to political exigencies, the Council amended the Ordinance piecemeal over the next two and a half years.[84] This created even more confusion because the dozens of new rules and regulations were dispersed, unconsolidated, contradictory in some instances, and ever changing. This was not what Leonard had meant by remedial legislation, he complained toward the end of his tenure; nobody could even keep up with all the amendments:

> It certainly would be advisable to have, for the proper government of this extensive establishment, an ordinance that would <u>fully</u> comprise its whole sphere of influence and action. I have frequently recommended this measure but the Common Council have always seemed to have too much <u>other</u> business to occupy their time, to give an effective attention to my repeated suggestions. At present, no one officer in the whole range of Institutions, knows his powers or privileges. The re-organization of 1845, incomplete and contradictory as it was, formed a better guide to the official incumbants than the present <u>altered</u> code, and I doubt very much whether there is, in reality, such a document as an <u>Alms-House</u>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Ordinance. These alterations and amendments have been, within the last few years, so numerous, that mystified as it ever was, it is now a perfect labyrinth - an incongruous collection of chapters and sections, that none can understand - and, in short, may be styled a municipal medley.

Nobody knowing his proper powers and obligations, each interpreted them for himself.[85]

The clarity sought by Leonard was provided, but in an ironic way: imposed abruptly by the State instead of fashioned carefully by the Council. One week after the Legislature abolished the position effective the following month, the Whigs elected their candidate for caretaker Commissioner, Outdoor Poor Superintendent William W. Lyons. He was appointed a month early when Moses G. Leonard resigned on April 17, 1849.[86]

On April 6, 1849, the Legislature passed an Act to Provide for the Government of the Department of Alms and Penitentiary in New York City which implemented several favorite reform concepts. The Commissioner was replaced by ten unpaid Governors of the Almshouse; their rule would also supplant that of the Common Council for all practical purposes. The first ten such officials were initially appointed by name in the Law. Two would leave office each year to be replaced by new men with five year terms, a mechanism of built in continuity modeled on the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

United States Senate and in line with the essence of the suggestions of Phillip Engs and James Van Nostrand. The first of each year's two new Governors would be elected by the people of the City, each citizen voting for a single candidate. The Mayor was then mandated to appoint the runner up to the second vacancy. This guaranteed an even split between the two major parties, tempered by an occasional instance of reform representation that would last five years into the future. The principle of political balance sought to remove the element of spoils, but also meant that the voters could no longer reject a party nominated candidate. This mechanism was later applied to the New York County Board of Supervisors.

The Governors were given a free hand in organizing, staffing, and running the institutions. They could only be removed by impeachment before the Supreme Court "for due cause shown." They had an absolute claim on the County Supervisors who were mandated to "collect by tax...such sum of money as said board of Governors shall from time to time require." The Common Council could appoint an oversight committee to inspect the institutions semiannually and could initiate impeachment proceedings. The Department's real estate and buildings were to remain forever City property.[87]

The City fought this encroachment on home rule bitterly

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and fruitlessly. The Corporation remonstrated against its passage with no success.[88] After enactment a resolution calling for an inventory from the last outgoing Commissioner pledged a desire to aid "in carrying into successful operation the reform contemplated" but refused any "acknowledgment of the validity of the act..."[89] Despite this disclaimer, the City lost no time in setting up its oversight committee[90] though it refrained from any precipitate impeachments.

In February 1850 the City was petitioning for repeal of the Act[91] while simultaneously trying to defeat a move to increase the Governors' powers. The new Act to Explain and Extend the Powers and Duties of the Governors of the Alms House clarified authority over Potter's Field, the prisons, building construction, the proposed Workhouse, and general expenditures and gave them full authority to transfer inmates among the institutions and to remit unexpired prison sentences.[92] The Aldermen's Special Committee on the Almshouse Department, which included former Commissioner James H. Cook, protested heatedly, especially regarding control over expenditures and the pernicious power to release convicts into society.[93] Despite the protest the Act was passed and the Governors' authority thus enhanced. In July 1850 the Aldermen's Law Committee was forced to advise that the Council could no longer even authorize

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

visits to Blackwell's and Randall's Islands.[94]

Even as they framed their protests the Council realized their futility and began to attend to the problem of the transfer of jurisdiction. The Ward Aldermen and Assistants had always been an important referral source for the Almshouse and were, conversely, among the most logical people for the poor to go to for help. The lower classes were slow to grasp the change; "the opinion continues to prevail among the unfortunate and destitute," noted the Council, "that the Aldermen and Assistant Aldermen...are the parties to whom application should be made for admission to the Alms House Institution." In order to correct this "erroneous opinion, and the present delays and disappointments to the applicants, and inconvenience to the members of the Common Council," the City asked the ten Governors to prepare cards for distribution and to post notices in the "various station houses" giving their "names and authority."[95]

The Charter revision of 1857 retained the ten Governor system while slightly refining the funding process. City officials were allowed a minimal delaying power over budget requests by a new mechanism. The Governors would submit their proposed "ordinary" expenses to a Board consisting of the Presidents of the two Council Boards, the Comptroller, and the Mayor. If this Board approved of the proposal, it would "immediately report the same" to the Board of Supervisors

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

who would raise the money by tax. If it disapproved, it would return the budget proposal and objections to the Governors and "in case said Governors shall, upon a reconsideration, adhere, by a vote of two thirds" to their original request, it would become law and go to "said Board whose duty it shall be to report it to the Supervisors."[96]

With a free hand, the new Governors devised their own institutional authority structure, particularly focused on introducing a separation of fiscal from general administrative functions. Each facility would be headed by a "Warden" who would appoint subordinates. At Bellevue, the Resident Physician's office was finally abolished, leaving the Medical Board to handle "medical management" while the Warden would "attend to the economical concerns of the house."[97] In addition to the Wardens, the Governors "reserved to themselves the appointment of one other officer, whose independent position should render him a constant check upon the abuse of authority, or neglect of duty on the part of any Warden or his subordinates."[98]

The Governors soon reported that they had stablized and improved all of the institutions, especially Bellevue Hospital. As soon as 1851 the system there was proven "successful" and its "Medical staff and Medical school

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

are eminent for talent and accomplishment; its police, economy and order good."[99] In 1857 they reiterated that under its Medical Board and Warden system Bellevue's character had "steadily improved, until from a lazar house to which the pauper even went with reluctance, it has become a well appointed Hospital, whose wards are crowded with eager applicants."[100] The rest of the Department, despite "many obstacles at the outset" in changing "old landmarks" and "long trained habits of official delinquency," was also set back "upon the track of faithful service" by 1854.[101]

The Governors probably overstated their accomplishments. Politics was not entirely irrelevant under their rule; nor was there an absence of conflicts and scandals. But there was unquestionably a new element of stability and balance which was guaranteed by the mode of choice and term of office of the Governors. In 1857 they requested a survey of the political "bias" of their employees, probably not for the same reasons Superintendent Moss had wanted one a generation earlier, but rather in order to make sure there was a fair balance. This there was - a distinct measure of improvement over the old spoils system - though representation was by no means equal. Democrats, the City's usual majority party, had the most employees: seventy-nine. But there were fifty-four Republicans, nineteen Native Americans, six Whigs, and thirty-eight who claimed no affiliation or were not United

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

States citizens.[102] Certainly the day of the annual purge was over.

After a single decade of trial, the ten Governor system was abolished, along with the legal entity of the Almshouse Department in another State imposed reorganization. This time pure cost consciousness seems to have been the motive for reform. The Act to Create a Department of Public Charities and Corrections and to Abolish the Alms—House Department of April 27, 1860 replaced the ten Governors with four "Commissioners of Charities and Corrections" who would be appointed by the New York City Comptroller. The first Board of Commissioners would serve for five years. Second and subsequent Board would serve six. If a vacancy should occur meanwhile, the remaining Commissioners would fill it or, if they disagreed, the appointment would be made by the Superior Court or the Court of Appeals.[103] This measure appeared to insulate the Department from direct electoral politics by making the executives' appointments derive from a single officer, the chief fiscal agent of the City. It also showed a belated recognition of the futility of institutionalization, the tenacity of outdoor relief, and the development of specialized facilities by dropping the obsolete designation of "Almshouse Department" and thus ending the first Department's twenty-eight year administrative life.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

It was unfortunate that the single Commissioner system was so thoroughly undermined and received such a short trial. Unitary professional authority, popularly accountable, is the soundest administrative principle and, like most other Almshouse ideas, was adopted by later reformers as a key to efficient and responsible government. But the halfhreated reform hatched by the Council in 1845 only guaranteed chaos and invited a strong State intervention. The ten Governor system failed in a more subtle way. Continuing, if fewer scandals and problems, the atrophy of many of the institutions, and, especially, the mounting expenses finally brought about the ultimate reorganization in Comptroller appointment of poverty officials. Reform was now considered completely synonymous with cost control.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. New York State Poor Laws...First Six Titles of Chapter XX of the First Part of Revised Statutes and Such Subsequent Acts as Relate to the Support and Management of the Poor...With Suitable Forms (Albany, 1832).

2. MCC, July 18, 1825. On this occasion the Senators found "their most sanguine expectations entirely surpassed," praising the City fathers for "maintaining the good order, cleanliness, regularity and attention to the health, comfort, and improvement of the pupils and subjects."

3. AH Supt John Myer, Rept to Secretary of State for 1841, Asts Doc, XIX, #45, February 14, 1842, 158.

4. Secretary of State John V. N. Yates, Rept...on Laws for Relief and Settlement of the Poor, Assembly Jnl, 1824, I, 386-99, also excerpted in Sophonisba P. Breckenridge, ed. Public Welfare Administration in the United States: Select Documents (Chicago, 1927), 39-54.

5. MCC, XIV, September 26, 1825, 770.

6. MCC, XV, December 19, 1825, 90, January 3, 1826, 137, April 24, 1826, 365.

7. MCC, XVIII, March 1, 1830, 574-6.

8. Aldmn Finance Cmte, William Chamberlain, Egbert Benson, Peter Cooper, Rept on State Law on Foreign Paupers, Doc, XII, #80, March 22, 1841, 802-5. This version was even more vindictive than that of 1830 as it would have allowed other jurisdictions to fix the rates of charges unilaterally. The Committee argued successfully that "in order to be just, it should be reciprocal and extend to every County in the State where foreigners may first land." Many Almshouse dependents, they claimed, came to the City from Canada and upstate. There was no more reason "why the City of New York should respond to these other Counties, than that they, in turn should respond to the City."

9. New York State [Act Concerning Passengers in Vessels Coming to the City of New York, Passed May 5, 1847] (as Amended by 1862) in Valentine, ed., Laws of the State of New York Relating Particularly to the City of New York (New York, 1862), 1046-1104; Act to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Amend Act Concerning Passengers...Passed December 15, 1847 in Secretary of State Archibald Campbell, Acts of Legislature Transmitted to Corporation, Aldmn Doc, XIV, #24, December 20, 1847, 381-3.

10. Until 1831 the New York City Common Council was a single house legislature consisting of two representatives from each City Ward: an Alderman and an Assistant Alderman. The Charter of 1830 divided the Council into two separate bodies: a Board of Aldermen and a Board of Assistants, as well as mandating executive Departments to administer the details of City business. Prior to this Charter the Councilmen performed administrative functions through their Committees, besides retaining ancient judicial functions. After the attempt to modernize the government by the Charter revisions, the Councilmen tried to hold on to their old functions and declined to establish any Departments other than the Almshouse until 1849. They also clashed with the Almshouse Commissioners over primacy of policymaking authority when in conflict over substance. Thus opposing party leaders James Ferris and Egbert Benson, serving together on the Aldermen Charity and Almshouse Committee, advised the Almshouse Commissioners chaired by John V. Greenfield (himself a former Councilman and Charity Committeeman) that they were "as capable of arriving at a correct conclusion" regarding the Lunatic Asylum building plan and had "just as careful a regard for economy" as the Department executives. Ferris and Benson, Rept on Cmctn of Cmsrs of AH Opposing Extension of LA, Aldmn Doc, VII, #87, April 19, 1841, 895. The Mayor was elected by the Council until 1834 when another Charter revision provided for popular election. Even then he remained weak since the Council could override his veto by simple majority of both Boards and retained appointment power over all City offices. (Democratic Mayors Cornelius Lawrence in 1834, Robert Morris in 1842, and William F. Havemeyer in 1848 held little sway over Whig Council majorities.) The Council and the Mayor were elected annually in April and took office in May during the years of their control of the Almshouse. Gustavus Myers, History of Tammany Hall (New York, 1971), 78, 92, 172; Leo Hershkowitz, Tweed's New York: Another Look (Garden City, 1978), 15-6. Mayors complained bitterly about the Council's illegal refusal to establish Departments, as well as about its members' continuing participation in contracts. Myers, 132-3. Mayor Morris, for example,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

told the lawmakers in the angriest tone he could summon that it was their "duty" to "organize the different departments to transact their business, and...the executive business of the Corporation must be conducted by Departments, and not by Committees of your honorable bodies." Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, IX, #4, July 11, 1842, 31. For the eventual accomplishment of this goal, for which the Almshouse Department had served as a model, see Ordinance Organizing the Depts of Municipal Government...and Prescribing their Powers and Duties, Ords, XVII, May 30, 1849, 14-149. The Council also evaded the intent of the separation of the body into Boards by means of joint meetings and joint Committees. Building was always a joint Committee. Charity and Almshouse Committees were separate for each Board until 1847 when they went joint. Special Committees were appointed both by single Boards and jointly. Single Board Committees usually consisted of three men, joint Committees of six, but the number varied, especially with Special Committees. For purposes of general discussion of the Council and its members when a distinction between Boards is unimportant, the term "Alderman" or "Councilman" here denotes either Board. However, in source citations, legal titles of individuals at a specific point in time, and in instances in which a distinction between the Boards is contextually relevant, the exact Board title, Aldermen or Assistants, is specified.

11. Committee assignments were made at the beginning of each political year when the Council Boards "organized" or when special issues arose and are accordingly recorded in MCC until 1831 and in the Proceedings of the Boards thereafter. Committeemen are also identified by their signatures on their reports which constitute a majority of the Documents of the Boards. Examples of influential members of Charity and Almshouse, Building, and Special Committees of the period include Effingham Schieffelin, Peter Cooper, future Almshouse Commissioners Phillip E. Engs, Anthony Lamb, James Roosevelt, John V. Greenfield, and James Cook, future Mayors Issac Varian, Aaron Clark, future Almshouse Governor and Mayor Daniel Tiemann, another future Governor Washington Smith, former Superintendent Linus E. Stevens, party leaders like Elijah Purdy and Clarkson Crolius, Jr., to note a few of the most important.

12. Law for Government of AH, March 1, 1827 in Digest of All Laws and Ordinances...of the City of New York... to 1830 by a Student of Law (New York, 1830), 3-9.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

13. Act to Regulate City Prison and Bridewell, April 30, 1827, ibid., 108-9.

14. Law for Government of Penitentiary, April 30, 1827, ibid., 80-2.

15. MCC, XVII, May 19, 1828, 188-93.

16. Law to Designate Prison Erected on BI to be a Penitentiary of New York, October 5, 1829 in Digest of...Ordinances, 128.

17. Law Creating AH Dept and Prescribing Duties of Officers Thereof, Ords, I, April 23, 1832, 187-97.

18. [Second] Law Creating AH Dept and Prescribing Duties of Officers Thereof, Ords, II, April 1, 1834, 225-35.

19. Myers, 81-2; MCC, XVIII, December 28, 1829, 461-2, January 6, 1830, 463-5.

20. Although the Whigs of 1834 offered some mild criticisms of their predecessors' accounting practices detailed below, chapter 3, the first scathing review was Engs, Tomlinson et al., 202, 205. On party politics, see Myers, 93, 102, 109-10, 120-1, 133-5; Jerome Mushkat, Tammany: The Evolution of a Political Machine, 1789-1865 (Syracuse, 1971), 156, 162, 174, 189. On the nativism of the 1840s, see Ira M. Leonard, New York City Politics, 1841-1844: Nativism and Reform (New York University Dissertation in Political Science, 1965). Valentine's Manual for 1854 includes basic data: the "Boundaries of Wards in the City of New York, 1854," pp. 398-9, a "List of Members of the City Government from Incorporation in 1653 to Present," pp. 400-41, and a "Political History of New York," pp. 444-523. This last section gives complete Municipal Charter Election results up to 1854 and is the source, unless otherwise indicated, for basic political identification and electoral information throughout this study. The Manual for 1861 gives the Presidents of the Boards of Aldermen and Assistants from 1831, pp. 444-6.

21. Aldmn CCAH, William S. Miller and William Gale, Rept on Reorganization of Pauper Dept of AH, Doc, XI, #11, July 15, 1844, 157-8.

22. AH Cmsrs, James Van Nostrand, Joseph W. Savage, William J. Roome, Charles W. Houghton, Cmctn on Abuses, Aldmn Doc, XI, #40, December 30, 1844, 398-9.

23. Van Nostrand et al., Rept on Male Paupers Voting, Aldmn Doc, XI, #51, February 10, 1845, 492-4.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

24. Andrew Henderson, Affidavit, ibid., 496.

25. Charles Davis, Affidavit, ibid., 498-9.

26. James Owens, Affidavit, ibid., 505-6.

27. William Wade, Affidavit, ibid., 509.

28. Van Nostrand et al., Rept on Convicts Voting, Aldmn Doc, XI, #57, February 24, 1845, 576-7.

29. Former Penitentiary Ast Keeper Theodore C. Shadbolt, Affidavit, ibid., 581.

30. Penitentiary Ast Keeper John Perisianna, Affidavit, ibid., 580.

31. Penitentiary Guard Garrett De Groot, Affidavit, ibid., 581-2.

32. Ibid., 577.

33. In the broadest sense Almshouse reform referred to any change in running the Department but is here used in a narrower sense denoting the attempt to insulate the executive control of public institutions from politics. Reform was generally discussed along with and in relation to reorganization, that is, the structural rearrangement of institutional authority within the Department to fit new realities and meet the administrative problems of the day. Though reform and reorganization were treated together and along with the related topics of removal of the Almshouse proper and the establishment of a Workhouse, their distinct meanings must be borne in mind. As detailed below, reform efforts sought to remove the Almshouse Department from the spoils system by means of professionalization of the executive, its consolidation into a single person, making the post elective, or, alternatively by the use of staggered termed or party balanced Boards or Ward Overseers. A separate reform thrust for hospitals, interestingly, sought to abolish the single, professional Resident and replace him with an unpaid Board. Reorganization efforts sought to separate the various institutions from each other administratively to correspond with their growth in size and importance, their physical removal and separation from each other, and the increasing skill required to deal with their problems.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

34. MCC, XV, January 16, 1826, 167, XVI, May 21, 1827, 313, XIX, April 11, 1831, 635.

35. Peters, 120.

36. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 227-8. The "extensive project" referred to was the Lunatic Asylum. The Engs Board was not as fastidious nor their duties as onerous as they would have had people believe; they did an excellent business with themselves in Almshouse supplies. See below, chapter 3. Engs felt strongly about staggering Commissioners' terms and granting tenure to professionals and took every opportunity to promote these ideas. When asked how expenses might be reduced, he called for "more permanency in the appointment of officers, viz.: Commissioners to go out by classes, so as always to insure experience and the completion of well laid plans. Superintendents and Resident Physicians, to be appointed for three years, subject to removal during that time, for incapacity or mal-conduct only." Engs, Cmctn to Aldmn Talmage in Talmage, 80. Engs acted on these beliefs when it came time for his own replacement. The Resolution of the new Board of Aldermen of 1839 to appoint five new Democratic Almshouse Commissioners was delayed momentarily in the Board of Assistants on the ground that the customary resignations of the old officials had not yet been read and accepted. This formality was then duly performed for the four other than Chairman Engs and, after some parliamentary maneuvering, the new men were appointed. Finally, the new Chairman, John V. Greenfield, was appointed "in place of Phillip W. Engs, removed," as the principled Whig had refused to resign. Asts Jnl, XIV, May 14, 1839, 8-13; Ords, VII, May 16, 1839, 3-4.

37. Joint Special Cmte, Frederick R. Lee, Robert Jones, David Vandervoort, Abraham Hatfield, John A. Underwood, Daniel D. Briggs, Erastus C. Benedict, William D. Waterman, Rept on Establishment of Work House and Reorganization of AH Dept, Aldmn Doc, VIII, #61, February 7, 1842, 456-7.

38. Ibid., 458-9.

39. Ibid., 460.

40. Special Cmte, Lee and Jones, Rept on Reorganization of AH Dept and Establishment of Work House, Aldmn Doc, IX, #73, January 30, 1843, 701-47.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

41. Aldmn Proc, XXIV, February 16, 1843, 507-20.

42. Mayor Robert Morris, Message on Improvement in City Government and its System of Police, Aldmn Doc, X, #20, August 7, 1843, 216.

43. Cook et al., 257.

44. Van Nostrand et al., Cmctn on Abuses, 402-3.

45. Van Nostrand, Memorial from Cmsrs of AH of City of New York for Amendments in Law Relating to Said Institution, &c., New York State Senate Doc, March 8, 1845, II, #57, 2.

46. Ords, XII, March 11, 1845, 288-9.

47. Ibid., March 27, 1845, 311-2.

48. Aldmn Proc, XXVII, July 8, 1844, 248-9.

49. Joint Special Cmte, Josiah Rich, Peter Cooper, William Chamberlain, Elias L. Smith, Elijah F. Purdy, Moses G. Leonard, Benton M. Halsey, Daniel Ward, William L. Wood, Samuel Bradhurst, Rept and Address to People of State on Our Municipal Grievances, Aldmn Doc, VII, #17, September 21, 1840, 281-8.

50. James F. Richardson, The New York Police: Colonial Times to 1901 (New York, 1970), 109-25. It was perhaps not coincidental that Simeon Draper, having just served for several years as President of the ten Governors of the Almshouse, was the first President of the Metropolitan Police Board. This choice strengthens the impression of the conscious use of the Almshouse as a model for the Police reform.

51. New York State Act for Reorganization of AH Dept in the City and County of New York, Aldmn Doc, XII, #2, May 14, 1845, 26-7.

52. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, Ords, XIII, June 16, 1845, 72-3.

53. Ibid., 77-9, 85, 87. The exact pattern of appointments was complex, allowing the Commissioner some degree of patronage and salary fixing power over lower officials. Some were appointed by the Commissioner but had their salaries fixed by the Council, as Van Nostrand had suggested, while others' salaries were also fixed by the Commissioner. The appointment of some of the institution heads was by the Mayor and Council, others

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

by just the Council, at least in the language of the law (though the Council could override the Mayor in any event.) The staff roster of the first single Commissioner's administration of 1845-6 lists appointment and salary fixing source for all officials. AH Cmsr James H. Cook, List of Persons Connected with AH Dept, Aldmn Doc, XII, #23, December 1, 1845, 410-11. The Ordinance provided no mechanism for new jobs which might become necessary and even left obscure the appointing agency for some existing positions. Thus the proper authority to appoint the Bellevue engineer was hotly debated; see below, chapter 5. In practice, some barely knew their own appointment sources: note how witness William Edmonds introduced himself to a Special Council Committee: "I am Keeper of the City Prison, or Tombs - can't say by what authority - the Sheriff has appointed me - but I hail from the Common Council." Testimony in Joint Special Cmte, Thomas Carnley, William Adams, Joseph Britton, Minority Rept on Conduct of Officers Connected with Public Prisons on BI, Aldmn Doc, XV, #28, January 15, 1849, 584.

54. McCready in AH Govs, Rept for 1856, VIII, 22-3.

55. William Anderson, M.D., Plan for Samaritan Hospital of University of City of New York, Asts Doc, X, #94, October 30, 1837, 306.

56. Joseph M. Smith, M.D. et al., Memorial in Asts Special Committee, Murray Hoffman, Abraham V. Williams, William Welles Holly, Rept on Holly Resolution and Memorial, &c. of Sundry Physicians on New Organization of Hospital Dept of AH, Doc, X, #108, November 27, 1837, 356-7.

57. Proposed Law to Regulate Hospital Dept of AH, ibid., 347-53.

58. David Rogers, M.D. et al., Remonstrance, ibid., 359-61.

59. New York Medical Society, Remonstrance, ibid., 363.

60. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 228-9.

61. Engs, Cmctn on Reorganization of Medical Dept of AH, Asts Doc, XI, #150, February 19, 1838, 552.

62. Asts Jnl, XI, May 7, 1838, 484-5.

63. Lee and Jones, 705.

64. Aldmn Ordinance Cmte, Thomas S. Henry and Emanuel B. Hart, Rept on Ordinances on Organization of Medical Dept of AH and LA, Doc, XII, #39, February 23, 1846, 605-8.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

65. Cmte of Medical Profession, John W. Francis, Joseph M. Smith, Valentine Mott, James R. Manley, F. Campbell Stewart, W. Parker, S. R. Harris, James R. Wood, David Meredith Reese, G. S. Bedford, Benjamin Drake, Views on Organization of Medical Dept in Oliver, Purser, Smith, Rept on Organization of Medical Dept of AH at Blvu, and Penitentiary, and LA, &, on BI, Aldmn Doc, XIV, #2, June 1, 1847, 24-5.

66. Reese, Drake, Wood, "Plan for Better Organization of Hospital Dept," ibid., 26-37.

67. Ibid., 38.

68. Ibid., 21.

69. Ordinance for Reorganization of Hospital Dept of AH, Ords, XV, October 14, 1847, 165-73. The following month the measure was amended to provide for a Committee of the Medical Board consisting of Consulting, Resident, and Visiting doctors to settle any "difference of opinion" that may arise between the Resident and the Visiting Physician or Surgeon: Ibid., November 20, 1847, 217.

70. A. H. Stevens et al., 604.

71. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 14-5.

72. LA Visiting Phycns Medical Board, James MacDonald, Henry M. Gray, Benjamin Ogden, Abraham V. Williams, Rept for 1848, Aldmn Doc, XV, #42, March 5, 1849, 780.

73. A creative and energetic reformer with regard to poverty matters, Moses G. Leonard was also a fierce Tammany partisan politically. He served on the Board of Aldermen in 1841 and was re-elected the following year when the Whigs secured a majority on both Council Boards. When Tammany's victorious opponents tried to organize the new Board, Leonard joined Grand Sachem and President of the outgoing Aldermen Elijah F. Purdy in threatening them with arrest and imprisonment if they dared to speak. The rest of the Board reprimanded Purdy and Leonard for their "unauthorized" and "unwarranted" conduct. Aldmn Proc, XXIII, July 5, 1842, 41-4.

74. The Almshouse Commissioner's post was unquestionably regarded as of prime importance, the main Citywide office other than the Mayoralty. The vote for Commissioner was even taken as a more reliable guide to the voters' true party preference than the votes for Mayor or Council which were complicated during

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

these years by severe factionalism between the Conservative Hunkers and the Radical Barnburners within the Democratic Party. On this overall conflict, see Myers, 140-9; Mushkat, 224-41. In general the Whigs won the City only when the Democrats split along factional lines. All Tammany factions appear to have supported Moses G. Leonard. In 1846 the Democrats held together and won the entire Corporation by a large majority, Andrew Mickle and Leonard defeating Whig candidates Robert Taylor and Hezekiah Williams for Mayor and Almshouse Commissioner respectively. New York Evening Post, April 15, 1846; New York Journal of Commerce, April 14, 1846. Williams had served as the Agent for the Almshouse Commissioners of 1842-3 and 1844-5. In 1847 the Whigs won the Mayoralty with William V. Brady, partly because Tammany nominated a "rowdy," as the Whig papers termed J. Sherman Brownell. Leonard was re-elected Commissioner over Taylor. The Democratic Evening Post said that the Leonard vote, rather than that for the Mayoralty or even the Council, was the important thing as it was a "pure Democratic vote...the vote for Taylor... probably comprises the entire Whig strength...He is a popular man with his party...there is no probability that many of the Whigs forsook him to vote for Leonard." April 14, 1847.

75. Ords, XV, June 2, 1847, 47-8. The Commissioner and the Superintendent of the Almshouse were given concurrent powers to suspend an officer appointed by the Charity and Almshouse Committee pending a hearing.

76. Ibid., April 28, 1848, 358-9.

77. In 1848 Leonard defeated Whig Jefferson Berrian. The Democrats also won back the Mayoralty with reformer William F. Havemeyer but only achieved a tie on the Board of Assistant Aldermen, leaving a Whig majority on the Board of Aldermen. This resulted from the continuing party split producing two Tammany slates in many wards. Many Conservatives were so alienated from Havemeyer that they voted for Brady hoping to throw the Mayoralty but keep the patronage. In one ward the vote for Havemeyer fell 300 short of that for Leonard. The Conservatives, however, had achieved the opposite of what they had wanted since the Whigs were sure, in their lame duck period, to remove all remaining Democratic officeholders while they still

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

could. As the Evening Post put it, there would be a retention of "all the Whig officers in their places to the exclusion of Democrats" for which "we are solely indebted to the Conservatives. Through their conduct, democrats are to be deprived of any share in the officers of the city, and the few now retained will probably be removed and their places filled by Whigs before the new board is organized. So much for Conservatism." April 12, 1848. True to this prediction, the Whigs removed Edward Witherell as Second Visitor to the Outdoor Poor and replaced him with George Kellock, Jr. Alderman George H. Purser tried unsuccessfully to have the action referred to the Corporation Counsel for an opinion on its legality. After voting Purser down, the Aldermen proceeded to replace the other lower level Almshouse employees previously left unmolested. Aldmn Proc, XXXIV, May 5, 1848, 834-5. The Democratic Clerks refused to give up their offices, forcing the Whigs into a lawsuit for which the City paid a $200 legal fee. Aldmn Proc, XXXV, June 26, 1848, 255-6.

78. The political aspects of the conflict are obvious and important but since it was primarily an internal Almshouse Department dispute, it is examined in chapter 5, below. The refusal of the Council to take any action against either of the warring parties seemed to underscore the basic unviability of the single Commissioner system as it was constituted. Though sworn enemies, Commissioner Leonard and his nominal subrodinate Superintendent Eells had to continue to try to function together after the Council's virtual exoneration of both and its failure to place real responsibility for the problems leading to the charges on anybody. The Almshouse could hardly continue much longer as a raucus battleground of City politics with no clear primacy of authority without the State contemplating another and more drastic intervention.

79. Aldmn Special Cmte, Abraham R. Lawrence, Moses Maynard, Jr., Theodore R. De Forest, Bernard J. Meserole, Rept on Sale or Disposal of Dead Bodies at Blvu, Doc, XIV, #14, October 25, 1847, 215. George H. Purser was a Democratic Alderman from a rough and tumble ward of seafarers and immigrants. At the time of his attack on Reese, he seat was being contested because of alleged electoral irregularities; ultimately the Council found the evidence insufficient to overturn his victory. Aldmn Special Cmte, Thomas McElrath, James Kelly, Stephen H. Feeks, Rept on Contested Election of the Fourth Ward,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Doc, XIV, #46, July 6, 1847, 645-59. He was a druggist by trade. I. M. Leonard, 450. Dr. David Meredith Reese criticized City contracts for purchasing adulterated drugs for the Hospital from political pharmacists. Reese, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 49; Blvu Hospital Medical Board, James R. Manley, President, and Committee, Alexander F. Vache, David Meredith Reese, John T. Metcalfe, James R. Wood, Stephen R. Harris, Quarterly Rept, Aldmn Doc, XIV, #43, March 6, 1848, 636; see also chapter 9 below.

80. A. R. Lawrence et al., 218.

81. Lyman H. Stone, M.D., Testimony, ibid., 222-3.

82. Ibid., 214.

83. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Condition of AH, Aldmn Doc, XIII, #11, September 7, 1846, 130.

84. For example, in response to scandals arising out of the Ordinance's neglect of the supply receiving function, Amandments were passed to tighten up the entire contracting process such as requiring supply bids to be opened in the presence of the Charity and Almshouse Committee. Ords, XV, June 9, 1847, 46. In April 1848 the Council forbade unauthorized boat landings on Blackwell's and Randall's Islands. Ibid., May 8, 1848, 358-9. The "law business" of the Almshouse Department was transferred to the Corporation Attorney. Ibid., May 8, 1848, 410. An October 1848 Ordinance directed the Resident Physician to "make requisitions in writing" upon the Commissioner for supplies and also gave him direct authority over Hospital admissions and discharges. Ords, XVI, October 12, 1848, 174. These are only a sampling of dozens of Amendments passed between 1845 and April 1849.

85. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 50-1.

86. Ords, XVI, April 17, 1849, 437.

87. New York State Act to Provide for Government of Dept of Alms and Penitentiary in the City and County of New York, Passed April 6, 1849 in Breckenridge, 55-7.

88. Ords, XVI, March 13, 1849, 390-1.

89. Ords, XVII, June 20, 1849, 206-7.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

90. Ibid., July 17, 1849, 236.

91. Ords, XVIII, March 19, 1850, 46.

92. New York State Act to Explain and Extend Powers of Governors of AH in City and County of New York in Secretary of State A. G. Johnson, Acts of Legislature transmitted to Council, Aldmn Doc, XVI, #30, April 10, 1850, 570-4.

93. Aldmn Special Cmte on AH Dept, George H. Franklin, H. Shaw, James R. Ball, Robert T. Haws, James H. Cook, Rept Against Passage of State Law to Extend Powers of Governors of AH, Doc, XVI, #21, March 4, 1850, 332-7.

94. Aldmn Law Cmte, James E. Wood, Edmund Griffin, H. Shaw, Rept That Common Council Cannot Authorize Visits to BI and RI, Doc, XVII, #50, July 10, 1850, 787-8.

95. Ords, XVIII, January 29, 1850, 6.

96. New York State Act to Amend Charter of City of New York, April 14, 1857 (Albany, 1858), 57.

97. AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 37.

98. Ibid., 4.

99. AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 5.

100. AH Govs, Minutes, December 29, 1857, 695.

101. AH Govs, Rept for 1854, VI, x.

102. AH Govs, Minutes, August 4, 1857, 414.

103. New York State Act to Create in the City and County of of New York a Department of Public Charities and Correction and to Abolish the Alms House Dept Therein, April 27, 1860 in Valentine, Laws of State Relating Particularly to City..., 1036-42.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 3

ALMSHOUSE ECONOMICS

One simple fact emerges clearly from the complexities of nineteenth century New York City public welfare finance: the Almshouse Department was consistently one of the largest municipal expenses and caused universal fiscal concern. It was always one of the two or three top budget items and was frequently the very largest single category in the City treasury. Over the years the annual budgets rose dramatically. Occasionally, within the short run, they might decrease slightly only to rise again well above their previous high levels. It is no wonder that most reforms had dollar savings as a primary goal.

A cursory inspection of any initial City appropriation reveals the enormous absolute and relative claim that welfare had on the treasury. In 1839, for example, the largest expense items were Streets: Opening and Paving (each a separate large amount): $400,000; Almshouse, Bridewell, and Penitentiary: $150,000; Bonds Payable: $800,000; Interest: $100,000.[1] The initial budget projection for 1842 allotted more to the Almshouse than to any other "ordinary" service: $250,000. The Watch got the second highest amount: $230,000.[2]

The high poor expense started very early. In 1825 the Comptroller reported the Almshouse expenditure to have been

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

$81,500 out of a total City budget of $780,400,[3] over ten per cent of the municipal purse. By 1828 the figure was up to $93,000. The following year it went into six figures: $115,000 and rose to $117,000 in 1830.[4] Throughout this period the Common Council showed concern over the increase; typical was the appointment in 1831 of a committee to "confer and advise" with the Almshouse Commissioners regarding "their present expenditures and relief of the poor."[5] This and many similar efforts had no effect in reducing the burden.

Expenses continued to rise for the next two years to $123,000 in 1831 and $127,000 in 1832. In 1833 there was a sharp drop to $113,000 but then an increase to $132,500 in 1834 and another to over $200,000 the following year. During the Depression years of 1837 and 1838 the budgets were $227,000 and $245,000 respectively.[6]

Mayors and Councils then began to intensify the familiar cries against this rising poor expense and to undertake grandiose political investigations into their opponents' welfare financing practices. Whig Mayor Aaron Clark lamented the rise in City expenses in general, with particular emphasis on the heavy demands made by "foreigners" on the Almshouse.[7] His concern grew more urgent with the deepening depression of business and industry. Perhaps, he said in 1838, Almshouse removal and a workhouse would

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

enable "new arrangements" so that the "enormous expense may be diminished or at least prevented from being increased, except in a few absolutely unavoidable cases..." Otherwise, he feared, "many years will not elapse before they will become a burthen greater than the taxpayers will submit to."[8] Citing Almshouse statistics, Clark conceded "the poverty of the times." Were it not for this unusual factor, he would have been "much surprised that the Alms House should contain so many inmates," considering all the active private charities and their extensive activities.

But even for a depression period, New York City was being far too generous, claimed Mayor Clark, stressing the link among reform and reorganization, toughness toward the poor, and expense control. "It is certain that the Poor-Laws, regarding this City, require revision. As they now are, New York is likely to become the general rendez-vous of beggars, paupers, vagrants and mischievous persons." These undesireables would naturally "prefer a place where, as they learn, charitable support is most easily obtained and that they should practice deceptions on a community where they suppose they would be most likely to be successful." The subject needed further study and "every possible corrective applied" in accordance with the prevailing opinion that "the amount of charges on this head may be, and at all events SHOULD BE DIMINISHED."[9]

Instead the amount increased. Clark's successor, Democrat

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Issac Varian called attention immediately to the Almshouse budget as the "most prominent" of all rising City expenses. The figure, he noted, was "more than double during the period of nine years, while the population has increased about one-half." Welfare took up "so large a portion of the City Taxes" that a special Council investigation might be warranted.[10]

The Aldermen appointed a special Committee to investigate the causes of City expenditures in general. Of the several service categories discussed in Chairman Thomas Talmage's final Report, the Almshouse was the first item treated and was of obvious primary concern - the worst offender.[11] Its budget had increased "in an extraordinary degree..." Had the population increased proportionately? "Certainly not." Therefore nothing could have cause "this unparalleled increase but negligence, or extravagance, on the part of the officers."[12] The year 1838, Talmage said, had been "favorable to industry." It was utterly impossible that "so large a portion of the people of this city...were paupers," 80,696 all told. Concluding that "a more strict system for the government of the Alms House should be adopted," he suggested various pauper labor, supply purchase, and personnel reforms.[13] The Almshouse of 1839, however, cost a record $281,500 and Mayor Varian noted grimly that this plus the "145,000 appropriated to Streetcleaning absorbed

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

over a third of the City's entire expense budget.[14]

Over the following two years there was a drop, to $238,000 in 1842. In 1843 the amount increased to $251,000. In 1844 it shot up past $290,000 and increased the following year to over $310,000.[15] An initial appropriation for 1846 of $250,000 was about one sixth the total projected City budget of $1,617,480 but actual Almshouse expenses that year reached $343,000 including $52,000 for salaries alone.[16] In 1847 Mayor William V. Brady deplored this continuing "rapid increase" which was "making our constituents justly alarmed."[17] Though not the only offender, the Almshouse was still the main problem.

Almshouse Commissioners of the period were by no means insensible to the need for economy; it was one of their prime concerns. Most of them were more realistic than Mayors and Aldermen, though, about the legitimate need for a sizable expenditure. James H. Cook, who was exceptionally interested in frugality, said that it was "gratifying" that "while so large a number of necessitous beings are fed, clothed and otherwise provided for by the bounty of the City, this required relief is dispensed to the needy at a cost so comparatively small, in view of the extent of its charity..." He made "the most rigid economy" the hallmark of his administration of 1845-6 and claimed that despite a twenty per cent advance in the cost of goods his

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"actual cost has not exceeded the sum expended by the late Board of Commissioners" who also had advantages over him in every other respect.[18]

At the close of 1847 Commissioner Moses G. Leonard prepared his budget estimate for 1848 on the basis of what he called "the best information available." He thought there were "good reasons to believe that the coming year's expenses may not reach the extent of the present" and therefore made a modest request with the caveat that "the Department might require an equal sum" for which "provision can readily be made."[19] In early 1848 he challenged "every member of the Common Council to co-operate in reducing a burden on the community - the expense, as well as the immoral influence of pauperism."[20] The initial appropriation for the year was $300,000 but by August there remained only $25,687.[21] Now Leonard told the Comptroller that he could "not perceive how we shall require less than $100,000 for the balance of the year." His initial explanation for this was deft and curt:

> The expenditure for the year 1847 far exceeded the amount for for the year 1848. This arose from an error in computation. The out door expenses of last winter were largely beyond what was deemed would be wanted. It was supposed that the Emigration Act would relieve us from a considerable burthen of support. Experience, however, proved otherwise.
>
> Extensive outlays have been made for new furniture for the recently erected Alms House, for the Nursery, and Bellevue

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Hospital. Additional quantities of coal and wood had to be purchased. Some of the contracts for supplies in particular - were made at much advanced rates. All of which necessarily tend to prematurely exhaust the appropriation.[22]

The Whig Council was unimpressed and demanded a specification of the amounts attached to each of these factors.[23] Leonard submitted in reply a detailed summary stressing the burdens of outdoor relief, particularly by Aldermanic referral, and immigration as the main problems,[24] but also noting $74,734 worth of expenses for the "estimated... increase in pauperism" and other items for which no estimate had been included "it not being known at the time that the articles would be required."[25] The Council ignored the Commissioners $100,000 request and, instead, on October 9, authorized a mere additional $10,000 "for Alms House purposes." The following day, even before the Mayor could approve this appropriation, Leonard advised the Council that it would "not be sufficient to meet the needs of the Department until after the next meeting of the Finance Committee," so another appropriation of $15,000 was made immediately.[26] After the Finance Committee met, an additional $50,000 was appropriated to carry the Department through the rest of the year.[27]

There were many reasons why the year 1848 might have been exceptionally expensive. Certainly the public could expect expenses to diminish after 1849. Most of the money saving

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

reforms that had been sought for years had been accomplished or were well on the way: removal of the Almshouse proper, the ten Governors' reorganization, the Workhouse. But expenditures continued to rise: initial appropriations alone soon exceeded total budgets of just a few years before.

With the Governors empowered to requisition their funds virtually unchecked, the decade started with a staggering figure: $400,000.[28] The next four years the budgets hovered at about that level,[29] rising to $610,000 in 1855 out of a total City purse of $2,618,594.[30]

Almshouse expenditure rose to a significant new level in 1856 with an initial appropriation of $925,000 out of an overall City budget of $3,485,944.[31] In 1857 it was less: only $718,000 plus $125,000 "to reimburse the treasury for arrears for 1854."[32] The amount for 1858 was $605,000[33] and rose the following year above $830,000.[34] The Board empowered to review the Governors' budget request objected to increases in basic items totalling about $43,000 and to an $80,000 request for a new wing for the Lunatic Asylum,[35] but the Governors had the final say.

The Four Commissioner reform of 1860 was clearly directed primarily at the problem of the rising welfare budget. The Governors had succeeded no better than their predecessor Commissioners in holding down public assistance costs. Mayor

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Daniel F. Tiemann, formerly a Charity and Almshouse Committeeman and Almshouse Governor, admitted in 1858 that since 1849 expenses had "considerably increased," but refused to blame the Governors or their system. Rather, the problem arose "from the increased number of persons maintained" which had doubled the budget in seven years.[36]

The Almshouse supplemented its income from myriad sources other than the tax levy and subject both income and expenditure to a complex, if ineffective accounting system.[37] Early financial practices were quite informal until William Mandeville's Board of Commissioners took some giant steps forward in City government by introducing some basic, modest reforms. In the past the Superintendent of the Almshouse, then but no longer also a Commissioner, had kept the financial records at Bellevue where he would access to them in his role as Treasurer. This removed them, however, from the scrutiny of the other Commissioners downtown. Moreover, the previous Superintendent had sustained an old tradition of his "private money...and concerns being mingled with the public money, in his account at the bank, as Superintendent of the Alms House." The Whigs proposed to correct these problems by establishing a Corporate bank account and moving the ledgers back to the Old Almshouse in the Park at City Hall.[38]

There were additional problems: the old accounting system made expenses appear smaller than they actually were, thought Mandeville. The Comptroller's appropriation of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

$124,850 for the Department for 1833 could not be taken as a true budget, but rather, to this must be added $16,600 in income of various other sorts which was "offset by the Superintendent against other expenses incurred by him, which we apprehend to be a wrong mode of keeping these accounts, and therefore have directed that all such payments be placed in the City Treasury and drawn out in conformity to law."[39]

A further complexity was that the Comptroller paid some salaries amounting to $9,000 while the Commissioners paid others amounting to $447.82. Probably thinking of expanding their jurisdictional domain, the Mandeville Board suggested that they "pay all these salaries...the accounts would be simplified from their payments all being drawn from one source." Nor was this the end of the confusion: the labyrinth deepened:

> We have called the amount an approximate amount of expenses; for many other credits to the Superintendent have been given in different accounts, which makes it without a great deal of labor, impossible to say what amount was actually expended in support of the establishment as well as what is the amount of credits in favor of the Penitentiary, and pauper labor, or materials sold.[40]

This uncertainty complicated everybody's favorite intellectual exercise: calculating the exact per capita cost of supporting the paupers. Mandeville's predecessors, the John Targee Board, had relied on the Visiting Committee

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

from Philadelphia of 1827 in compiling their cost data and had arrived at a figure of sixty cents a head per week. "We have examined these accounts in the hope we could claim for New York this desirable economy," said Mandeville, but his Board found the real cost to be at least seventy-five cents per week. The implication was spelled out for benefit of the unsophisticated: "There must have been something wrong in the mode of accounting of our predecessors."[41]

The next Whig Commissioners, under Phillip W. Engs, one of whose professions was that of accountant, demonstarted an even more complicated approach to budgeting. Engs conceded that the "amount of money drawn from the City Treasury has been large" but said it had "not been expended for useless purposes." He questioned the practice of paying receipts to the City unless it be "borne in mind that of the amount disbursed for the Alms House expenditures, a considerable amount is returned into the City Treasury...all of which should properly go to the credit of the Alms House..."[42] He also pointed out what would become a recurring problem: the institutions had to be completely replenished after long neglect and plunder by the preceeding administration. The condition of the Almshouse proper, for example, was "fitly summed up in the language of the former Superintendent, when asked for an inventory, 'It is useless to make one, for there is nothing to inventory.'"[43]

In June 1838 the Board of Assistants asked the Engs

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Commissioners for a detailed budget explanation. The Engs Board replied with a minute analysis designed to prove that after accounting for items like the increase in the number of paupers, rising repair costs, $12,082 in "contracts made by the former Board of Commissioners unliquiditated," various other bills forwarded, expenditures for "Junk, to make oakum - the proceeds of which goes into the City Treasury, (none of the article was furnished in the former year)," advances in the price of beef, an increase from 9,571 to 27,399 in the number of families receiving outdoor aid because of the Depression, and various other factors, they had actually achieved a fiscal "balance in favor of 1838" of $25,491.[44]

James Cook's Board of Commissioners stressed particularly the problem of their predecessors' unpaid bills. This problem was an inescapable consequence of annual political turnover. Nevertheless Cook held that "measures should be taken to compel each Board to pay their own bills, instead of leaving them to be audited and paid by their successors." There were "several instances" in which the Cook Board was "called upon to pay bills contracted by one Board, audited and approved by another, and eventually presented for payment to a third." Requiring payment by the contracting Board would provide "greater accuracy" and "greater security against fraud and deception."[45] The Commissioners did not explain how the process of audit and payment could be

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

speeded up to keep pace with the rush of political change.

Still, situation was being abused. At least $3,000 was "properly chargeable to former Boards," according to Cook's estimate. Additionally, as had occurred during past changings of the guard, his Board had to "supply necessary articles" to the various barren Departments when they took over.[46] A schedule attached to their Report asserted that of $51,924 spent between May 15 and July 10, 1843, $21,568 were for bills of their Whig predecessors and only $30,355 for their own.[47] After a year of Nativist rule, Cook returned as single Commissioner to the same mess of forwarded bills and empty institutions but now hoped to set everything right once and for all:

> It has been customary in making up the accounts at the close of the year, to throw over into the succeeding year's cost a large amount of purchases; and last year, according to the Comptroller's Report, bills to the amount of between nineteen and twenty thousand dollars were so disposed of. I have avoided pursuing this course, with the exception of omitting several monthly bills that are presented after the close of the month, the whole sum of which, less than $3,000, is scarcely sufficient to offset the numerous accounts paid since the 16th of June, and included in our accounts they were incurred previously, and by others.
>
> At the period of entering upon the discharge of my duties as sole Commissioner of the Alms-House, I found the whole establishment in immediate requirement of almost all description of supplies, of numerous necessary repairs, and many conveniences, that had formerly been attached to the institution, but had been removed or

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> otherwise disposed of by my immediate predecessors...the whole establishment was in a condition calling immediately for the disbursement of a large portion of the appropriation to place it in proper repair and replenish the exhausted supplies. All these were items of prospective additional outlay, the means of the Institution had been shorn, and what would have been of important avail in reducing the cost of the Department, I was compelled to do without, and owing to its crippled condition, the expenses of maintainence have been necessarily augmented.[48]

The Almshouse derived income from well over a dozen sources besides the tax levy. Receipts in any given category fluctuated month to month and year to year but always amounted to something worthwhile. Alien passenger bonds, for example, brought in only $15 in April 1826,[49] but produced $625 in November.[50] They generated $3,117 in 1831[51] and $2,023 in 1832.[52] New York State paid the City for boarding its female convicts: $4,257 in 1831, $2,279 in 1832, and $6,434 in 1833.[53] The labor of prisoners in the Penitentiary on Almshouse buildings with credit for the City provided for in the contracts and in the quarries of Blackwell's Island and the City sewers brought in over $1,000 annually; in 1833 the amount was $4,829. Pauper labor brought in far less: $1,221 in 1831, $442 in 1832, and only $31 in 1833.

Significant income came from support payments by relatives of dependents. Fathers of "illegitimate children" were the largest such group and paid several hundred

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

dollars into the Almshouse treasury annually in the early 1830s: in 1833 the sum was $595. These contributions were obtained either by agreement or by adjudication and were met sometimes regularly, sometimes haphazardly. Andrew Waters, for example, paid $10 in February, another $10 in March, $13 in July, and $10 in October of 1835 and $40 in the first four months of 1836 for support of his daughter Almira. Then he stopped paying. Luke Kipp kept a perfect record of quarterly payments from March 1835 to December 1836 of $28 each for maintainence of his son William.[54]

The Court system for obtaining and enforcing these payments from husbands and fathers was faulty, according to the Cook Commissioners. Reform was sorely needed in the "administration of the Laws in relation to Bastardy and the abandonment of wives." Though the system was supposed to insure adequate protection to the City through the agency of bondsmen, in practice, Magistrates would too often "take security without requiring them to justify. Worthless bail is thus taken." A mother and child often became public charges together and when a support bond was prosecuted, it was impossible to collect anything because "many of the sureties as well as the principals are perfectly insolvent."[55]

The City often chose to avoid the expense and uncertainty of Court procedures by "compromising" for flat sums with

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

unadjudicated fathers. The accused villain could settle for something exceeding a few months' worth of support but less than a Court might eventually order him to pay. H. B. Cutting paid $350 in May 1835, "being a compromise putavie father of Mary Stevens." Similarly, Samuel Osborn paid $100 for a "compromise in bastardy of I. H. Parker." Money also came from friends, distant relatives, and estates. William Ryan paid $6 biweekly "for board of Mrs. Cherio, Lunatic." Ezekiel Bishop's estate paid "for board of C. C. Bishop, Lunatic" at the rate of $150 annually.[56]

One of the most important sources of Almshouse income was the sale of surplus or damaged Almshouse commodities. For some merchants and consumers the Department was primarily a second hand store rather than a poverty institution. Hundreds of dollars came in annually from auctioning of excess farm produce, livestock, empty barrels, spoiled or leftover flour, salt, meal, and other foodstuffs, stationery, clothing, paving stone, bones and swill, old iron, copper, carriages, and sundry other items. Sometimes enterprising merchants like New York Tattersalls or Tonnele and Hall would contract to sell a large volume of Almshouse goods, charging a five per cent commission plus storage and insurance.[57]

The Department had other odd ways of raising money,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

both petty and lucrative. New York Hospital paid $4,644 in August 1834 for the support of its smallpox patients in the Almshouse just as the City paid that private institution for the care of public lunatics. Almshouse officers rounded up stray horses and then charged their owners for their keep. The Bridewell received $3,485 on one occasion for "keeping Sweedish and Austrian sailors $39^1/_2$ days at $2 per day. In a typical month the establishment reclaimed $4.54 "found on sundry persons who died in the Alms House."[58]

Almshouse income defrayed a wide variety of expenses. Despite the Utopian goal of many reformers of making the institutions self sufficient through pauper industry, the Department consistently had to pay out huge sums of money on contract to various merchants for enormous quantities of building materials, provisions, clothing, medicines, and incidentals. The number of different expense categories in itemized budgets were few in the early years but increased to hundreds by 1850. Despite incongruities, inconsistencies, biases, and gaps in the reporting, the evidence clearly establishes what were the largest and most basic expenses.

Though both dollar amounts and the number of categories grew during the period, any early expense budget such as that for 1833 can be taken as a model for a farily stable proportionate cost pattern throughout. That year the Penitentiary received an institutional budget of $26,000.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Donations," or outdoor relief, was and would remain a huge item despite the institutionalization policy: $17,986. The basic institutional expense was food. The basic foods were flour and beef. Flour and meal cost $14,750 and beef $11,700. Administrative expenses under the heading "Old Alms House" absorbed $7,890. Clothing cost $6,900, "groceries" $6,240, repairs $5,437, children's wet nurse bills $4,000, "provisions" $3,875, and salaries paid by the Commissioners $3,760. The Bridewell had an institutional budget of $3,150. New York Hospital charged $2,333 for board of lunatics. Coffins cost $2,185, hay and grain $2,176, medicine $1,770. The Long Island Farms budget was $1,400. "Turf or peat" cost $1,700. Several other items under $1,000 each included "illegitimate children," "soap and candles," transportation, milk, livestock, "junk and oakum," "sweeping chimneys," and stationery.[59]

Similar expenses absorbed future expense budgets in larger amounts. James Cook's Commissioners reported that during their first two months in office they had spent $15,690 just on "fuel contracted for by the former Commissioners." The largest supply item was beef which had cost $5,400 during this period. Flour cost $5,000. Other food items were now specified as had not been done in the early years: fish cost $86, sugar $1,370, pork and beans $223, butter, lard, and cheese $580, molasses $1,898, to note just a few.[60] Nativist reports showed similar proportions and also gave an institutional breakdown: Bellevue Almshouse

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

received $37,170 under the Cook Board from January to May 1844 and $15,150 under John R. Willis' Commissioners from May to July. The outdoor poor expense was the second largest: $22,775 during the winter and early spring and $10,000 in the late spring and early summer. The Lunatic Asylum got $7,000 under Cook and $5,550 under Willis. The Long Island Farms received $13,600 and $6,900 under the two succeeding Boards and the Bridewell, "transportation of paupers," and Old Almshouse administrative headquarters all got under $5,000 during each period. These and several smaller expenditures totalled $106,000 for January to May and an additional $62,000 for May through July.[61]

By 1848 an eight month beef bill amounted to $27,750. Bread and flour cost Commissioner Moses G. Leonard $31,400 from January to August, coal and wood $34,500, "dry goods" $18,000, milk $5,000.[62] The budget report for the entire year of 1848 divided the expenses into over 120 categories. Beef was still the largest item of institutional supply, costing $42,100. Outdoor relief in the crisis year hit a staggering $54,350. Bread cost $11,000. Some smaller but interesting expenses included "wine, ale, Brandy for medical use," $4,480; "Fruit and Cake (for the children in the Nursery)," $100; and $109 for "binding the Commissioner's Annual Report."[63]

The budgets were proportionally similar but absolutely larger under the ten Governors. In 1857, out of a total budget request of $660,000, it was expected that $65,000

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

would go for flour, almost ten per cent. Another $55,000 was allocated for fresh beef and an additional $8,000 for salt beef. $50,000 was estimated for "Coal and expenses for the institutions, and out-door poor." Other outdoor relief donations would total $27,500 plus another $3,500 directed to three particular City wards. Other items like lumber, coffins, drugs, milk, and sugar would cost under $15,000 each. There were some new expenses of size and importance like $6,000 for the steamboat.[64]

Though all bemoaned these increasing amounts, few questioned the necessity of supply purchases. But there were certain types of expenses that were controversial and problematic in themselves, either because they were patently improper or because they were misclassified as Almshouse charges. There was a well ingrained tradition of entertaining visitors and important functionaries at public dinners in the Almshouse. There was another tendency for Commissioners and staff to maintain themselves in their supposedly accustomed style. Though they realized that the City had few places available to entertain people and naturally relied on its Almshouse for this extra function, the Council contemplated reform and held spirited debates in the early years over prohibiting "public dinners" and "public suppers" there.[65] There was no action on the issue. Commissioner Phillip W. Engs suggested to Alderman Thomas Talmage that one desirable economy would be "a prohibition

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of public feasting on appropriations for the poor."[66] Talmage said his Committee "entirely concurs"[67] but still nothing was done.

After 1834 exceptional outlays were necessary just to refresh the increasing numbers of watchmen needed to cope with growing semiannual election violence. Commissioner Engs told the Council in early 1839 that during the previous November's exercise in democracy he had been obliged to furnish a watch force of 300 men with food and drink for three days. Since the charges for this were "merged" with other Almshouse bills, they could not be "reported with precision" but probably reached $450.[68] Engs' successor, John V. Greenfield, recomputed the estimate at $1,000 and asked that this type of expense, as well as others like $225 for "printing the report of the late Commissioners" blasting the Democrats, 1500 extra copies - and $1,000 "extra allowances to Corporation Officers" be "placed to some other account...as might also the cost of entertainments given to distinguished individuals, when invited by the Commissioners, or by the Common Council to visit the public institutions." None of these expenses had any "legitimate connection" with the Almshouse Department.[69]

Even less legitimate were other expenses which the Greenfield Board found that its Engs predecessors had incurred on their own authority. The new Tammany Commissioners reported that they took over institutions destitute of all

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of nearly everything except numerous bills for missing "costly and extravagant articles" like J. and J. Cox's charge of $205 for "silverware, ivory handled knives, French forks, carvers, &c," James Grant's invoice for "Britannia dishes and covers" costing $43.88, and other bills for teaboards, kettles, and other luxuries "no trace" of which was found physically on the premises. Nor could Greenfield locate a $20 spy glass purchased by Engs, but he noted that "honorable exception should be made" of William Thompson's bill for a "now useless copper plate," still in the Almshouse office, "for printing in gold letters, cards of invitation to feastings on Blackwell's Island and elsewhere."[70] Engs had left some of these bills unpaid; Greenfield paid out $8,321, "some for extravagant articles for the use of the Commissioners." At first the new Board had declined payment, "but after taking advice, they submitted to the imposition rather than put the city to the additional expense of a law suit." Some remaining invoices for "oysters, confectionary, turtle, &c." would still be disapproved and referred to the Council if payment were "again demanded."[71] Tammany leader Elijah F. Purdy chaired a special investigating committee which uncovered more "luxurious articles, wholly unnecessary for a charitable institution" listed on the books: English wax candles, silver soup ladles and dessert spoons, $15 engraving charges, salmon, lobsters, veal, mutton, "regalia segars," a $2 office

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

umbrella, and $363 worth of turkies, ducks, cherries, cranberries, and similar staples. The House even paid Commissioners' Agent Robert Winslow's Court Martial fine of $26. Even worse, from May 1838 to May 1839 the Whigs had spent over $3,300 on "Champagne, Old Hock, and other wines, brandy, and other liquors."[72] The Comptroller reported that a total of $7,411 had gone for Champagne, "Madeira in Glass," sherry, port, Old Hock and Claret, gin, whiskey, wine "by the gallon," brandy, and "segars," between 1837 and 1840.[73] Purdy and the other Democrats on his Committee agreed easily that such revelations showed the "necessity there was that some reform should take place in the management of the affairs of the whole Alms House Department."[74]

James Cook's Commissioners viewed public dinners as an important expense problem. The institutions attracted visitors; the officers could not "well avoid the necessity of furnishing them refreshments, particularly when they are accompanied or introduced by some of the higher officers of the City Government."[75] Among the many abuses reported by the Nativists was the "custom of many years to expend large sums in sumptuous and costly dinners at the Alms House, principally for the entertainment of partisans." Actual articles were found this time, not just bills: "elegant cut-glass decanters, punch-bowls, champagne and other wine-glasses, &c., &c., &c." which would be sold since they

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

would "not in all probability be needed again by the Department."[76] Almshouse entertainment appears to have continued though perhaps under the ten Governors the staff paid some of the bills. Penitentiary Warden Joseph Keen claimed that he had "frequently been called upon to entertain and to exercise the rites of hospitality to various public bodies, officers, and visitors, and the expense thereof I have borne out of my private means and have done so cheerfully."[77]

Commissioner Moses G. Leonard made a valiant but ineffectual attempt to redefine an array of expenses as improper charges to the Almshouse Department. "A large amount of the annual appropriations for the poor is continually draining away in the payment for numerous repairs, alterations and furniture, that should properly be provided from some other source," he told the Board of Aldermen in May 1848. In "every branch" there were such items so that "aggregate expenditure" did not "exclusively go for the feeding and clothing of paupers and prisoners." Leonard even thought that the Colored Orphan Asylum's contract to care for black children should not be charged to the Almshouse budget, but rather to private charitable donations. There was an urgent necessity, thought Leonard, to "have these difficulties so adjusted as to allow <u>these outside expenditures</u> to be borne by other than the Alms-House funds." Only then could there be any hope to keep expenses "within the legitimate limits

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of this general charity."[78]

However problematic particular types of expenses may have been considered, the most persistent economic difficulties revolved around supply policies: from whom would the Almshouse Department purchase the huge quantities of provisions required for its use and how could the honesty and fairness of merchants toward the City be assured? The first question involved considerations of self supply and political favoritism and demands for competitive bidding. The second focused on enforcement of contractual standards which, in turn, often depended on the extent of proper staff responsibility and functioning.

There was no prohibition in the 1820s or 1830s against Commissioners of the Almshouse, generally merchants by trade, from buying supplies for the City from their own businesses. The standard of purchase was to procure articles on the best possible terms; if self supply happened to accomplish this, what complaint could there be? But there was an early awareness that such a practice might lead to problems. The Council Finance Committee reviewed Almshouse purchases in 1828 and found them "judiciously made" partly because only "a very small part...appear to have been furnished by any of the Members...of the Corporation."[79] When the Department was formed the Commissioners retained discretion. The Ordinance of 1832 required "provisions and fuel and all other articles"

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

for the establishment "as far as...practicable" to be "contracted for on the most reasonable terms" after advertising for estimates with a "detailed list of the articles required...in all the daily papers of the city."[80] Perhaps this generated more advertising costs than it saved; in 1834 the requirement was removed, leaving it to the Commissioners to solicit bids when "in their opinion, it may be advantageous so to do."[81]

Phillip Engs' Commissioners engaged in massive self supply and defended it brazenly. In June 1838 the Board of Assistants asked them "by whom supplies have been furnished and particularly if by any of the Commissioners" and, if so, the amounts received by each.[82] Engs and his colleagues replied coyly that "by the Alms House books" the amounts would "appear" to have been $137.66 paid to William A. Tomlinson, $865.41 paid to Zebedee Ring and Co., $1,545.63 paid to James H. Braine, $14,310.29 paid to Phillip Engs and Son, and a staggering $38,790.32 paid to Peter Palmer and Co. However, it was explained carefully, these sums by no means all went into the individuals' businesses but included expenses for "purchases at...sales" for which bills were "rendered to the individual Commissioner, paid by him, and brought in among other charges against the Board."[83] Purchases were made from "a very great number of individuals" in conformity with the requirement to get the best terms. Commissioners used "all the judgment they possessed as men of practical business habits" when buying on behalf of the City.[84]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Commissioners then gratuitously outlined their reformed methods of purchasing and receiving supplies. The Superintendent applied to the Commissioners for any needed goods. The request was considered at the weekly Board meeting and, if approved, was referred to the Commissioner "best qualified to procure the article wanted." Sometimes, especially with flour, two Board members took charge. The Superintendent received the goods; a "receiving officer" certified as to receipt; and the Clerk examined and certified the bills. Then the Commissioners would "open and re-examine" the invoices "as a Board" and register them before Chairman Engs signed a payment authorization. This last safeguard had "not obtained with former Commissioners."[85]

Only the Council could decide "how far it may be considered good policy" to let Commissioners sell merchandise to the Almshouse. But whatever was done, the Engs Board could "discover no virtue in that fastidiousness which would prevent an open and honorable use of the real name of one who sells, because he happens to be a Commissioner, and would substitute another to hide a transaction honorable in itself."[86] Only open and honest conflict of interest was moral.

The Greenfield Board thought that the Engs Commissioners had been overly fastidious about revealing the true extent of their self supply practices and even questioned whether they had extended themselves the best possible terms. From

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1837 to 1839 the Whig Commissioners had received nearly $100,000 for "articles furnished by themselves, neither the relative prices nor actual value of which can at this time can be ascertained" as most were missing.[87] The Purdy Committee found the Engs Board's prices "unreasonable and extravagant" compared with "market prices of the day."[88] The Comptroller showed that a very large portion of the enormous Whig liquor purchases were made from Engs and Son, $282 worth of champagne in February 1839 alone, for example.[89] But other merchants shared in the liquor bounty: Samuel Kip, Van Pelt and Fowler, and Harper, Arcularius and Co., to note a few.[90]

Even before these detailed revelations there were the beginnings of reform based on Engs' admissions to the Assistants. Alderman Thomas Talmage thought that "one of the chief evils of the present system is that the Commissioners are at liberty...to furnish the supplies themselves, and at their own prices" which the "late Commissioners," Engs' Board, had done "to a great extent." Under such a system, "the greater the expenditures, the better for the Commissioners," hardly a very good approach to economy.[91] The Greenfield Commissioners resolved immediately upon entering office that since it was "contrary to the wishes of the Common Council and of the citizens generally" for Commissioners to supply the House, they would "not, under any circumstances, in any

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

shape, manner or form, directly or indirectly, furnish any articles to the institutions under their charge."[92] But to insure that the City did not have to rely on the good faith of future Commissioners, the Council passed an amendment to the Almshouse Ordinance that no Commissioner could "hold any office" of the City other than his Almshouse post, nor "be directly or indirectly interested in any contract."[93] Self supply was finally illegal.

Commissioners could still make purchases from political friends and even Almshouse employees and could easily come into conflict with the Council over contracting authority. Never was there a monopoly over an important category of provisions, but rather a fairly tight circle of merchants well connected with the political parties who skillfully built part of their businesses around the Almshouse trade.

The Board of Assistants of 1844-5 asked their Commissioners for a detailed report on purchases of flour from merchants "other than those designated by the Common Council." The Commissioners answered that the Ordinance gave them full power over purchase contracts. Supplies had been bought "in a manner best for the public interest," comparing favorably with the previous year. All, except flour, had been made "by some one or more of the Commissioners, upon their own judgment, but none of the Board being acquainted

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

with the prices of that article," they employed a dealer, Heman Norton, to act as a broker on their behalf. This was done "as a matter of prudence and in imitation of other Boards...Whig and Democratic." If previous Commissioners had always done the same, $1.46 per barrel or $5,905 might have been saved to the City.[94] Twelve merchants had supplied the Nativists with flour;[95] their Democratic predecessors had bought from only four, one of whom, Jacob Brush, was a former Tammany Almshouse Commissioner.[96]

The Reorganization Ordinance of 1845 attempted to clear up the supply issue once and for all with a comprehensive set of safeguards based on a strict advertising and bidding requirement:

> The said Commissioner shall advertise for proposals to furnish by contract, beef, pork, flour, lard, soap, candles, salt and dry fish, molasses, teas, sugar, coffee, spices, salt, rice, wood, coal, dry-goods, clothing, leather, vinegar, and all other principal articles used in the Department, excepting Medicines; and shall accept the lowest offer, provided the articles are in accordance with the samples and specifications; and proposals shall be sent in, sealed, accompanied with security for due performance of the contract.

Bids would be limited to one per person with "no alternative, or indefinite co_dition" acceptable. The Commissioner would file copies of contracts both in his own office and with the Comptroller. He could not be

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"directly or indirectly interested in the purchase of any articles for the use of the institutions, either by favor, commission, or otherwise." The Superintendent was supposed to "receive" articles and "certify to their delivery."[97]

Implementation of the new law was an immediate disaster: outright supply fraud surfaced for the first time under its operation. The bureaucracy forgot to assign the all important function of monitoring the deliveries, despite the Superintendent's nominal responsibility; eventually the merchants learned this and began to cheat.

One day shortly after the Reorganization, the Mayor, "when about to sign the warrant" for a supply bill from Merchants Morgan and Ford, noticed "some descrepency between the weights of the coffee and rice charged and the ordinary commercial weight of the articles" and questioned the invoice. It then turned out that "Rio" coffee had been delivered "instead of St. Domingo" which had been contracted for. The merchants also admitted that "it was slightly stained, but the damage removed" and made a voluntary deduction for the shortweight on the rice.[98] An extensive investigation that followed revealed a shocking level of carelessness within the Department: no procedure existed in reality to check the quality or quality of anything.

Superintendent William Moss testified that he was

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

overburdened with other work and was not required to "see personally that goods received at the Alms House compared with samples, nor have I weighed or measured them to see if they were correct." Instead, the Steward was supposed to "examine everything"[99] but, instead, only sampled a portion of each delivery. Resident Physician Fenelon Hasbrouck testified vividly as to the low quality of some of the unexamined tea that was accepted at the House:

> The Assistant Physicians stated that the tea was unendurable for themselves and desired that as little as possible should be given to patients...Alderman Brady...inquired what I thought of the tea, referring at the time to the 24 cent tea, I told him that I thought it miserable trash. He asked me if I thought it poisonous - I hesitated, and told him it possessed some deleterious quality, for if it did not, it would not have been complained of by those whose stomachs were accustomed to rotgut rum - I remember adding that a cup of it would make them vomit. I recollect the appearance of the tea after it was drawn and cold - a dark greyish brown scum rose on the surface of the tin cans. It has more the appearance of copperas than any thing else, and so far as I could judge from the taste, tasted like an infusion of gall-nuts. When drank in this way, it affected patients unpleasantly. I have not tasted the 40 cent tea. On chemical analysis of the black tea I detect a slight trace of sulfate of iron. The 24 cent tea has not been tested...I wish to explain that I did not intend to convey the idea that the tea was poisonous in the ordinary acceptation of the term, and which would produce immediate death...it made me vomit three times. My stomach was weak at the time.

Decent beverages were often adulterated after delivery,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

according to Hasbrouck. The Lunatic Asylum staff made a "formal complaint...of the coffee, and they have since... purchased it for themselves." This particular item was "St. Domingo coffee, and comes to us roasted and ground at the Alms House...I have the impression that a little rye is mixed with the coffee at the Alms House."[100]

Some articles disappeared after arriving inside the gate, never finding their way to the institutions. City Prison Keeper Malachi Fallon related a sad tale of theft:

> I received a box of soap from the Alms House about a month or six weeks ago. The nett weight charged I do not know. My attention was called to the fact that I had received soap and on going to see, I found that I had none, but that I had an empty box marked 72 lbs. I went to two or three stores and filled the box full of soap, and it weighed 64 lbs., soap and all.[101]

The Aldermen who investigated issued a majority and a minority report, disagreeing only about possible solutions to the chaos. Daniel Briggs emphasized the total confusion in the Department after the Nativist sale of Bellevue, but admitted that there had been "considerable carelessness, and the absence of that scrutiny necessary to secure the institution against fraud." The "absolute amount" of cheating was unclear but, obviously "imposition has been practiced." To Briggs the main problem was Steward Norman B. Smith's method of "weighing only a portion of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

goods delivered" and averaging from the resulting sample. His proposed solution was to establish a new Almshouse post: that of Receiving and Distributing Clerk.[102]

Oliver Charlick's majority deplored the abysmal lack of basic tools necessary to check deliveries. Even if the responsible official were clearly designated and infinitely conscientious, he could hardly determine accuracy solely by hand and brain. There was "no proper regulation... at Bellevue...for weighing a tierce of rice or a hogshead of sugar; nor was there a gauging rod provided..."[103] Bills were certified as correct with minimal examination of goods.[104] Merchants disagreed in testimony regarding whether or not samples provided them had been sufficiently clear. Focusing on this last point, the Charlick group recommended rejection of a Charity and Almshouse Committee suggestion to dispense with the advertising requirement and, instead, a strengthening of that mechanism by mandating the Commissioner to furnish "accurate" samples of precisely the quality of goods desired.[105] The Aldermen tabled all proposals.

Under Reorganization, as before, contracts frequently went to political friends. Former Board of Assistant Aldermen President and Ordinance reformer Frederick R. Lee, Bellevue Hospital Steward David Wood, and Apothecary John Miller all held supply contracts under Commissioner Leonard's Democratic administration.[106] After the Whig victory, the Charity and Almshouse Committee

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

expanded its role in purchasing so that soon it was hard to tell who had completed which agreements. By 1849 Leonard had discovered a number of defects in the process. Bidding could work only as long as advertising generated "a number" of proposals, but often there were "but one or two - and it has happened that not a single offer has been made." Nor did the system insure the City a fair price; no effort had yet succeeded in preventing undue financial damage to the public interest:

> I believe that the object of the Contract system is fair competition, but I doubt very much whether we have ever reached that desideratum. In the purchase of flour, for instance, frequently have we paid more for it in this way than we could have obtained it by other means; and so it is for a majority of all the supplies that thus have to be procured. There are other objections to this system...the difficulties that almost constantly arise in relation to the quantity and condition of the goods. This annoyance the Commissioner nor the Committee seem to have any adequate power to avert and it sometimes happens, if the Contract be a losing one, it is not fulfilled. The compulsory features of the law failing in two respects at least, to be of any service to the Department - one, the extreme hazard of a legal suit - the other, the time and cost of a prosecution, even though a verdict be the favorable result.[107]

The ten Governors immediately designed a rational system for both contracts and for deliveries and distribution. Their innovations were threefold: a Supply Committee, the Storehouse system, and public reporting of their largest contracts.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Committee on Supplies was part of an overall committee system adopted by the new administration for the government of the institutions. Three of the Governors became specialists in procurement and performed this function on behalf of the entire Board.[108] This located executive responsibility for contracts in a small number of individuals who, over time, would acquire a degree of expertise in the market.

Storerooms were always part of each institution. The Governors expanded upon Alderman Briggs' notion of making supply receipt a separate, centralized function and established an augmented Storehouse at each location: Blackwell's, Randall's, and Bellevue. William Hallinan, for instance, was Storekeeper of Bellevue; this was his only job and was therefore sure to be performed. The Blackwell's Storehouse had a staff of five, three attached to the Bakehouse. Nehemiah P. Anderson served there as Storekeeper at a salary of $1,333 with a $933 Clerk.[109] Locating the responsibility for deliveries in a single administrative entity assured requisite attention and accountability for this complex and long neglected function. Presumably the Governors even provided gauging rods.

The new executives summarized their half dozen biggest supply contracts annually in their budget requests. In 1856 and 1857 I. S. Valentine supplied beef to the City Prison at $4.00 per hundred pounds; George Haws had the Randall's contract for $5.74 and those for the Almshouse

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and Workhouse for $5.73 and Bellevue Hospital for $6.50. The Penitentiary got its beef from C. G. Cornell for $4.50; he sold to the Lunatic Asylum at $6.12 and to the Penitentiary Hospital at $6.10. David Hennion supplied Randall's Island and the Almshouse with milk and Richard W. Woodhull the Hospitals and Workhouse, all at four cents per quart. A contract would be concluded for 1857, the Governors advised, "for supplying the various institutions and outdoor poor with coal. The amount required...is estimated at $50,000."[110] With purchases of this size, far exceeding those of even a few years before, the Storehouse, the Supply Committee, and publicity were crucial safeguards against economic abuses which, had they continued, would have dwarfed those of the past and wreaked catastrophic damage upon the public purse.

Even these reforms, however, did not answer the persistent demand for frugality. With all the attention to economy, all the reorganizations, and all the devotion to institutionalization with its obvious advantages of large scale, controlled consumption, New York City could never lighten its public assistance burden. All that could be done was to try to raise incidental income and see that tax money was spent wisely and honestly. Even this was difficult, at least until the Governors. Deception, politics, and conflicts of interest made Almshouse supply a game in which merchants gained at the expense of both the City and its poor.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. Ords, VI, February 6, 1839, 114-5. These large appropriations were followed by over a dozen other categories of far more modest expenses. These, and all Almshouse appropriations discussed in this chapter, unless otherwise indicated, represented operating budgets only and did not include the large sums raised by loan and other means for real estate purchases and building projects discussed in chapter 1 above. Capital expenses were separately categorized under "Trust Accounts." These appropriations also represent initial allotments only, based on roughly estimated expense projections for the coming calander year and nearly always had to be supplemented every few months.

2. Ords, IX, February 23, 1842, 127. Lamps and Gas received $100,000; Cleaning Streets, $80,000; Salaries, $60,000; Street Expenses, $30,000; many less demanding functions got varying lesser amounts.

3. MCC, XV, January 3, 1826, 140, 217.

4. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, Table A following p. 184.

5. MCC, XIX, January 31, 1831, 464.

6. Talmage, 45, 89.

7. Mayor Aaron Clark, Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, IV, #1, May 22, 1837, 8.

8. Clark, Message to Council for 1838, 1, 11.

9. Ibid., 13-4.

10. Mayor Issac Varian, Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, VI, #1, May 14, 1839, 10.

11. The progress of the investigation was held up because of the tardiness of the Engs Commissioners in submitting their figures. Though the Comptroller gave data to Talmage "freely and promptly," information came from the Almshouse only "after considerable delay." Talmage, 38. Chairman Engs explained that the "clerk at Bellevue finds that he cannot prepare, in a correct manner, the statistics you want, so as to hand the statement today. He will send it to me as soon as finished, when you shall have it." Engs in Talmage, 79.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

12. Ibid., 45.

13. Ibid., 46-9.

14. Varian, Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, VII, #1, June 1, 1840, 19.

15. W. V. Brady, 7.

16. Ibid., 8; Ords, XIII, February 25, 1846, 341, 343.

17. W. V. Brady, 7.

18. Cook, Rept for 1845, Asts Doc, XXVII, #19, February 2, 1846, 72, 76.

19. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Expenditure, Asts Doc, XXXII, #8, September 25, 1848, 109.

20. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 7.

21. Comptroller T. J. Waters, Cmctn on Additional Appropriations, Aldmn Doc, XV, #10, September 4, 1848, 136.

22. M. G. Leonard, ibid., 150.

23. Ords, XVI, September 19, 1848, 143.

24. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Expenditure, 104-7.

25. Ibid., 108.

26. Ords, XVI, October 11-12, 1848, 172-3.

27. Ibid., November 2, 1848, 203.

28. Ibid., December 29, 1849, 357.

29. Ords, XVIII, December 30, 1850, 513; XIX, December 31, 1851, 598; XX, December 29, 1852, 604; XXII, January 18, 1854, 6.

30. Ords, XXII, December 30, 1854, 387, 389.

31. Ords, XXIV, January 7, 1856, 16.

32. Ords, XXV, January 6, 1857, 9.

33. Ords, XXVI, March 1, 1858, 29.

34. Ords, XXVII, February 4, 1859, 25.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

35. Budget Board, Mayor Daniel F. Tiemann and Comptroller A. C. Flagg, Disapproval of Estimate in AH Govs, Estimate of Expenditure for 1859 in Flagg, Comptroller's Estimates of Expenditures for 1859, Asts (Councilmen) Doc, V, #18, December 20, 1858, 58-9.

36. Tiemann, Message to Council, Asts (Councilmen) Doc, V, #1, May 5, 1858, 13, 20.

37. Internal Almshouse budgeting and reporting was a tangled thicket indeed. If early fiscal practices were haphazard and arbitrary, later ones were politically charged. The best that can be done with the massive, incomplete, and convoluted records is to sample them for basic patterns of income and expenditure, bearing in mind their frequent political bias on only approximate accuracy. Though Almshouse reports pretended at scientific exactitude, they were generally so inconsistent in format and politically motivated that they often proved indeterminate in their ultimate implications. Commissioners and Councilmen could and did argue incessantly over which administrations had been truly the most economical when all factors were accounted for. Each new series of revelations and proposed reforms demonstrated not only that the poor expenditure was too high, but also that it was stangely administered, peculiarly reported, and politically exploited.

38. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 167.

39. Ibid., 170.

40. Ibid., 171.

41. Ibid., 172.

42. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 225-6.

43. Ibid., 205. Serious minute inventories became a standard practice in the years ahead, usually, but not always, when a new administration entered office and wanted to document the destitution of the facilities. Inventories often revealed the presence of interesting odds and ends. An 1840 survey of Bellevue Hospital property recorded a range of furnishings including "1 carpet (worn out!)," all kinds of chairs and dishes, and a motley set of surgical instruments like "1 case of amputating instruments, very inferior and incomplete," "4 small saws, (old and good for nothing)," "1 caustic instrument, broken)," and "Leeches." AH Supt John Myer, Rept for 1839-40, Aldmn Doc, VII, #9, June 20, 1840, 90-3. The

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

entire inventory for all institutions comprises pp. 83-107. James Cook's Commissioners ordered a thorough inventory including dollar estimates of property worth. Cook et al., 260-322. The Almshouse Assistant Steward's Department had $2,601 in property, including typical items like a "Fire Engine, Very Old" and "1 Refrigerator, has been used," each valued at $10. Much dearer were the "60 Hogs, all sizes," worth an estimated $150. AH Deputy Steward John Fitch, Inventory of Sundry Articles in Dept, ibid., 271-2. The Steward reported an additional $2,814 worth of goods. Steward John Miller, Inventory of Property Found, ibid., 275. Outgoing Superintendent Linus W. Stevens certified an estimate of $478 worth of property in his office, including "Washington's Writing Table, Mahogany, 1789" valued at $100. Inventory of Articles in Office at Blvu, ibid., 283, 285. The Nativist Council thought it unpatriotic to keep such an antique at the Almshouse and ordered it placed in the Governor's Room at City Hall along with any "such other property or relics" of a similar nature which may come to light. Ords, XII, December 5, 1844, 200.

44. AH Cmsrs, Engs, Seixas Nathan, Ring, Braine, Palmer, Rept on Resolution of Asts on Expenditure, Asts Doc, XII, #16, October 1, 1838, 146-51.

45. Cook et al., 242.

46. Ibid., 244, 246.

47. Ibid., 258.

48. Cook, Rept for 1845, 76.

49. MCC, XV, April 26, 1826, 383.

50. Ibid., November 20, 1826, 701.

51. New York Annual Register for 1832, 233. Annual aggregates of income and expenditure for the years 1832-4 are taken from the respective Registers, unless otherwise indicated.

52. New York Annual Register for 1833, 250.

53. New York Annual Register for 1834, 265.

54. AH Cash Received by Supt, Ms. Vol. 143, February 1835-December 1836.

55. Cook et al., 251-2.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

56. Cash Received by Supt, June, July, September 1834, May 1835.

57. Sale of livestock alone, for example, brought in $130 in 1831, $238 in 1832, but only $7 in 1833, according to the Annual Register. A single sale of livestock to Ernest Keyser brought in $227 in 1834. Cash Received by Supt, misplaced entry between August and September 1834. The Nativists made an itemized list of goods sold from May 15 to December 31, 1844 amounting to $2,377 compared with only $749 worth of property sold by the predecessor Cook Board during the corresponding period of the previous year. AH Supt Horace Loofborrow, Rept on Articles Sold in AH..., Aldmn Doc, XI, #62, March 31, 1845, 663.

58. Cash Received by Supt, July, August 1834.

59. New York Annual Register for 1834, 266.

60. Cook et al., 258.

61. Comptroller D. D. Williamson, Statement of Monthly Statements of AH, Bridewell, and Penitentiary, Aldmn Doc, XI, #15, August 26, 1844, foldout following p. 183.

62. M. G. Leonard in Waters, Cmctn on Additional Appropriations, 137-8.

63. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, foldout following p. 56.

64. AH Govs, Estimate of Expenditure for 1857 in Flagg, Comptroller's Estimates of Expenditures for 1857, Asts (Councilmen) Doc, III (Third Run), #37, November 15, 1856, 102-6.

65. MCC, XVIII, December 28, 1829, 461-2.

66. Engs in Talmage, 80.

67. Talmage, 47.

68. Engs, Rept in Answer to Resolution Calling for Expenses for Refreshments Furnished to Watchmen, Aldmn Doc, V, #30, February 6, 1839, 351-2.

69. AH Cmsrs, John V. Greenfield, John M. Bradhurst, Nicholas Schureman, Alexander Stewart, Nicholas J. Quackenboss, Rept on Condition of Institutions in Aldmn Special Cmte, Elijah F. Purdy, William Chamberlain, James Ferris, Rept on AH Dept, Aldmn Doc, XV, #66, April 6, 1840, 655.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

70. Ibid., 653-4.

71. Ibid., 657.

72. Purdy, Chamberlain, Ferris, 657-9.

73. Comptroller Alfred A. Smith, Rept Showing Amount Paid for Champagne, Wine, other Liquors, and Segars in Years 1837, 1838, 1839, and 1840, Aldmn Doc, VI, #67, April 6, 1840, 666. Much of the liquor was purchased from the Commissioners' own businesses. See section below on supply contracts.

74. Purdy, Chamberlain, Ferris, 657. Unlike true Almshouse reformers, these Tammany leaders simply saw a return of control to their party as the best "reform." This accomplished, there was nothing further to do except for the Democratic Commissioners to "make further inquiries as to the property stated deficient" and "take such measures as may be deemed proper for obtaining the same" and for the Special Committee to be "discharged from the further consideration of the subject." P. 660.

75. Cook et al., 249.

76. Van Nostrand et al., Cmctn on Abuses, 401.

77. Penitentiary Warden Joseph Keen, Affidavit #138 in Flagg, Rept with Affidavits Taken Before Recorder... on Alleged Abuses in City Government, 1570.

78. Aldmn Proc, XXXV, May 29, 1848, 114-6.

79. MCC, XVII, March 10, 1828, 13.

80. [First] Law Creating AH Dept..., 1832, 190.

81. [Second] Law Creating AH Dept..., 1834, 225.

82. Engs, Nathan et al., 145.

83. Ibid., 156.

84. Ibid., 154.

85. Ibid., 155.

86. Ibid., 156.

87. Greenfield et al., Rept on Condition of Institutions in Purdy, Chamberlain, Ferris, 654-5.

88. Purdy, Chamberlain, Ferris, 658.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

89. A. A. Smith, 667.

90. Ibid., 668-75.

91. Talmage, 46.

92. Greenfield et al., Rept on Condition of Institutions in Purdy, Chamberlain, Ferris, 654.

93. Asts Jnl, XIV, June 3, 1839, 67. The Committee on Laws, David Graham, Jr. and James Pollock, to whom the resolution was referred on motion of its opponent Calvin Balis, stated with considerable naivete that they were "not aware of any instance" of abuse but "cannot but believe it proper to provide against the possibility of such abuse." Ibid., July 22, 1839, 204-5.

94. Van Nostrand et al., Rept on Purchase of Flour, Asts Doc, XXV, #15, January 28, 1845, 114-7.

95. Ibid., 118-23.

96. Ibid., 124-30.

97. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 73-5.

98. Aldmn Daniel D. Briggs, Special Cmte, Minority Rept on Manner Articles under Contract are Delivered to AH, Doc, XII, #40, March 9, 1846, 611-12.

99. AH Supt William P. Moss, Testimony in Aldmn Special Cmte, Oliver Charlick, Emanuel B. Hart, William V. Brady, William C. Seaman, Majority Rept on Manner Articles under Contract are Delivered to AH, Doc, XII, #41, March 9, 1846, 694.

100. Blvu Resident Phycn Fenelon Hasbrouck, Testimony, ibid., 657-8, 660.

101. City Prison Keeper Malachi Fallon, Testimony, ibid., 649.

102. Briggs, 610-11.

103. Charlick et al., 622.

104. Ibid., 625.

105. Ibid., 628.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

106. Comptroller John Ewen, Cmctn with List of All Contracts... Not Performed, Completed, and Paid, January 1-May 31, 1847, Asts Doc, XXX, #2, May 31, 1847, 26-7. Lee sold the Department $500 worth of hardware; Wood held a clothing contract for the same amount; Miller had a $400 black tea contract.

107. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 50. Contracts resulting in problems for Commissioner Leonard are discussed below, chapter 5, section on conflict between that official and Superintendent Marcellus Eells.

108. AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 3.

109. AH Govs, List of Persons Employed in AH Dept in Estimate of Expenditure for 1857 in Flagg, Comptroller's Estimates of Expenditures for 1857, 112, 117.

110. AH Govs, Estimate of Expenditure for 1857, ibid., 108-9.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 4

ALMSHOUSE DEMOGRAPHICS

All of the elaborate and imposing buildings on choice real estate, the complex political maneuvers and reform struggles, the ever rising expenditure, and the growing bureaucracy had one ostensible purpose: the custody, care, and rehabilitation of people. Often the residents of the institutions and recipients of outdoor relief seemed forgotten in the midst of conflicts over contracts and appointments. Yet there would have never been any kind of organizational structure without the prerequisite of an increasing poor population.

Like other Almshouse functions, demographic reporting was so convoluted that there is an impression of ultimate indeterminacy in many of its implications. There was no shortage of figures since poverty reformers were fascinated with statistics, but much of the material was erratic and inconsistent in format over time, as well as biased and unreliable. Still, definite trends are clearly observable, the most important of which was the marked increase of public dependents during the period from 1825 to 1860.

The pauper class included not only inmates of the Almshouse proper - the most important of only three compact and proximate institutions in the beginning year - but the sick, the convicts and trial prisoners, children

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in Nurseries, at nurse in the city, and at indenture, lunatics, Workhouse inmates, and outdoor relief recipients. As each of these classes grew large enough to require its own specialized institution, the Almshouse proper lost them and thus periodically stablized its numbers. The total number of poor grew larger: just counting them became a problem. Along with the financial burden it caused, this increasing pauperization was decried in its moral aspects by politicians and Almshouse managers who were, nevertheless, powerless to stem the tide.

The incoming Almshouse Governors offered a cautionary observation about their predecessors' statistics which should be taken seriously despite its obvious bias. After their first year in office, they reported 954 persons in the Almshouse proper. The last Commissioner had claimed a count of 2,502 which would show an impressive decrease of 1,548 residents. The Governors said they derived their figures "from actual weekly enumerations of the inmates," an innovation. But even with only 954 persons, the House was badly overcrowded, they reasoned; surely it must contain as many as it ever had and in no case could have possibly held even 1,000 more. From this dubious premise the Governors deduced a more reliable conclusion that past statistics were "purely fictitious and known so to be by the Superintendent and the Commissioner. The magnitude and boldness of their imposition upon the public render it almost incredible that it should have no foundation."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Yet the "simple fact" was that "the number was made up in the same manner as had been customary for so many years."[1]

Systematic reporting, whether truthful or fabricated, began in 1826 with a Commissioners' order that the Almshouse Clerk furnish "the number of paupers in the House; their sex, and whether natives or foreigners, the numbers of children in the House, & likewise those out at nurse separately," as well as the number admitted into and discharged from the House, by sex, and "whether adults or children." The Resident Physcian was to report similar data for "sick and insane separately" at Bellevue and the Penitentiary Keeper was to do the same for his facility.[2] These categories became the basic reporting units in the years to come with appropriate variations and refinements such as breakdowns of foreigners' nationalities.

In order to compile this material, the Almshouse kept elaborate admissions and discharge records. Demographic aides were detailed and duplicative in the 1830s; the record keeping system was developing and the mania for intricate reporting was at its height. There were not yet enough poor to make fairly informative notations impossible. With the increasing numbers of inmates in the 1840s and 1850s, fewer specifics were recorded for each case and the ledgers were simplified to eliminate some of the duplication and cross referencing. The Governors kept notations in registers to a minimum, requiring only the barest essentials

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to be listed for each individual.

Until 1846 two sets of admissions and discharge records preserved similar information twice. First, there was an ongoing chronological volume of admissions and discharges, the former recorded from the front of the book and the latter from the back. A new volume was started when admissions entries were about to meet discharge entries in the current book.[3] Additionally, there was a register based on an annual census of inmates conducted by each new administration in June. The residents present were listed in alphabetical groupings by first letter of surname only, then in order of past admission. Those admitted during the year following the census were then listed chronologically in the appropriate letter sections.[4] Both types of records typically indicated each resident's name, sex, race, age, birthplace, source of referral to the House, illness, disability, or "condition," admission date, institution and ward assignment, discharge date and reason or date of death, and, often, pertinent remarks about individual situations or behavior. This bare material constitutes the nearest approach to "case records" in the modern sense that existed and tells all we can know about a majority of the inmates.

The number of residents peaked every winter and declined in the spring, but usually only to a level well above that

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the previous fall. This spiral pattern was attributed to seasonal unemployment, the difficulty of surviving on the streets in the winter, and the exigencies of politics which required voters in November and April.

In November 1826 there were 1,405 Almshouse residents including Hospital patients.[5] By the following February the number had climbed to 1,626.[6] The spring brought a decrease, but not down to the preceeding fall's level, only to 1,523 in May 1827.[7] In April 1828 there were 1,940 inmates.[8] The House discharged enough that month to show a decrease to 1,629 in the annual report of May 1828 but this was still well above that of a year before. Also, this last figure no longer included Hospital patients: there were 104 male and 61 female medical patients and 37 male and 45 female "maniacs." There were also 135 prisoners and vagrants in the Bridewell and 320 prisoners in the Penitentiary. The bill for support of the outdoor poor came to $10,477. The sex and age breakdown for the Almshouse proper was 494 men, 572 women, 376 boys, and 187 girls. The pattern would continue of women slightly outnumbering men and boys far outnumbering girls.[9]

The early 1830s showed a slight decline in the count for the Almshouse proper while that of the other, developing institutions rose. In December 1832 there were 1,827 residents "remaining in the House."[10] In May 1833 there were 1,535: 5,409 had been admitted during the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

previous political year while 3,874 had been discharged or had died. Of those present, there were 456 men, 504 women, 374 boys and 201 girls. The Hospital had 188 medical patients and, coincidentally, the exact same number of maniacs. There were 68 Bridewell prisoners and 460 in the Penitentiary. Outdoor relief cost $16,711.[11]

The Depression of 1837 caused a record increase in the population of all of the institutions. The Almshouse proper reported 2,548 persons, not counting the children on Long Island. Bellevue medical wards had 136 patients, the maniac ward, 156. The Bridewell held 132 and the Penitentiary 652.[12] The years 1837 and 1838 thus marked a new level of public dependence, the Almshouse proper housing over 2,000 persons for the first time. Until the Governors, its population appears only once to have fallen below that level, and then only slightly.

During the political year of 1839 to 1840 there were 7,049 persons admitted into the House. There were 3,272 discharged while 140 "eloped," and 880 died, leaving 2,757 in May 1840. This number included 180 Hospital patients, 217 lunatics in the new Asylum, and 142 children at nurse in the city. Of the Almshouse proper and Nurseries populations, there were 813 men, 978 women, 667 boys, and 299 girls. The City Prison or Bridewell held 146 and the Penitentiary 566. Outdoor poor donations came to $26,136.[13] A calendar year report for 1840 indicated the seasonal

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

variation once again: on December 31, 1840 there were 2,956 paupers in the House; the "whole number of paupers relieved or supported," presumably including outdoor relief recipients, came to 27,553.[14] The Whigs could not effect a reduction; their Superintendent reported 29,951 relieved or supported during 1842.[15]

The figures for 1843 showed a leveling or decrease in some institutions but increases in others. The Almshouse proper had 1,032 men and 948 women. The Long Island Nurseries had two men, 435 boys, and 174 girls. Using a new reporting format to include finer distinctions than in the past, the Penitentiary claimed 109 "white male convicts," 41 "colored male convicts," 156 white and 21 "colored" male vagrants, 18 white and three "colored" female convicts, and 334 white and 39 "black" female vagrants.[16]

By 1845 the increase in the number of people needing support and the physical limitations of the institutions began to approach emergency proportions. Mayors, Councilmen, and Commissioners had long commented upon the rising tide of pauperism. Commissioner James H. Cook's statistical report for 1845 is different from previous expressions of concern only in its degree of urgency. At this point, the institutions were nearly bursting:

> Embraced in the Alms-House Department are fifteen institutions, (omitting Police-Offices, Jails, &c.,) to wit - Bellevue Alms-House, with an average number of 1443 Paupers -

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Bellevue Hospital 488 - Lunatic Asylum 379 - the Nursery at "Long Island Farms" 549 - Nursery Hospital 83 - total Paupers supported in them 2960 - Penitentiary, including the Hospital attached 1177 - City Prison 180 - total Prisoners 1357 - Total Paupers and Prisoners 4317, being an increase over the computation of the preceeding year of 560 persons, or 15 per cent, above the number then supported. There are also regularly assisted, about 1200 Pensioners - 150 Nurse children supported - and 3000 transient Paupers relieved, all of which three classes are designated under the head of "Out Door Poor" - to which may be added several hundreds transported to foreign countries, and various parts of the United States - making in all, rising 9000 persons who have been relieved between the reorganization of this Department, and the close of the past year.
>
> During the year 1845, there have been received into the different institutions out of town 14097 persons, and the number of those discharged inclusive of those who have died is 13284. These institutions are now full, and though the discharges are daily occurring, yet the number received keep in continual advance, conclusively showing that sufficient room for further accomodation is daily needed, both in the Alms-Houses and Prisons, and many means are resorted to and expenses incurred to provide for the comfort and safe-keeping of the inmates. In the prospect, however, of having sometime during the ensuing season the new Alms-House and Hospitals completed and ready for the reception of Paupers, this inconvenience may not be a difficulty long to be borne, yet as no provision appears to be in preparation to enlarge our Prisons, I am at a loss to discern, how they can be rendered capable to keep in confinement the increase that may reasonably be expected to occur in commitments to these places.[17]

Cook was wrong only in expecting any quick relief from new construction. Commissioner Moses G. Leonard reported that on December 31, 1846 the Almshouse proper held 2,205 residents. During 1847, 4,615 were admitted and 4,233 discharged, leaving

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a net increase of 382. Bellevue Hospital started the year with 505 patients, admitted 6,615 and discharged 6,585, leaving 535 at the end of the year. The Nurseries passed the thousand mark, increasing from 795 to 1,035. The Lunatic Asylum had 405 patients at the end of 1846 and admitted 396 in 1847. But 439 were discharged or died to show a net decrease of 42. The Penitentiary also showed a drop from 852 to 762. Outdoor assistance during January and February 1847 alone reached 44,000 people.[18] The following year Leonard reported that for January to August 1847 the "average number supported, not including those temporarily assisted during the winter with fuel, &c." was 7,455. For the same period of 1848 the average figure was 8,154. The Commissioner blamed the immigration torrent of the past year for the 699 increase in the average.[19]

Though the Almshouse Governors attacked Leonard's statistics, they were soon surprised by the large and growing number of dependents. In 1852 the Outdoor Poor Visitors made 11,348 visits "for money" and another 35,101 "for fuel."[20] The institutional statistics for 1856 were fairly close to the norm for the decade. It appeared that the Governors had begun to stabilize the extent of public assistance to a degree. Then the Depression of 1857 dashed any such hope and the institutions absorbed a dramatic increase of inmates. On December 31, 1856, the Almshouse proper had 1,445

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

residents; a year later this number had risen to 1,562. Bellevue Hospital increased its patient load from 629 to 857 and the Lunatic Asylum from 597 to 627. The Penitentiary census went from 534 to 715. The Island Hospital had 320 patients at the end of 1856, 441 at the close of 1857. There were 826 residents of Randall's Island Farms and Nurseries in 1856, 1,073 in 1857. The number of City Prison inmates rose from 332 to 435. The "Colored Home" which cared for black dependents by contract lost three residents, going from 245 to 242 and the population of the Colored Orphan Asylum, another contractor, showed no change: there were 180 black children there at the end of both years. The total increase for all the institutions was 1,695 persons.[21] The figures did not include those provided for by the Commissioners of Emigration.

Whatever their degree of reliability, these statistics illustrated a growing problem of public dependency. The number supported in any year was always several times that being assisted at any given point in time. Despite all efforts at containment, both institutional and outdoor relief increased constantly, finally reaching upwards of 40,000 annually by the end of the period - a virtual army of the poor which alarmed both reformers and the public. It often seemed to the harried politicians and taxpayers that all of the world's paupers were gathering together at the Port of New York for their promised feastings on Blackwell's Island.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

There were several different common sources of referral to the Almshouse Department. Registers had a column to record "By Whom Sent," in the early years, later changed to "By Whose Order." Though only occasionally completed, these entries provide enough data to show clearly whom the poor initially went to for help and how they found their way to the Almshouse.

An admissions study for a single week at the beginning of June 1834 exemplifies a typical proportion of referral sources. Seventy-one persons were admitted between May 31 and June 6. About half, 33, were referred by various private individuals such as I. W. Wyman who sent six. The Almshouse Superintendent authorized the admission of 12. Josiah Mann, the Commissioners' Agent, admitted nine. Commissioner John Targee authorized three and Commissioner George Lovett authorized six. Alderman John Lovett sent one, Alderman Issac Varian three, Alderman William C. Wales one, and Alderman Francis Fickett one. The Police brought in six. The "hearse" brought in 20. Comments entered upon admission reveal some of the situations. Five persons were transferred from the Penitentiary into the Almshouse proper. Three were committed as vagrants for 30 days or for six months, typical periods specified in the judicial orders. There were nine, including a family of four, designated "emigrant with ship, captain named." One child was "left by mother." Two were returned to the Almshouse "from nurse" and one was

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

born in the Hospital. The Almshouse had a problem with residents' aliases: many maintained more than one name, either as a folk tradition or, perhaps, to secure a double identity and provisions for a while. The June admissions include three: William Ran, "insane," brought in by Police, alias "Sparum;" Bridget Gillen, also insane and brought by the Police, a 26 year old married Irish lady, alias "Mary" Gillen; and a 29 year old blind carpenter, Cornelius March, alias "Mahort."[22]

Further sampling of admissions reveal a variety of situations. The Commissioners and their Agent found many of the needy - or they found the Commissioners - without any intermediary. John Targee admitted 50 year old German laborer Charles W. Miller who had a "sore arm." Agent Josiah Mann admitted Irish weaver Connell Moore suffering from rheumatism.[23] Commissioner Peter Palmer admitted 42 year old Irish widow Alice McGee to the Hospital in September 1838. She had been "burned" and remained for six months, transferring to Almshouse ward 38 after initial recovery.[24] Either the Commissioners or their Superintendent were the only referral source recorded for most of the admissions of the early 1840s, except for those of the Police.[25] Under Moses G. Leonard, the tradition revived of sharing admissions prerogatives with the Aldermen, especially members of the Charity and Almshouse Committee. Under the Governors, the Superintendent of the Outdoor Poor, George Kellock, Jr.,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was the main referral source, other than Police Justice vagrancy commitments. The only physical condition usually noted was "destitution."[26]

Members of the Common Council referred a great many people in the period before 1849. Dr. John Rhinelander of the Board of Assistants referred Abbey Myers, 30 years old, from New London. She had a "heavy cold" which developed into pneumonia.[27] Alderman William Mandeville referred William Daley, a 32 year old Irish brassfounder with syphilis who died within three weeks.[28] Alderman Fickett sent John McLean, suffering from "diarhea."[29] Alderman William Welles Holly referred Hugh Coyle who had bronchitis and his wife and daughter, both suffering from "fever," into the Hospital "from 18 St. near Broadway."[30] Alderman James Palmer referred an unknown black woman who was "badly burnt" during the winter of 1837.[31] During the administration of Commissioner Moses G. Leonard, Alderman Moses Maynard referred 24 year old "spinster," Almira Jones, suffering from syphilis and Alderman George Purser sent 29 year old Scottish tailor William Lawson, noted only as suffering from "sickness."[32] Some Aldermen were particularly active in getting local vagrants committed for their own and the ward's good. Alderman Palmer got 48 year old "intemperant spinster" Alice O'Neil, alias Mary Crane "committed during life."[33] Richard Hoe, suffering from delerium tremens, was luckier; Palmer committed him for only 25 years.[34]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A great many Almshouse residents were either referred or physically delivered by the Police. Not only criminals, but vagrants, the insane, lost children and wandering, penniless, or injured strangers were likely to be sent or escorted from a stationhouse. A 27 year old black farmer from Tappen, John Berry, was delivered by the Police and designated both "intemperate" and "insane."[35] They also brought in Patterson born laborer Henry Johnson, "insane - cut his throat."[36] William Sagres was suffering from "convulsions" when "picked up in the street wholly insensible" by Police and delivered to the Almshouse.[37]

The ambulance or "hearse" brought in hundreds of sick or injured who could not have made it to the House on their own. Often the stage would round them up in groups and they would be registered together. On May 1, 1832 there were several such admissions "per hearse," including those of Margaret Watson, a 40 year old "intemperant" Scottish lady, Catherine McGrath, a widow of 33 suffering from phthisis; Hannah Tiffany, 50, suffering from "chronic gastritis;" and the Braddock family: Catherine, 32 and "lazy" and her two children, John and Patrick. On May 4, the hearse brought in, among others, 30 year old Irish miller James Hannon, suffering from "starvation" and "pyrexia."[38] In 1834 the hearse delivered one of New York City's early nonalcoholic drug cases, 20 year old Irish farmer and "opium eater" John Sullivan.[39] Many

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

were delivered by the ambulance with smallpox like 16 year old Louisa Hicks who recovered[40] and 26 year old laborer Lawrence Lewis who died.[41] Dozens of other ailments frequently necessitated hearse transportation to the Almshouse and its Hospital. Owen Vangle was brought in "with dropsy" and died after two months.[42] Some came with one complaint but really had something more serious. John McLovay, a 53 year old Irish weaver, was admitted with a "sore foot" but died after two weeks of "hydrothorax."[43]

These and thousands of similar admissions were partially offset by discharges and deaths. Releases could be voluntary or involuntary, rehabilitative or disciplinary. In many instances the House and an inmate agreed amicably upon a plan but, in any case, the Superintendent was required to discharge "such persons as, in his judgment" could adequately "maintain themselves."[44]

Of 87 discharges during the first week of June 1834, the House recorded reasons for 42. The largest number of these, 16, were "cured" of various ailments: four of syphilis alone. There were 13 infants returned home "from nurse," this minimal assistance probably being the only type needed by their families. Another three children were removed "by the mother" and three others sent out on trial at indenture. Three adults were expelled as "intemperate" and one left "by request." One child was

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

sent to the Orphan Asylum, a private facility and another released to the care of a private citizen. One person was expelled "for not getting a ticket," a control requirement for leaving the House temporarily.[45]

Discharges because of cure were probably the most pleasant and amiable. Typical of the thousands were those of waiter John Brumley, cured of hemorrhoids,[46] Matthew Maloney of delerium tremens,[47] and James Brennan of an ulcer.[48] Sometimes Superintendents were skeptical about the efficacy of certain cures, especially of morally related conditions. William Moss and Horace Loofborrow delighted in register entries like that for Eliza Donovan: "'Discharged,' says Hospital Board 'sober.'" Frederick Bodey was released after four days, "cured of debauch, so says the board from Hospital." Nobody seems to have questioned the hundreds of discharges like those of James Nowland who was "relieved" or William Endler who was "cured" of "mania."[49]

Disciplinary discharges were very common and grew out of incidents of drunkenness, lewdness, insolence, violence, absence without a pass, and a very widespread reluctance to work. Early records, like the entry for Robert Fredericks, often just noted that the resident was "turned out."[50] Later notations were far more detailed and told a story of smoldering rebellion on the part of many people against the Almshouse routine of regimentation and a refusal to relinquish their freewheeling life habits.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A large proportion of offences involved liquor. It was not unusual for someone like William Williams to be labeled "a notorious drunk." Patrick Covney, 58 years old, was discharged with the notation: "Have no employment for him, he is and was well in health when admitted except being beastly drunk when he came up on Saturday."[51] Smuggling of spirits was one of the Almshouse Department's most vexing discipline problems. In a typical case, Martin Lightell was ejected after a three year stay for "getting drunk, scaling the walls, and repeatedly bringing in liquor."[52] Jane Campbell left "because refused a pass, is well known by Ald. Nash & warned of the consequences of getting drunk - An old rum dealer and drinker, brings in rum."[53] Catherine Gillbride, 23, was "turned out for Lewdness, getting drunk, & very improper conduct."[54] Ann Hunt was discharged for "intoxication and fighting."[55]

Much misbehavior was apparently liquor free but still troublesome. Patrick Lawlor was "turned out of the gate for riotous conduct, day and night." John Stewart was ejected "for striking and otherwise abusing Jacob Harvey, the Gate Keeper of the Upper Gate."[56] John O'Neil was discharged for "impudence and abuse to Mrs. Ley at Nursery."[57] Theft was a constant problem. A typical case was that of John Ferguson, caught "stealing white bread."[58] Many residents, like Ann Hand, were expelled "for practicing imposition on the Commissioners."[59] Some, like Michael Bryson, were

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

were banished just for "disobedience of order."[60] Letitia Leonard was "very troublesome" and Sarah Ann Price "very difficult."[61] Harvey Pratt was considered "an improper subject for the Alms House, and fit only for the Penitentiary." Amos Dunham was ejected for "disorderly conduct and using blasphemous language." Some behaved so badly that they were blacklisted from returning to the House. John Thompson was "a Penitentiary case - has been there. The Supt. objects to his readmission." The record said of Mary Driscoll that "the conduct of this woman has been so outrageous that the Supt. refuses to receive her again at all."[62]

Hundreds were discharged for refusing to labor. The physicians decided who could work and recalcitrants were ejected. Ellen Dalton and Mary Romer were "turned out of the gate for refusing to go to Long Island Nursery having both been examined by the doctor and pronounced able to work."[63] James Kane was "sent to wind Bobbin" but "took his discharge in preference."[64] Charles Hammond was sent out because he "won't work, afraid of spoiling his clothes!" Jeduthan Cotton accepted a discharge "because he was asked to shake a carpet."[65] Alex Dominsky refused "to do any work whatever."[66] Malingering was often combined with other sins. James Ward was ejected because he "refuses to work or to comply with any of the rules of the institution, was insolent to the Commis." Similarly, John Wright was

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"insolent and idle, refusing to work and being grossly insolent to the officers of the institution."[67]

It was usual for residents to request a pass to go into the city and then leave the House permanently if permission were denied. Mary Smith, Rebecca Pymn, and hundreds of others thus took discharges "for being refused a ticket to go into town."[68] Others accepted releases rather than go to institutional assignments they did not desire. Mary Duffy left "because she was not located as she wished. She takes her name off, admtd. yesterday." A two year old child, Henry Vandeveer, was "taken out by mother because it was to be sent to L. Island."[69]

Many residents simply left or "eloped," sometimes with articles of House property. John Swinney, admitted in August 1835, "eloped with Boat Cloak" in January 1836.[70] Bridget Gilbert departed, after one week of residence, "from Wash House, leaving two children in the House."[71]

Residents were commonly discharged to return home like Betty Frasher, admitted "sick," but soon recovered and "gone to New Jersey," her birthplace.[72] Many children were removed after short stays by relatives: fathers, mothers, uncles, grandparents.[73] In turn, some adults removed their aged parents from the House. Sarah Carnes, 87 years old, was discharged "by request of her son."[74]

A happy circumstance for many children was adoption. Catherine Winslow, six years old, was admitted into the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

House in June 1837 and, after a month there, was "adopted by Henry & Ann Willard, 117 Crosby Street."[75] James Clark was two days old when he was brought in on December 19, 1842. The following day he was "given to a lady by the mother be adopted by the lady as her own child."[76] Many other children, like Rosanna Randall,[77] Elisa McNeal,[78] and Bridget Cavey,[79] were transferred to the private facility for dependent and delinquent youth, the House of Refuge.

One of the most common modes of discharge for children was indenture "trial." Luciania Davis, ten years old, was put out "on trial" two weeks after her admission,[80] a typical example. Ann Wains was too young for indenture when she was admitted at the age of four, but as she neared seven, the House put her to trial.[81] Often the arrangements did not work out well and the child was returned, like Sarah Mackie, "from trial."[82] Records indicated a variety of situations. Margaret Irving was readmitted "from trial being taken from Mrs. Sarah Muller to whom she was bound in consequence of ill treatment."[83] Patrick Brady was "returned, represented without a fault."[84] Sophia Brown was "returned April 15, [18]45 having itch, Mr. Coyt will take her back when cured."[85] Eliza Briers was bound out and "returned next day, being then considered to small."[86] Parents sometimes snatched their children from indenture situations: John Burns, for example, was "stolen from Mr. Brown by the mother."[87]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A final and interesting mode of discharge was repatriation: the transoceanic removal of unwanted immigrants. The Whigs were especially adept at convincing the homesick that the City was happy to pay their fare:

> Vast numbers of Europeans are constantly applying to your Commissioners to be sent home at public expense; and when these have been in feeble health, or in any manner so impotent as not to be able to earn a living in our country; or when heads of large families, that must become chargeable from want of employment, we have, occasionally, thought it the best policy to pay their charges to some port near their place of nativity.

The Engs Board thus "disposed of a considerable number."[88] Sometimes there were mass discharges: as one of the last acts of the lame duck Whig administration of 1834-5, 33 Irish, Scottish, and English Almshouse inmates were "all sent to Liverpool by the Commissioners in the Ship Constitution the 10th Instant."[89]

Death removed many from the Almshouse, sometimes more than did the discharges. In a fairly typical week of December 1827, 53 persons left the register: 27 were discharged and 28 died.[90] Over the long run, deaths were a smaller proportion of population loss but the rate was still very high. From May 1840 to May 1841 there were 2875 discharges, 84 elopements, and 599 deaths.[91] Disease was the most common cause of death, but there were occasional

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

suicides and accidents and a great many infant and childhood deaths from obscure causes. At first deaths were recorded only on the registers but in the 1850s the Almshouse Governors also kept orderly volumes of Death Certificates which showed detailed basic data including indirect and direct cause of death and place of burial.

The House blamed drinking for many deaths like that of James McCabe, a "rum case"[92] and James Irwin who, after fifteen months of residence, was "found on the avenue dead. Verdict of jury = intemperance."[93] An array of physical ailments killed others: Hannah Gildersleeve died of athsma after three weeks in the House;[94] Isabella Patts died of dysentery;[95] and Ellen Herring of consumption, one of the most common afflictions.[96] The various epidemics resulted in thousands of deaths like that of John Kelly, victim of the cholera of 1854.[97] Causes of death were often indeterminate. Daniel Sullivan, 60 years old, suffered from "sore eyes" when admitted and died after almost a year in the House.[98] John Trudy was admitted "speechless" and died after a month and a half of residence.[99]

The link between direct and indirect causes of death was often clear and logical but was sometimes doubtful. Quaint medical concepts were employed to explain what was imperfectly understood. Duria Gillon supposedly died from "congestion of the brain" resulting from epilepsy.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

William Wadsworth died from delerium tremens and "exhaustion." Mary Bradley died directly from "dropsy abdominal," indirectly from "cirrhoss [sic] liver."[100] Infant deaths were particularly frequent; nursing records show a frightening mortality rate and document terrible human situations.[101] Typical were cases like those of foundling Mary Seaman, "left by a woman unknown... Put to nurse with Clarissa Sinclair...as long as she continues sick" and who died after a month[102] and John McEvoy, "natural child of Mary Laden & James McEvoy; they were married, but a former wife arrived from Ireland & he turned the latter one off." John died after five months at nurse.[103]

The largest single demographic problem in the eyes of City officials was that too many of these public dependents were "emigrants" from Europe or "alien passengers." Though the poor came from everywhere, an ever increasing proportion emanated from England, Ireland, and Germany. Although immigration of paupers was nothing new, its extent was or was so perceived. Mayors, Councilmen, and Almshouse officers all agreed that foreigners constituted much of the public welfare problem.

Conversely, political nativism relied very heavily on the "foreign pauper" issue to gain public support. Anti-Catholicism, political and occupational competition, and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

antiradicalism were certainly prime ingredients of the xenophobic appeal.[104] But antiwelfarism was absolutely central to nativism; the loudest and most persistent theme of its propaganda was that of immigrant pauperism and criminality. "The almshouses of Europe are emptied upon our coast, and this by our own invitation - not casually, or to a trivial extent, but systematically, and upon a constantly increasing scale," cried the National Nativist Convention in 1845:

> The bedlams of the old world have contributed their share to the torrent of immigration; and the lives of our citizens have been attempted in the streets of our capital cities by madmen just liberated from European hospitals, upon the express condition that they should be transported to America. By the orders of European governments, the punishment of crimes has been commuted for banishment to the land of the free; and criminals in irons have crossed the ocean to be cast upon society... The United States are rapidly becoming the lazar-house and penal colony of Europe...[105]

New York City was the lazar house's lazar house and had been for some years. Many of the newcomers went straight to the Almshouse for immediate aid and the Department kept careful count of "natives" and "foreigners." Besides the general unreliability of statistics, there is one difficulty, however; children born to immigrant women, some quite prolific, were classed as American by birth but, like their mothers, were only in New York because of immigration. Conversely, one may have been born abroad in the 1700s and lived in New York for many years but

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

still retain the technical designation of "foreigner" by birthplace. Even allowing for these and other difficulties, Almshouse figures document an impressive increase in the immigrant proportion of its population from 1825 to 1860.

Even in the early years the Department supported many foreign born. Natives, however, outnumbered until 1837. On November 11, 1826, for example, the Almshouse proper counted 816 natives and 530 immigrants.[106] In May 1833 the Superintendent reported 894 natives and 615 foreigners. Of the latter, 389 were Irish, 117 English, 36 German, 35 Scottish, 17 French, six Swedish, and seven West Indian; there were two persons each from the lands of Prussia, Italy, South America, and Africa.[107] On November 7, 1835 the number of foreigners in the Almshouse proper reached exactly 1,000. Natives still outnumbered: the following month there were 1,259 as against 1,111 immigrants. The balance tipped in the year of economic depression and nativist political upsurge: in January 1837 the House first showed a majority of its inmates as foreign born: 1,186; there were only 1,085 natives. By October the gap had widened to 1,203 foreigners and 1,070 natives.[108]

Much concern was expressed about the problem, especially by Whigs who were more subject to nativist sentiment than Tammany. The Mandeville Commissioners called attention to "the increase of paupers...of our Prison Establishments and ... foreign emigration into this country." Between 1826 and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1831 a total of 197,915 immigrants had arrived.[109] The Board presented to the Council one of the first supposed documentary proofs of foreign pauper dumping, an affidavit of one James Balentine Sinden of Catsfield near Hastings, Sussex, England, who had heard his Parish Officers "offer to Richard Crouch (who was a pauper in said Catsfield, with eight children,) that if he would go to New York, that they would pay his passage, and allow him five pounds... or would pay thirty pounds for the passage of himself and his family." They were "expected to arrive in New York this fall." A "like offer" was made to another village pauper, Walter Quay. In addition, from neighboring Blacksbill, "there were fourteen pauper families sent out on or about 8th April last."[110]

The Engs Commissioners complained that the "emigrants that have landed here for a few months past are, in the aggregate, far below the class who formerly came among us; and positive proof is not wanting, that Europe is casting upon us the refuse of her Alms Houses and Prisons."[111] In his Inaugural Message to the Council for 1837, Mayor Aaron Clark noted that a "large proportion of these people generally consist of women and infants, and many of them sickly or crippled persons, who pay nearly all their substance for a passage..." Shocked to find that "scarcely a vessel arrives from certain ports of Europe" that does not

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"increase the applicants for admission into our Alms House," usually after being "crowded together, poorly clad, lodged, and fed...sickly and miserable on arrival," he called for a new system of controls that might provide "ample security" to the City.[112]

The Aldermen's Law Committee investigated and reported 60,540 new arrivals, most "absolutely penniless, and reeking with the accumulated filth which long confinement on shipboard and an habitual want of cleanliness produce." After arriving they would "roam the streets, a band of homeless mendicants" or would "apply to your Alms House for succor." Commissioner Zebedee Ring had furnished statistics showing that the House was "full, containing, at this moment 3,074, of which about three-fourths are foreigners. In fact our public charities are principally for the benefit of foreigners" since 982 out of the 1,209 admitted to the Hospital were also "aliens."[113] The following year Mayor Clark claimed to have "discovered that extensive arrangements had been made to quietly invade New York, with a large number of foreigners, thousands of whom have no means of livelihood."[114]

The primary blame for all of this was thrust, not really at the immigrants, but at the foreign governments which sent them and the ships' captains and professional "agents" who profited from the traffic. The Engs Commissioners

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

angrily charged that the law was

> set at defiance, and this metropolis forced to be the recipient of the poor objects who have been deluded from home by "agents," who draw from them the remaining hard earnings of their life, for expenses of transportation, and then shamelessly leave them a prey to want, and subjects of a dependency, produced by the reverse of what these "agents" had informed them was a demand for labor in our country.[115]

Mayor Clark also understood the immigrants' plight. The newcomers were in a "state of poverty, excitement, and wretchedness; the prospect before them is very discouraging." Nevertheless they were an undeserved problem for New York. "The times being more unpromising in other countries than in our own, they imagine they cannot change for the worse and hither they come...an intolerable burden to us." One might indeed "rejoice," thought the Mayor, that "our country should be the 'Asylum of the oppressed,' but we cannot be willing that a single city should, without manly resistance, become a 'conquered town.'"[116] Clark contemplated and even implemented several novel solutions to the problem, most of which focused on the antiquated bonding and commuting system of indemnification and its manifold evasions.

Bonding and commuting constituted the legal mechanism to reimburse the City for support of recently arrived foreign poor. State law permitted the Council to require bonds of up to $300 per passenger to insure against charity

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

dependence within a two year period. In lieu of taking a surety bond, the Council authorized the Mayor to "commute" for a flat sum of $2.50 per passenger if he deemed it "expedient and proper to do so upon an examination of the passengers."[117] In 1830, "on the application of several merchants," the fee was reduced to $1.00.[118] In 1832 the Mayor was given discretion to commute for any sum from $1.00 to $10.00.[119] Apparently this flexibility was rescinded between then and 1837 for Mayor Clark sought the same authority.[120]

A greater problem than what rate to charge was evasion. Ship captains cheated notoriously. Even when caught, they received lenient treatment, usually just owning up and paying their fees with no further penalty.[121] With such an incentive for smuggling, massive, organized circumvention of the regulations was inevitable. From 1826 to 1837 when Mayor Clark finally settled the matter, a lively struggle ensued between New York and New Jersey over ship captains' use of just one of many clandestine ports: Perth Amboy.

In 1826 Amboy officials arrested the Sheriff of Staten Island, Joshua Mersereau, for jurisdictional violation when, acting on behalf of New York City, he pursued and served process upon Captain Currie of the Brig Irene from Cork, Ireland, who had brought in unreported, unbonded immigrants. Facing a possible seven years in prison, Mersereau never appeared for trial. Four years later the Council was still

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

struggling with his sureties' bail forfeiture claims.[122]

Meanwhile the Amboy traffic increased until, in 1837, Mayor Clark reported an organized system by which passengers were told that they were "landed safely in New York" and "duly reported" but were "in truth...put on shore at Perth Amboy...to enter our City through New Jersey," their shippers "relieved from the risque of giving bonds for their support."[123] By exerting public and private pressure, Clark and the Council persuaded New Jersey, first, to afford "facilities for the reconveyance of emigrants,"[124] and, finally, to pass a commutation law of its own.[125]

Though this disposed of the Amboy aspect of the problem, there were other holes in the net. The Whigs saw a veritable worldwide conspiracy: Clark knew of the "arrival of passengers at Eastport and other places with the sole intent of reaching New York clandestinely."[126] The Engs Board complained that the poor flocked into the City on "steamboats from Rhode Island and Connecticut" without bonding or commutation.[127]

Mayor Clark did not stop at trying to collect the proper indemnities. No amount of bond money could compensate the public for the wholesale dumping of paupers and criminals into its midst. Two "armed vessels, of a nation in alliance with the United States," charged the Mayor, had recently brought "hither," unbonded and uncommuted, "a man who had been pronounced worthy of death; but who was relieved of that punishment by the substitution of exile." Only Congress

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

could provide the ultimate remedy for such outrages, but Clark made a start. He "opened the eyes...of the people of Europe to the subject" and proudly noted that Counselor Shiel had denounced to the Liverpool Common Council the practice of "chartering vessels...for the conveyance of POOR people to America."[128] He also approached the Senate of the port of Bremen, Germany where many emigrants embarked and secured an ordinance to prohibit export of "worthless persons."[129] Another nativistic Whig measure was to clearly authorize the Almshouse Commissioners to repatriate the homesick.[130]

There were severe problems of corruption and maladministration within the bonding and commutation system itself, according to a study commissioned by the Whigs when they regained the Council in 1842 and designed largely to embarrass Democratic Mayor Robert Morris. The Mayor, who delegated the duty to his Clerk, was supposed to keep one set of bond and commutation registers while the Almshouse Commissioners kept a matching set.[131] The Whigs' investigators, Robert Taylor and Samuel J. Willis, revealed mounting confusion and theft. The state of the records was chaotic:

> No law has been found which requires the reports or bonds to be preserved or that in any way alludes to the disposal of them, and some of them were found in the Mayor's Office, others in the Office of the Commissioners of the Alms-House, many of them in the office of the Superintendent of the Alms-House, and most of them in one of the garrets of the Alms-House at Bellevue.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reports made by captains to the Mayor had been transmitted to the Almshouse Commissioners with great "regularity and detail" but many were found "on which no entry is made in the Commissioners' books" and there were, conversely, many "reports...copies in the books, which reports have not been found notwithstanding diligent search...every place where it was supposed there was any possibility of finding them."[132] Taylor found in the Mayor's office "many bundles of bonds...but partially executed; and auctioneers' bonds, that should have been forwarded...retained...for months. The business of the office was in a deranged condition, and there were no accounts of moneys received nor business transacted."[133] The Aldermanic investigating Committee noted additionally that there were numerous errors in amounts on bonds, ranging from $300 to $10,000, many others "in which no amounts were stated," many not sworn to, others falsely sworn to, and others partially executed that had sat around past the two year expiration period. In addition to this neglect, there was an "amount of deficiencies, as ascertained" of at least $8,019 for the period of July 1837 to July 1842.[134] The latest defalcating Mayor's Clerk, John Ahern, was suspended from his post.[135]

Immigrants continued to fill the Almshouse in the early 1840s. Of 6,049 admissions in the first political year of the decade, there were 1,844 Irish born, 545 from England, 149 from Scotland, 37 from France, 15 from the West Indies,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and a few from Italy, Spain, Africa, and elsewhere. There were 330 from Germany.[136]

The City began to pay attention to the special needs of the growing German population. In 1839, George Arcularius and dozens of other leading citizens petitioned for "competent" interpreters in the Almshouse and other public facilities. They claimed that "among the German population" there was "proportionally the smallest number of applicants generally, and such, particularly as are utterly unworthy of sympathy or public support" and that to serve this small group, German-English speaking attendants should be employed.[137] The Assistants Charity and Almshouse Committee agreed but pointed out that "such Interpreters are now employed" and "are increased in number, from time to time, as circumstances may render an increase necessary."[138]

The honeymoon with the immigrants ended abruptly with the American Republican election victory of 1844. The Nativists exploited the foreign pauper issue relentlessly. Xenophobia embellished all charges of predecessors' abuses. Not only were foreigners a huge financial charge upon the public - $150,000 a year for "support of alien paupers and vagrants!" cried the Charity Committee - but two thirds of the illegal Almshouse voters were immigrants.[139]

It took the Nativists a few months to produce something eloquent but their Almshouse Clerk, Henry Requa, proved equal to the occasion. In January he submitted a 700 name

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

petition asking the Council to memorialize Congress for immigration restriction. The Charity and Almshouse Committee gave a vivid description of continued foreign pauper dumping and indemnification problems. Nine bonding firms owed the City $16,000,000 in liabilities. They denied having bonded Almshouse applicants whom they had in fact covered. Speculators bonded "inadequate to the risk...all the worthless and helpless immigrants" including "hundreds of cases...of poor people which the communes (towns) in Germany had to support."[140] The problem presented by some of the young mothers was particularly vexing:

> Amongst the immigrants of the present year there have been an unusual number of young women far advanced in gestation, entirely unprotected and destitute. The history of this class may soon be told. A few days or weeks after landing, they are confined in the Alms House. On recovering her strength, or as soon after as an opportunity occurs, the mother leaves the Alms House premises, and in most instances her offspring behind her. Within a year the same woman presents herself at the Alms House in a similar condition as before, so that at the termination of the bondsman's liabilities, the city has a family of three persons to support in the place of one originally bonded.[141]

Some fancy arithmetic on the 821 Almshouse children showed that the "ratio of more recent births" was "seventeen foreigners to one American...an alarming increase."[142]

The Committee concluded that "shipment to this country of the inmates of the poor-houses of Europe, more especially of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

England and Germany, is no new thing" and denounced the "toleration of American legislators" of the evil. They seconded Requa's call for Federal action, proposing a worldwide inspection system with American consuls issuing certificates of fitness to emigrants at every port of embarkation.[143]

The Almshouse Commissioners soon joined the effort by integrating claims of past ethnic favoritism and tensions into their report on voting paupers. James Owens said that many electors acknowledged that they were unnaturalized aliens and that he recalled one Mr. Bird, "an Irishman, who said he voted in the Fall of 1843, but who I know did not get his naturalization papers until a few days previous to the Spring election of 1844." Nativistic in sentiment, Owens felt that Irish inmates were "generally very impudent and overbearing to the Americans...almost intolerable."[144] Charles Davis was bullied by an Irish orderly and claimed that

> Americans were abused last winter by Irishmen. They told me my ancestors were transported from England in irons, and also said Americans were nothing but Irishmen's bastards; the man who said this was Patrick Morris. I never dared complain of this treatment for fear of being assigned an unpleasant room. I know that an American by the name of Abraham Freeman, a cripple, was turned out of No. 2, and sent to No. 6, and laid on the floor for about three weeks and this to make room for an Irishman who was an able-bodied man, a carpenter who went out a few days after the election.[145]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Stephen Munson was proud to be "an American born citizen" even if he was an Almshouse inmate but he felt uncomfortable that two thirds of the orderlies in his ward were foreigners and that natives were "abused by these Irish." He said that he had heard

> an Irishman say to Major Mimme, who was nearly eighty years of age, and who had been a revolutionary soldier, that this establishment was built for them, and not for him, and that they had more right to it than he had. I have heard them say that they, (the Irish,) were too strong for us, that they had the country now, and that there was no use of a Native American party. The Irish have been in the habit of abusing the Americans, and making their home here very unpleasant; and I have known Irishmen to get better provisions than Americans who did the same work could get. I have seen them come into the room with a beef steak in their hand, and say, holding it up, There, you damned Yankees, you can't get that.[146]

With all of its revelations and petitions, nativism lacked political staying power. But however sympathetic the returning Democrats may have been, the unprecedented immigration emergency of 1846 to 1849 resulting from the Irish potato famine and German political and economic troubles put an unbearable strain on the Almshouse.

The State Law Concerning Passengers was supposed to ease this burden but took hold slowly. The Superintendent and Resident Physician both complained in June 1847 that the Emigration Commissioners were sending to the Almshouse

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

many of the "great influx of emigrants recently arrived," many of whom carried the "seeds of disease." Consequently the "ship fever cases in the Hospitals were accumulating." The Almshouse was being used "as an emigrant boarding house" which would shortly "preclude the possibility of receiving those for whose support the Department has been organized..."[147] Commissioner Leonard rejoiced that, in theory at least, "the foreigner is no longer dependent." Perhaps now the City could attack the "pauperism of our own citizens." Still, there might well be "little or no relief to our institutions" at first since the reform was a "new and novel enterprise" which was bound to be "ineffectual in its early career."[148]

Leonard did not hesitate to base budget estimates for 1848 on expected relief from the Act: "we were fairly entitled to infer" that the Emigration Commissioners would "materially reduce the numbers requiring aid." All hope proved totally unjustified.[149]

Meanwhile Whig Alderman Clarkson Crolius, Jr. revived the nativist line in his proposal for a Workhouse. He saw the unmistakable connection between immigration and the rise in pauperism as central to the need for such an institution, opening his argument with a statement of the Almshouse labor problem in xenophobic terms:

> The rapid growth of this City, and its geographical position making it the great connecting link between the old world and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> the new, the point d'appui of the emigrating masses, which are travelling westward, and also the reservoir for the scum of the cast-off population of Europe crowds our prisons with vagrants and our alms houses with paupers, many of whom prefer the comforts and leisure of even our criminal establishments to that ceaseless unrequited toil of liberty.[150]

The Workhouse proposal went forward but did not solve the problems of immigration. Nor did the new Commissioners meet reformers' initial expectations, even after they settled on Ward's Island and began to function. They did, indeed, provide for many who would have otherwise gone to the Almshouse Department, thus accounting for some of the decrease shown initially by the ten Governors. But the Emigration Commissioners had no facilities for lunatics, "idiots," vagrants, or interments and therefore, now receiving all commutation fees, opened financial accounts with the Almshouse to pay for care of these groups.

This arrangement might have worked but the arrogant Commissioners refused to pay their bills. In 1855 the Governors calculated the total owed since 1849 at $97,912.[151] Furthermore, they could not understand why the Commissioners disclaimed responsibility for vagrants, why

> the expense of their support should not be borne by the fund to which they have contributed in the administration of the Commissioners. They are not the less emigrants that they are vagrants; they are not the less paupers that they are vagrants; they are not the less chargeable to the Governors [sic] that they are vagrants.[152]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Emigration Commissioners gave the Almshouse Governors the "most indifferent answers" to all requests for payment and raised "quibbles...for legal procrastination"[153] like "offsets." The main offset was the argument that the Commissioners supported many native born children of immigrant mothers, properly chargeable to the Almshouse.[154]

But the Commissioners even evaded responsibility for nonvagrant, nonlunatic paupers. Workhouse Superintendent Harmon Eldridge submitted two cases which he said were typical of many. James Brannan said he had arrived from Liverpool to join his wife in New Orleans, inquired for a night's lodging, was sent by a Policeman to the Tombs, and committed to the Workhouse. The Emigration Commissioners supposedly existed to settle people like Brannan but he "never saw any Commissioner of Emigration: no one asked me how long I had been in this country, until you, or some keeper in this Work House..." Perhaps it was not the Commissioners' fault that Brannan and some others like him never found them. But Eldridge also presented the statement of John Reynolds:

> I arrived in this country May last...taken sick immediately...prevailed upon to make application to the Governors of the Alms House for a home until I could get my health, and find employment.
>
> I applied to the large man in the Rotunda. He asked me how long I had been in the country. I answered, since May last. He called on an aged Dutchman to conduct me to the Office of the Commissioners of Emigration, as I properly belonged to them. The Dutchman conducted me there and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> and left. As soon as I could get an interview with the Clerk or Officer, I related to him my story, and informed him that all I needed was health and employment. The Officer directed a man in the Office to show me to a place up town where employment could be obtained. I was conducted to the place, but instead of getting employment, I was committed to this Island for three months.[155]

The Governors appointed a Special Committee to address the problem who passed a resolution to settle their differences with the Commissioners "by an amicable lawsuit."[156] Meanwhile they also took direct action of the most miscalculated sort, instructing Lunatic Asylum Resident Physician Moses H. Ranney to transfer ten of his foreign patients per week to Ward's Island, holding at that number to give the Commissioners "ample time to provide for those thus transferred." Ranney took his first group of lunatics to the Commissioners' island where, predictably, their Deputy Superintendent "refused to receive said ten persons, or admit them on said Island." Accordingly, Ranney returned them to Blackwell's to join the other 108 "recent emigrants" in the Asylum.[157]

The Governors' Workhouse Committee raged that the sums owed were "not to be made the mere objects of pleasantries at weekly meetings."[158] There were more charges and countercharges and opinions of counsel in preparation for the suit. The pitch to which the argument rose was typified by the Committee's closing comment:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> To the mild and amiable insinuations as to the familiarity of the Governors with the "facts of the law" and their "liability to become inmates instead of visitors of the penitentiary," and a variety of similar twaddle, your Committee refrain from dignifying by any special effort, loss of time or temper.[159]

The State finally solved the problem, at least for the future, by amending the Emigration Law to clearly assign the Commissioners jurisdiction over all alien paupers including lunatics and vagrants.[160]

"Model" Mayor Fernando Wood, one of New York's most eminent power lovers, attempted a very creative and direct approach to the immigration problem. Railing against the "INTRODUCTION OF FOREIGN CRIMINALS AND PAUPERS" in his Inaugural Message of 1856, he boasted that he had just told the Sardinian government that he would stop the disembarkation of any "suspicious characters" from the frigate Des Geneys from Genoa. He put Belgian paupers in prison to be "returned to Antwerp, (which would have been accomplished but for the summary proceedings of the Supreme Court in granting a writ of habeas corpus.)" When a German vessel tried to smuggle in four criminals, Wood had them seized and imprisoned, keeping "the whole of these proceedings from the public eye, until after the trans-shipment, so that no attorney could be employed to sue out a writ...before a kind hearted judge...as in the case of the Belgians." Mayor Wood bragged that in taking such

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

measures, especially the boarding of ships, he had asserted for the municipality "a right heretofore supposed to belong exclusively to national authorities."[161] The Free City idea started, not with the Civil War, but with the foreign pauper issue.

All efforts of Mayors, Aldermen, and Almshouse managers were increasingly ineffectual in reducing the inordinate public assistance demands of the proliferating immigrant poor. The cumbersome bonding system proved less and less adequate over time. The Commissioners of Emigration seemed to present as much of an additional problem as a solution. Nor was transoceanic removal really an answer.

Though they struggled doggedly with the problem, the most perceptive reformers realized that, in the long run, little could be done to control the increase of either native or immigrant poor, except to continue to build, expand, and maintain the institutions and their bureaucracy. This alone was an enormous task and, even if perfectly accomplished, would never eradicate poverty in New York, for, as Moses G. Leonard wisely noted:[162]

> The <u>resort</u> of the world must, of necessity, be the <u>refuge</u> for the poor.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 6.

2. AH Cmsrs, Minutes, Ms. Vol. 0194, November 4, 1826.

3. AH Admsns and Dschrgs and Dths, Ms. Vols. 146, 231, 141, 140, and 230 for November 1826-July 1837; Vols. 102-107 for October 1839-June 1851; and Vols. 110 and 111 for October 1856-February 1861.

4. AH Census with Names, Ms. Vols. 186, 185, 187, 184, and 183 for 1826 and 1828-1831. AH Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Ms. Vols. 165, 177, 166, 167, 168, 176, 169, 171, 170, 172, 173, 174, 175 for 1834-1846. The years indicated are dates of the annual censuses: thus the volume designated 1846 would include entries for those remaining in June 1846 and those admitted until June 1847. The Governors dispensed with the annual census, no longer necessary under continuous administration and instituted a simple, single, continuous alphabetical and chronological register: AH Continuing Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Ms. Vol. 05, November 1849-December 1860. When Commissioners took a census, they always uncovered a few residents who had been admitted during the past year but left off the register. A notation would then be made such as that for Mary Eliza Dubois, "daughter of Rebecca born in the Alms House in May last" and "found upon taking the census, not being on other register." AH Combined Admsns, Dschrgs. Dths, Ms. Vol. 168, Dubois, Mary Eliza, June 22, 1838. There were ten such previously hidden residents just with surnames beginning with the letter "B" and nine under letter "C" in the 1838 census. Ibid., Sections "B" and "C," June 1838.

5. AH Weekly Rept in AH Cmsrs, Minutes, November 25, 1826.

6. AH Weekly Rept, ibid., February 3, 1827.

7. AH Weekly Rept, ibid., May 5, 1827.

8. AH Weekly Rept, ibid., April 5, 1828.

9. MCC, XVII, May 19, 1828, 197-8.

10. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, Table A, foldout following p. 184.

11. AH Supt Jameson Cox, Rept for 1832-3, Asts Doc, II, #67, May 1, 1833, 388-9.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

12. Engs, Tomlinson et al., foldout following p. 251.

13. Myer, Rept for 1839-40, 76.

14. Myer, Annual Rept to Secretary of State for 1840, Aldmn Doc, VII, #71, February 23, 1841, 774.

15. AH Supt Linus W. Stevens, Annual Rept of Supt of Poor of County of New York to Secretary of State for 1842, Aldmn Doc, IX, #62, December 27, 1842, 593. However, he claimed the Whigs had supported their poor cheaper than their Democratic predecessors. Ibid., 596-7.

16. Cook et al., 254-5.

17. Cook, Rept for 1845, 73-4.

18. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 12, 13, 16, 20, 31-2.

19. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Expenditure, 104-5.

20. AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, foldout following p. 111.

21. AH Govs, Rept for 1857, IX, xv.

22. AH Admsns, Vol. 140, May 31-June 6, 1834.

23. Admsns, Vol. 141, May 1, 4, 1832.

24. AH Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Vol. 168, McGee, September 2, 1838.

25. Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Vol. 171, "S" entries, August 19-September 11, 1841 serve as an example. Of 22 admissions recorded for this period, the Commissioners authorized ten, Commissioner Alexander Stewart alone admitted an additional ten, the Superintendent admitted one, and the Police referred one.

26. AH Continuing Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Vol. 05.

27. Admsns, Vol. 141, May 1, 1832.

28. Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Vol. 165, Daley, April 4, 1834.

29. Ibid., McLean, October 28, 1834.

30. Admsns, Vol. 141, November 8, 1832.

31. Admsns, Vol. 230, February 27, 1837. The lady was later identified as Sophia Turner.

32. Admsns, Vol. 106, June 21, 1847.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

33. Admsns, Vol. 141, November 9, 1832.

34. Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Vol. 163, Hoe, November 10, 1832.

35. Admsns, Vol. 141, May 1, 1832.

36. Ibid., October 26, 1832.

37. Admsns, Vol. 230, December 30, 1836.

38. Admsns, Vol. 141, May 1, 4, 1832.

39. Admsns, Vol. 140, June 18, 1834.

40. Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Vol. 165, Hicks, October 27, 1834.

41. Ibid., Lewis, March 19, 1835.

42. Ibid., Vangle, June 28, 1834.

43. Ibid., McLovay, May 8, 1834.

44. [First] Law Creating AH Dept..., 1832, 192.

45. AH Dschrgs and Dths, Ms. Vol. 140, May 31-June 6, 1834.

46. Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Vol. 165, Brumley, August 2, 1834.

47. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 104, November 6, 1843.

48. Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Vol, 165, Brennan, August 14, 1834.

49. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 104, November 5, 6, 1843, May 2, October 28, 1844.

50. Census with Names, Ms. Vol. 186, Fredericks, January 25, 1827.

51. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 141, August 6, December 26, 1833.

52. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 230, July 10, 1837.

53. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 104, May 2, 1844.

54. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 140, March 30, 1835. Joseph Rourke was simultaneously ejected for "bringing in liquor and indecent conduct with Catherine Gillbride."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

55. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 111, April 20, 1859.

56. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 141, May 15, August 6, 1833.

57. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 230, July 1, 1837.

58. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 141, December 3, 1833.

59. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 230, February 22, 1836.

60. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 140, November 18, 1835.

61. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 230, January 1, 13, 1837.

62. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 104, May 6, August 5, 1844, March 4, 5, 1845.

63. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 140, April 15, 1835.

64. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 230, January 12, 1836.

65. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 103, April 28, June 19, 1843.

66. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 111, October 31, 1859.

67. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 104, December 5, 1843, May 2, 1844.

68. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 140, December 15, 1835, February 23, 1836.

69. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 104, December 3, 1843, March 5, 1845.

70. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 230, January 21, 1836.

71. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 141, April 7, 1833.

72. Census with Names, Vol. 186, Frasher, November 2, 1826.

73. Ibid., Anthony, May 2, 1826, Armrod, July 10, 1826, Alberton, August 26, 1826.

74. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 104, August 5, 1844.

75. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 230, July 14, 1837.

76. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 103, December 20, 1842.

77. Census with Names, Vol. 186, Randall, December 16, 1826.

78. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 231, April 13, 1831.

79. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 140, December 5, 1835.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

80. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 230, January 6, 1836.

81. Ibid., January 26, 1836.

82. Admsns, Vol. 141, May 1, 1832.

83. Admsns, Vol. 102, May 19, 1841.

84. AH Placement of Children by Name, Ms. Vol. 0326 Brady, April 28, 1842.

85. Ibid., Brown, December 12, 1842.

86. Ibid., Briers, November 27, 1843.

87. Ibid., Burns, April 24, 1843.

88. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 222.

89. Dschrgs and Dths, Vol. 140, May 16, 1835.

90. AH Supt, Weekly Rept in AH Cmsrs, Minutes, December 8, 1827.

91. Myer, Rept for 1840-1, Aldmn Doc, VIII, #15, June 28, 1841, 74.

92. Census with Names, Vol. 183, McCabe, September 25, 1827; Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Vol. 163, McCabe, September 25, 1827.

93. Census with Names, Vol. 184, Irwin, December 31, 1829.

94. Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Vol. 163, Gildersleeve, March 3, 1833.

95. AH Dth Certificates, Ms. Vol. 0256, #153, July 13, 1854.

96. Ibid., #155, July 15, 1854.

97. Ibid., #270, September 10, 1854.

98. Combined Admsns, Dschrgs, Dths, Vol. 167, Sullivan, August 26, 1836.

99. Ibid., Trudy, September 12, 1837.

100. Dth Certificates, Vol. 0256, #61, March 7, #64, March 9, #152, July 13, 1854.

101. AH Nursing Payments by Name, Ms. Vol. 0380, 1834-5, pp. 1-142.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

102. Ibid., Seaman, July 1835, 24.

103. Nursing Payments by Name, Ms. Vol. 0382, McElvoy, March-August 1826, 270.

104. John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New York, 1973), 5-11; Mushkat, 185-207.

105. Native American Convention, Declaration of Principles, Philadelphia, July 4, 1845 in Stanley Feldstein and Lawrence Costello, eds., The Ordeal of Assimilation: A Documentary History of the White Working Class, 1830s-1970s (Garden City, 1974), 150-1.

106. AH Weekly Rept in Cmsrs, Minutes, November 11, 1826.

107. Cox, Rept for 1832-3, 388.

108. AH Census with Figures, Ms. Vol. 145, November 7, December 19, 1835, January 6, October 19, 1837.

109. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 183, 185.

110. James B. Sinden, Affidavit, ibid., 184.

111. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 220-1.

112. Clark, Message for 1837, 8-9.

113. Aldmn Law Cmte, Matthew C. Patterson and David Randall, Rept on Quarantine Laws and Alien Passengers, Doc, IV, #10, June 14, 1837, 62.

114. Clark, Message for 1838, 15.

115. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 221.

116. Clark, Cmctn in Patterson and Randall, 70; Message for 1838, 16.

117. MCC, XV, October 23, 1826, 643.

118. Asts CCAH, Dr. John R. Rhinelander, Samuel Dunshee, William Welles Holly, Rept Concurring with Aldmn on Commutation of Alien Passengers, Doc, I (First Run), #62, February 27, 1832, 237-53.

119. Ords, I, March 1, 1832, 142.

120. Clark, Cmctn in Patterson and Randall, 73.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

121. MCC, XV, December 5, 1825, 58.

122. MCC, XV, July 31, 1826, 529-36; XIX, October 25, 1830, 308-14; Asts Finance Cmte, Stephen Allen, John I. Labagh, John August Smith, Rept on Petition of John Leveridge to Pay Judgment Against Sureties of Joshua Mersereau, Doc, III (First Run), #43, February 17, 1834, 289-90.

123. Clark, Message for 1838, 15.

124. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 221.

125. Aldmn Special Cmte, Issac P. Whitehead and George W. Bruen, Rept on Cmctn of AH Cmsrs on Alien Passengers, Doc, IV, #12, June 19, 1837, 81-4; Clark, Cmctn and Act of New Jersey of February 13 and 19, 1838 Providing for Commutation of Alien Passengers, Aldmn Doc, IV, #75, March 12, 1838, 571-4.

126. Clark, Message for 1838, 16.

127. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 221.

128. Clark, Message for 1838, 16-7.

129. Clark, Cmctn Enclosing Ordinance Passed by Senate of Bremen and Letter from L. H. Von Post, Consul for Bremen at New York, Asts Doc, XII, #2, May 28, 1838, 25-9.

130. Whitehead and Bruen, 82-3.

131. Registers of this type which have survived are AH Vessels, Captains, Ports, Ms. Vol. 0211, January 1819-June 1827; Vol. 0187, July 1827-August 1839; Vol. 190, May 1836-December 1840; AH Vessels, Captains, Ports, Bondsmen, Ms. Vol. 213, January 1841-June 1845.

132. Samuel J. Willis, Rept in Aldmn Special Cmte, John A. Underwood, Hezekiah W. Bonnel, Robert Jones, Rept on Bonding and Commuting of Alien Passengers with Repts of Robert Taylor and Samuel H. Willis on Cases of John Ahern and James H. Ward, Aldmn Doc, IX, #101, March 20, 1843, 1099.

133. Robert Taylor, Rept, ibid., 1111-2.

134. Underwood, Bonnel, Jones, ibid., 1080.

135. Taylor, Rept, ibid., 1111. For his part Mayor Morris

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attacked a peculiar notion of the Whig Almshouse Commissioners that only sick emigrant paupers were entitled to public assistance, not healthy ones. He corrected Peter S. Titus and his Board sarcastically: "This I perceive to be an error... Persons are chargeable if they are destitute of the means of subsistence, and, indeed, if they are not taken care of, starvation will soon bring them within the rule prescribed by the Commissioners." Morris, Letter, ibid., 1093.

136. Myer, Rept for 1840-1, 74.

137. George Arcularius et al., Petition for Appointment of German Interpreters to Courts of Justice, &c in Asts Cmte on Police, Watch, Prisons, Jesse West, Frederick R. Lee, Felix O'Neil, Rept on same, Doc, XV, #33, January 13, 1840, 168.

138. Asts CCAH, Cornelius B. Timpson, David Graham, Jr., Freeman Campbell, Rept on Arcularius Petition, XV, #89, May 11, 1840, 418.

139. Miller and Gale, 157-8.

140. Aldmn CCAH, Miller, Gale, William Cozzens, Rept on Petition of Henry Requa and 700 Others on Bonding and Commuting of Alien Passengers and Resolution of Aldmn Drake, Doc, XI, #44, January 6, 1845, 434-5.

141. Ibid., 435-6.

142. Ibid., 436-7.

143. Ibid., 437, 441-2.

144. James Owens, Affidavit in Van Nostrand et al., Rept on Male Paupers Voting, 506.

145. Charles Davis, Affidavit, ibid., 498-9.

146. Stephen Munson, Affidavit, ibid., 504-5.

147. Aldmn Proc, XXX, June 14, 1847, 117-8.

148. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 6, 10.

149. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Expenditure, 104-5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

150. Aldmn Clarkson Crolius, Jr., Cmctn on Workhouse, Doc, XV, #6, June 26, 1848, 86-7.

151. AH Govs Workhouse Cmte, Simeon Draper, Patrick Henry, Daniel F. Tiemann, William S. Duke, Rept in AH Govs, Minutes, October 9, 1855, 385. The rates charged were $2.50 per week per lunatic, $3.00 per hospital patient, and $2.00 per interment. AH Govs Special Cmte, Draper, Duke, Tiemann, Rept on Accounts with Commissioners of Emigration, March 6, 1855, 17.

152. Workhouse Cmte, Draper et al., Rept in AH Govs, Minutes, November 13, 1855, 478.

153. Workhouse Cmte, Draper et al., Rept in AH Govs, Minutes, October 9, 1855, 388.

154. Special Cmte, Draper, Duke, Tiemann, 5-7; Workhouse Cmte, Draper et al., Rept in AH Govs, Minutes, November 13, 1855, 479.

155. Special Cmte, Draper, Duke, Tiemann, 32-3.

156. Ibid., 8.

157. Workhouse Cmte, Draper et al., Rept in AH Govs, Minutes, October 9, 1855, 385-7.

158. Ibid., 389.

159. Workhouse Cmte, Draper et al., Rept in AH Govs, Minutes, November 13, 1855, 480.

160. New York State Amendment to Act Concerning Passengers in Vessels..., 1855 in Valentine, Acts of State Relating Particularly to City, 1075.

161. Mayor Fernando Wood, Message to Council, Asts (Councilmen) Doc, III (Third Run), #5, February 4, 1856, 16-20.

162. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 44.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 5

THE ALMSHOUSE DEPARTMENT BUREAUCRACY

In order to provide for its expanding number of poor in the proliferating array of institutions and out of doors, the City needed an increasing number and variety of officers. In 1832 the Almshouse, Bridewell, and Penitentiary officially became the City's first executive bureaucracy pursuant to the Charter of 1830: the Almshouse Department. Little changed or would ever change in its basic structure: that of the classic hierarchical pyramid of authority. Throughout the period, however, the institutions were run by a steadily increasing number of staff occupying several levels of skill, salary, and social prestige. The executive consisted of five unpaid Commissioners appointed by the Common Council until 1845, then the single, elected, professional Commissioner until 1849, then the ten Governors until 1860. At the next highest level were the institution heads: Almshouse Superintendent, Resident Physicians of Bellevue and other Hospitals, Keeper of the Penitentiary, and the Wardens of the 1850s. Also at this level were certain other profesionals: Commissioners' Agent, Chief Clerk, and some of the physicians. Then there were trusted middle level employees who handled the day to day affairs of the institutions: stewards, keepers, visitors, mechanics. This group gradually merged into a lower stratum: matrons,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

assistants, orderlies, nurses, coxswains, and other helpers. Some of these were paupers or prisoners enjoying their assignments because the City would not hire enough paid staff. As the size of this bureaucracy grew from a compact and informal group at Bellevue in 1825 to a large and formal organization by the 1840s, paralleling the growth of the institutions and their clientele, there was also the development of a host of labor relations traditions and problems.

Policymaking rested in the hands of the Commissioners of the Almshouse though they were often in active conflict with their Council superiors or their institutional subordinates. Though they did not make poverty law, Commissioners were supposed to implement it and many assumed wide laditude in doing so. Most Commissioners, in fact, had made poverty law: they were highly sophisticated merchants and politicians with years of experience on the Common Council, perhaps on Charity and Almshouse Committees and some were top political party leaders. By virtue of their office, Commissioners were also among the publicly recognized poverty experts of the day.

From 1825 to 1834 the Almshouse was dominated by a Tammany Board of Commissioners led by Commissioner-Superintendent Arthur Burtis, his successor Jameson Cox, and Chairman John Targee.[1] The Targee Board met weekly and deliberated over staffing and work rules and received statistical reports from the institutions. Minutes grew minimal by the late 1820s.[2] When John R. Peters resigned from the Board in 1833 he

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

criticized the informal system of governance that had evolved. Though the employees were conscientious, confusion sabotaged new projects like convict labor which were "occasionally directed by such part of the commissioners as happen to be present." Large purchases were "sometimes made by one officer and then by another, but most frequently by the direction of one commissioner who consults the other commissioners as his caprice inclines to, and sometimes he condescends to consult all of the commissioners together." No "regular" minutes were kept any longer; proceedings were recorded only in "rare and important instances." One of the "most valuable" Commissioners had resigned after an "ineffectual attempt" to establish minutes and by-laws. "No case," lamented Peters "has come to my knowledge where a dissenting individual commissioner or a minority...have been placed on record, showing their dissent. When I have been overruled, I have simply been informed that the Commissioners had decided the case."[3]

The Democrats departed temporarily in 1834. Cabinetmaker William Mandeville chaired the new Whig Board which consisted entirely of former Aldermen and party leaders.[4] They wrote a mild critique of Targee, concentrating on accounting and beginning the tradition of political review of predecessors. They introduced some cautious reforms, proposing to "increase the inmates...and, of course, the expense" of the children's department by limiting binding out.[5] They presided over the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

completion of the Penitentiary and the commencement of the Lunatic Asylum[6] and called for better classification of Bridewell inmates and their removal back to the central city.[7] They appointed a matron for lunatic females, prohibited Almshouse staff from drinking alcoholic beverages and began to examine immigration.[8] Their overall tone was cautiously creative, evincing the hope that reform could be accomplished in modest but meaningful small steps.

Targee returned in 1835 and reacted sharply against the new schemes.[9] Claiming to know best "from long experience in this department," his reconstituted Board stopped work on the fledgling Lunatic Asylum,[10] beginning years of conflict over design and direction of the wings. Not partisan politics, said the Asylum Medical Board, but the Targee Commissioners' "want of knowledge," their "unwillingness to depart from a time honored, but narrow minded line of policy," and their "conservative views" held up the important project. While they "watched the public interests with a jealous eye," they also "overlooked the advantages" which they were "sincerely desirous of attaining." It was unfortunate, thought the alienists, that the Targee Board's main principals had "been in power for many years, and could not be diverted from looking at the subject in a single aspect."[11]

Targee's successors elicited evidence that he and his Board may have been even less sincere than later thought. The incoming Whigs asked Nurseries Matron Jane Ley how often the Tammany Commissioners had visited Long Island. She said that

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Mr. Targee has not visited the nurseries since the latter end of October. Messrs. Brush and Hart have visited the nurseries, &c., two or three times since that. Their last visit was on or about 20th April last. Mr. Thomas J. Stephens, the Superintendent, I have not seen in nine months. Mr. Targee has since that time occasionally visited the farmer, but not the children, Matron, or nurseries, to know their various wants, though he has been informed (through Mr. Guest) of the distressed situation of the children, &c., in want of shoes, fuel, accommodation, &c.[12]

The Whig victory of 1837 disposed of Targee permanently and installed Phillip W. Engs as Chairman of a new Board of Commissioners.[13] They published an extensive, scathing attack on Targee and the floundering disarray of the institutions he left behind, carefully forswearing any "expression of opinions, based upon the facts related, whenever they would bear upon individuals."[14] After replenishing the depleted facilities,[15] Engs' Board set about perfecting prisoner classification[16] and resuming the Lunatic Asylum. They countered Targee's claim of long experience with a claim that they had some of their own which they had used "profitably," as well as having consluted the best alienists.[17] They proposed removal of the Almshouse proper to "an island."[18] Most of their policies were a continuation of those of the Mandeville Board and reflected a similar reform optimism. Though hostile toward predecessors, Engs was patient toward the Whig Council, reserving "for future occasions, many suggestions of improvement; considering that enough is already before you, more especially...that the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

uncertain tenure of office in this metropolis, renders it prudent to perfect plans already in progress, rather than to devise others, which a change in rulers may frustrate, as in the case of the Lunatic Asylum."[19]

A change in rulers brought in former Alderman and Charity Committeeman John V. Greenfield as Chairman of a new Almshouse Board.[20] They instituted new reforms like hiring two more House of Detention Keepers and allowing the Resident Physician to "add to the variety and quality of the food." In attempting to improve conditions they "avoided no necessary and justifiable expenditure," curtailing "nothing but the abuse of liquors" and other "unnecessary and improper" disbursements.[21]

The Whig victory of 1842 brought a new Board of Commissioners chaired by former Alderman Peter S. Titus. Attorney Hamilton Fish made his political debut on this Board, the beginning of a long career of distinguished public service.[22] The Titus Commissioners broke tradition by ignoring their predecessors and concentrating entirely on a vigorous reform program which centered upon removal of all institutions to Blackwell's Island.[23] Their proposals looked to the future with a sense of urgency and were aimed at the Almshouse population, in a repressive manner, not at the sins of political opponents.

James H. Cook, like Greenfield a former Charity Committeeman, emerged as Chairman of the Democratic Commissioners of 1843-4.[24] They continued the tone of restraint toward predecessors, fidning all institutions except the Penitentiary "in a proper

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

condition" and the Nurseries and Lunatic Asylum in "excellent condition."[25] Like the Titus Board, they saw reform largely in terms of Almshouse removal.[26]

Though the American Republicans styled themselves political reformers, they adopted the old tradition of putting party leaders at the head of the Almshouse Department. John R. Willis chaired the Nativist Commissioners until his death in December 1844; James Van Nostrand presided during the remainder of the term.[27] They launched a sensational attack on their predecessors of both major parties and proposed a broad series of reforms stressing immigration control, a more careful indenture policy, and Almshouse removal.[28]

James H. Cook returned in 1845 as the first single, professional Commissioner and the last Department head to be appointed by the Council. His chief concern, even before reform, was economy and, in this respect, he contrasts with his successor. Though he appeared ineffectual in controlling his Superintendent and preventing supply fraud, he was highly respected by all as honest, competent, and fair. Much testimony in the investigation of delivery procedures illustrated these qualities. "I consider the Commissioner very strict with me," said Assistant Hospital Steward David Wood. "I have heard other subordinates speak of him, that he was very particular about everything."[29] Merchant Howel Hoppock related an incident in which Cook, an

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

eighteen year customer, had angrily rejected a small gratuity. "Those raisins are paid for," the merchant told the Commissioner. "'No they are not, Mr. Hoppick,' or something to that effect, and since then I have never tendered him anything in any shape whatever."[30] Resident Physician Fenelon Hasbrouck assured the Council that Cook had never "had anything but the public interest at heart." He had "repeatedly urged economy" and visited all the institutions on an average of twice a week.[31] Superintendent William Moss said that Cook was "a man desirous of having every thing as it should be. He had come so near a disposition to economy as to border on parsimony." But he did not "do anything to deprive the inmates of any necessary or comfort. The parsimony was with the officers. The inmates never fared so well before as they did last year."[32]

After his year's service as single Commissioner, Cook claimed a measure of accomplishment. His predecessors had many "manifest" advantages over him since

> theirs, like that of others before them was a path well trodden and straight forward, and their discretion could be their guide - mine was but a pathway shadowed out - a mere experimental line, a deviation from which, for however expedient and necessary a purpose, may have proved a mistaken policy, and the strict pursuance of the limited track, for which I have daily toiled, has not been unincumbered with annoying difficulties; and had I not possessed a former experience in the management of this Department, I am not aware, that I could have accepted the post...with

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> justice...to be the pioneer in the administration of the Alms-House Department under the ordinance of reorganization.[33]

While Cook put economy first and took refuge in conservatism, his successor, Moses G. Leonard, tried to strike out in new directions of both fiscal and moral reform, with primary emphasis on the latter. A former Alderman and, by profession, a grocer specializing in ice,[34] Commissioner Leonard applied the notion of scientific salvage to the physical, moral, and economic reclamation of the paupers by means of careful experiment and the development of a rational Almshouse system. The subtle difference between Cook and Leonard in terms of their attitudes toward moral reform and economy is quite significant. Both linked the two goals together and wanted "every thing as it should be." But, as his statement clearly indicated, Cook was ready to sacrifice moral reform ambitions, if this appeared necessary, for frugality. Leonard put moral reform above economy, should these goals appear to conflict, calling for an adequate investment in the institutions and a commitment to necessary change: improvements might require outlays but "never doubt the wisdom of a policy that points to having all relative matters as they <u>should be</u>. Such expenditures actually <u>save</u> money."[35]

As soon as he entered office, Commissioner Leonard chided

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Council for its sloppy Reorganization Ordinance which left a great deal unclear. He wanted a "more careful definition of the duties of the officers...and checks guarding the distribution of funds." There should also be better ways to "afford to the incumbents a means of defence against the attacks of mischievous and designing individuals."[36] The Reorganization had indeed addressed a difficult problem: "The ablest and best men of the different political parties" had served as Commissioners but had all "signally failed" to meet public expectations. The fault, in the past, had rightly been "attributed to the system, and not to the administration of the laws." The new system "properly makes the Commissioner the responsible head" and would "hold him accountable for a well-governed and well-regulated establishment." Leonard welcomed this responsibility and "would not complain, had the same ordinance carried with it the power and authority necessary to execute these large expectations and this high and responsible trust."

But there was a fatal flaw. By providing for "distinct heads" of the institutions, still appointed by the Council rather than the Commissioner, the Ordinance had created a situation in which nobody knew "where their prerogative ceases, and the Commissioner's supervision commences." There had been many "points of experience arising from this cause," some too "vivid" in recent memory to need further "allusion" and all illustrating the "glaring

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

imperfections existing in the present ordinance...there is no security to the officer while these deficiencies of organization remain in force."

Leonard reassured the Council that he did not want a "transfer to me of any patronage they have reserved to themselves," but only that the Ordinance be amended such "that when errors occur, the responsibility should rest with those immediately entrusted with the duty." He felt a "conviction of the want of harmony in the present laws" while disclaiming any imputation of "discovery of official delinquency on the part of the several incumbants connected with the department."[37] After many amendments failed to provide harmony, the Commissioner suggested that the Council consider "in the event of a determination...to frame another Alms House Ordinance, the propriety of thoroughly consulting those whose experience and practical knowledge of the subject will enable them to furnish a rational code." With such a reliance on experts like himself, Leonard was "convinced that this condition of our Alms House Department can be improved."[38]

The Commissioner was piqued when the Board of Assistant Aldermen rejected his pet labor scheme, prison manufacture of saddlery hardware. "In the organization of municipal matters, we are, to use the language of the 'Poor Laws' - 'Lame, Impotent, and decrepid,'" he told the organizers of municipal matters.[39] He hoped that the "burthen" of his

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

views would not "slumber 'upon the table,' or be hidden amid the mass of documents that are so nicely stowed away in the archives of the Common Council proceedings."[40] His detailed defence of the labor plan tied the moral and financial imperatives of pauper industry to the need for scientific experiment, the City economy and tax structure, especially as it related to the working class, and the flight of the middle classes to the suburbs. His concluding plea exemplified his attitude of reform zeal, fired by what he saw as the extreme nature of the problem:

> I have not asked you to be satisfied by my own individual urgency to have our Alms House and prisons placed in the position their magnitude and importance demand, but have referred you to the policy of other places - and the acknowledged advantages derived from experiment - invited your calm attention to our city incumbrances, our tax ridden population, our deserting wealth, and our loose management of the moral relations pertaining to our Poor-Houses and Prison departments, and our manifest injustice to the industrious classes, the emergency of the occasion, combining, as it does, such a multiplicity of vital interests, speaks in the strains of a loud and significant appeal for a more comprehensive and judicious organization.[41]

Besides a clear and rational organizational structure and adequate facilities and arrangements for rehabilitation, Leonard wanted a commitment to precise classification of paupers. "It cannot...be thought proper" that the mixture of the virtuous and vicious poor "should be allowed to exist in a Christian community. Yet it does exist and ever

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

has existed in our institutions..."[42] The Commissioner was delighted when, for a moment in time, it appeared that Blackwell's Island had all the buildings it needed because of the completion of the new Almshouse. But all was not yet right: a "different classification of paupers" was necessary, as well as the "construction of high walls running directly across the Island so that there could be no commingling of the inmates of the different institutions."[43]

Classification would permit decent provision for the virtuous poor and correction of the vicious. Commissioner Leonard was profoundly sympathetic to the ill, widowed, orphaned, and other true unfortunates. He praised Bellevue Hospital for offering many incurables "full satisfaction that all that <u>can</u> avail has been extended to them" and giving them "as comfortable a home for their declining hours as the world, in its public charities, can afford."[44] The Hospital Reorganization might not reduce expenses, he warned, "true it is well to have a vigilant eye to the public economy; but no sordid impulses entered into the design of this benevolent measure; higher and nobler views conceived it - the welfare of our poorer citizens and strangers." The institutions were not "what many careless observers" might assume, "mere refuge for the careless and the vicious, but are truly the homes of many of the honest, the humble, and the oppressed poor. And are not <u>these</u>, in the midst of their dire affliction, deserving of the guardian

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

succor of our city's warmest philanthropy?"[45]

But if generosity was due the afflicted, a stern and disciplined labor routine was needed for the careless and vicious. Help strangers and widows, said Leonard, but "I would oppose all interference in individual enterprise."[46] This meant making the employable paupers work. Labor for vagrants was both an economic and a therapeutic imperative: "The moral character of these persons could not but be improved by this classification, and this system of employment, and many...would return to their friends and to the community with some well settled determination to reform their lives, and would become valuable members of society."[47]

In his Report for 1847, Commissioner Leonard displayed a characteristic blend of optimism and pessimism about the results and further prospects of his reform efforts. "The hand of reformation" had "visited" the institutions: the idle had work and there was "discipline, sobriety, cleanliness, and improved health."[48] On the other hand, there were severe and persistent contradictions about the problem of poverty. Expenditures for the poor were "necessarily large," but despite all efforts of public and private charities, there were still "at this moment hundreds almost starving and freezing from sheer and undeserved destitution." Yet, "when we look at this sad theme in another light - view it as philanthropists and moral economists - the question is a pertinent one...whether

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the charities bestowed are not incentives to beggary and idleness?" Perhaps the problem would not yield to any solution: the picture "presented by the misery and wretchedness around us" was "truly appalling," a "calamitous evil" which offered little "hope or probability of soon enjoying the happiness of an improved condition of the world's poor."[49] New York City's particular problem with public dependency was "attributable to unavoidable circumstances. Growing as we are, in all things, pauperism seems to keep an even pace in the progressive march." Though he agreed that education of the lower classes might help, Leonard thought that "perhaps" it was "too recently adopted to have exercised its influences." Or maybe pauperism was too tenacious to succumb to education and was "irresistably connected with the existence of so numerous and promiscuous a population as that of the City of New York."[50] Few others, if any, ruminated on the problem in such depth. Leonard's approach to poverty was permeated with contradictions: the possibility of reform versus the hopelessness of much improvement and the need for generous relief versus the incentive to dependency which it might create. These contradictions reflected the realities of the socioeconomic system, urban life, the institutions, and of the interaction of these forces.

One of Commissioner Leonard's most lasting accomplishments was the comprehensive Annual Report, the format of which served as the model for those of the future. Previous

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Commissioners' Reports had generally been written only in response to specific Council requests. This meant that they were erratically issued, usually coinciding with the political year starting and ending in May, that they were blatantly biased, and that they were hidden within the Documents volumes. Leonard was the first to prepare a regular, fairly objective Report at the close of each calender year. There was a fixed and expanded format: the Commissioner wrote a general introduction which was followed by an individual report from each institution head. The Reports for 1847 and 1848 were separately printed for the public, besides being designated as Aldermen Documents. This set a new standard of accountability to the citizens at large. The Report for 1848 also included plates of the buildings; Leonard considered these "essential" in order to help the "interested taxpayer" and "our neighbors abroad" to "learn the method of our municipal management."[51]

After Commissioner Leonard resigned, the Almshouse Clerks gave him a farewell party on board the steamboat Stranger as he departed for the destination of the most restless and enterprising: California.[52]

Almshouse Governors, like Commissioners before them, were prominent merchants and City politicians; many were former and future Aldermen and Mayors. It appears also that a relatively small number of men came to dominate the Board by virtue of their important positions as President and Secretary: Simeon Draper, Washington Smith, Issac Townsend, William W. Pinckney, Anthony Dugro,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and Christian Godfrey Gunther. Despite occasional disruptions in the composition of the Board due to death, resignation, or other circumstance, the overall pattern was one of administrative stability such as the Department had never before known.[53]

Since the institutions had developed to the size and complexity of a small city in themselves and could no longer be conducted in the informal manner of the old Commissioners, the Governors organized their Board on the model of the Common Council. They elected officers, President and Secretary, and created an array of functional and institutional committees, most consisting of three of their number, to carry out daily business. There was a general oversight Committee which "prevents the necessity of a reliance upon the reports of any officers, however trustworthy."[54] When special problems arose, as with the Emigration Commissioners, there were Special Committees. The Committee system aided in coordinating policymaking and execution between the entire Board acting in a legislative capacity and the institutional bureaucracies. It also allowed for expertise to develop and careful and informed recommendations to be made to the Board.

The Governors passed and published By-Laws which they amended throughout the decade. There were to be stated public meetings every Tuesday at the Rotunda, special meetings on call of the Board President or petition of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

four members, and a quorum requirement of six. That same number of Governors had to concur in filling any Board vacancy, for election of President and Secretary, for appropriations, for establishment or abolition of any office, or for appointment, removal, or suspension of any officer.[55] Charges against officers had to be made in writing; standing institutional Committees were given the power to suspend officers until the next meeting of the full Board. The Committees were to visit their institutions once a month and report in writing on their condition. Two Governors would visit at least ten outdoor poor cases monthly and report on them independently of the Visitors.[56] These novel and orderly procedures probably helped as much as did the continuity in Board composition to promote stability though they by no means ended personnel problems.

At all times in the City's history, Almshouse administrators needed a paid staff to actually run the institutions. The workforce grew impressively between 1825 and 1860 into a large bureaucracy of hundreds of workers on several wage and skill levels which developed interests, needs, and traditions of its own.

The highest paid and most important employees were the institution heads: Superintendents of the Almshouse and Nurseries, Keepers of prisons, and the Resident Physician of Bellevue and their equivalents, the Wardens under the Governors. At the same level were certain

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

central administrative aides. The Almshouse Superintendent was the prototype for these positions.[57] His duties included general supervision of the institution, reporting statistics, accounting for articles bought and sold, and preventing fraud.[58] The Ordinance of 1845 gave him "exclusive control" of the Almshouse proper, subject to the Commissioner's "direction." The Superintendent could "select from the inmates proper persons as orderlies and nurses, door-keepers, runners, cooks, and domestics...removable at his discretion." Superintendents always resided on the premises; the Reorganization Ordinance mandated this.[59]

In 1825 Arthur Burtis was Superintendent-Commissioner. The Common Council praised his work lavishly. He was, they said, "charged with a great responsibility...many and arduous duties" in both Almshouse and Hospital. He gave them his "whole time and attention" and was "remarkable for his kindness...tenderness...unremitting efforts to promote the comfort of all...since the establishment of an Alms House in this City, there has not been his superior."[60] Burtis resigned in March 1831 and was succeeded by Jameson Cox.[61]

The Whig Superintendent in all of their first three administrations was glove and comb dealer Linus W. Stevens. In the party's victory of 1847 he was elected to the Board of Assistant Aldermen and then to its Presidency.[62] The Whigs' new Superintendent was Marcellus

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Eells.[63] The Democratic Superintendents after 1834 were Thomas J. Stephens from 1835 to 1837,[64] John Myer from 1839 to 1842,[66] and William P. Moss from 1843 to 1844 and from 1845 to 1847.[66] The Nativists' Superintendent was Horace Loofborrow.[67]

The prison equivalent of a Superintendent was the Keeper. The Democratic Penitentiary Keepers were John Phillips under Targee from 1835 to 1837, John W. Brown under Greenfield, John Order from 1843 to 1844 and Morgan L. Mott after May 1845. Tammany Keepers of the City Prison and Bridewell were Daniel Lyons under Targee, James E. Hyde under Greenfield, and Malachi Fallon under Cook and Leonard. The Whigs appointed Jeremiah Vanderbilt Penitentiary Keeper in 1837. A Deputy Keeper of that year, Joseph Keen, became Keeper in May 1842. Jacob Acker was appointed to the post in May 1847 but was removed for misconduct and replaced by Keen. The Bridewell Keeper from 1837 to 1839 was James Coggeshall; in 1842 this post fell to William Jones and, in 1847, to William Edmonds.

The Nurseries enjoyed greater stability. William H. Guest served as Superintendent on Long Island from their opening there until 1845 when William Hayward replaced him. The Whigs installed Charles Turner in 1847.

The institution heads with the most training, prestige and independence were the Resident Physicians of Bellevue Almshouse and Hospital prior to 1849 and of the Island Hospitals

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

thereafter. They and the doctors who worked under their supervision also had the most dangerous jobs in the Department since they were constantly closely exposed to the devestating epidemics of the age, like cholera and typhus, "doctor's disease."[68] Bellevue's first Resident Physician, Dr. Belden, died of typhus during the epidemic in the Penitentiary of early 1825. He was replaced by Dr. James H. Rogers[69] who served only a few months until Dr. Issac Wood took over.

Dr. Wood was a model medical reformer and the true organizer of Bellevue Hospital.[70] Best remembered for first separating lunatics from general patients, he also did much more, beginning with the rescue of the beleagured institutions from the terrible epidemic. Wood resigned in 1832 and was replaced by John B. Stevenson, "a gentleman of liberal education and large attainment, but ignorant of hospital duty." He resigned in 1834 and was succeeded by Benjamin Ogden who became one of the most respected physicians associated with the institutions over the years, one "whom we all know and esteem."[71] The Whigs retained him but the Democrats of 1835 installed Henry Van Hoevenbergh. Ogden returned briefly in 1837 but he soon resigned and was replaced by William Wilson.[72] Greenfield's Resident was Alexander Vaché who also continued his association with the Department in later years. Titus employed Alexander B. Whiting. The Resident of the following year was John Conning and, under the Nativists, Jonathan

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

McClelland. From 1845 to 1847 Bellevue was directed by Fenelon Hasbrouck who was, like his father Stephen, a prominent radical "Equal Righter."[73] David Meredith Reese managed the institution for the Whigs of 1847-9.

The Outdoor Poor operation was constituted as a Department in 1845 with its own Superintendent. George Anderson held this post under the Democrats. The Whigs brought in William W. Lyon. When he became the last Commissioner, he was replaced by George Kellock, Jr., a grocer by trade, who remained in the post throughout the rule of the ten Governors.

Certain professional workers were equal in stature to the institution heads. The Boards of Commissioners employed an "Agent" to act on their behalf; this official was very powerful. Josiah Mann was Agent to the Targee and Greenfield Boards; Engs employed Robert Winslow. Cook used former Greenfield Commissioner Alexander Stewart. Hezekiah Williams served both the Titus and the Nativist Boards. The Chief Clerk presided over the bookkeeping of the Department.[74] A significant medical professional was the Apothecary. Dr. Wood raised the prestige of this post when he insisted on its "growing importance" and secured a paid worker for the function.[75]

Under the Almshouse Governors, the Bellevue Medical Board abolished the post of Resident Physician and substituted their own complete medical rule, giving economic management to the Warden. The first Warden was Josiah Mann. The Medical Board included Vaché, Reese, and others. In 1854, Issac Wood

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

became its Vice President. The Island Hospitals continued under the Residents installed by the Reform of 1847. William Kelly was the first such official for the Penitentiary Hospital. He left in 1853; William Wallace Sanger was then promoted to the top position there. Moses H. Ranney was the only Resident Physician of the Lunatic Asylum during the period. Edwards Hall was the first Resident of the Nursery Hospital. The Governors replaced him with Henry N. Whittelsey who remained throughout the next decade.[76]

The Wardens of the Almshouse, Penitentiary, Nurseries, and the embrionic Workhouse were former Steward John Fitch, former Keeper Joseph Keen, Jonathan Stearns, and Harmon Eldridge, respectively, from 1849 to 1855. Then the new Workhouse opened and its Superintendent's salary was raised to $2,000, $500 higher than that of the other Wardens. There was a reshuffling of the incumbents in order to give Keen the post, despite citizens' protests aimed at keeping Stearns at the Nurseries. Stearns became Almshouse Warden; Fitch took charge of the Penitentiary, and Eldridge went to Randall's Island.[77]

The second level of Almshouse employees consisted of Assistant Physicians, Assistant Clerks, Stewards, Visitors, and prison Keepers' deputies and Guards. Skilled physicians like Nicholas Morrell supervised the growing island hospitals without promotion and were well appreciated.[78] Stewards assisted the Superintendents in running the institutions; they also had assistants. Visitors, incidental at first,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

increased their ranks and importance with the growth of outdoor relief. There were also dozens of skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled workers: bakers, carpenters, gatekeepers, gardners, engineers, blacksmiths, messengers, quarrymasters, gravediggers, cooks, and coxswains, among many others.

The lowest level of officers did difficult work at poor wages but sometimes therefore enjoyed more job security than did their superiors. Nurseries and Hospitals wards fell largely into the hands of highly skilled but underpaid and politically disenfranchised women: Matrons and Nurses like Jane Ley, Eliza Jane Ring, and Leah Eliza Strang who survived all electoral changes. Mrs. Ley, Matron of the Nurseries from 1832 to 1860, was New York City's first de facto permanent civil servant.

The entire staff only numbered about a dozen in 1825[79] but increased steadily thereafter. The Engs administration had 76 regular employees. The Penitentiary accounted for the largest group of these: 34, including Keeper, Physician, five craftsmen to supervise convict labor, five Keeper's deputies, five Keeper-Guards, two Matrons, a coxswain, and a dozen Watches at fifty cents a night each. This was a full staff complement for the first of the extensive new institutions and would remain stable in number throughout the entire period: in 1857 the facility had only one employee more. The Almshouse proper under Engs had 14 employees; the Commissioners' office had ten. The Bridewell had seven and Bellevue Hospital six. The Long Island Farms and Nurseries had five. James Cook reported 106

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

employees in 1845: twelve in his own office, ten in the Almshouse, ten at Bellevue, eight in the Nurseries, twelve at the Lunatic Asylum, 35 in the Penitentiary, and 20 in the City Prison. In 1857 the Department employed 313 persons including temporary and part time help like eleven Bellevue orderlies at $144 per annum and 21 winter Visitors to the Outdoor Poor.

Complaints were common about the growth of the bureaucracy and there were periodic attempts, of dubious effectiveness, to control the increase. Commissioner Engs said that he had abolished two offices at Bellevue and discharged all their watchmen "as unnecessary appendages."[80] Alderman Talmage suggested that many other offices might be eliminated "without impairing the efficiency" of the Department.[81] Commissioner Greenfield argued that expanding the Lunatic Asylum would "create the necessity or the excuse" for a "large retinue of officers such as Wardens and Assistants" with increased salary expenses.[82] The Charity and Almshouse committee curtly answered that they would leave the question of "how to avoid an increase of attendants, in proportion to the increase of patients" to "much wiser heads than their own."[83]

In reality there were never enough officers to run the expanding and diversifying institutions properly. In lieu of hiring sufficient paid staff, the Department used paupers and convicts for many sensitive tasks. "Irreclaimable inebriates and prostitutes" thus served as nurses and hoodlums

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

as orderlies; many would perform the "not very agreeable duties" only unwillingly and "seek dismissal by...neglect." Others would "solicit" the jobs so they could "indulge" their "follies and vices" and "purloin the property of the patients and the public."[84] Dr. Reese and Commissioner Leonard joined in pleading repeatedly for the abolition of convict nurses at Bellevue; the latter called them "totally incompetent" and subversive of all discipline and efforts at healing. "Humanity and economy" together demanded an end to the use of the "most abandoned felons" and, instead, a complete reliance on "selected hired help."[85]

Dr. Moses Ranney also found prison aides to be a problem at the Lunatic Asylum until he prevailed upon the ten Governors to abolish the practice by regailing them with horror stories. It was difficult enough to "convince the patient he is not in prison," how, he asked, "may this be done when he is surrounded by convicts?"[86] It was usual for the aides to steal patients' clothing; Ranney told the Governors and the public of an instance in which a convict nurse cut off a lady's "beautiful" and "highly valued" hair "for the purpose of selling it to a peruke maker."[87]

Proper hiring could be expensive. Large sums had to be spent for salaries, "emoluments," "perquisites," and various other expenses of labor relations - sometimes even frauds and "defalcations." At first fixed on a case by case basis for individuals,[88] amounts of salaries were regulated on a mass scale after 1832. Institution heads made from $1,000

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to $2,000 at various times throughout the period from then to 1860 - depending on the economy and the party in power. Doctors, Clerks, the Agent, Stewards, Visitors, and skilled artisans made from $500 to $1,000. Assistant Stewards, Deputy Keepers, and most mechanics made between $400 and $700. Nurses, Matrons, and the unskilled made under $400. Salaries were fairly stable throughout the period. The Nativists lowered them slightly as a matter of policy.

Until 1845 a man and his wife might both work for the Department and draw residence and salaries: Resident Physician Van Hoevenbergh, Farmer Martin Rapelye, and Engs Board Agent Robert Winslow all had wives who also worked as low paid Matrons. The Reorganization prohibited simultaneous employment of spouses.[89]

It was difficult for the City to disentangle salaries, perquisites, and job obligations. Confusion increased with the growth of the institutions. A careful Finance Committee investigation was necessary in 1834 to determine whether, in the case of a salary claim of Dr. John B. Stevenson, residence had been an obligation of office or an emolument.[90]

The most difficult problem for the City was the inevitable institutional tradition that evolved of staff living off the House as part of their salary and residence: the "Middle House Table." Commissioner Peters raised an early complaint against the practice and called for reform: "indirect compensation for office is of the most objectionable kind."[91] By 1837 abuses had surfaced. The Engs Commissioners

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

said that they abolished all practices they found existing of "keeping of cattle or horses, or raising any swine or poultry, or cultivating ground for any private purpose." By forbidding officers from keeping "stock of any kind," they anticipated "a profit to the City, by applying the offal of the establishment to fattening hogs."[92]

The Nativist Commissioners thought that "one of the greatest evils that has existed in the department" was the public table "and support of the officers" and undertook the "remedial process" of "abandoning" the practice and "commuting with the officers" for specific "sums in lieu of living." The Superintendent of the Almshouse, however, refused to "negotiate" with the Commissioners and would only discuss the matter with the Council's "Honorable Body, from whom he received his appointment."[93]

The Reorganization of 1845 provided for "suitable apartments...and no other perquisites whatever" for the Almshouse Superintendent[94] who promptly converted his perquisites into job necessities. While the primary mission of the Charlick Supply investigation was to determine why William Moss did not weigh and sample deliveries, some of the Aldermen were more intrigued by his devotion to the fine arts of animal husbandry and horsemanship.

Dr. Hasbrouck testified that Moss had "ten to twelve hogs in a pen south of his own house. I did not know until after the first of December that these hogs were private property. I thought it was all correct." Moss also kept a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

cow, paying for the hay and fodder for her and claimed he had a contract with the Department to pay for all the swill consumed by his animals.[95] He told the Aldermen that he had always kept up to thirty hogs "fed on swill from the establishment. When the street was cut through they were removed inside to a pen...kept by themselves. The pen was built by the inmates...the material...belongs to the Department." The Superintendent sold swill both to himself and to others on behalf of the City and sold his hogs to the City. He paid for their swill "what I considered it was worth, according to the number of hogs I had...as much as...other individuals." Lately, however, there was less swill than before "owing to the greater diligence of the officers in preventing waste."[96]

Commissioner Cook swore he had "never made a contract... for the swill spoken of." The only hogs he had known of were "some on Blackwell's Island" that belonged to Keeper Morgan L. Mott who "fed them on his own swill." Cook had not "given any directions as to swill from the Almshouse" and had thought that all hogs there were City hogs. When some had been "brought down from Long Island," Cook had asked Moss if "he had not better kill them, and he replied no, we have plenty of swill and had better keep them."[97] The Commissioner went along with this considered opinion.

Moss took some Almshouse oxen to the County Fair and won a prize, "a premium," according to Assistant Steward David Wood,

> a silver cup which I understand they received... The cup I suppose would hold half a pint. It was

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> awarded to Mr. Moss. I have always considered it his property. There is no secret about the oxen going to the fair. They are there yet. I presume they belong to the City, but do not know.

Wood made a comment during his testimony which illustrated well the developing art of official dissembling: "My memory is very good about some things and very poor about others."[98]

A serious problem was whether the Superintendent was empowered, required, or even permitted by the Ordinance to have a horse and carriage. Moss interpreted his duties to require this convenience as a job tool, a basic travel necessity, even though the Ordinance did not seem to provide for it. "I do not consider it a perquisite," he protested, to give me facilities for doing public business." Though the Ordinance did not require him specifically to go "outside the walls" of Bellevue, he still performed many more duties "than appears in the Ordinance under the head of Superintendent of the Alms House." After all, the Ordinance provided for a Workhouse and "although there is no Workhouse there is as much labor performed as if we had one...I consider that the performance of the duties of Superintendent of the Workhouse and other duties render the horse and carriage necessary." Furthermore, the Commissioner had never objected to the horse and carriage except "two or three times" when he said it was "an eye-sore to some people."[99]

In late 1846 the Aldermen's Committee on Ordinances recommended abolition of the Officers' Table.[100] The next

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

year the Assistants appointed a Special Committee on Retrenchments in City expenditure which finally achieved the reform in law.[101] The main immediate effect was on the Hospital; the physicians had relied on the Officers' Table informally, in lieu of the requisition process with its "delays and disappointments," to furnish the sick with "food essential to their recovery and suited to the capricious palates of convalescent patients." They therefore petitioned for a return to the old system so that the ill might have their needed "luxurious aliment."[102]

If some officers' traditions were debatable, others were plainly illegal and fraudulent. The Engs Commissioners ended the practice of "permitting officers...to apply to themselves the mechanical labor of inmates; and to use for this purpose, the tools and materials belonging to the public." They had found that "wagons, sleighs, harnesses, boats, tables, bureaus, boots, shoes, &c." had long been "manufactured and taken from the premises, as the individual property of officers."[103]

The abuse soon resurfaced. The Nativist Commissioners found that the "materials of the department have been used freely and the government of the superior officers almost entirely destroyed; for if the superior is guilty of a fraud... the subordinates can follow his example and...hold a rod over him." Whig and Democratic staff alike had routinely solicited the manufacture of personal furniture, clothing, and even "elegant carriages."[104] Sometimes they seemed to "have considered the inmates of the Alms House as placed

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

there to labor for their especial benefit and emolument," so massive and well organized were such work projects.[105] Stephen Munson testified that female prisoners were "taken out to clean the houses of the officers outside the walls; no keeper went with them. They took out lime, tubs, brushes, &c. to clean with."[106] James Coleman recalled making pine chests and bedsteads for officers.[107] John Frederickson said that Moss and Steward John Miller had "coats, pantaloons, and vests made in the Alms House tailor shop" and that lesser aides like the baker and shoemaker also had clothing made but less often.[108] Andrew Henderson claimed that the stewards once had "thirty to forty feet of rag carpet made" and that he could "not recall a single Superintendent in my time that did not have furniture made...other officers would also have some made, but they could not always get the chance, as the Superintendents generally kept the cabinetmakers (Barry Collet was one of them) fully employed."

Sometimes the staff looted the supplies wholesale, especially during lame duck periods. Henderson saw "a Steward removing from the Alms House, after an election was decided, a quarter-size tea chest, and I believe a full one, carried from the store to the residence of the Steward." It was also common for officers "living outside of the Alms House, to have bread and milk for their families daily, and fresh meat every other day. They also got sugar from the storeroom. They used to get all they could."[109]

The Council voted to have the Corporation Counsel "bring

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to justice all persons...as have embezzled the public property or converted the same to their own use" as charged by the Commissioners and their witnesses.[110] Instead, the abusers were brought back into office. When, during the Supply investigation, an Alderman asked Assistant Steward Fitch how Superintendent Moss' private garden was worked, the answer was: "By the inmates."[111]

Even honest staff performance received mixed reviews. The Engs Commissioners took a positive attitude, expressing "our approbation toward the subordinate officers."[112] Usually there was criticism, usually for lackluster effort or faulty discipline. John R. Peters first raised the issue of incompetent political appointees with a merciless criticism of the Long Island Farmer:

> Soon after my transfer of the Long Island Farms to the public in 1831, a man was placed upon them ostensibly to cut wood in winter, his large family to be supported, and he to have two dollars per day besides. This was consented to by all the commissioners, on the express condition that it should be temporary: this convenient man of the swamp has been continued to this time, as I believe, without any definite order of the Common Council, or the commissioners, and certainly contrary to my repeated remonstrances: the man appears to be inclined to perform his duty but he is unaccustomed to agricultural pursuits, and in my humble opinion, entirely unqualified to superintend either the farms or the children and much less is he competent to perform the difficult task of making adult paupers work.[113]

In 1841 Aldermen Ferris and Benson rejected Commissioner Greenfield's proposed purchase of Jeremiah Towle's land with

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a reprimand that "if a proper system of discipline existed over the subordinate officers attached to the Alms House Department, or an efficient police was maintained at Blackwell's Island," more real estate at the pier would be unnecessary. Problems of controlling prisoners were not physical but were "more owing to the keepers or persons having the boats and crews in charge."[114]

The Lunatic Asylum Medical Board complained bitterly of many paid attendants, "small politicians who, after being disappointed in gaining offices of greater emolument, ask for these until something better should offer." Others were

> men of respectable connexions, but broken in fortune, and perhaps doubtful in habits... Their sole recommendations...are political considerations and influential friends... the keepers do not yield implicit obedience to the orders of the Resident Physician. Knowing that they derive their appointments from the same source that he does, they imagine that obedience is due only to this source. We have witnessed various acts of insubordination arising from this cause. At one time a keeper was absent from the Asylum two or three days, and another keeper, newly appointed, who had no duties whatever to perform, would not take his place...a nurse was confined to her bed by sickness and another who had nothing to do, refused to officiate in her stead...It is a time honored custom which the Resident Physician does not seem to have the power to change, for half the keepers to absent themselves on Saturday and remain away until Monday...it was a weekly occurence to find on our Saturday visit but one keeper for more than two hundred lunatics. The consequence of this state of things was, unnecessary confinement of the patients, noise, confusion, and violence, all tending to injure the inmates and retard or prevent their recovery.[115]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Many Council appointed aides were "generally not working people...some never accustomed to labor; others too far advanced in life to be active." They considered their duties to be "similar to those of penitentiary keepers, and rely on prisoners to do their work." The Asylum did not "want...persons brought up to live without labor" but, rather, those who would "endeavor to merit the approbation of their employer" by working well for "moderate wages" and refrain from "cultivating political importance out of doors." Not all of the employees were lazy, however; there were some "valuable persons" who "deserve better positions than they now hold."[116]

More disruptive than all the perquisites and questionable work practices were the ambiguities of authority among Commissioners, Council, and staff and consequent conflicts and confusion resulting in charges, countercharges, institutional wars of personality, and long hearings before Special Council Committees. Even when simple and compact, the organization was never free of internal dissention, but as it grew, these problems worsened until they reached a climax in the conflict between Commissioner Leonard and Superintendent Wells in the summer of 1848.

Dr. Wood had staff problems at early Bellevue as in June 1827 when the Almshouse Steward refused to fill medical orders. The Resident Physician appealed to the Commissioners who ordered all prescriptions "promptly, implicitly, and literally executed." In April 1828 Wood

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

fired his Assistant, Dr. Hamilton Morton, for "neglect of duty," then rehired him after "an explanation," whereupon Morton resigned.[117] Disputes were as common among the various operations as within them. Commissioner Peters wanted the institutions separated largely to "prevent the collisions which occur between their respective keepers."[118]

In 1838 a staff rebellion at Bellevue Hospital led to the dismissal of three employees and a special Council inquiry. Resident Physician William Wilson proved to the Engs Commissioners charges against Matron Mary Dunham of "insubordination and disorganizing conduct" and, further, that she, Steward Asa W. Welden, and Apothecary Stuart Ginnis "had conspired to subvert the government of the institution and decry the Resident Physician." After their ouster, Ginnis had Alderman William Holly bring "slanderous" charges against Dr. Wilson who denounced such "private malignity" and "political motives" and solicited a full investigation. Chairman Engs related the tale of the mutiny and said that the Aldermen "therefore will judge what confidence ought to be placed in the abovementioned Welden, Ginnis and Dunham."[119] The Special Committee that investigated the incident concurred with the Commissioners' "undiminished confidence" in Wilson and added that the trouble seemed to have "originated in personal difficulties...and probably grew out of a difference of opinion as to the exact line of demarcation between the duties of persons in the service of the public at the Alms House."[120]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

There was some conflict between Dr. Hasbrouck and Superintendent Moss within the Cook administration. The Resident Physician said he had "no difficulty with Mr. Moss. A little feeling was evinced about the time of my recovery. Up to that time we were always on the best of terms. The whole trouble arose from the fact that Mr. Moss told me he did not recognize me as the Resident Physician."[121] Moss said that he had "refused to obey requisitions made on me by the Resident Physician simply because he has no right to make requisitions on me." They were, rather, to go through the Commissioner and be approved by him. "The one I refused today," he explained, "did not differ in form from those I had obeyed heretofore."[122]

By far the most disruptive case of bureaucratic warfare was that of June 1828 between Democratic Commissioner Moses G. Leonard and Whig Superintendent Marcellus Eells. The total deterioration of their relations and the consequent plethora of charges and countercharges resulting in a minute, extensive, and inconclusive Council investigation coincided perfectly with the heightened immigration emergency and the removal of the Almshouse proper. Many of the points of the dispute also illustrated the confusion of Department operations under the incomplete and irrational Reorganization. After the charges were aired, the Joint Charity and Almshouse Committee divided over their disposition. A majority of six, led by Linus W. Stevens, exonerated both

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

officials of any serious wrongdoing and recommended no reprisals against either.[123] Committee Chairman Timothy R. Hibbard stood alone in vindicating Leonard and condemning Eells entirely and calling for the Superintendent's dismissal.[124]

Most of Eells' charges against Leonard involved four supply contracts that went bad: for flour, tea, lime, and milk. James R. Baker failed to fulfill a flour contract and the City sustained a loss, according to Stevens, but Leonard had still made the contract in good faith.[125] Hibbard thought that by the end of the episode the City had made $1,331 from the contractor, who had gone bankrupt, and that the problem arose from "an unexpected rise in the produce market caused by the famine abroad." The Commissioner had taken security which appeared "good at the time."[126] But Baker's surety was Aaron Coe with whom Leonard had also contracted with for tea. Stevens found dealing with both a contractor and his surety a failure of "prudence and caution" on Leonard's part.[127] Hibbard pointed out that an initial delivery of poor tea had been properly rejected by Eells and the matter then referred to the late Charity and Almshouse Committee. "No record being kept of their proceedings, and no one or either of them could recollect the precise action of said Committee...their action cannot be known" except that a new contract for "a better quality" and "more economical" tea was made.

Lime was also complicated. Eells said that Leonard had

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

paid two thirds above the market price for this commodity "with the insinuation that the extra profit was pocketed by the Commissioner, or his friends." Hibbard found that the price cited by Eells as a standard only applied to cheap Thomastown lime but that Leonard had actually purchased more expensive Glenns Falls lime. The Superintendent also complained "bitterly" about a milk contract and "cans of water were paraded before the public in a way to induce the supposition that the Commissioner had actually watered the Alms House milk himself or connived with the contractor in so doing." Actually, the late Charity Committee, not Leonard, had let the contract; Dr. Reese had discovered that the product was "adulterated," and the Commissioner had duly notified the Committee who then contracted with another merchant for new milk.

The Superintendent said that the Commissioner had "sacrificed" Almshouse property at a public auction. Hibbard found that the late Charity Committee had, in fact, properly conducted the auction and would "probably escape the arraignment of the Superintendent who, it appears, in his attempts to thrust at the Commissioner, has ignorantly charged his friends."[128]

Eells blamed Leonard for dismissing several carpenters from Bellevue, "deranging" and "impeding" operations and causing the dead to be buried in boxes for want of coffins. Stevens discovered that the Charity Committee had discharged the men because "neither the Committee nor Commissioner knew

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

by whom, or upon what authority, they had been employed."[129] Some were soon rehired and for only one day was the Department short of carpenters. The only known box burials were of "drowned persons" whom "no ordinary sized coffin could contain, and so much swollen that the lid of the coffin would not close over them." Hibbard could not see why anybody would have been improperly buried but for the Superintendent's neglect and felt that "language" could not "convey the sentiment proper to be entertained toward a subordinate who, without a shadow or color of truth, could perpetuate a charge so flagrant and wicked as this."

Finally, Eells said that Leonard had neglected to furnish a supply boat to the new Blackwell's Island Almshouse and that therefore bread was "conveyed in the dead boat...This charge was twice repeated, besides having been made the subject of a newspaper article." But Eells had failed to requisition a supply boat or to borrow one which had previously been loaned to him by Penitentiary Keeper Jacob Acker. So, Hibbard stressed, even if the Department lacked enough craft, "there was no necessity of carrying bread in the dead boat at any time, with putrid or decomposed bodies, as the Superintendent represents and published to the world, when, by his simple request it might have been otherwise conveyed."[130] Stevens simply held Leonard blameless that "for circumstances beyond his control," the needed boat

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was not supplied as early as desired."[131] Nobody asked why the City had purchased two islands and moved its institutions there without also buying enough boats to transport supplies.

Commissioner Leonard's charges against Eells involved two old and familiar problems: the Superintendent's retention of his horse and his refusal to fill prescriptions for the Resident Physician. There was an additional novel issue of the legal appointment source and, therefore, the correct identity of the Bellevue Engineer. When the Almshouse proper was removed to Blackwell's Island, the Commissioner tried to comply with an old Charity Committee resolution to sell the Superintendent's horse and barouche "knowing that now no reasonable excuse could be advanced for a continuance of this useless expense." But Eells refused to relinquish them, claiming that "the Commissioner has no authority to sell them, nor require him to give up their possession." Eells' "disposition...to...defiance also led him to refuse supplies to the Engineer, "not recognizing him an officer of the Department."[132] Leonard seized upon Dr. Reese's common Whig political affiliation with both Superintendent and Council to lend credibility to the charge of refusing prescriptions: "complaints of so grave and serious a character coming from a source entitling them to your belief" should certainly elicit action.

The Commissioner saw Eells' insubordination as the most "precarious" situation he faced:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> with no acknowledgment of the Commissioner's prerogative to adjust these matters, by the Superintendent of the Alms House rather setting aside all order from that source, I am compelled to admit the complaints to your deliberation...to declare and direct whether such errors and evils can by any authority be arrested...
>
> Under the present authority, who have, it may be asked, the powers to administer the laws governing the Department?...as you perceive the Superintendent appears before you as the absolute head of the whole Institution, neither the Commissioner, nor the Resident Physician, nor any other officer from whatever source he may derive his power, has the control of any thing within the limits of the Poor House establishment. It is unnecessary for me to dwell upon these disastrous topics. A remedy must be found...[133]

Even after the Council stripped the Commissioner of his appointment power, Leonard had claimed and exercised the right to choose the Bellevue Engineer. The Council appointed Charles Burns to this position while Leonard reappointed incumbent Issac Jarvis. Ultimately, but prior to the Stevens and Hibbard Reports, the Supreme Court sustained the Council. But while the case was pending in the meanwhile, it was a perplexing question who owed recognition to whom. Stevens thought that Leonard was "not justified in refusing to recognize...the action of the Common Council...sanctioned by the decision of the Supreme Court."[134] Hibbard disagreed: while the Court was resolving the issue, Leonard's appointment should have been respected. The Superintendent "at no time has a right to be governed by, or act under orders, emanating from any other source than the Commissioner of the Alms House, whose subordinate he is made by the ordinance, in every particular."[135]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Even the Stevens majority had to admit that Eells was wrong in "not disposing" of the horse after being so "requested" by Leonard.[136] Hibbard stressed that the Superintendent had "assumed authority which he was not justified in doing" and was "disobeying orders," not a "request," by "using for his own private purposes the property of the City." Leonard and Hibbard tried to introduce evidence to prove that, far from being "wanted for public purposes," the horse and buggy were "used by the Superintendent to convey him to Harlem...whilst he... was engaged in gambling." A tie vote of the Committee along strict party lines with one member absent blocked the introduction of whatever such evidence may have existed.[137]

Hibbard said that he would "regard disobedience of orders, arising from an honest misinterpretation...or from an ardent zeal for the public welfare, with proper leniency" but that he could not "gleen...any thing of the kind favorable" to Eells. His wild charges had been "published and widely circulated in the public newspapers without authority of the Committee" in violation of their legislative privilege. They were "set forth in language improper...disrespectful... heralded widely to an overtaxed people instinct with suspicion" but were completely "groundless, and unfounded in truth." The only proper course was to reaffirm Leonard's "fidelity and honesty" and fire Eells who was "unworthy to hold the office he fills."[138] Full Council action on the Reports was delayed until October. Finally Hibbard's was

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

tabled and, since nobody had the votes to upset the status quo, the entire affair settled into an uneasy truce.[139]

The authority structure of the ten Governors left no room for such confusion and rebellion as had plagued their predecessors. However, their administration was not entirely free of fraud or conflict. The Civic Reform exposures of 1853 did not neglect the Almshouse. One celebrated incident involved Department Governor Patrick Henry. An inmate, Edward Haynes, "suffering from what is termed the painter's cholic, and unable to do a fair day's work," had agreed to paint Bellevue Hospital for ten dollars a month plus board.[140] Governor Henry told him to also paint his own private house, which he had rented to a Department employee, and to charge the Almshouse for the work.[141] Hospital Warden Timothy Daly agreed to allow this and supply the materials, but only after the institutional work was completed.[142] The resident did the Henry job but refused to bill the City and instead sued the Governor for proper private payment. Henry settled and paid.[143]

Governor Henry admitted most of these facts but put a "very different construction" on them than had various press attacks. He had made a verbal agreement to pay for materials used and had done both Haynes and the City a favor by providing him additional employment. "I unthinkingly said I would desire Mr. Daly to furnish the article...and replace it immediately upon the quantity required or used being known."[144] But there was no entry on the Hospital books for the paint.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A Special Governors' Committee thought that even the "most favorable construction" of the affair showed Henry "unworthy of his position" and that "his continuance as a member of this Board is incompatible with the public interests." His conduct had brought "discredit" and that of Warden Daly, likewise, deserved "severe reprehension."[145] A motion to fire Daly failed by one vote.[146] The Assistant Aldermen impeached the Governor,[147] but he told the Supreme Court that he had never "converted to his own use any paints or oils without rendering an account"[148] and served the remainder of his term unmolested.

The same year a series of disputes between Penitentiary Warden Joseph Keen and Assistant Keeper Issac Britton led to the latter's discharge.[149] The angry subordinate retaliated with allegations that, since 1849, Keen had improperly released several notorious convicts and allowed others to escape, had favored some prisoners with special privileges, and had appropriated huge amounts of Department mackeral (intended for Hospital patients and quietly embezzled "during divine service on a certain Sunday"), beef, slaughtered pigs, marrow, bread, and other items to the reconstituted Middle House Table, charging his employee-boarders for use of these public foodstuffs. Furthermore, said Britton, Keen had routinely embezzled deceased convicts' cash, misappropriated inmate labor, and committed "many other serious offences of a nature similar."[150]

Over a dozen witnesses detailed to the last roasting

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

pig what Keen supposedly took from the City.[151] Governor Richard S. Williams defended the Warden[152] and Keen denied ever taking "any public property whatever, except such to which I had a lawful right." Nor had he favored any prisoners or "committed any violation of my duty."[153] The Governors indicated their attitude toward disgruntled former employees and Civic Reformers when they promoted Keen to the Workhouse a year later.

In 1857 a controversy erupted between Keen and Samuel Reynolds whom he discharged from the post of Deputy Superintendent of the new institution. The Superintendent claimed that the position was unnecessary; "any Keeper" could fill in when needed. Reynolds appealed to the Governors, alleging that the true reason for his dismissal was that he "wrote a resolution for the Nineteenth Ward Republican Association censuring Governor Simeon Draper" for resigning his post as Metropolitan Police Commissioner. As might have been expected, the other Governors sustained the dismissal.[154]

It often seemed as if the bureaucracy constituted as great a problem as the poor themselves. Despite valiant efforts on the part of some legislators and administrators to tame their subordinates, the City's first Department was often a hotbed of scandal, conflict, and chaos. Though the stability of the ten Governors extended to labor relations, the problems of maintaining a large staff were never fully solved. A troubled and growing bureaucracy was an inevitable concommitant of the development of institutions for the poor.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. Besides Chairman John Targee, who remained in office throughout the period of 1825 to 1834, Burtis, and Cox, the early Commissioners included Tammany leaders Elisha Tibbits, James Roosevelt, and Thomas T. Woodruff, as well as Thomas R. Smith, Peter Stagg, Jacob Westewelt, Gilbert S. Coutant, John R. Peters, George Lovett, Mangel M. Quackenboss, Jeremiah Towle, and Gideon Ostrander. AH Cmsrs, Minutes, May 11, 1825, January 31, 1829, MCC, XIX, March 7, 1831, 529-30; Aldmn and Asts Joint Proc, I, May 2, 1832, 85-6, September 5, 1832, 94, December 5, 1832, 109-10, April 3, 1833, 124, July 3, 1833, 127, August 7, 1833, 123. Tibbits and Roosevelt belonged to the Tammany elite who controlled party nominations. Woodruff fought for the bosses against popular election of the Mayor. Myers, 86, 95.

2. AH Cmsrs, Minutes, 1828-9 passim.

3. Peters, 117.

4. The first Whig Board of Almshouse Commissioners also included party leader Joseph Hoxie, a jolly but unsuccessful cloth merchant and former schoolteacher who became political mentor to Hamilton Fish. According to a biographer who was a Democratic politician in the 1830s, Hoxie was "an honest man...opposed to corruption." Joseph A. Scoville [Walter Barrett], Old Merchants of New York City (New York, 1863), II, 114-8; Allan Nevins, Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration (New York, 1936), 24. Hoxie had been defeated for an Assistant Aldermanic seat but since his party won a majority, he could obtain a Commissioner's post as a consolation. This became an occasional practice. Valentine, Manual for 1854, 487. The other Commissioners besides Mandeville and Hoxie, all of whom were former Aldermen, were Phillip W. Engs (who would chair the next Whig Board), Samuel Stevens, the first Aldermanic President, and Anthony Lamb who replaced George Doughty when he declined the appointment. Aldmn and Asts Joint Proc, I, June 4, 1834, 164, August 6, 1834, 176.

5. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 173-4.

6. Ibid., 177-8.

7. Ibid., 178-81.

8. Ibid., 183-4.

9. Woodruff, Lovett, Jacob Brush, and James H. Hart also served with Targee from 1835 to 1837. By profession,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Lovett and Brush were both lumber merchants and Woodruff was a builder. Longworth's New York Directory for 1830-1, 156, 393, 651.

10. AH Cmsrs, John Targee, Thomas T. Woodruff, George Lovett, Jacob Brush, James H. Hart, Cmctn in Reply to Certain Interrogatories on LA, Asts Doc, I (Second Run), #23, September 7, 1835, 202.

11. A. H. Stevens et al., 682.

12. Nurseries Matron Jane Ley, Statement #VII to AH Cmsr-Peter Palmer in Engs, Tomlinson et al., 250.

13. Phillip W. Engs was a merchant and accountant. Besides having served as an Alderman and as one of Mandeville's Almshouse Commissioners of 1834-5, he had run as an independent for Mayor in 1836. The Engs Board included merchants William A. Tomlinson and James H. Braine, feed dealer Peter Palmer, and shipwright Zebedee Ring. Tomlinson died in early 1838 and was replaced by Wall Street broker Seixas Nathan. Palmer had run unsuccessfully for the Council in 1837 and 1838. Valentine, Manual for 1854, 493, 495; Longworth's for 1833-4, 248; Longworth's for 1836-7, 111, 479, 506, 565; MCC Analytical Index, I, 416; Aldmn and Asts Joint Proc, III, February 7, 1838, 16.

14. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 203-9.

15. Ibid., 225-6.

16. Ibid., 214.

17. Ibid., 231-3.

18. Ibid., 212.

19. Ibid., 233.

20. Serving with Greenfield were party leader Nicholas Schureman, John M. Bradhurst, and former Aldermen Alexander Stewart and Francis Fickett. Soon after taking office, Fickett resigned and was replaced by Dr. Nicholas J. Quackenboss. Aldmn and Asts Joint Proc, IV, 149, 169.

21. Greenfield et al., Rept on Condition of Institutions in Purdy, Ferris, Chamberlain, 656.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

22. The other members of this Board were merchants Richard S. Williams, who had been defeated for re-election to the Board of Aldermen (who would also become an Almshouse Governor in 1849), William W. Todd, and Revo C. Hance. Valentine, Manual for 1854, 501; Longworth's for 1841-2, 329, 372, 702, 768.

23. Titus et al., Rept on Removal to BI of AH Establishment, 1395.

24. An original appointee, John D. Van Buren, was replaced by Cook before July 1843. The other Commissioners were Gideon Ostrander who had served as Commissioner under Targee in the early 1830s, silversmith Gerardus Boyce, Daniel D. Crane, and Tighe Davey. Valentine, Manual for 1843-4, 49; Longworth's for 1841-2, 115, 188.

25. Cook et al., 237-8.

26. Ibid., 253.

27. Each of the other three Nativist Commissioners was a defeated Council candidate: Charles W. Houghton, William J. Roome, and American Republican Party General Secretary Joseph W. Savage. Valentine, Manual for 1854, 506; I. M. Leonard, 407; Asts Jnl, XXV, December 9, 1844, 344.

28. Van Nostrand et al., Cmctn on Abuses, 397-403.

29. Blvu Hospital Ast Steward David Wood, Testimony in Charlick et al., 681.

30. Howel Hoppock, Testimony, ibid., 709.

31. F. Hasbrouck, Testimony, ibid., 660.

32. Moss, Testimony, ibid., 699.

33. Cook, Rept for 1845, 76-7.

34. Valentine, Manual for 1854, 419; Longworth's for 1841-2, 433.

35. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 37.

36. M. G. Leonard, Rept on General Condition of Institutions, Asts Doc, XXVIII, #2, May 25, 1846, 22.

37. Ibid., 24-5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

38. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 51.

39. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Convict and Pauper Labor, Asts Doc, XXIX, #24, January 11, 1847, 271.

40. Ibid., 274.

41. Ibid., 290-1.

42. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Establishment for AH Children in Oliver, Purser, Smith, Rept on same, 328.

43. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 4, 8.

44. Ibid., 13.

45. Ibid., 15.

46. Ibid., 7.

47. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Establishment for AH Children in Oliver, Purser, Smith, Rept on same, 329-30.

48. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 4.

49. Ibid., 30.

50. Ibid., 37-8.

51. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 47. The portraits do not remain in extant copies examined; however, they were published also in Valentine's Manuals and in every Almshouse Governors' Report and at least some are still available as prints of which the author owns copies of two. See illustrations of institutions

52. Ords, XVI, April 21, 1849, 449.

53. The New York State Act to Provide for the Government of the Department of Alms and Penitentiary..., in Breckenridge, 55, named the first ten Governors of the Almshouse Department as follows: Richard S. Williams, Jonathan I. Coddington, Simeon Draper, James H. Titus, "(Merchant)," Schureman Halstead, Andrew H. Mickel, William T. Pinckney, Issac Townsend, J. Phillips Phoenix, and Timothy Daly. Phoenix declined the appointment and was replaced by William M. Evarts. Mickle and Titus resigned very early from the Board and were replaced by Francis R. Tillou and Peter McLaughlin. The new Board determined its members' terms of service: Halstead's and McLaughlin's were chosen to expire first, at the end of 1849. They

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

both stood for re-election and were then to go out at the end of 1854. In 1850 Pinckney's and Townsend's terms expired and John J. Herrick and Patrick Henry replaced them. Their terms would expire in 1855. An orderly mode of succession was thus established. The other Governors during the decade were Edmund C. West, Anthony Dugro, Washington Smith, Gustavus A. Conover, William S. Duke, Daniel F. Tiemann, Joseph S. Taylor, Issac Bell, Issac J. Oliver, Christian Godfrey Gunther, Charles V. Anderson, P. G. Maloney, Benjamin F.Pinckney, Patrick McElroy, Charles Brueninghausen, and James Lynch. The Presidents of the Board were: Draper from 1849 through 1852 and in 1854 and 1856, West in 1853, Townsend in 1855, Gunther in 1857, Smith in 1858, Dugro in 1859, and Benjamin Pinckney in 1860. Valentine, Manual for 1850, 117; for 1851; 56, for 1852, 59; for 1853, 55; for 1854, 70; for 1855, 68; for 1856, 67; for 1857, 67; for 1858, 98; for 1859, 102; for 1860, 103. These references also provide staff rosters. The Annual Reports of the Governors also give their names as well as their Committee assignments but only include staff rosters for some years. Many of these men soon went on to bigger and better things in government and politics. Tiemann and Gunther both became Mayors, the former largely on the strength of his record of clean Almshouse administration. Oliver and Bell served Tweed; Evarts and Tillou were prominent reformers. Myers, 187, 205; Alexander B. Callow, Jr., The Tweed Ring (New York, 1965), 23, 144, 156, 246, 249, 265, 273. Comptroller appointment of Public Charities and Correction Commissioners hardly brought a revolution. Draper emerged as the first President of the new Board and Bell as their Secretary. The other two were Moses H. Grinnell and James B. Nicholson. Valentine, Manual for 1861, 112.

54. AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, iii.

55. AH Govs, By-Laws and Amendments in Minutes, front of volume, November 1, 1854, 1-6.

56. Ibid., 7-8.

57. In 1827 the post of Keeper of the Penitentiary was clearly separated from that of Almshouse Superintendent when Arthur Burtis was denied both appointments concurrently and, instead J. O. Woodruff appointed to the prison office. MCC, XVI, March 26, 1827, 201.

58. [First] Law Creating AH Dept..., 1832, 190-1.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

59. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 79.

60. MCC, XV, January 30, 1826, 182.

61. MCC, XIX, March 7, 1831, 529-30. Burtis and Cox were both former Tammany Aldermen. Ibid., Appendix, 735, 737. The Almshouse Superintendent's job had always been highly political, ever since it was held by Tammany Hall's founder, William Mooney. On the history of the office and its incumbents before 1825, see Mohl, 74-80; Myers, 1, 24-5.

62. Aldmn and Asts Joint Proc, I, December 3, 1834, 206; Comptroller D. D. Williamson, Rept of Persons in Employ of Corporation and Salaries, Aldmn Doc, V, #8, July 2, 1838, 134. This document, pp. 134-7, gives names, appointment source, and salaries for Engs administration officers and is the source of such information below unless otherwise indicated. Valentine, Manual for 1842-3, 108. This source, pp. 108-10, lists all Titus Board employees. Manual for 1861, 445; Longworth's for 1833-4, 569.

63. Valentine, Manual for 1848, 49. This source, pp. 48-52, lists officers for the administration of 1827-9. Eells had run for Assistant Alderman in 1844 and received only fourteen votes. Manual for 1854, 506.

64. Comptroller D. D. Williamson, Rept on Resolution of Aldmn Clark to Report Names of All Officers Employed by Corporation and Those that Receive Compensation from Public Treasury, Aldmn Doc, III (Second run), #116, April 5, 1837, 745. The section on the Almshouse, pp. 745-7, serves as the source for all Targee employees of 1835-7.

65. Myer, Rept for 1839-40, 78. The Supplement to this Report, List of Officers Attached to the Several Depts of AH and Prison Establishment, pp. 79-82, supplies names only for all Greenfield employees.

66. Valentine, Manual for 1843-4, 49. This source, pp. 49-51, identifies all employees of the Cook Board. Cook, List of Persons Connected with AH Dept, 410; this roster, pp. 410-12, supplies names, appointment source, salaries, and authorities fixing salaries for all employees of the first administration under a single Commissioner.

67. AH Cmsrs Chairman John R. Willis, Cmctn with List of Persons Connected with AH and Prison Establishments for 1844-5, Aldmn Doc, IX, #29, October 21, 1844, 279. This document, pp. 277-83, also gives appointment source and salary for each Nativist employee.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

68. Dozens of comments in the literature allude to this extreme risk; many doctors died in the line of duty. Note the comment of Dr. James D. Fitch of the Colored Home upon the death of his colleague, Dr. Seligman, from typhus: "the nation honors the warrior who falls on a field of battle but the MEDICAL MAN...sinks to an early grave, 'unwept, unhonored, and unsung.'" Colored Home Rsdnt Phycn James D. Fitch, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 108. The Engs Board praised Resident Physician Benjamin Ogden and his staff and students for "gratuitous service" in the cholera epidemic of 1834 in which they "periled their lives" and for similar assistance in 1837 in which some of them "barely escaped death." Engs, Tomlinson et al., 206-7.

69. MCC, XIV, April 28, 1825, 499.

70. Dr. Wood received his M.D. from Queens College in New Jersey in 1816 and served as an Interne at New York Hospital. Besides his Almshouse affiliations, he served in several high offices in organized medicine, such as President of the New York Academy of Medicine and Treasurer of the American Medical Association. Robert J. Carlisle, ed., Account of Blvu Hospital with Catalogue of Medical and Surgical Staff from 1734 to 1894 (New York, 1893), 135. This source, pp. 107-50, gives credentials, affiliations, and publications for Resident and House Physicians and Surgeons of the period but is inaccurate with respect to some of the identities of Residents for the 1830s and 1840s.

71. Aldmn and Asts Joint Proc, I, December 5, 1832, 110, February 5, 1834, 152; McCready in AH Govs, Rept for 1856, VIII, 20-2.

72. Aldmn and Asts Joint Proc, II, May 9, 1837, 33-4, III, December 28, 1837, 11-2.

73. Walter Hugins, Jacksonian Democracy and the Working Class: A Study of the New York Workingmen's Movement, 1829-1837 (Stanford, 1960), 104-5.

74. The location of the Clerk and the books was shifted back and forth between Bellevue and the Old Almshouse, according to the whims of successive administrations. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 167-8; Aldmn CCAH, Robert C. Cornell, Edward Taylor, William C. Wales, Rept on Subjects Referred from Doc #20, Doc, I (Second run), #28, December 8, 1834, 225, 227; Ords, XII, August 2, 1844, 82.

75. I. Wood, Blvu Weekly Rept in AH Cmsrs, Minutes, January 27, 1827.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

76. Valentine's Manuals for 1849-60, cited above, note 53, and some Governors' Annual Reports have rosters. Also, the Governors submitted to the Council a comprehensive List of Persons Employed in AH Dept in their Statement #16 in Flagg, Comptroller's Estimate of Expenditures for 1857, 110-7 which includes salaries. Charles Sutton replaced Mann as Bellevue Warden in 1851; the next year Timothy Daly was appointed to that post and remained until after 1860. William Edmonds remained Warden of the City Prison until his death in 1854; John Gray succeeded him until his own death in 1858; Charles Sutton became the new Warden. The City Prison also had a Resident Physician, Dr. John C. Covel.

77. AH Govs, Minutes, June 26, 1855, 8-11, July 10, 1855, 4. In 1858 Thomas B. Tappen was appointed Nurseries Warden. In May 1859, Charles P. Degreck, Moses E. Crasto, Robert Walmsley, and Stephen M. Drew replaced Stearns, Tappen, John Fitch, and Keen as heads of the Almshouse, Nurseries, Penitentiary, and Workhouse, respectively. See their Repts in AH Govs, Rept for 1859, XI, 11, 212, 232, 284.

78. A special exception to the Ordinance was made to retain Dr. Morrell beyond the legal one year limit. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 182-3; Cornell, Taylor, Wales, 226. The Engs Commissioners praised Morrell and hoped for his "advancement in the medical departments of our city." Engs, Tomlinson et al., 207-8. Instead, he managed the Island hospitals without advancing in title or salary.

79. Philadelphia Board of Guardians of the Poor, 10.

80. Engs, Nathan et al., 151.

82. Greenfield et al., Cmctn Opposing Extension of LA in Ferris and Benson, Rept on same, 901.

83. Ibid., 897.

84. Manley et al., 632-3.

85. Asts Jnl., XXXII, July 24, 1848, 321-2.

86. LA Rsdnt Phycn Moses H. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 104.

87. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 99.

88. For example, the Council found the Superintendent's salary insufficient in 1825 and raised it from $1,250 to $1,600. MCC, XIV, June 6, 1825, 58.

89. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 97.

90. Aldmn Finance Cmte, Judah Hammond, Peter Sharpe, Abraham Van Nest, Rept on Memorial of Dr. John B. Stevenson, Late

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ksdnt Phycn of Blvu, Doc, III (First run), #104, March 31, 1834, 871-85. Stevenson fell ill when he took office and declined to reside among the raving maniacs so he subcontracted his duties to substitutes. The Comptroller refused to pay him for the time of nonresidence. When the Committee ruled residence part of salary, this meant that Stevenson would be paid for the time in question.

91. Peters, 119.

92. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 226.

93. Aldmn Proc, XXVII, September 23, 1844, 305-6.

94. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 80.

95. Hasbrouck, Testimony in Charlick et al., 663.

96. Moss, Testimony, ibid., 696-7.

97. Cook, Testimony, ibid., 661-2.

98. Blvu Ast Steward David Wood, Testimony, ibid., 680.

99. Moss, Testimony, ibid., 697-8.

100. Aldmn Ordinance Cmte, Emanuel B. Hart, Theodorus Van Tyne, Bartlett Smith, Rept on Proposed Amendment to Reorganization Ord, Doc, XIII, #19, November 9, 1846, 205-8.

101. Asts Special Cmte, John P. Cumming, Jr. and John Coger, Jr., Rept on Retrenchments, Doc, XXX, #8, September 24, 1847, 80-1.

102. Manley et al., 634-5.

103. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 226.

104. Van Nostrand et al., Cmctn on Abuses, 399-400.

105. Van Nostrand et al., Rept on Male Paupers Voting, 494.

106. Stephen Munson, Affidavit, ibid., 504.

107. James Coleman, Affidavit, ibid., 502-3.

108. John Frederickson, Affidavit, ibid., 507.

109. Andrew Henderson, Affidavit, ibid., 497.

110. Ords, XII, March 7, 1845, 286-7.

111. AH Ast Steward John Fitch, Testimony in Charlick et al., 278.

112. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 227.

113. Peters, 118.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

114. Ferris and Benson, Rept Against Rept of Asts on Purchase of Property at Foot of 61 Street, 1054.

115. MacDonald et al., 778-9.

116. Ibid., 780.

117. I. Wood, Blvu Weekly Repts in AH Cmsrs, Minutes, June 2, 1827, April 4, 9, 1828.

118. Peters, 120.

119. Aldmn Proc, XVI, March 11, 1839, 240-1.

120. Joint Special Cmte, James Lynch, Thomas Lawrence, Thomas Jeremiah, Rept on Charges Preferred by W. C. Stuart Guinness Against Dr. William Wilson, Aldmn Doc, V, #48, May 13, 1839, 517-9.

121. Hasbrouck, Testimony in Charlick et al., 663.

122. Moss, Testimony, ibid., 699-700.

123. Joint CCAH, Linus W. Stevens, Amos F. Hatfield, Washington Smith, Morris Franklin, George H. Franklin, Nathan A. Sutton, Majority Rept on Cmctns of AH Cmsr and Supt on Charges Preferred by Them Severally Against Each Other, Asts Doc, XXXII, #4, June 26, 1848, 59-71. Democrats Hatfield and Sutton joined the four Whigs in an apparent compromise to avoid reprisals against anybody, thus isolating Hibbard in his extreme position against Eells. The Committee Chairman had tried strenuously and unsuccessfully to suppress the reading of Eells' charges on the grounds that the Superintendent "had no right to impeach the Commissioner of the Alms House before this Board." President Wilson Small, a Democrat, ruled that until the paper was read there was "no knowledge of the fact" and that Hibbard's point of order was therefore "not well taken." Asts Jnl, XXXII, May 22, 1828, 39-40.

124. Joint CCAH Chairman Timothy R. Hibbard, Minority Rept on Cmctns of AH Cmsr and Supt..., Asts Doc, XXXII, #5, June 26, 1848, 72-90.

125. L. W. Stevens et al., 70.

126. Hibbard, 82-3.

127. L. W. Stevens et al., 70.

128. Hibbard, 84, 87-8.

129. L. W. Stevens et al., 66.

130. Hibbard, 84-6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

131. L. W. Stevens et al., 71.

132. Aldmn Proc, XXXV, May 29, 1848, 118-9.

133. Asts Jnl, XXXII, June 19, 1848, 177-80.

134. L. W. Stevens et al., 70.

135. Hibbard, 79-80.

136. L. W. Stevens et al., 71.

137. Hibbard, 79, 88.

138. Ibid., 81-2, 90.

139. Asts Jnl, XXXII, October 30, 1848, 713-4. Even after the Reports were printed but prior to their consideration, Hibbard tried to repossess the horse and fire Eells by separate resolutions based on additional "depositions... of a serious nature," including an astounding letter from the Mayor discussed below, chapter 13. These motions were likewise tabled. Ibid., July 24, 1848, 341-3.

140. Bivu Hospital Warden Timothy Daly, Deposition in AH Govs, Rept on Corruption, New York State Assembly Doc, 1853, II, #35, 5.

141. Edward Haynes, Deposition, ibid., 3-4.

142. Daly, ibid., 6.

143. Haynes, ibid., 3-4.

144. AH Gov Patrick Henry, Deposition, ibid., 4-5.

145. AH Govs Special Cmte, William M. Evarts, Issac Townsend, Jonathan I. Coddington, Edward C. West, Rept. ibid., 11-2.

146. Ibid., 13-4.

147. Ibid., 2.

148. Henry, Deposition to Supreme Court, ibid., 17-20.

149. Former Penitentiary Ast Keeper Issac Britton, Affidavit #119 in Flagg, Rept with Affidavits Taken Before Recorder...on Alleged Abuses in City Government, 1520-3; Keen, Affidavit #138, ibid., 1568-9. Keen said that Britton had been caught asleep and had carelessly allowed some prisoners to escape. Britton said that

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Keen had reprimanded him twice: once for flogging an errant prisoner on his own authority and then, in another similar situation, for failing to do so.

150. Britton, Affidavit #119, ibid., 1525-7.

151. Affidavits #s 120-136, ibid., 1528-1566. Policeman Jeremiah Fowler, formerly captain of the Blackwell's Island Cookhouse submitted "Exhibits:" "A" was a count of Middle House beef and pork, "B" of "hogs and pigs," and "C" of marrow for 1849 and 1850. Affidavit #125, pp. 1541-6. Deputy Warden Jacob Ridabock said that the Department supplied all kinds of foodstuffs for which Keen deducted board from officers' pay, including "a boar...not fit to be used by a human being." Ridabock told Keen he should not subject himself "to be talked about among the keepers; that it was food not fit to be eaten; he told me he was glad I had spoken about it; after that I saw no more of it on the table." Affidavit #120, pp. 1529-30.

152. AH Gov Richard S. Williams, Affidavit #137, ibid., 1567-8. Note that Williams was the only former Commissioner among the Governors, having served in the Titus administration of 1842 and knew Keen from then. A member of the Governors' Penitentiary Committee, Williams professed "no knowledge" or "recollection" of any misdeeds by Keen. The most he might have taken might have been "a few vegetables from the garden and even of this I have no knowledge, except that I suppose he, as well as all the keepers did." Keen was "liberal" and readily entertained "ministers and others coming to this Island." Williams had "full confidence in his integrity." The charges were "groundless."

153. Keen, Affidavit #138, ibid., 1569-70.

154. AH Govs, Minutes, August 25, 1857, 456-60.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 6

THE ALMSHOUSE PROPER

As the first of the City's institutions, the Almshouse "proper" served as the prototype for all others which followed. An understanding of the basic dynamics and procedures of the most general facility is fully applicable to the specialized operations, providing proper adjustments are made for differences arising out of the very purpose of specialization - which was classification and slightly differential treatment of the various categories of poor. In 1825 the Bridewell, Penitentiary, maniac wards, children's arrangements, and even Bellevue Hospital's medical and surgical functions were all merely incidental appendages of the Almshouse proper. By 1860, the Almshouse proper, while still important, had dwindled proportionately to the status of only one among half a dozen specialized facilities. Having lost its dominance in an era of diversification and specialization, the original generic institution remained the public home for the aged and disabled, adopting that group as its specialty.

The public Almshouse cared for a group that few others bothered with. Private charities chose their beneficiaries while the City was legally obliged to accommodate, in one or another fashion, anybody objectively eligible for assistance. There thus arose a class division among the poor between those deemed worthy of help by private

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

organizations and those "considered undeserving of our aid" and "only fit subjects for the Alms House." The Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor condemned "indiscriminate" private donations to people "accustomed to avail themselves of the public provision made for them at the Alms House, and who leave it in the summer to pass a few months in idleness, and return to it again when other means fail."[1] Only the virtuous and humble poor should be spared both "suffering" and "the degradation of Alms House relief."[2] The private charity establishment quite consciously left the less personable poor to public care.

Residents of the Almshouse proper included women in classic dependent situations, the indigent aged, disabled, injured, and chronically ill, assorted social outcasts, ethnic minorities, alcoholics, and vagrants. Women usually comprised more than half the population. Admissions records labeled a woman "married," "widow," or "spinster." There were many "women with infants, some of them very respectable and most of them married" who were abandoned and unsupported. The Almshouse Warden found them "very useful." The did "nearly all the washing and scrubbing" and were "entitled to be well taken care of."[3] In certain years high desertion rates increased the Almshouse burden. Commissioner Moses G. Leonard reported that one effect of the Mexican War was that abandonment was of "more frequent occurence

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

than previously" and that wives crowded his office

> in the most abject despair, though with a slight hope they can be successful in their expectation they often apply to have restored to them their erring husbands, who, in some unthinking moments, have sealed their desertion by enlistment in the army. The rashness of the act is equalled only by the arbitrary bonds by which they are retained in their new position; and it is a matter of much difficulty to again place them in their families' household.

However difficult, since the wives had to go to the Almshouse and the children to the Nurseries, it became a "duty" to intervene with the military to effect the release of large numbers of husbands.[4]

Many circumstances besides desertion made the City a surrogate husband. There were many "elderly women, widows as well as spinsters, having no relatives" who sewed, knitted, and served as ward nurses. There was also a "small number of women, who are committed by their husbands or relatives to prevent them from indulging in spiritous liquors, to which habit they are addicted." Most were "industrious" when sober but some were "troublesome" and "quarrelsome" and had to be "reprimanded frequently." Finally, there were a "great number of insane, idiotic, and epileptic women" who needed "close watching to prevent bodily injury."[5]

The aged and disabled were a large and important category of residents. All agreed with Commissioner Leonard that the "entirely superannuated"[6] and the "infirm, decrepid, and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

imbecile" should be exempt from labor requirements and accorded gentle and kind treatment.[7] "The people of the Almshouse are not unemployed," wrote Superintendent Eells, "but it must be borne in mind that there are several hundred inmates who, from old age, paralysis, or decrepitude, require the constant attention of a large number of the more vigorous."[8] A decade later the Warden described the same group: "those, who are, through old age or a crippled condition, unable to support themselves" and "insane, idiotic, and epileptic men, who, though not so numerous as the women, require as careful watching."[9]

It was for these people that the institution was intended in a sincere spirit of benevolence. Despite its numerous structural defects, said Leonard,

> in the Alms House "proper," as it is termed, we have an institution well calculated to be what it purports; a glance through its various rooms will show the comfort enjoyed by many an aged and infirm dependent - some have been there for many years, and it is to them an asylum of happiness in their declining years.[10]

Alderman Clarkson Crolius, Jr. seconded this ideal of "comfortable asylums, where the hungry are fed, the parched tongue refreshed, and the progress of decrepit age made easy to the tomb." Unfortunately, the City's poor establishments were "so crammed" with immigrant vagrants "as to render them places of torture" to the virtuous.[11] But whatever the assessment of practical accomplishment, everyone agreed on the mission to cater conscientiously to the needs of the benign poor, to the elderly and disabled.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Alcoholics and vagrants were the most troublesome class of residents. Since these were not the benign poor for whom the Almshouse was intended, reformers like Leonard and Crolius called for a Workhouse. But this institution was slow in coming and even after its completion there remained in the Almshouse proper many alcoholics "unable to obtain employment."[12] Prior to the opening of the Workhouse, any vagrant who applied to the Department for assistance would likely be admitted to the Almshouse proper, if there was room there - otherwise, reluctantly given outdoor relief.

Many saw alcohol as the main cause of pauperism. In 1834 the Almshouse Clerk told a temperance reformer that of 5,000 public dependents, "nine-tenths were such from intemperance, directly or indirectly."[13] The Department's efforts to suppress the use of alcohol were quite unsuccessful. There were even times when if an inmate wanted to remain sober, electoral bribery raised temptation. A "ticket" for liquid refreshment was offered to John Frederick for his vote but he "did not take it, as I do not drink liquor. I am a temperance man."[14]

Social minorities were heavily represented in the Almshouse population. Though immigrants came to dominate, there were also many blacks - as said in 1830, "an undue proportion of freed Slaves."[15] They naturally turned to the Almshouse for what little succor they might find against the harsh treatment accorded them in New York City. Within the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

institution, they were segregated by wards. Records identified them with the notation "bl.," - after 1840, "col." beside their names. The Whigs were far more sympathetic to the plight of blacks both within and without the Almshouse than were the Democrats who were more attuned to the needs of immigrants.

Mayor Aaron Clark juxtaposed Tammany's solicitude for foreigners with the abject circumstances of the City's "colored people...entitled to the protection of our laws" but unjustly deprived of "patronage" by the "increasing influx of needy immigrants." They were driven into the "foulest conditions of life...corners, cellars and dens, where virtue cannot breathe..."[16] But the black Almshouse wards were worse than the dens, according to the Engs Commissioners. Although the Targee Commissioners had left the entire Department in poor condition,

> In the Building assigned to colored subjects, was an exhibition of squalid misery and its concomitants, never witnessed by your Commissioners in any public receptacle for even the most abandoned dregs of human society. Here, where the healing art had objects for its highest commisseration, was a scene of neglect, and filth, and putrefication, and vermin. Of system or subordination there was none. The same apparrel and the same bedding, had been alternately used by the sick, the dying, the convalescent, and those in health, for a long period...one room was such that it would have created contagion as the warm season came on; the air seeming to carry poison with every breath. It was a scene, the recollections of which are too sickening to describe...[17]

With such conditions considered acceptable by the party

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

usually in power and with the Irish, who were not their best friends among other ethnic groups, far outnumbering them, perhaps publicly dependent blacks may have benefited from a new segregation policy inaugurated by the American Republicans. In September 1844 the Nativist Commissioners announced that they had negotiated an agreement with the Colored Home, a private institution located at Fortieth Street and Fourth Avenue, for "subsistence of all the colored persons that are now at Bellevue, or may apply to be received there" at the rate of fifty cents each per week. The Department would "retain the supervision and disposition of them." The immediate objective was mainly financial. The average cost of supporting a pauper was ninety cents per week but "in that part appropriated to colored persons" it was $1.25 because of "the limited number in proportion to the means required to sustain them in a separate apartment."[18] Nobody ever considered desegregation for a moment. The Home's public function was officially classified and reported as "another section of the Alms-House proper, though under a somewhat different arrangement."[19] This system provided "a proper separation," as Commissioner Leonard put it, and was "otherwise...advantageous."[20] At the end of 1847 there were 280 public dependents in the private facility;[21] a decade later, 242.[22] The arrangement seemed to work well and the contract was annually renewed until long after 1860.

Despite the City's attempts at classification, institutional

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

specialization, and physical and moral improvement, the various poor were crowded together in increasingly foul and chaotic living conditions. In theory, they were to be provided for decently, but modestly, and closely supervised; in fact there was a great deal of laxity and confusion.

There was a constant guerilla war between the Almshouse inmates and the City: an economic war focusing on consumption and a social war focusing on rules and discipline. The policy of institutionalization was supposed to enable the City to regulate the use of resources by public dependents and their moral behavior. Though the government had the advantage in this struggle, its control over the poor was precarious and often seemed on the verge of a complete breakdown; the inmates would lie, sneak, and steal and proliferate prodigiously.

The cardinal governing principle of relieving paupers was only occasionally explicitly stated but was even more fundamental than that of internal classification: the doctrine of less eligibility. This meant that the nonworking poor must never enjoy a standard of living superior to that of the lowest class of working poor. As Robert M. Hartley explained:

> The first and most essential of all conditions, is the establishment of a line of distinction, between the pauper and the independent laborer. That the situation of the pauper on the whole, shall not be made really or apparently as eligible as the situation of the independent laborer of the lowest class, is a principle universally admitted, even by those whose practice is at variance with it. All experience has shown, that in proportion as the condition of the pauper class is elevated above the condition of the independent laborer, the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> the condition of the independent class is depressed, their industry impaired, and the strongest inducements presented for such persons to quit the class of eligible laborers and to enter the more eligible class of paupers.[23]

Dietary consultant John Stanton Gould applied this standard specifically to the regulation of food intake. Any amount of nourishment which increased a pauper's weight was excessive

> because the great body of the laboring class do not obtain food enough to increase their weight, and I believe the united experience of all nations shows that it is a capital error to feed paupers and prisoners <u>better</u> than the corresponding class in society who rely upon their own exertions for support. By doing so, you offer a premium to pauperism and vice, and destroy the spirit of independence and self-reliance among the laboring classes, which is the most active spring of industry and the surest guaranty they possess for their own elevation in society.[24]

A Grand Juror told Alderman Briggs that a certain low grade of tea was "of a good quality of that kind, sound and not poisonous, as many of the laboring class use it as a common beverage" even though "he would not drink it and believed it unfit for hospital use."[25] While there was a realization that sick patients and convicts at hard labor needed more or better food than ordinary residents, the basic axiom remained that no pauper of whatever category should live as well as did the working class. The latter did not live well.

The process of institutionalization began with commitment or voluntary application for public care. This was not

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a brief step. Applicants went to the Office of the Commissioners or Governors in the Old Almshouse or, after 1848, in the more spacious Rotunda and "extensions." The first three stories and basement of this building were allocated to the Department's central offices and intake section but were of sufficient size for neither.

The scene was grueling and chaotic. In 1829 a proposal to move prisons into the Old Almshouse failed largely because "the Commissioners of the Alms House are here accommodated and not unfrequently 400 or 500 persons are here waiting to be examined and relieved by them."[26] Commissioner Leonard said sarcastically that "strangers seeking information have difficulty in discovering" the well hidden Rotunda "but it can scarcely be said that those seeking alms, or 'their rights' as some of them term it suffer much wearied searching in finding the exact spot." Once they found it they waited for attention in an atmosphere which Leonard described for the benefit of the well to do, few of whom, he felt, had "any knowledge of the amount of assistance required in our community." Visitors often stumbled upon the office accidentally in passing or in their pursuit of some type of public business

> and frequently, when as strangers having business at our offices, and noticing dense crowds of human beings, of various countries, colors, and ages, filling the rooms and passage ways, to the extent of nearly preventing ingress and egress, they visit the Department, they cannot refrain from exhibiting both sorrow and surprise,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> naturally led, by a feeling of inquiry, as well as humane interest, they often protract their stay to become informed of the diversified causes of complaint, and, as they leave, they feel indisposed to ever enter the rooms again, feelingly desiring to never witness a repetition of so sad a spectacle as mere accident brought into their view.
>
> Humanity, from the earliest infantile existence, through all the periods of childhood and maturity, to the extreme limits of advanced age, our offices are the scene of its plaintive supplication. Infants abandoned - just breathing their first moments, unclothed in some instances, in others conveyed hither as found in the public streets, in the rudest enclosures - find a home among us. Numbers of poor, half clad and nearly starved, are daily presented led by disconsolate mothers and not infrequently by sorrow stricken fathers, to ask a shelter and protection. No work, no resources, and vicious habits are the alleged causes of these picures of misery...
>
> Often crowds of the sick and exhausted surround us, infected with disease of every character, some of them in their last stage of existence, and fretting out the term of life - the most piteous poverty. Some, when brought in in carts, are scarcely able to draw a breath, and in several instances they have died on the floor from the sheerest exhaustion; some are wrung with the convulsive agonies of delerium tremens, epilepsy, hysteria, and cholera; some are wandering in the wildest incoherence of mania, and not infrequently, some women, whilst awaiting their turn to obtain the alms sought for, are seized with the pains of parturition, and, ere they have time to leave, give birth to their offspring.[27]

Those who survived an interminable wait in this setting told their stories to a Commissioner or the Agent. A decision regarding eligibility for assistance and classification was then made and the applicant was then either denied any help at all, given outdoor relief, or assigned to the Almshouse proper or one of the specialized institutions.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Those who were to be institutionalized were transported by horse and carriage to Bellevue or to the pier at Sixty-first Street and then, by unreliable ferry, to Blackwell's Island. The dock was an open air version of the Rotunda, perhaps worse. Inmates waited for hours, even in inclement weather, without "shelter" or "protection...from the frequent obstructed navigation of the river by ice."[28] After removal of the Almshouse proper in 1848, its inmates joined those going to specialized institutions at the

> wharf...used...as a general depot for the public exhibition of drunken vagrants, felons, &c., as well as maniacs, cases of small pox, and other infectious diseases, while the persons of many of them are often indecently exposed, and they are in the habit of using the most obscene language, thus corrupting the morals and jeapordizing the health of large numbers of children and others who daily congregate together, out of curiosity, to witness these rare scenes of moral degradation and depravity - a notorious public nuisance...[29]

After arrival at the Almshouse, the pauper was further classified and assigned to living quarters by sex and, insofar as possible, by social class background or behavioral expectations. Bellevue had male and female wards; reflecting a needed expansion of scale, Blackwell's Island Almshouse consisted of a building for each sex.[30] Segregation by gender might only rarely be waived "in the cases of aged married persons who might be permitted to live together."[31] The ward assignment was generally recorded in the admissions register.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Living conditions in the Almshouse were Spartan at best, squalid at worst. Construction was shoddy, repairs delayed, and conveniences few. Classification and social separation were more easily accomplished in theory than in actuality. There was chronic overcrowding, particularly bad in the winter, which continued throughout the period despite removal, expansion, or any other reform expedient.

Bellevue provoked many early criticisms of the "great number of inmates at certain seasons; the miserably constructed buildings without ventilation; the impossibility of separating the respective grades of paupers."[32] Unsurprisingly, ten years later the same "present accommodations" were deemed "entirely inadequate to the demands upon the public charity." During the winter of 1842-3, the House was "crowded to its utmost capacity."[33] By Moses G. Leonard's administration the problem had become a crisis: Bellevue was "constantly filled with paupers, and at various periods numbers have had to occupy the garrets and cellars. The Dead House recently erected had to be opened for their admission. The Chapel also has been converted into sleeping apartments and shanties built...a tolerable substitution for a suitable receptacle." The Commissioner had to abandon one of his cherished pauper labor projects "to make room for the increasing influx of immigrant paupers - the basements and lofts that had been converted into work-shops and the building... had to be used for the occupation of the inmates and thus arrested for a season the labor system."[34] In 1847 the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chapel, Deadhouse, garrets, and cellars were again opened to "those who by adverse circumstances were thrown into the Alms House, arising from the immense emigration in the early portion of the year." The Department "scarcely afforded a provision for ample shelter" to the new immigrants since the House was "already so full of those who had arrived previously, and those whose destitution was so extrame that the City has been obliged to keep many of them to the present time."[35]

The new Blackwell's Island Almshouse was almost immediately similarly overcrowded. By the end of the decade of the ten Governors' rule, the situation was approaching another crisis; the "present buildings" were "by no means adequate to the large number of Inmates, which is increasing every year." The Warden described the effects on residents' daily lives, as well as calling attention to the inferior accommodations accorded the women, despite the supposed uniformity of shelter provisions:

> The Male Department has, besides the large Dining Room, 28 Wards, in each of them can be placed not over 26 bed steads, so that the whole can accommodate 728 persons, but the present number is 917, the rest of them are obliged to sleep on the floor. The Female Building being of the same size, will give accommodation for the same number; but there being no dining-room, the females have to take their meals in the wards; a common dining-room for this Department, would greatly add to the comfort and cleanliness, and at the same time prevent waste of food and provisions.[36]

Even had there been adequate space, physical conditions

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

also depended on the quality of initial workmanship and the degree of repair of the buildings. During the very first year of occupation the new Blackwell's Island Almshouse buildings were "much out of repair; and gradually decaying" and needed "immediate attention." Walls were damaged; ceilings were collapsing, and balconies and piazzas were rotting from water. A barn was needed to keep straw for bedding and hay for cattle, "the place now occupied being unfit for that use."[37] Despite the enormous investment in new buildings, the most important details were forgotten. The Warden had to remind the Governors of

> the absolute necessity of erecting a suitable building for washing, ironing, and drying the clothes of the inmates. The entire absence of facilities for such purpose is the cause of endless embarrassment, not only to those whose duty it is to perform this part of the labor of the Institution, but to the undersigned, many women being obliged at this inclement season of the year to wash in the open air, and in bad weather, to do their drying in the sleeping apartments of the inmates.[38]

Worse than the crowding or the structural problems was the indifference and neglect of internal conditions by many administrations. The Engs Commissioners found the female section under the "excellent" Matron, Mrs. Johnson, in "good order and cleanly condition." But this only "exhibited a silent rebuke to the contrast in other parts of the house." Her miracle of order was performed despite "clothing and bedding...so deficient as to render it extremely difficult to afford the requisite changes...demanded by the ties of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

humanity." The male section was "in a filthy and ragged condition...Complaints of poor and scant provisions, and of unavailing applications for relief in these particulars were numerous and voluntary. Many were without shirts; their other clothing in miserable condition, destitute of sheets and blankets...bedding...not clean." Their eating hall displayed "far from decent cleanliness" and was bereft of "dishes and spoons, and the occupants were found using their fingers, instead...to take up their food." The only provisions on the premises were 50 gallons of molasses, half a barrel of pork, some rice, a bit of sugar, and three cords of wood - no coal, meal, flour, or potatoes. There were "no arrangements for cleansing and washing paupers when received, and the bathing house, at the dock, was used as a privy."[39] Engs improved housekeeping and the facility was probably never as badly neglected thereafter but standards were capriciously variable.

Besides shelter, the House provided clothing, generally a uniform "pauper gray" but with some degree of adjustment to fit the season and the mode of labor of the wearer. Inmates manufactured most of their own clothing which was crude, at best.[40]

The most important item of assistance, the biggest regular expense, and the most sensitive indicator of living standards was food. The quality and quantity of the food allotted varied depending on the policies and practices of the political parties and the whims of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

their officers, at least until the advent of the stable and scientific rule of the ten Governors.

Democrats were haphazard, Whigs more systematic in the task of determining food intake for residents. The Engs Commissioners stressed that the diet should be "sound and wholesome" with paupers receiving "a better quality" than prisoners. There should be salt provisions in summer to "check a disposition to bowel complaints generally attaching to persons who become inmates of these establishments." Some of the Commissioners visited other cities with a view toward studying comparative nutritional economy and found from "an accurate tabular statement" in Baltimore that savings could be achieved by converting to "superfine, or scratched wheat flour...at least five per cent more economical than the 'fine,'" especially considering New York's "standard of inspection," the "highest in the country."[41] Superintendent Eells found a simpler way to save, boasting to the Council that "the bread, heretofore supplied, had been reduced nearly six thousand pounds, weekly, without any sensible privation to the inmates, but thereby diminishing the quantity wasted by excessive supply." Of course it was a matter of opinion what was "excessive." Eells planned to reduce the intake further "in accordance with the opinion of all men of experience that one pound per capitum was an ample supply per day" considering other items in the diet."[42]

Less calculating, the Democrats probably allowed a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

greater quantity of food but their nonchalance could be injurious. Dr. Hasbrouck did not bother to transmit his patients' complaints about tea and butter because he "knew the contracts would expire at the end of the year" which would be the "proper time" to get the matter "rectified." Since patients were "in the habit of complaining of many things," the doctor "made light of it until my Assistants complained...The inmates are very apt to complain of almost everything, and I think they often complain without good reason."[43] The complainers must indeed have had difficulty in deciding whether they were better off under Tammany carelessness or Whig economy.

The Almshouse diet consisted of the same items that dominated the expense budgets: crude beef, bread, potatoes, beans, molasses, and similar staples. In the 1850s breakfast consisted of a half pound of bread and 3/8 of an ounce of coffee; supper was the same ration of bread and a half an ounce of tea. Dinner for working men consisted of a pound of fresh beef or a half pound of beef and half of pork, and half a pound of bread on a typical weekday, supplemented twice a week by three and a half pints of bean or beef and vegetable soup and on Saturday with a pound of potatoes. Three quarters of a pound of codfish replaced the meat on Friday. Women and unemployables received meat less often during the week, eating instead Indian meal and molasses. There were supplements of pork, rice, and incidental items.[44]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The inmates might have complained even more loudly than they did had they known of the full extent of some reformers' designs on their diet. In the 1850s the experts first turned their serious attention to theory and experiment in the undeveloped science of large scale institutional nutrition and general management. The Commissioners of Emigration and the Governors of the Almshouse together commissioned a pioneering study by John Stanton Gould which illustrated perfectly how the ideal of economic efficiency could be served by scientific inquiry and planning. Gould wanted to ascertain the "least amount and cheapest kind of food" able to support a pauper and still "preserve his health and strength," "by what process of cookery can the nutriment in any kind of food be most thoroughly extracted," what factors influence digestion, and the "relative values of all the usual varieties of aliments, with a view toward the establishment of a scale of their dietetic equivalents." He sought ways of "preventing peculation and waste," hints on warming and ventilating rooms, and means of employing paupers at labor. The whole idea was to "learn how prisoners and paupers could be supported with the least burden to the community and with the greatest benefit to themselves." There were many obstacles to such a study: the incomparability of different institutions in many respects and, especially, the "little attention" ever paid before to nutrition, even by specialists in mass feeding like Army provision officers and hotel

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

keepers. "Not one would admit that he ever thought of the question before." Dietary information was simply "not in existence. It remains to be created."[45]

Gould created it out of an examination of several institutions worldwide and a review of the rudimentary, eclectic brand of biochemistry then available. Details of the theory included the need for food to be in its proper "mechanical form" and the importance of "ozmazone, the substance which gives to meat its peculiar taste."[46] The analysis postulated the existence of "nitrogenized compounds for muscles and tissues and carbonaceous compounds for respiration." The problem was that, in some institutions, like the New York City Almshouse, paupers gained weight after admission. This indicated excessive feeding and therefore gross inefficiency. The House should not add to, only maintain an inmate's weight. Some of the food in the Almshouse should be diminished in quantity. Returning to the theory, the "first practical question" was "shall we reduce the amount of carbonaceous or nitrogenous food?" The researcher proposed an ingenious experiment to determine the answer:

> The only method of discrimination that I am acquainted with, is to compare the amount of nitrogen in the food taken in with the amount contained in the urinary and alvine evacuations. If the nitrogen received with the food exceeds the sum of nitrogen contained in the excretions, we conclude that the increase is organic and therefore reduce the amount of nitrogenized food. If, on the contrary, the two sums are equal, we content ourselves with reducing the carbonaceous aliments.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

It would be "easy for anyone" to ascertain the nitrogen counts of various foods by means of "calculation" based on one of Gould's numerous tables. But to measure that "in the excrements would require a greater amount of chemical skill, and greater delicacy of manipulation" than most institutional researchers could achieve. However, thought Gould, perhaps such an analysis could be attempted in New York, Philadelphia, or Boston.[47] There is no evidence that the Governors ever tried such an experiment but the proposal alone indicated the extreme limit - or lack of limit - of the taste for scientific economic precision.

Gould admitted the "narrowness of the line which separates deficiency of food from sufficiency." At the British Pentonville Prison "an addition of 28 ounces of bread, $3^{1}/2$ pounds of potatoes, and 14 ounces of milk weekly, made all the difference" between weight gain and loss for most inmates. But this narrowness was the very reason to develop a more exact science of nutrition. It would be "a most interesting fact," for example, "if we could establish it, that these 6 lbs, 10 oz. of potatoes could replace the 5 lbs, 12 oz. of meat, by which the allowance at Blackwell's Island exceeds that at Pentonville" since these quantities of the two foods were thought nutritionally equivalent.[48]

In addition to providing for basic physical needs, the Almshouse was supposed to promote social order and individual moral regeneration. Though their own example was often mediocre, Council and Commissioners prescribed and Superintendents

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and Stewards enforced a regimented routine governed by House Rules designed to promote social control, security of property, and health and safety. Nobody could be admitted if "known to be under any infectious or contagious disease." Each newly admitted resident would be examined by the Physician and "be made to clean in every respect." There were to be "no ardent spirits...used...except for medical purposes." No inmate was to "go abroad, without a ticket from the Superintendent," nor "remain out after sunset" except by "special license." Begging alms from visitors or others was "positively prohibited."

Inmate "overseers or orderlies" were appointed in the wards to "see that their rooms are kept cleanly, the beds well aired, and maintain order" and report "infractions" to the Superintendent, a common means of supervising subject populations within and without institutions. Any pauper who would "waste or spoil any of the materials or tools...introduce any strong liquors...use the same, or disturb the House by quarrelling or fighting, or by profane or abusive language" or who acted with "disrespect" or "immorally in any respect" would be subject to "bread and water" provisions or discharge. All "fires and lights" were to be "extinguished" at nine o' clock in summer and at eight o' clock in winter. Residents could appeal to the Commissioners in the event of any "cruel or improper treatment" by the officers.[49]

Enforcement was often lax and it was not long before

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the manual of Rules itself vanished. The Nativists found

> a want of proper discipline...When the present Board took charge of the establishment, they supposed that each department had its rules and they accordingly gave instructions to have the old rules adhered to until otherwise ordered. Upon inquiring, however, they soon found that there were no rules for the government of the institutions, and had not been for several years and... therefore made rules...[50]

One of the most important elements of moral rehabilitation was religion. The Chaplain was a familiar and commanding figure in the Almshouse. He conducted Sunday service at the main institution, supplemented by "meetings for religious worship" on other days in the specialized institutions. He was to "regard the spiritual welfare of the inmates" and have sole religious visiting rights except by special permission of both himself and the Superintendent, according to the Rules of 1835. Inmates were "expected" to attend Sunday services.[51]

Chaplains took their charge seriously. The earliest and best known of the period was British born John Stanford, an activist in the Society for Supporting the Gospel Among the Poor,[52] who served from prior to 1825 until his retirement in 1833.[53] Stanford stressed the "assertion of the Savior, that the poor shall have the gospel preached onto them," rejoicing that Almshouse inmates "are in enjoyment of that privilege...we may say in the language of David, 'the needy shall not always be forgotten: the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

expectation of the poor shall not perish forever.'" Though their lives in the institution may have been miserable, the inmates were comforted by Stanford's sympathy and solace:

> In some of the rooms...there are frequently more or less sick, infirm, and aged persons...This year several of the more aged, who had been fostered in the Old Almshouse, as well as in the New, died in the most charming composure, and in the hope of that celebrated mansion where sin and poverty are known no more. To the invalids...I frequently deliver a discourse...to direct their tottering steps...this service seldom fails to excite both their attention and their gratitude.[54]

Stanford's successor was Henry Tappen who served until one day in November 1347 when "in the dispensation of Providence," he was "suddenly called from his sphere of usefulness, while actively engaged in the discharge of his duties, and while fervently invoking a blessing upon those who were the special objects of his charge."[55] There is no record of the paupers' reaction to expression of divine will.

Tappen's successor, William Lyall, contrasted sharply; he almost invoked damnation upon his charges. By 1848 Chapel attendance was voluntary in the Almshouse proper, though not in all other institutions; Lyall wanted it mandatory for everyone. Instead of comforting the inmates, he stressed retrubution for sin:

> A delusive hope that the threatened everlasting plagues which constitute the penalty of sin, will not be inflicted,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> prevails...it is sad to see the power of this opinion to lull the minds of so many into a false security. We often hear from the bed of death, the unwarranted hope expressed, that the Almighty will take pity on them, because of their misery, and because they have suffered so much in this life. Not having done anything very bad, according to their own account, they hope that all will be well. Some are sufficiently acute to draw an inference from their condition in the Alms House, to confirm this sort of reasoning; that as their fellow citizens pity them...so the "Father of Mercies," they hope, will not allow them to go down to endless woe; constituting themselves judges in their own cause, never thinking of their personal unfitness for heaven, they forget, or never have discerned, the strictness of God's law...Fatal dream!

Rather than searching within his own attitude for an explanation why inmates were reluctant to attend his sermons, Rev. Lyall blamed the secular Almshouse officers' similar disinclination to appear which, he said, set a poor example. To reach those who "never attend church," he decided to rely on literature and got the City Tract Society to allot him three thousand pages per month.[56]

Almshouse religion was of the quasi-official, Protestant, ostensibly nondenominational and neutral variety that so angered the Catholic immigrant spokesmen. In 1839 John V. Greenfield's Democratic Commissioners granted a Catholic application to conduct regular services at Bellevue Chapel. The Nativist Commissioners of 1844 attempted to restore Protestant exclusivity by rescinding the Greenfield order. The Council asked for an explanation "by what authority Ministers of various religious sects have been excluded from the institution and the inmates thereby prevented from

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

worshiping God agreeably to the right of conscience." Chairman Willis replied that Greenfield had granted "special privileges to the clergymen of the Catholic Church" and that his Board merely sought to "abridge a special privilege enjoyed by the Roman Catholics, that has been neither sought for nor claimed by any other of the different sects." The House had a "regular Chaplain." In order to "reform existing abuses," the Commissioners were strict about visitors, "whether clergy or laity." Moreover, "in no circumstances has permission been refused to the clergy of any denomination to visit...and clergymen are invariably sent for to attend the sick, permitting the patient to select a clergyman of his choice."[57] Still, sometimes it seemed as if even God served at the pleasure of the Common Council or the Commissioners.

The ultimate Almshouse reform was its removal away from the central city. Relocation of the House periodically to sustain its distance from the advancing line of dense settlement was an old policy of which the removal from Bellevue was merely a continuation.[58] There were a multitude of reasons for removal, including, most important, sanitation and quarantine both physical and moral, land economics, and expanded need for space due to overcrowding. The policy of removal was intricately bound up with other important reforms such as the Reorganization and the Workhouse - all of these goals emerged from a unified reform vision of a rational Department. Nobody ever questioned the necessity to remove the Almshouse proper from Bellevue to one of Manhattan's

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

satellite islands. The question was to which and the resulting controversy held up action on the project for a generation.

Assistant Alderman Henry Arcularius penned the first proposal for an Almshouse away from Bellevue. His resolution showed brilliantly the mentality of scientific salvage; he wanted to consider

> changing the mode of subsisting the Paupers... by substituting a Public Farm on the shore of one of our Rivers...in which the labor of the paupers and others under a proper classification and supervision...may be made productive in a great measure, if not wholly to support the establishment, it having a division of labour in agriculture, horticulture, and the necessary Mechanic Arts...connecting with the farm a small Steam Boat and a suitable number of Scows to transport from the City to the farm the surplus street manure, Kitchen Offals and Garbage, together with stray animals found roaming about the streets to designated places and to bring to the City markets any surplus produce...[59]

Though nothing came of this proposal at the time, the dream of disposing of all urban nuisances in one compact operation survived and many of its elements surfaced in later removal plans.

In early 1830 a Special Council Committee on Pauperism chaired by Assistant Alderman Phillip W. Engs again linked Almshouse removal to agriculture. A new facility on "an island" would "not be so subject to that visiting and being visited from the City, between the inmates of our poor house and their friends, which is attended with many and serious evils." Some applications for aid would be

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

discouraged, on the part of those who would not "deprive themselves of the liberty of free intercourse with the City, and those opportunities it too often affords for the gratification of evil habits." Besides quarantine, a proper island site would afford free water communications, farming, "health, and river fishing." The Committee considered an offer from Abraham R. Lawrence to sell part of "Great Barn" (Ward's) Island but he wanted $107,000, "far beyond its true valuation" of about $60,000. There were "other locations." Perhaps there should be an inquiry "whether Blackwell's Island cannot be cultivated."[60]

No action followed and by 1833 a tone of urgency could be heard, partly because of the epidemic of 1832. Commissioner Peters noted that the "dense population has reached too near Bellevue to allow the prevention of evil communications with the City...no delay should occur...the entire establishment should be speedily removed..." He thought, like many after him, that accommodations for everyone could be built "including the first cost of the land, for a sum far less than the Bellevue establishment would sell for."[61]

Mayor Lawrence proposed removal to Blackwell's in his inaugural of 1835.[62] But the Assistant Aldermen's Charity and Almshouse Committee, chaired by John V. Greenfield, worried about keeping the Long Island Farms in "foreign" Queens County and about placing paupers and prisoners on the same island, a "maifestly improper" policy. Those "suffering from their own crimes" should not

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

be placed with "children of misfortune and want." The City should therefore sell the Long Island Farms and commence an expanded agricultural Almshouse on Randall's Island.[63] The full Board of Assistants passed the proposal, slightly amended.[64]

The Aldermen's Charity Committee, chaired by David Banks, stressed the danger of "contagion" at Bellevue: "the cholera pestilence of 1832, which swept to the grave thousands of our fellow citizens, had its origin traced to the Alms House" and the danger of a repetition was only increased by the "approximation of the city population" to the site. The acknowledged need for removal was "irrelevant" to the question of "where" to put the House. Fears about the Queens property were "imaginary." Randall's Island was a poor choice because it was situated near unhealthy marshlands and was twice the distance from City Hall as was Blackwell's. The people of Harlem opposed the plan "considering it a nuisance and detrimental to their property." The would never permit a needed bridge to be built. Moreover, a Memorial had asked for Randall's Island to be used as a burial ground, a more appropriate use for it. Blackwell's Island, on the other hand, was "healthy" and "convenient of access" to Commissioners. Its long, narrow form allowed enough separation of the institutions to "obviate the objection that the poor and the criminals will be mixed together," said Banks with supreme confidence; "they can never come in contact with each other. The criminals are put to work

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

under guards and are locked up in their cells at night. The poor will be confined to the precincts alloted to them," at least in social theory.[65] Neither Board abandoned its pet island that year. The following year there was agreement on Blackwell's,[66] but too late for implementation.

Phillip Engs' Almshouse Commissioners declared cautiously in favor of Randall's for all but the Lunatic Asylum, but felt that if the Council were to "waive the objections to density of population...and improper vicinity of a criminal population," Blackwell's might accommodate "all, except the children," whom, it was thought, the Council would not "for a moment entertain the idea of placing on that location." Buildings should not be like "palaces," but "such as will be dictated by a sound policy, guided by a just philanthropy."[67]

The Assistants' Charity Committee, under Joseph N. Barnes, found it "highly imperative" to select a location "somewhere" for a new institution to be "pointed to with honest pride, by future generations, as the work of their forefathers in the cause of humanity." Barnes favored Randall's Island, especially for its reputed water supply.[68] There was no action. The following year, negotiations with the House of Refuge to give that agency some Bellevue land and the interdependence of physical and administrative reorganizations "having been referred," Commissioner Engs could "not now speak of a location or a plan."[69]

A new Aldermanic Charity Committee, chaired by Daniel F. Tiemann, called for speedy removal to Blackwell's with a tone

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

increasing concern. "Every consideration urged in former reports still exists," especially the "great increase in population" just since 1835. But since the Barnes Report, a well had been sunk near the Lunatic Asylum and proven the availability of the "best quality" water on Blackwell's. Furthermore the need for rigid separation of paupers and convicts was a myth. More labor than might be available from paupers alone could be needed to cultivate the land. Should such a "deficiency...occur, the neighborhood of the Penitentiary would enable a supply of criminal laborers... (under certain restrictions,) to meet" it. Now the two groups would not even necessarily be completely separated as under the Banks plan. Tiemann discounted the "impropriety and inconvenience of placing the paupers and criminals" in proximity and could not "see the objection" since they were "for several years together without inconvenience within the walls of Bellevue...A marked distinction now as then, could be preserved..."[70] It seemed forgotten that Bellevue had been deemed unacceptable partly because of this problem and that this was one of the reasons for removal.

Tiemann departed from past Blackwell's partisans by favoring the sale of "foreign" Long Island Farms and the transfer of farming and the Nurseries to Randall's Island.[71] This new configuration was the one eventually implemented. Both Council Boards passed the Tiemann plan but, again, too late for physical action.[72]

Mayor Robert Morris reopened the question in 1841 adding

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

his own specification: for several small detached buildings - a cottage plan - instead of one large one. They should not be in "one united mass," but rather "separated by large spaces of land, that the inmates may be classified, so that the virtuous and unfortunate poor will not be compelled to associate with the abandoned...their last hours...embittered by the presence and conversation of the profligate..."[73]

Peter S. Titus' Commissioners introduced the option heretofore unthinkable: placing all institutions, including the Children's Nurseries, on Blackwell's Island. Almshouse removal was the cause celebre of this Board from which all other desirable reforms would spring. There was "ample space" on Blackwell's to "contain...all the buildings" of "both establishments." Nurseries should go immediately north of the Almshouse which would be situated just north of the Penitentiary, offering "obvious" advantages of concentration. while providing an "insular position" with respect to the city.[74] The Assistants Charity Committee wanted details but a delay and confusion in communication held everything up until January, by which time the Commissioners were frantic for "immediate action." There should be a full range of facilities on Blackwell's, including a "double set of Work-Shops for paupers and for criminals." The City should offer a "premium lottery" for plans. Buildings should omit "ornament;" they should be "extensive, commodius, substantial, but, in every part... severely plain and simple." No reform could take hold at Bellevue with constant liquor smuggling and visiting. Beyond

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

discouraging new relief applications, which was a hope of most removal advocates, Titus even hoped to stimulate an exodus of disgruntled residents:

> It is stated by an officer who was connected with the Alms-House prior to its removal from Chambers Street, that at the time of that removal about three hundred of the inmates refused to go to Bellevue...remote from the city, and no facility of intercourse between the inmates and friends without...and the introduction of liquor infrequent... Should the establishment be removed to the Island...Very many would quit merely on account of the change in position.[75]

The Aldermen asked Titus for detailed plans. The Commissioners got maps and consulted an "experienced and practical architect." But a "constant succession of rains...retarded...operations." In May 1843, Titus submitted an intricate design for "buildings contemplated to endure for ages, a monument to the munificient charity of our noble city." Everything was perfectly laid out: plumbing, heating, ventilation. More detail would follow from the architect.[76] The Commissioners seemed oblivious to only one problem: it was a lame duck proposal now.

James Cook's Commissioners agreed, however, that a move to Blackwell's Island would promote the "discipline of all the institutions...by cutting off the chief of all, from direct and immediate communication with the City, bringing all under the constant supervision" of the officers. Expenses would also be much reduced.[77] The Democrats did nothing with the question that year in their Council. The Nativists' quick sale of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bellevue and abortive move to Randall's Island only created confusion. In 1845 incoming Mayor William F. Havemeyer called for detached cottages.[78] The Council appointed a Special Joint Committee to execute a decisive removal to Blackwell's Island.

Robert Hartley, General Agent of the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, published a vigorous dissent against the plan in four open letters to the Council in the Journal of Commerce. His entire philosophy of private and public philanthropy was woven into the conviction that "Blackwell's Island is ineligible for the proposed buildings" and "Randall's Island...preferred."[79] Public relief should be hard to obtain and unattractive. Private relief should address "exceptions" to general rules - unique cases - where the usual harshness would be unjust. Within the public sector, the infirm and agriculturally employable should go to a new Almshouse on Randall's Island and vagrants to a "House of Reformation" on Blackwell's.[80] Departmental reorganization had long been discussed, but also deferred until removal; thousands had been spent on plans and surveys but "owing to the lamentable policy by which the public welfare has been made subservient to political changes, the consummation of the necessary improvements has totally failed." Agriculture was more appropriate an occupation for most paupers than was mechanical industry, thought Hartley, and therefore Randall's Island was the proper Almshouse site.[81]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The new Almshouse must be located on "good and arable land." Blackwell's Island lacked enough land for even those institutions already there. It was "crowded to excess" and to triple the number of "wretched" people was a "mistake" founded on the "false principle" of exclusive reliance on mechanical labor for paupers. The plan also promoted a grievous injustice: no "merely executive body" had any right to "ride rough-shod over the hearts and sensibilities" of the virtuous poor by mixing them with criminals. To do so was "inhumane," "impolitic," and un-Christian.

Randall's Island allowed an easy water supply. It was not unhealthy as once "said," but "suitable for infants." It was "picturesque and beautiful" and had natural springs; it owed "all of its advantages to nature and nothing to culture."

The relief system was a "standing public reproach," a "crisis...in our municipal affairs." But a "false" reform like a Blackwell's Almshouse would "promote disappointment." Such a "scheme, instead of improving our charitable institutions, will render them worse...a mistake at the outset will so rivet an atrocious system upon us that it cannot be afterwards removed, but will probably extend to future generations." This was indeed a prophetic remark.

Randall's Island, on the other hand, would provide the "first installment of a great reform."[82]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Council Committee, chaired by Bernard J. Meserole, rejected both Hartley's counsel and the Mayoral preference for cottages. Removal was now an emergency; Bellevue was "already approached...soon to be surrounded, by our rapidly increasing population." Randall's Island was blocked by ice in the winter and was unhealthy due to "a large swamp." The "great length" of Blackwell's Island could accommodate all buildings except Nurseries, separated by "high walls" and achieving necessary "concentration."[83] In only one respect was this Report absolutely unique: it was implemented. Over the next two years, the Almshouse proper was finally "removed" and one of the fondest dreams of reformers thereby realized.

There were still many problems and a few unanticipated side effects of the process. Mayor William V. Brady noticed that "sufficient care is not taken" in construction of the buildings "to guard against their destruction by fire."[84] The air heating plan that had been adopted was "erroneous;" it neither saved money as expected, nor heated the buildings well. The walls that Titus, Tiemann, Meserole, and others thought would rise alongside the institutions were delayed; Superintendent Eells asked for "permanent walls or fences... across the island, separating the Alms House from the Penitentiary, and the Male and Female Alms Houses from each other," adding that "Morality, and the safety of the institutions urgently suggest this." Despite the confidence of Blackwell's advocates that wells were gushing, nobody had given proper attention to water supply; Eells begged

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

for a Croton pipeline because it took until midnight for the water to rise high enough in the wells for bakehouse use, a "material disadvantage to the institution."[85]

Reformers had always thought that removal would separate the Almshouse population from their liquor supply. Instead, rum began to flow into the Penitentiary from "free communication with the Almshouse Department." There was "abundant facility for smuggling" at the Almshouse wharf and a large "contraband trade, through...the drivers of the carts" grew up, not only in alcohol, but in tobacco and pipes.[86]

Bellevue Hospital benefited tremendously from Almshouse removal since it obtained the vacant building and achieved a "complete separation of the Hospital from the Alms House, and the consequent prevention of the annoying conflicts between the officers of each respectively" arising from their interdependence. Though it needed much refurbishing, the Almshouse building afforded "vastly superior accommodation for the sick."[87]

There was still an immediate administrative problem. As an official part of the Almshouse, Bellevue Hospital could not admit patients directly, but only by administrative transfer from the main institution or the Nurseries or Penitentiary. When Almshouse and Hospital shared the same premises, the transfer was accomplished merely on paper. After removal, the letter of the law demanded that

> all sick persons have to be received into the Alms House, and be from thence transferred to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> to the Bellevue Hospital. The Alms House having been recently removed to Blackwell's Island, it becomes necessary in order to obtain admission into the Bellevue Hospital legally, that the patient should first be sent over and received at the Alms House on Blackwell's Island, and from thence transferred back again to the Hospital at Bellevue.

This bureaucratic nonsense continued for a few months until Charity Committee Chairman Timothy Hibbard noticed it and had the Council pass an Amendment to permit the Resident Physician to admit directly and dispense with the "useless voyage" and its "fatigue, inconvenience... danger...and unnecessary labor and expense."[88]

Almshouse removal symbolized many aspects of the City's war on poverty. There was the desire to protect the poor from vicious urban influences and the converse need to expel them from society's midst. The transfer also marked the decline of the Almshouse proper from its former position of centrality. It was now one of many island facilities; soon it would be a home for the infirm. The Blackwell's option symbolized and guaranteed that the poor and the criminals would continue to be placed and managed together. Finally, and of great importance, removal would parallel and promote the interdependent and vital reforms of making the paupers work and controlling outdoor relief.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, Rept for 1845, I, 20, 30.

2. New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, Rept for 1849, VI, 24. (This run of Annual Reports is misnumbered beginning with the erroneous designation of that for 1846 as Vol. III.)

3. AH Warden, Charles P. Degreck, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1859, XI, 8.

4. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 39.

5. Degreck, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1859, XI, 8.

6. M. G. Leonard, Rept on General Conditions of Institutions, 28.

7. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 5.

8. AH Supt Marcellus Eells, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 61.

9. Degreck, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1859, XI, 8-9.

10. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 12.

11. Crolius, 87.

12. Degreck, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1859, XI, 8.

13. AH Clerk E. M. Guion, Statement on Intemperance in Samuel Chipman, Rept on Examination of Poor-Houses, Jails, &c. in the State of New York...addressed to Aristarchus Champion, Esq. of Rochester (Executive Committee of New York State Temperance Society, Albany, 1834), 41.

14. John Frederickson, Affidavit in Van Nostrand et al., Rept on Male Paupers Voting, 507.

15. MCC, XVIII, March 1, 1830, 575. There were also plenty of "lazy vagrant whites."

16. Clark, Cmctn on Quarantine Laws and Alien Passengers in Patterson and Randall, 72-3.

17. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 204.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

18. Aldmn Proc, XXVII, September 23, 1844, 503-4.

19. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1846, Asts Doc, XXIX, #30, February 22, 1847, 386.

20. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 37.

21. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 28.

22. AH Govs, Rept for 1857, IX, xv.

23. Robert M. Hartley, [First] Letter on Removal of AH from Bellevue in New York Journal of Commerce, August 30, 1845.

24. John Stanton Gould, Rept on Diet with Observations on the Dietetical Regimen, suited for Almshouses, Prisons, and Hospitals; also on heating, ventilation, &c. with Practical Recommendations, Prepared at Request of of Board of Commissioners of Emigration and Board of Governors of New-York Alms House Department (New York, 1852), 24.

25. Briggs, 613.

26. MCC, XVIII, December 21, 1829, 438.

27. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 28, 39-9.

28. Greenfield et al., Cmctn on Purchase of Property at BI Ferry in S. Bradhurst, Vandervoort, Penny, Rept on same, 484-5.

29. Jeremiah Towle, Cmctn in Kelly and Adams, 478.

30. Mason Andrew Brady and Corporation Counsel James T. Brady and Comptroller John Ewen for City of New York, Specifications of Mason Work and Materials for New AH About to be Erected on BI for Corporation of City of New York, Special Contracts A, October 8, 1845, 3. The "Description" begins with a statement emphasizing the preoccupation with conformity of detail and order, as well as sexual segregation: "There are to be two entirely separate departments which are to be alike in every particular: one for the males and the other for the females."

31. Meserole et al., 92.

32. Peters, 115.

33. Titus et al., Rept on Removal to BI of AH Establishment, 1394.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

34. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1846, 373-4.

35. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 10-1.

36. Degreck, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1859, XI, 7.

37. Fitch, AH Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 23-4.

38. Fitch, AH Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 23.

39. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 203-4.

40. AH Distribution of Clothing, Ms. Vol. 0245, 1853-7, most entries for 1852-4. This volume recorded issuance of items like short gowns, aprons, handkerchieves, caps, stockings, and shoes; Workhouse Supt Keen, Table Showing Number and Kinds of Articles Manufactured in Shops in Workhouse Dept in AH Govs, Rept for 1855, VII, 158-61.

41. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 223-4.

42. Aldmn Proc, XXX, June 14, 1847, 118.

43. F. Hasbrouck, Testimony in Charlick et al., 660.

44. Gould, 74.

45. Ibid., 5-8.

46. Ibid., 14-5.

47. Ibid., 25. Gould found that prison food in most cities was "much fuller" than Almshouse food but the New York City Almshouse "forms an exception; its diet is a prison diet, and as it exceeds all other Alms Houses in the amount of food, and as the uniform increase of weight among its inmates shows that they receive more than sufficient to repair the waste of the system, and as the fare is better than that enjoyed by the self-sustaining poor in the vicinity, I think it is clear that it may be safely reduced. P. 26. The irony here is that plumpness did not necessarily indicate overfeeding but probably the wrong kind of diet - too much starch and, probably, a lack of proper exercise. The inmates were probably suffering from chronic malnutrition despite the supposed weight gain, indeed, in connection with it.

48. Ibid., 15.

49. AH Cmsrs [unidentified], Rules for Government of AH Establishment of the City of New York (New York, 1835), 4-6, 8, 10.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

50. Van Nostrand et al., Cmctn on Abuses, 398.

51. AH Cmsrs, Rules..., 6.

52. Mohl, 162, 193-5.

53. AH Chaplain John Stanford, Cmctn upon Resignation, Asts Doc, II (First run), #42, January 2, 1833, 255-8.

54. Stanford, Rept for 1824 (New York, 1825), 4, 6-7.

55. Ords, XV, November 11, 1847, 206.

56. AH Chaplain William Lyall, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 186-8.

57. Willis, Cmctn on Exclusion of Ministers of Various Religious Sects, Aldmn Doc, XI, #14, July 29, 1844, 177-9. Commissioner Nicholas Schureman had dissented from the pro-Catholic Greenfield policy in 1839. Ibid., 178.

58. Mohl, 83-6.

59. MCC, XV, November 20, 1826, 699-700.

60. Common Council Special Cmte on Pauperism, Phillip W. Engs, Peter I. Nevius, James N. Wells, Peter Cooper, William Scott, Rept on Purchase of Barn Island as Suitable Place for Farm Connected with AH, May 31, 1830, 5, 8.

61. Peters, 115-6.

62. Mayor C. W. Lawrence, Message to Council, Asts Doc, II (Second run), #1, May 18, 1835, 9.

63. Asts CCAH, John V. Greenfield, Daniel P. Ingraham, Aaron Clark, Rept in Favor of Removing AH Establishment to RI and Selling LIF, Doc, II (Second run), #4, June 29, 1835, 40-3.

64. Asts Resolutions Reported by CCAH in Doc #4, as Amended and Adopted, Doc, II (Second run), #10, July 15, 1835, 95 or 103 (mispaginated).

65. Banks, Labagh, Nixon, Rept Against Rept and Resolutions of Asts Recommending AH and LIF Establishments be Removed to RI, 595-600. This Committee ignored the disinclination of the Assistants to use Randall's for a cemetery precisely because of their intention to put the Almshouse there. Daniel P. Ingraham served on both the Assistants Charity and their Lands and Places Committees; the latter was handling the burial ground relocation. See below, chapter 13.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

66. Aldmn CCAH, Banks, Issac Varian, Aaron Clark, Rept Favoring Removal of AH to BI, Doc, II (Second run), #104, February 27, 1837, 674-8. Clark changed his position from the previous year when he had favored Randall's. He really agreed with most any removal plan that stood a chance of implementation. Asts CCAH, Henry Erben, Joseph R. Taylor, William Welles Holly, Rept Concurring with Aldmn CCAH, April 24, 1837 in Aldmn CCAH, Daniel F. Tiemann, J. Phillips Phoenix, James H. Cook, Rept on Removal of AH, Aldmn Doc, VI, #22, September 23, 1839, 297. This document, pp. 266-97 reproduces previous Council Reports on the subject.

67. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 212.

68. Asts CCAH, Joseph N. Barnes, W. W. Holly, Ellis Potter, Rept in Favor of Removing Blvu Establishment to RI, Doc, X, #90, October 16, 1837, 272-3. Holly now changed his position from endorsement of Blackwell's the previous year.

69. Engs, Nathan et al., 154.

70. Tiemann, Phoenix, Cook, 261-3.

71. Ibid., 264-5.

72. Asts Jnl, XV, March 23, 1840, 256-7.

73. Morris, Message to Council for 1841, 5-6.

74. Titus et al., Cmctn to Council, 214-5.

75. Titus et al., Rept on Accommodation of All AH Buildings on BI, Aldmn Doc, IX, #92, February 13, 1843, 926, 933-6.

76. Titus et al., Rept on Removal to BI of All Establishment, 1384-8, 1394. Meanwhile the Aldermen's Special Committee on Reorganization issued a Report in substantial agreement with everything said by the Commissioners and with the same tone of urgency and linking removal to administrative restructuring and the establishment of a Workhouse. Aldmn Special Cmte on Reorganization, Lee, Jones, John Stewart, Rept on Resolution to Make Application to Legislature for Permission to Appoint Cmsrs to Erect Buildings on BI, Doc, IX, #94, March 6, 1843, 1011-7. This Report also came too late to follow through with any action.

77. Cook et al., 253-4.

78. Havemeyer, Message to Council for 1845, 12-3.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

79. Hartley, [First] Letter on Removal..., August 30, 1845.

80. Hartley, [Second] Letter on Removal..., New York Journal of Commerce, August 31, 1845.

81. Hartley, [Third] Letter on Removal..., New York Journal of Commerce, September 2, 1845.

82. Hartley, [Fourth] Letter on Removal..., New York Journal of Commerce, September 3, 1845.

83. Meserole et al., 92, 94-5, 98.

84. W. V. Brady, 6.

85. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 47-8; Eells, Rept, ibid., 61, 64-5.

86. Penitentiary Warden Keen, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 122.

87. Reese, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 88.

88. Asts Jnl, XXXII, September 4, 1848, 433-5; Ords, XVI, October 12, 1848, 174.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 7

THE IMPERATIVE OF LABOR

Cleanliness, Godliness, and every other tenet of institutional morality and discipline took a decided second place to the value of industry. The goal of extracting labor from the paupers and prisoners was the paramount reform purpose and pervaded all measures for betterment. Labor was both a moral and a financial imperative. Other reforms might cost money and be seen as investments; pauper industry promised to pay off quite directly. The double moral and financial edge gave labor its peculiar appeal to reformers as a panacea.

Everybody agreed upon the need to make paupers work. Mayors, like Issac Varian, called for "a different mode of providing for the poor...requiring from those receiving public charity such labor as they are able to perform." This would "reduce the cost" and "lessen the number claiming public assistance."[1] Commissioners, like Phillip Engs' Board, boasted that they brought "into operation all the labor of the inmates, and no one is allowed to remain idle who is capable of performing the slightest service."[2] The Nativist Charity Committeemen proclaimed most clearly the universal goal: "making LABOR the uniform condition of relief to the able-bodied poor."[3] Although the entire body of reform literature emphasized the point, Moses G. Leonard was unquestionably the most

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

eloquent theoretician and the most creative inventor in this area, as in others. He virtually worshiped the principle of pauper and prison labor, singing the praises of such a reform on almost literally every page of his writings. Arriving in office, he advised the Council that

> the great...the only means of effecting any considerable reduction in the expenses of the Alms-House Department, is the introduction of some system of suitable labor for the employment of all paupers and prisoners who are not patients at the Hospitals; and many of even the invalids might under proper medical directions be enabled to add their physical assistance...
>
> Believing that employment, even though it may not turn to very great advantages pecuniarily from the direct result of the labor, is much better for the inmates themselves than idleness - that it serves to discipline, and have a decidedly beneficial effect upon the police regulations of the Institutions, as well as to lessen the numbers of those who seek the Alms House for a Home, there to indulge their idle and vicious propensities; enjoying a comfortable provision at the public expense; and that it will teach them (perhaps many... for the first time in their lives) that great and most important of all lessons - to wit - <u>self-dependence</u>. Make the pauper, who has the physical strength find some suitable channel for the exercise of his capacity, and feel that he is able to earn a subsistence, and our records of harboured pauperism will not present the meloncholy picture now portrayed to the astonished view of the world- he will look out for another home, and perhaps his degradation will at once cease, and the natural energies of human economy place him in a position to answer the beneficient design of his Creation. Liberty is too highly valued by most persons to be voluntarily surrendered unless in exchange for some presumed needed expedient, and I shall entirely despair of rendering any essential service...unless my efforts meet with your sanction, in lessening the burden of inefficiency borne by the existing Alms-House provision.[4]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

All basic legislation mandated pauper labor. The Ordinance of 1832 simply said that those capable of work should be "furnished with suitable employment."[5] The Revision of 1834 added the helpful provision that the Superintendent have "the power...to reward the industrious with small gratuities."[6] House Rules carefully assigned supervision of agricultural and housekeeping tasks. The Long Island Farmer was to "superintend and aid in the cultivation of the lands on New-York Island, attached to the Alms-House, and to see that it is accomplished by the labor of paupers; to prevent them from obtaining intoxicating liquors, while thus employed." The Baker, Carpenter, Blacksmith, Shoemaker, and other mechanics would likewise "direct the labor of such paupers as shall be assigned to them, to work in these several occupations, for the purposes of the establishment."[7] The Reorganization of 1845 provided for a Workhouse which became a physical reality only several years later. In the meantime the legislation provided the administrative structure deemed necessary for the future when such a facility would arrive. The Superintendent of the Almshouse proper would "daily send all paupers...capable of performing any work, and not otherwise employed, to the Work House, where they shall be put to such labor as the Superintendent of the Workhouse is authorized to direct."[8] Until the Workhouse was actually built, the Almshouse served as the Workhouse and its Superintendent in the dual capacity as head of both facilities. Though the feeble were generally not driven hard,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

all of the poor, even Bellevue Hospital patients,[9] were, at least in theory, subject to the demands of the industrial imperative.

While agreeing that paupers should work, the reformers divided over certain particulars. The primary conflicts involved the relative emphasis to be given to agricultural and to mechanical pursuits. The second important issue was whether pauper labor could be allowed to compete with free industry established in the community and the extent to which specific projects might pose such a danger.

There were five modes and scales of inmate labor: housekeeping, workshops, gardens, farms, and the Workhouse. Household or domestic labor was most basic and uncontroversial. Inmates' clothes had to be washed, beds made, floors swept, and food prepared. Workshops and gardens both existed from the beginning of Bellevue; nobody would have abolished them. But agrarians wanted large farms to replace the modest gardens and to keep the small workshops while industrialists wanted large workshops and a factory, the Workhouse, to predominate and to sell the larger farmlands, just keeping the smaller gardens.

Bellevue's regular workshops helped considerably in supplying and maintaining the institutions. The Tailor's, Carpenter's, and Shoemaker's shops produced, in 1832-3, many thousands of yards of cotton and woolen cloth, yarn, shoe repairs, shirts, dresses, coffins, and soft soap.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

While convicts built institutions, paupers made their trousers. The Bakehouse made twelve barrels of flour into bread daily and paupers did all the repairs and blacksmith work.[10] In 1841 the Bakehouse alone employed eleven men plus two "laborers;" the "factory" at Bellevue kept busy fifteen weavers, two spinners, eight wheel turners, and two boys and one man at the carding machine. Other operations were of similar size. There were gatekeepers, tailors, shoemakers, coopers, boatmen, masons, whitewashers, lamplighters, barbers, and numerous other inmate occupations.[11] The value of all pauper labor for 1841 was estimated at $27,550.[12]

The workshops had many difficulties: broken and stolen machinery, resistance of inmates to the routine, lackluster supervision, disruption from institutional chaos. In 1837 Superintendent Linus W. Stevens found the shops entirely "destitute of stock, not sufficient to repair a cart or make a coffin."[13] In 1843 Cloth Factory Superintendent John Fairchild found the "machinery in as good order as could be expected, except that the Carding Machinery, that was almost destroyed either by ignorance or neglect, before it came into my hands; it will cost, with my time, nearly $100 to put the Cards in working order; part of the Machinery will have to be got anew."[14] The Nativists said that all inmate labor had ceased except that required to enrich the officers. Idle, able-bodied paupers were found lounging around the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

House and were promptly set to work "about the establishment, and in picking, assorting, and washing wool."[15] For months after Almshouse removal, there were no shops at all. Finally Superintendent Eells installed some at "considerable expense, yet much of the labor in preparing them has been performed by inmates of the Department."[16]

The most enterprising reformers were far from satisfied with such modest efforts and undertook ambitious experimental schemes specializing in particular subject groups and products. All were interesting failures. Arthur Burtis' predecessor as Almshouse Superintendent, Federalist Richard Furman,[17] established a pin factory shortly after the War of 1812 which, supposedly, would redeem the City's juvenile delinquents by setting them up in healthy industrial competition with Europeans and also turn a "neat profit" to the Council. Everything went wrong: European pins suddenly dropped in price and were dumped on the market in order to "destroy this manufactory." Americans preferred imported pins anyway. Experienced pinworkers left the factory when "punishment was out," leaving "fresh hands" to cause waste as they learned. Furman died in 1823 leaving things "unsettled." His daughter tried to carry on but fever broke out and, finally, the House of Refuge opened and took the deliquents away. The factory closed, leaving the City a moral-financial debt to Miss Furman and the fresh memory of an impressive attempt to realize a dream of perfect classification, morality, industry, and economy.[18]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Moses G. Leonard was the most avid inventor of new labor schemes. His first and least controversial, a basket factory, ultimately succumbed to the need for space to house the influx of immigrants. But it worked well while it lasted:

> Shortly after I assumed my duties as Commissioner, it became the prominent aim of my administration to make every exertion to procure employment for all the inmates...Immediate means were adopted for carrying out this proposition, and I was enabled, with some difficulty, of course, in the prosecution of a novelty, to successfully establish a manufactory of Market baskets, for which ready sale was obtained as soon as finished.
>
> For several months I had the satisfaction to witness the gratifying progress of this labor promoting adventure; by practice nearly all the operatives became quite satisfied in the performance of their task, rather fond than otherwise of this mode of spending their time, and pleased that their exertions were accomplishing a portion at least of their charitable support - the moral tendency of this measure thus becomes apparent, and in a physical view the advantage can readily be seen, upon personal examination animation was equally manifest.[19]

Market baskets bothered nobody but Leonard's next "novelty" raised an unprecedented furor. Most reformers, especially Democrats and certainly Leonard, agreed that pauper labor should not compete with free manufactures. Notwithstanding his protests to the contrary, the Commissioner's pet proposal for prison industry violated this prohibition and cast him into the unsought role of laborbuster. The resulting argument illustrated the tenuousness of the alliance between workers and social reformers and the precariousness of any plan

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of improvement which threatened to upset the delicate relation between the working class and the underclass.

In October 1846 Commissioner Leonard advised the Council that he had negotiated a contract with "a Manufacturing House engaged in the fabrication of Saddlery Hardware" to establish a workshop in the Penitentiary. The firm would only invest in the project if there were a five year commitment from the City. The product, Leonard believed, would be noncompetitive with anything made in New York; it was primarily a line of British imports. He asked the Council to allow him to enter into contracts for employment of convicts for any period up to five years, "if deemed by him beneficial to the Department and not in anywise interfering with the interests of any Mechanical pursuit now established in this City."[20] The Aldermen's Charity Committee accepted the "energetic" Commissioner's claim at face value and recommended the plan; the full Board approved.[21]

The Assistant Aldermen, however, were suspicious and referred the question to a Special Committee who advertised for impact testimony. More than sixty City artisans responded with a petition advising of "nearly Three Hundred families" depending on "this branch of business" for support. Any government policy which would "throw them out of employment" would cause "distress and deprivation." Some of them were "Foreign Artisans" who were "driven" here by "want of employment" in their native lands and now made

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

saddlery hardware. Leonard's plan would expose them to "destitution in a strange land." Furthermore, there was no variation of the idea that could be acceptable; it was "impossible" for the "proposed Bill" to pass in "any manner which will not conflict with their interests; because no Mercantile firm will make a contract" for convict labor "unless...at a rate of wages less than charged by the regular artisan." Ostensibly a plan to "remove burdens," such a scheme was really only "an indirect mode of transferring the taxes for their support from the city at large to the poor classes; whatever is saved to the city in taxes will be deducted from the hard earned wages of the Mechanics with whom they will come into competition."[22]

The Committee, chaired by Issac B. Smith, held a public hearing at which artisans were invited to testify. The room was "filled densely" with aroused workers and others listening to dozens of statements like that of Thomas Minshull who said he made "all kinds of Saddlery Hardware belonging to Coach, Gig, Cart and Wagon Harness in short every thing in the line." There was "nothing of the kind" imported that was not also made in New York; in fact, two-thirds of the nation's saddlery hardware was made in the City.[23]

The Commissioner defended his idea in a passionate note stressing the need "for the modification of a burthensome tax, and the discouragement of vagrancy and crime," ever increasing "from the idle inclination of the degenerate class who seek an asylum in our penitentiary." Without labor, this

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

institution was only an "inducement" to "wretched outcasts" to "continue in their course of infamy and pollution." Accordingly, the Commissioner had "settled" on this "system of labor that would thoroughly occupy their time and compel them to earn the means of their support." Such labor "should not in any way conflict with the honest and legitimate exertions of our industrial fellow citizens." As a friend of the workers, Leonard had "ever held sacred the interests of our mechanical population," would always "aid in the promotion of their welfare," and would reject any measure "unless it could be free even from the imputation of being thus detrimental." The Department would never "in the remotest connection" compete with free workers. To show good faith, he even wrote a prohibition against such competition into the contract.[24]

Saddlery hardware was chosen only after a great search had "ascertained" that it was only manufactured in some State prisons and in Manchester, England. The line included "numerous articles" but Leonard intended to contract mostly for "Bridle Bitts, Horse Chains, and several other things" which, he understood "no mechanical pursuit of this city" to have "embraced in its range of production." Thus the line afforded "safety" from injurious competition and could "materially aid in the prevention of crime, pauperism and profligacy."

Then the Commissioner belied his entire argument by asserting the general interest - that of the taxpayers - as against the particular interest - that of threatened workers. It was really quite acceptable to him that, if

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

there were any saddlery workers, they might pay the price of the reform. "However paramount we are disposed to consider the interests of individuality," he wrote, the "philanthropic and republican sentiment engrafted upon the noble superstruction of our constitutional eminence, 'the greatest good to the greatest number' equally deserves a significant prominency." Though we must be "jealous" of any "invasion of right," we must also "lighten the growing burthens of public expenditure" and "ameliorate both the moral and physical condition of society."[25] Should the two conflict, Leonard put reform ahead of labor's interests.

Accordingly, the Smith Committee rejected the proposal and denounced "the impropriety, nay the wrong and injustice of allowing such a business to be prosecuted." The Commissioner had good intentions but, otherwise, the scheme was "undertaken by designing men who wish to enrich themselves by arraying against the prosperity and success of the honest and hard working Mechanics of our City and State, the labor of outlaws, criminals and vagabonds." Such a plan would certainly injure the welfare of free workers be reducing their wages. The "dignity of honest labor" would also be "destroyed" by "coming in collision with" that of those whose "vocation before their imprisonment was to prey upon the honest portion of the community" and who would now be "privileged to do so at law!" They would only remain long enough to learn "a part of the trade" and would then be "let loose" to "pass themselves off as able Mechanics" and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

use the trade as a "cloak to cover the evil deeds they would commit in the darkness of night." Eventually, the very word "MECHANIC" would become "a reproach among those who now hold it in high esteem." After the honest workers have been rendered "penniless and miserable" by association with those "forced to work for fourteen cents per day," the demand for New York products would lessen and the City's "immense trade" would be "injured, if not totally ruined."[26]

Though the Committee recommended immediate nonconcurrence with the Board of Aldermen, i.e. immediate rejection of the contract, the full Board of Assistants instead asked Commissioner Leonard for a comprehensive presentation of his views on convict and pauper labor. The reply was both passionate and closely argued: an eloquent specimen of reform exposition and a veritable ode to labor.

Leonard opened his essay with a claim of special expertise and of sympathy for public criticism of the Department. A careful distinction existed between mere "errors in the management" of the "extensive establishment" for which there were ready "avenues of relief" and the more basic "inefficiency of the institutions" growing "from their own internal misorganization." For the latter, there must be a "proper remedy:" the "removal of whatever obstacle may oppose the end in view." The Commissioner emphasized the difference between a legislator's familiarity with institutions "from a general point of view" and his "own experience" with their "internal economy" which warranted his urging "legislative

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

interference" to correct their evils. He acknowledged that frequent charges by the press that the system was "burthened with abuses" were "not true in the main" yet he felt that they "contain some hints" and "point to the existence of evils." Even such exaggerated criticism, though unduly severe, could spur reform: "'Good can sometimes grow out of evil'...Reforms are needed, and it requires only the wheel to be put in motion to cause a revolution that will disseminate its blessings to the honor and pride of our municipal charter."

Though Leonard had always believed that the "first step to a proper system of Alms House and Prison government is the introduction of labor," he soon found such a reform "much more easily conceived than carried out." But he would not be "thwarted:" every pauper would earn his keep. But financial reimbursement was no more important than the moral dimension. For Leonard, labor was the foundation of all beauty, health, and ethics:

> What indeed is man without something to engage his attention? Most of the evils in human life have their origin in idleness. Crime, in all its hidden and visible deformity owes its birth to this prolific source of error - and a prominent means of ameliorating the condition of the world, of rendering man the creature of his design is to engraft upon his mind the importance of work. What though it be toil, it has its reward - it preserves the mental sphere of his brain from dropping into early and irremedial decay - it developes the physical capacity, enobles the heart, strengthens the understanding, gathers together the valuable things of life, confers an eminence that can by no other course be obtained and fits him for that honor and greatness that can alone belong to the good man's lot.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

It was morally wrong to deprive anybody of such a wondrous benefit, even the criminal. Just because "a poor being has been unfortunately cast upon the cold charities of the world" and become the "degraded inmate of a felon's cell," was it the "part of wisdom" to hold him in "idleness" to his "utter ruin?" Almshouses, even prisons, should "not necessarily be the degradation of humanity - 'Poverty is no crime' - and infamy has but relation to the act." We should be "not only their keepers, but their teachers."[27] But instead of pursuing reform, the City averted its eyes while "year after year has passed away with a rapid accumulation of evils and abuses growing out of our own too palpable inefficiency."

Leonard insisted vehemently that his proposal passed the test of noncompetition with free labor. Further details would clear up the misunderstanding: "to be more definite," he had meant to specify "a species of Bridle-bits and Horse-chains, &c." to be manufactured only "in the rough" whereas New Yorkers were "almost exclusively engaged in finishing the roughly fabricated article." Therefore the project would actually "give an opportunity to our workmen, to find a market for their labor in the finishing of this class of hardware" rather than threatening their trade as the artisans had charged.[28]

The Commissioner gave a bold and intricate analysis of the political economy of pauperism and free labor. The link was the taxation process of which there were two methods:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

direct and indirect, the one "open," the other "covert." The second type "insidiously drains the pockets of the less favored...not seen...not heard...not felt...not deemed taxation!" It is hidden in the rent and bread and, ultimately, in the labor of the honest, poor workingman.[29] New York compared poorly with Baltimore, Providence, and Boston at the ostensibly twin arts of holding down assessments and working their paupers.[30]

Gotham displayed a strange "idiosyncracy of the body politic" comparable to "like conditions in the body corporeal," in the words of scientific reform metaphor.[31] There was an "anomoly" of a "slight advance of the Real Estate of the city and a diminished valuation of Personal Estate, with a rapidly increasing rate of taxation." The explanation for this lay in the flight to surrounding suburban counties by "our wealthy residents leaving the city, ostensibly to luxuriate in the solitude of a rural elysium, but actually to practise the principles of domestic economy and save their estates from the ravaging inroads of extravagant taxation." They could hardly be blamed. The laws were "proverbially accommodating" allowing the "man of millions to slumber in the country and make more money still in the city - every dollar he makes is not the New-York Dollar...but the Country Dollar," protected from any taxation at all. The only remedy was to "reduce the scale of Taxation" lest all of the city's wealth "retire en masse to some more favored spot," leaving only "tombs of her former greatness."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

As the wealthy left the tax burden fell ever more heavily upon the working poor to whom the "continuance of the present system" which gave their children's food to prostitutes and vagabonds "living in idleness" was far more threatening than the proposed reform.[32]

But of even more concern to Leonard than excessive taxation was institutional misclassification. In his view, building alone could not alleviate this problem; work also had to be introduced. Reformers must "base our efforts upon the indispensible groundwork of classification and labor."[33] The two were inseparable. In a seering passage he denounced the "common association of the various classes of paupers, vagrants, and prisoners" and its baneful effect on any attempt at improvement. Those "steeped...in the very dregs of lewdness, lust and crime" mixed constantly with the innocent poor and the ill. "How long," asked the Commissioner, "shall the City of New York remain defiled by this perfect Pandora's Box of criminalities and vices?" There was a desperate need for a "well arranged plan of classification" and the "pursuance, to a practicable extent, of the 'silent system'" used to advantage in other cities, but especially "Work-shops - then industry can have some chance of exhibiting its powers."[34]

Veteran Penitentiary Keeper Morgan L. Mott characterized the institution as a "manufactory of thieves." Leonard introduced the rudiments of a "labor system" to which he ascribed a decrease in admissions there, only to find those

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to the Almshouse proper, which lacked a viable labor routine, increasing "almost en masse." If labor could be imposed throughout the entire system, Leonard could envision "our famous Blackwell's Island with untenanted cells," an end to the need for Committees to investigate convict labor, and terms like "Saddlery Hardware...known only as an emergency identified with the follies of the day." Then his Department could escape the dilemma of either "interfering with mechanics' rights" or supporting criminals in "laziness and lust."[35]

Nobody was surprised when the full Board of Assistants rejected the plan.[36] Undaunted, Leonard turned his full attention to more conventional matters like farms and a workhouse.

Bellevue always had fairly extensive gardens which grew a supply of basic vegetables for the institutions. In 1832-3, for example, there were 10,000 heads of cabbage raised within the enclosure, as well as other crops and "sufficient broom corn to make 800 brooms." The City also raised 60 tons of hay, 5,300 bushels of potatoes, and 100 bushels of turnips on common lands between Bloomingdale Road and Third Avenue.[37] In 1841 there was a workforce of fifteen gardners and farmers, two hog feeders, two stablemen, three cartmen, two ox drivers, and seventeen at "general work," woodyard labor, and kitchen service.[38]

Agrarians thought such an operation much too modest and soon farming was linked to the removal question and, in a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

context of heightening controversy, set in theoretical opposition to mechanical labor and workhouses. Phillip Engs' Special Committee on Pauperism gave the first analysis of the City's agricultural needs and potential. The "ground at present allotted to the poor house is not good soil, and is in detached situations," it was found. Other counties and cities had their almshouses on sizable plots. Though they would not "hazard too much upon theory," the Committee hoped that "the product to be obtained from a farm of 250 acres of good land, in the immediate vicinity of this great mart, cultivated with a view to the wants and luxurious appetites of those who congregate in large cities" would far exceed the "necessary vegetables for the subsistence of the paupers." The land could be "manured at the cheapest rate." Also, "large gains" could be "reaped" from "raising and fattening swine, by the use of the vegetable garbage collected by the public carts." Farming was far preferable to idleness or even to industrial labor and was particularly suited to the abilities and situation of Almshouse dependents:

> It may be said that there are not among our paupers a sufficient number of effective labourers to cultivate a large farm, and such would no doubt be the impression of those who might look through our poor establishment. But let us ask, why is it that there are so few of its inmates who can perform hard labour? and the reply is at hand...if a man, however vigorous his frame, is brought to our alms-house by disease, poverty, or both, and recovers his health, he cannot be put to such labour as would excite and reinvigorate his muscular faculties, for want of employment, but lounging about the premises of the house, he becomes inert, lacid, and, finally, lazy and feeble, and his labour can be turned to no

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> other account than is exhibited in the present returns of our Bellevue establishment, which presents the mortifying fact, that they do not raise even potatoes sufficient for their own consumption.
>
> In the management of agricultural, and more especially horticultural business, the labour of feeble men, and of women and children, can be applied to advantage; and the healthful effect of the occupation will fit many for its purposes, who are now mere "cumberers of the ground."

If the Almshouse had a farm, it could assign selected individuals their own gardens "by the cultivation of which, with the advantage of fishing, raising poultry, &c. they could sustain themselves without being any further a public charge." This would be more "satisfactory" to the "virtuous poor" and result in "great economy."[39] Labor, indeed, was the key to the goal of cutting expenses for it would

> compel the indolent...to work, if they would eat at public expense...such a course...will rid the public of a portion of the sturdy worthless, who, if they must work will work without the bounds of your alms-house where they can indulge their vagrant habits...
>
> Your Committee can devise no incipient step towards a system that does not invite paupers, so promising as applying their labour to agriculture..."labour, not alms, should be offered to all who have any ability to work."

The Committee closed their argument with an aggressive statement of the new reform creed of scientific pauper management with jibes both at the conservative Targee Almshouse Commissioners and at naive easy almsgivers:

> It does not become us to sit down under opinionated notions, gained from a certain

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> course of practice, and to fold our arms in satisfaction that all is right in our poor system, because our valuable commissioners labour hard to make it so. But while we regard with a jealous eye those theories which misdirected charity and well meant philanthropy set on foot, we should eagerly pursue a practical investigation in this important branch of political economy, and endeavor to get at results which present certain promise of lessening the public expense for the support of the poor.[40]

Commissioner John R. Peters purchased and managed Long Island Farms for the City; at last the Almshouse had an agricultural opportunity. But the Council would neither relinquish the patronage nor supply the operation properly. To Peters' dismay, the farmer of the swamp imposed by the Aldermen was "left without any definite instructions, except conflicting directions from those who are as ignorant of agriculture as himself." There were only ten cows to provide milk to a "multitude;" the land could support forty and produce vegetables for 2,000 people. The previous gardner, an "old citizen, who had successfully cultivated one of the first garden spots in the state, and planted many mulberry trees" was rudely "turned off, the garden planted with broom corn, and trees neglected." Peters begged in vain for a "practical and intelligent agriculturist" who would "pursue up our plan of cultivating the mulberry tree, preparatory to the manufacturing of silk."[41] The following year the Mandeville Commissioners relied completely on the Children's Nurseries to justify Long Island, calling the Farms "unproductive" and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"uncultivated," since "but little labor or expense has ever been bestowed upon them."[42]

When the Whigs returned after another Targee administration, gardens and Farms had nearly collapsed. Bellevue was "neglected and unprepared," with "very few utensils, and those in a miserable condition; a scanty supply of hay, and that of poor quality; no straw, oats, or other grain feed for cattle." All wagons and carts were "out of order" and harnesses worn out. Cows were "very thin in flesh." The Long Island Farmer said that the soil was good but there appeared to have been "a want of management, on the part of my predecessor." There were only ten acres of potatoes and "very few other vegetables, except in the garden attached to the farm house." Fencing was "miserable;" cows were "half starved...very poor...full of lice, from want of proper attention." The premises was "destitute" of tools though the Whig had left a full set to his Tammany successor-predecessor in the transition of 1835.

The Engs Commissioners said the "deficiency" was "great indeed...there must have been depredations; much pains and inquiry do not afford light in the matter." But with 230 acres of land, two-thirds under cultivation, perhaps something could be salvaged:

> The lateness of the season when these premises came under our control, and the hindrance from want of utensils, &c., will prevent the product which <u>ought</u> to be obtained from a farm of such dimensions, so well supplied with manure; but...even under such circumstances, a fair crop will be raised...arrangements will be

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

made to apply the labor of the pauper boys to the cultivation of the land.[43]

Meanwhile removal advocates included their agrarian and antiagrarian prejudices into their plans for Randall's and Blackwell's Islands. Typical was the theory of John V. Greenfield's Charity Committee who favored selling the Long Island Farms and moving the Almshouse operation to Randall's, largely because that Island's 180 acres were of the "finest quality for farming and gardening." All kinds of fruit trees could be cultivated.[44]

Peter Titus' Whig Commissioners of 1842-3 emerged as the first serious Hamiltonian critics of the agrarian ideal. Previous reformers had accepted the notion of farming in theory and ascribed its failures to poor management. Titus' Board deprecated it entirely. Their plan for a concentration of institutions on Blackwell's would frankly "abandon the idea (which experience teaches ought long since have been utterly rejected) of 'farming'; the present Farm is a constant source of expense. Sufficient ground, for garden purposes, will be had."[45] The Commissioners did a painstaking analysis of the Long Island balance sheet, frought with difficulties due to the intermingling of Farms and Nurseries. After separating the two functions and comparing expense ratios for the present and past years, they estimated that, counting cash of $4,500, prison labor at $1,300, 1,000 loads of manure at thirty cents a load, and transportation costs of $500, the previous year's Farm cost $8,700. The

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

estimated receipts of the previous Farmer only reached half this investment, despite his probable exaggeration:

> It is probably even more difficult to state the value of the products...than...to arrive at the cost.
> The experience of the present Commissioners is calculated to produce the impression that these products are much like the Scriptural definition of faith - the substance of things hoped for - the evidence of things not seen.
> The most favorable aspect which can be given to this subject is that presented by the late farmer, whose account for the year 1841, exhibit (on paper) the aggregate value of $4591...most flattering...what may have been raised in a season of uncommon productiveness, and affixes prices that may be realized under an inflated currency, when the Fulton Market shall be transferred to the Long Island Farms...it must have been a lumping estimate, made without any measurement, the prices are extravagant - yet he shows only $4591, as the return of an expenditure of probably more than $8700.

The present Whig Farmer's return was less, only $2,076 with price standards more realistic, but still high. He had only taken office in July which would "clear him from much responsibility for the small yield," but the Commissioners did not

> pretend to say the Farm has been well managed, in fact do not believe it <u>ever</u> to have been, and, under the present system...it will never be properly attended. The past season, generally, has been prolific, but the Long Island Farms is an exception; possibly the current farmer has not measured his corn with his predecessor's bushel.

The Commissioners thought that their Farmer's return was closer to the average than Tammany's claims and asked that

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Farm be leased, for "surely some terms can be obtained better than to pay $8700 for what yields only $2000."[46]

The Nativists strongly preferred agriculture to industry for most paupers and therefore chose Randall's Island for the Almshouse because vegetables, fruits, and flowers could be raised their "in abundance."[47] Ironically, they could accomplish only the sale of Bellevue gardens and Long Island, so for the next couple of years, there was barely any provision for agriculture at all.

Robert Hartley's protest against the Blackwell's removal plan relied primarily on the argument that paupers were naturally unmechanical and agrarian. In other American cities "more than nine tenths" were "ignorant of any trade and the same is doubtless true of the same class in New York." More than half the City's dependents were Irish and Germans "without mechanical skill, mostly mere day laborers who have been accustomed only to the rudest and humblest employments." Many were too old to acquire manual dexterity. Philadelphia's elaborate textile machinery had thus gone unused. "Nine tenths of the paupers who cannot by any management be made useful in a workshop, may be immediately made useful in a field."[48]

The Meserole Committee on building plans refused to "assume" that pauper labor could be more easily employed in agriculture than in industry. They

> witnessed imposing statements of large sums received...in...neighbouring cities...that pauper labor, in work-shops...utterly failed; while in agriculture, it was successful... Upon examination...the nature of these receipts have been greatly misapprehended...

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> These facts show that statistics hastily obtained, and frequently not well understood, are not always to be relied upon...The Long Island Farms...were purchased...to try the experiment of pauper labor in agriculture... well stocked...about thirty paupers were employed upon it; but the experiment utterly failed; the Milch-cows were allowed to dry up, so that in a short time...out of twenty cows, but thirty quarts of milk could be obtained. The cows were disposed of, and the milk for the Children has since been purchased at an annual expense of about Five Thousand Dollars.

None of these comments were meant toward "condemning" farming, just, as agrarians said in reverse of industry, a total reliance thereupon. Though past failures could have been due largely to mismanagement, there were serious inherent limitations to agriculture: "It seems...of much greater importance to provide the able bodied paupers with constant employment at all seasons of the year, than to attempt to render their labor highly productive during a short period... during winter, when the number...is largely increased... agriculture and horticulture cannot be resorted to." Mechanical labor in indoor workshops was oblivious to seasons.[49]

It took a reformer with Moses G. Leonard's flair for labor schemes to overcome the opposition between the two modes. The Commissioner had no trouble reconciling agriculture and industry: both were wonderful. Initially, like Hartley, he hoped to use Randall's Island for the Almshouse proper, primarily a poorfarm. He would put a House of Industry on Blackwell's and maintain the disabled at Bellevue. He advised the Council early of his

> opinion that the occupation best suited to...our poor...is agriculture...most of them are from the laboring classes, and not a few of them

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> experienced in the culture of the soil...
> I have procured from the Finance Committee the privilege to convert the neglected fields on Randall's Island into farming grounds for pauper and prison labor. The lateness of the season, and the disadvantages of a pioneer enterprise, with the dilapidated condition of the buildings, &c. and the destruction of the most valuable portion of the Island, occupied by the remains of the late Nursery, are serious impediments to success, and will... lessen the profits of the first season's adventure.

Leonard planned to purchase "cows and teams" and thought that such "judicious" investments would help "stay the rapid career of pauperism and the depravity of impoverished humanity."[50]

A few months later about seventy paupers were working the new farm. Leonard said the Almshouse should go to Randall's with "appendages for the promotion of labor for that should ever be the distinct principle identified with poor house relief." There could be "a model farm worked by pauper industry" which would not preclude workshops for the "mechanically oriented."[51]

Though the main Almshouse went to Blackwell's Island, Leonard maintained and developed the Randall's "branch," always claiming a modest success despite difficulties. Many who could not run their own businesses were, under Almshouse management, "in fact, scarcely paupers." The "air and exercise of an outdoor occupation" was much healthier and more pleasant than lounging indoors. The residents were "restored to their wonted nature, and after a period of no

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

very great duration inmate after inmate applies for discharge, and leaves the Institution, to again return to the independence of his own resources, and the happiness of his own individual support." If only "all our pauper population could be provided with the opportunity of tilling the soil," there could finally be an "economical administration of our city government." Also - and alas! - farming did not "interfere with the business or labour of our citizens" since it supplied Department needs only.[52]

The Governors continued to operate the Farms though no Arcadian paradise ever materialized. Crops were successful in 1850, except for potatoes. An average of 56 men were employed, "mostly broken down either in body or mind, and of course full work cannot be expected of them, although many of them do as much as their broken down Constitutions will admit."[53] Though it thus survived, agriculture could never achieve dominance.

The culmination of the fondest dreams of labor reformers was the Blackwell's Island Workhouse. This facility was the apotheosis of both labor and specialized institutions and its development engaged the fascinated attention of all. Perhaps no other single measure promised such hope for both moral and financial improvement. The difference between mere workshops and a Workhouse was crucial. Workshops exploited pauper labor but never to anything near a maximum potential. Nor could they reclassify the inmates as was necessary. An entire, separately constituted "House of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Industry" and was necessary for the systematic extraction of labor from a special group of dependents to be drawn from both the Almshouse and the Penitentiary. Such a facility was also the only means of properly classifying and separating the virtuous and vicious poor and the vagrants and criminals.

The City of Boston had pioneered in establishing such an institution and Gotham's reformers lamented that they lagged behind. Phillip Engs' Commissioners hoped that when new buildings were constructed, they would include

> a work house, where a class may be placed for whom there is now no proper provision in our city, and for want of which they are mingled with the more deserving and infirm, and receive support in a manner to which they have no claim; while, on the other hand, vagrants from intemperance or idleness, for want of such a place, are classed with and committed among felons. In our estimation, this is undue punishment; and, in a moral point of view, has a downward tendency.[54]

Economics only supported morality. The best way to save money was "a proper 'Work House,' where the intemperate, the wilful vagrant, the husband who abandons wife and family, and the wife whose dissolute and inebriate course compels the unfortunate husband to shut her from his house" would not only be "sheltered," but also "emphatically taught the injunction, 'by the sweat of thy brow shalt thou earn thy bread.'"[55]

Mayor Robert Morris called urgently for a workhouse for the "indolent" who lived by the "beggary" of their

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

children. They should not go to the Penitentiary; that institution should only be used for those guilty of "acts of moral turpitude and misdemeanors." The City needed an "intermediate place between the Almshouse and the Penitentiary" for those "unworthy" of the former, but "not so vicious as to merit imprisonment" in the latter.[56] The theme was repeated annually by Morris and his successors, almost to the word.[57]

Councils and Commissioners became very active in building a Workhouse - on paper. The Council and its Special Lee-Jones Committees tied the subject to that of Department reorganization. The first Committee visited Bellevue and noted many "unemployed paupers." Even many of the "aged and infirm" might have some "light labor imposed upon them." Others more hardy were "strolling about the yards in idleness...the present system is an invitation to pauperism, and induces the indolent poor to seek an asylum; who, if obliged to labor for the benefit of the public, would find it to their interest, and more congenial to their feelings, to appropriate the product of such labor to their own benefit." Therefore a separate Workhouse with its own administrative subdepartment should be constituted.[58]

The Titus Commissioners tied the Workhouse to their Almshouse removal plans. There should be "work-shops" located between the Penitentiary and the Almshouse, "one set for prisoners, another for paupers, - contiguous, but not communicating." These would form the "dividing line" between the two institutions, physically as well as

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

symbolically.[59] The new institution would punish "idleness rather than crime" and aid in "checking the progress of vice, by arresting it in the incipient stage, ere yet idleness hardened into crime." Perhaps it would "work the penitential reform" on idlers which the Penitentiary had clearly "failed to effect." There would be additional workshops built into the old Penitentiary as well, separated from the Workhouse by a "suitable barrier."[60]

The second Lee-Jones Committee called the Workhouse reform "long overdue" and began to address important details like the necessity of "confining the articles manufactured to such things as may be required in the institution."[61] Assistant Alderman William Dodge attended to the particulars of seeking an enabling and commitment act and a public loan authorization from the Legislature.[62]

James Cook's Commissioners joined the chorus for "Work-Houses" for the "many...who now resort to the Alms-House for support, continue there during the inclement season of the year, leave in the commencement of the spring, and return in autumn."[63] An Ordinance was drafted but resulted in nothing.[64] The Nativists also wanted what they called a "House of Reformation" on Blackwell's Island for "vagrants and mendicants whose destitution is the consequence of their vices.[65] Their Police Committee promptly quashed a rather quaint plan for a Workhouse at Bellevue.[66] The Reorganization Ordinance of 1845 set up a Workhouse Department in anticipation of a building to follow; in the meantime, the Almshouse was to serve as a temporary Workhouse.[67]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Commissioner Leonard was unsatisfied with such a situation. In 1846 he suggested that the new Almshouse in construction on Blackwell's Island "could very properly be occupied as a House of Correction or Reformation for a large class now incarcerated within the walls of the Penitentiary." This would enable improved "classification of felons" and a labor routine for vagrants. Then the Department might "possess some order and arrangement" and begin to "fulfill its godlike purpose."[68] The reform was a solemn and urgent obligation:

> I trust, for humanity's sake, for the reputation of our City, for the welfare of the Institution, for the cause of the virtuous poor, for the reformation of the uninitiated in crime, who may have taken the first steps therein, for the duty we owe our constituents and ourselves, no effort will be wanting, nothing left undone, that may be consistently done, to reform the moral condition of those, whether paupers or criminals, entrusted to our care and supervision.

The estimated seventy per cent of the Penitentiary inmates who were mere vagrants should join the "very considerable number of those at Bellevue" in the new House of Industry. Not only would this improve their own behavior but would even "surely correct the conduct of many that might never reach the institution."[69] The following year Leonard again called for a "different classification of paupers...separate the vagrants and criminals on Blackwell's Island, and the aged and infirm from the vagrants at Bellevue Alms House." There was no logical reason why "if found by Police in the street, intoxicated, diseased, or homeless," such persons

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

should be "committed to the Penitentiary as vagrants," while if they "make application either personally or through some friend, they are generally sent to the Alms House." All should go to a Workhouse on "well suited" Blackwell's Island; "make this separation," said Leonard, "call the institution a House of Industry and make it such, and a greater reformation will have been effected than all that has been done for the last twenty years."[70]

Only in Leonard's final year in office did the Council begin to act, not at his behest as much as that of Alderman Clarkson Crolius, Jr. The Whig founder belonged to the private reform group, the New York Prison Association who, he said, offered to administer a Workhouse on behalf of the City. He outlined a plan in a communication to his Council colleagues calling for "a suitable Workhouse for the employment of able-bodied paupers, &c., &c., being of opinion that a Workhouse is imperatively demanded for an honest, economical, and moral exercise of the duties we owe." Penitentiary, City Prisons, and Almshouse were similarly overcrowded. "The first and great want...seems to be more poorhouse room. We need it for the health of the inmates, we need it for the economy of their maintainence." A Workhouse would remove the "indolent and idle" from all other facilities. Crolius pointed out that the prisons were more luxurious homes than the streets:

> The Penitentiary...affords so comfortable a support, such extended opportunities for social intercourse, and above all so indulges sloth, that hundreds every winter, and many

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> even in summer, prefer the restraint and the disgrace of a prison to the honorable exertion which is necessary for support while at liberty...a large proportion of the inmates of our Penitentiary are sent there at their own request...induced...by their aversion to labor. The agent of the New York Prison Association informs...that one of the greatest obstacles in the way of reform seems to be the ease to which prison life inclines, so comfortably are they fed, clothed, and lodged, so unrestrained their habits of intercourse, and so light their labor, that instead of looking to prison as a terror, they look forward to it as an abode of ease, an asylum from wretchedness... We are thus fostering vice through the very means devised to repress and prevent it... We are encouraging prostitution...If constant and hard labor was provided...the City would... in many instances be entirely relieved from the burden of their expense...

The City prison was full of "five day prisoners, or in other words, drunkards...committed time after time in the same condition." Many would "go out in the morning to be carried back in the afternoon." Some returned fifteen times within three months. They should be set at hard labor so that "instead of encouraging drunkenness by providing an asylum where the inebirate may at his leisure recover from the effects of his drunken orgies, at the City's expense," there would probably be a decrease by half in the number of commitments.[71]

Alderman Crolius went beyond other reformers by totally rejecting the hallowed stricture against competition with free labor. He also insisted that Workhouse labor should be uncompensated:

> The great element of reform is the introduction of hard and unrequited labor. In this manner idleness is rebuked - the vagrant no longer seeks

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> a prison to indulge his love of ease - habits of industry are inculcated - the duty of self support illustrated - and the importance of free labor rendered apparent. We know that a popular cry has been raised against the employment of prisoners at any of the ordinary branches of business practised out of prison; a moment's reflection we believe will show the baseless fabric on which such position is founded...inmates of our Houses of Correction...are part of society, restrained for a few days for purposes of correction, but to be returned into its very bosom, and mingle unrestrainedly with it...a workhouse is indispensibly necessary...[72]

The proposal was referred to a Joint Special Committee chaired by its author. Some lip service was paid to agriculture in their Report but the Workhouse would be the primary means of insuring that "paupers and criminals should be separated and employed." There was great attention to detail. The "power to commit" had to be given "not only to all Magistrates, but also to the Alms House Commissioner or Commissioners."[73] The full Committee tamed Crolius' approach to noncompetitiveness and nonremuneration. They decided that the system could "not interfere...with the popular prejudice of the day...in reference to bringing the labor of paupers or convicts into competition with the mechanical pursuits of others," leaving the merits of the issue to another day. The Superintendent of the Workhouse was forbidden to contract labor competitively with private pursuits. The Committee also decided to extend "all proper inducements to those who are industriously disposed and able to work" by means of "a regular debit and credit

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

account" with a cash settlement for each at the end of his term of confinement.[74]

Urgent action was needed in order to establish the basic principle of classification. The "vagrant, as a misdemeanant, rather than a criminal, claims our protection from the corrupting influence of the hardened and vicious offender... classification therefore, must be introduced." It was a crime on the City's part to maintain an institution where "all are required to wear the same badge of degradation."[75]

The Committee drafted an Act embodying these points which was promptly passed by the Legislature.[76] The official opening of the facility did not await the building. Warden Harmon Eldredge found it hard to operate a Workhouse without the Workhouse itself:

> The first and greatest difficulty which presented itself...(say nothing about washing and bath-room for cleansing and purifying externally the filthy and loathsome persons that are almost daily sent to, and received into the Alms House) was the total want of the necessary buildings for the boarding, lodging, and classifying of the inmates.

In the absence of any accommodations, the Warden made arrangements with the Almshouse proper for boarding and lodging of Workhouse inmates. The "limited amount of shop room" precluded employing "all the mechanics at their respective trades." The social significance of classification was again stressed, however, as the main reason for proper construction:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> In order to discipline and influence the minds of inmates properly, either in prisons or work-houses, a continued and vigorous restraint must be enforced upon each individual, at all times and under every circumstance...resort to classification, based upon the various grades of education, habits and temperments.
> This conclusion is...permanently established in the minds of all philanthropists...[77]

Magistrates understandibly demurred to sentence people to a nonexistent Workhouse, knowing they would really only go into the Almshouse. The only inmates, therefore, at first came from the Almshouse Department, "no regard whatever having been paid to the law by the committing magistrates." But these people had already shown an "elevation and improvement" by the end of a year of operation. The first seven showed earnings of between $2.20 and $23.90. Previously, the Governors noted, most had been "eeking out a miserable existence amid the huddling masses of a stupid, indolent, unambitious population" with no provision for even those willing to work. Opening an account and leaving the institution with cash in the pocket was a new experience for many of the subjects.

Classification was better. "Nothing," said the Governors, could "do more to retard" rehabilitation than the old "system of throwing together, without discrimination as to crime, age, or circumstance, the masses of human beings who compose the sediment of a populous city like ours." The Workhouse system, even without buildings, now absorbed the "class of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

persons" whose "chief difference from others" consisted of "a natural aversion to labor." There had been a "dimunition of some seventy in number of the most able" within three days of the establishment of the new institution, thus "showing that the parties had full confidence in their ability to get a living if compelled to do so."[78]

Within two years Warden Eldredge noticed disciplinary problems and tried to develop solutions. He reduced the pay scale because of the "desire so eagerly manifested by a majority" to "earn a few dollars over their board and clothing, to spend in a drunken debauch at the expiration of their term, with the knowledge that they could return... and repeat the same thing." The decrease at first "created considerable excitement and dissatisfaction" but the inmates soon "seemed to forget it," except that they worked "with more reluctance than formerly, which renders the duties of the officers more arduous." Some were deserving, however, and Eldredge tried to be fair: when given "proof" of "honest intentions" of sobriety and providence, he presented their cases to the Board of Governors to be "awarded...the highest price in the scale." Sometimes he was "deceived" and was, therefore, at other times, overcautious. But "time elucidates all things and we must profit from experience. Our great aim is to do right to every one - though none may be pleased or satisfied."

Many of the inmates had to be excused from labor - about thirty per day - "on account of indisposition caused by

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

intemperance, lameness, &c., &c." Perhaps this seemed like a lot, mused Eldredge, but really was not, considering "that a majority...are so thoroughly saturated and steeped in alcoholic drinks, that it takes from one to two weeks to invigorate, and put them in a condition to labor."[79]

Occupations varied but consisted mostly of basic maintainence functions. In 1853 there were an average daily number of 16 1/2 shoemakers, 13 1/2 bakers, 7 carpenters, 5 3/4 blacksmiths, 3 1/4 painters, 2 3/4 masons, 1 3/4 coopers, 3/4 of a tailor, 3/4 of a tinsmith, and 163 laborers to total a workforce of 230 1/4 persons. They earned cash payments of $7,150 that year and the institution showed a labor "credit" of $133,468, at least on paper, to produce a "balance" in its favor - a profit - of $18,250.[80] It was thus counted the Department's only financial success.

Admissions patterns and commitment terms varied. Barbara Shahm was sent for a year, a common term; many, like Alice Donahue went for only three months. Typical was a sentence like that of Isabella McBride, "committed by order of Governor Issac Townsend and not to be discharged without his order." German laborer Charles Rive was registered in December 1859 with the notation "keep him until spring." Mothers who gave birth to children at Bellevue were sent to the Workhouse with their offspring if they refused to permit smallpox vaccination, as in cases like those of Mary Ann Leary and Barbara Fleurer. There were frequent group transfers into the Workhouse, such as one of twelve inmates from the Lunatic Asylum on May 15, 1858 and another of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

August 26 of nine from Randall's Island.[81]

The Workhouse movement demonstrated the strength and primacy of pauper labor in the vision of poverty reformers. In its attention to both classification and economics the concept found universal appeal. Boston's accomplishment made it seem possible. No other project, not even Almshouse removal or the construction of favored specialized institutions, so intrigued the reformers of all hues and united the politicians of all parties. Even agrarians accepted it, though holding it secondary to their farms. The quaint institution that finally resulted looked as macabre as its hybrid almshouse-prison function might suggest: a veritable purgatory of architecture, reflecting the puzzlement of the systembuilders confronted with an intractible and slippery poor. It looked almost like the perfect dream of order which it was designed to be, but with something very subtly wrong - or perhaps there was just a look of unreality about it. Perhaps the appearance of defect only reflects or symbolizes the continuing persistence of urban pauperism. In the long run labor, even a Workhouse, proved to be a very limited approach to the problem.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. Varian, Message to Council for 1840, 14.
2. Engs, Nathan et al., 152-3.
3. Miller and Gale, 165.
4. M. G. Leonard, Rept on General Condition of Institutions, 26.
5. [First] Law Creating AH Dept..., 1832, 192.
6. [Second] Law Creating AH Dept..., 1834, 231.
7. AH Cmsrs, Rules..., 4.
8. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 80.
9. Banks, Labagh, Nixon, Rept on Petition of David B. Hawkes Soliciting Remuneration for Services Rendered at Blvu, Aldmn Doc, II (Second run), #68, January 18, 1836, 331-4. Hawkes claimed that after recovering at Bellevue from a "violent" fever, he was "detained there against his will, and put to servile labor" for which he requested payment from the Council. Banks' Charity Committee found that he had been allowed to leave whenever he wanted and that Bellevue's policy was to "discharge patients as soon as they recover," but that, in any case, the Almshouse was empowered by State Law to "require and compel" "reasonable work and service." The petition for payment was denied.
10. Cox, Rept for 1832-3, 390.
11. Myer, Rept for 1840-1, 75-80.
12. Myer, Rept to Secretary of State for 1841, 158.
13. L. W. Stevens, Statement #1 in Engs, Tomlinson et al., 238.
14. Blvu Cloth Factory Supt John Fairchild, Inventory of Stock and Machinery in Factory at AH, Blvu, New York, May 20, 1843 in Cook et al., 266.
15. Van Nostrand et al., Cmctn on Abuses, 399.
16. Eells, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 60.
17. Mohl, 75-80.
18. MCC, XV, February 27, 1826, 243-4.
19. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1846, 373-4.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

20. M. G. Leonard, [First] Cmctn on Contract for Convict Labor on BI, in Aldmn CCAH, Purser and Benson, Rept on same, Asts Doc, XXVIII, #10, November 2, 1846, 103-5.

21. Ibid., 105-6.

22. William White and others, Remonstrance Against Contracting for Convict Labor on BI, Asts Doc, XXVIII, #12, November 9, 1846, 111-7.

23. Asts Special Cmte Issac B. Smith, Dennis Mullins, James Robertson, William Radford, Rept Against Aldmn's Resolution on Convict Labor, Doc, XXVIII, #16, November 23, 1846, 150-5.

24. M. G. Leonard, [Second] Cmctn on Contract for Convict Labor on BI in I. B. Smith et al., 145-7.

25. Ibid., 148-50.

26. I. B. Smith et al., 160-3.

27. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Convict and Pauper Labor, 263-5.

28. Ibid., 269.

29. Ibid., 273-4.

30. Ibid., 275-80.

31. Ibid., 285.

32. Ibid., 280, 286-7.

33. Ibid., 267.

34. Ibid., 282-3.

35. Ibid., 283-5.

36. Asts Jnl, XXIX, January 11, 1847, 101.

37. Cox, Rept for 1832-3, 391.

38. Myer, Rept for 1840-1, 79.

39. Engs, Nevius et al., 4-6.

40. Ibid., 9-10.

41. Peters, 118-9.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

42. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 175.

43. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 205, 217; LI Farmer Martin Rapelyea, Statement #V, ibid., 247-8.

44. Greenfield, Ingraham, Clark, 42.

45. Titus et al., Cmctn to Council, 215.

46. Titus et al., Rept on Accommodation of All AH Buildings on BI, 930-3.

47. Miller and Gale, 160.

48. Hartley, [Third] Letter on Removal..., New York Journal of Commerce, September 2, 1845.

49. Meserole et al., 95-7.

50. M. G. Leonard, Rept on General Condition of Institutions, 26-7.

51. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Condition of AH, 137.

52. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 22-3. See also Rept for 1848, 24-5.

53. RI Warden Jonathan Stearns, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 149.

54. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 213.

55. Engs, Nathan et al., 153.

56. Morris, Message to Council for 1841, 6-7.

57. Morris, Message to Council for 1842, 25-6; Mayor James Harper, Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, XI, #1, May 14, 1844, 7. Harper did not, however, see the Workhouse as the primary labor institution; like other Nativists, he wanted to concentrate on having paupers produce the "fruits of the earth" on expanded farms. The Workhouse would be "very desirable" as "an auxiliary to this...for the employment of women and children, and for that of the males in winter." Havemeyer, Mickle, and Brady laid heavy emphasis on a House of Industry. Havemeyer, Message to Council for 1845, 14; Mickle, 13; W. V. Brady, 8.

58. Lee et al., 457.

59. Titus et al., Cmctn to Council, 215.

60. Titus et al., Rept on Accommodation of All AH Buildings on BI, 937-8.

61. Lee and Jones, 704.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

62. Asts CCAH, William Dodge, Rept on Establishment of Workhouse, Doc, XXI, #76, April 24, 1843, 389-94.

63. Cook et al., 253.

64. Joint CCAH, William Dodge and William D. Waterman, Rept on Establishment of Workhouse and Proposed Ord, Aldmn Doc, X, #28, October 4, 1843, 343-7.

65. Miller and Gale, 166.

66. Aldmn Cmte on Police, Watch, and Prisons, Gale and William C. Seaman, Rept Against Establishment of Workhouse at Blvu, Doc, XI, #6, June 24, 1844, 125-6.

67. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 85-7.

68. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Condition of AH, 138.

69. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Establishment for AH Children in Oliver, Purser, Smith, Rept on same, 328-9.

70. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 4-5.

71. Crolius, 86-90.

72. Ibid., 92-3.

73. Joint Special Cmte, Crolius, L. W. Stevens, Amos F. Hatfield, Morris Franklin, T. R. Hibbard, Morgan Morgans, Jedediah Miller, Wilson Small, Rept on Workhouse and Draft of an Act, Aldmn Doc, XV, #38, February 19, 1849, 727, 731, 733.

74. Ibid., 734-6.

75. Ibid., 732.

76. Ibid., 740-4. The necessary Ordinance was passed immediately by both Council Boards and signed by the Mayor on February 21, 1849. The State also acted promptly. New York State Act for Establishment of Workhouse in City and County of New York, Aldmn Doc, XV, #56, April 23, 1849, mispaginated following p. 1060, hand repaginated on copy consulted: "1053a-1057."

77. Workhouse Supt Harmon Eldredge, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 180-1.

78. AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 15-9.

79. Eldredge, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 178-9.

80. Eldredge, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1853, V, 132, 135.

81. AH and Workhouse Admsns, Ms. Vol. 112, January 26, February 3, May 10, 18, August 26, 1858, November 2, 14, December 14, 1859.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 8

THE OUTDOOR POOR

Outdoor relief was a serious problem for the poverty reformers. Many wanted to abolish all direct public assistance in cash or kind and help people only in the institutions. Some defended the practice. Most accepted it as necessary in a few situations but extremely susceptible to abuse and applicable only with great caution. The early part of the nineteenth century was, in general, a time of reaction against outdoor relief, the heaviest weight of opinion seeing it as a last, rather than a first resort of treatment. Despite all efforts to limit it, however, assistance in cash and kind grew markedly alongside the residential institutions intended, in part, to lessen or replace it. Even moderate cutbacks, let alone abolition, proved impossible. Indeed, increases were inevitable; the best that could be done was to organize the outdoor poor component into a specialized subdepartment as if it were another institution.

There were several reasons for outdoor relief and different modes of assistance. Many elderly and disabled persons living in cheap flats were deemed better off there than in the overcrowded institutions and therefore received regular cash "pensions." There was an ever increasing army of chronic and seasonal unemployed whose numbers were swelled periodically by the victims of business depressions. There

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

were widows and families whom Aldermen thought too respectable to go into the Almshouse. Children were put out "at nurse" and indenture; these were considered outdoor functions. Despite all efforts of reformers to contain direct assistance, a cycle evolved: each depression raised expenditures to new high levels; afterward they might taper off slightly and temporarily, but never enough to bring them down to predepression amounts. Then the budgets would rise steadily, despite prosperity, to new levels even above those of the last depression years.

The City dispensed outdoor relief in the form of money, potatoes, soup, transportation tickets for wayward travelers, fuel - coal and wood - and stoves to burn it. Suspicious of all outdoor help, reformers debated which of these various modes were the best vehicles of constructive aid, that is, the least liable to "imposition" by the undeserving.

In 1827 New York City's embryonic outdoor poor office consisted of a single full time Visitor supplemented by a second and sometimes a third in winter when applications always increased. The Visitors investigated the circumstances of applicants in their homes and reported to the Commissioners at their next weekly meeting. The latter then decided whether and how relief would be granted in each instance. The Visitors could extend emergency aid "in cases of great urgency" subject to later reporting and approval. It was rare for anyone to be "admitted as a regular pensioner, to receive a specific stipend at stated periods" since the Commissioners

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

experienced this to be the "fruitful source of most of the evils...of the poor laws," destroying "incentives to honest exertion."[1]

Economic distress from 1831 to 1833 stimulated special efforts to alleviate suffering despite the distaste for extending noninstitutional relief. Most projects involved fuel and some bore the stamps of scientific inventiveness and wise shopping. In February 1831 the Commissioners alerted the Mayor and Council to an opportunity to buy "a lot of woodland on this Island...at a moderate price" which would assist greatly "at the present period of scarcity of fuel."[2] The Delaware and Hudson Canal Company sent an offer of "Lackawana Coal for Public Use."[3] Alderman James Palmer proposed offering a "premium" of fifty dollars for devising "the cheapest and best stove" for heating and cooking. He called attention to "the anxiety and distress among the poor during the Last Winter" and hoped that a "Stove may be constructed to burn Anthracite Coal which may be of small expense and very useful."

A Special Council Committee, Aldermen Samuel Stevens and Fyler Dibblee, investigated the large amount of extra assistance given during the winter of 1830-1: "during several days of the cold weather" up to 1500 people were furnished wood, vegetables, and cash at the Old Almshouse office. Stevens and Dibblee had great reservations about such expedients: the "system of the Commissioners giving to the out door poor should not be extended," but instead "they

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

should as much as possible confine the public Charities to the Public Alms House, and the fewer exceptions to the rule the better, although unusual severe seasons, like the past will call for unusual relief." Objections to the outdoor method of help included the "impossibility" of judging 1400 cases a day and the tendency to teach people "instead of trusting to their labor and industry, to look to this mode of support." It was also "more expensive... than their support in the Alms House would be." Paupers became professionals: they developed "arts and tricks to impose on the Commissioners" and lived "without remorse" on public charity. Still, the system "must, probably, to some extent, be kept up...affording temporary relief to temporary suffering." Regarding fuel, "coal would be cheaper than wood, and the sooner the poor learn to use it the better."[4]

The following year the Board of Assistants Charity and Almshouse Committee called for public fuel yards for low priced wood and coal, to be run by the Council Boards' Charity Committees or by a Special Committee. They also recommended building "500 economical cooking stoves" since wood would certainly soon "give way to anthracite coal" as the main fuel used by the poor. In order to "guard against imposition," applicants should have to get "a line" from their Aldermen or from the Almshouse Commissioners before they could purchase the stoves or cheap fuel.[5]

Phillip Engs' Almshouse Commissioners endured the great Depression of 1837. When they entered office, they boldly

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

dissented from the growing tendency to regard institutionalization as an adequate substitute for judicious outdoor assistance:

> Opinion is much divided on the policy of administering outdoor relief to the public poor. It is esteemed, by some, to be of little use to the receiver; and, by others, an encouragement to dependence. Your Commissioners believe that, when exercised with prudence, it is the most useful, and the least corrupting mode of affording relief in a large proportion of instances. Very moderate aid, in money, provisions, or fuel, often enables a family to keep together, and, by united exertions, to avoid becoming inmates of an Alms House; and thus partially sustain their independence, until health or employment renders it no longer necessary to be a burthen to the public. How much better is this, than, by refusing such aid, to sever the links of society, by forcibly withdrawing to the enervating seclusion of an Alms House, individuals who could have been retained among their fellow citizens; and, in the course of time, might have risen to stations enabling them to minister to others, in like manner as they had been ministered unto. We are well aware that this mode of relief is subject to much abuse; so are <u>all</u> others; and should we leave the poor to suffer until some system is perfected whereby they can be assisted without incurring the hazard of an occasional error?[6]

Such a balanced view was very rare. The Engs Commissioners themselves regretted the expansion of outdoor relief during the unprecedented troubled winter. The Council did not question institutionalization for those of the pauper class but were very concerned with insulating the working poor from the dangers of descending into the lower stratum. When unemployed operatives petitioned for work relief, Alderman John V. Greenfield's Special Committee recommended accelerated public works projects: extensive street repairs and Macamadizing and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

new sewers. Those asking for help were "not paupers; they do not demand charity," just employment "to enable them to procure food for their wives and little ones." Many had endured the "rigors of the past winter, on savings of the previous year, believing that the return of spring would bring with it the accustomed demand for labor." Unlike in previous years, "circumstances have destroyed that hope."[7] When Greenfield's proposal to advertise for contracts was debated by the full Aldermen and the Assistants, substitute motions were proposed to do the work through the Street Commissioner instead of by contract, to limit help to those residing in New York City over six months with families, to reduce the amount appropriated.[8] The Finance Committee advised that there was no money in the Treasury; it would have to be borrowed against future tax receipts.[9] Each Board passed its own version of a measure; there was no reconciliation and no timely aid.

As the next winter approached and the situation worsened, the Charity and Almshouse Committee noted that the Almshouse was full and "daily applications...still made." Drawing a clear distinction between workers and paupers, they proposed that to "prevent, as far as practicable an increased amount of suffering among that class, who, usually enabled by their industry to lay aside a pittance" but had recently been unable to, there should be a "supply of peat or turf for the use of the foreign poor" who were accustomed to that kind of fuel. The Committee had "tried the experiment of its

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

properties" and recommended a quantity purchase.[10]

At the beginning of winter the same Committee sponsored a brilliant innovation: souphouses. Their glowing rhetoric wove sentimental, scientific, and moral elements of reform philosophy into a new panacea which would produce the best and avoid the worst effects of public relief:

> The abstract proposition of relieving the poor from the "pinching gripe of poverty," by all reasonable means, is one that few will probably dissent from.
> The particular manner...opens a wide field for discussion...there are many among us who "pine in want," and from a commendable feeling of self-respect, intuitively "shrink into the sordid hut of cheerless poverty," whose recollections of better days...forbid a public disclosure of their necessities...to such it is proposed to extend aid through the medium of Soup Houses - where the widow, yet weeping... the orphan...the wife...the devoted husband... obtain the means of preserving life - without being rudely jostled by the thoughtless crowd.
> Nor is it to the vicious and the ignorant that poverty and want exclusively are attached...
> It needs not an argument to prove the moral and intellectual degradation, which necessarily attaches to the public recipients of charity - to the inmates of a poor house...It is to prevent this result - to enable the poor man to say - that although I am, through present misfortune obliged to accept charity, yet so long as I hide...I may...repay the debt...but once having become the inmate of the Alms House...an incubus rests upon his exertions...his wife and children are degraded - a stigma attaches to their character...father to son as paupers...[11]

Souphouses could not solve this most vexing problem of avoiding the pauperization of workers who needed temporary help. But the Committee thought that the Commissioners could not possibly "relieve, to a proper extent, all." They would never see the "many cases of absolute want, which,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

shrinking from a public gaze, suffer - and too often miserably perish, without a sympathizing friend to administer even a drop of cold water to cool the fevered lip or moisten the parched tongue." The solution to this reticence was souphouses, not "by any means unprecedented." Their good effects were already "widely felt." The "soup...is perhaps the best, cheapest, and most nutritious food that can be given in charity." The Commissioners now gave a "weekly stipend" to the outdoor poor. That this money could be "more economically expended in soup" could not "for a mement admit of a doubt." A previous souphouse experiment had relieved people at a cost of "a fraction over one cent per quart." The Committee thought that "this fact speaks volumes."[12]

Soup did not replace cash assistance which soared. In October 1838 the formerly liberal Engs Commissioners hoped that "the same necessity for out-door relief will not exist the present year as did the last, when the expenditure on this head so far exceeded that of any previous year, as to form an alarming item." It was now the "crowded state of the Alms House" rather than philosophical scruples which made it "impossible to provide for all who should have been sent there," leaving Engs "no alternative but to provide for them in their own domiciles."[13]

Proposals for removal of the Almshouse proper and for reorganization of the Department emphasized outdoor relief, both curtailment of its amount and improvement of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

its administration. The Reorganization Committee called for a professional Commissioner to tend to business "daily, through the inclement season of the year; which will obviate the difficulty that now exists, of the poor...congregating twice each week around the office...remaining from morning till night, to obtain the small pittance granted to them."[14] Less sympathetic, Peter Titus' Commissioners rejected outdoor relief entirely: its "curtailment or abolition" would be one of the most advantageous "anticipated consequences" of removal of the Almshouse to Blackwell's Island.[15] Pensions were "very questionable;" the Board saw a "problem" on which they "entertain a very decided opinion" whether the system "does not make more paupers than it relieves; whether it does not generate an improvidence and thriftlessness, with a carelessness of expenditure during the season of labor" and a resulting public dependence in time of misfortune.[16] James Cook's Commissioners said that the number of families on outdoor relief had "greatly increased" since 1840 but that they had "in some measure reduced the expenditure" from that of their conservative predecessors and would "endeavor to reduce it still further."[17]

When Commissioner Moses G. Leonard inherited the problem, he attacked it with his characteristic blend of creativity, understanding, and vigor, airing the issue thoroughly stressing its subtle complexities and inherent contradictions:

> Another branch of this extensive institution, and one which occupies a large page in its annals - is the Outdoor Poor. This class of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> paupers is the most numerous connected with the Establishment, and its numbers are increasing, and I fear will continue their progression as long as the present system of dispensing charity is pursued. But few - if any instances are known where the recipients have voluntarily withdrawn from the fountain of distribution, however much their circumstances may have placed them beyond the necessity of receiving the pauper's relief - and no doubt many deserving poor are deprived of a much needed assistance, owing to the extreme difficulty of properly discriminating between the various applications...
>
> In many cases this bestowment is judiciously made, and seems to stay the encroachments of famine and disease, but I am apprehensive that in many others, and perhaps a majority of them, much evil is brought about...
>
> Relief to the Out-door poor, to a proper extent, can perhaps never be dispensed with... on the other hand...I earnestly desire your co-operation and suggestions in framing some practical method to relieve the city of an incubus which is justly the subject of frequent and serious complaint...[18]

Shifting to a mood of militancy against the undeserving, Leonard attacked the "class of miserable, importuning lazaroni, who are continually infesting our charitable places, crowding around the doors of our public functionaries in the most pitiable plight." Some of these latter worthy citizens, "with a commendable feeling, though with a rather less praiseworthy discrimination," too frequently assisted these beggars with "the means of misplaced sustenance." Those truly sympathetic to the poor should beware: "To be charitable is to be noble but to bestow promiscuously can be nothing otherwise than to waste, with rather too prodigal a distribution...The piteous moan and tattered garment are often the mere subterfuges of gross imposition." Easy almsgiving by the naive bred "avarice, laziness, and crime."[19]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Commissioner softened when he contemplated those who truly needed and deserved outdoor assistance. There were "thousands of poor, whose destitution, sickness, and misery call for the exhibition of the city's charity." For lack of Almshouse space, most inhabited "cellars, garrets and hovels most of which humanity shudders in the contemplation of...Many of this class are sick widows and children."[20]

Destitution lurked "on every street" and in the slums with "children of every age clustering around their parents, asking for food and fire." If assistance were not extended them, "they would starve and freeze." Despite all efforts of "our wisest philanthropists," all "experience of past ages," and the contributions of "philosophy, science, morality, religion, and political economy" toward tracing the "causes and remedy," there was still nothing substantial "to elucidate the matter" of how to "obviate the evil of progressive poverty." Nor was there any "feasible substitute for the "present system" so universally condemned.[21]

In addition to its own poor, the City had to deal with transients. Some would "continually" apply for "temporary assistance" between their disappearances. Others, "a class of traveling poor," sought "the means of their transportation, and we grant it in preference to supporting them perpetually in our institutions."[22] Leonard claimed that "observation has taught us to readily discriminate the undeserving from the truly needy." It was found more economical in many cases to give a "single donation" than to "go through the formality of a regular entry upon the pension record."[23]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In May 1848 Leonard reiterated that "too much improper charity is bestowed." It was true, he said, "that the poverty and desolation among us are almost beyond calculation." Only those "whose unpleasant duty calls them to the scenes of misery" could have any "correct conception" of the great "evils." Still, "though from motives of the purest philanthropy," the Department encouraged idleness. Though Leonard did not hope to "suddenly arrest this range of distribution," he believed that with the Council's cooperation in "reform," they would "eventually succeed."[24]

Instead, the Commissioner watched outdoor relief help deplete his budget several months early. "There are more abuses arising from the present system of Out Door relief, than from any other branch, or all of the Departments of the Alms House proper together." The system had been "too long in existence to be at once abandoned, nor could it safely, or without material injury," but it should at be "limited and kept within proper bounds." Under "wholesome laws and careful supervision," however, it might become the "most important and useful branch of the institution."

No such improvement could occur "so long as a large number of applications for Out Door relief come through members of the Common Council, for the indigent of their respective Wards, and which are pressed with much force and eloquence." Nor did it help that many "respectable citizens are daily and almost hourly making calls to the office, urging the claims of some unfortunate neighbor or acquaintance, and hope that they may not be sent to the Alms House." Everyone thought a dollar per

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

week "the smallest pittance that we ought to allow."

The science of detecting fraud was in its infancy. Fuel, especially, was subject to "much deception" but the administration of all forms of outdoor help teased the professional skills of the staff - and particularly of the new Whig appointees:

> It requires much time and experience to learn the various arts and means devised by the unworthy to obtain assistance, and not until the winter is nearly or quite gone, do our charitable visitors find themselves deceived by the worst imposters, who have taken advantage of their inexperience and credulity, to live upon the public bounty.[25]

The Outdoor Poor Department was organized to minimize fraud while efficiently aiding the deserving. From their small and overcrowded offices in the Rotunda,[26] the Superintendent and his Visitors conducted the "most onerous, the most difficult to manage of charities."

Commissioner Leonard thought the "nature of this bestowment" and its exact method to be too "little known" to the citizens at large and undertook to portray and explain it: "a few hours...in the office of pension distribution, on one of our customary pay days" would "soon enlighten the happily ignorant, and furnish a lesson not easily forgotten." Occasionally accident provided "some unwilling witness of others' sorrow" which was usually hidden from most of the public. The scene still had its "fair face, for when the little pittance is placed in the withered hand of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

impoverished but honest dependent, a smile of complacent gratitude chases away the painful aspect of this countenance."

Before a withered hand received any pittance it applied to the Superintendent of the Outdoor Poor. Name and residence were recorded in an entry book. Then the "regularly constituted visitors select from this book all names belonging to their route." Only after "fully inquiring into the merits...and deciding favorably" did the Visitor record the "history of the case" which then became a "subject for future reference."

Each Tuesday was "pay day." The grants covered biweekly periods, each alternate payday corresponding to half of Manhattan Island: East and West. On the appropriate day the pensioner "presents himself to the Check Clerk at an extremity of the room, who, with the attendant visitor at his side, (giving...name of, and bounty allowed to the applicant) fills up a ticket for the sum, signing his initials, and directs him to go to the Superintendent's desk, whereupon a presentation of the voucher...the money is paid." This elaborate process supposedly "guarded pretty well against imposition."[27] "Instances have probably occurred," Leonard admitted, "owing to an accumulation of business on the part of the Visitors, where imposition has been practiced," but such cases were now seen as "rare" and "unavoidable."[28]

The Commissioner concluded, quite sensibly, that "in the present condition of society in our City," there was no "rational prospect of very much lessening our general Out-

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Door Poor expenditures." The real reason was not politics, inexperienced Visitors, or even the system in general, but simply New York City's fate of "having in our midst, among the multitude of our population, a greater proportion of the truly necessitous, than any other place in the United States." A heavier burden than that carried by most was "our unavoidable lot."[29]

If spending could not be lessened, thought Leonard, perhaps a "suggestion" could "prevent the continued increase" of outdoor assistance. "Suppose," he ventured, "this kind of relief be entirely cut off from all...not confined to their home by sickness; this class...must have aid. Our hospitals cannot receive them for treatment - they are already full." Those not sick would go to a Workhouse if they wanted aid.[30]

Alderman Crolius' Workhouse Committee and the social engineers they consulted quite agreed. Outdoor relief would be less pernicious if it reached only those intended, but even with great "diligence," there were numerous "impositions;" many "entirely unworthy" applicants "so manage as to make their cases appear most urgent, whilst the really necessitous are less successful...the devices of the adroit beggar are so various and subtle..."[31] But even when confined to the deserving, outdoor relief was destructive because it created a privileged class of poor by lessening the healthy stigma attached to receiving public assistance. The term "pensioner" designated the outdoor relief recipient, rather than "pauper;"

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

it was considered "less degrading to obtain money from the Alms House office than to become an inmate of that institution." Many people spent "as much time in seeking and obtaining out-door relief as would be required in earning a similar amount" were they more "industricusly directed."

Yet cash assistance "properly bestowed" was "productive of the greatest amount of relief in proportion to the sum given" and could prove more economical than institutionalization and "much more in consonance with the dictates of humanity." But it should be confined to widows and their children, aged and infirm, and the temporarily sick and injured. To abolish outdoor help for such groups would "cure the ulcer by killing the patient," an apt analogy indeed to describe what the City supposedly wished to avoid.

Fuel was the "great abuse of out-door relief," not pensions; its "indiscriminate" mass distribution had gone on so long that hundreds regarded the public yard "as their own, and hence make no provision" for winter. They increased the wretchedness of their appearance before applying for help, either "to save from doubt, as to the decision of the visitor, or to obtain a larger supply." The solution was to "cut off" the fuelyards. With "timely notice in the spring," thousands would "put coal and wood into the cellars" from their own earnings. To continue the yards was to keep "supplying the drunkard the material for his debaucheries, while his innocent children are left to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

perish with cold." As long as the Aldermen continued granting fuel, "the Department might as well attempt to stay the tides as to stop the abuse."[32]

The City's Mayors began to notice the increases in outdoor assistance and to question the skills of the Department staff. Mayor William V. Brady asked whether $46,000 should be spent "upon the sole responsibility of the Superintendent of the out-door poor" and asked for "means to reduce this large expenditure."[33] Mayor William F. Havemeyer bemoaned the "very large increase" to $95,000 during 1847-8 and launched a critique of the entire principle and practice of outdoor relief:

> The system of distribution to out door poor, even if not founded on a false principle, is so extremely liable to abuse, that in all probability it will become ultimately impracticable. It may well be doubted whether the government can safely undertake to grant relief to persons at their own houses, or at any other place than the public institutions; so impossible is it to define and limit the cases in which assistance shall be granted, and so difficult is it to prevent a public charity which is not subject to any of the restraints which apply to that dispensed at the Alms House, from becoming a stupendous abuse, creating an expenditure on the part of the Government, and affording to the indolent "incentives to idleness and beggary."
>
> The arbitrary discretion of an individual dispensing money not his own, exposed to arts which may mislead and to solicitations which are counteracted by no feeling of interest or sense of practical responsibility; and subjected to the influence of those who may seek popularity through the dispensation of the public bounty, cannot be a safe depository of such power.[34]

The ten Governors had more confidence in the staff's

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

abilities but resumed the attack on outdoor assistance, criticizing their predecessors' failures and then proving unable to reverse the trend of increase. Cash and kind relief had been "very extensive" and its "liability to abuse...always conceded." It was a "moot question with the most intelligent and experienced friends of the poor" whether it did not "create more pauperism than it relieves." The Governors claimed to have "afforded as much assistance to those really necessitous" as had been done in the past, while still reducing expenditure by cutting back aid to the undeserving. They did not "think that from the restrictions they have imposed on this branch...street begging has increased, or the burdens upon the private charities of our citizens have been enhanced."[35]

Superintendent George Kellock, Jr. explained the skill needed to dispense relief properly: "In order to avoid imposition, on the one hand, and extend relief tempered with judgment, tenderness, and correctness on the other, requires circumspection, and <u>great attention</u>."[36] The implication, of course, was the need for experienced professionalism, such as his own and that of his Visitors. In early 1852 he noted a large increase in applications and reiterated that "a full and complete history of each recipient is first obtained by the Visitor" and that the officers tried to be "just in their distribution" and to "protect the worthy."[37]

That winter there was a decrease in requests for money but an increase in those for fuel when the season proved

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

unusually long and severe. Kellock mused that accounting for the rise in population, "it is a source of congratulation that pauperism is, not, to any great extent on the increase."[38]

Hardly had he spoken than a business recession brought an upsurge in relief demands. To meet the exceptional need, the City gave $10,000 to the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor in December 1854.[39] In January 1855 the Council passed an "Ordinance for Relief of the Poor" donating $11,000 to the "various Ward Relief Associations, to be by them expended for the relief of the poor and destitute" and $3,000 to the President of the New York AICP for each Ward lacking a local chapter, and an additional $15,000 "for the purposes of that association."[40] This reliance on private charity bypassed the usual Almshouse relief mechanism for mass assistance.

But the AICP hardly put the Almshouse out of business. Kellock noted the unprecedented demands on his office due to the "great distress...during the last winter, owing to the stagnation of business." Many people who had always supported themselves in the past had to apply for public assistance, despite the "greatest zeal" of private charities and individual philanthropists. With the spring there was a decrease in the number of applications.

Kellock became as philosophical as had Phillip Engs and Moses G. Leonard before him about the subject of outdoor relief, one "for deep reflection as to what remedy, if any can be found." To institutionalize people made them "paupers for life" and likewise infected their posterity. Many who

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

received winter aid supported themselves gladly "on the return of more favorable weather." Others were "real objects of charity, old and infirm persons" whose applications "cannot and should not be denied."[41]

If the recession of 1853-5 was bad, the Depression of 1857-8 was devastating. The situation was not improved when Mayor Fernando Wood enouraged relief riots among his supporters. In November he requested a bond issue to buy food directly for the starving laborers of the city. The Aldermen's hostile Finance Committee rejected the proposal with a Report characterized by a remarkable complacency toward the plight of the poor, matched only by a corresponding concern for the property of the rich. Emergency measures were recommended, however, even by these conservatives.

In the past, they recalled, when there was less necessity than in the case at hand, appropriations were "invariably" made "for Macadamizing the principal avenues and streets in the upper part of the city" but this policy had been "discontinued" in favor of "dispensing public charity by the Alms-House Department." The most important present task was to condemn the recent riot in which angry unemployed men had torn up fences for fuel.[42]

It was also important, mused the experts, for the public to realize that "in reference to what is called the present crisis...the revulsions in trade, the depressions of all descriptions of labor, the apparent scarcity of money, and...

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

other causes" of the "distress and suffering, which is said to exist" was "but temporary...in a short time, from the nature of existing circumstances, the country will resume its wonted prosperity." This should be contrasted, they said, with the Depression of 1837, a far worse situation during which the "whole country was impoverished...The great laboring and artisan classes were reduced to beggary." This time, however, the national debt was low, the South rich, and the overall economy healthy. Nor did luxury and high living among the rich cause the distress of the workers. Rather, there was just a phychological "panic" in which objective economics had little influence. "It is a universal distrust - every man doubts his neighbors' means, and has his doubts returned."[43]

The Committee promised "ample provision...for the deserving at all times" but also said that the "unemployed must forbear and remember that the peace and good order of society must be maintained throughout the 'crisis.'" Instead of a bond issue, the Committee proposed a public works program to "expedite" grading of Hamilton Square and the beginning of Central Park and to appropriate $50,000 for Macadamizing Second Avenue from Forty-second to Forty-ninth Street.[44]

The Council also asked the Almshouse Governors "in consequence of the almost unexampled depression," to organize "an efficient corps of out-door visitors" immediately in November instead of waiting until January 1 as was

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

customary.[45] Early in 1858 Kellock said he had "already experienced the effect of the almost total want of employment by the Mechanic and Laborer in the application, from a class who never before sought the Alms House for temporary relief." It appeared that the coming season's demand would "exceed that of any former period."[46]

Despite the sanguine predictions of the Finance Committee, Kellock was correct: over the next year there was a continued increase in applications and an "extraordinary outlay" to many "compelled for the first time" to come for help. Over 7500 adults and 12,500 children were given money and over 37,000 adults and 52,800 children were given fuel. There was an increase in 1858 over 1857 of 37,011 persons assisted at a cost higher by $29,800. The total outdoor poor bill rose from $108,700 to over $138,000.[47]

If prosperity occasionally brought outdoor relief temporarily within reasonable levels and institutionalization limited its use, reformers never achieved their goal of controlling its growth. Without the residential facilities it would have grown many times more, but, even as it was, cash and kind assistance was usually the largest component and one of the most important of the extensive Almshouse Department operation.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. Philadelphia Board of Guardians of Poor, 11.
2. MCC, XIX, February 10, 1831, 485.
3. Ibid., February 14, 1831, 486.
4. Ibid., April 11, 1831, 638-9, 642.
5. Asts CCAH, Jeremiah Towle, George Sutton, Samuel Dunshee, Rept on Establishing Public Fuel Yards, Doc, II (First run), #7, June 4, 1832, 21-3.
6. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 222-3.
7. Aldmn Special Cmte, John V. Greenfield, George W. Bruen, Richard J. Smith, Rept on Petition of Unemployed Operatives for Relief, Doc, IV, #4, June 7, 1837, 31-3.
8. Asts Special Cmte, Morris Franklin and Joseph N. Barnes, Rept on Rept of Aldmn on Application of Unemployed Operatives for Work, Doc, X, #29, July 10, 1837, 101-3; Aldmn Proc, XIII, June 12, 1837, 112-3, July 31, 1837, 274, Asts Jnl, X, July 10, 1837, 92, July 31, 1837, 126.
9. Aldmn Finance Cmte, Edward Taylor, Daniel P. Ingraham, Charles De Forest, Rept on Employment of Necessitous Poor, Doc, IV, #9, June 12, 1837, 57-60; Aldmn Proc, XIV, February 5, 1837, 112-3.
10. Barnes, Holly, Potter, Rept in Favor of Purchasing Peat or Turf for Out-Door Distribution to Poor, Asts Doc, X, #89, October 16, 1837, 267-9.
11. Barnes and Holly, Rept on Soup House, Asts Doc, XI, #115, December 11, 1837, 391-4.
12. Ibid., 395-6.
13. Engs, Nathan et al., 152.
14. Lee et al., 459.
15. Titus et al., Rept on Removal to BI of AH Establishment, 1395.
16. Titus et al., Rept on Accommodation of All AH Buildings on BI, 936-7.
17. Cook et al., 256.
18. M. G. Leonard, Rept on General Condition of Institutions, 29-30.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

19. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Condition of AH, 131-2.

20. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Establishment for AH Children in Oliver, Purser, Smith, Rept on same, 339.

21. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1846, 388-9.

22. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 29.

23. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 43.

24. Aldmn Proc, XXXV, May 29, 1848, 116-7.

25. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Expenditure, 106-8.

26. Ords, XVI, September 21, 1848, 135. Outdoor Poor Supt George Kellock, Jr., Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1854, VI, 212-3. The Department finally got enlarged accommodations in 1855 which "materially facilitated its operations." Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1855, VII, 191.

27. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 40-2.

28. Ibid., 46.

29. Ibid., 43-4.

30. Ibid., 46.

31. Crolius et al., 728. The Committee was quoting here from their consultants whose views they adopted and who included Josiah Quincy of Boston, Peter Cooper, J. Smyth Rogers, John D. Russ, and Renssalear Havens. Ibid., 737.

32. Ibid., 729-31.

33. W. V. Brady, 9.

34. Havemeyer, Message to Council for 1848, 10.

35. AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 7-8.

36. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 118.

37. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 128.

38. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 109.

39. Ords, XXII, December 23, 1854, 362.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

40. Ords, XXIII, February 28, 1855, 78-9.

41. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1855, VII, 190-1.

42. Aldmn Finance Cmte, Thomas McSpedon, Peter Fullmer, Henry R. Hoffmire, Rept on Mayor's Cmctn on Condition and Relief of Unemployed Working Men, Doc, XXIV, #19 (misnumbered: second Doc #19 in volume), November 9, 1857, 3-4.

43. Ibid., 4-7.

44. Ibid., 8.

45. Ords, November 17, 1857, 381-2.

46. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1857, IX, 294.

47. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1858, X, 279-80.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 9

THE SICK AND THE HOSPITALS

Hospitals were the first specialized Almshouse institutions. Their purpose was to care for the acutely ill and injured. They also served as laboratories for the development of the perfect link between the physical and social sciences: medicine. Bellevue was the first, foremost, and most general of the City's medical facilities. As the other specialized institutions evolved, each had its own hospital. Also, because of its exceptional degree of contagion, smallpox necessitated a special, separate hospital.

New York City's poor were not a healthy population. Their doctors lacked much medical knowledge which came only after 1860 but applied their improvisational ingenuity heroically to the broad range of problems presented to them. About half a dozen conditions affected masses of people - over a hundred in a typical year. These were typhoid, typhus, and intermittent fever, phthisis pulmonal, rheumatismus, bronchitis, ulcers, and, in certain epidemic years, cholera. There were also hundreds of childbirths - "parturitio" - annually.

A larger number of ailments each affected a moderate number of persons - between twenty and a hundred in a year. These included delerium tremens, "constipatio," "dysenteria," diarrhoea, remittent fever, "ebrietas," hydrops, erysipelas, syphilis, gonorrhea, opthalmia, "paralysis," pneumonia, "injuria," "contusio," "debilitas," "morbi cutanei," and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

many others. The greatest number of conditions occurred in small numbers of cases - under twenty, often only a single isolated instance - annually. These included bubo, necrosis, cystitis, "convulsio," carcinoma, chorea, podagra, urinary incontinence, "congestion of brain," "softening of brain," hepatitis, "fistula in ano," "vulnus," "ustio, "exhaustion," "malingering," influenza, spermatorrhoea, "tumour on nympha," "sublaxatio," senectus, heart disease, and scores of other complaints both familiar and obscure.[1]

The categories "injuria" and "parturitio" (childbirth) designated the expanding surgical function. During the period of urban development, safety generally yielded to expediency at great human cost. The Bellevue Hospital Medical Board reported a constant increase in the volume of surgical cases "owing to an increase in population in the upper parts of the city, and the frequent accidents arising from the use of machinery and from building operations in the vicinity of the Hospital." Forty operations were performed that year: eight amputations, two removals of cancerous breasts, two procedures for stricture of rectum, three for "fistula in ano," three for fistula in "perineo," one for fistula "recto-vaginal," one for strabismus, one for cataract, one for an artificial pupil, two for "entropion," seven for hydrocele, one for "necrosis of radius," one trepanning, one removal of tumor of knee joint, one "ligature of femoral artery for aneurism," one "cure of femoral aneurism by compression," one trachiotomy,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

one "excision of condyles of humerus," one cystotomy, and one castration. Alcohol was the main anesthetic. The "Lying-In Department" had 163 obstetircal cases: 168 deliveries were made, five sets of twins; there were 14 stillbirths. Ten of the mothers died of puerperal fever and one of rupture of the uterus. There were two "operations:" an application of forceps and a turning.[2]

The most dramatic health problems were the great epidemic fevers: cholera, typhus, and typhoid. Cholera was the most capricious, periodically sweeping through the institutions and the city and killing half of its thousands of victims. The epidemic of 1832 which started at Bellevue and spread throughout the city at large is well known,[3] but a worse outbreak occurred in 1834.[4] Another epidemic attacked the city in 1849 but the Bellevue Medical Board said that only a small number of Almshouse inmates were directly affected though there was a "bad effect" on patients with other diseases.[5] Other years which were not necessarily known for epidemics in the community saw institutional cholera. In 1854 the scourge "prevailed" at Blackwell's Island and was "very fatal" during the summer.[6]

A more constant problem in ill kept institutions full of recently arrived immigrants were the deadly fevers: typhus and typhoid - "prison" and "ship" fever, respectively. The Almshouse was notorious for typhus and reformers constantly invoked its terrors to plead for improvements or indict their predecessors. When the Engs Commissioners took over they found the fever so rampant as to "excite apprehensions of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

contagion." The Bridewell was in a "loathsome and filthy state, and the effects of this neglect developing itself in the shape of prison fever, to an alarming extent. The former Keeper lay dead in the house, of this disease, when we first visited."[7] The Titus Board claimed that overcrowding in the Penitentiary Hospital should "excite the most serious apprehension of the generation of Prison or Typhus fever."[8] Their Resident Physician, Alexander B. Whiting, said the same of the Lunatic Asylum Lodge: "With three hundred and fifty human beings huddled together so closely, what can we expect but disease? - where can we find a better nursery for that scourge of public institutions, Typhus Fever? Once originating, it would produce the most fearful havoc, and while our eyes were pained at the devestations of death, we shall wish that something had been done in season."[9]

The increase in immigration added a new disease to the arsenal of death: typhoid. The Engs Commissioners reported the first appearance of this fever when they praised Dr. Benjamin Ogden for his successful containment of typhus "notwithstanding the influx of cases of a similar disease from among foreign emigrants" who "filled the hospital to overflowing."[10] The problem became a crisis during the period of 1846 to 1849. Dr. Fenelon Hasbrouck reported a "large number" of typhoid cases, "many of them in a dying condition, and while quite a number have died, the proportion of recoveries has been great, and the fever has not generally been marked, by the contagious character usually assigned to it."[11] Commissioner Leonard

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

described the victims as "so exhausted of all physical energy" that they would "enter the wards to live but a brief space, and then become numbered among the dead." Fevers "generated on ship-board" defied "all the appliances of Medical skill."[12]

In July 1847 a Grand Jury headed by former Almshouse Commissioner Gerardus Boyce said that there were "few" ship fever cases except among recent immigrants who had originally landed at Quebec.[13] Commissioner Leonard reported that the institutions largely "escaped" the "most fearful scourge" which had caused such "dreadful fatality" in most other cities. Few "except foreigners" were affected; the officers and doctors were "preserved" though "some of them have been prostrated." Most of the Assistant Physicians contracted the fever, at least twelve, but "only" two died: they "sacrificed their lives in their fidelity to the unfortunate sick."[14]

Dr. David Reese explained how greater fatality was avoided: by cleansing the institutions and getting tough with the Commissioners of Emigration. He entered office "at a most critical period. The immense tide of immigration then taking place had filled the hospital at Bellevue beyond all precedent in its history." Boyce and Leonard's evaluations notwithstanding, Reese found the ship fever mortality "appalling." At one point there were seventy new admissions per day; the crowding caused the epidemic to spread into the adjacent Almshouse, affecting seventeen inmates "whose symptoms gave evidence that 'hospital

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

fever' was identical with 'ship fever' in its violence and dangers." To meet the emergency the staff scoured the various "outhouses" and "shanties" for reception of the sick and the Commissary General loaned the Almshouse 100 military tents to accommodate 300 patients while the wards were aired out. No new cases originated after this cleansing process. The Board of Health forced the Emigration Commissioners to assume their legal responsibility for new cases from Europe. Then came the influx from Quebec and Montreal for whom the Commissioners were not chargeable. Dr. Reese stressed the importance of considering the disproportionate toll of stricken immigrants when assessing Bellevue's high mortality statistics.[15]

There was a brief pause of medical peace in 1848 just before the cholera epidemic. The Almshouse population enjoyed "general good health...especially since their removal to the Island." A room in each building served as "an infirmary for such sick persons as require separation from the well." There were no epidemics and mortality was "chiefly occasioned by the infirmities of age." But even during this relatively calm period, three doctors died from the "toils of hospital life" and several Assistant Physicians "suffered severe and dangerous attacks of the fever, to which all have been exposed during the year, some of whom have resigned on account of impaired health."[16]

The most common killer of the poor was tuberculosis or "consumption." Its victims would "linger a considerable length of time, and together with those in the fever wards, require

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to keep them in existence a very liberal dispensation of stimuli."[17] Dr. Hasbrouck said that the number of phthisis cases was "very great" and deaths "very frequent," accounting for much of Bellevue's mortality and for the "slanderous remark, often uttered against our Alms House Hospitals, 'that patients when sent there, are sure to die.'"[18] In 1851 the Bellevue Medical Board reported the "same preponderance of diseases deemed incurable" as "in former years, the number of consumptives alone being one hundred and eighty, or nearly one third" of the deaths.[19]

Women in childbirth were subject to a special problem: puerperal peritonitis or fever, the "great fatality" of which was "unfortunately too well known." In 1850 an epidemic in the Lying-In Ward necessitated a temporary transfer of patients to "a house in the neighborhood" while the rooms were "thoroughly cleansed and purified" and left empty for thirty days. Should the disease recur, thought the Medical Board, perhaps the "room over the new cooking-house might be made available as a temporary lying-in ward."[20] There were such recurrences at intervals throughout 1851; twelve women died despite attempts at isolation and purification. The doctors preferred to emphasize the six who recovered, "a large proportion when the terrible fatality of this disorder is considered." Those who lived owed their survival to "an improved method of treatment...adopted within the last few months" which would "ere long be laid before the profession" and promised great "benefit to humanity."[21] It was not said

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

whether the latest scientific wonder was developed over the cooking house.

From its opening in 1825 Bellevue Hospital was beset by chronic overcrowding, staff shortages, inferior equipment and drugs, and a host of other problems which hampered its crusade against disease and injury. Resident Physician Issac Wood had to make special requests for the most basic "instruments - such as an apparatus for resuscitating drowned persons, for extracting poison from the stomach, and also a complete set of instruments for difficult parturition."[22] Commissioner John R. Peters said that "none who have examined the condition of Bellevue of late can be surprised to learn that epidemics have been most fatal."[23] The Whigs of 1837 found the Hospital in the same sorry condition as the other institutions.

Resident Physician Benjamin Ogden reported that eight "nurses and servants had escaped through the front gate, leaving the sick unprovided for." Patients were "laying in filthy blankets" without sheets or pillowcases and there had been no changes in bedding in three months. The staff could not clean for want of supplies from the Targee Commissioners. There was "not a stick of wood...no coal, no straw...for two months; so that new patients had to occupy beds that had been used by others...in a deplorable state." Ogden's predecessor had made requisitions "again and again, but there was no notice taken of it." The entire establishment was "in a filthy state...filled with

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

typhus fever top to bottom."[24]

The Engs Commissioners magnanimously spared "detail of all the disgusting particulars" but did not "shrink" from describing a "condition...such as to excite feelings of the most poignant sympathy for its neglected inmates." The apartments were neither "cleansed nor ventilated" and the "sick rooms" had not been whitewashed since 1835, that is, since the Whigs' previous departure. The "clothing of persons who had died was found in an uncleansed state;" the sick, including fevered women, lay naked except for "a dirty blanket." Everything evidenced "great neglect and indifference...calculated from its filthy state and neglect of ventilation, to produce contagion, unless immediately cleansed and purified."[25]

The Hospital fared better in ensuing years and reformers turned their attention to amenities. A Grand Jury of 1847 asked for window blinds "to protect the sick from the full light of the sun...superior to the temporary awnings which have been furnished."[26] There was a protracted crusade for iron bedsteads, instead of wooden ones, to guard against vermin.[27] The expansion of the Hospital into the Bellevue Almshouse after removal of the Almshouse proper to Blackwell's Island helped ease problems of space and physical structure for a short period. Soon, however, repairs were needed and the expanded facility was full.

Warden Josiah Mann called for better fire protection

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"by covering the extensive shingle roof with slate, tin, or the newly discovered cement." Otherwise there would remain the "imminent" danger, in event of fire, of consequences "too terrible to contemplate without emotion." He also needed the "fences and walls so elevated (they are now, on the First Avenue, but about five feet above the level of the street) that liquor may not be introduced clandestinely, or public property feloniously passed out, to the subversion of the discipline of the house."[28]

The Medical Board expressed pride in their management and that of the Warden but noted that recent improvements were "chiefly external and economic. Those which are now most needed are internal and sanitary." The main problem was simple and represented no new knowledge on the part of science: the "want of room. A hospital should never be crowded."[29]

A new wing was soon in the planning stage. In early 1855 the Medical Board suggested that "a private apartment be set aside for the investigation of female complaints, as none exists in the main building, but...a screen... objectionable not only to the females undergoing investigation... but unpleasant to the patients in the ward and also to the Medical Attendant." Also, thought the physicians, while renovation was taking place, perhaps a minor problem of some duration could be addressed: "May not the Medical Board hope to see the new Dead House in progress of building this year?"[30]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bellevue Hospital had great difficulty purchasing decent medicines and liquors. The Medical Board complained bitterly that these products were "adulterated by chemists and venders" and cautioned that they should be bought only "from the most reliable wholesale dealers."[31] Dr. Reese explained that drugs were often obtained "by promiscuous purchases from several different dealers. No uniformity either of quality or price is thus attainable, the supplies being often very inferior in quality, and not at all reliable, while in many cases the price is greatly in advance of that for which pure and genuine articles could be obtained in the market."[32]

The Hospital had a unique problem with its public reputation. The medical profession systematically dumped its worst problems there and then slandered the facility about its mortality rate. Resident Alexander Whiting saw this as the institution's main problem in 1843: "Many are conveyed to Blackwell's Island and to Bellevue Hospital, in the last stages of disease, whether through ignorance or the culpable thoughtlessness of friends, and all too frequently at the instigation of their medical advisors, who should know better." A large number of these people died just from the journey.[33] Dr. Hasbrouck offered a fierce rebuttal to those who attacked Bellevue for its death rate:

> at least two-fifths of those who die at our Hospitals, are (received by us), pronounced incurable before they are sent, and in a dying state.
>
> During the past year, three have died at the very door, in the vehicles in which they are brought. Ten more within two or three

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> hours after admission, and forty within the first week.
>
> Very many are sent from the City Hospital New York Hospital where they have been for months under treatment, then pronounced incurable, and dismissed for us to take charge of during the remainder of their lives.
>
> Others come directly from the City with certificates from Physicians who have for a length of time attended them, and who, finding that their remedies are of no avail, or, (what is more probable,) that the purses of their patients are entirely emptied, send them to the Alms House - to die, and for their own satisfaction or recompense, when such a result does occur, make the slanderous remark alluded to above.

Dr. Hasbrouck thought that, considering these circumstances, Bellevue's "results of treatment will compare favorably with those in any well regulated Hospital in the country."[34]

Dr. Reese was even more biting in answering critics. Not only did the influx of ship fever cases have to be regarded in assessing the year of 1847, but also the large proportion of deaths of people sent from the City Prison, the Police Stations, and private infirmaries, hospitals, and dispensaries:

> Many of these are beyond all hope of successful or even palliative treatment on their arrival. They often figure in the "reports" of the Institutions whence they came as "discharged, relieved!" the relief spoken of meaning relief to their medical attendants, but death at Bellevue in a few hours, and frequently in the carriage which brings them hither, augments out bill of mortality.

Reese devised a neat scientific solution: get the Coroner to come over quickly when somebody died at the Bellevue gate so that the death could be charged to the sending hospital.[35]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

More realistic the following year, he simply asked for a reading of mortality statistics in light of the many sent "hither only to die."[36] The Medical Board reiterated the plea, stressing that the proportion of deaths among incurables was bound to exceed that of hospitals "where only acute diseases are treated." Also, a new and more honest admissions policy inflated the death rate: "Greater strictness than heretofore has been exercised in receiving persons who were unfit subjects for treatment. This, while it diminished the whole number treated, makes the per-centage of deaths larger than it might have been."[37] The Hospital was thus more efficient in fact, but appeared less so on paper.

Bellevue had one other peculiar problem: periodic attempted raids upon its physical space by outside agencies and interests. In 1838 the House of Refuge almost displaced the Hospital, but finally ended up on a parcel of the site which did not intefere with the public facility.[38] In 1852 the Commissioners of Emigration petitioned the Common Council for permission to erect a building at Bellevue "for the public purposes under their management." The Medical Board found the proposal "highly objectionable, and detrimental to the interests of the sick in this hospital." All of the "space remaining around the hospital" was "already scarcely sufficient to afford the necessary amount of air required by the patients." The Governors seconded their physicians. President Simeon Draper advised the Aldermen that they opposed "most earnestly...

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the appropriation of any part of the hospital inclosure to any other purpose than those connected with that institution." If Hospital space could ever be spared, the Governors themselves had "uses...equally important with those designed by the Commissioners of Emigration." The Council agreed and rebuffed the petition.[39]

A more insidious attempted incursion was sponsored in 1857 from within the organization. Governor Benjamin F. Pinckney proposed giving half of Bellevue's wards to the New York Society for Homeopathic Medicine to promote their promised miracle cures. The Board assigned the question to a Special Committee of Pinckney, Washington Smith, and Patrick Maloney. The latter two issued the Majority Report condemning homeopathy. Science, not fakery, had made Bellevue great. The full Board adopted their recommendation to keep it medico-surgical.[40]

A basic network of differentiated hospitals for special diseases and populations developed during the period of 1825 to 1860: the Smallpox, Nursery, and Penitentiary Hospitals. Smallpox epidemics raged periodically and City officials frequently condemned the reluctance of a large portion of the population to accept vaccination.[41] The Almshouse could refuse to admit the unvaccinated but also had to treat all smallpox cases which occurred in the city; no private hospital dared accept them. Until 1856 the Department's provisions were wretched. In 1826 Dr. Issac Wood complained of Bellevue's inadequate

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> accommodation now offered to small pox patients - The disease in its nature being of the most loathsome kind, it is desirable that the rooms in which the patients are placed be spacious as well as airy - It is not only desirable for the comfort of the attendants, but absolutely necessary for the successful treatment of the disease.
>
> The building at present appropriated to small pox is crowded and there being but one room renders it impossible to preserve that delicacy which ought to be observed between the sexes.[42]

In 1829 the Council directed the Commissioners to "provide accommodations for the reception of Patients with Small Pox."[43] By 1840 a separate Smallpox Hospital was in operation on the southern tip of Blackwell's Island.

This was barely an improvement since it necessitated a ferry trip, bad for anyone but especially deadly for smallpox victims. Conveyed first by land, "jolted over the length and breadth of our city to the ferry," exposed to the inclement weather in the boat, then bounced across land again, a prospective patient was lucky indeed to survive the journey. Perhaps, thought Dr. Whiting, the City might at least build a shelter at the pier.

The Hospital itself did "not deserve the name. A mere shanty, put up as some out-building, with miserable accommodations for scarcely a dozen patients, it is the only Hospital that our City posseses for this formidable disease."[44] By 1847 it had grown to a "pile" of outbuildings but was otherwise unimproved. Commissioner Leonard found it

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> a matter of surprise that the various medical officers, who have had charge of it have not for the honor of the city, as well as the comfort of the patients, to say nothing of the pride of their profession, and their ardent desire to take proper and effectual care of their patients, refused to tolerate this medical corporation nuisance.

Doing her best, the Matron made the facility only "barely tolerable." Leonard emphasized the dependence of the public at large, not just the poor, on the Hospital: "Strangers, however respectable," who might "contract" the malady were surprised to find themselves refused admission everywhere else and would "at length find out the necessity of applying at the Alms House Commissioner's Office for a permit to be relieved in our Blackwell's Island variola receptacle." All were "crowded in a room or two, some white, others black, some enjoying a happy and worthy respectability, and others of a class of the lowest character, affording no opportunity to classify," no change in quarters for the convalescent, nor any other form of individualized treatment. The physical location was good: it was close to the river with pure air but an "adequate refuge" was sadly wanting.[45]

Alderman Clarkson Crolius sponsored a resolution to plan construction of a "suitable building" for smallpox victims. The Blackwell's Island Medical Board and Resident Physician William Kelly reiterated the needs of the rich for decent smallpox treatment and the inadequacies of the Hospital and detailed exactly what kind of new facility would be needed. The Council's Joint Building Committee proposed to solicit

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

plans and authorize $40,000 but the matter remained "upon the table."[46]

Only in 1853 did the Almshouse Governors resume planning the new Hospital which would "afford accommodation to ALL persons" afflicted with smallpox, both paying and charity cases. The stress was on how to "deal with a peculiarity:" the "most intensely contagious disease in the whole range of medical science." Finally, in 1856, the Department celebrated the opening of the first decent hospital "organized for their exclusive use."[47]

Almshouse doctors were among the first pediatricians. Pauper children exhibited poor health and high mortality and were subject both to adult diseases and some special maladies of their own. Commissioner Leonard said that the offspring of the poor were "not very rugged" and needed "careful attention to shield them from attacks of disease."[48] Scrofula, measles, ophthalmia, and cholera infantum were particularly dangerous to children of all ages and marasmus carried off great numbers of infants. Dr. Whiting reported an outbreak of measles in 1843 which was not severe, by which he meant that "of several hundred that were affected with it, comparatively few were fatal cases, chiefly those of feeble scrofulous constitutions, or those suffering from other diseases." But the "greater portion of these children have scrofulous constitutions, the only inheritance they have received from their parents, who in turn inherit it from poverty and wretchedness." There was also a severe problem with "the fatal child bed fever"

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

during the winter which "gave occasion for alarm; but immediate change of quarters, disinfecting means, &c. served to arrest it."[49]

In 1839 an epidemic similar to cholera broke out at the Nurseries and prompted a Council investigation. Many children suddenly became ill in school,[50] of which a large number died. Nobody could trace the cause with certainty but Dr. Nicholas Morrell surmised that it was the "neglect or inattention of the cook - the matron, Mrs. Ley, being at the time unwell and not able to attend as she usually does to the cooking." The physician thought that the "cooks should be more responsible persons than paupers who are now employed."[51] The investigating Committee likewise could not "assign any cause for the origin of the disease" but thought that "the fatal effects of it and the great mortality which existed...was to a degree enhanced in consequence of the very crowded state of that portion of the buildings used as a hospital, and the want of room for that exercise and recreation which...is so essential." The staff had performed admirably in the emergency, however, and the fever subsided almost as quickly as it struck.[52]

One of the most serious and tenacious afflictions of children was ophthalmia, a virulent eye inflammation which often blinded its young victims and left them dependent for life. Little was known of the disease when it first struck the juvenile facility of the Almshouse in 1831. Dr. Issac Wood and the Assistants Charity and Almshouse Committee, chaired by Dr. John R. Rhinelander, began an investigation.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Wood decided that the disease was "both infectious and contagious" but the Committee disagreed, thinking that "if it were infectious, it would rarely, if ever, affect the same individual a second time; but it was ascertained that patients suffered from more than one attack." It appeared that personal contact spread a virus, a "specific poison," especially in "crowded and unventilated apartments, and in certain conditions of the atmosphere." Introduced via England from Egypt, the disease was not yet well enough known to tell if it affected populations "under every condition of the atmosphere, or state of the constitution;" the Committee left this "inquiry to the medical philosopher."

The afflicted children were confined in one apartment and the convalescent and healthy together in another, a disastrous arrangement since there was "no period, in any stage of the disease, when the contagion ceases to be operative." The Committee was "surprised" that a "disease so dangerous in its character should have been permitted to extend its ravages for so great a time" and asserted that "had timely precaution been used, it might have been checked, if not entirely arrested." The Commissioners were given $1,000 for temporary quarters for the victims but this was useless without "vigorous measures" like complete separation, improved ventilation, and "light...graduated to the sensibility of the eye in the different stages of the complaint." Nurses should stop using "materials" successively in the rooms of the sick and the well. The results of further neglect would include the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

permanent dependency of current sufferers and possibly an uncontrolable citywide epidemic among the poor. Ideally, there should be "a permanent building with grounds attached... where all contagious diseases might be speedily arrested."[53] How to quickly conquer all contagious diseases in a single building was apparently also left to the medical philosophers.

The prediction of permanent disability came true for some of the victims. In December the Council asked the Commissioners whether "several of the children" who had "become blind by the disease termed ophthalmia" could be "taught any and what useful employment, that may tend to render them less burthensome to themselves or to the public" and at what expense.[54] They also asked for a report from Dr. Wood who obligingly described the year's confusion.

The most severe cases were removed to Blackwell's Island but were "not doing as well as at Bellevue" with frequent relapses and were therefore returned. Until midyear separation mitigated the spread of the disease but "in the Fall, the influx of Paupers was so great, the room was taken for their accommodation, and the Children were again thrown together." This caused a renewed outbreak, some cases occurring within three days of reception in the Almshouse and "in one of the most distressing cases, in which a very faithful assistant lost an eye, the disease made its appearance in twenty-four hours after exposure to the poison." Lately there was an "unusual degree of care" toward trying to prevent "extension" of the disease by "separating the Children, as far as means

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

would admit, by the use of disinfecting agents," and by close attention from the staff. Wood thought that the "hope of getting rid of the difficulty, under the present accommodations is perfectly forlorn." A slight "alteration" in the Nurseries might provide "great temporary relief" at "trifling expense" but the only permanent solution to the "evils, both moral and physical" was "an establishment for Children large enough to classify them, having no connexion whatever with adult paupers."[55] The City soon had such a facility but it was by no means free of ophthalmia.

In a second Report on the problem, Rhinelander's Charity Committee called for a thoroughgoing "medical police" for the entire Almshouse complex. Science had finally supposedly clarified the origins of the disease: it was "introduced from the city and country" and would persist unless precautions were taken. Though patients had been removed to a separate building, there was still no system to combat epidemics - no real protection against smallpox, measles, and ophthalmia, all "raging" through the institutions. Over 2,000 Almshouse poor were

> exposed to the introduction of contagion, which might become an epidemic and destroy most of the occupants. In all other establishments of like character regulations of the strictest nature are enforced with a severity as just as it is protective. Independent of the moral claim which these sanitary provisions enforce, other considerations of great power and force...urge... some mode by which the Alms House can be placed beyond the hazard which now threatens it. If the same carelessness and indifference is persisted in, an increase in expense must be authorized to meet the demands which press so heavily, and at this time so urgently.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Not just ophthalmia, but many other plagues would thrive on continued neglect. The Committee asked

> what is to prevent the Scarlet Fever from being introduced, and if introduced how is it to be controlled? Is there any Pest House which can be employed to separate it, or prevent a communication with the other parts of the house? There is none. There must therefore be some regulations to prevent the admission of contagious diseases, or if admitted, some provision made for their separation. There is an inhumanity in the present state of things, which must strike everyone, and there is a disgrace attached to the first City in the Union in permitting it to continue for so long.
>
> If the Board is content to add further tax in supporting an institution which is already a heavy burden, by increased expenses, employing more physicians, in maintaining paupers who are made so by inhumanity and neglect, and delivering it up to the ravages of loathsome diseases, the Committee cannot expect a sanction from any other authority. And has not this sanction been given by the indifference so long continued that it has passed into forgetfulness and culpable neglect? Again, if it be true that Cholera, which has desolated the fairest portion of the globe, is to reach our happy land, must we fly and leave our poor to its mercy, or like the savage, place him before a bowl of water and desert him for the protection of our own lives?

Only a system of "medical police" could prevent massive suffering and death. "There is not in the annals of any country such a condition of things as our Alms House presents." Commissioners and their physicians had complained about ophthalmia for months with no attention from the Council. Nurses should be chosen for other than mere "physical strength." Those presently employed had "dissolute habits" and indulged in "profanity, neglect, and even cruelty" instead of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

offering "consolation, support, and calmness."

Finally, ophthalmia required specialized care rather than just the attention of a general practioner. The eye was "the most delicate organ" and "one of the most essential." Although "general principles are undoubtedly valuable... experience...increases the value and importance of science which here is brought to their aid." This affliction could not be "left to the inexperienced student, it must be aided by the ophthalmic Surgeon, a man who has made this organ his peculiar study, and whose knowledge in this branch alone entitles him to prescribe." This was the beginning of a rudimentary system of medical specialties with due attention to both general principles and practical experiment. The Surgeon spent four hours a day just visiting the children.[56]

Commissioner John R. Peters summarized the long term impact of ophthalmia up to the time of his resignation in 1833: it attacked "nearly an average of one hundred children for five years...some are left entirely blind, and many with but one eye."[57] The disease was still a problem a decade later. Dr. Whiting saw the "constitution" of the children as the "key" to its "recurrence" and attributed its "prevalence" to "a want of proper hospital accommodations." Though a Nursery Hospital had been constructed, it was, like the smallpox facility, located on Blackwell's Island. Therefore "the sick children of whatever disease and in every stage, are obliged to be conveyed across the river" from Long Island Farms. The doctor thought it "dangerous and improper in the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

extreme" to require such a journey and asked "What parent would be willing to expose a child with some severe complaint, to the risks of crossing the East River in an open boat?" He asked for a hospital "in the neighborhood, located at a sufficient distance to admit of complete separation of the sick from the well" while obviating the need for removal to another island.[58]

Such an arrangement was finally achieved with the opening of the Randall's Island Nurseries and accompanying Hospital buildings. Conditions there were better than ever in the past, but the institution was by no means free of epidemics: cholera struck the children along with the rest of the population in 1849 and was followed by measles, complicated in most cases by pneumonia.[59] The following year the children's health was "satisfactory" and there was "no prevailing epidemic." There was no longer a problem with "purulent" or "epidemic" ophthalmia within the institution though some cases still came in from the city. There were, however, "strumous affections of the eye." Nine tenths of the deaths among the children were still those of "subjects of scrofula."[60] In 1855 there was a simultaneous appearance of scarlet fever and measles. Dr. Edward H. Kimball died in the epidemic and Resident Physician Henry Whittelsey suffered a "severe illness."[61]

Nobody questioned the heroic mission of the Nursery Hospital but the Penitentiary Hospital was quite controversial. This hybrid facility attempted to confront one of the city's most vexing problems: vice and venereal disease. Syphilis and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

gonorrhea received great attention from poverty reformers, once they dared speak at all of the problem. All agreed that social disease was linked to prostitution. By 1840 a system of treatment involving criminal commitment at the Penitentiary Hospital was in operation. From the beginning the facility was in sorry shape; overcrowding was a particular problem in 1842. In August alone, 210 women were sent there as vagrants. "whether the public is to see in this increase in vagrancy cause of alarm at the spread of prostitution, or of congratulations for the increased zeal of the magistrates," the Titus Commissioners declined to "speculate;" all they knew was that the Almshouse Department received the "overflow."[62]

The second Lee-Jones Reorganization Committee wanted to take a step away from equating social disease with crime and proposed allowing Bellevue Hospital to "receive...persons suffering from venereal diseases...in wards appropriated to them, and apart from the other patients of the institution."[63] This liberal measure was amended out of the Reorganization plan, leaving the insidious charade of phony vagrancy commitments to continue unabated.

Commissioner Leonard discovered the criminal commitment system flourishing in all its glory and reasoned that the City was thereby literally underwriting the medical occupational overhead costs of the pimps and madames of the community. When healthy, the prostitutes worked for themselves and their entrepreneurial exploiters, but when ailing or old, they lived

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and recovered at the City's expense. Thus the reformer gave the Penitentiary Hospital a high priority in his critique of the Almshouse system, culminating in a firey denunciation of

> the system of commiting lewd vagrants to the Penitentiary Hospital...the common receptacle of the most abandoned of both sexes...callous to any sentiment of virtue, honor and usefulness, and when foul disease fastens itself upon their bloated forms, they either voluntarily give themselves up...or are gathered up from the gutters...This system of affording a convenient home for the temporary retirement of this unfortunate but dishonored class...should no longer be permitted to remain in continued practice, reflecting as it undoubtedly does, upon the policy of our municipal management.
>
> That it has fostered crime, encouraged evil inclinations, and induced the virtuous to stray from the paths of rectitude and become the loathsome victims of lust and debauchery, is too obvious to require an illustration or an argument to prove; and yet years have rolled along, and no antidote has been applied to alleviate the grossness of this growing evil: representations of its enormity - its impropriety - and manifest injustices, have frequently been publicly made, but probably, from the multiplicity of onerous duties devolving upon the City Councils, their particular attention has been drawn in other important directions...

Fallen women depended upon public aid "until at length 'Potter's Field' covers their shame and degradation." To break this vicious cycle, Leonard suggested that the City ask the State to allow a year's imprisonment for the first venereal offence, two for the second, and so on, and to set the patients at labor. There could hardly be an alternative; in a perhaps unintended pun, the Commissioner questioned "whether there can exist right, even in the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

delegated authority of legislative proceedings, to impose a public tax for so prostituted a purpose, as the support and encouragement of wanton infamy and deep disgrace." A labor plan could surely defeat the effects of "many a house of lust and lewdness...morally, physically, and pecuniarily, none can doubt its true efficacy."[64]

The Commissioner adopted a more moderate tone a few months later, calling for a "proper male hospital" to replace the single wing at the top of the main Penitentiary. The "Female Hospital" was "tolerable" though not quite "roomy" enough. The "good air" at the southern end of Blackwell's Island was "a very necessary element in the cure of the almost special disease here treated." Nor was the treatment misplaced as he suggested earlier; though "deemed by some an institution having a tendency to subvert public morals," the "asylum" was necessary to "shelter many an outcast from dying in the streets." Though it might provide an "inducement to the looseness of vicious propensities," this seemed the "least evil of the pair" and it would "certainly be unwise to dispense with it." But certainly also, the patients should work off their support after their cure.[65]

Meanwhile, Bellevue still had to contend with a venereal burden. The new Medical Board complained of the continuing "custom" of sending victims of social afflictions there where they mixed freely with the other patients. The doctors thought that

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> To compel virtuous women to commingle with the depraved of the sex, is so gross an insult to the chastity of respectable females, as to need, perhaps, but the mention of the circumstance, to insure the suppression of the privilege; and to extend the right to men, is to guarantee a comfortable home and gratuitous medical treatment as a premium for indulgence in idleness and debauchery. Both, if chargeable to the city, should be sent as vagrants to the Penitnetiary Hospital until cured. An exception must be made of those who contract the disease, when it can conclusively be established that it was through the misconduct of others, as occasionally happens in married life.[66]

The medical philosophers gave no hint regarding how they could establish such innocence conclusively.

The incoming Almshouse Governors condemned the explotation of the Penitentiary Hospital by the city's pimps and wanted power to commit patients to the Workhouse after their cure. This would save money and give the "victims...some chance of escape from pollution, a return to which under the present system is almost inevitable."[67] Penitentiary Warden Joseph Keen was the first to analyze prostitution in a serious sociological context in a section of his Report for 1853 entitled "DISSOLUTE WOMEN." If the "facts" were known by the citizenry, "probably some method would be devised for putting an end to this public shame." The "rites of humanity" should not be denied the "poor victims of deception, lust or penury;" there was a "duty of society to the individual." But the community should not encourage vice as it does when "a poor creature...has but to give herself up" and "enjoys

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

excellent medical advice and attendance, good nursing, suitable food, comfortable bed, &." Once a patient was cured, "harpies and fiends, who live on the ruin of her soul and body, hasten her return to the city haunts; assisted by a class of beings who call themselves men, and arrogate the title of lawyers." What had never been appreciated, thought Keen, was that the "prostitute bears a twofold relation to society...we have overlooked this fact...she is unfortunate, and so deserves our pity and care; but she is likewise guilty, and, therefore, should be amenable to the penalties of the law."[68]

The Governors and physicians eagerly embraced the sociological approach to the problem. In 1855 Governors' President Issac Townsend addressed inquiries on venereal to all the governing physicians in the Department. Many at Bellevue were apparently "affected with Syphilis in some of its many forms;" more knowledge might help "dry up the sources of an evil which prevails so extensively, saps the health and taxes of the City, &c." He asked the Medical Board to report the percentage of Hospital patients suffering "directly or indirectly" from the malady, whether some admitted for other diseases had a venereal "taint," whether the children of affected parents were not "unhealthy," and how to "eradicate or lessen the disease."[69]

The Medical Board's reply was the first call for an entire overhaul of the prohibition and criminal commitment policy in favor of legalization, organization, and control of prostitution.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Half of the males and one sixth of the females had "some form" of venereal disease; syphilis occurred three times as often as gonorrhea. Most were officially admitted for other ailments. The Board thought that "venereal diseases prevail to an alarming extend among the poor" of which the Penitentiary Hostpial showed only the tip of the iceberg. But the problem was not "confined to this class;" private doctors' advertisements indicated a huge "company of irregulars who live and grow rich on the harvest of the grapes of Sodom." Nobody knew the full extent of the problem; "Lus venerea" was "credited with only a fraction of the work it actually performs." Doctors frequently substituted "such terms as Marasmus, Atrophia, Infantile Debility, or Inflammation" as causes of juvenile venereal deaths and, for adults, "Inflammation of the Throat, Phagedaena, Ulceration, Scrofula, and the like" in order not to "brand the patient's memory with disgrace."[70]

Secrecy only aggravated the problem. Victims concealed their affliction even from themselves but syphilis "lingers in the system ready to break out at any provocation." It "tortures and consumes" and "is slow to destroy." Its "relentless character" was manifested by its "transmission from parent to offspring...the children's teeth are set on edge, because the fathers have eaten sour grapes." The "contaminated" parent experienced "successive bereavements" as each of his infected children died in early infancy. The condition also spread easily, it was thought, through nursing, kissing, and use of household implements. There were cases in which "a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

single diseased child has contaminated its mother; a hired nurse; and through that nurse, the nurse's child; and... the husband's mother and the mother's sister...the weighty consequences of a single error."[71]

Addressing requirements for "PREVENTION," the physicians rejected the notion of the perfectability of man and contemplated a more realistic policy toward vice. "That the great source of the venereal poison is prostitution, requires no argument." World history demonstrated that vice could not be prevented despite all efforts at prohibition or even "the disgusting malady with which nature punishes the practice." In modern times "the progress of society" increased the evil by making early marriage economically impossible for most people. "The great law of nature on which the existence of the race depends" could never "be abrogated by any artificial state of society." Many of both sexes would always be unrestrained by religion, morality, law, or fear and would sustain houses of prostitution, retreating, if necessary, into "hiding places" of "darkness and secrecy." Criminal penalties for syphilis only made its victims "slow to confess" and to seek treatment, inducing them instead to "spread the disease without limit."

Prostitution depended on an "inborn passion," much unlike drunkenness or slave trading which were more plausibly dealt with by prohibition. The law could never pursue vice into its corners because nobody was wronged; those engaged in it recognized only the "law of nature." Nor did reform organizations offer any hope. They could help individual prostitutes but could "no more stop the current of prostitution" than "dry up

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the tide of the Hudson...with a bucket." Though prohibition was useless, the Board thought that with "a change in policy... much can be done to limit and control prostitution" and promised details following a study of various European methods.[72]

President Townsend asked Resident Physician Henry Whittelsey the extent of inherited syphilis at Randall's Island.[73] The doctor replied that nine tenths of children's diseases were "of constitutional origin, and for the most part hereditary" and took "a variety of forms." Though inadequate recordkeeping made it impossible to identify the full extent of syphilis, it appeared that "human degradation is the source of the stream of pollution supplying this Hospital with disease; and further, that of all the vices which make up the sum total of depravity, both moral and physical, Prostitution and its consequences furnish the larger proportion." There was indeed a "sad picture" of countless Almshouse children "doomed to an early grave, or to breathe out their miserable existence, bearing a loathsome disease, carrying the penalties of vice, of which they are innocent, being a generation contaminated and capable only of contamination in return."[74]

The Penitentiary Hospital was still the main institution treating venereal disease. The Governors asked Resident Physician William Wallace Sanger what proportion of his patients suffered from syphilis, whether there was not a steady increase and if patients did not often leave before cured, thus threatening others in the community. They wanted

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to know the effect of the disease on offspring in terms of permanent dependency and, finally, how the problem could be checked.[75]

Dr. Sanger's ultimate reply was more detailed than anybody could have hoped. First, he issued a brief preliminary Report, cautioning that a bare statistical summary would be misleading because it would be

> looked upon as containing a history in full of nearly all the prostitution in the City, and particularly, would a majority of the public have believed, that nineteen-twentieths of the amount of disease resulting from prostitution found its home here. Such is not the fact. Great as is the number of prostitutes annually sent here, and enormous as is the number of cases of venereal disease yearly treated here, yet either is but a miserable fraction of the sum total actually existing in this city. There are but few more prostitutes on this Island than are to be found in the same number of acres in certain portions of the city; and as for venereal disease, why, gentlemen, this Island has the advantage. It is the least dangerous locality.

Vice no longer even hid in secrecy but "boldly strides into our most thronged and elegant thoroughfares" and "jostles the honest, the virtuous, and the good." The problem necessitated careful and complete study so Sanger decided to plan a full length history and sociological survey of the world's oldest profession. It would not be like the cheap pandering publications that referred their readers to brothels, but rather a presentation of "aggregate facts" and case studies. The result would be "startling" and "alarming," though not pornographic. Sanger was already convinced that prohibition

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

had failed but did not believe it "prudent to grapple a monster whose strength and numerical force were not yet fully ascertained."[76]

Sanger's final Report, The History of Prostitution: Its Extent, Causes, and Effects Throughout the World, was truly a milestone in history, sociology, and reform expostulation.[77] The theme was the urgent need to dispel conventional secrecy and was expressed in the quotation chosen for the title page: "To such grievances as society cannot readily cure, it usually forbids utterance on pain of its scorn; this scorn being only a sort of tinsled cloak to its deformed weakness."[78] Thus there was a need for an "exposure...so explicit as to leave no doubt of its meaning" and yet "so guarded as not to offend in its application."[79]

Applying what would later become the classic sociological method, Sanger's investigators interviewed 2,000 prostitutes - one third of the city's estimated total - regarding their age, nativity, personal history, literacy, marital status, occupation, patterns of prostitution and disease, and similar variables.[80] Though many of the women had been "seduced and abandoned," there were many other social reasons for vice,[81] but most especially economics. Large numbers of poor needlewomen, domestics, and basketmakers were inevitably attracted to dancehalls, houses of assignation and prostitution, and the streets. Accordingly, Sanger criticized those who "frown on any attempt to improve the social condition of dependent women" and consigned them to "routine employment" and "lamentable monotony." The Panic of 1857, thought the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

doctor, precipitated a twenty per cent increase in prostitution.[82]

Other social causes of vice included faulty sex education and child rearing: "excessive rigidity" and failure to set a good example for the young. Parents left their children totally ignorant of their own sexuality but thought nothing of exposing them to literary "mythology" of "courtesans who are described as goddesses." Advanced sex education came from "obscene books and prints" peddled around the docks.[83]

Though estimates of the number of prostitutes in New York reached 20,000, Sanger thought this figure excessive. There were really only about 6,000, yet this was quite enough:

> If it were possible to parade six thousand known public prostitutes in one procession, they would make a much larger demonstration than the mere words "six thousand" suggest to the reader. It requires a man who is in the habit of seeing large congregations at a glance to comprehend the aggregate implied in this statement. Place this number of women in line, side by side, and if each were allowed only twenty-four inches of room, they would extend two miles and four hundred and eighty yards. Let them march up Broadway in single file, and allow each woman thirty-six inches (and that is as little room as possible, considering the required space for locomotion), and they would reach from the City Hall to Fortieth Street. Or, let them all ride in ordinary city stages, which carry twelve passengers each, and it would be necessary to charter five hundred omnibuses for their conveyance.[84]

In a brilliant analogy Sanger compared the City of New York to the fallen woman herself: she was cynically condemned by sinning neighbors. Everyone thought Manhattan vicious

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

which it "unquestionably is" and yet much of its vice and disease was actually brought in by suburbanites who "largely participate in the offence...escape all censure, self-righteously saying, 'How virtuous is our town (or village) compared with that sink or iniquity, New York.'" If visitors to the city were truly moral, the problem would be far less severe.[85]

The impact of vice on the institutions and the tax levy was enormous. The Penitentiary Hospital treated 2,090 venereal cases in 1857 while 9,847 were treated in other public and private facilities. The annual Island Hospital budget was $22,750 and the venereal cost to all institutions was estimated at $77,027. The total cost of prostitution including all attendant public and private outlays like payments to the courtesans and madames, for liquor, for Police, and other expenses was thought to reach $7,036,075 annually or $135,467 a week.[86]

Government response to the problem was woefully inadequate and criminalization a bankrupt policy. "Government should be paternal in its character," thought Sanger, even toward prostitutes. Napoleon was most to be admired because he knew "secrets which bound the soldiers of his empire" in loyalty, the first of which was their knowledge that "France regarded them as her children, and would not fail to protect and support them."[87] In contrast, New York imposed the miserable criminal commitment system, stigmatizing thousands of its citizens. Those with money received private

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

treatment.[88] The poor underwent the "degradation of a police commitment."[89]

Blame rested upon the shoulders of the general public who refused attention to the problem although it affected everyone. It could no longer be left to the legislators, but also had to be addressed by their constituents.[90] The solution was to adopt the Parisian approach of legalization and licensing of prostitution with mandatory medical inspection and treatment and red light districting. Containment and control by sanitary experts - the doctors - should replace prohibition which only concealed the problem. "Instead of trying to extirpate the evil, to place prostitutes and prostitution under the surveillance of a medical bureau" was the only answer. There should be a "suitable hospital," a "legally authorized medical visitation of all known houses of prostitution," and "power to detain infected persons...until... cured" which "none but medical men can decide." The hospital should be "like the special hospitals of Paris and other continental cities, entirely removed from all connection with any punitive establishment."[90]

Examinations and treatment should be "rigid and thorough" with "no half way measures" able to satisfy "the absolute demands of the case." Liquor licensing provided a precedent and a one per cent tax on prostitution would yield over $100,000. Ultimately prostitution would probably diminish since it had "flourished" in "seclusion" which the Medical Bureau would make impossible.[91]

In conclusion, Sanger reiterated that

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Prohibitory measures have signally failed to suppress or check prostitution.
> A necessity exists for some action.
> Motives of policy require a change in the mode of procedure.[92]

The City did not adopt the Parisian system. The best hope was to sustain, perhaps improve, the Penitentiary Hospital. The facility was still substandard in 1850; Sanger's predecessor, William Kelly, expressed an admirable rehabilitative vision while criticizing conditions: "This Hospital ought to be made...a school of reform...reclaiming in its influences; yet...it is positively demoralizing...All that are in this Hospital are not depraved."[93] Dr. Sanger's attention to prostitution in the city at large did not come at the expense of his own reform plans for Blackwell's Island.

In 1855 he proposed a centralization plan for all Island hospitals which would enhance his own power considerably. He did not like the small, scattered infirmaries attached to the Almshouse, Workhouse, and Penitentiary which were too subject to the control of their parent institutions and too little to that of their doctors. Size itself was a virtue: "The prompt attention and close watchfulness, so effective in the treatment of disease and so beautifully displayed in large Hospitals" could never be given inmates of tiny, inappropriate, and poorly furnished facilities, "mixed up with the well, and at a distance from each other." Sanger found the military metaphor plainly applicable to medicine:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Concentration, with sufficient room for classification and ventilation, is the true course to be pursued...As with an Army in the field, the farther it goes from its base line of operations, the weaker it becomes, - so with these Hospitals, the more they are scattered over the Island the less efficient are they, and the longer is the duration of treatment, and the greater the ratio of mortality.

The sick and the well should not be kept in "close proximity." The ailing should be distinguished from the employable and "confined to bed" and, if chronically ill, "transferred from the institutions intended for the well, and sent to the general Hospital." Once again, Sanger expressed his admiration for Napoleon who

> remarked, that it appeared to him as though "Providence was always on the side of the heavy artillery." I believe "economy" to be among the heaviest artillery that can be brought to bear on this question. I believe the whole argument to be on the side of consolidation. I think the concentration of the sick contained in these several Institutions into one comprehensive general Hospital, will produce - economy of time, - economy of life - and a very great saving in your annual expenditure. Centralization is the grand secret of success in commercial matters...[94]

Under such a plan doctors and laymen would no longer conflict: the "most fruitful source of difficulty" had always been the "clashing of medical and non-medical rule. The regulations of the sick and well are constantly interfering with each other." The Governors should "cut loose your Medical Departments from the surveillance and interference of non-medical men, and let them swing out on the broad sea of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

self-reliance and responsibility." Finally, the name of the enlarged facility should be changed to "Charity Hospital" in order to remove the criminal stigma.[95]

Sanger then faced an attack from Almshouse Governor William S. Duke who took him at his word about medical rule and introduced a resolution, endorsed by the Bellevue Medical Board, to subject Sanger's appointments to qualifying examinations given by a Blackwell's Island Medical Board. Sanger had never shared personnel authority with anybody; the resolution was referred to him for comment.[96]

All of his appointments, Sanger advised, brought the best references from well established physicians who were notoriously "careful of committing themselves on paper, in black and white. Poor appointments are more frequently made by bodies of men, acting under the influences of self-interest, outside pressure, log rolling, and the secret ballot." A Medical Board would lead to "Old Fogyism," "Cliqueism," and other "isms" which had no proper place in the "management of living, breathing, acting, and advancing institutions." Hospitals were for the sick, not for "the exclusive use of every ambitious aspirant after notoriety" and hospital practice was quite different from "dreamy, speculative medicine" and required men of "common sense and firmness, as well as medical ability."[97] All of his physicians had just won great praise for their performance against cholera.[98] Regarding the all important principle of accountability, Sanger asked incredulously: "How...can you sanction the crippling of my authority in its

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

most vital point, and at the same time...hold me... responsible for all that may occur here?" Sanger alone could never escape responsibility if he appointed an "ignoramus." But, "divide and sub-divide the appointing power here, and then who would be responsible?" Sanger said he would "like to see the lawyer cunning enough to frame a by-law that would hold a body of Consulting Physicians responsible for the subsequent acts of one who had passed an examination before them." His Consulting Board only advised and assisted in emergencies and were "NOT to act as my medical DICTATORS" and this was how it had to remain.[99]

The threat was beaten and the Island Hospital plan adopted. The official renaming occurred at the end of 1857 and the institution was "separated" from the Penitentiary proper, enabling it to "commence a new life."[100] Then came the great fire while the "ink...was scarcely dry" on the resolutions.[101] This drove the institution into "temporary quarters, never intended for hospital purposes" and subjected it to "many inconveniences"[102] but Sanger hoped for an early consolidation of his empire and an expanded opportunity to advance science.[103]

Though each hospital had its own unique mission and problems, they shared with each other and the other institutions the common concerns of understaffing, political influence, overcrowding, misclassification, and mismanagement. Despite the best efforts of the doctors, the hospital system usually seemed as ailing as its patients. Perhaps the best consolation was that the other institutions were hardly any better.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. Blvu Rsdnt Phycn Henry Van Hoevenberg, Rept for 1836, Aldmn Doc, III (Second run), #114, February 20, 1837, Foldout following p. 733; A. B. Whiting, Rept for 1842-3, Aldmn Doc, IX, #119, May 8, 1843, 1413-6; Reese, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 98-103. These statistics were for Bellevue Hospital only and did not include the other institutions.

2. Blvu Hospital Medical Board, James R. Manley, President, John T. Metcalfe, Secretary, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 37-9.

3. Charles E. Rosenberg, The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, 1866 (Chicago, 1962), 13-39. Bellevue Almshouse recorded 633 cases of cholera in 1832 of which 352 of the victims died and 281 were cured. Admsns, Vol. 141, Fifth leaf from front, reverse side of first page of entries for 1833.

4. There was a juvenile malady: "cholera infantum." This showed the "most conspicuous increase" in deaths of all diseases in the year 1838, rising to 184, according to the City Inspector: "More deaths of this disease occurred than ever before, with the single exception of the Cholera Year 1834, when it was only 38 greater. In the year 1832, it was 103 less than this." City Inspector Henry G. Dunnel, Rept of Interments for 1838, Asts Doc, XIII, #13, January 21, 1838, 90. The Engs Commissioners recalled in 1837 that Drs. Abraham Dubois and David L. Eichenbrodt, as students in 1834, had "periled their lives in the cure of cholera." Engs, Tomlinson et al., 207.

5. Rosenberg, 101-14. Manley and Metcalfe, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 36. The Penitentiary Hospital treated 229 cases of Asiatic cholera in 1849. Penitentiary Hospital Rsdnt Phycn William Kelly, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 155-6.

6. Penitentiary Hospital Rsdnt Phycn William Wallace Sanger, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1854, VI, 29, 31.

7. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 206-7, 209.

8. Titus et al., Cmctn to Council, 212.

9. A. B. Whiting, Cmctn, ibid., 222.

10. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 207.

11. Hasbrouck, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1846, 339.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

12. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1846, 375.

13. Grand Jury, Gerardus Boyce, Foreman, Presentment on State of Institutions of BI, Blvu, AH Dept, &c., Aldmn Doc, XIV, #6, July 19, 1847, 77.

14. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 1-2.

15. Reese, Rept, ibid., 43-5.

16. Reese, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 94-5.

17. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1846, 375-6.

18. Hasbrouck, Rept, ibid., 399.

19. Blvu Hospital Medical Board, John W. Francis, President, John T. Metcalfe, Secretary, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 17.

20. Manley and Metcalfe, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 39.

21. Francis and Metcalfe, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 19.

22. I. Wood, Weekly Rept in AH Cmsrs, Minutes, February 10, 1827.

23. Peters, 116.

24. Blvu Rsdnt Phycn Benjamin Ogden, Statement #2 in Engs, Tomlinson et al., 240-1.

25. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 205-6.

26. Boyce, 77-8.

27. Asts Jnl, XXXII, May 16, 1848, 18; Manley et al., 635.

28. Blvu Hospital Warden Josiah Mann, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 32.

29. Francis and Metcalfe, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 17.

30. Blvu Hospital Medical Board, Issac E. Taylor, Chairman, John A. Lydel, Cmtc on Annual Rept; Issac Wood, Vice President, Charles D. Smith, Secretary, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1854, VI, 11.

31. Manley et al., 636.

32. Reese, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 49.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

33. A. B. Whiting, Rept for 1842-3, 1401.

34. Hasbrouck, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1846, 399-400.

35. Reese, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 46.

36. Reese, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 86.

37. Manley and Metcalfe, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 36.

38. Aldmn Special Cmte, Ingraham, Clark, Banks, Rept on Future Location of House of Refuge, Doc, III (Second run), #94, January 30, 1837, 623-35; Asts Cmte on Lands and Places, Holly and Charles De Forest, Rept on Removal of House of Refuge, Doc, IX, #20, April 3, 1837, 622-3; Engs, Nathan et al., 154.

39. Aldmn Proc, XXXXVI, June 11, 1852, 581-3.

40. AH Govs Special Cmte, Majority, Washington Smith and Patrick G. Maloney and Minority, Banjamin F. Pinckney, Repts on Homeopathy in Minutes, December 29, 1857, 605-712 and at end of volume.

41. In 1825 City Inspector George Cuming reported that the "Small Pox which commenced its frightful course in November 1823, has not yet been arrested." There had been 394 deaths in the past year of which 113 were "coloured persons. This large proportion," thought the official, "probably arose from their greater inattention to Vaccination than the Whites manifested; yet it is well known that a very great negligence in this important practice prevails amongst the latter, notwithstanding many opportunities afforded to all in our City." MCC, XIV, January 17, 1825, 283. In 1827 there was an increase in cases of "this loathsome and malignant disease" and Cuming again urged universal vaccination and would continue to do so annually. MCC, XVI, January 1, 1827, 28, January 14, 1828, 686-7, XVII, January 26, 1829, 606.

42. I. Wood, Weekly Rept in AH Cmsrs, Minutes, December 16, 1826.

43. MCC, XVIII, December 21, 1829, 416.

44. A. B. Whiting, Rept for 1842-3, 1401-2. The Almshouse Warden expressed great concern about contact between smallpox patients and those bound for his facility at the pier; the healthy inmates were "constantly exposed" to the danger of the "fearful malady" and an epidemic would have the "most alarming consequences." Fitch AH Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 23.

45. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 26-7.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

46. Joint Special Cmte on BI and RI, William Adams, C. Crolius, Niel Gray, Jedediah Miller, Nathan A. Sutton, George F. Clark, Rept in Favor of Building Small Pox Hospital on BI, Aldmn Doc, XV, #9, July 31, 1848, 117-26, Rept on Small Pox Hospital, #12, September 11, 1848, 201-9.

47. AH Govs Special Cmte, Issac Townsend, Washington Smith, Anthony Dugro, Rept on Opening of New Small Pox Hospital in Minutes, December 18, 1856, 623-4, 627-9.

48. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 18.

49. A. B. Whiting, Rept for 1842-3, 1400.

50. Nurseries Supt William H. Guest, Affidavit in Joint Special Cmte, Egbert Benson, Samuel J. Willis, Robert Smith, Orville J. Nash, James H. Cook, Frederick R. Lee, David Graham, Jr., Cornelius B. Timpson, Abel T. Anderson, Rept on Treatment of Children at LIF, Aldmn Doc, VI, #74, May 4, 1840, 737.

51. AH Ast Phycn Nicholas Morrell, Affidavit, ibid., 742.

52. Ibid., 319-20.

53. Rhinelander, Dunshee, Holly, [First] Rept on Ophthalmia, Asts Doc, I (First run), A, May 30, 1831, 318-20.

54. Ords, I, January 3, 1832.

55. I. Wood, Rept on Children at Blvu Afflicted with Ophthalmia, Aldmn Doc, I, #14, January 16, 1832, 1-3.

56. Rhinelander, Dunshee, Holly, [Second] Rept on Ophthalmia, Asts Doc, I, #69, March 19, 1832, 286-9.

57. Peters, 116.

58. A. B. Whiting, Rept for 1842-3, 1401.

59. Nursery Hospital Rsdnt Phycn Henry N. Whittelsey, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 171-3.

60. Whittelsey, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 157-8.

61. Whittelsey, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1855, VII, 107-9.

62. Titus et al., Cmctn to Council, 212.

63. Lee and Jones, 724. However the fact that Bellevue was not supposed to treat venereal disease by no means relieved it of the problem in practice.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

64. Aldmn Proc, XXXIII, September 13, 1847, 676-9. As was common in Leonard's and other reform writings, whatever was unproven by evidence was established with a phrase like "it must be apparent to all" or "it cannot be doubted..." Note similarly the Bellevue Medical Board's use of this technique below to prove the link between prostitution and venereal disease.

65. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 33-4.

66. Manley et al., 635.

67. AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 12-3.

68. Keen, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 120-1.

69. AH Govs President Issac Townsend, Letter of Inquiry to Blvu Hospital Medical Board on Syphilis, August 24, 1855 in Minutes, December 26, 1855, 549-50.

70. Francis and Metcalfe, Rept on Constitutional Syphilis, Adopted by Medical Board, December 18, 1855 in AH Govs, Minutes, December 26, 1855, 552-5.

71. Ibid., 555-9.

72. Ibid., 559-65.

73. Townsend, Letter of Inquiry to Dr. H. N. Whittelsey, November 28, 1855 in AH Govs, Minutes, December 26, 1855, 567-8.

74. Whittelsey, Rept on Constitutional Syphilis, December 24, 1855 in AH Govs, Minutes, December 26, 1855, 569-70.

75. Townsend, Resolutions of Inquiry to William Sanger, Adopted by Govs, January 23, 1855 in Minutes, December 26, 1855, 571-2.

76. BI Rsdnt Phycn William Wallace Sanger, Preliminary Rept on Prostitution and Syphilis, December 31, 1855 in AH Govs, Minutes, December 26, 1855, 573-7. Dr. Sanger felt that he had to carefully distinguish his proposed study from such publications as that illustrated in Hershkowitz, fifth plate following p. 148.

77. Sanger, The History of Prostitution, Its Extent, Causes and Effects Throughout the World... (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1858). The author's credentials appeared on the title page: besides his post at Blackwell's Island, he was a "Member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; Late one of the Physicians to the Marine Hospital, Quarantine, New York, etc., etc., etc." The work went through several Harper editions and became such a classic that when a new generation of reformers launched their crusade against vice in 1899, it was republished

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

with just a brief updated appendix saying that little had changed in New York City since Sanger's day. The entire volume comprised 685 pages of which the first 450 treated prostitution historically from antiquity and in different cultures using secondary sources. The remainder was devoted to the sociological survey of New York City.

78. Quoted from Currer Bell, Shirley, ibid., title page.

79. Ibid., 21.

80. Ibid., 450-2. The schedules were all lost in the Hospital fire of February 13, 1858 and the book was completed from a draft copy which had fortunately been removed previously from Dr. Sanger's office there. Ibid., "Advertisement," fourth unnumbered page in front of volume.

81. Ibid., 492-503.

82. Ibid., 524-7, 575. One of the prostitutes interviewed had formerly been a Bellevue staff nurse. P. 524.

83. Ibid., 504-5, 520-1.

84. Ibid., 584. Probably nobody in his professional association ever dreamed that science could advance thus far so quickly.

85. Ibid., 585-6.

86. Ibid., 586-606. Cost and case statistics are from pp. 593, 603, 606. Sanger cried that "OVER SEVEN MILLIONS of dollars!" was "nearly as much as the annual municipal expenditure of New York City." He said that "comment upon these figures would be superfluous" but thought that "the American mind is said to be proverbially open to argument based upon dollars and cents" so perhaps these "financial considerations, combined with the claims of benevolence and humanity" might "influence" the public toward some "accomplishment." Ibid., pp. 606-7.

87. Ibid., 628-33.

88. Ibid., 594-7.

89. Ibid., 633-40. Criminal commitment was a simple but melancholy process: a magistrate asked the victim if he or she wished to be sent to the Blackwell's Island Hospital and, if so, the defendent was committed to the Penitentiary or Workhouse as "a Vagrant, viz., being without the means of supporting ___self, and having contracted an INFECTIOUS DISEASE IN THE PRACTICE

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

OF DEBAUCHERY, viz., the venereal disease, requiring charitable aid to restore ___ to health, whereof _he is convicted of record on confession." The form appears on p. 634.

90. Ibid., 641-9, The officers of the Penitentiary should be "entirely shut out" of the new hospital since "inmates of hospitals have too long endured the stupid interference of non-medical men." P. 650.

91. Ibid., 651-2. The "fearless" and "uncompromising" men of the "Medical Bureau" who would "not evade responsibility" must have "absolute power to retain every patient until cured." Such men, while not "evangilists," would still "delight to bear the Gospel to these poor degarded beings" and act in the role of "good Samaritan." Ibid., 648.

92. Ibid., 675-6.

93. Penitentiary Hospital Rsdnt Phycn William Kelly, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 160.

94. Sanger, Rept, Doc A in AH Govs, Minutes, May 8, 1855, separately paginated at end of volume, 3-6.

95. Ibid., 13-4.

96. AH Govs, Minutes, June 26, 1855, 11-2.

97. Sanger, Cmctn on Resolution...Amending...Rules and Regulations of Penitentiary Hospital in AH Govs, Minutes, between meetings of July 10 and July 24, 1855, separately paginated, 6-7. Such comments would not seem to have been calculated to impress a Board of Ten Governors but this was not one of Sanger's more tactful moments.

98. Ibid., 8.

99. Ibid., 11-2. Sanger told his collective employer that he was far better able to judge fitness than any board "at a distance" and that unitary responsibility was preferable to a situation "where there are twenty heads to be consulted and pleased, each (in all probability) with a candidate in hand awaiting the honor of being passed, on the principle of 'You tickle me and I'll tickle you.'" He claimed that his Hospital had never been ruled by any medical "clique, junta, or college, nor shall it ever be with my consent." It would remain "neutral ground, whereon the good and talented (so far as I am able to judge) shall meet."

100. Sanger, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1857, IX, 27.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

101. Sanger, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1858, X, 24-5.

102. Sanger, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1859, XI, 46.

103. In 1855 Sanger established a meteorological observatory on Blackwell's Island under the joint "care" of the New York State Regents and the Smithsonian Institution. Thereafter his Reports included detailed weather analyses and descriptions of his methods for measuring atmospheric "vapors" and other environmental variables. Sanger, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1856, VIII, 61, 91-125.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 10

MALEFACTORS AND PRISONS

Prisons existed for detention and for reformation. The system consisted of two parts: the City Prison and Bridewell and the Penitentiary. The City Prison grew out of the Bridewell and constituted a decentralized detention apparatus for persons awaiting trial, debtors, indigent witnesses, and others who could not remain at large. Though it was intended primarily for noncriminals, it also housed some convicts. Most of those found guilty of crime, however, were supposed to be punished and reformed by the main prison facility, the Penitentiary.

The Bridewell and City Prison system developed around City Hall amid much debate over particular locations.[1] The main Bridewell was at Bellevue until 1837 when it was closed and supplanted by the main City Prison on Center Street and district branch prisons at Jefferson Market, Essex Market, Harlem, and other outposts.[2]

Bridewell functions focused on the noncriminal. Unruly slaves[3] and runaway apprentices were sent there;[4] the Mandeville Commissioners were shocked to find young apprentice boys "committed and confined in the large prison-room, for the crime of a contemplated running away from a vessel."[5]

Most inmates of the Bridewell were accused persons awaiting trial. "The law presumes that persons detained...are innocent," noted Mandeville. There were "many charges for small crimes made in this City, from revenge or bad motive." Police process

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was initiated on the basis of "an exparte statement," often as not that of the offending party. Criminal complaints arose from incidents like snowball throwing and ladies hitting each other with broomsticks "on some slight quarrel." But the accused, if indigent, was spirited off to Bellevue where bail was even harder to raise than in the city and shut away in the Bridewell except for periodic expensive Court journies. Their lawyers could visit only at great difficulty and expense and only those charged with "higher crimes" of great "notoriety" and "interest" could attract free legal services.[6] The Engs Commissioners welcomed the solution to this problem in 1837: the closing of Bellevue Bridewell and the opening of the new "House of Detention" at City Hall.[7]

The City Prison and Bridewell imprisoned debtors upon the petitions of their creditors. The Almshouse Commissioners supplied provisions and blankets to those who were totally indigent. Reformers finally persuaded the State to abolish imprisonment for debt for residents in 1838 but the new law did not apply to nonresidents until two years later. Meanwhile Mayor Aaron Clark took a keen interest in the remaining victims of the old practice, quoting a Grand Jury and questioning "whether any portion of a building 'used <u>mainly</u> for the imprisonment of <u>persons</u> charged with <u>criminal</u> offences should be occupied as a place of confinement for <u>debtors</u>.'"

There were also many persons detained as witnesses. When Mayor Clark visited the Halls of Justice he found five "imprisoned there merely because a Court of the United States <u>might</u> at some

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

unknown future day, require their testimony." Ignorance was usually called misfortune, but here "knowledge without the charge of any connexion with crime or any sympathy for it, becomes a hardship." Thus were innocents locked up with the "mutineers and others" against whom they were to testify and were treated no better. "It would seem," thought the Mayor, that the "time had arrived when this sort of incarceration should be terminated." The State should abolish imprisonment for debt for nonresidents "equally with our own citizens," if only because continuing discrimination against "the stranger could ruin business by warning people to 'avoid this state.'" Furthermore, the practice discouraged honest negotiation between debtors and creditors.[8]

Shortly thereafter the Assistants Charity and Almshouse Committee studied the problem. The Prison Keeper was holding twelve nonresident debtors, seven persons "on United States Suits," seven Federal witnesses, one person "on a chancery suit," and one "for penalty to the Corporation." Of these, fifteen boarded "with the Keeper" and the remainder lived "on charity." Six of the latter lacked "means of obtaining bed or blankets;" the Committee stressed that "humanity requires that these persons should not be left to suffer." But they also thought that since the State had abolished debt imprisonment for its own citizens, it was "not...right that the City or State should be called upon to support foreign or non-resident debtors." They therefore asked for

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

State legislation to authorize collection of support from the petitioners for imprisonment.[9] Failing humanity, perhaps economy could be achieved.

In a rare instance, humanity prevailed promptly. In May 1840 Mayor Issac Varian announced the extension of abolition to nonresidents. He proposed that since the Debtor's Prison was no longer needed, those still confined on "civil prosecutions" could be housed in the Halls of Justice instead of in their previous "apartments," long condemned as "unfit."[10]

Witnesses and even victims of crime were still routinely imprisoned. Mayor Robert Morris denounced their confinement "in the same cells" as the "most heinous offenders." Often the "criminal with the money he has stolen, obtains bail and goes at large, while the person he has robbed is confined, as stated, for months to appear as a witness." Too many Councils had found "other business" more important than even separating criminals physically from their victims. Morris called for a "change" to erase "this blot upon our character as a civilized, humane, and christian community."[11]

The City Prison treated some convicted offenders both petty and serious. The Mandeville Commissioners compiled a statistical report of about 35,000 persons "fully committed to the City Prison" from 1816 to 1833 for crimes like assault and battery, breach of peace, forgery, false pretences, keeping a disorderly house, "felony," "bastardy," swindling, perjury, arson, and robbing the United States mail.[12] In 1850 the most common crimes for which people were committed to the Prison were intoxication, vagrancy, petty larceny, and assault and battery.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

There were also large numbers sent there for grand larceny, burglary, violation of Corporation Ordinances, and insanity. In fewer instances people were committed for crimes like riot, seduction, abandonment, selling pornography, "foreign convicts knowingly brought to this country," libel, "mayhem," rescuing prisoners, "driving over children," and similar urban pursuits.[13] There was an occasional execution at the City Prison, as at the First District branch in 1852.[14]

The Penitentiary differed functionally from the City Prison system. It received only legally convicted persons and therefore had a clear mandate to rehabilitate its charges. Warden Joseph Keen explained the theory: "The idea of a Penitentiary seems to be that of a place where the State or County, may deal paternally and correctively with those who are, for the first time tempted to the commission of crime. Here, the lower grades of offences are theoretically taken as the development of a disposition not yet thoroughly debased."[15] There were all different types of criminals; the City retained only the beginners serving up to a year and was supposed to reform them and thus keep them from falling into more serious criminal behavior which would lead them to State prison.

Crimes for which people were sent to the Penitentiary in a typical year included several hundred cases each of petty larceny and assault and battery and a few instances of burglary, counterfeiting, forgery, indecent exposure, larceny on the high seas and the like.[16] However, the vast majority

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of Penitentiary prisoners were vagrants and prostitutes under the City's criminal commitment system. From June to December 1849, 1,557 out of 2,109 of the sentences were for vagrancy.[17]

Classification was considered the key to crime control just as to all other social problems: each grade of deviant should be clearly ranked and defined with respect to all others and kept physically separate. In practice the City failed miserably to effect the most elementary classification in either the City Prison system or the Penitentiary. The prisons also manifested severe problems of overcrowding, poor physical conditions, and breakdowns in moral discipline.

The Mandeville Commissioners complained that in the Bridewell those "charged with all the different grades of crimes, except murder, and a few of the highest offences, including children" were crowded together in cells "badly ventilated and ill contrived." These presumed innocents were "much worse off...than a sentenced convict for arson or highway robbery would be in either your Penitentiary or State Prison." The Commissioners had "done all we could to remedy this evil, but the classification is not sufficiently complete."[18] It never became so. The Engs Commissioners reiterated Mandeville's complaint: in a single, unventilated room:

> the guilty are concocting evil with their fellows, and those who are yet innocent, are inducted into the mysteries of crime, or forced to suffer the companionship of men of the most disgusting character. Nearly all classes of prisoners are associated together; vice finds its desired

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> aliment, and incipient crime...receives an impetus from the counsels of desperation.[19]

In October 1839 a death in the City Prison revealed the woeful inadequacy of physical conditions there. One William Kitchman was brought in drunk and "found dead on the following day in [his] cell, shockingly disfigured, his face having been eaten by rats." A Grand Jury Committee found that the cell had been "ventilated by openings in the walls, commencing below and rising a few inches above the level of the prison yard, of sufficient size to admit rats and other vermin." The jailer said the Prison was "much infested with rats" and that some had recently entered a cell and "commenced gnawing at the foot of a living prisoner." The openings were closed immediately which "may not prove injurious to prisoners during cold weather," but might "during the warm season." Ultimately, thought the Jury Committee, "measures should be taken for ventilating the lower cells in a different manner" which would admit neither rats nor air "from damp or warm earth of the yard."[20] A follow-up investigation by a Special Assistants Committee established that there was finally "an abundance of pure air admitted in the cells by means of ventilators made through walls...and appertures (or holes) made through the doors." This scientific advance seemed sufficient but it would require "warm, close weather to fully test the experiment."[21]

Conditions worsened during the following decade. Commissioner Moses G. Leonard thought the Prison so bad that "almost any

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

alteration in its construction and arrangement would be an improvement."[22] The Prison Physician, Dr. John Covel, found the facility desperately in need of "CLEANSING AND VENTILATION... those most essential requisites productive of health" by means of which he finally repelled the ship fever.[23]

Dr. Covel challenged cholera in 1849: "Every precautionary measure was immediately adopted." The diet was changed from "indian mush to rice." Lime and other disinfectants were used and a "strict police was maintained over the health of the inmates" by means of tents and other emergency arrangements. Covel found that one of the most effective disinfecting and deodorizing procedures was

> the roasting and grinding of coffee, used as food for the inmates, within the walls of the Prison proper. This process, occupying the greater part of a day, and filling the building with its grateful aroma, much to the satisfaction of the prisoners contained therein, was repeated on an average of at least twice a week.

He also "scattered in various parts of the yard, from fifteen to twenty pounds of sulfur."[24]

The Prison would never be healthy whatever the doctor's efforts because the ground on which it sat was "low, sunken, unhealthy" - unsuitable for those "under accusation only... its corridors being too narrow; its cells too small, dark, and damp, being, in fact, dangerous." The Aldermen reiterated in 1852 that "an accusatory prison should be distinct from a convict prison" and should have "apartments...sufficiently large for comfort, air, and light" and ordered a Committee to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

seek a new site.[25] Nothing came of the effort.

Meanwhile Warden William Edmonds linked misclassification and overcrowding to the "appalling increase in crime" and called for a special investigation of the problem. Many causes of crime were "extraneous to the Prison" but there were also

> other causes inseparable from the administration of this Prison. These are: -
> First - Want of room; and
> Second - Want of classification consequent thereon.

More than 300 inmates shared 173 cells "several" of which were "unfit for use." Therefore the "wise and humane Provisions" of the law had to be "disregarded; and the innocent and guilty...commingle." It was utterly "impossible to discriminate between persons" because of crowding - "impossible to classify, even according to crime." This led to "corrupting influences" which were bound to exert an "action on the criminal statistics of the city."

Young boys, "after a few days' residence with us, have become proficients in crime; and those who came in as disorderly, truant, or suspected, have gone out but to be returned as thieves or burglars." Edmonds thus saw the "Prison itself" as "one of the most prolific sources of crime" which could only be remedied by an enlargement of the building. There was no separate place yet for Court prisoners or witnesses. "Ought not the public authorities," queried the Warden, "protect the merely suspected or entirely innocent?"[26]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Pioneering in criminology, Edmonds prepared a table of offenses "classified according to sex and age; with a view of showing to what species and grade of crime, either sex, at what particular period of life, is most generally addicted." Such a scientific approach could show the "vast number of young offenders, and the causes of their imprisonment." There had to be separate confinement for them: "As it now is, the moral welfare of the delinquents, and the interests of society would be better served by dismissing the charges against them, than by placing them here under the instruction of able and experienced professors of iniquity." Only a drastic change could "stay the progress of these Cadets of Crime" before their enlistment "in the ranks of that Army whose line of march is to the door of the State Prison, and the foot of the gallows." Equally disturbing to Edmonds was the large number of detained witnesses: it had tripled in a year. "Apart from the impolicy of confining them in the same building with those against whom they are to testify," he asked, would they not form associations that would return them to Court in "a less honorable capacity?"[27] Despite all such entreaties, the City Prison's population grew ever more heterogeneous.

There was great difficulty in distinguishing among lunatics, alcoholics, and the criminally violent. This task fell to Dr. Covel who boasted of his fidelity and exactitude. All kinds of circumstances led people into the City Prison. There were sailors whom "officers of vessels placed here to recover

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

their reason, or avoid new excesses previous to the sailing of their respective ships;" there were "young men of dissipated habits, who remain here until sober and sane... roues, gamblers, and even gentlemen, being in boarding-houses and hotels, who become dangerous and troublesome to their hosts and friends, &c." Some had money or helpful friends and were "not really prisoners, but in reality insane under the effects of drink." They were only lodged in the Prison from "an unwillingness to subject the Physician of the Lunatic Asylum to the annoyance of these disorderly persons" during their short delerium and a reluctance to subject them to "the stigma of having been at one period of their lives an inmate of a Lunatic Asylum, a reproach which clings." Many of these people recovered within a few days and would "laugh at their ridiculous fantasies" and thank the staff for their "kindness and attention." Covel thought their friends and relatives ought to pay their room and board.[28]

Covel lost patience in later years, complaining bitterly that his Prison was the "central depot for the reception of Pauper Lunatics, real or presumed, supplied mainly from among recent emigrants, (who are chargeable to the Commissioners of Emigration.)" He took great care, he said, to distinguish insanity from intemperance; hence the large number of cases discharged as cured.[29] In 1857 he performed an average of two diagnoses of apparent insanity per day and claimed that "in a period of ten years' service, I am not aware of a single

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

instance in which an improper diagnosis on my part, has been detected, or the liberty of an individual improperly invaded." It required great skill and experience to classify these cases and to "assign to each its proper character and destination."[30]

The Penitentiary likewise failed to classify its inmates properly or to provide them decent living conditions. While the City Prison mixed petty criminals with innocents, the centralized facility for the guilty threw together minor and serious offenders.

The Engs Commissioners found misclassification and neglect on Blackwell's Island though it was "in better condition than the establishment at Bellevue." The Penitentiary was the only institution that had been recently cleansed and presented a good "general appearance" despite the Keeper's sorry lack of "implements and materials." There was a shortage of blankets and clothing; those on hand had been used for months without washing, causing the dormitories to be overrun with vermin. Women slept on the bare stone floor and there was a "lamentable deficiency in order and discipline."

The females especially needed some better arrangement. There was no labor room for them so they were taken daily "to and from the 'shanties' erected at a distance from the prison; this gives opportunities for familiarities with the males, subversive of all order." A new female Penitentiary was necessary to "effectually separate the sexes" and "render their imprisonment more secure."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Too little "regard" had ever been paid to the prisoners' "personal cleanliness;" the Commissioners found that "our Penitentiary is far behind that of other cities." They were doing everything they could to improve hygiene but needed "bathing houses and other apparatus."

The Engs Board also first revealed the Penitentiary's problem with derelicts, noting the large expense of "males confined for short periods" who would "scarcely...recover from the effects of dissipation" only to return for "crime or vagrancy." Their "punishment" was thus "frustrated" and the citizens taxed to support "depredators upon society" who refused to labor.[31]

This problem worsened and provoked more urgent complaints. The Cook Commissioners wanted first offender vagrants sent to a Workhouse rather than the Penitentiary. "Were it not for the Vagrant Law, and the system of punishment created by that law...the number of felons in this City would be by no means as large as it is, and of consequence the expenses of the Alms House Department would be greatly reduced." It was also a moral outrage that "females, innocent of any felony, are committed to the Penitentiary, there to associate with felons of their own sex...the Vagrant Law...tends greatly to demoralize the community."[32] The Nativists agreed; their Council asked the Special Justices "to commit all drunkards and vagrants to the Alms House instead of the Penitentiary, in all cases where no actual criminal act has been committed."[33] The plea fell on deaf ears. Commissioner Moses G. Leonard told

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Council that he had found the Penitentiary a luxury resort for tired courtesans:

> It is perhaps not unknown to you, that this City abounds in hordes of lewd women, but are you aware that our Penitentiary is their home of retirement? They make it a convenient place to flee to, when turned out of doors by their keepers, for their faded charms.[34]

The Almshouse Governors sought power to transfer inmates between the Penitentiary and the nonexistent Workhouse because only then could "any classification" be made of the "very heterogeneous crowd of inmates...both sexes, all ages, and every degree of depravity, and every stage of proficiency in vice." The Magistrates could never tell "from a cursory inspection" as well as could the Governors over time what would be the best plan of treatment for each member of a group "generally...regarded" as "paupers rather than as criminals."[35]

Warden Joseph Keen attacked the vagrancy system and the general misclassification and neglect with great eloquence. Courtesans confessed and received a sentence in order to obtain venereal cures; they would then "procure their discharge" by a writ "through some keeper of a brothel... The policy of receiving prostitutes in the Penitentiary is at least questionable." They seldom came from "motives of charity, or for the preservation of the public morals." The complainants were Policemen "and the objects are of the lower class. Those who can command money, or friends, seldom

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

remain; while thousands who live openly, (and who are well known to the police,) in splendid mansions, or what is termed genteel houses of ill fame, are permitted to remain unmolested." Furthermore, the "lame and the blind" were "frequently committed."

Keen considered the "classification of the prisoners, their occupation and treatment" to be "of the first and last importance to the well being of society." There was "no subject connected with the administration, treatment, and discipline of a prison" that carried "equal importance." Any large prison required "separate confinement" which would at first occasion expense but would "ultimately diminish the number of convicts and lessen the cost." It would enable "moral and religious influences" to operate and keep the "young offender" from being "subjected to contaminating influences." Any reformation under existing conditions was "next to impossible" and universal "education in crime almost certain." Those who emerged from the present system were often "candidates for the gallows," whereas, under a system of separation, "unknown to his fellow prisoner, the salutary influences" would take hold on each. The Warden thought that "men possessed of any character and intelligence do not (ordinarily) willingly commit crime. It is circumstances which lead or drive them to it." By separation he did not mean "the solitary system," only "separate confinement, accompanied by labor, moral instruction, and all the appliances that tend to improve the mind and morals." The "ultimate end and object"

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of "all prison discipline" should be "reclamation rather than punishment," especially in a system intended for "petty offences, the first stages in crime."

Though he used "every means" to classify, Keen still witnessed the constant "painful spectacle" of "those committed for assault and battery, libels, and other misdemeanors, being indiscriminately mixed up with thieves, many of whom were hardened criminals." He was unable to vary discipline to suit the case; all were "subject to the same treatment." The Penitentiary should be used only for those "convicted by a Court of Record" and prisoners guilty of larceny should be kept entirely separate from "those convicted of misdemeanors not involving the moral turpitude of theft." Hardened offenders should be set to labor or placed in solitary confinement with their "own thoughts" which they dreaded. The Penitentiary was "far from being a place of punishment" for them under the existing system.[36]

When commitments increased, the Warden commented that were the Penitentiary "a 'terror to evil doers,' or a school of reform...It would not be the purposely selected...occasional resort of the scum of our city, its desperadoes and its petty depredators, in their hours of want and weariness." A Workhouse and a new Penitentiary building were needed. "This prison must continue to enjoy its 'bad eminence' as one of the largest prisons in the world, until it is subjected to the most thorough and radical reform."

If there could be no new buildings, at least "ADDITIONAL

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CELLS" were mandatory. Keen explained vividly how overcrowding affected night discipline:

> In the south wing of the Prison there are 240 cells. Of these, 40 cells are occupied by 80 men; the remaining 200 cells accommodating 360 women, 100 of these cells having two inmates each. In each cell there is but one iron frame, with sacking bottom, two and one-half feet wide. When this has to serve for two occupants, they are compelled to lie with heads at opposite ends of the frame, thus bringing the feet of one directly in the face of the other. Will any one, accustomed to the ordinary conveniences and decencies of life, wonder that sometimes night is made hideous with the yells and fightings of the men thus situated. For it must not be overlooked, that besides the natural repulsiveness of such a condition, even with the choice of our bed-fellow, here it is impossible to make selections. The most loathsome may be placed, perchance, by the side of the most brutal; a struggle ensues, and sometimes blood flows. The Warden may be attracted to the scene of the contest, but how is he to discriminate between the guilty and the innocent.
>
> All are locked in their cells, but the men can converse with the women through the grated doors.
>
> The description of an ordinary night scene in this Prison, would be but a recital of lewd songs and ribald jests, interspersed with scuffling and fighting. During a portion of the year a night watch has been allowed, when comparative quiet was secured; but as the Warden was directed to discontinue the services of the Guard, it is now impossible to enforce silence or anything like order. As it is necessary to have some one in the corridor, to answer the calls of those attacked with sudden illness, as those of dissolute lives are liable to be, two inmates of the institution, females, are employed in this service. Having the range of the Prison, although, indeed, without access into the cells, it may be imagined how far profitable and improving, both to themselves and to the other prisoners, must be their nocturnal visits at the grated cell doors.[37]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Penitentiary routine was supposed to enforce a stern but humane moral reformation through labor, religion, moral guidance, and, if necessary, physical punishment. The City Prison had no claim on the labor of the unconvicted but in the larger institution, an industrial regimen was basic. Legislation authorized Almshouse Commissioners to "direct" the labor of inmates, as "necessary or useful...upon any public work in this City, or on the farm."[38] The Street Commissioner had a claim on inmates to help "cleanse the public sewers" and for "other work." When employed by City departments other than the Almshouse, prisoners were to be "provided for" by those agencies. Those employed within the Almshouse Department should work daily except Sunday unless sick, "males in the manufacture of such articles as may be required for the use of the institution, or in getting out stone, or in the erection of buildings on the public property, or in working the public grounds; the females in making garments...or...other work."[39] Every building Ordinance and contract also ratified long traditions of employing Penitentiary labor.[40]

But the gangs were ill managed, "frequently shifted about by order of committees" of the Council "to work roads, sewers, &c. without any general system to guide the keeper, or means whereby to enable him to exhibit the amount of profits or loss of the establishment."[41] The Engs Commissioners found the females "in idleness for want of materials for making oakum, and the quarry had been but partially worked for a long time, because a fire

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

engine was not furnished to draw off the water." The cart harness was "worn out;" the potatoes were unploughed, and a "valuable meadow appropriated to pasture for cattle that resembled 'Pharoh's lean kine.'"[42] The Cook Commissioners thought the Penitentiary to have been "greatly mismanaged" since there were not enough shoes for the inmates. The last Democratic Board had left behind 700 pairs so Cook thought it a matter of "some surprise that in the past year enough shoes for all were not manufactured."[43]

Commissioner Moses G. Leonard sponsored many Penitentiary projects besides saddlery hardware. Hearing "few complaints" from Almshouse contractors who paid for quarrying and stonecutting crews, he concluded that most Blackwell's convicts could be self-supporting. Perhaps even, "after a thorough organization of this Department for the attainment of this commendable view," the prison could "prove a source of revenue."[44] The "able bodied" were "constantly employed in getting out stone for the new buildings" which helped motivate them to "wisely choose to follow another and different pursuit - affording an irrefragible argument in favor of a system of labor and production."[45] Besides discouraging recidivism, the Department realized over $25,000 worth of convict labor in 1847 on excavation, grading, quarrying, and stonework for the New Lunatic Asylum extension and Mad House projects alone.[46]

Problems arose under the newly appointed Whig Keeper. In 1848, Mayor William F. Havemeyer said there was "an

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

inefficiency in the management of the Penitentiary;" many "of both sexes were entirely unemployed" and the grounds were neglected. "Basket making, which had been introduced at the instance of the Commissioner" had just been "abandoned... in consequence of the want of efficient co-operation on the part of the keeper of that Institution."[47] The Governors, however, did not leave convict labor to chance. The new regime cultivated "every spot of vacant ground" and produced 1,100 bushels of turnips and potatoes. The women made clothing for the Randall's Island children, 1,000 "summer and winter suits. This has never been done before." Each workshop had a Superintendent responsible for supply and maintainence within his craft: the shoeshop, for example, would maintain "a surplus to meet any emergency that may arise."[48] Daily living and extensive island development generated an ever expanding array of tasks like "digging trenches for Potter's Field, grading, or blasting rocks."[49]

Religion was important to prison discipline. Reverend John Stanford explained that a "culprit" awaiting trial in the Bridewell ought to choose only one or two clergymen for counseling, rather than many "whose religious sentiments are not always in unison." He thought that a "discovery is more likely to be made by the <u>confidential</u> few" and recalled a case of two "incendiaries" who eventually trusted him enough to reveal their accomplices.[50] Nobody questioned this use of the spiritual relationship; after all, with

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

such ministerial techniques, who needed prosecutors?

The Penitentiary used religion, not for information but for moral maintainence and reform. Some feared any collective activity among convicts, but Sunday group worship was an old tradition. "It is a matter of dispute," noted the Engs Commissioners, "even among men of Christian character, whether these unfortunate and abandoned people profit by attending in a congregated manner, to the instructions of wisdom." They declined to "speculate" upon the question but accepted a "high estimate of the ordinances of Christianity" and decided "to continue a course, which, if it should not happily produce reform among individuals, tends, in a very great degree, to the preservation of order and discipline and discharges the imperative duty of using the means of teaching the only path to happiness and heaven." They further felt that such religious gatherings could aid in laying "the foundation of much good...which followed up by counsel in private, will leave the hope of a reformation, and a return to the proper duties of life."[51]

The tradition continued. Warden Keen said that "the morals of the prisoners" were "strictly attended to" by means of two services each Sabbath and an open door to "all classes of Christians." The Warden went beyond religion and tried to educate his charges, proposing to start "a library of suitable books, such as histories, biographies, religious, and other works of an interesting character. In stormy days, when the prisoners cannot work outside, their minds, which would not

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

otherwise be engaged, can be improved by reading." This would entail little expense since many offers to donate volumes had been made. Keen thought books and tracts "silent and powerful monitors; and, as the 'public press' seems to guide the opinion and character of the community at large, so can they here have a most beneficial effect."[52]

Moral rehabilitation and discipline were constantly undermined by the smuggling of liquor. Warden Keen subscribed to the temperance movement's article of faith that "the use of intoxicating drinks is the prime cause, in nearly every case in our country, of crime and vagrancy" and found this belief confirmed "by the experience of this Prison." He asked the Governors to "inquire what influence they can assert for its suppression...if the liquor traffic were broken up, the numbers committed to this Prison would be diminished three fourths." He lamented "what may look like a strange acknowledgment from the Warden:" that intoxication was "not entirely unknown even within the prison walls." It was "impossible to prevent the introduction of liquor among a portion of the prisoners," not only because of the Almshouse proper delivery system, but also through other "channels" like the "men employed in the boats belonging to the Penitentiary Ferry, and the boat employed at the Hospital." The "manifest remedy" for this "evil" was to "employ in the boats none but paid and responsible men."[53]

Discipline included punishment for the most troublesome: solitary confinement, bread and water rations, or even

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

flogging. In the early years the Commissioners, rather than just the Keeper, had to approve all applications of corporal punishment "for improper conduct or disobedience."[54] Under the Governors this authority was delegated to Warden Keen. Occasionally there were charges of "cruelty" in punishment,[55] but no proven scandals. Rather, the tone of available evidence suggests that though living conditions were harsh, discipline was usually lax.

Since most of its inmates were vagrants and unconvicted defendents, the City Prison entirely neglected moral treatment. This upset the reformers in the New York Prison Association whose Executive Committee memorialized the Common Council in 1846 about conditions there. Though often the reformers and the politicians were the same people, in some instances voluntary societies faced an obstinate legislative machine that laughed off their entreaties for change. Sometimes it appeared that the criticisms were the wailings of the opposition out of power and using the private charities as a base of attack. The Association Memorial was signed by Clarkson Crolius, a Whig leader without a current office, and was referred to an all Tammany Assistants Committee on Police, Watch, and Prisons.

The Association and the Committee agreed that it was unfortunate that some debtors were still confined with criminals. The politicians could even share the private agency's concern about "the great lack of virtue and morality among the prisoners." But the Assistants boasted

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a pragmatic insight not appreciated by the Memorialists, who, while calling the Prison the "gate of perdition to multitudes," still did "not pretend to say that the wicked and reckless were virtuous and moral before they were sent to prison, nor do they say that prisons generally are schools for crime." Even though "young boys and girls detected in their first petty offences" were "thrust into a den of murderers, burglars, highwaymen" and it was proper to "remonstrate against such a system, or rather want of system," nothing could really be done without a new building. "A radical change is required."

The Association complained of "the manner in which prisoners spend their time on Sundays, viz: - 'In the perusal of licentious publications, smoking, &c.'" and said that they did not know "by whose 'connivance' the papers and tobacco are introduced." The Committee criticized the reformers for wanting "every person searched who enters the Prisonyard." Their disarming exoneration of the Keeper and humorous critique of the inflated expectations of the Association was a model of unregenerate Tammany logic, but also had a ring of sober reality. The Association Memorialists

> seem to convey the impression, by the use of the word 'connivance' that the Head Keeper and his Deputies have a thorough knowledge of the pocket contents of all who visit...but... the Keepers do not take it upon themselves to search any persons except those who are duly committed and subject to their surveillance... it is not considered their duty to do so. The safe custody and comfort of the prisoners claims their whole attention, and if they fulfill their duty in this regard they do all that is required...It seems strange to your

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Committee that prisoners should indulge in such amusements only on the Sabbath, as the Memorialists set forth, for it would appear that they are engaged in some business during six days of the week that requires their attention; but it is not at all strange that men or women who have been convicted of infamous crimes and have lived by theft, fraud, and violence, should be disposed to spend their leisure time in obscene and immoral pursuits. Prisons are not the nurseries of virtue and good morals, and it must not be expected that condemned felons will act the parts of saints even during the short time they are doomed to stay in the City Prison.[56]

Escape was a serious problem for the Penitentiary. What passed for security allowed vagrants and criminals to take an "elopement" even more easily than to obtain a writ. The Council received dozens of reports of flights from the Penitentiary proper and of prison laborers from various work locations such as "the sewer in Canal Street while cleaning the same."[57] Methods of escape were detailed in a Keeper's Report for 1838-9. Stealing boats, often from the doctor, and swimming the river were the most common means of flight. Women found it easy to disappear from Bellevue where they worked as matrons and nurses. Only recently was there "a place of security for them at night." Eleven inmates "made their escape by cutting off a bar in the door of the prison. It is now made secure." Another precaution was taken: the "guards have now been supplied with rifles, instead of muskets, of which the convicts seem to know the inutility, and that they could swim off at mid-day with impunity." The Keeper was also

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"erecting two additional turrets for guard posts" and hoped that "the experience we have had in our new vocation will increase our vigilance, and enable us to have elopements less frequent."[58] Better management could, indeed, reduce such incidents but could never prevent them completely.

The City Prison had a special problem with the greed of many of its Keepers. Extensive arrangements, both legal and fraudulent, allowed officers to exploit inmates financially. An accused person or debtor was responsible for his own support and had to tip the officers for necessities and amenities. These "fees" were technically legal but merged easily with extortion and bribery. The Nativists complained of past Keepers' traditions of swindling prisoners out of their money and forcing them to use a recommended "pettifogger" in a kickback arrangement instead of allowing them to freely select their attorneys. "Under this arrangement the prisoner would look upon the keeper as no better than himself, a kind of legal or official robber." The Van Nostrand Commissioners were "fully persuaded" that the "whole system of perquisites in addition to salaries" was "wrong, demoralizing in its effects, and very expensive."[59] In 1846 the State outlawed Keepers' fees in an attempt to prevent imprisonment for purely monetary purposes but the City Prison Keeper did not think that the law applied to him. Corporation Counsel James T. Brady said it did.[60] This ended fees.

Penitentiary officers never took fees but sometimes the belongings of the convicts disappeared. The Cook Commissioners

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

complained that after routinely confiscating the prisoners' clothing and replacing it with Penitentiary garb, the institution lost many of the original garments. When release time came, many inmates' property "could not be found" and had to be replaced at considerable expense.[61]

Finally, the Penitentiary had occasional problems with favoritism toward special prisoners. The coddling of the famous abortionist Ana Lohman, alias Madame Restell,[62] caused the dismissal of Keeper Jacob Acker in 1849.[63] Restell was sentenced to a year in the Penitentiary in 1847 "having procured an abortion on the body of a girl named Mary Bodine." Just before her arrival the Matron was removed from the Female Department and an "entire change" was made in visiting policies: the Aldermen were suddenly excluded from access to the prison.[64] But Madame Restell's husband was not denied visiting rights: a "voluntary" inmate, Louisa Barker, testified that she "saw and received" him often and would "be alone with him three or four hours" in a room "over the office." Madame was served better food than others received; it was presented to her ceremoniously by several "waiters" with white towels. She was excused from all but personal labor, "fine work and not prison work," permitted to keep her light on after hours, and given unusual freedom of movement. She was even permitted a feather bed "while other convicts had only the usual straw beds." Mr. Lohman supplied it; a "colored female prisoner by name

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Deborah" carried it into the cell, and Restell slept on it every night. It had to be brought outside for a daily airing, "covered up with a blanket or sheet" and transported in careful time with routine prisoner movements for purposes of concealment.[65]

The Special Committee of the Council which investigated the scandal was shocked. Women like Jane Bingham told them things like: "All I came here for was drinking a glass - my husband sent me out of my own house."[66] They were treated as criminals. But Madame Restell had money from her illicit enterprises and therefore lived like an honored guest though convicted of "a most heinous offence, one not surpassed in moral turpitude by any known in society." Favoritism toward the abortionist was therefore especially objectionable:

> Your Committee have not heard of any reason why Madame Restell deserved or why she in fact received, the tender treatment here described... there are no circumstances connected with her name, career or crime, which gave her any right to other treatment than such was bestowed on many unfortunate wretches, who either from the cravings of hunger, or most abject poverty, were tempted to obtain by stealth the means to continue life, or who, because of sickness or penury, gave themselves up, as was the case with Louisa Barker. On the contrary, your Committee believe, that if any distinction could justly be made in treatment, she should have been most severely punished, who without any necessity to palliate her horrid avocation, habitually engaged herself in a war against the laws of God himself, and in practices, the success of which first emboldens girls to surrender their chastity to the vile seducer, then enables them to conceal from relations the natural evidences by which God makes such guilt apparent, and thus at last drives them to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> to a course of life tending first to the brothel, and thence to such a death as cannot be contemplated without pain. Your Committee know too well the universal detestation with which Madame Restell has long been considered by this community, to believe that she can be considered by any moral person, as worthy of any feeling but hatred, or any treatment but execration.

The Committee could not "too strongly express their astonishment" or condemnation of the conduct of "him who has endeavored to shelter a convict so vile" from her "deserved punishment." Disclaiming any feeling of "vengeance," they thought that "no convict should ever be favored" except "in consideration of some superior disposition to reformation manifested." The rarest event occurred when the Whig Council and Mayor removed their patronage employee Acker.[67] Joseph Keen, his replacement, was also soon embroiled in charges of favoritism.

At the end of 1849 Keen stressed that "no distinction or discrimination has been made in the prisoners, except such as may have arisen from their conduct and demeanor."[68] But among Issac Britton's charges of 1853 was an allegation that the famous dime novelist Ned Buntline was allowed to cross the river at leisure and visit Manhattan taverns in civilian clothing.[69] Keen said that he never gave anybody improper permission to cross the water and that Buntline went on boats only "as a bargeman."[70] Almshouse Governors' Clerk Joshua Phillips explained also that Ned had been of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

great service: when Keen was sick, he filled the role of a "very efficient" nurse with the Governors' permission. He had also once given Keen information "which led to the examination of prisoners on the island who had meditated a rise; on this examination weapons were found on a large number of the prisoners."[71] Clearly Ned Buntline was no Madame Restell; Keen emerged looking clever and astute.

The substandard conditions of the prisons both gave Blackwell's Island a bad name and inspired the beginning of modern criminology. As the first of the large Island institutions, the Penitentiary demonstrated the ominous truth that a large, strong building on a site removed from the city was not sufficient to guarantee social order and moral rehabilitation. The managers of the other specialized Island Almshouse institutions learned the same lesson.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. A proposed Bridewell in the notorious Five Points section of Manhattan was rejected in 1829 because a slum would "not be a proper location for persons accused, and not generally convicted of crimes." MCC, XVIII, April 20, 1829, 11. At this time the main Bridewell was in the City Hall Park; with the removal of the Penitentiary to Blackwell's Island, the Bridewell went to Bellevue and the Old Bridewell became the Debtor's Prison. MCC, XIX, August 23, 1830, 194. In noting the Bridewell's function as a place for the accused rather than the guilty, an early Council Committee cautioned that it was still, indeed, a prison and wisely warned against the seduction to complacency of a euphemism like "House of Detention:" "Names do not alter things." MCC, XVIII, December 21, 1829, 437.

2. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 34-6; City Prison Warden William Edmonds, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 76.

3. Prior to the abolition of slavery in New York State, the Bridewell law provided that "Where slaves are committed by the police magistrates at the instance of their masters or others, for running away or misbehavior, the person making such application must pay fifteen dollars...to the corporation...as indemnity for expenses," giving bond to guarantee compliance. Act to Regulate City Prison and Bridewell, April 30, 1827, 108-9.

4. Masters and mistresses were likewise liable for support of apprentices. Law to Regulate City Prison and Bridewell, Ords, II, April 6, 1834, 235.

5. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 178.

6. Ibid., 179.

7. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 210.

8. A. Clark, Message on Debtors, Asts Doc, XII, #5, June 18, 1838, 105-7.

9. Asts CCAH, Ellis Potter, C. Crolius, Monmouth B. Hart, Rept on Petition of Imprisoned Debtors, Doc, XII, #20, October 15, 1838, 173-5.

10. Varian, Message to Council for 1840, 15.

11. Morris, Message to Council, Aldmn Doc, X, #1, May 29, 1843, 22-3.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

12. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, Table E following p. 184.

13. City Prison Warden William Edmonds, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 52-3.

14. Edmonds, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 46.

15. Keen, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 116-7.

16. Ibid., 114.

17. Keen, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 136.

18. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 178.

19. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 209-10.

20. Grand Jury, John W. Walker, Foreman, Presentment on Conditions at City Prison in Asts Special Cmte, J. West, C. Balis, F. R. Lee, F. O'Neil, Rept on Cmctn from Mayor Transmitting same, Doc, XV, #29, December 30, 1839, 114-5.

21. West, Balis et al., 112.

22. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 35.

23. City Prison Physician John Covel, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 78.

24. Covel, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 100-1. Later Dr. Covel reported continuing success with coffee. His opinion of its "decided influence in destroying noxious effluvia," even to the point of warding off cholera, was verified by both the Emigration Commissioners and Outdoor Poor Superintendent George Kellock who had observed its use "where large numbers of sick, filthy emigrants congregate." These experiences convinced Covel beyond all doubt of "its deodorizing influences, if not its disinfecting agency." Covel, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 61.

25. Aldmn Proc, XXXXVI, May 7, 1852, 336-7.

26. Edmonds, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 48-9.

27. Edmonds, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 64-5.

28. Covel, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 60-1.

29. Covel, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 41.

30. Covel, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1857, IX, 138-9.

31. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 213-6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

32. Cook et al., 248, 255.

33. Ords, XII, May 13, 1845, 391.

34. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Convict and Pauper Labor, 288.

35. AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 11-2.

36. Keen, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 139-44.

37. Keen, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 115-9.

38. Law for Government of Penitentiary, Ords, II, April 22, 1834, 254.

39. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 98.

40. There were innumerable references throughout the Council records to the use of prison labor. Formal arrangements to supervise the crews began around 1825 within the Almshouse. "During a great portion of the year the Prisoners are made to work on the roads and public grounds," noted the Council in that year. MCC, XV, December 19, 1825, 75. Every building Ordinance mandated the use of convict labor in all phases of construction. Contracts provided for credit for such labor to the City. Almshouse Commissioners' Reports also noted the constant use of convicts in and about the institutions. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 178. For a typical contract clause, see Andrew Brady, Mason and Corporation Counsel James T. Brady and Comptroller John Ewen for City of New York, Articles of Agreement, Contract for Building AH on BI, Special Contracts A, October 8, 1845, 12. Prison labor was the subject of new experiments and variants of old ones. In 1852 Alderman Daniel F. Tiemann introduced a resolution calling for all street manure to be carried by vessels to the Islands and used by the convicts to build a sea wall which would reclaim useful land and "destroy the present nuisance of manure heaps in the densely populated parts of the city." Aldmn Proc, XXXXVI, April 5, 1852, 15-6.

41. Peters, 117.

42. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 213-4.

43. Cook et al., 238.

44. M. G. Leonard, Rept on General Condition of Institutions, 27-8.

45. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1846, 391.

46. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 32.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

47. Havemeyer, Message to Council for 1848, 11. The Keeper was Whig Jacob Acker.

48. Keen, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 136-8.

49. Keen, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 122-3.

50. Stanford, Rept for 1824, 9-10.

51. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 216.

52. Keen Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 145-6.

53. Keen Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 121-2.

54. Law for Government of Penitentiary of 1834, 253.

55. Asts Jnl, XIII, March 25, 1839, 215.

56. Asts Cmte on Police, Watch, Prisons, Charles Webb, Stephen H. Feeks, Henry H. Byrne, Rept on Memorial of Prison Association on Condition of City Prison, Doc, XXVIII, #17, November 30, 1846, 170-1.

57. MCC, XIX, July 26, 1830, 168.

58. BI Keeper John W. Brown, Rept with List of Elopements, Aldmn Doc, VI, #28, November 18, 1839, 337-9, 344-7. Many who eloped were soon "retaken."

59. Van Nostrand et al., Cmctn on Abuses, 401.

60. Corporation Counsel James T. Brady, Cmctn on Right of Keeper of City Prison to Charge Fees, Aldmn Doc, XIII, #14, September 28, 1846, 163-5.

61. Cook et al., 238-9.

62. Ana Lohman, born Ana Trow, was a well known scapegoat for frustrated moral reformers like Anthony Comstock who eventually hounded her to suicide. Hershkowitz, 44, 357.

63. Though favoritism was his main offense, Acker also refused to admit Dr. Reese or visiting Aldermen to the Penitentiary, saying that the female prisoners had complained of being displayed like animals "in a menagerie." He would not supply Reese with convicts for Hospital labor. Also, his family ate all the prison vegetables and his wife had prisoners make her clothing, sheets, and trinkets such as "bead bags" and "purses" fashioned by "French Josephine." Joint Special Cmte, Thomas K. Downing, T. R. Hibbard, Robert P. Getty, Majority Rept on Conduct of Officers

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Connected with Public Prisons on BI, Aldmn Doc, XV, #27, January 15, 1849, 513-4; Corporation Counsel Willis Hall, Opinion, ibid., 515-24; Carnley, Adams, Britton, 525-33; Penitentiary Keeper Jacob Acker, Testimony, ibid., 535; Mary Jacobs, Testimony, ibid., 575; H. P. Chapman, Testimony, ibid., 579. Though there were "Majority" and "Minority" Reports, there was no disagreement on any issue regarding the affair.

64. Downing, Hibbard, Getty, 506-7.

65. Mary Jacobs, Testimony in Carnley, Adams, Britton, 574; Louisa Barker, Testimony, ibid., 575-6.

66. Jane Bingham, Testimony, ibid., 577-8.

67. Downing, Hibbard, Getty, 507-9, 513-4.

68. Keen, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 137.

69. Issac Britton, Affidavit #119 in A. C. Flagg, Rept... on Abuses in City Government, 1518, 1520.

70. Keen, Affidavit #138, ibid., 1370.

71. AH Govs' Clerk Joshua Phillips, Affidavit #134, ibid., 1564.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 11

CHILDREN OF THE REPUBLIC

Everybody professed to love the Almshouse children. Their primary distinguishing characteristic, innocence, was symbolically important to society at large and was even more appealing to reformers in the context of a system where "imposition" was the main threat to stability and control. Children, perhaps alone among the poor, were held exempt from any suspicion of fraud and were thought of as entirely amenable to moral guidance and instruction.

Typical was the comment of the father of the Nurseries, Commissioner John R. Peters: the opening of the Long Island establishment was "intended for the special benefit" of children, "this unoffending, interesting and numerous class of paupers, who excite the sympathies of all persons, except the arrogant, and hardened aristocrat."[1] The Mandeville Commissioners proposed to increase the number of children cared for in the Nurseries and "of course the expense" while diminishing assistance in the Almshouse proper. This was justified in both economic and moral terms. The Children's Department was "in every point of view, highly interesting to the community." Liberal provision for the young poor rested on the assumption that "children abandoned by their parents, or those who are destitute of parents" would later become "the criminals of all nations." Police, courts, prisons, and "thefts and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

depredations on society" were "almost all expenses and losses caused by individuals depraved in youth." The expense of "food, clothing and teaching a child for two or three years" was "trivial in comparison with the expense of his frequent arrests, trials and imprisonment." To avoid "murder of one valuable life, or one conflagration" equalled the education and support of "several hundreds of these children." Many, after useful experiences at indenture, would "make valuable citizens, who otherwise would have been even incendiaries or murderers." Furthermore, children were not dependent through any fault of their own like intemperance; assistance to them would not make them "idle or improvident." "On the contrary, you make them industrious." There was an "obligation and duty of the public" to give "moral and religious instruction" and the "advantage" of being "bound out to moral people and to those of correct deportment."[2]

The Engs Commissioners believed it their "duty, and the interest of the community, to separate from vicious and incompetent parents, (with their consent,) those children which they may be unable to support without public charity; and to adopt them into the family at Long Island Farm; requiring the parents to maintain themselves." They thought that the "best assistance" that could be given many of the "deserving" poor might be to "take a portion of their young offspring until the course of events shall bring about a more favorable state of things with them."[3] Enthusiasm for child care was not confined to Whigs or to Almshouse Commissioners. Moses G. Leonard

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

deemed the Nurseries "perhaps the most entitled to your careful and vigilant attention, and demanding a more liberal support than any other branch of the Institution."[4] Perhaps Mayor Aaron Clark summarized the public attitude best when he boasted proudly that "proper nurses and good clothing are provided for the children, and they are considered, in every respect, as the 'children of the Republic.'"[5]

Upon closer examination, however, the Republic and City did not think so well of their children. Though virtuous in comparison with other paupers, as part of that class, the Almshouse youth were stigmatized with respect to other children. Often, their backgrounds and, probably, their destinies were thought polluted and depraved. They were literally the "abandoned" of the city. It was no accident, it was thought, that those without close guidance would become morally corrupt. Therefore orphans, foundlings, and children of profligate parents shared a common susceptibility to evil influences.

Children came into the Almshouse from many tragic situations. Some were epidemic orphans. Commissioner Peters reported an influx of "many whose parents perished by the cholera" of 1832. "Several of these little ones cannot be traced as to their names, parentage or kindred."[6] Many were victims of tangled omestic situations and would have fallen to the neglect of vicious distant relatives if not claimed by the city.[7] Most poignant, however, were the circumstances of the foundlings.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

There were many cases of helpless infants left in various corners of the city by prostitutes and other irresponsible persons. The Almshouse received them from the Police, named them after the site of their abandonment, and set them out at nurse. Ann Alley was "found in an alley in Canal St near the Church" in April 1829 and "put to nurse with Julia Spragg." She was discharged in 1834. Clifton Courtland was "found in Courtland St Oct 1830 aged about 1 week." Alfred Waverly, "about one month old" was "left on the stoop of Alfred Wagstaff No 25 Waverly Place by some person unknown" and eventually adopted by Louisa A. and Phoebe Ann Barrett of 115 Mulberry Street. A child was found at the corner of Nassau and Pine Streets and named Nassau Pine.[8]

It was many years, however, before the problem of foundlings received the attention it merited. Finally, in 1857, the Almshouse Governors, partially in an attack on the "imperfect system" of nursing out, made a systematic study of the social roots of child abandonment. "We have to do with human nature as we find it," concluded their Committee on Outdoor Poor; therefore the City needed a proper Foundling Hospital.[9]

The following year a Special Councilmen's Committee agreed and proposed a joint public-private venture. They confirmed that the "practice of prostitution" was the main, though not the only source of abandoned infants. Unfortunately, there were "those, who are unwilling to give birth to an infant, either from fear of expense or inability to support it" and who, in their desperation not to be mothers, "resort to medicinal or

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

surgical means," even "self-infliction of violence" to rid themselves of their unwanted offspring. Even when they were unsuccessful, "the physical condition of the infant" had to be "permanently injured by the unnatural means essayed to deprive it of vitality." The "evil" could no longer be "named in whispers;" infant mortality and premature birth statistics as well as Coroners' and Criminal Court records showed "to what an extent the crime of infanticide is practised, instigated by the desire of the mother to conceal the birth or existence of a child." Dr. Alexander B. Mott informed the Committee that in five months, at least six children had been "found exposed in the cemeteries, in sinks, and in the streets." According to post mortems, they had been born alive. There was "hardly a physician in the city, to whom application was not made every week to procure abortion, and they refusing, the women applied to quacks." Despite fears that a special institution for unwanted children might "have the effect of relieving seduction and prostitution of one of their repulsive consequences, and thereby tend to increase those practices," the Committee concluded that "a Foundling Hospital or Infant's Home" was "a measure of philanthropy imperatively called for."

Dr. David Meredith Reese advised the Committee that the City should "collect all the outcast and friendless children in a single institution" but that it was necessary to have "both a 'Foundling Hospital' and an 'Infant Home,' in order to separate illegitimate children from the offspring of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

respectable parents." Half of the foundlings were born "constitutionally diseased" and should not be mixed with healthy children, "not to speak of the odium which would attach through life to any one who should emanate from a Foundling Hospital." Perhaps, he thought, the Infant Home could be started first and then the need for a Foundling Hospital re-examined. Reese also reassured the Committee that the "proposed institution would have little, if any, effect in encouraging vice."[10] The Committee recommended building a twin facility to New York Hospital's Nursery and Child's Hospital at Fifty-First Street between Third and Lexington Avenues; the institution would be codirected by the Mayor and the First Directress of the Nursery and Child's Hospital.[11]

Almshouse children were by no means all foundlings. Dr. Samuel B. Halliday told the Foundling Hospital Committee of an estimate by the Almshouse Governors that of 242 infants out at nurse, a quarter to a third were "illegitimates, and the remainder orphans, half orphans and the children of wives abandoned by their husbands."[12] Thus the City assumed responsibility for many children like Henrietta Lefevre, "bl[ack], father & mother dead." She was "put to nurse Dec. 1829 with Mary Robinson, bl[ack] , No 186 Franklin." Some lucky children depended on the City only temporarily. Elizabeth Gannon, nine months old, was nursed at public expense with Margaret Dunderdale because her mother was "sick in Hospital" for three weeks.[13]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The first experience of a child of the Republic was nursing out. Early legislation called for "care...to provide healthy and proper nurses for such of the children as may require them," preferably "out of the house" and assigned supervision to the Almshouse Superintendent.[14] The Reorganization of 1845 transferred the function to the Outdoor Poor Department.[15] The City paid large amounts of money to hundreds of poor and working class women who labored as wetnurses to its children, at the rate of a dollar per week. Most signed by means of an "x" for their money. In a typical early two week period the nursing expense came to $305.[16] Normally a child was nursed out until the age of three at which time he or she would be transferred to the Nursery Establishment.

The treatment of the children was, according to Dr. Halliday, "very indifferent - in most cases being confined in dirty, ill-ventilated apartments" and given the "poorest quality of food." When an infant became ill, "dispensary treatment was resorted to." This was an important factor in the great mortality. Many of the youth were concentrated "in the filthiest localities of the Sixth Ward." The doctor thought that the "poverty of the nurses was no excuse for placing the children in their hands" but he blamed "the system" rather than the Almshouse Governors and called for a "complete reform."[17]

The Almshouse Department defended its system implicitly by the use of the term "respectable nurses"[18] but soon

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

acknowledged the concern of the Foundling Hospital advocates. In 1859 Outdoor Poor Superintendent George Kellock reported the condition of the children at nurse "greatly improved, and their Supervision being entrusted to a competent person whose frequent visits enable her to detect any neglect or want of cleanliness on the part of the Nurses." He claimed that the "difficulties which have heretofore existed" would soon be "entirely removed" and the "best attention" given to the children's "comfort and welfare."[19]

Almshouse youth spent their early childhood years in the specialized institution, the Nursery Establishment, under a careful regimen of education, religion, recreation, and light labor. First at the Long Island Farms, later on Randall's Island, the City attempted a fascinating experiment in the application of ruralism to the innocence of childhood. Agriculture would help realize the reformers' dreams of promoting virtue.

From their beginning the Nurseries had severe problems. Commissioner Peters lamented that because of the mismanagement of the Farms, "one hundred and eighteen boys dined last Saturday upon dry hard boiled salt beef, with dry bread, but no vegetables, bread and molasses for supper, occasionally chocolate for breakfast, but no vegetables with either meal." This privation occured "in the midst of the most fertile fields." The City should hire "a discreet and capable man to manage children, and to instruct them in farming, furnish

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

him some cows, and feed the youngsters with "such common vegetables as are not prohibited by the attending physician."[20]

After 1835 the Nurseries enjoyed the most stable management of any institution: Jane Ley mothered the children with exceptional care throughout the entire period. But the farming experiment failed and physical conditions and treatment deteriorated. Superintendent William Guest informed the incoming Engs Commissioners that clothing for the 328 boys and 105 girls had been "insufficient" for "some time past" under Targee, although bedding was satisfactory. Shoes were "imperiously demanded" for the winter "if we would preserve the children in tolerable health."[21] Asked to discuss recent fuel and food provisions, Ley replied, "What supply of fuel, &c? We got out of coal and wood about the last of February. We had nothing to burn in March or April but brush and chips gathered in the woods by the women and children." Targee Commissioners Brush and Hart had pleaded ignorance of this situation. "What supply of food, &c? The beef sent up...is generally of a very inferior quality and the supply very scant. Bread likewise. Some days we receive none;" potatoes were then substituted. What care had been taken to insure safe delivery of supplies from Bellevue? "None. When it pleased the Captain of the boat he would bring the different articles and put them on the dock." Unwrapped meat was casually thrown on the "dirty dock, and trampled over by

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the men." The facility was badly overcrowded with the lower story of a new building put into unintended emergency use as sleeping rooms "with no accommodation for fire during the whole winter." The children had to "eat in the wash and cook-house combined; a very uncomfortable place in winter." There were no cisterns for rainwater until Engs supplied them; only one well was available and in warm weather everyone had to wait three or four hours for a supply of water that ran out before breakfast.[22] The Engs Commissioners reformed what they could and in ensuing years the Nurseries generated fewer complaints than the other Department institutions.

Moving the Nurseries to Randall's Island was the subject of a degree of controversy because some thought that its "contiguity to Harlaem must necessarily render it insalubrious and unhealthy - arguing from the mere presumption, that 'chills and fever,' and other diseases of a similar type, would prevail." Commissioner Leonard discounted such objections; there were no marshes that would cause fever or ague. True, there were some complaints in Harlem, but just because "this part of York Island" was unhealthy did not mean that Randall's was.[23] The worst health hazard on Randall's Island turned out to be the continuing presence of the public graveyard which was originally supposed to be removed simultaneously with the opening of the new Nurseries, but was somehow left behind.[24]

Leonard also liked Randall's Island because it would "not

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

be sought so frequently by the relatives of the children, who are inclined too frequently to pay them visits, often to the discontent of the children and the disturbance of the officers and the good order of the institution." Best of all, the Island offered more space for "out-door exercise and out-door employment" necessary to reclaim the children "from their scrofulous habits" and permit "a proper classification and division into classes or families, not exceeding in number, in any one building, 100 children."[25]

The Commissioner also rejoiced at the moderate expense and the "beauty and durability" of the proposed new buildings which would be "humble and unostentatious." Even a lesser sum might have sufficed, he told the Council and public, "but would they have been adequate for their intent?" The lovely symmetrical Nursery structures would soon stand on leveled grounds with a newly Macadamized road leading from the West, "Alanthus trees decorating the borders of the grounds, and the pure 'Croton' flowing in the midst." Then, promised Leonard, would be "witnessed with a becoming pride, an Asylum for the destitute and parentless young unsurpassed for efficacy and accommodation throughout the world."[26] Built with rare dispatch, the new Nurseries were equally pleasing to the ten Governors who instituted internal reforms such as the complete removal of adult paupers and prisoners from the Island in 1854.[27]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Black children were always segregated from the main facility. Before 1837 they were educated at Bellevue since there was no provision for them on Long Island. The Engs Commissioners found their school "grossly neglected" and claimed to have put it into "successful operation" under one of the House inmates.[28]

Meanwhile, in 1836, a group of private philanthropists founded a society to establish a Colored Orphan Asylum. Despite "strong opponents," they built a small house and school. Visiting Bellevue, they found "the colored children...collected in a cellar under the care of a man of intemperate habits, who was also at intervals deranged." The reformers rescued seven youngsters from this environment immediately and, eventually, took in all black Almshouse children by contract. After fire destroyed their first building in 1842, the Society obtained a plot on Fifth Avenue between Forty-third and Forty-fourth Streets and put up a new and better structure.[29]

The Asylum Managers paid very close attention to education and constructive indenture, reporting in great detail the achievements of each class and of exceptional individual students.[30] But Asylum life was constantly threatened by successive and simultaneous epidemics of measles and smallpox and high rates of consumption. The Resident Physician gave one case history in detail which illustrated that even the sources of black children's admission could be more diverse and peculiar than those of the white children.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A visiting Southern planter was "so much pleased" with the Asylum that he gave its Managers a "present of a deaf and dumb boy," Elijah Mitchell, suffering from eclampia nutans. The child immediately developed a severe ear inflammation and could only sleep in a sitting posture, swaying "backwards and forwards with great force and rapidity." The doctor treated these symptoms with mercury. Eventually Elijah learned to speak a few words, including the name of his beloved nurse, Miss Flynn.[31] In 1851 the child died of a milder case of smallpox than that from which many others recovered.[32]

The mission and mainstay of Nursery life was education. Early legislation mandated that at "a suitable age," the children "regularly attend school" in order tc "be instructed in reading, writing and arithmetic."[33] The Reorganization Ordinance added geography.[34] Most reformers agreed readily with Rev. John Stanford who told the Council that one third of the inmates of the Almshouse and prison systems were

> ignorant even of the Alphabet; and the Justices of the Peace give it, as their belief, that two thirds of all that are brought before that Court, can neither read nor write...upon the question of pauperism or crime, the chances in favor of Knowledge and against ignorance are about as ten to one.[35]

The Engs Commissioners expressed the belief that "the experience of mankind has shown that the strongest barrier for youth against the moral degradation, consequent upon

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

pauperism or bad example, are the principles implanted in a course of education" which made children "far less liable to become a burden" than those who could "evade" it. Nothing, not even the chance of learning a trade at indenture, could be permitted to deprive an Almshouse child of at least "a beginning in the elementary branches of education."[36]

From before 1825 until the Ward based educational decentralization reform of 1842,[37] the Almshouse children were "faithfully" schooled under the direction of the quasi-public, but really private and Protestant Public School Society.[38] The Mandeville Commissioners lamented that there was only one teacher; he was "at liberty to leave the Establishment" after hours. The operation was growing "so large" that a resident Principal was needed.[39] Under the Engs administration, the school was "superintended" by a Mr. Oakley; the Commissioners thought that it compared with any other run by the Society. "Many of the children evidence a high order of intellect" and deserved "much commendation for their progress in learning."[40] Joseph McKeon and an Assistant, J. Wilson, taught 320 boys and girls in 1837; that year former Almshouse Commissioners James Roosevelt and William Mandeville served as Trustees of the Long Island Farms District, Number 6.[41] After the institution of the Ward system and removal of the Nurseries to Randall's Island, the Almshouse school fell within the Twelfth Ward.[42] The basic teaching method was Lancasterian, the educational rage of the century, which relied mainly

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

upon rotelearning and the use of student monitors.[43]

Though students were punished for misbehavior, there is no evidence of abuse or cruelty in the Nurseries and only one in the Schools. But this extreme exception shocked Almshouse officials deeply. On April 3, 1855, Nurseries Warden Jonathan Stearns reported that some type of unspecified punishment had been inflicted on a boy by one of the teachers, Miss Jackson. The Almshouse Governors thereupon asked the School Officers of the Twelfth Ward to extend "such protection" to the children "as will prevent abuse of the powers by them vested in the Teachers by them employed."[44] The Officers responded by promoting Miss Jackson to the position of Principal Teacher in the Primary Department.

A year and a half later, in October 1856, another teacher, Elizabeth Wilson, sent two boys, Charles Doran and E. J. Rheingart, "off to the gallery to be punished." It turned out that Miss Jackson's favorite punishment for talking or other misbehavior was to force the offender to burn his tongue repeatedly on a hot stove.[45] Jane Ley examined the blisters on one victim's mouth; previously she "had heard of the burning but did not pay any attention to it, for I did not believe it possible that such punishment could be."[46]

Harmon Eldridge interviewed Miss Jackson who acknowledged her methods but said that "the stove was not very hot." The Nursery Warden was "sorry our Teachers resort to such

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

cruel punishment or even threaten such chastisement" and found it "painful" to refer the matter to the Board of Governors.[47] Their Committee on Randall's Island and a Special Committee of the Twelfth Ward School Trustees both conducted investigations during which time Miss Jackson was suspended.[48]

In January 1857, the Randall's Island Committee told the School Officers that "several children had been punished in the manner stated" and asked for "the immediate dismissal of Miss Jackson."[49] In March, the School Officers adopted a Majority Report of its Special Committee finding that dismissal would "inflict a punishment greater than the offence demands." Though it was "wrong" for Miss Jackson to "threaten" as she did, the "injury done to the boys... was so slight" that there could have been "no intention to inflict a cruelty." They had to consider the "deep and lasting effect" of dismissal on "the character and future prospects of Miss Jackson in her chosen pursuit in life as a Teacher." The "importance" of the incident, moreover, probably grew "from a state of feeling which appears to exist between some of the employees of the Governors and the School Officers and Miss Jackson." Disapproval of Miss Jackson's act was sufficient punishment for her; she should be restored to her position as Principal.[50]

A Minority of the School Officers' Committee found the charge sustained and felt that Miss Jackson's "usefullness ...is at an end" because she would never be able to work

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"in harmony" with her accusers. Since she was the guilty party, it was "but right that she should suffer the penalty."[51]

The Governors' Committee protested the Trustees' action vigorously. They pointed out that the Majority Report was adopted only by a five to four vote in the absence of one Trustee, Dr. Abraham V. Williams, who would have opposed it. It was "remarkable" that in the entire proceeding, "no reference whatever is made to the interest of the public." Miss Jackson would be fully restored in the face of proven charges. It was a "manifest misapprehension" for the Trustees to treat the matter "as a criminal charge, and to deliver their judgment as an act of executive clemency to the party accused." The question was not "what degree or character of corporeal punishment" was proper, but, "if it were, there are certain limits beyond which no one occupying a position either of parent, teacher or jailor may lawfully go. The Constitution itself has declared that no cruel or unusual punishment shall be inflicted." The Almshouse officials, to their credit, insisted that tongueburning, "though it may have produced 'but a slight injury,' was both cruel and unusual.'"

The issue was not one of whether Miss Jackson could receive clemency "in which she, and she alone is interested" from "those who have the authority to dispense with her services." The only real question was "whether her services are of any further value, and whether her usefulness is not

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

altogether destroyed." Not only did her employers consider dismissal too harsh, they arrogantly recommended, as her "only punishment...that she be restored to her position as Principal." Talk of bad feeling among staff was unsubstantiated, trivial, and "employed to divert public attention from the real point in controversy."

The Committee felt that the "welfare and good government of the children" required supervision by "some one not obnoxious to a charge so pernicious as that of cruelty." Almshouse youth lacked parents and drew "precepts which are to govern them, for good or ill through a lonely life" from their charity guardians. They were "an unfortunate class, and innocently so" who could be "made useful or... without...good example, worse than useless." The task was "at best...extremely difficult." By promoting the children's welfare, however, we contribute to that of society. "It is a matter of self-preservation with the State; whose interests are paramount and should be regarded, those of the children or that of their custodian?" There was only one answer: while capricious changes in teachers were "not expedient without assignable cause," there was an "imperative duty" to replace any who had "forfeited" the right to the respect of pupils.

The Committee recommended that until the School Officers replaced Miss Jackson, the children be "withdrawn from the Primary Department and instructed in their play room."[52] The full Board of Governors adopted this position.[53]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Almshouse relied heavily on recreation, religion, and labor to control and develop its youth. Legislation provided for "such sports and pastimes as may contribute to their health, but always in the presence of some discreet and sober person." The children were to be kept strictly segregated by sex and from "intermixture with the other paupers."[54] Long Island afforded less indoor and outdoor play space than was necessary but the Randall's Island Nurseries provided ample grounds.

Religion was very important and controversial. Early legislation required children to attend worship on Sundays;[55] the Reorganization Ordinance added "other suitable occasions."[56] The Engs Commissioners explained that "inculcation of moral and religious principle" was on a par with education as the "basis of all action."[57]

The Chaplains considered the young to be their most important charges. Rev. William Lyall stressed the importance of "right impressions of religious truth" to the Department's "mass of minds, especially those of the young." He considered the Nurseries "by far the most interesting and hopeful portion" of his ministry. "The gathering there of impressionable youthful minds requires great assiduity to communicate religious instruction."

Each Sabbath the Association of Sunday School Teachers sent a "deputation" to "conduct exercises" similar to those in Sabbath schools in the community. An association of local Methodist preachers sent a member each Sabbath

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

afternoon to address the children. An exception was the first Sunday of each month which Rev. Lyall spent personally on Randall's Island. First, after breakfast, he met with the children in the Nursery Hospital. Then he spoke with the staff, "as many of them as he can assemble." During the afternoon, "a special time," he enjoyed "the high privilege of preaching to the grown children of the Nursery, the boys and girls in one assembly, the Gospel of Christ." The Chaplain found that

> This always seems to be a precious season. An unction seems to be in the singing then, a little beyond what is ordinary. It is seriously affecting to look in the face of so many young immortal creatures - tainted by sin, in danger of becoming more morally corrupt as they grow - to endeavor to awaken their attention to divine realities - their relations to God and eternity, and their need of a Savior - unfolding to them the richness of his grace, and his mightiness to save.

In addition to the monthly assembly, Rev. Lyall met periodically with smaller groups of children for preaching and worship. He praised the cooperation of the Matron and the Superintendent who set "an example, in attending on all occasions when the children meet for worship."[58]

The Catholic issue erupted in the Nurseries in 1855. In December Governor Washington Smith charged that the Randall's Island Warden had diverted part of the Cookhouse attic "to be fitted up for the exclusive use of teaching sectarian doctrines." Smith asked the Board to reiterate

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a "settled policy...not to permit or allow" teaching of such doctrines nor "preference or partiality shown to any religious denomination" nor any services outside the building "appropriated for that purpose" and to direct the Warden to "prohibit all religious services" in the Cookhouse, dismantle his altar, and allow no further "exclusive privileges to any religious society." Governor Edward C. West offered a countermotion that "all religious denominations have equal privileges to worship" with no preferential treatment to any. By a vote of six to four, the Board passed Smith's proposals except the statement of past nonpreference, thus rejecting a more open religious policy.[59]

Reformers of the mid nineteenth century never opposed child labor - they demanded it. Youngsters were supposed to work as part of their institutional routine. When they did not, it was considered an abuse as when the Nativist Charity Committee complained that "they now pass their time between school and the playground." There could be "no worse policy than that of placing pauper children or adults in circumstances really or apparently better than those of the self-supporting laborers and the children of the poorest class." At least one third of the Almshouse children could be employed "in light farming or other labor" and should be treated "like the children of agricultural laborers who are employed six or eight months of the year in such labor

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in the field or garden, or the house" as they could perform, spending the remainder of their time in school. The Committee quoted a rhapsodic account, from Dr. Kay's Report on the Training of Pauper Children, of a successful ruralistic experiment at the Ealing Grove School in England in which children were given their "own little gardens" which they gladly paid rent for and eagerly cultivated.[60]

Children's workshops received some attention both in law and in reform writings but never took hold successfully. The Reorganization empowered the Commissioner to establish "a School for the teaching of such trades or occupations as he may deem most conducive to the interest of the children, and to the benefit of the Institution," subject to the approval of the Council. Its pupils would be those "who are maimed or who, from other causes, are least likely to be sought by others."[61] Commissioner Leonard envisioned a manual labor school on Randall's Island where the children would raise medical herbs and manufacture paper boxes and fans. "None of the labors," he assured, "could infringe upon the rights of mechanics."[62]

The dominant mode of child labor was indenture. The law provided for placing out at a "suitable age" and for "continuing supervision" by the Department. The Law of 1832 directed the Superintendent of the Almshouse to inquire by letter every six months of the Town Supervisors about the treatment of all children indentured outside the City by

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the various masters and mistresses.[63] The Reorganization reduced the frequency of inquiry to once a year. The Commissioner was to "procure redress" in cases of ill treatment and the children were considered "in every respect as the children of the public under the care of the Commissioner."[64]

The minimum "suitable" age for indendure varied: the Whigs generally placed children out at a later age than the Democrats. The Mandeville Commissioners apprenticed girls at the age of ten and boys at twelve;[65] the Engs Commissioners sent out boys at ten and girls at twelve. Both Boards made exceptions and indentured earlier for "good cause" such as "circumstances presenting unusually flattering prospects for the interest of the child."[66] Applicants for apprentices who were not known to the Commissioners had to furnish references "of their standing and ability to bring up and sustain an apprentice and time must be allowed for inquiry in such cases."[67]

This vigilance did not prevent serious abuses. One of the worst features of their predecessors' neglect, said the Nativist Commissioners, was the binding out of children "in a loose and careless manner" to "persons of the lowest grade, living in hovels unfit for human habitation" who required "daily...the labor of a man." They cited a recent case of "a little American girl, an orphan who was bound out to a foreigner without character or responsibility" who kept "several cows and hogs" at Twenty-sixth Street and Eighth

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Avenue. Neighbors said that the child would

> take care of several small children and clean the cow stables; and during the cold and inclement season of March last, was compelled to do this without either hat, shoes, or stockings, besides being half starved all the while, and most of what she had to eat was taken from the chickens and the swill pail; and in addition the child had been beaten in the most inhuman manner.

The Commissioners said that this treatment was typical of many instances though there were "honorable exceptions to the above charge in individual cases, in former Boards." Their own administration addressed the problem by advertising in the press for the public to inform them of improper treatment of any indentured children.[68]

The Nativists and, later, the Almshouse Governors had problems maintaining indenture arrangements against the objections of parents. Commissioners' Chairman James Van Nostrand told the State Senate that questions had arisen regarding the Department's authority to apprentice children and asked for new legislation to clarify this power since the "aim and wish of the department is to educate them and apprentice them to persons under whose care they will grow up to usefulness and become respectable citizens."[69] The law remained vague until 1849 when the Ten Governors reform gave parents the explicit right, as the first Board put it, "to break up the indentures and resume possession of their children," a provision which

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"operates very injuriously."[70]

At any one time, such as in 1851, around 191 children might be indentured and an additional 300 "on trial previous to indentures being executed."[71] Each apprenticeship was recorded in a Placement volume, alphabetically by first letter of surname, then chronologically, indicating the name, address, and occupation of the master, such as those of James Evatt, bound to Jamaica farmer Abraham J. Hendrickson, who ran away or Mary Jane Ellison, bound to chemist Greenleaf R. Norris of West Point. Some, like Mary Ann Clark, were returned because of problems such as being "subject to fits." Adoption sometimes resulted from apprenticeship, as in the case of Fanny Ellster who was taken into the family of William and Sarah Jones of 5 York Street.[72]

The Almshouse published many dozens of "selected" case histories obtained by Visitors under Moses G. Leonard who specialized in indentured children, John McGrath and his successor Walter K. Penny. These illustrated to the public the Department's "general routine" of supervising hundreds of similar cases. John Gibson was "bound to Henry Tembell, No. 43 Essex Street, with him 3 months, is now 16 years old, doing very well at his business, reads, writes, and cyphers, was taken away from another place, as being deemed improper, by Mr. Leonard." Lewis Campbell, 5 years old, "a very fine child," was adopted by Alexander Mackey's family "to be recognized as their own child." Joseph Johnson "(col.) bound

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to Thomas Shillingsworth, No. 439 Broome St. with him 3 months, is now 10 years old; gave him a lecture about his disposition to lie, promised faithfully to reform his habits." George William Smith was with Frederick Morrell of 306 Houston Street for a month "when his mother took him away; don't know anything about him since." John Wright was bound to Michael Farrell of Orange Street and was "with him 1 1/2 years, is now 13 years old, gets on well at his trade, can't read or write; promised to send him to school; at present very sick with the prevailing fever."[73] Daniel McEvoy was indentured to John Weston, a Williamsburgh painter and "suffers some from the unhealthiness of his occupation, unless he improves in health, his indentures will be cancelled." His master said he had a "good character." Probably the ideal happy ending to an indenture arrangement was that of Peter Arthus. He was apprenticed to Charles Simpson, a boot and shoemaker at Eighth Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street and "served his time out, and now receiving wages; made complaint that the articles of his indenture were not fulfilled, called on Mr. S., who cheerfully gave the boy a new suit of clothes and a bible."[74] Indenture thus had both its joys and its disappointments for reformers and the children alike.

During the decade of the 1850s, indenture gradually led to Westernization. This extreme form of outplacement was in perfect accord with the agrarian dream and the desire to remove the poor physically from the city. In 1849 the Almshouse

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Governors suggested that the "most useful disposition" of many youth might be made by "placing them with the farmers and mechanics in the agricultural districts of the country" and requested "power to indenture children to citizens of other States of the Union with proper restrictions."[75] The Legislature promptly granted them authority to indenture into adjacent states such as New Jersey.

In 1855 George Kellock advised that "power should be given to indenture children in places beyond 'adjoining States,'" explaining that he had found the condition of those in near states "most encouraging."[76] Apparently without formal authority, he had started, in 1854, to send children to Iowa City where missionary Charles C. Townsend placed them in "comfortable homes" and wrote periodically to report their progress. Kellock saw "great advantages derived by placing the children capable of labor as far as practicable from the City." All accounts were so "flattering" that "no one of them would wish to return." Moreover, there were "many in the departments...particularly females and their children, who have been compelled to seek a refuge on account of abandonment by their husbands" who would be "greatly benefited by being sent away from the city to distant places where employment could be obtained." The cost of such a plan was "trifling" compared to that of "maintaining them for an indefinite period in our institutions."[77] In 1859 the Almshouse sent 200 children West. Though only a "small number" became legally indentured, Kellock saw "every reason

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to believe that they are well disposed of among Farmers, and are happy and contented."[78] Rev. Townsend wrote that year that, of all the children sent him since 1854, he had "lost none" and all were doing well except one little girl. They were "all learning how to do business, and much of our work is performed by their hands." He promised to ask them to write to Kellock personally, "such of them as can."[79]

The program of Westernization ultimately failed to solve the problems of abandoned children. But its promise loomed large before 1860. It constituted a measure of the surviving faith in the agrarian and Western ideals and of the failure of the urban social welfare system.

The Almshouse Department probably tried to provide for its children better than for any other group of paupers. In some ways its record of care was admirable. But in the long run, the Nurseries and indenture, like other institutions, tended to reinforce and perpetuate the stigma of poverty and were hardly free of mismanagement. At its best, care from the public was no substitute for community life or a decent income.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. Peters, 118.

2. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 172-3.

3. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 217-8.

4. M. G. Leonard, Rept on General Condition of Institutions, 28.

5. Clark, Message to Council for 1837, 10.

6. Peters, 117-8.

7. The City asserted early its prerogative of rescuing youth from relatives willing to provide for them but only in a morally dubious environment. On September 19, 1825, James Conway, six years old, and his sister, Elizabeth, aged three, were brought to the Almshouse "from a cellar in Anthony Street...in a miserable and filthy condition." Their mother had died at some time unknown in the past; their father was hospitalized on September 28 and died on October 15. Shortly thereafter, a distant cousin, Edward J. McGloin, "called on the Superintendent and demanded the children." Arthur Burtis decided during the interview that McGloin intended to bring them to "a very improper place" which would "probably prove their ruin." The Visitor and one of the Commissioners inspected McGloin's residence and found "one of those miserable dram shops" selling unlicensed whiskey and running card games "and in the absence of the master a boy about 10 or 11 years of age (said to be a brother of the children in question) in rags and dirt acting as his deputy." Burtis refused to relinquish the children. McGloin appealed to the Council who cited him for selling liquor without a license and sustained the Superintendent's position. MCC, XV, January 26, 1826, 153, January 30, 1826, 180-2.

8. AH Nursing Payments by Name, 0380, March 14-June 20, 1834, 3, October 1830, 47, May 22, 1835, 104, November 12, 1836, 106.

9. AH Govs Special Cmte (Cmte on Outdoor Poor), Issac Townsend, Washington Smith, Anthony Dugro, Rept on Claims of City to Institution and Erection of a Foundling Hospital in AH Govs, Rept for 1858, X, xxxii-xxxiii.

10. Asts (Councilmen) Special Cmte, Samuel W. Galpin, John C. Fraser, George Ross, Rept on Foundling Hospital, Prostitution, and Infanticide, Doc, V, #17, November 4, 1858, 1-4.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

11. Ibid., 8.

12. Ibid., 5-6.

13. AH Nursing Payments by Name, 0380, March 14-June 6, 1834, 19, March 10-April 18, 1837, 60.

14. [First] Law Creating AH Dept..., 1832, 194.

15. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 78.

16. AH Nursing Payments by Date, Ms. Vol. 0613, August 6, 1830, 94.

17. Galpin, Fraser, Ross, 5-6.

18. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1855, VII, 191.

19. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1859, XI, 295. Though the nurses were usually considered a threat to the health of the children, sometimes the situation was reversed. In 1845 the Council paid Susannah Dyckman $500 because she and her mother had "contracted a loathsome and contagious disease" from a child they had nursed in 1842. Aldmn Proc, XXVIII, April 23, 1845, 586-7.

20. Peters, 119.

21. Nurseries Supt William H. Guest, Statement #VI in Engs, Tomlinson et al., 249.

22. Ley, Statement #VII, ibid., 250-1.

23. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Establishment for AH Children in Oliver, Purser, Smith, Rept on same, 333.

24. Ords, XIII, October 25, 1845, 214. See also below, chapter 13.

25. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Establishment for AH Children in Oliver, Purser, Smith, Rept on same, 330-1.

26. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 17.

27. AH Govs, Rept for 1854, VI, 126.

28. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 226-7.

29. Colored Orphan Asylum Managers, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 77-81; M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 36. This was the institution that was burned down during the Draft Riot of 1863. Richardson, 137.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

30. Colored Orphan Asylum Managers, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 85-8.

31. Colored Orphan Asylum Rsdnt Phycn James McCune Smith, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 86-8.

32. James McCune Smith, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 93-4.

33. [First] Law Creating AH Dept..., 1832, 194.

34. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 83.

35. MCC, XVII, March 9, 1829, 698-9.

36. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 218.

37. Diane Ravitch, The Great School Wars: New York City, 1805-1973 (New York, 1974), 20-91 on the reign of the Public School Society, its policies, and the school religious issue which culminated in the Ward reform of 1842; p. 11 for the earliest legal establishment, in 1807, of a link between the Almshouse and the Public School Society's predecessor, the Free School Society.

38. Peters, 118.

39. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 174.

40. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 219.

41. Public School Society Trustees, Robert C. Cornell, President, Annual Rept #32, Asts Doc, X, #46, September 4, 1837, 157, 164.

42. AH Govs, Minutes, April 14, 1857, 191.

43. Stanford, Rept for 1824, 6; Ravitch, 12-7.

44. AH Govs, Minutes, April 14, 1857, 206.

45. Twelfth Ward Teacher Elizabeth Wilson, Testimony, Teacher Elizabeth M. Hammond, Testimony, Nurseries Ast Matron Charlotte Botner, Testimony, ibid., 203-6.

46. Ley, Testimony, ibid., 205-6.

47. Nurseries Warden H. Eldridge, Cmctn to AH Govs, ibid., 190-1.

48. Twelfth Ward School Officers Secretary H.H. Gregory, Cmctn to AH Govs Cmte on RI, January 26, 1857, ibid., 193.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

49. AH Govs Cmte on RI, Daniel F. Tiemann, Issac J. Oliver, Patrick G. Maloney, Cmctn to School Officers of Twelfth Ward, January 22, 1857, ibid., 192.

50. Twelfth Ward School Officers Special Cmte, James Davis, John Bellamy, G. C. Hebbard, Majority Rept on Complaint Against Principal of Primary Dept of Ward School #6 on RI, March 6, 1857, ibid., 195-7.

51. Twelfth Ward School Officers Special Cmte, James McKean and D. Sadlier, Minority Rept on Complaint..., March 6, 1857, ibid., 198.

52. Tiemann, Oliver, Maloney, Rept on Punishment at RI, ibid., 198-203.

53. Ibid., 207.

54. [First] Law Creating AH Dept..., 1832, 194; Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 83.

55. [First] Law Creating AH Dept..., 1832, 195.

56. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 83.

57. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 218.

58. Lyall, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 185, 190-1.

59. AH Govs, Minutes, December 11, 1855, 524-9.

60. Miller and Gale, 160-3.

61. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 83-4.

62. M. G. Leonard, Cmctn on Establishment for AH Children in Oliver, Purser, Smith, Rept on same, 335.

63. [First] Law Creating AH Dept..., 1832, 195.

64. Ord for Reorganization of AH Dept, 84.

65. Mandeville, Stevens, Hoxie, 174.

66. Engs, Tomlinson et al., 218-9.

67. AH Cmsrs, Rules..., 6-7.

68. Van Nostrand et al., Cmctn on Abuses, 402.

69. Van Nostrand, Memorial for Amendments to Law on AH Dept, 1-2.

70. Act to Provide for Government of Dept of Alms... in Breckenridge, 56; AH Govs, Rept for 1849, 1, 10-1.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

71. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 127-8.

72. AH Placement of Children by Name, 0326, Evatt, May 23, 1843, Ellison, May 7, 1844, Clark, November 14, 1841, Ellster, May 24, 1843.

73. Visitor to Indentured Children John McGrath, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 86-7, 94.

74. Visitor to Indentured Children Walter K. Penny, Rept in M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 184.

75. AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 11.

76. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1855, VII, 191.

77. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1858, X, 281, 284. See Charles C. Townsend, Cmctn to Kellock, ibid. 282-4 for details on some of the children.

78. Kellock, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1859, XI, 295.

79. Townsend, Cmctn to Kellock, ibid., 295-6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 12

THE LUNATIC ASYLUM

Like the children, the insane were a very special group of dependents. Their keepers found them fascinating, puzzling, and deserving of better treatment than most other paupers. The planning and construction of the New York City Lunatic Asylum was part of a general movement in the West to humanize the care of the mentally ill by abolishing excessive restraints and isolation. Enlightened theories and methods were supposed to replace the violence that the insane had hitherto suffered. Insanity was deemed curable if treated early with kindly cleverness. It was no longer thought to be a condition inspired by the Devil, though the transition to a medical, secular model retained a religious metaphor to describe society's mandate to "ameliorate the condition of that unfortunate class of our suffering fellow beings, on whom the Almighty in his all-wise but inscrutable providence, has seen fit to lay his dispensation in withholding from them that greatest of all blessings, reason."[1]

The irony was that the early attention given the insane bore no results for over a decade so that their Asylum was the last main specialized institution to open and, even thereafter, building was fitful and never caught up with space needs. Further, the controversies over site and design produced such chaos that it is difficult to escape the conclusion that perhaps the insane might have been better

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

at running things than the Aldermen and Commissioners, whose contentious deliberations might have been more plausibly pursued in the lunatic wards than in the Council Chamber. Only in 1849 could a sustained building policy and stable internal administration survive the tides of politics. Until then party changes and administrative-legislative conflict probably damaged the Lunatic Asylum to a greater extent than any other institution.

The insane were at first included in the general sick poor population of Bellevue Hospital. In December 1825 Resident Physician Issac Wood "collected" them together and "immediately classified" them, a great reform. Their wards were soon inadequate. From 1829 to 1832 Dr. Wood asked the Targee Commissioners for "more appropriate accommodations" for the "lunatics," noting "the great annoyance they give to the sick," their "constant and unavoidable exposure to the sport or idle curiosity of visitors and inmates of the hospital," and the overall "want of the best means for successful treatment."[2]

In February 1833 Commissioners' Chairman John Targee told the Council that some "further provision" was needed for the mentally ill. The "sick and insane" were "crowded together in one building" and it was "impossible to prevent the yells and cries of the lunatics from reaching the ears of the sick." A "greater evil" was the "impossibility of classifying the lunatics themselves." This meant that

> The simple idiot, the partially deranged, and the fierce, outrageous madman, the curable

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> and the incurable, are to a great degree, from necessity, blended in one common family. There are cells, it is true, for the confinement of the persons of the more violent, but there are no means of preventing their horrible noises from distrubing and distracting their fellow sufferers.
>
> To expect many, or even any cures under such circumstances, would, we conceive, be almost as irrational as the wild calculations of some of the lunatics themselves.

There were 100 patients in Bellevue's lunatic department with an increase expected to correspond with the "rapid increase in the general population." The average proportion of "outrageous subjects" was one-tenth of the whole. The City owed all a "reasonable share of the ordinary comforts of life, and a fair prospect of recovery" besides just confinement and prevention of injury. The only way to effect this, thought Targee, was to construct some "small, cheap buildings, detached from each other and from the main establishment" for the wilder patients. For the more manageable, "exercise and employment...in the open air, in farming and gardening" would be "the cheapest, as well as the most effectual mode of treatment." Since none of this could be done properly at Bellevue, Targee recommended that the entire "Lunatic Establishment" be removed to Blackwell's Island.[3] A year later he repeated the request.

The question was referred to the Council's Joint Special Committee on Public Buildings on the Islands, chaired by Samuel Dunshee who engaged Dr. James MacDonald of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bloomingdale Asylum as a consultant. The writings of the Dunshee Committee and MacDonald and of all the reformers following them who addressed the problem posed lunacy as a most delicate puzzle to be handled with carefully constructed wonders of architecture and feats of internal social control which these wonders would facilitate.

"The slightest reflection" revealed to the Committee than any "edifice" designed for the insane must be "materially different, both in form and in interior arrangement" from "ordinary habitations." Warmth was necessary but lunatics could not be trusted with fire. Air was needed, but windows could not be opened. Of paramount importance was classification for which the correct building design was crucial. "Architectural fitness" was "indispensable" to the welfare of the patients: "it promotes humane treatment, gives additional efficacy to medical skill, and often disarms the rage of a spirit intent upon the destruction of the body in which it dwells."

The Dunshee Committee proposed, "for the present," a Blackwell's Island Lunatic Asylum consisting of a center building with two distending wings. The center would connect with the wings by inspection lobbies "from which the wings will diverge at obtuse angles to the extreme angles of an oblong square." Hallways and rooms would be arranged in such a manner as to "give a view of all the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

lodging rooms from the inspecting lobbies." The Committee had another plan for possible later construction of "two additional wings, which if they should ever be required, will form a complete square diverging obtusely from the centre building" but thought that "the two wings will be amply sufficient for the accommodation of the insane for a long period." The design was clever because it allowed for easy expansion, if necessary. The plan followed that of an asylum in Limerick, Ireland, built in 1826.[4]

Dr. MacDonald submitted his own plan for detached buildings. European nations, he said, had built modern asylums and thus offered models. In the United States, only a beginning had been made in treating the insane scientifically. "Why have not the Insane been cared for? Why have we not an establishment worthy of our city?" Not only was proper care a civic duty, but it would pay economically because "insanity of recent origin is now proved to be a highly curable disease."

Any asylum plan should "sacrifice external display for proper internal arrangements and comfort;" the lunatics' interests should take precedence over travelers' "gratification." The basic principle in treating the insane was to approach them "as much as possible like rational beings." Conveniences were more important than security which had been overemphasized in the past. The "unfortunate inmates" had often been subjected to "severe if not cruel treatment" in a system that made their "keepers secure." While the patient was

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"locked in his cell or chained to the floor," the attendant was "free to go where he pleases."

It was a gross error to treat all insane alike. "With the same propriety might we treat inflammation and debility, a broken bone and dyspepsia in the same manner." If five per cent need "strong rooms," why lock up the other ninety-five per cent? In the enlightened future, security should depend on "kindness" rather than on "bolts" and institutions should be built not for "safe-keeping merely, but for the recovery of the insane."

One basic structural question was whether to have one large building with divisions or several small, detached cottages. The answer, MacDonald thought, hinged on considerations of classification, the psychological effects of the design on patients, original cost, subsequent expense of upkeep, and the comfort of the inmates.

Classification was most fundamental. "Every agent brought to bear directly on the mind of the patient begins with classification." Without it all management is "confused and irregular." Once well established, it gives "a tone and system to every thing else." A specific system of classification must be "fixed upon" prior to any building plan and then the "internal arrangement made accordingly." Though neglected in the past, classification was "now jointly considered...of the first importance in the treatment of insanity." The "indiscriminate mingling of the mild and furious, clean and filthy, convalescent and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

idiotic" had to yield to a scientific ordering by "habits of cleanliness or sociability," "general behavior and capacity for enjoyment in each other's society." Each class should be limited in number to about twenty so that they could live as a family. Any more than that would create "confusion."

Each class should be kept "distinct" from the others. Besides sociability, "rank or station in life" should be a basis of division, as must sex: "It requires no arguments to prove the importance of separating the different sexes." They should not even be allowed to see each other except that "under certain restrictions, a social intercourse between them, if not morally depraved, may be occasionally salutory." Within each sex, there should be four broad classes based on condition: the "noisy, destructive, violent," the "idiot, epileptic, &c.," the "convalescent," and the "intermediate, first stage convalescent, and harmless incurables." Separate buildings were better than one large structure for insuring that the various classes "do not interfere with each other."

The facility should resemble a prison as little as possible, especially since the name "Blackwell's Island" already meant "Penitentiary" to most people. Detached buildings would also meet this need since they would be more like the patients' homes in the community than like the mammoth penal institution.

The cost of both construction and upkeep would likely be

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

more for cottages than for a single building. So would the expense of supervision. Paupers could be used for this function, however, and the City had to realize that the "care of insane paupers will cost more in proportion, than the care of ordinary paupers."[5]

Detached buildings would probably increase the comfort of the insane while decreasing that of officers and making supervision more arduous than it would have been in a large single building. MacDonald turned this argument to advantage: "Things are usually well done in proportion to the difficulty of doing them, if inspection be too simple, it will perhaps be neglected." To facilitate supervision, the buildings could be placed close together and connected by "covered passages." Their height should be two stories: Europeans had made errors in this regard, England building too tall, France building only a single story.

The internal division should be tailored to the specific needs of each class. In general each patient should have a "distinct sleeping room" but there was a class that could be placed "without inconvenience...together in a large dormitory." Some padded rooms would be needed "to prevent frantic patients from injuring themselves." Also, "for those patients who wet themselves and require frequent drying, rooms may be expressly prepared with stone floors warmed by heated air introduced beneath."

Work rooms were essential. "Until recently," noted Dr. MacDonald, "the insane were thought incapable of useful or regular employment." But no more: modern science had

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

discovered that "after classification, the most important of all considerations in their management is occupation." Both the patient and the establishment would gain; the effect on the former "is both moral and physical, it gives health and vigour of body while it diverts the mind from brooding over its own sorrows or dwelling upon its favorite delusion." Like other paupers, most lunatics were well accustomed to manual labor.[6]

There should be an observation room for the study of each patient "before his final location is determined on" since the "character of an insane person can not be judged of at a glance." There should also be a chapel since religion "may be made most useful in the moral management of the inmates." Heating and ventilation were important considerations since "the notion that the insane are not affected nor injured by the variation of temperature is now exploded." Heated air (the "Wakefield furnace"), steam, or hot water were acceptable alternative methods.[7]

Windows should not be placed near ceilings as the British had done. Most patients could have ordinary windows opposite their doors. "Bars and all prison-like fastenings should be avoided." Doors should resemble those on ordinary houses. Only for the violent were very strong doors or high windows necessary. Above all, "those small openings in the doors, for the purpose of viewing the patient without the necessity of coming in contact with him" should be strictly forbidden. The lunatic was only rendered "fierce and reckless" and the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attendant "careless and cruel" by this device which allowed the latter to view the former "like a wild animal."

For a water supply, rain should be saved and wells sunk. Privies should be located in each class' airing court which should be overlooked by that group's day-room. An attendant could observe the day-room and the courtyard simultaneously.

MacDonald's plan was a modified version of one in operation at Middlesex County Pauper Lunatic Asylum near London which was, in turn, a copy of that of Wakefield. The British model was redesigned "for the occasion" and "adapted to the number of patients," by now well over one hundred. But most important, the doctor stressed again, was that the City must first select a classification scheme and only then plan the buildings accordingly.[8]

The Council adopted the Limerick plan with minor modifications in April 1834 and made an initial appropriation of $3,000.[9] The new Whig Almshouse Commissioners, William Mandeville's Board, immediately sought drastic alterations in the design. The new Council referred the question to its own Building Committee chaired by John I. Labagh.

New information and drawings forced Labagh's Committee to "review the acts of their predecessors" and to find the Limerick model defective. They agreed readily with the "several requisites of classification, supervision, ventilation and conveniences for treatment." They elaborated upon the unique requirements for the care of lunatics:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> It is desirable not only to divide the inmates of the Asylum into appropriate classes, but to separate the classes entirely from each other; and if possible, to prevent a knowledge by any one class of the existence of any other in the edifice...it should be so arranged, that the Patients whether in the galleries to their wards, in their day rooms or airing grounds, should never be out of sight of their immediate keepers; and that the keepers should be constantly exposed to the oversight of their superiors.

It was hardly surprising that such a feat of combination had proven "the embarrassment in the plans of all Lunatic Asylums" but the "first near approach" to such a panopticon had been accomplished at Wakefield. The Limerick Asylum was an attempt to improve upon the basic Wakefield design, but was intended for a smaller facility than that contemplated for Blackwell's Island for which it was inappropriate because the extension of the long wings beyond the water line would create problems making proper supervision impossible. A better modification of Wakefield than the Irish asylum was the latest experiment at Middlesex.

Dunshee's Limerick plan was also deficient because there was no adequate provision for reception, visiting, or "convenient" day-rooms. Instead of this design, Labagh proposed the erection of a structure, on the Middlesex model, consisting of, first, a "centre building 90 feet square" of at least two stories for officers, a kitchen, parlours, day-rooms for the "nearly sane," and a chapel, "this building to be divided by cross halls through its

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

centre and have stairs at their intersection." Two wings would extend from the center building, one from each side, two stories high, two hundred feet long; these would contain the wards. At the end of the wings, opposite the center structure, would be "buildings of an octagonal form to be erected...corresponding with the centre building." Then, "from one face of each of these octagonal buildings," would be a wing "at right angles to those described, and of a like description...for the worst class of patients - those who are noisy, filthy, and need close confinement." The Asylum should front the East with the last mentioned wings extending Westward. The ground fell so that the wings could be raised high on the foundation allowing space under the cells for "laundries, bake-houses, baths, &c." Besides providing the most perfect means of classification and supervision, this design was ingenious for being expandable. It was "wise" to have an "edifice...capable of being extended with the demand there shall be for its extension." The City now had 150 lunatics. Only two wings, their connecting octagon, and the center need be built immediately; these structures could accommodate 300 patients. But in the future, the "edifice proposed may be enlarged by building wings from two of the remaining faces of the octagons, and still preserve its unity of exterior, and the operation of the principles of its interior arrangements."[10]

The Committee also stressed an aesthetic consideration, that the proposed building would

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> be easy in its proportions, and be capable of being made creditable to the city in its architectural characteristics. Placed as it will be, on the north end of Blackwell's Island, on one of the grand highways of approach to this city, it will be the first object of a public character which will strike the approaching stranger. It ought therefore, at the same time, it will stand a monument of the munificient benevolence of this metropolis to the poor and distressed, be cretitable to the taste and liberality of the people, and of the age.[11]

The Council passed the new plan and ordered construction "of the centre building, one of the front wings, one of the east and west wings, and the octagonal inspection building, at the angle formed by said wings."[12] They authorized $20,000 for an initial appropriation and ordered 300 copies of drawings, plans, and past proceedings on the subject "as may tend to illustrate its governing principles."[13] The Building Committee issued a supplementary Report ruminating upon the "Vertruvian Tuscan style" of the proposed Asylum: it would require little expenditure in "ornaments," presenting a "humble" appearance "well suited...for...the poor, and such as have never lived in palaces, or thought of so living, except under the hallucinations this establishment is designed to remove." Though humble, the structure would not be "mean," but would possess a "dignity becoming the City." It would be the first asylum in the United States "in which an attempt has been made to construct...in reference to the scientific principles adopted for the treatment of the insane."[14]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Mayor laid the cornerstone for the building and the craftsmen and convicts nearly completed the foundations for the North octagon and the West wing by May 1835. Then John Targee returned to the Almshouse and stopped work on the project, telling the Board of Assistant Aldermen that it would detroy a valuable quarry. Controversy ensued for the following two years with the Targee Commissioners in control of the status quo, the building suspended.

The Targee Commissioners argued that the proposed site of the Asylum comprised an "immense quarry," at least 68,000 tons of "the finest building stone in the world," worth a dollar a ton. It would enable "some of our wealthy citizens" to "erect splendid mansions...creditable to the taste of 'this great and proud city.'" Building on the present site would also render much of the ground north of it "comparatively valueless." Instead, Targee wanted to fill in the northern marshy part of the Island and build the Asylum there, thus leaving the quarry available for commercial exploitation. He also thought that the "unfortunates" should be "isolated, or removed as far as possible from all other public buildings." To guarantee this in the face of a certain future need for many more buildings, the Asylum should be placed as far north as possible. Finally, "if 'neighborhood' and beauty of surrounding scenery" were important, the extreme north was preferable since it had a good view of the "elegant basin - Hallet's Cove, the romantic scenery of Hurl-gate, the ferry, the entrance to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Harlem, which collectively combine to present a scene at once picturesque, beautiful, and animating" which would aid immeasurably in the curative process.[15]

The Targee Commissioners said they were as impressed as anybody with the need for better accommodations for the insane and blamed the preceeding Mandeville Board of Commissioners for the crisis.[16] But not only was the proposed site for the Asylum faulty, so was the design. The Middlesex model had been shown "defective in many important points." It was three stories high, "highly improper;" most physicians recommended two stories. Its ventilation was imperfect since the hall arrangement caused air to be "respired by the patients" after circulating through opposite rooms. Recreation, "one of the most efficient means of alleviating the aberrations of the mind" was also neglected; the plan would necessitate confinement of patients in their sleeping rooms in bad weather. The Tuscan eves were "expensive" and "constructed entirely of wood, and exposed in this situation more than ordinarily to the weather, and the spray of the river, that they would decay." They were also "objectionable on account of fire... a Lunatic Asylum ought to be made fire-proof in all its parts."

An architectural consultant, John Haviland, had advised the Targee Commissioners that Middlesex had lately "fallen into disrepute in Europe" in favor of Limerick which met "in a greater degree than any other, the requisites for a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Lunatic Asylum - such as ventilation, supervision, recreation, and classification." Costly buildings were unnecessary; "splendid palaces" might "gratify the traveler" but only internal comfort mattered to the happiness and recovery of the lunatics.[17]

The new Council Building Committee, chaired by James Ferris, immediately rejected the Targee position and recommended that their predecessors' plans go forward. They were "not aware that the Island was purchased by the City, with the intention of speculating by the sale of building stone" beyond that obtained incident to the construction of institutions. There were many quarries. The Island's natural topography should be preserved and the current site retained. Building should proceed quickly toward an "early completion" for conditions were ever deteriorating at Bellevue. The Commissioners had to be directed to implement the Middlesex plan.[18]

The Committee's position was reinforced by pleas from Dr. MacDonald and from the previous Almshouse Commissioners and Building Committeemen on behalf of the aborted design. The Mandeville Commissioners and Labagh Committeemen stressed that all alleged defects of Middlesex had been removed from their plan. Middlesex was not in disrepute in Europe and Dr. Haviland was not an expert on lunatic asylums, but on prisons.[19] Dr. MacDonald reviewed the already tortuous history of the controversy, stressing that "isolation of the insane" was "a cardinal point in their treatment." Which plan, he asked, was better for isolation, "to set

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

apart sixteen acres on each side of the building or to crowd the Asylum upon the northern point of the Island?" Regarding all future plans for the Island, MacDonald felt that the "ground for the insane should be held sacred, that no 'policy' should be allowed to interfere with it."[20]

The Middlesex model favored workshops for labor and was not in disrepute in Europe. Haviland was an architect, not a physician. "The Wakefield, Perth and Middlesex Asylums" were "distinguished...for...clsssification and facility of supervision." Limerick was deficient, especially in space for day-rooms; for that reason it had not been copied on the continent. New York required an "Asylum that shall be inferior to none." Such an institution's "bounties will not be sought by the unworthy, and the public expects that more ample provision will be made for the insane than for any other class of paupers."[21]

The Council agreed and voted to order the Commissioners to proceed with the northern octagonal building and western wing, upon the Middlesex model, on the site selected by the previous administration in May 1835. Any work on the "residue of the building" would remain "suspended until the future order of the Common Council."[22] Nevertheless, the Targee Commissioners stalled the project until they left office in 1837.

"Common fame has made proverbial the wretched unfitness of the place" called a Lunatic Asylum, wrote the Engs Commissioners when they assumed office. They immediately commenced building and completed the north octagon and west

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

wing. They added some ornaments to the design and attacked Targee's obstructionism, quoting a State Legislative Report of 1830 which recommended lunatic asylums presenting an "imposing appearance" that would exhibit a "show of power in subduing the violence of patients." There were, at this point, over 200 insane. The building, even when "entirely finished," would only accommodate 450. "Is it then rational to say, that the plan is too extensive?" Engs thought not.[23]

The Asylum opened in 1839, coinciding with a new Almshouse administration and an upsurge in the admission of lunatics. The Greenfield Commissioners opposed the Labagh plan as strenuously as had Targee. Thus when the new structure proved immediately inadequate and the first extension was proposed, the confusion of the Asylum's first phase was repeated at an increased level of complexity and crisis.

Within a year the number of "pauper lunatics" had risen to almost 300 and a new, detached "Mad House" for the worst seventy had been hastily constructed near the main building. The total number of rooms in both facilities was under 200; there were 114 patients without rooms. The 228 who therefore had to share living space were "in constant danger of injuring each other and jeopardizing their lives...a practice...totally inadmissable." The Greenfield Commissioners wanted $15,000 for "additional accommodations." The Aldermen's Charity Committee, led by James Ferris, called instead for the immediate enlargement of the main building, continuing the "centre or main front" from the octagon of the "present

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

wing" to the main building - a 200 foot extension in accordance with the plan of 1835. Additionally, said the Committee, there should be a second "Mad House" on the east side of the Island, on a line with the first "and opposite to a point where the north octagon would be located in the event of the entire building being completed according to the plan adopted in 1835." The Aldermen passed this plan and appropriated $30,000.[24]

Samuel Bradhurst of the Assistants Charity Committee supported the Commissioners' opposition to the extension. Like everyone, he would have good accommodations for the insane. But a quarter of the entire projected structure had already cost $200,000. It would eventually cost $750,000 and was "not only exceedingly extensive in its accommodations, but really magnificant in its appearance." This might please the eye of the "passing stranger," but the question was "the aiding of the unfortunates and not the beautifying of the suburbs of the city." The Asylum was so "splendid" that numerous nonresidents were induced "to bring their pauper Lunatic relatives to this City, swear out lunacy warrants, and have them admitted," expecting that the "internal arrangements" would match the external magnificance. Everything possible should be done for lunatics, but not the "erection of a palace," just "plain, substantial accommodation" which was all they could appreciate. There should be an appropriation of only $30,000 for improvements and a new Madhouse and no further extension.[25] The Bradhurst position lost in the full Board of Assistants which concurred with the Aldermen.[26]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

After the extension plan became law in February 1841, the Greenfield Commissioners attacked it bitterly. In April they announced that they "are now and ever have been, opposed to it." The project would cost too much and ruin a quarry "unrivaled in quality." A "showy structure" would "invite" residents. New arguments were introduced: the plan would destroy the Island's wellwater supply and had aroused the opposition of neighbors on Long Island. A 500 to 600 foot eastern front would "disturb" them and "impair the value of their property." All buildings, "where a choice of site can be had," should front the south." Also, a large facility would "create the necessity or excuse for a large retinue of officers." The Commissioners thought that they could build an adequate facility for 100 inmates for $16,000.[27]

Though the extension was already passed, the Aldermen's Charity Committee issued a biting rejoinder. The loss of the quarry was "of very little importance, inasmuch as the entire island is a rock;" moreover quarrying had not furnished any recent revenue. The extension would not be as costly as Greenfield asserted and would not interfere with the "new made well," but even if it would, the well was probably not the only spot on the Island yielding surface water. Besides, "why it was dug in a direct line with the plan contemplated by the Common Council for the continuation of the building" was thought a matter of "curious conjecture."

There would be no 500 to 600 foot eastern front for many years when, eventually, the number of lunatics would require

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

it. At that point it would be unavoidable. "How to prevent insane people from disturbing others by their ravings" was something the Committee was "not prepared to state."

Perhaps the Commissioners could build something for $16,000, but the Committee thought that "if they or any of their friends were deprived of their reason," they might like a "more 'showy and extensive' building."[28]

The Greenfield Commissioners simply stalled implementation of the extension Ordinance until after the convening of a more sympathetic Council. In June 1841 Assistant Alderman William D. Waterman introduced a resolution to suspend work on the Asylum pending investigation of the contract.[29] On June 21, Greenfield advised the Council that by the previous year's resolution, appropriations could only be applied to the enlargement of the original building. He requested a specific appropriation of $10,000 for "additional accommodations and improvements to existing ones."[30] The same day the Assistants received an Aldermen's resolution that the location of the addition had "been changed, since that of the Mad-House was established" and that the previously selected site was not "most suitable" and that the Charity Committee should select a new Madhouse location.[31]

All questions - the extension, the Madhouse, and improvements - were referred to several different committees. Waterman's Select Committee reported first, in July, in favor of voiding the Madhouse contract and stopping work.[32] The following month the Joint Building Committee examined

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Asylum and found the "atmosphere...exceedingly unwholesome" and the patients exposed to "mutual violence" from their "maniacal paroxisms." They recommended that a new Madhouse for females be built immediately, regardless of the need for eventual extension of the main building.[33]

In October, Dr. Edmund G. Rawson's Assistants' Charity Committee reported in favor of several building improvements including verandahs for the Asylum[34] and of Greenfield's request for heating apparatus, carpentry, and "further accommodations." Rawson noted pointedly, however, that the Commissioners had already expended $5,000 of this and said he would "deprecate the course of expending large sums of money without a previous appropriation therefor."[35] In November Mayor Robert Morris vetoed the second Madhouse because the State had just opened a new Asylum at Utica which, he thought, might accept transfers.[36] The Aldermen's Charity Committee, chaired by Samuel Bradhurst, seconded Greenfield's renewed proposal for "an additional asylum for 100 lunatics" for $16,000 and verandahs and a second Madhouse for another $5,000.[37] With the close of the political year, Greenfield had his minor improvements, but no new Madhouse.

The Whig's Resident Physician, Alexander Whiting, took a close interest in the Asylum and called for its extension throughout the year 1842-3. The normal duration of insanity varied, he said, "from one year to twenty," but it was "incurable in proportion to the length of time it has existed." Insanity of recent duration was curable. But

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in its Asylum and "Lodge," the new euphemism for "Madhouse," the City only provided "Pandemonium, creating...a moral atmosphere, from which no rational ideas could be gained, but rather tending to increase the disease of the mind. Lunacy thus becomes contagious, as it were." Like Bellevue's patients, many of those at the Asylum were "discharged from other institutions, or given up by their physicians." Some even paid the City for their care; these should be removed "to other asyla." Workshops and hired attendants were necessary. But the great reform would be more room "in order to separate and classify patients properly." The original plan of 1835 should be completed, but in the "plainest style" with no "elegance or ornamental architecture."[38]

The Council passed a mere $250 authorization for forty sleeping rooms to be added to the octagon attic.[39] At the close of the political year Whiting again called for completion of the Asylum. He also detailed more internal reforms: "appliances for occupying the mind with new topics" like farms and a "ten pin alley" recently installed by the Commissioners. The bowling alley was "good as far as it goes, but its benefits are of a limited character. To this should be added a library of books." In addition, the lunatics should not be required to wear "uniform pauper grey" clothing but "tastes should be consulted and a variety of dress adopted." This would effect a money saving and increase the patients' self-respect "and a respect for their apparel, which they now deem only fit to be destroyed."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

There should be plates, knives, and forks for dining instead of just a pan and spoon since "comparatively few lunatics are disposed, if properly treated, to do violence to themselves or others; these the Physician in attendance can always detect." In general, the doctor lamented, "to the wilfully vicious and criminal we are far more humane."[40]

The Democratic administration of 1843-4 resolved early to plan for "a building or buildings...for the further accommodation of the Lunatics" but nothing resulted.[41] The Nativists similarly resolved to proceed with the extension envisioned in the original plan, again with no implementation.[42] In 1846 Mayor Andrew Mickle complained that New York City had more than its share of lunatics, which, he felt, could "only arise from a systemized practice of fraud upon the benevolent feelings of our citizens, by casting upon them the insane of other communities." Whatever the source, however, the patients needed better provisions; therefore the extension should go forward.[43]

This time there was action. George Purser's Aldermen's Charity Committee found 420 insane on Blackwell's Island, of which 140 were in the Madhouse and the remainder in the main Asylum. By adding dormitories converted from octagon and "bastion" rooms, an additional sixty could be housed, but not "with proper regard to classification, medical treatment and comfort." The overcrowding and "deficient ventilation" were threats to health. However, the original plan requiring a continuation of the building at right angles from the octagon was "liable to objection" since

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

there would be "no necessity...for years for...the original design" and the construction of a single wing would jeapordize the quarry and "interfere with the beauty and symmetry of the Asylum." It would also "bring one portion of the inmates constantly in sight of another, thus tending to preserve an excitement, and maintain a description of communication not beneficial."

Instead, there should be a continuation of the building "in a line to the East River" which would afford summer ventilation. The structure would then "appear symmetrical" and leave options for future expansion. It would "interfere with the Mad House, which would have to be torn down or removed" but this "difficulty" was not "serious" since one Mr. Brown would remove the building by contract.

A new Madhouse was "requisite" in view of the large number of patients. There should be verandahs for "winter promenade" and an opening for summer airing of the halls which would "render unnecessary those elevated platforms where in Summer, without any protection from the sun, unhappy beings toil during the entire day." The $38,000 cost of the extension and $22,000 for the second Madhouse were necessary expenses "if the City is to regard the inmates as <u>patients</u> and not merely as <u>prisoners</u>." There had been a change in "the moral and medical treatment of lunatics" in the past fifteen years and both the United States and Europe had "greatly increased the per centage cured." Dr. Bell at Boston's McLean's Asylum had been especially

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

successful. But it was impossible to treat the insane in cheaply built and poorly managed facilities.[44]

In June 1847 the new Council resolved to built the extension and the new Madhouse.[45] Commissioner Moses G. Leonard, Resident Physician Moses H. Ranney, and the Asylum Medical Board all applauded the extension but deplored the reliance upon Madhouses. Leonard commented in his cryptic fashion that the Asylum was originally supposed to be larger than it was "but for some cause unknown to me it was left unfinished, notwithstanding it must have been painfully evident that in this condition there would be a great lack of room." By the end of 1847 there was finally a new wing "branching southwestwardly from the main (octagon) building, and presenting a uniform appearance with its western direction... rapidly progressing toward completion." It would offer great "conveniences...particularly required for the alleviation of the mental malady" and acknowledged to be "more essential... in reclaiming the wandering mind than all the medical and surgical appliances, strictly so called - known in the annals of profane learning and science."[46]

The Medical Board recounted the sad history of the Asylum's subjection to politics, culminating in a scathing attack on the Madhouse policy. Upon entering their newly created office, the Board found the patients in a wretched condition: "The first visits of inspection were among the most painful duties of our lives." "Idleness and confusion" prevailed; the people crowded into halls and lobbies reminded the doctors of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of "the descriptions of mad houses in the last century and in countries not yet enlightened by Christianity and civilization." They could "not help but agree" that "the name 'Mad House' was well applied, for there was madness in its conception, madness in its completion, and madness in its continuance. It was certainly more full of madness and better calculated to perpetuate madness than any house we have ever examined."

Buildings removed from the main structure complicated inspection. Officers should be able to oversee the entire facility "with ease, at all times of the day and night and in all kinds of weather; without this abuses will creep in." There could be "neither system, nor satisfaction, nor success, in the treatment of the insane in this Hospital" thought the Board, "until the original plan shall have been completed." Madhouses were "a false economy."[47]

Within a year the new Madhouse was finished and judged in some ways superior but in others inferior to the first. It was a "relief...as it affords more room...greater facilities for classification" but was defective in its heating and ventilation. Both the "New Wing" and the new Madhouse also lacked airing grounds.[48]

Once building was resumed, the officials gave renewed attention to moral treatment, especially labor. That which "struck" the Medical Board "most forcibly" was not the crowding, but "the idleness that pervaded every part of the establishment." All would admit that sloth "in the sane...

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

leads to vice; with the insane it tends to the worst consequences. Man permanently deprived of reason, and impelled only by his animal instincts, uniformly degenerates unless guided and sustained by the intelligence of others."[49] Dr. Ranney started the lunatics on the project of building a sea wall which Commissioner Leonard thought "a task of no easy or promising enterprise" even if accomplished "by no other than lunacy labor." The Commissioner's appraisal of the potentialities here was cautiously hopeful:

> Lunatics, when physically well - and a large proportion generally are so, do not, in the main, object to work; many of them seek it, and when properly practicable it unquestionably palliates their condition. We can depend on them for the performance of a reasonable amount of suitable labor, but the sanguine expectations of some persons in relation to their ability to "earn their bread by the sweat of their brow," our experience and information... induce us to scarcely believe are ever to be realized - at any rate not in our Asylum. It may be that the class supported here are of too promiscuous a collection, but...the inmates in this Institution have performed a variety of important services, and deserve encouragement in their exertions.[50]

Other internal reforms were needed. The system treated the patient from the beginning like a convict: he was committed through the Police office. The Medical Board detailed the admissions experience of a "respectable" gentleman chosen at random to illustrate the process. He was first brought to the Magistrate, then to Sixty-first Street, then to Blackwell's Island "in a boat manned by

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

men of the most unprepossessing appearance." Then he was deposited at the Guardhouse and dispatched on foot to the Asylum. "This...is the usual method of sending male and female, excited and quiet, and debilitated as well as strong." With no reception ward, the patient was cast in immediately with the "incurable and idle." The once proud gentleman would probably be "seen a year after admission stalking about the premises, miserably clad, in Alms House dress, a driveling imbecile, or an incurable madman." The commitment process should be changed "so as to avoid... the police office" and there should be a receiving room for each ward where the new patients could be observed "until their cases shall be understood, and they properly classed."[51]

At this point the psychiatrists began to give close attention to the sources, causes, and treatment of insanity. There seemed to be a relationship between cities and lunacy. Urban areas tended to breed or attract mental disorder and New York carried a special burden:

> Large cities attract people of all professions, and every degree of idleness and vice...Changes and chances of life reduce the industrious, the enterprising, and virtuous to misery and madness; while the idle, the abandoned and the licentious, who seek the thronged city as the fit theater for the practice of their vice, or as the most suitable place to hide their shame and degradation, sink still deeper in infamy and eventually become the tenants of prisons, alms-houses and hospitals. In the great commercial metropolis of America with the multitudes rushing into it from all parts of the world, with its fluctuations in trade, its sudden losses and gains of fortune, its various excitements, political, religious,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> speculative, social, and vicious, we have as many active moral causes of insanity existing among us as may be found, perhaps, in any other community in the world.[52]

The insane came from a variety of sources. Dr. Ranney reported that he treated many immigrants who were not really lunatics but were merely suffering from privations of shipboard.[53] He was, nevertheless, surprised at the high proportion of foreigners among the truly insane and was unable to "give a satisfactory reason why the proportion of native citizens is so small...Either the ratio of the insane is very much less among the natives or they are kept at their homes." He thought the first of these explanations more likely and believed that it might have arisen "from the peculiar causes incident to emigration, and in part from the shipment of the insane from Europe during a lucid interval."[54]

Soon Dr. Ranney showed irritation at the increasing number of world travelers who landed in his Asylum. He bristled when some residents of Amherst collected seven dollars for a patient, Tyler Wedge, so that he could "be more free in his mind to go to Pennsylvania and see his folks." Lunatics from everywhere were generously supplied "small sums of money," he protested, "'that they may be more free in their minds' to travel...Our city seems to be the terminus of their pilgrimage." He recounted a typical instance:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Within the past week a Frenchman was admitted who came to America last month in the steamship Africa. He is evidently well educated, and has without doubt been insane for two or three years. His great scheme is the formation of a universal system of religion - a perfect science of divinity - which shall be so clear that no one can disbelieve it or contradict its doctrines. For the perfection and propagation of this sublime design, he visited Constantinople a few months before coming to America, in order to convert the Turks, but learned too late that to instruct he must understand the language of those taught. Returning to France, where he had many a hair-breadth escape from the plots of those inimical to the new views, he finally arrives in New-York, his mind pregnant with the idea of joining his researches and efforts with those of Mrs. Stowe, whose works he has read. Cases like this are of almost daily occurence.

Perhaps, thought Ranney, the well intentioned residents of Amherst should keep their money.[55]

All sorts of delusions existed among the patients. Any "particular topic" which happened to captivate the community was likely to "become connected with" and "form a part of the delusion of the insane." The great revolutions in France thus coincided with a "greater number than usual" of lunacy cases "and in many the delusions seemed to be directly connected with the political excitement." In the United States the same thing happened with Millerism and Mormonism.

The most common type of delusion in New York seemed to reflect an "excitement of self-esteem" and was "very marked and curious" involving "a perversion of personal identity

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

connected with an idea of the high life." Accordingly the Asylum housed, among other celebrities, Emperors of the United States and of France, a King of Scotland, Napoleon the Second, Sir Robert Peel's son, a Genii invoking millionaire, two wives of Presidents "one of which personifies animals and mistakes them for her friends," Queens of Ireland, France, Mexico, America, "and one calling herself the City Hall Queen." One lady was engaged to an English Lord and waived her handkerchief at passing boats thinking that they were "a fleet dispatched by Queen Victoria to convey her expected lover to our shores." Many of these ladies thought that they owned the Asylum or even the entire city. One woman believed she was a lawyer and was constantly conducting trials. The Pope might have been surprised to learn of his sister's presence in the Asylum.[56] Some patients refrained from making any claim to fame but still found themselves in unique circumstances like the lady governed wholly by St. Paul's spirit which, fortunately, ordered her to obey her physicians or the man with "a golden bee, that not only communicated to him the secrets of the spirit-land, but, unfortunately for his peace of mind, was often flying to his ear to warn him of the infidelity of his nearest friend." Seldom was the same delusion repeated and Ranney thought the story of Aladdin "quite probable" compared to such "wonderful tales."[57]

Friends of patients assigned a variety of causes to their condition based on their personal knowledge. "Intemperance,"

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"epilepsy," and grief at loss of friends" were the most common immediate situations but paralysis, apoplexy, typhus, convulsions in childhood, masturbation, "use of concentrated tea," bathing, ill treatment, head injuries, "Coup de Soleil," "religious excitement," "spiritual rappings," fright, nostalgia, domestic trouble, marital anxiety, seduction, jealousy, disappointment in love or business, pecuniary loss, and "poverty" were all cited as "exciting causes."[58]

"Among our patients," said Dr. Ranney, in fact, "poverty, with its attendant evils, is the most common cause of insanity." He also noted that lunacy seemed less prevalent in barbarous than in civilized nations and had "greatly increased within a few years" in the latter countries though this might be "ascribed to a more careful examination" and "public attention." The mind had to be nurtured in a balanced manner: "Perfect sanity implies complete and equal development of all the mental powers, and the greater the departure from this, the greater the liability to insanity. Misdirected education, by cultivating a particular faculty or faculties, at the expense of the others, and thus destroying the balance between them, lays the foundation for derangement from any slight exciting cause." The head and the heart must be in tune; overemphasis on either would produce, on the one hand, "an intellectual, but a bad man" or, on the other, "the man of feeling - the fanatic." Physical factors were important: malnourishment, breathing impure air, exposure to inclement weather. Social factors were vital: most significant were "perplexities in obtaining a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

livelihood." The great risk for the middle class was the devotion of all energy to business "with the purpose of accumulating wealth in a short time" with small capital in keen competition insuring "disappointment" to many an "already overtaxed mind." The higher classes had the opposite problem: "no definite business to pursue...the want of any real object in life" resulting in "ennui and indolence" driving them to "trivial amusements and excesses." Some were "imaginative" and dreamed of "high positions and honors, but without any effort to acquire them. This castle-building enfeebles the intellect, and destroys that firmness of character which success in any course of continued action requires."[59]

Dr. Ranney's treatment of patients depended on sensitive creativity. He expressed his overall philosophy with a metaphor that typified the reform vision of benevolent social control:

> An insane asylum should be like a well-regulated household, everything moving on with the utmost harmony, all tending toward the same end, viz. the comfort and happiness of the inmates. It is a world in itself, and should afford the enjoyments of the outer world. It should sustain a high moral character.

The first step in realizing this vision was to replace convict aides with paid staff. Officers must have "pride of character and sobriety, as well as benevolence." The staff was "pleased with the old system" under which they did nothing. Prisoners were "better servants for them than

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attendants for the insane." In cases of ill treatment the officers "generally decided against the patient and represented these complaints as a matter of course, a usual result of delusions." After Ranney succeeded in replacing the convicts, he claimed that "patients may complain of being detained, but rarely does one complain of being misused."

It was very important to minimize restraints while still guarding against suicide attempts. Ranney was proud that in 1852 "only" eight had occurred. He thought that if the physician had the "entire confidence" of the patient, the frequency of suicide would be "much diminished by freedom from restraint." Though the propensity might remain, the trusting lunatic would fear that the "act might lessen him in the estimation and good-will" of the doctor. In most cases, moreover, "fear of some impending evil" was the "immediate cause of self-destruction" and the "firm reliance of a friend gives a moral aid which could come from no other source."[60] Ranney found that abandoning unnecessary restraints made the patients "from year to year...more mild and manageable."[61] He also had a rule "never to punish a patient." The violent and noisy were "shut in a room" and kept away from the others.[62]

Ranney managed his milder lunatics by inventing an ever expanding array of activities for them though he could find no way to keep most from sometimes lapsing back into insanity's "darker side." Religion was an important aid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Rev. Zetus Searle and Father Robert Kleinedom served as Asylum Chaplains though they doubtless had to compete with the French universalist from Constantinople. Dr. Ranney cautioned, however, that a "subject so fraught with abiding interest as that of the future must be presented in a wise and prudent manner, so as to console and correct, without exciting fear or other depressing passions...Denunciations do no good...They produce positive harm...Anxiety is a universal feeling among a large class of the insane." Hell and brimstone were definitely out.[63]

Ranney also appealed to "our benevolent citizens" for "shells, minerals, prints, in fact, any curious or rare production, either natural or artificial, that would serve as the nucleus for a museum" to supplement the Asylum library.[64]

Finally, Ranney used holiday celebrations and psychodrama brilliantly in order to expand the patients' opportunities for self-expression and enable them to exhibit their talents. He does not seem to have considered them unduly exciting or provocative of delusion. The year's important holidays were always appropriately observed: New Year's, Washington's Birthday, the Anniversary of the Ten Governors Law, the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.[65] About 350 patients joined in the Independence Day celebration of 1855 which featured an "oration delivered by one of the inmates." The "reading of the Declaration of Independence, the music, and the original ode, would compare favorably with the usual

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ceremonies on similar occasions."[66]

In 1857 Ranney realized that he had many musicians in the Asylum so he formed an "unique" orchestra consisting of violin, banjo, triangle, tambourine, and castanets. He encouraged dancing at holiday events which was "quite as varied as that of a ballet company, though perhaps not strictly conformable to the rules of an artiste; in fact conventional forms are not received with any great favor." Only the "conservative few" did the cotillion or waltz which were "rather tolerated than enjoyed by the masses." The doctor assured the Governors that the "strictest propriety of conduct" was "ever observed by all."

That Christmas the patients presented a grand pageant. The band played an Overture, followed by several solo performances of songs like "Old Dan Tucker" and "Who's That Knocking at the Door." Santa Claus entered with presents. There followed a seven scene pantomime, "The Fairies' Captive" about a little girl and her grandfather who lose their way in the woods. After the old man "sadly consigns her to the protection of heaven" and leaves to seek their lost way, she falls asleep and dreams of her "Home, sweet home." Fairies emerge from the woods, surround the little girl, and charm her into becoming a fairy. She joins them and the grandfather returns to find only her clothing. This enchanting little skit was followed by more songs and a "Grand Finale - Fairy Dance."[67]

One of the "most pleasant and interesting" of amusements

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was the holding of "Moot Courts." Everyone could participate in the roles of plaintiff, defendant, counsel, witness, judge, and juryman. Actual "minor offences" were tried by "this Supreme Court of Blackwell's Island" but the Judge, "noted for benevolence and wealth, and preferring to pay the damages rather than have any one suffer from the uncertainty of the law, gave decisions (unlike those of the City Courts) satisfactory to both parties." The doctor feigned regret that "these trials having never been given to the Law Reporters, the decisions are lost to future jurists as a matter of reference."[68]

To Ranney such activities were very important. Some might think it "trivial to attach such importance to matters so trifling" but he had found that "upon the varied and judicious repitition of these depends much of the happiness and even success of treatment." And is it not true, he asked, that the "sum of temporal pleasures and joys of life is made up to a great extent of trifles?"[69]

Despite all such efforts, moral treatment was soon again undermined by a reappearance of the old physical problems. By 1854 Ranney was asking for a new wing because of overcrowding.[70] By 1859 a new emergency was developing and the insane were collecting in the Almshouse proper for want of Asylum space. The City had come full circle since 1825: lunatics were again mixed with the general poor and Dr. Ranney had to advise Warden Charles P. Degreck to effect a classification supposedly long accomplished:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I highly approve of your suggestion of placing the insane of your Department in separate wards, and of engaging paid nurses to take care of them. I feel a more lively interest in the matter, from the fact that it would benefit this Institution as well as your own. The crowded condition of the Asylum is dreadful to contemplate, and that murder is not of nightly occurrence, seems more the result of Providential interference, than of any care on our part. Common humanity demands that our numbers should be diminished, as every patient suffers from being one of this promiscuous multitude. By having your insane scattered through the building, the quietness of every ward is disturbed, while to have them brought together, the cause of excitement will be much less, and they will remain much more quiet, so that many might be retained with you safely, who are now, of necessity, sent to the Asylum.[71]

The Commissioners of Public Charities and Correction thus inherited a situation not dissimilar to that of Bellevue in 1825, only at a higher level. At least the Lunatic Asylum had a history. The problems were not new but there was a lenghthy record of attempted solutions and a growing body of theoretical and practical knowledge distilled from the observations and experiences of men like Drs. MacDonald and Ranney. Perhaps there was a chance of avoiding some of the mistakes - indeed - the insanity which the City had imposed on itself and its lunatics over the preceding thirty-five years.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. Dunshee et al., 759-60.

2. A. H. Stevens et al., 679-80.

3. AH Cmsrs Chairman John Targee, Rept on Lunatic Establishment at Blvu, Asts Doc, II (First run), #52, February 25, 1833, 321-3.

4. Dunshee et al., 760-2.

5. MacDonald, Letter on LA, Aldmn Doc, III (First run), #101, March 10, 1834, 813-20.

6. Ibid., 821-4.

7. Ibid., 825-8.

8. Ibid., 829-33.

9. Ords, II, April 15, 1834, 164.

10. Joint Special Cmte on BI and LIF, John I. Labagh, Joseph Tucker, Robert C. Cornell, Robert Smith, Samuel Purdy, William Samuel Johnson, Rept on LA, Asts Doc, I (Second run), #38, January 5, 1835, 319-27.

11. Ibid., 328.

12. Ords, II, January 20, 1835, 315.

13. Ords, II, May 7, 1835, 399.

14. Labagh et al., Rept on Details of LA and Appropriations, Aldmn Doc, I (Second run), #54, April 20, 1835, 590, 594.

15. Targee et al., 197-9. This was the second and more detailed of two explanations; the first provoked the Building Committee Report disucssed immediately below.

16. Ibid., 199-200.

17. Ibid., 202-4.

18. Joint Special Cmte on BI and LIF, James Ferris, Egbert Benson, John Delameter, George Paulding, Alexander Stewart, Aaron Clark, Rept on Cmctn from AH Cmsrs on LA, Asts Doc, II (Second run), #14, July 22, 1835, 126-8.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

19. Late AH Cmsrs, William Mandeville, Samuel Stevens, Joseph Hoxie, Phillip R. Engs, Anthony Lamb and Members of Joint Special Cmte on BI and LIF, William Samuel Johnson, Robert C. Cornell, Joseph Tucker, Robert Smith, Memorial on LA, Asts Doc, II (Second run), #31, October 13, 1835, 280-2.

20. MacDonald, Cmctn on LA, Asts Doc, II, #37, October 13, 1835, 307-11.

21. Ibid., 314-7.

22. Ords, III, December 11, 1835, 119.

23. Engs et al., 208, 232-3. Years later, the Lunatic Asylum Medical Board praised Engs' resumption of the project but noted that "much money" had been expended "on the ornamental, which might better have been devoted to the useful" and that a serious error was made in building the basement for patients' rooms instead of for storerooms and offices. It was "damp and imperfectly ventilated" and therefore "unhealthy" but the "public authorities" were "so strongly opposed to extending the buildings" that such an expedient was perhaps necessary. A. H. Stevens et al., 683.

24. Aldmn CCAH, James Ferris, Egbert Benson, Nathaniel Jarvis, Jr., Rept on Cmctn from AH Cmsrs on LA, Doc, VII, #30, November 30, 1840, 384-6.

25. Asts CCAH Chairman Samuel Bradhurst, Minority Rept on LA, Doc, XVII, #55, February 1, 1841, 348-50.

26. Ords, VIII, February 18, 1841, 99.

27. Greenfield et al., Cmctn Opposing Extension of LA in Ferris and Benson, Rept on same, 898-901.

28. Ferris and Benson, Rept on Cmctn of AH Cmsrs Opposing Extension of LA, 895-7.

29. Asts Jnl, XVIII, June 21, 1841, 59-60.

30. Greenfield, Cmctn on Appropriation, Asts Doc, XVIII, #8, June 21, 1841, 35-6.

31. Asts Jnl, XVIII, June 21, 1841, 59-60.

32. Waterman et al., 50, 54.

33. Joint Special Cmte on BI and LIF, David Vandervoort, Robert Jones, Cornelius B. Timpson, Edmund G. Rawson, Erastus C. Benedict, Charles J. Dodge, Rept on Extension of LA and Erection of Mad House, Asts Doc, XVIII, #25, August 2, 1841, 89-92.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

34. Asts CCAH, Edmund G. Rawson, George F. Nesbitt, Henry Brevoort, Rept on Cmctn of AH Cmsrs on Public Buildings, Doc, XVIII, #63, October 25, 1841, 253.

35. Rawson, Nesbitt, Brevoort, Rept on Application of AH Cmsrs for $10,000, Asts Doc, XVIII, #62, October 25, 1841, 249-50.

36. Morris, Message of Veto of Mad House, Aldmn Doc, VIII, #37, November 15, 1841, 244-5.

37. Aldmn CCAH, Samuel Bradhurst and David Vandervoort, Rept on Public Buildings at Blvu, LIF, &c., Recommending Concurrence with Asts, Doc, VIII, #70, February 21, 1842, 537-8.

38. A. B. Whiting, Cmctn in Titus et al., Cmctn to Council, 220-6.

39. Ords, X, November 25, 1842, 96.

40. A. B. Whiting, Rept for 1842-3, 1404-9.

41. Ords, XI, August 8, 1843, 29.

42. Miller and Gale, 166; Miller, Cozzens, Gale, Rept on Part of Cmsrs' Cmctn Relating to LA, Aldmn Doc, XI, #9, July 8, 1844, 147-9.

43. Mickle, 14.

44. Purser, Walker, Benson, 282-6.

45. Ords, XV, June 19, 1847, 62-3.

46. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 20-1.

47. A. H. Stevens et al., 687-9, 694.

48. MacDonald et al., 773-4.

49. A. H. Stevens et al., 690.

50. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 22.

51. A. H. Stevens et al., 691-3, 702.

52. Ibid., 676-7.

53. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1854, VI, 106-7.

54. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1853, V, 70.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

55. Ranney, Cmctn to AH Govs on Letter of Amherst Residents in AH Govs, Minutes, March 17, 1857, 116-7.

56. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 82-3.

57. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1853, V, 70, 73.

58. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 98.

59. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1859, XI, 182-5.

60. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1852, IV, 86-7.

61. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1853, V, 73.

62. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1857, IX, 189.

63. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1854, IV, 92.

64. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 106.

65. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1857, IX, 184.

66. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1855, VII, 93.

67. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1857, IX, 184-7.

68. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1855, VII, 93.

69. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1857, IX, 187.

70. Ranney, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1853, V, 77.

71. Ranney, Letter to AH Warden C. P. Degreck in AH Govs, Rept for 1859, IX, 9-10.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 13

POTTER'S FIELD

Death and burial were vivid and problematic themes of nineteenth century urban existence,[1] particularly in the Almshouse Department. For most lifelong paupers, interment in Potter's Field was the final institutional transfer. Also, any unclaimed bodies of strangers who died in the city were buried there. The entire process of disposal of the dead was fraught with danger and confusion, offering challenges and opportunities to rogues, scandalmongers, scientists, and Almshouse managers that taxed their best creative efforts.

Sometimes it took a long time for bodies to reach their coffins: rotting corpses served as a wonderful tool of political warfare and bureaucratic sabotage for Almshouse Superintendent Marcellus Eells. In mid June 1848, a month after entering office, Democratic reform Mayor William F. Havemeyer received a visit from one Dr. Carter of the House of Refuge who had just followed a foul street odor to the Bellevue Deadhouse where he discovered "not less than twenty-eight bodies lying, a portion of them on the outside of the building, exposed to the scorching sun." Resident Physician David M. Reese summoned Commissioner Moses G. Leonard to the unpleasant scene. The three officials met there and Reese told the Mayor that the bodies had been accumulating for four days despite "several messages to Mr. Eells...who has

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the charge amd direction of the Dead Boat, to have them removed;" the Superintendent simply paid "no attention." Visiting the deadhouse, the three confronted a "sight which... beggars description:"

> some fifteen or more coffins lying outside of the Dead House, exposed to the action of the burning sun - the bodies contained in them were in a state of loathsome putrefication, and many of them had swollen and burst the coffins - presenting a revolting spectacle, while from others blood was freely oozing. Among the corpses thus exposed, were some of persons who had died of the smallpox, and the stench arising from them was absolutely insupportable.

The Mayor could not bring himself to enter the deadhouse, "so dreadful was the effluvia," but hardier souls who had assured him that the "condition of the corpses there was quite as bad as that of those on the outside."

Leonard told Havemeyer that he had ordered Eells by messenger to send down the deadboat; it arrived while the Mayor was at Bellevue and, presuming that the bodies would thence be removed, he left. Later Dr. Reese informed him that "the crew refused to remove any of them, having, as they said, been so instructed by the Superintendent." Finally, Reese hired a crew to take them away. The Mayor denounced Eells to the Council as "criminally culpable" for stockpiling bodies "so long at this season of the year, when our citizens are so apprehensive of contagious or pestilential diseases" and demanded an immediate investigation. A Special Assistants Committee was accordingly appointed but never reported.[2]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Sabotage aside, the technology of interment was quite imperfect, beginning at the coffin door. The common carpenter's wooden box was considered highly unsatisfactory and enterprising scientists eagerly sought to invent an improvement. It was this sort of project which led to Alderman George Purser's spurious but plausible and inflammatory charges that Dr. Reese trafficked in corpses for surgical dissection.

The tangled episode which led to Purser's charges was told differently by the various witnesses. Whoever was telling the truth, it appeared that Bellevue was in the forefront of the advancement of science in a curious way. Two inventors, D. S. Smith and Frederick Skiff, designed an "ingenious...patent metallic coffin" the worth of which could "only be known by experiment, which could be done by taking the coffin to the Hospital at Bellevue." An acquaintance gave Skiff a letter of introduction to Dr. Reese. Meanwhile, Smith went to Reese for a body and was told that the matter would be considered. Later a "stranger" brought Smith a body "to be put in a small iron coffin" but he did not use it and did not know if it had come as a result of his interview with Reese.[3]

Subsequently, the inventors went to Reese and requested a corpse to take to their office. The Resident Physician refused adamently, saying he "had no right to sell a body or have a body removed from the dead house except for

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

interment."[4] However, they might be allowed to test their invention within the confines of the deadhouse, especially if they tipped the Keeper there, Nicholas. This gentleman obliged them with "a little girl who died last night; he took it out of the coffin and placed it into the metallic one" where it remained for several days. Smith "visited it several times" to "ascertain...whether the box was air-tight or not."[5] There was a pump to exhaust the air but it proved imperfect, according to one witness.[6] Hence, as another explained, Smith and Skiff needed a second body because the first "decomposed;"[7] but Smith told other witnesses that the first body was "too large for the coffin."[8] Dr. Reese supposedly said that the girl "would be a good subject as it did not die of ship fever."[9]

Some witnesses said that Smith ascertained from a lawyer that the experiment was a "State Prison offence,"[10] but Smith denied this.[11] Reese was said to have objected to the small gratuity tendered for the first corpse and remarked that "if they got another they must pay five dollars for it, as that was what we sell them for."[12]

Bellevue Matron Leah Eliza Strang testified that she asked Dr. Reese "if he would traffic in dead bodies, to which he replied, yes, if they would give him a chance, there would be no need of a Potter's Field, I would sell them all, and would make a fine thing of it, and I will as it is." She also asked Nicholas how many bodies he had

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

sold, to which he replied: "only one for two dollars." Strang joked that "he had better look out, he would make his fortune yet, between selling coffins and dead bodies." He received a fair share of tips as a "perquisite" for staining coffins at the request of friends of the deceased and did far better in this fashion under Reese whom he "could rule" than under Reese's predecessor, Fenelon Hasbrouck, whom "he disliked."[13]

When Alderman Purser read an article in the Sunday Dispatch about the sale of bodies, he sought out Dr. Lyman H. Stone, whom Reese had just dismissed from Bellevue, and inventor Smith. Even Stone, no friend of Reese, said he knew nothing of corpses being taken from Bellevue or offered to surgeons for dissection, nor of anything irregular other than the coffin experiment or "from hearsay." Stone himself had never removed bodies or parts "except certain morbid specimins such as hearts, livers, &c. for exhibition to medical societies" which he always returned after use. Purser's charges fell flat because they were unsubstantiated by the conflicting and often biased testimony. Still, what was revealed seemed to show that at least an occasional body, in the name of progress, "never saw Potter's Field."[14]

The Almshouse deadhouse, boat, and field operations were poorly managed, at least until 1849. There were many calls for "some other way than the present one for converying the dead from the Alms House to the place of interment"[15] and reports

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

like that of the Engs Commissioners that "the manner in which the dead are buried in Potters field affords facilities to the purpose of men engaged in procuring human bodies for dissection, &c."[16] In the early 1830s, it was ordered that dogs be buried in Potter's Field because a central place of disposal was needed to prevent fraudulent duplicated bounty claims for canine corpses. The Finance Committee criticized the system of leaving the "whole business" of burial to a per diem Keeper. The function should "not be left to any person;" instead there should be "an oversight by a Committee."[17] Eventually jurisdiction over the Field was assigned to the City Inspector's Department.[18]

The City's most vexing problem with Potter's Field was its periodic relocation beyond settled city limits. A Common Council Committee of 1823 thought that three miles from City Hall was sufficiently removed for a permanent graveyard, a gross error. They set aside a plot of land bounded by Fifth and Sixth Avenues and Fortieth and Forty-fifth Streets. Besides the imminent northerly expansion of settlement, there was a physical problem: the soil was "entirely unadapted" for interment and therefore remained "wholly unoccupied as a burial place." The field was "filled up and regulated" in 1825 and became the "Washington Parade Ground" while common lands were set aside between Third and Fourth Avenue and Forty-eighth and Fiftieth Streets for a new public cemetery. Though the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

soil was hardly any better "adapted" there, burials of people and dogs proceeded peacefully, if not hygienically, for the next decade.[19]

By 1835 there stirred some dissatisfaction among influential citizens. In February Jacob Lorillard petitioned the Council to relocate the Potter's Field to the recently acquired Randall's Island.[20] In September "sundry" memorialists, including Fyler Dibblee and William V. Brady, asked that Randall's "or some other place" be reserved for future public burials.[21] This touched off a controversy similar and related to that concerning Almshouse removal.

The Assistants Lands and Places Committee, Daniel P. Ingraham and John Cleaveland, reviewed the sad history of Potter's Field in the context of the ever expanding line of settlement: the city was "in fact even now upon the boundary line" of the public cemetery proposed in 1823. The City had a solemn obligation to provide "a home for the dead." Randall's Island had been purchased with this in mind but had since baan "taken" by the Board of Assistants for the proposed new Almshouse.

"The history of the past teaches us," wrote the Committee, "that the graves of our fellow citizens have been again and again disturbed" and "their dust scattered upon the four winds of the city" with every expansion beyond the fire limits. Between 1792 and 1823, Methodists, Africans, Jews, and many other groups saw their graves desecrated by streetcutting,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

as did part of Potter's Field in 1826 when First Street "travelled over" it as well as passing "directly through" the Cemetery of the Cedar Street Presbyterian Church.

Because the Almshouse would probably go to Randall's, the Committee excluded that island from consideration for a graveyard and instead began to deal with James Connor who offered a plot between Eighth and Twelfth Avenues and 151st and 155th Streets. Part of the land belonged to a minor whose trustee was willing to sell but was supposed to wait until the youth reached the age of twenty-one but ways were seen around this difficulty. The streets in the area and "the Kings Bridge" could be closed, allowing ninety acres for a cemetery. The distance from City Hall would be less than nine miles and at a "convenient distance" could be a "spacious Receiving Vault in which the remains of the deceased could be temporarily deposited, at this place all funerals should terminate." It was believed that the day was "not distant when the funeral service will be only solemnized at the Church" and that processions should terminate there as a matter of modern practice.

The Committee stressed the urgency of the problem in a fervent plea for reverence for the dead and evocation of the rural ideal. Boston had her Mount Auburn, so lovely a cemetery that it was a tourist attraction. Could New York "permit year after year such unholy violations of the tomb? Shall it always be said that here no one shall find a place of repose?" They reminded their colleagues

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

that it should be "easier to rifle the mansions of the living than the narrow house of the dead. That man loses the respect of the living who does not venerate the dead, however excessive this veneration may at times become." The obligation was "universal" from the tombs of Hadrian and Metella which outlasted the Caesars' palaces through Biblical times to "the present generations of men."

There should be a "Rural Cemetery...placed under the charge of the Horticultural Society and adorned and ornamented by art." The Connor land had "dry gravelly soil" and was thus "well adapted" for burial. There was a hill "covered with a rich growth of trees and shrubbery;" no spot on Manhattan could be "rendered more attractive by being tastefully laid out and ornamented with tombs and shaded walks." There should be no further interments in the "present" Potter's Field. The City should purchase the Connor land and reserve it, along with fifty acres of the Long Island Farms, for a new public cemetery.[22]

The full Board of Assistants passed the proposal and sent it to the Aldermen whose Lands and Places Committee, which included David Randall and John V. Greenfield, amended it slightly and recommended its passage.[23] However, the full Board, "after considerable debate," laid the issue "upon the table" where it remained for eight years.[24]

By 1843 the problem had become a crisis. Frantic complaints of angry citizens of the Twelfth Ward where the bursting Field remained described for the first time the City's

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

incredible ineptitude at interment. In flagrant violation of its own ordinances which it so sanctimoniously imposed on the churches, the municipality maintained

> a nuisance of the greatest magnitude. The coffins containing the bodies are deposited in a trench about ten feet wide, by fifteen feet deep, and say one hundred and fifty feet long, to within eighteen inches of the surface. This trench is never entirely closed until it is filled, and its use, therefore, discontinued. The effluvia arising from this great mass of animal matter in the process of decomposition, is permitted to escape freely, thus rendering the atmosphere of our neighborhood most disgustingly offensive, and, as a matter of course, seriously affecting the healthiness of that portion of the Ward within its influences, which now embraces no inconsiderable population.[25]

An Assistants Special Committee further explained that the coffins were made of "light pine wood" and were piled up until the ditch was filled, exposed to the sun and air. There was "emitted from the pit an effluvium, which the most hardened sensibilities cannot endure," extending for hundreds of yards. Burials averaged at least twenty-five per week, perhaps up to forty "in sickly seasons."

The Committee opposed "large open cemeteries" because the "effluvia...will convey miasmatic poison to a considerable distance." The City should obey its own laws like that requiring at least six feet of earth over a vault or grave. But most important was removal of the Field "to a more distant and secluded place, where the dead may find few or none of the living to exercise their destructive influence

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

upon." For the first time the Committee detailed how the Field was "unadapted" for burials: the soil was wet and the bottom rocky so that bodies could not be interred deep enough and the moisture hastened decomposition. This situation proved for more unhealthy than the marshes in the area which were the subject of so many complaints. The marshes were being drained but Potter's Field must also be removed to "a suitable location." Gone was all talk of reverence for the dead or of rural beauty; now the only emotion was fear.[26]

In accordance with the Whig policy of placing all institutions for the living on Blackwell's Island, the Committee leaned toward concurrence with a resolution, already quickly passed by the Aldermen, for a Randall's Island cemetery. Upon hearing of this possibility, the citizens of Harlem panicked. Remonstrating against it, they cited the great expense of transporting bodies so far, the freezing of the river in the winter which would prevent any approach to the Island, and the ease of stealing corpses from the site. This last circumstance was "certainly wrong, although it is the burial place of the poor and the humble." But the residents did not hide their main objection:

> the health of our village would be seriously affected by the buiral on Randall's Island, as Potter's Field is the burial place of all who die of infectious diseases this Island being separated from the Harlem shore by about 1,000 feet and numbers of our inhabitants living on the shore immediately opposite the shore of the Island.[27]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Committee disposed of these objections cavalierly. There was only "occasional difficulty of crossing...in winter." If obstructions "do occasionally exist for a few days at a time, in cold weather, it is the season when bodies may be kept in a dead house" until the problems are "removed." A distant place would be more, not less, secure from grave robbers. Not a word was said about the health issue; no answer to this objection existed.[28] In April the Randall's Island graveyard plan passed the Council.[29]

However, ironically, the Whigs' other institutional removal plans never went beyond paper and their successors were determined to put the Nurseries on Randall's Island. As they planned the new buildings, the Nativists called attention to "the necessity of the immediate passage of an ordinance prohibiting interments from being hereafter made on Randall's Island;" the Council had already "overlooked" the matter for ten months "in the pressure of other business" but it "manifestly cannot be long delayed with propriety."[30] Nothing was done, however, and the Democrats of 1845 passed a resolution to find "a more suitable place of burial" than Randall's.[31]

Predictably, the Nurseries were well established before any such place was found. The alarm sounded more urgently over the next few years, beginning with the plea of Commissioner Moses G. Leonard on the eve of the transfer of the children:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I would here suggest to the City a matter...of the highest importance...a removal of Potter's Field, or an abatement of its injurious tendency. It is very certain that the thousand children who are shortly to become residents of Randall's Island should not be subjected to the deleterious influences against their health and lives that will doubtless be the result of continuing this public place of interment at its present location. Emanations constantly vitiate the atmosphere in its immediate vicinity, and the prevailing southerly winds of the summer season waft these pestilential exhalations directly over the plot covered by the Nursery Buildings. It must be apparent that sooner or later this contaminated air must render the place too impure for the full enjoyment of health, and under peculiar and not infrequent circumstances seriously endanger the lives of the young inhabitants under our charitable protection.

Leonard did not consider it his prerogative to select a new site but demanded a "timely removal" from "contiguity to the children's habitation."[32]

The Council referred the question to the Joint Charity and Almshouse Committee who failed to find a location.[33] The next year the Commissioner reiterated the necessity of "removing Potter's Field from its present position; or at all events substitute some better method of placing under ground the numerous dead interred in this place." He feared that the "contaminated air may engender the foulest of diseases" and entreated that "since the Common Council have erected so fair a fabric, let not its innocent inmates fall a prey to reckless neglect."[34]

Still there was no action and the Governors inherited the problem in 1849. That July the Council acknowledged

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the hazard and appointed a new joint special Committee to seach for a location.[35] This bore no result. At the end of 1850 the Governors complained that the Field was "unsuitable and insufficient in its capacity." Incomprehensibly enough after all the concern of the past for soil quality, the Randall's cemetery, like its predecessor, rested on rock. Therefore its "effluvia" did not sink but would "taint the atmosphere" of the Nurseries and necessitated removal.[36] Randall's Warden Jonathan Stearns explained that there were six pits left out of a "great number" dug the previous summer. Each would hold 120 bodies; about seventy were being interred per week.

> No more pits can be dug on the north, east or west part of the ground; some may be dug between the pits filled last summer, but I leave you to judge if there will not be a bad stench when pits are opened with a partition of earth only one foot thick, and that subject to cave in or be dug through with rats.[37]

After another year with no action, the Warden repeated the familiar plea for removal.[38] In 1852 the Council finally stirred and engineered the Tweed-Lawrence deal which acquired cemetery space on Ward's Island.

Problems of jurisdiction and management of the Field were addressed more promptly. Since it was located on Randall's Island, the Governors demanded full authority: "They have care of the burials to be made" and had to "prevent injury" to the Nursery inmates that could result from "careless or

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

injudicious management" of the cemetery. Moreover the Governors had found it "impossible to prevent depredations" on Nursery property "encouraged by the influence of persons employed at, or having access to the Potter's Field." Though the Council had passed an Ordinance giving "custody and control" of the Field to the Governors, they still wanted a State law to clarify the issue.[39]

Total jurisdiction over the Field was conferred as the first point of the Act to Explain and Extend the Powers of the Governors of 1850.[40] Accordingly, they "organized" the "institution" under a Standing Committee and a Warden. "Appropriate rules for the interment and protection of the dead were adopted" and measures taken to "prevent the continuance of the evils heretofore existing, in relation to that Cemetery." Registers of interments were to be kept; the Field was "properly fenced up and methodically arranged," and a "Dead House and receiving vault, and other suitable conveniences established." The Governors considered this reorganization their leading accomplishment of the year.[41]

After the Ward's Island purchase, the Governors renamed the facility the "City Cemetery." Both the site and the reorganization came none too soon: in 1853 there were over 3,500 burials in the new field.[42] Despite its grim and absurd history, the graveyard, like the other institutions, found a comfortable degree of stability under the Governors' administration even if it was hardly a tourist attraction or a rural Elysium.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

NOTES

1. Problems relating to disposal of the dead abounded. Basic was an increasing need for graveyard space which conflicted with the expanding settlement of the living. The dead and the living simply competed for scarce island urban real estate. See MCC, XIV, June 9, 1825, 576-634 for a lengthy and fascinating report calling for a new City burial ground, easier said than done. Churches and the City government conflicted constantly over restrictions on interment within the fire limits; see MCC, XVI, March 26, 1827, 199 for a typical investigation of Trinity Church for violations and MCC, XIX, May 2, 1831, 686-6 for a recommendation for liberalization by a Committee chaired by Phillip W. Engs. See also Asts Special Committee, Oscar W. Sturtevant and David Miller, Majority Rept in Favor of Prohibiting Interments South of 40 Street, Doc, XXXIV, #2, July 9, 1849, 31-57 and R. A. Sands, Minority Rept Against same, Doc, #5, July 2, 1849, 87-97. On the other hand, the graveyards of churches were constantly being threatened by proposed street openings and extensions. Asts Special Committee, Charles Webb, Issac B. Smith, Rept and Thomas McElrath, Moses W. S. Jackson, Concurrence Adverse to Opening and Extension of Albany Street through Trinity Church-Yard, Doc, XXIX, #33, March 22, 1847, 491-501. Churches often sold part of their grounds or were foreclosed; when the buyers disturbed ancient graves, descendents rioted. Morris, Message for 1843, 23. Immigrants rioted against removal of their epidemic victims for burial in violation of their cultural beliefs. Rosenberg, 33. There are numerous other references to the myriad difficulties and visibility of the problem of urban burial.

2. Asts Proc, XXXII, June 19, 1848, 172-4.

3. Dr. _____ Childs, Testimony in A. R. Lawrence et al., 236; D. S. Smith, Testimony, ibid., 219-20.

4. Frederick Skiff, Testimony, ibid., 232-3.

5. D. S. Smith, Testimony, ibid., 220.

6. Childs, Testimony, ibid., 236.

7. Blvu Matron Leah Eliza Strang, Testimony, ibid. 225.

8. Dr. Lyman H. Stone, Testimony, ibid., 223.

9. Skiff, Testimony, ibid., 232.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

10. Stone, Testimony, ibid., 224.

11. D. S. Smith, Testimony, ibid., 230.

12. Stone, Testimony, 224. Strang testified similarly, p. 226. But D. S. Smith denied the story, p. 230.

13. Strang, Testimony, ibid., 225-6. By the time of the beginning of the investigation, Nicholas was a fugitive from justice. Ibid., 218.

14. Stone, Testimony, ibid., 224.

15. Asts Jnl, XXX, June 14, 1847, 110. The petition came from former Mayor Aaron Clark "and others."

16. Aldmn Proc, XVI, January 28, 1839, 137.

17. Asts Finance Cmte, Peter S. Titus, Dennis McCarthy, John I. Labagh, Rept on Petition of Keeper of Potter's Field for Payment for Burying Dogs, Doc, II (First run), E, April 29, 1833, 415-7.

18. Valentine, Manual for 1847, 49.

19. Ingraham and Cleaveland, 732.

20. Jacob Lorillard, Petition to Make RI a Public Cemetery, ibid., 738-9.

21. Fyler Dibblee and others, Memorial to Make RI a Cemetery, Asts Doc, II, #25, September 21, 1835, 211-4. (This Document is reprinted in the Ingraham and Cleaveland Report; all these Documents, including Ingraham and Cleavaland, were reprinted in the Judd, Randall, Greenfield Report cited below.)

22. Ingraham and Cleaveland, 731-7.

23. Aldmn Cmte on Lands and Places, Samuel Judd, David Randall, John V. Greenfield, Rept on Rept and Papers of Asts on Purchasing Ground for a Burial Cemetery, Doc, III (Second run), #13, August 1, 1836, 71-2. Reprints of Asts papers, 72-93.

24. Aldmn Proc, XI, August 1, 1836, 198.

25. H. P. Peet and others, Petition for Removal of Public Cemetery in Asts Special Cmte, John Pettigrew, George W. Allerton, John B. Scoles, Rept on Potter's Field, Doc, XXI, #64, February 27, 1843, 235-6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

26. Pettigrew, Allerton, Scoles, 236-9.

27. Andrew McGown and others, Remonstrance Against Removal of Potter's Field to RI, February 18, 1843, ibid., 241.

28. Pettigrew and Allerton, ibid., 241-2. (Scoles did not sign this portion of the Report.)

29. Ords, X, April 28, 1843, 246-7.

30. Aldmn Proc, XXVIII, May 12, 1845, 749-50.

31. Ords, XIII, October 25, 1845, 214.

32. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1847, 25-6.

33. Ords, XVI, August 4, 1848, 117.

34. M. G. Leonard, Rept for 1848, 24.

35. Ords, XVII, August 4, 1849, 254-5.

36. AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 15.

37. Stearns, Rept, ibid., 150.

38. Stearns, Rept in AH Govs, Rept for 1851, III, 138.

39. AH Govs, Rept for 1849, I, 9; Ords, XVII, January 5, 1850, 579.

40. New York State Act to Explain and Extend Powers of Governors of AH, 570.

41. AH Govs, Rept for 1850, II, 1.

42. AH Govs, Rept for 1853, V, Foldout following p. 112.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER 14

CONCLUSION: THE FAILURE OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION

An evaluation of New York City's nineteenth century public welfare policies depends upon several standards. How well did the reformers attain their own professed objectives of managing and rehabilitating the poor? How closely did they meet the expectations of others in society: the poor themselves, the middle class citizenry, and the political and social conservatives? To what extent did the reformers address the basic socioeconomic questions of the time of which the problem of poverty was so large a part? How meaningful were their solutions in terms of the developing political economy of the city? Finally, aside from anyone's expectations, what was accomplished that would have been neglected had there not been any relief system or reform impulse? Since many people's expectations were unrealistic, the system might have failed to meet them but still have delivered significant social benefits. The reformers might be entitled to great credit for averting total social disaster even if they realized nobody's hopes, especially their own. This was, in fact, the case: there was both tremendous accomplishment and dismal failure.

New York City faced problems of poverty at once both typical and unique among American cities. A growing class of public dependents seemed inevitably bound to the dominant

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

social trends of the times: immigration, industrialization, urban expansion, and political contention. These processes were felt in all large cities but particularly acutely in New York. Municipal leaders trield to meet the problem by expanding, codifying, and reforming the nascent public welfare apparatus which had only recently evolved out of the less formal and more familial eighteenth century arrangements for the poor. This newly evolving system consisted primarily of institutions and functioned largely by means of bureaucracy.

The policy of institutionalization was a conscious attempt to solve the problem of pauperism through scientific methods of social salvage relying primarily on classification, supervision, forced labor, and moral treatment. These methods could best be applied in controlled congregate living facilities removed from the larger urban community. Even noninstitutional operations such as outdoor relief and indenture were subject to a bureaucratic accounting system which integrated them into the overall control sturcture.

A bureaucratic classification system was undoubtedly necessary with the growth in the numbers of the poor. This increase, however, dovetailed with the reformers' growing obsession with science and categorization which stimulated the expansion and specialization of the institutions. Groups of the poor who were either mixed together or separated only by wards in 1825 had entire buildings, even whole islands, allocated to them before 1860. Classification and calculated differential treatment generated professional specializations in medical, criminal, juvenile, and psychiatric treatment,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

as well as in the management of pauper labor. These new social sciences were developed in the setting of peculiar almshouses modeled on the Almshouse proper, but specially adapted to the needs of each group.

As they built their institutions the reformers of the public sector elaborated a complex of ideas about the scientific management of the paupers, permeated by the themes of classification and social control. The most cynical and skeptical contempt for the imposing poor coexisted with the most sincere sympathy for the genuinely helpless; indeed, watchfulness toward the undeserving was held to be corequisite with humanity toward the deserving. All of the poor were considered in need of the physical and moral guidance of the social experts for both their own and society's protection. There was hardly a hint of respect for the idea of self-determination for the publicly dependent. Labor was essential to the reform vision both because it was considered the primary moral imperative of life and because it could reduce the financial burden of relief upon the city both by means of reimbursement and by discouraging unwarranted applications.

This approach tended to blame the poor for their condition and neglected the larger social causes and possible remedies for poverty. It was far too limited, self-satisfied, and inadequate to urban realities and therefore would have failed to meet the problem even if it had been perfectly applied. The poor simply could not be classified away, even in theory,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

nor controlled in their numbers or their behavior by moral treatment. Real social justice might have been more effective in terms of genuine rehabilitation and more ethical but seems not to have been considered by anybody as a possible alternative to institutionalization. Everyone was wedded to the classification panacea.

Perhaps more serious was the gross failure in implementation of the policy. If even a perfect application would not have solved the problem because of faulty assumptions and a limited vision, surely a better execution would have produced some of the promised advantages which were instead largely lost in the endless tragicomedy of errors that passed for government. Proponents of classification and moral treatment were quite correct to insist that their theories never had a fair test.

One of the central facts of public social welfare was politics. As a governmental mechanism, tax supported and party directed, City relief was clearly distinguished from private philanthropic endeavors. The most obvious manifestation of this was the dependence of policy and administration on the outcomes of annual elections. Also, the Almshouse became a favorite political patronage machine and, as the City's first executive department, was the battleground of perpetual struggles between Council and bureaucracy, City and State, Democrats and Whigs, and spoilsmen and reformers. Each political party had a roster

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of poverty experts who took turns ruling the Department, not without periodic sensational exposes of each other's abuses. Public welfare thus became a sensitive and important political issue. Finally, reform forces prevailed to a degree and used the Almshouse as a pilot experiment in various governmental alterations such as board staggering and party balancing. It is therefore impossible to study New York City politics, at least for the period prior to 1850, without examining the Almshouse machine. Likewise, unlike private charity, public relief is incomprehensible without a familiarity with the urban political imbroglio.

All parties accepted the theory of institutionalization with its stress on classification, moral stewardship, and labor. This agreement overrode myriad differences over particulars and prevented any serious questioning of basic policy. Consistent party differences, other than patronage, focused on a few matters. Democrats were more solicitous toward immigrants and less so toward blacks than were the Whigs. They were slightly less inclined toward reform or the policing and correction of institutional inadequacies. The Whigs attacked Democratic coddling of immigrants and neglect of the facilities but were themselves vulnerable to charges of financial abuses. The Whigs and Nativists stressed the necessity of singling out the supposedly benign poor, children and lunatics, for better treatment while the Democrats were more likely to treat everybody

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

fairly similarly. The Democrats were more apt than the Whigs to worry about the unfair competition of pauper labor with the industry of free workers. Partly because of this and partly because of their Jeffersonianism, they were more enamored of agriculture which was rejected by the Whigs in favor of a heavier emphasis on manufactures.

These party differences, as well as others less consistent through time and many disputes crossing party lines, complicated the application of policy while hardly making it more cautious or deliberated. Between honest policy disagreements and incessant party strife, there was a guaranteed instability in Almshouse operations until 1849, best symbolized by the internal war of 1848 between Commissioner Leonard and Marcellus Eells and the Council when, at one point, people did not even know whose appointees to recognize. The political process never caught up with the demands of the changing urban reality. Planning was always far behind need and mired in debate over detail or scuttled by changes in personnel.

It was ironic and unfortunate that there was such a strong unanimity on the broad question of institutionalization, which might well have been questioned, and such constant bickering and indecision over details of application. The large and crucial decisions were usually made by implicit consensus and then could not be implemented for want of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

agreement upon particulars. It might have been better for both the City and the poor if the opposite had occurred: less initial agreement and more questioning about the fundamentals but prompter and more precise and effective agreement about implementation of details once basic policy was decided. Perhaps then, a saner, more appropriate, and more humane approach might have evolved and might have been better applied.

The particular decision to locate both the poor and the criminals on Blackwell's Island together, with which many disagreed, must be very seriously questioned, as well as that to place them jurisdictionally within one overall Department. Despite classification and subdepartments, the failure to effect a clear separation between these two groups was probably the central error of the time (assuming an acceptance of the institutionalization policy itself.) As Robert Hartley predicted, it riveted a horrible system upon the City. Blackwell's Island soon became so rigidly associated with crime in the public mind that, eventually, to eliminate the stigma, the City renamed it "Welfare Island." The administrative merger of assistance and corrections also helped to equate poverty with crime. If one measure, within the confines of the institutionalization policy, might have been done differently most beneficially (other perhaps than increasing the net resources allocated to the poor,) it would have been to place paupers and convicts

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

both geographically and administratively apart. Many of the reformers urged this but did not prevail.

Economics was a central ingredient in poverty policy; conversely, the Almshouse was the main City budget item. Half of the science of institutionalization consisted of finding ways to save money. The difficulty was that economy was not supposed to occur at the expense of enlightened policy. Rather, the science of efficiency would minimize costs while maximizing social benefits by means of careful and systematic compilation of statistics, financial accounting, bulk buying, salvage selling, and exploitation of pauper labor. Unlike private sector organizations (which nevertheless received some City help,) the Department had a priority claim on the public treasury. Since welfare received the attention of everybody concerned about high taxes, economy had to be uppermost in the minds of its administrators. Reformers accepted the public concern for economy to the extent that they framed their arguments for improvements - completely sincerely - in the context of <u>true</u> economy, opposing this to the <u>false</u> economy of a stingy refusal to invest in rehabilitative measures which would pay off in the long run. Indeed, the institutions themselves, before they were social laboratories, were economic units of forced, cooperative, consolidated consumption at reduced cost effected by large scale purchasing and minute rationing.

The insistence that economy and humane treatment went

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

hand in hand tended to obscure an important point of universal agreement: the doctrine of less eligibility. All paupers had to live at a standard inferior to that of the worst paid self supporting free workers. Since the working class lived rather poorly, this tenet built an acceptance of wretchedness into philanthropic theory and, if followed in practice, would have guaranteed substandard living conditions for all dependents. Reformers muted this issue which was all too obvious to the paupers: there was a constant guerilla war between the inmates of the institutions and free, taxpaying citizens and their government focusing upon consumption. Put in its simplest and most graphic terms, as it was by Commissioner Moses G. Leonard, what the pauper ate he took from the mouths of the workers' children. By the same token, paupers were usually only unfortunate former workers. Rather than addressing this point directly and posing the difficult class questions it led to, most reformers preferred to portray public relief as an investment in human salvage by scientific methods which benefitted everybody (which it did in some ways, but not exclusively or equally.) This suppressed the overtones of class conflict inherent in the relief situation itself and stressed the aspect of social consensus.

The overall social class question was further evaded by the institutional system because it separated paupers from workers physically and ascribed pauperism to personal character defects. Though the city might be corrupt and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

threatening and institutionalization therefore a benefit to the inmate, the clearest advantages of the policy extended to the upper class. The most obvious and troublesome victims of the system by which they benefitted the most were removed from society and stigmatized while their own role in the process of pauperization escaped scrutiny. The free workers paid the bill and distained the victims, while fearing a decline to a similar station in life. The upper classes privately helped an elite few of the so-called virtuous poor and thereby earned a reputation for great generosity while they left the great masses of dependents to the municipal government. The basic social ills which bred both poverty and pauperism went unchecked. Perhaps this was how economy and policy truly agreed.

The implementation of the institutionalization policy depended upon a growing professional bureaucracy. The City's first executive department exhibited the earliest examples of problems of legislative versus executive authority, large scale formal organizational management, and complex labor relations. Between 1825 and 1860, as the Almshouse Department workforce grew from a mere dozen employees to several hundred, the first career City workers settled into their niches, venerable traditions of the municipal civil service took hold, and the business of an expanding City government lost any pretense of its old simplicity and coherence. The ancient five Commissioner system was plainly inadequate to the task of running the growing welfare apparatus. It was unfortunate

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

that the single Commissioner reform was so incomplete and short lived and that Moses G. Leonard's dynamism and determination could neither compensate for its limitations nor influence his colleagues to avoid confusion and disunity at the time of the most demanding pressures upon the Almshouse. Properly constituted and given more time to prove itself, the single, professional Commissioner system would undoubtedly have been the best type of administrative structure.

In the absence of a complete single Commissioner reform, the ten Governor system imposed by the State was welcome for the stability which it introduced into Departmental operations. But this stability was purchased at the price of accountability to the citizens of the City. If the Council politicians had, at the outset, been more willing to relinquish direct power and patronage to the elected Commissioner, both stability and popular control, as well as continued professionalization of top management, would have been possible. The Governors, like the old Commissioners prior to 1845, were part time amateurs - albeit sophisticated ones - managing a full time, paid workforce - not the best administrative practice. Unitary, professional responsibility should have received more than a four year trial and, even during its brief reign, could have been more vigorously supported and enforced than it was.

It is difficult to evaluate fairly the level of performance of the Almshouse Department staff. There were

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

certainly many derelictions of duty, leisurely patterns of daily work life designed to insure a tolerable level of comfort for officers, and periodic instances of outright fraud and theft. On the other hand, living and working conditions could be dismal. Though room and board were better for staff than for inmates, the quality was not very dissimilar and there was no way that the workers could escape the overall institutional setting which ordinary citizens avoided assiduously except for fashionable guided tours. The Almshouse staff was more exposed to disease, assault, and various other social risks associated with the poor than was the general public. What critic would change places with the prison guard on the night shift in the bawdy Penitentiary described by Warden Joseph Keen or even with Dr. Moses Ranney of the Lunatic Asylum?

If one can believe their superiors, prison guards and menial hospital aides inclined toward laziness; doctors and Nursery employees, especially Matron Jane Ley, were very dedicated and responsible. Much debate ensued at times over who was honest and who was inept and thieving. The important conclusion is that the bureaucracy collectively became a formidable factor to deal with in City government. It presented its own peculiar problems within the context of the institutionalization policy. In 1825, if someone in charge of a function was not doing his job, the Council could easily dismiss him (though political constraints might inhibit such action.) By the 1840s, it could take months of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

hearings just to locate the responsibility within the complex administrative structure for an error. In 1825 any political hack could perform any job. Within the next twenty years, certain functions such as child care and psychiatry became very specialized skills, making their practitioners less replaceable and more powerful. Though politics remained the key to public employment, the bureaucracy attained an identity and an impact of its own during these years. The performance of many employees might have been improved by a less political and more rational or even just a stricter mode of administration, but there was no way to run a growing relief operation without an expanding bureaucracy, including all than accompanies such a phenomenon.

The poor themselves came to New York City from everywhere. In this respect Gotham thought itself unique. From other states, from Canada, from upstate and Long Island, those who could not get along summoned up their last ounce of strength to make it to New York Port, exhausting their exertions most conveniently, so it seemed, at the doorstep of the Commissioners. But more striking than the domestic migration was the massive immigration from abroad, especially of the Irish and, to a lesser degree, the Germans. Until the belated Commissioners of Emigration reform, immigration was the main New York City welfare problem and the Almshouse the only reception center for penniless immigrants. Even after the reform, the Almshouse continued to absorb the most

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

troublesome cases. The relationship between immigration and public welfare naturally became the prime element of the political ideology of nativism.

It is regrettable that the Emigration reform was so long in coming and jurisdictionally incomplete. Prior to 1849, thousands of capable immigrant workers were pauperized and stigmatized simply because of their special situation upon arriving ashore. It was foolhardy to treat them as ordinary dependents; this both burdened the Almshouse and demoralized the newcomers. It contributed to ethnic tension both within and outside the Almshouse and helped to stimulate a negativistic political nativism which, in turn, did not take a constructive approach to the problem. Almshouse officials warned in the 1820s that immigration would be the main problem faced by their successors if something were not done. Had the State acted fifteen years earlier than it did, instead of just harassing the City over the issue, tremendous problems would have been averted by means of a more appropriate mechanism for integrating the newcomers into society. Instead, the immigrants were labeled as paupers and the Almshouse overwhelmed with people whom it was not in a position to assist - to the detriment of its legitimate charges. Ironically, it was probably the perceived immediate convenience of institutionalization itself which retarded the development of a better means of receiving immigrants until the emergency of 1847 forced State intervention.

The poor went to the Central Almshouse Office downtown,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

upon referral from politicians or others, by Police escort, by hearse, or on their own initiative. There they were examined, classified, accepted or rejected for outdoor or indoor assistance, and assigned to their appropriate institutions. A complex system of registers began the elaborate process of institutional confinement and control of thousands of people. The Almshouse proper was the general model of the institutional process. Its physical removals, first to and later from Bellevue, symbolized the overriding reform purpose of separating the poor from the central city.

Upon arrival at the appropriate institutions, the paupers were further classified and assigned to wards based on sex, age, and, especially, social condition in order to prevent the morally and physically sick from infecting the healthy and to enable differential treatment. All institutions were supposed to function under a benevolent but disciplined moral and social routine. The paupers were to be maintained at the scientifically calculated level of minimum but adequate subsistence, in no case to exceed that of free workers. Central to institutional treatment were labor, education for children, religion, supervision, and kindly but firm restraint from any opportunity to indulge in vicious conduct like drinking, profanity, or sex. Detailed house rules prescribed an orderly schedule of constructive activities. So went the theory, at least, of institutionalization.

In actual practice the institutions were often in an extreme state of chaos. The City's neglect and corruption

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

seemed to offer the poor the simultaneous opportunities to misbehave and to starve or die of terrible diseases. The specialized institutions - modified almshouses for children, lunatics, the sick, convicts, and employable workers, varied their routines according to their needs but imitated their generic model in terms of overcrowding, lack of sanitation, poor ventilation, shabby construction, neglected repairs, and inadequate provisions and supervision. Some institutions functioned better than others and most better at some times than at others, but all failed to provide anything near the kind of social rehabilitation which they promised in theory. By the admission of two generations of managers, the institutions proved to be a cruel parody of the reform vision.

Moreover, outdoor relief grew during this period; it was not even contained, let alone curtailed or abolished as many reformers desired. Without the institutions, of course, outdoor expenditures would have been many times greater than they were; perhaps, in that respect, the policy of institutionalization was somewhat successful though many would have wished it more effective. Though the persistence and growth of outdoor assistance was seen by many as an unmitigated evil, Commissioner Phillip W. Engs was correct to question the wisdom of confining those who might just as readily live in the community, even if only with some minimal help. In the end, the City had both a huge outdoor poor list and an institutionalized population

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of thousands.

In assessing the efforts of the reformers, there must be an appreciation of the large dimensions, the intricate complexities, and the novelty of the poverty problem, as well as of the larger ideological, political, and practical limits of the age. Especially in such a context do their heroic accomplishments emerge. The massive foregoing record was not the work of lazy, stupid, cruel, ineffectual, or self-serving men and women. Their problems were enormous and solutions were elusive and painstaking. Those measures which were adopted were often brilliant and pioneering. Often the reformers erred as much in setting their goals too high as in falling short of realistic expectations. It is surprising and laudable that amid their bumbling, bickering, neglect, and fraud, they mustered enough concern and expertise to save as many lives, relieve as much suffering, and perhaps even rehabilitate as many characters as they did. An overemphasis on the systemic failures can well unduly obscure a proper appreciation of the massive accomplishments of the Almshouse Department in terms of helping people who, were it not for its existence, might well have died much earlier and more miserably than they did.

Still, the reformers failed to meet their own or society's expectations. The indictments of the institutions were their own self-indictments, notwithstanding that they were usually directed between political opponents. The City never came to grips with the fundamentals of its

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

poverty problem despite the many valuable insights of the reformers. If the institutions provided an escape from the outer society for their inmates, they gave the policymakers a convenient refuge from urban reality by confining and controlling its victims. In order to profit fully from all the lessons of the institutionalization policy, posterity must regard the efforts and accomplishments of the reformers with admiration while recognizing and deploring the overall pattern of failure - a failure which impacted profoundly upon the lives of many thousands of people.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

New York State Legislation and Documents

Act to Amend the Charter of the City of New York, April 14, 1857 (Albany, 1858).

[Act Concerning Passengers on Vessels Coming to the City of New York, as Amended] in David T. Valentine, ed., Laws of the State of New York Particularly Affecting the City of New York (New York, 1862), 1046-1104.

Act to Create in the City and County of New York a Department of Public Charities and Correction and to Abolish the Alms House Department Therein, April 27, 1860 in Valentine, Laws of the State...Particularly Affecting the City..., 1036-42.

Act to Provide for the Government of the Department of Alms and Penitentiary in the City and County of New York, April 6, 1849 in Sophonisba P. Breckenridge, ed., Public Welfare Administration in the United States: Select Documents (Chicago, 1927), 55-7.

Alms House, Governors of, City of New York. Report on Corruption, Assembly Document, 1853, II, #35, 1-20.

Poor Laws...First Six Titles of Chapter XX of the First Part of Revised Statutes and Such Subsequent Acts as Relate to the Support and Management of the Poor... with Suitable Forms (Albany, 1832).

Van Nostrand, James, Alms House Commissioners' Chairman, City of New York. Memorial of Commissioners for Amendments in the Law Relating to Said Institution, &c., Senate Document, 1845, II, #57.

Yates, John V. N., Secretary of State. Report...on Laws for Relief and Settlement of the Poor, Assembly Journal, 1824, I, 386-99; also excerpted in Breckenridge, 39-54.

For other New York State sources, see under New York City Common Council Documents, New York State, below.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

New York City Legislation

Ordinances - Digest of All Laws and Ordinances...of the City of New York...to 1830...by a Student of Law (New York, 1830).

Ordinances - Proceedings of the Boards of Aldermen and Assistant Aldermen, Approved by the Mayor, Vols I-XXIX (1831-62).

Basic Almshouse Legislation

The following Ordinances are included in the above two sources but are separately listed and cited in the text due to their central importance. Page numbers for those prior to 1831 refer to the edition "by a Student of Law." Date of passage is that of Mayoral signature.

Act to Regulate the City Prison and Bridewell, April 30, 1827, 108-9.

[First] Law Creating an Alms House Department and Prescribing the Duties of the Officers Thereof, I, April 23, 1832, 187-97.

[Second] Law Creating an Alms House Department and Prescribing the Duties of the Officers Thereof, II, April 1, 1834, 225-35.

Law to Designate the Prison Erected on Blackwell's Island to be a Penitentiary of the City of New York, October 5, 1829, 128.

Law for the Government of the Alms House, March 1, 1827, 3-9.

Law for the Government of the Penitentiary, April 30, 1827, 80-2.

[Second] Law for the Government of the Penitentiary, II, April 22, 1834, 252-4.

Law to Regulate the City Prison and Bridewell, II, April 6, 1834, 235-8.

Ordinance for the Reorganization of the Alms House Department, XIII, June 14, 1845, 72-99.

Ordinance for the Reorganization of the Hospital Department of the Alms House, XV, October 14, 1847, 165-73.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

New York City Common Council Proceedings and Manuals

Aldermen, Board of. Proceedings, Vols. I-LXXVII (1831-60).

Assistant Aldermen (Assistants; after 1854, Councilmen), Board of. Proceedings, Vols. I-VII (1831-6). Journal and Documents, Vols. VIII-LII (1836-53). Proceedings, Vols. LIII-LXXVII (1854-60). Board of Assistants Proceedings and Documents were published separately until May 1836 after which they were combined into single volumes, two for each year, until 1854 when they were again printed separately. Minutes for the years 1836 to 1853 were sometimes called the Journal, other times Proceedings. Herein, all citations for 1836-53 have adopted the uniform title of Journal, reserving the designation Proceedings for the volumes without Documents. (The Board of Aldermen always printed their Proceedings and Documents separately.)

Aldermen and Assistant Aldermen, Boards of. Proceedings of Joint Meetings of the Boards, Vols. I-VI (1831-40).

Common Council. Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, 1784-1831 (New York, 1917), Vols. XIV-XIX (1825-31). Analytical Index to Minutes (New York, 1930).

Valentine, David T., ed. Manuals of the Corporation of the City of New York (1841-61).

Common Council Document Collections

Aldermen, Board of. Documents, Vols. I-III (First run) (1831-4); Vols. I-XXVI (Second run) (1834-59).

Assistant Aldermen (Councilmen), Board of. Documents, Vols. I-III (First run) (1831-4); Vols. I-II (Second run) (1834-6); Vols. I-V (Third run) (1854-8). Documents section of Journal and Documents, Vols. VIII-LII (1836-53).

Runs of Documents are specified in the text only when necessary to avoid confusion because of duplicate volume number designations. All Documents cited from the above volumes are listed by author in the next section.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Documents of the Common Council

All of the following Documents except two: Phillip W. Engs, Peter I. Nevius et al., Report on Purchase of Barn Island... and Rev. John Stanford, Report for 1824 are from the separate Boards' Documents collections listed above. These two exceptions were printed separately by the Council before it divided into two Boards and began to publish its Documents regularly.

The Board is specified in each citation in the text and below only once, either in the author or the title.

There are a great many subdocuments: documents contained within the larger Documents. Only each whole Document is listed below, but both are specified in the text citations. A complete bibliography including separate listings for subdocuments would have been unduly complex, but it must be noted that there are many items contained in some of the listings. Also, many brief communications were reprinted verbatim in Minutes and Proceedings; these are not separately listed or cited, although attempts have been made in the text to identify each author.

Adams, William, Clarkson Crolius, Jr., Niel Gray, Jedediah Miller, Nathan A. Sutton, George F. Clark, Joint Special Committee on Public Buildings on Blackwell's and Randall's Islands, Report in Favor of Building a Small Pox Hospital on Blackwell's Island, Aldermen, XV, #9, July 31, 1848, 117-26.

_____. Report on Small Pox Hospital, Aldermen, XV, #12, September 11, 1828, 201-9.

Allen, Stephen, John August Smith, Assistants Finance Committee, Report on Long Island Farms Contract, Aldermen, III (First run), #15, July 15, 1833, 91-6.

Allen, Stephen, John August Smith, John I. Labagh, Assistants Finance Committee, Report on Petition of John Leveridge to Pay Judgment Against Sureties of Joshua Mersereau, III (First run), #43, February 17, 1834, 289-90.

Anderson, William, M.D. Plan for a Samaritan Hospital of the University of the City of New York, Assistants, X, #94, October 30, 1837, 285-308.

Assistants, Board of. Resolutions Reported by Committee on Charity and Alms House as Amended and Adopted, II (Second run), #10, July 15, 1835, 95 or 103 (mispaginated).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Balis, Calvin and Moses G. Leonard, Aldermen Committee on Arts and Sciences. Report on Establishment of Messrs. Collon and Cantel, VIII, #79, March 31, 1842, 609-13.

Banks, David, John I. Labagh, George Nixon, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Petition of David B. Hawkes Soliciting Remuneration for Services Rendered at Bellevue, II (Second run) #68, January 18, 1836, 331-4.

_____. Report Against Report and Resolution of Assistants Recommending that the Alms House and Long Island Farms Establishments be Removed to Randall's Island, II (Second run) #113, April 11, 1836, 593-602.

Banks, David, Issac Varian, Aaron Clark, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report in Favor of Removal of Alms House to Blackwell's Island, III (Second run) #104, February 27, 1837, 673-8.

Bard, James M. and Jacob F. Oakley, Aldermen Finance Committee. Report in Favor of Purchasing Lots on Ward's Island from A. McCotter, XX, #65, December 16, 1853, 1259-62.

Barnes, Joseph N. and William Welles Holly, Assistants Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Soup House, XI, #115, December 11, 1837, 391-6.

Barnes, Joseph N., William Welles Holly, Ellis Potter, Assistants Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report in Favor of Purchasing Peat or Turf for Out-Door Distribution to the Poor, X, #89, October 16, 1837, 267-9.

Benson, Egbert, Samuel J. Willis, Robert Smith, Orville J. Nash, James H. Cook, Frederick R. Lee, David Graham, Jr., Cornelius B. Timpson, Abel T. Anderson, Joint Special Committee. Report on Treatment of Children at Long Island Farms, Aldermen, VI, #74, May 4, 1840, 732-42.

Bouton, Edwin, Sam R. Mabbat, Timothy O'Brien, Assistants Special Committee. Report in Favor of Purchasing from Abraham R. Lawrence 69 Acres of Land on Ward's Island, XXXXVI, #6, April 16, 1852, 51-6.

Boyce, Gerardus, Foreman, Grand Jury. Presentment on State of Institutions of Blackwell's Island, Bellevue, Alms House Department, &c., Aldermen, XIV, #6, July 19, 1847, 76-9.

Bradhurst, Samuel, Assistants Committee on Charity and Almshouse Chairman. Minority Report on Lunatic Asylum, XVII, #55, February 1, 1841, 347-54.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bradhurst, Samuel and David Vandervoort, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Public Buildings at Bellevue, Long Island Farms, &c., Recommending Concurrence with Assistants, VIII, #70, February 21, 1842, 533-8.

Bradhurst, Samuel, David Vandervoort, Edward Penny, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House, Report on Communication of Alms House Commissioners on Purchase of Property at the Blackwell's Island Ferry, XVII, #101, April 16, 1841, 483-9.

Brady, James T., Corporation Counsel. Communication on Right of the Keeper of the City Prison to Charge Fees, Aldermen, XIII, #14, September 28, 1846, 163-5.

Brady, William V., Mayor. Message to Council, Aldermen, XIV, #1, May 11, 1847, 1-17.

Briggs, Daniel D., Alderman, Special Committee. Minority Report on Manner Articles Under Contract are Delivered to the Alms House, XII, #40, March 9, 1846, 609-19.

Brown, John W., Blackwell's Island Keeper. Report with List of Elopements, Aldermen, VI, #28, November 18, 1839, 337-47.

Carnley, Thomas, William Adams, Joseph Britton, Joint Special Committee. Minority Report on the Conduct of Officers Connected with the Public Prisons on Blackwell's Island, Aldermen, VI, #28, January 15, 1849, 525-84.

Chamberlain, William, Egbert Benson, Peter Cooper, Aldermen Finance Committee. Report on State Law on Foreign Paupers, VII, #80, March 22, 1841, 801-7.

Charlick, Oliver, Emanuel B. Hart, William V. Brady, William C. Seaman, Aldermen Special Committee. Majority Report on Manner Articles Under Contract are Delivered to the Alms House, XII, #41, March 9, 1846, 621-730.

Clark, Aaron, Mayor. Communication and Act of New Jersey of February 13, February 19, 1838 Providing for the Commutation of Alien Passengers, Aldermen, IV, #75, March 12, 1838, 571-4.

_____. Communication Enclosing Ordinance Passed by Senate of Bremen and Letter from L. H. Von Post, Consul for Bremen at New York, Assistants, XII, May 28, 1838, 25-9.

_____. Message to Council, Aldermen, IV, #1, May 22, 1837, 1-16.

_____. Message to Council, Aldermen, V, #1, May 14, 1838, 1-24.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. Message on Debtors, Assistants, XII, #5, June 18, 1838, 105-7.

Cook, James H., Alms House Commissioner. List of Persons Connected with the Alms House Department, Aldermen, XII, #23, December 1, 1845, 409-12.

_____. Report for 1845, Assistants, XXVII, #19, February 2, 1846, 71-7.

Cook, James H., Daniel D. Crane, Tighe Davey, Gerardus Boyce, Gideon Ostrander, Alms House Commissioners. Report in Answer to Certain Resolutions of Inquiry, Aldermen X, #23, July 24, 1843, 235-322.

Cornell, Robert C., President, Public School Society Trustees. Annual Report #32, Assistants, X, #46, September 4, 1837, 149-64.

Cornell, Robert C., Edward Taylor, William C. Wales, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Subjects Referred from Document #20, I (Second run) #28, December 8, 1834, 225-7.

Cox, Jameson, Alms House Superintendent. Report for 1832-3, Assistants, II (First run), 387-91.

Crolius, Clarkson, Jr., Alderman. Communication on Workhouse, XV, #6, June 26, 1848, 85-94.

Crolius, Clarkson, Jr., Linus W. Stevens, Amos F. Hatfield, Morris Franklin, Timothy R. Hibbard, Morgan Morgans, Jedediah Miller, Wilson Small, Joint Special Committee. Report on Workhouse and Draft of an Act, Aldermen, XV, #38, February 19, 1849, 725-44.

Cumming, John P., Jr. and John Coger, Jr., Assistants Special Committee. Report on Retrenchments, XXX, #8, September 24, 1847, 79-108.

Dibblee, Fyler and others. Memorial to Make Randall's Island a Cemetery, Assistants, II (Second run), #25, September 21, 1835, 211-4.

Dodge, William, Assistants Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Establishment of a Work House, XXI, #76, April 24, 1843, 389-94.

Dodge, William and William D. Waterman, Joint Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Establishment of a Work House and Proposed Ordinance, Aldermen, X, #28, October 4, 1843, 343-7.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Downing, Thomas K., Timothy R. Hibbard, Robert P. Getty, Joint Special Committee. Majority Report on Conduct of Officers Connected with the Public Prisons on Blackwell's Island, Aldermen, XV, #27, January 15, 1849, 493-524.

Dunnel, Henry G., City Inspector. Report of Interments for 1838, Assistants, XIII, #13, January 21, 1839, 69-93.

Dunshee, Samuel, James Palmer, Henry P. Robertson, Stephen Allen, John I. Labagh, Cornelius C. Jacobus, Joint Special Committee on Public Buildings on Blackwell's Island and Long Island Farms. Report on the Erection of a Lunatic Asylum, Aldermen, III (First run) #93, February 17, 1834, 759-63.

Engs, Phillip W., Alms House Commissioners' Chairman. Communication on Reorganization of Medical Department of Alms House, Assistants, XI, #150, February 19, 1838, 549-53.

_____. Report in Answer to Resolution Calling for Expenses of Refreshments Served to Watchmen, Aldermen, V, #30, February 6, 1839, 351-2.

Engs, Phillip W., Seixas Nathan, Zebedee Ring, James H. Braine, Peter Palmer, Alms House Commissioners. Report on Resolution of Assistants on Expenditure, Assistants, XII, #16, October 1, 1838, 146-51.

Engs, Phillip W., Peter I. Nevius, James N. Wells, Peter Cooper, William Scott, Common Council Special Committee on Pauperism. Report on Purchase of Barn Island as a Suitable Place for a Farm Connected with the Alms House, May 31, 1830.

Engs, Phillip W., William A. Tomlinson, Zebedee Ring, James H. Braine, Peter Palmer, Alms House Commissioners. Report upon Entering Office, Aldermen, IV, #32, September 11, 1837, 199-251.

Ewen, John, Comptroller. Communication with List of All Contracts...Not Performed, Completed, and Paid... January 1-May 10, 1847, Assistants, XXX, #2, May 31, 1847, 21-31.

Ferris, James and Egbert Benson, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Communication of Alms House Commissioners Opposing Extension of the Lunatic Asylum, VII, #87, April 19, 1841, 895-901.

_____. Report Against Report of Assistants on Purchase of Property at Foot of 61 Street, VII, #101, June 11, 1841, 1053-5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ferris, James, Egbert Benson, John Delameter, George Paulding, Alexander Stewart, Aaron Clark, Joint Special Committee on Public Buildings on Blackwell's Island and Long Island Farms. Report on Communication from Alms House Commissioners on Lunatic Asylum, Assistants, II (Second run) #14, July 22, 1835, 121-8.

Ferris, James, Egbert Benson, Nathaniel Jarvis, Jr., Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Communication of Alms House Commissioners on Lunatic Asylum, VII, #30, November 30, 1840, 383-6.

Flagg, Azariah C., Comptroller. Estimates of Expenditures for 1857, Assistants (Councilmen), III (Third run) #37, November 13, 1856.

_____. Estimates of Expenditures for 1859, Assistants (Councilmen), V, #18, December 20, 1858.

_____. Report with Affidavits Taken Before the Recorder, in the Years 1853 and 1854 on Alleged Abuses in City Government, Aldermen, XXI, #55, September 28, 1854, 1209-1728.

Franklin, George H., H. Shaw, James R. Ball, Robert T. Haws, James H. Cook, Aldermen Special Committee on Alms House Department. Report Against Passage of State Law to Extend Powers of Governors of the Alms House, XVI, #21, March 4, 1850, 332-7.

Franklin, Morris and Joseph N. Barnes, Assistants Special Committee. Report on Report of Board of Aldermen on the Application of Unemployed Operatives for Work, X, #29, July 10, 1837, 101-3.

Gale, William and William C. Seaman, Aldermen Committee on Police, Watch, and Prisons. Report Against the Establishment of a Work House at Bellevue, XI, #6, June 24, 1844, 125-6.

Galpin, Samuel W., John C. Fraser, George Ross, Assistants (Councilmen) Special Committee. Report on Foundling Hospital, Prostitution, and Infanticide, V, #17, November 4, 1858.

Graham, David, Jr., James Pollock, John Spader, Assistants Law Committee. Report on Petition of New York Urate and Poudrette Company, XV, #19, December 9, 1839, 67-70.

Greenfield, John V., Alms House Commissioners' Chairman. Communication on Appropriations for Lunatic Asylum, Assistants, XVIII, #8, June 21, 1841, 35-6.

Greenfield, John V., George W. Bruen, Richard J. Smith, Aldermen Special Committee. Report on Petition of Unemployed Operatives for Relief, IV, #4, June 7, 1837, 31-3.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Greenfield, John V., Daniel P. Ingraham, Aaron Clark, Assistants Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report in Favor of Removing the Alms House Establishment to Randall's Island and Selling the Long Island Farms, II (Second run) #4, June 29, 1835, 39-46.

Hall, Willis, Corporation Counsel. Report with List of Suits in Which the Corporation of this City Are Interested, Assistants, XXX, #9, October 14, 1847, 109-40.

Hammond, Judah, Peter Sharpe, Abraham Van Nest, Aldermen Finance Committee, Report on Memorial of Dr. John B. Stevenson, Late Resident Physician of Bellevue, III (First run) #104, March 31, 1834, 871-85.

Harper, James, Mayor. Message to Council, Aldermen, XI, #1, May 14, 1844, 1-13.

Hart, Emanuel B., Theodorus Van Tyne, Bartlett Smith, Aldermen Committee on Ordinances. Report on Proposed Amendment to the Reorganization Ordinance, XIII, #19, November 9, 1846, 205-8.

Havemeyer, William F., Mayor. Message to Council, Aldermen, XII, #1, May 13, 1845, 3-24.

_____. Message to Council, Aldermen, XV, #1, May 9, 1848, 3-35.

Henry, Thomas S. and Emanuel B. Hart, Aldermen Committee on Ordinances. Report on Ordinances on Organization of the Medical Department of the Alms House and Lunatic Asylum, XII, #39, February 23, 1846, 605-8.

Hibbard, Timothy R., Chairman, Joint Committee on Charity and Alms House. Minority Report on Charges of Alms House Commissioner and Superintendent Preferred by Them Severally Against Each Other, Assistants, XXXII, #5, June 26, 1848, 72-90.

Hoffman, Murray, Abraham V. Williams, William Welles Holly, Assistants Special Committee, Report on Holly Resolution and Memorials on New Organization of Hospital Department of Alms House, X, #108, November 27, 1837, 342-67.

Holly, William Welles and Charles de Forest, Assistants Committee on Lands and Places. Report on Removal of House of Refuge, IX, #120, April 3, 1837, 621-5.

Ingraham, Daniel P., David Banks, Aaron Clark, Aldermen Special Committee, Report on Future Location of House of Refuge, III (Second run), #94, January 30, 1837, 623-35.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ingraham, Daniel P. and John Cleaveland, Assistants Committee on Lands and Places. Report on Several Resolutions, Memorials, and Communications on a Public Burial Ground, II (Second run), #95, May 2, 1836, 729-49.

Judd, Samuel, David Randall, John V. Greenfield, Aldermen Committee on Lands and Places. Report on Report and Papers of Assistants on Purchasing Ground for a Burial Cemetery, III (Second run) #13, August 1, 1836, 71-93.

Kelly, James and William Adams, Aldermen Street Committee. Majority Report on Petition of Jeremiah Towle on Bulkhead and Wharf at the Foot of 61 Street and the East River, XIV, #30, January 3, 1848, 460-79.

Labagh, John I., Joseph Tucker, Robert C. Cornell, Robert Smith, Samuel Purdy, William Samuel Johnson, Joint Special Committee on Public Buildings on Blackwell's Island and Long Island Farms. Report on Lunatic Asylum, Assistants I (Second run) #38, January 5, 1835, 318-30.

_____. Report on Lunatic Asylum Details and Appropriations, Aldermen, I (Second run) #54, April 20, 1835, 589-96.

Lawrence, Abraham R., Moses Maynard, Jr., Theodore R. de Forest, Bernard J. Moserole, Aldermen Special Committee. Report on Sale or Disposal of Dead Bodies from Bellevue, XIV, #14, October 25, 1847, 213-36.

Lawrence, Cornelius W., Mayor. Message to Council, Assistants, II (Second run) #1, May 18, 1835, 1-10.

_____. Message to Council, Aldermen, III (Second run) #1, June 13, 1836, 1-14.

Lee, Frederick R. and Robert Jones, Aldermen Special Committee. Report on the Reorganization of the Alms House Department and the Establishment of a Work House, IX, #73, January 30, 1843, 701-47.

Lee, Frederick R., Robert Jones, John Stewart, Aldermen Special Committee on the Reorganization of the Alms House Department. Report on Resolution to Make Application to the Legislature for Permission to Appoint Commissioners to Erect Buildings on Blackwell's Island, IX, #94, March 6, 1843, 1011-7.

Lee, Frederick R., Robert Jones, David Vandervoort, Abraham Hatfield, John A. Underwood, Daniel D. Briggs, Erastus C. Benedict, William D. Waterman, Joint Special Committee. Report on the Establishment of a Work House and the Reorganization of the Alms House Department, Aldermen, VIII, #61, February 7, 1842, 455-60.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Leonard, Moses G., Alms House Commissioner. Communication on Condition of Alms House, Aldermen, XIII, #11, September 7, 1846, 129-44.

_____. Communication on Convict and Pauper Labor, Assistants, XXIX, #24, January 11, 1847, 261-91.

_____. Communication on Expenditure, Assistants, XXXII, #8, September 25, 1848, 103-10.

_____. Report on General Condition of Institutions, Assistants, XXVIII, #2, May 25, 1846, 21-30.

_____. Report for 1846, Assistants, XXIX, #30, February 22, 1847, 369-483.

_____. Report for 1847, Aldermen, XIV, #44, February 18, 1848.

_____. Report for 1848, Aldermen, XV, #44, March 5, 1849.

Loofborrow, Horace, Alms House Superintendent. Report on Articles Sold in Alms House, May 15-December 31, 1844 and for the Corresponding Period of the Previous Year, Aldermen, XI, #62, March 31, 1845, 663-72.

Lynch, James, Thomas Lawrence, Thomas Jeremiah, Joint Special Committee. Report on Charges Preferred by W. C. Stuart Guinness Against Dr. William Wilson, Resident Physician of the Alms House, Aldermen, V, #48, March 13, 1839, 517-9.

MacDonald, James, M.D. Communication on Lunatic Asylum, Assistants, II (Second run) #37, October 13, 1835, 307-17.

_____. Letter on Lunatic Asylum, Aldermen, III (First run) #101, March 10, 1834, 813-33.

MacDonald, James, Henry M. Gray, Banjamin Ogden, Abraham V. Williams, Lunatic Asylum Visiting Physicians Medical Board. Report for 1848, Aldermen, XV, #42, March 5, 1849, 770-82.

McElrath, Thomas, James Kelly, Stephen H. Feeks, Aldermen Special Committee. Report on Contested Election of the Fourth Ward, Doc, XIV, #46, July 6, 1847, 645-59.

McSpedon, Thomas, Peter Fullmer, Henry R. Hoffmire, Aldermen Finance Committee. Report on Mayor's Communication on Condition of Unemployed Working Men, XXIV, #19, November 9, 1857.

Mandeville, William, Samuel Stevens, Joseph Hoxie, Alms House Commissioners. Report upon Entering Office, Aldermen, I (Second run) #20, September 29, 1834, 65-84.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mandeville, William, Samuel Stevens, Joseph Hoxie, Phillip W. Engs, Anthony Lamb, Late Alms House Commissioners and William Samuel Johnson, Robert C. Cornell, Joseph Tucker, Robert Smith, Late Members of Joint Special Committee on Public Buildings on Blackwell's Island and Long Island Farms. Memorial on Lunatic Asylum, Assistants, II (Second run) #31, October 13, 1835, 271-84.

Manley, James R., President and Alexander F. Vaché, David Meredith Reese, John T. Metcalfe, James R. Wood, Stephen R. Harris, Committee, Bellevue Hospital Medical Board. Quarterly Report, Aldermen, XIV, #43, March 6, 1848, 631-40.

Meserole, Bernard J., William V. Brady, Joseph A. Divver, James D. Oliver, Lyman Candee, Nathan Roberts, Joint Special Committee. Report on Plans for Erection of New Buildings for the Alms House Department, Assistants, XXVI, #9, September 9, 1845, 91-102.

Mickle, Andrew H., Mayor. Message to Council, Aldermen, XIII, #1, May 12, 1846, 1-19.

Miller, William S., William B. Cozzens, William Gale, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Part of Communication of Alms House Commissioners Relating to the Lunatic Asylum, XI, #9, July 8, 1844, 147-9.

_____. Report on Petition of Henry Requa and 700 Others on Bonding and Commuting of Alien Passengers and Resolution of Alderman Drake, XI, #44, January 6, 1845, 433-42.

Miller, William S. and William Gale, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Reorganization of the Pauper Department of the Alms House, XI, #11, July 15, 1844, 155-71.

Morris, Robert H., Mayor. Message to Council, Aldermen, VIII, #1, May 31, 1841, 3-15.

_____. Message to Council, Aldermen, IX, #4, July 11, 1842, 21-43.

_____. Message to Council, Aldermen, X, #1, May 29, 1843, 1-27.

_____. Message on Improvement in City Government and its System of Police, Aldermen, X, #20, August 7, 1843, 213-25.

_____. Message of Veto of Mad House, Aldermen, VIII, #37, November 15, 1841, 243-6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Myer, John, Alms House Superintendent. Report for 1839-40, Aldermen, VII, #9, June 20, 1840, 75-107.

_____. Report to Secretary of State for 1840, Aldermen, VII, #71, February 23, 1841, 773-5.

_____. Report for 1840-1, Aldermen, VIII, #15, June 28, 1841, 73-80.

_____. Report to Secretary of State for 1841, Assistants, XIX, #45, February 14, 1842, 57-9.

New York State. Act to Amend Act Concerning Passengers in Vessels Coming to the City of New York in Aldermen, XIV, #24, December 20, 1847, 381-3.

_____. Act to Authorize Loan for a Work House in Aldermen, XVI, #30, April 10, 1850, 568-9.

_____. Act to Authorize Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonalty of the City of New York to Raise Money by Loan in Aldermen, XII, #2, May 15, 1845, 27-8.

_____. Act for Establishment of a Work House in the City and County of New York, Aldermen, XV, #56, April 23, 1849, mispaginated following p. 1060 - repaginated, 1053A-1057.

_____. Act to Explain and Extend the Powers of the Governors of the Alms House in the City and County of New York in Aldermen, XVI, #30, April 10, 1850, 570-4.

Oliver, James D., John P. Cuming, Washington Smith, George H. Purser, Amos F. Hatfield, Morris Franklin, Linus W. Stevens, Joint Committee on Charity and Alms House, Report on Introducing Croton Water to Randall's Island, Aldermen, XIV, #25, December 20, 1847, 403-6.

Oliver, James D., George H. Purser, Washington Smith, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Communication of Alms House Commissioner on Establishment for Alms House Children, XIV, #21, May 24, 1847, 321-40.

_____. Report on Organization of Medical Department of the Alms House with the Views of Medical Committee, XIV, #2, June 1, 1847, 19-39.

Patterson, Matthew and David Randall, Aldermen Committee on Laws. Report on Quarantine Laws and Alien Passengers, IV, #10, June 12, 1837, 61-75.

Peters, John R., Alms House Commissioner. Communication upon Resignation, Aldermen, III (First run), #18, July 1, 1833, 115-21.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Pettigrew, John, George Allerton, John B. Scoles, Assistants Special Committee. Report on Potter's Field, XXI, #64, February 27, 1843, 235-42.

Potter, Ellis, Clarkson Crolius, Jr., Monmouth B. Hart, Assistants Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Petition of Imprisoned Debtors, XII, #20, October 15, 1838, 173-5.

Purdy, Elijah F., James Ferris, John Chamberlain, Aldermen Special Committee. Report on Alms House Department, VI, #66, April 6, 1840, 651-64.

Purser, George H. and Egbert Benson, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Communication of Alms House Commissioner on Contract for Convict Labor on Blackwell's Island, XXVIII, #10, November 2, 1846, 103-6.

Purser, George H., William A. Walker, Egbert Benson, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Enlargement of the Lunatic Asylum and the Erection of a Mad House, XIII, #27, January 18, 1847, 281-6.

Rawson, Edmund G., George F. Nesbitt, Henry Brevoort, Assistants Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Application of Alms House Commissioners for $10.000, XVIII, #62, October 25, 1841, 249-50.

_____. Report on Communication from Alms House Commissioners on Public Buildings, XVIII, #63, October 25, 1841, 251-3.

Rhinelander, John K., M.D., Samuel Dunshee, William Welles Holly, Assistants Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report Concurring with Aldermen on Commutation of Alien Passengers, I (First run), #62, February 27, 1832, 237-53.

_____. First Report on Ophthalmia, I (First run) A, May 30, 1831, 317-21.

_____. Second Report on Ophthalmia, I (First run) #69, March 19, 1832, 285-90.

Rich, Josiah, Peter Cooper, William Chamberlain, Elias L. Smith, Elijah F. Purdy, Moses G. Leonard, Benton W. Halsey, Daniel Ward, William L. Wood, Samuel Bradhurst, Joint Special Committee. Report and Address of Common Council to the People of the State on Our Municipal Grievances, Aldermen, VII, #17, September 21, 1840, 281-8.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Robertson, Henry P., Samuel Dunshee, James R. Whiting, William Mandeville, John R. Rhinelander, William Welles Holly, Joint Special Committee. Report on Purchase of Farms on Long Island, Assistants, I (First run) #19, September 19, 1831, 61-3.

Sands, Robert A., Assistants Special Committee. Minority Report Against Prohibiting Interments South of 40 Street, XXXIV, #5, July 2, 1849, 87-97.

Smith, Alfred A., Comptroller. Report Showing Amount Paid for Champagne, Wine, Other Liquors, and Segars in the Years 1837, 1838, 1839, and 1840, Aldermen, VI, #67, April 6, 1840, 665-75.

Smith, Issac B., Dennis Mullins, James Robertson, William Radford, Assistants Special Committee on Convict and Pauper Labor. Report Against Aldermen's Resolution on Convict Labor, XXVIII, #16, November 23, 1846, 414-63.

Spofford, Thomas, Aldermen Street Committee. Minority Report on Petition of Jeremiah Towle on Bulkhead and Wharf at the Foot of 61 Street and the East River, XIV, #42, February 14, 1848, 619-29.

Stanford, John, Alms House Chaplain. Communication upon Resignation, Assistants, II (First run), #42, January 2, 1833, 255-8.

_____. Report for 1824 (New York, 1825).

Stevens, Alexander H., James MacDonald, Abraham V. Williams, Benjamin Ogden, Lunatic Asylum Visiting Physicians Medical Board. Report for 1847, Aldermen, XIV, #48, March 30, 1848, 673-703.

Stevens, Linus W., Alms House Superintendent. Report to Secretary of State for 1842, Aldermen, IX, #62, December 27, 1842, 593-7.

Stevens, Linus W., Amos F. Hatfield, Washington Smith, Morris Franklin, George H. Franklin, Nathan A. Sutton, Joint Committee on Charity and Alms House. Majority Report on Charges of Alms House Commissioner and Superintendent Preferred by Them Severally Against Each Other, Assistants, XXXII, #4, June 26, 1848, 59-71.

Sturtevant, Oscar W. and David Miller, Assistants Special Committee. Majority Report in Favor of Prohibiting Interments South of 40 Street, XXXIV, #2, July 9, 1849, 31-57.

Talmage, Thomas G., Chairman, Aldermen Special Committee. Report on Causes Which Have Tended to Increase City Expenditure, VI, #5, June 3, 1839, 37-90.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Targee, John, Alms House Commissioners' Chairman. Report on Lunatic Establishment at Bellevue, Assistants, II (First run) #52, February 25, 1833, 321-3.

Targee, John, Thomas T. Woodruff, George Lovett, Jacob Brush, James H. Hart, Alms House Commissioners. Communication in Reply to Certain Interrogatories on the Lunatic Asylum, Assistants, II (Second run) #23, September 7, 1835, 195-204.

Taylor, Edward, Daniel P. Ingraham, Charles de Forest, Aldermen Finance Committee. Report on Employment of the Necessitous Poor, IV, #9, June 12, 1837, 57-60.

Tiemann, Daniel F., Mayor. Message to Council, Assistants (Councilmen), V, #1, May 5, 1858.

Tiemann, Daniel F., J. Phillips Phoenix, James H. Cook, Aldermen Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Removal of Alms House, VI, #22, September 23, 1839, 259-97.

Timpson, Cornelius B., David Graham, Jr., Freeman Campbell, Assistants Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Arcularius Petition, XV, #89, May 11, 1840, 417-8.

Titus, Peter S., Dennis McCarthy, John I. Labagh, Assistants Finance Committee. Report on Petition of Keeper of Potter's Field for Payment for Burying Dogs, II (First run) E, April 29, 1833, 415-7.

Titus, Peter S., William W. Todd, Reve C. Hance, Richard S. Williams, Hamilton Fish, Alms House Commissioners. Communication to Council, Aldermen, IX, #28, October 5, 1842, 211-26.

_____. Report on Accommodation of All the Alms House Buildings on Blackwell's Island, Aldermen, IX, #92, February 13, 1843, 925-41.

_____. Report on Removal to Blackwell's Island of the Alms House Establishment, Aldermen, IX, #118, May 8, 1843, 1383-96.

Towle, Jeremiah, George Sutton, Samuel Dunshee, Assistants Committee on Charity and Alms House. Report on Establishing Public Fuel Yards, II (First run) #7, June 4, 1832, 21-3.

Underwood, John A., Hezekiah W. Bonnel, Robert Jones, Aldermen Special Committee. Report on Bonding and Commuting of Alien Passengers with Reports of Robert Taylor and Samuel H. Willis on the Cases of John Ahern and James H. Ward, IX, #101, March 20, 1843, 1079-1113.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Vandervoort, David, Robert Jones, Cornelius B. Timpson, Edmund G. Rawson, Erastus C. Benedict, Charles J. Dodge, Joint Special Committee on Public Buildings on Blackwell's Island and Long Island Farms. Report on Extension of the Lunatic Asylum and the Erection of a Female Mad House, Assistants, XVIII, #25, August 2, 1841, 89-92.

Van Hoevenberg, Henry, Bellevue Resident Physician. Report for 1836, Aldermen, III (Secont run) #114, February 20, 1837, 729.

Van Nostrand, James, Joseph W. Savage, Charles W. Houghton, William J. Roome, Alms House Commissioners. Communication on Abuses, Aldermen, XI, #40, December 30, 1844, 397-404.

_____. Report on Convicts Voting, Aldermen, XI, #57, February 24, 1845, 576-610.

_____. Report on Male Paupers Voting, Aldermen, XI, #51, February 10, 1845, 491-516.

_____. Report on the Purchase of Flour, Assistants, XXV, #15, January 28, 1845, 113-20.

Varian, Issac L., Mayor. Message to Council, Aldermen, VI, #1, May 14, 1839, 1-24.

_____. Message to Council, Aldermen, VII, #1, June 1, 1840, 1-20.

Waterman, William D., Henry Brevoort, George F. Nesbitt, William D. Murphy, Assistants Special Committee. Report on Contract to Extend the Lunatic Asylum and Erect a Female Mad House, XVIII, #11, July 7, 1841, 43-54.

Waters, T. J., Comptroller. Communication on Additional Appropriations, Aldermen, XV, #10, September 4, 1848, 128-60.

_____. Report on the Sinking Fund, Aldermen, I (Second run) #61, April 13, 1835, 635-7.

Webb, Charles, Stephen H. Feeks, Henry H. Byrne, Assistants Committee on Police, Watch, and Prisons. Report on Memorial of Prison Association on Condition of the Inmates of the City Prison, XXVIII, #17, November 30, 1846, 165-78.

Webb, Charles, Issac B. Smith, Thomas McElrath, Moses W. S. Jackson, Assistants Special Committee. Report and Concurrence Adverse to the Opening and Extension of Albany Street Through Trinity Church-Yard, XXIX, #33, March 22, 1847, 491-501.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

West, Jesse, Calvin Balis, Frederick R. Lee, Felix, O'Neil, Assistants Special Committee. Report on Communication from the Mayor Transmitting Presentment of the Grand Jury, John W. Walker, Foreman, on Conditions in the City Prison, XV, #29, December 30, 1839, 111-5.

West, Jesse, Frederick R. Lee, Felix O'Neil, Assistants Committee on Police, Watch, and Prisons. Report on Petition of George Arcularius for Appointment of German Interpreters in Courts of Justice, &c., XV, #33, January 13, 1840, 159-70.

White, William and others. Remonstrance Against Contracting for Convict Labor on Blackwell's Island, Assistants, XXVIII, #12, November 9, 1846, 111-7.

Whitehead, Issac P. and George W. Bruen, Aldermen Special Committee. Report on Communication of Alms House Commissioners on Alien Passengers, IV, #12, June 19, 1837, 81-4.

Whiting, Alexander B., Bellevue Resident Physician. Report for 1842-3, Aldermen, IX, #119, 1397-1422.

Williamson, Dow D., Comptroller. List of Persons in the Employ of the Corporation of the City of New York and their Salaries, Aldermen, V, #8, July 2, 1838, 85-140.

_____. Report on Resolution of Aldermen Aaron Clark to Report the Names of All Officers Employed by the Corporation and Those that Receive Compensation from the Public Treasury, Aldermen, III (Second run) #116, April 5, 1837, 735-801.

_____. Statement of Monthly Statements of the Alms House, Bridewell, and Penitentiary, Aldermen, XI, #15, August 26, 1844, 180-5.

Willis, John R., Alms House Commissioners' Chairman. Communication on Exclusion of Ministers of Various Religious Sects, Aldermen, XI, #14, July 29, 1844, 177-9.

_____. Communication with List of Persons Connected with the Alms House and Prison Establishments, Aldermen, XI, #29, October 21, 1844, 278-83.

Wood, Fernando, Mayor. Communication to Council, Assistants (Councilmen), III (Third run) #5, February 4, 1856.

Wood, Issac, Bellevue Resident Physician. Report on Children Afflicted with Ophthalmia, Aldermen, I (First run) #14, January 16, 1832.

Wood, James E., Edmund Griffin, H. Shaw, Aldermen Law Committee. Report that Common Council Cannot Authorize Visits to Blackwell's and Randall's Islands, XVII, #50, July 10, 1850, 787-8.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Almshouse Department - Printed Sources

Alms House Commissioners. Rules for the Government of the Alms House (New York, 1835).

Alms House Governors. Annual Reports, Vols. I-XI (1849-59).

_____. Minutes (1855-7).

Draper, Simeon, William S. Duke, Daniel F. Tiemann, Alms House Governors Special Committee. Report on Accounts with the Commissioners of Emigration (New York, March 6, 1855).

Gould, John Stanton. A Report on Diet with Observations on the Dietetical Regimen, suited for Almshouses, Prisons, and Hospitals; also on heating, ventilation, &c. with Practical Recommendations, Prepared at the Request of the Board of Commissioners of Emigration and the Board of Governors of the New-York Alms House Department (New York, 1852).

Sanger, William Wallace, Blackwell's Island Resident Physician. The History of Prostitution, Its Extent and Effects Throughout the World, being an Official Report of the Board of Alms House Governors of the City of New York (New York, 1858, 1859, 1899).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Manuscript Records of the New York City Almshouse Department and Building Contracts, City Clerk's Papers, Municipal Archives and Records Center, 23 Park Row, New York, N. Y.

All of the manuscript records listed below except for Special Contracts A are under the jurisdiction of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation and comprise the "Almshouse Collection." In addition, the City Clerk's Papers contain the manuscript records of the Common Council, Mayors' and other valuable papers.

There is an excellent index to the Almshouse Collection, compiled by an Archivist. Here a slightly different dating system has been adopted, especially for annual Census records. The Archivist has dated such records by the earliest admission date of any inmate indicated in the volume. Here, in contrast, the record is dated only for the year of the census which the record covers and during which it was produced.

Many of the records are disordered, fragmented, or unchronological while others are very well ordered and complete. Thus dating is more exact and reliable for some types of records and even some particular volumes than for others.

Volume numbers commencing with "0" indicate that an Archivist has assigned the number; those beginning with numerals are original Almshouse designations.

The list below is comprehensive for the years 1825-60.

Admissions, Discharges, and Deaths, Vols. 146 (November 1826-September 1829, 231 (September 1829-April 1832), 141 (May 1832-December 1833), 140 (January 1834-December 1835), 230 (December 1835-July 1837), 102 (October 1839-August 1841), 103 (September 1841-July 1843), 104 (July 1843-June 1845), 105 (June 1845-November 1846), 106 (November 1846-January 1848), 107 (January 1848-June 1851), 110)October 1856-December 1858), 111 (January 1859-February 1861).

Admissions to the Alms House and Work House, Vol. 112 (September 1857-January 1861).

Admissions of Foreigners, Vols. 014 (1828-40), 113 (1855-8).

Bill Books, Vols. 0387 (June 1834-August 1836), 0175 (September 1836-January 1838), 0153 (January 1838-December 1843), 0389 (January 1840-September 1843), 0173 (August 1841-April 1843), 0156 (July 1843-January 1851), 051 (1844-6), 0151 (1854-6), 0164 (1855-7), 0155 (1856-7), 0374 (1856-60).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Cash Received by the Superintendent, Vol. 143 (June 1834-May 1844).

Cash Received of the Superintendent, Vol. 0383 (February 1818-September 1834).

Census Records with Figures, Vol. 145 (November 1833-November 1838).

Census Records with Names, Vols. 186 (1826-7), 185 (1828-9), 187 (1829-30), 184 (1830-1), 183 (1831-2).

Combined Admissions, Discharges, Deaths, Vols. 163 (1832-3), 164 (1833-4), 165 (1834-5), 177 (1835-6), 164 (1836-7), 166 (1837-8), 168 (1838-9), 176 (1839-40), 169 (1840-1), 171 (1841-2), 170 (1842-3), 172 (1843-4), 173 (1844-5), 174 (1845-6), 175 (1846-7). Continuing Combined Admissions, Discharges, Deaths, Vol. 05 (1849-60).

Commissioners' Minutes, Vol. 0194 (March 1808-April 1829).

Commuted Emigrant Bonds, Vol. 0383 (February 1818-September 1834).

Death Certificates, Vols. 0256 (October 1853-December 1858), 232 (January 1859-December 1863).

Distribution of Clothing, Vol. 0245 (1852-7).

Monthly Payroll, Vol. 0381 (September 1844-November 1854).

Nursing Payments by Date, Vols. 0160 (April 1824-August 1829), 0163 (September 1829-June 1835), 0162 (May 1841-June 1845).

Nursing Payments by Name, Vols. 0382 (1821-8), 0380 (1834-5), 0149 (1829), 0384 (1829-37).

Placement of Children by Name, Vol. 0326 (1821-47).

Special Contracts A (1845-9).

Vessels, Captains, Ports, Vols. 0211 (January 1819-June 1827), 0187 (July 1827-August 1839), 190 (May 1836-December 1840). Vessels, Captains, Ports, Bondsmen, Vol. 213 (January 1841-June 1845).

Wardens' Reports, Vols. 096 (June 1849-December 1851), 080 (January 1851-December 1852), 0118 (January 1853)-January 1854), 078 (January 1856-January 1858), 079 (January 1858-January 1860).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Other Primary, Antiquarian, and Private Sources

Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor. Annual Reports, Vols. I-X (1845-53, run misnumbered).

Carlisle, Robert J., ed. An Account of Bellevue Hospital with a Catalogue of the Medical and Surgical Staff from 1736 to 1894 (New York, 1893).

Chipman, Samuel. A Report on an Examination of Poor-Houses, Jails, &c. in the State of New York...addressed to Aristarchus Champion, Esq. of Rochester (Executive Committee of the New York Temperance Society, Albany, 1834).

de Tocqueville, Alexis. Democracy in America (New York, 1945).

Folks, Homer. The Care of Destitute, Neglected, and Dependent Children (New York, 1900).

Hardie, James. Description of the City of New York (New York, 1827.)

Hartley, Robert Milham. Four Letters on the Removal of the Alms House from Bellevue in the New York Journal of Commerce, (August 30, 31, September 2, 3, 1845).

Longworth's New York Directory (1830-1, 1833-4, 1836-7, 1841-2).

Museum of the City of New York. Roosevelt Island Folder.

Native American Convention. Declaration of Principles, July 4, 1845 in Stanley Feldstein and Lawrence Costello, eds., The Ordeal of Assimilation: A Documentary History of the White Working Class, 1830s-1970s (Garden City, 1974), 170-1.

New York Annual Register (1832-4).

New York Evening Post (April 1846, April 1847, April 1848).

New York Journal of Commerce (August-September 1845, April 1846).

New York Hospital. Asylum for Lying in Women, Minutes, March 1831.

_____. Nursery for the Children of Poor Women, Minutes, September 1854.

_____. Nursery and Child's Hospital, Phycician's Report for the Year Ending February 24, 1858.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Philadelphia Board of Guardians of the Poor. Report of Committee Appointed to Visit the Cities of Baltimore, New York, Providence, Boston, and Salem (Philadelphia, 1827).

Richmond, J. F. New York and Its Institutions. 1609-1872 (New York, 1872).

Scoville, Joseph A. [Walter Barrett]. Old Merchants of New York City (New York, 1863).

Stokes, Issac N. Phelps. Iconography of Manhattan Island (New York, 1915-28).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Secondary Sources

Callow, Alexander B. The Tweed Ring (New York, 1965).

Goffman, Erving. Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates (Garden City, 1961).

Hershkowitz, Leo. Tweed's New York: Another Look (Garden City, 1978).

Higham, John. Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New York, 1973).

Hugins, Walter. Jacksonian Democracy and the Working Class: A Study of the New York workingmen's Movement, 1829-37 (Stanford, 1960).

Klebaner, Benjamin Joseph. "Public Poor Relief in America, 1890-1860" (Columbia University Dissertation in Political Science, 1952).

Leonard, Ira M. "New York City Politics, 1841-1844: Nativism and Reform" (New York University Dissertation in Political Science, 1965).

Mohl, Raymond A. Poverty in New York, 1783-1825 (New York, 1971).

Mushkat, Jerome. Tammany: The Evolution of a Political Machine, 1789-1865 (Syracuse, 1971).

Myers, Gustavus. History of Tammany Hall (New York, 1971).

Nevins, Allan. Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration (New York, 1936).

Ravitch, Diane. The Great School Wars: New York City, 1805-1973 (New York, 1974).

Richardson, James F. The New York Police: Colonial Times to 1901 (New York, 1970).

Rosenberg, Charles E. The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866 (Chicago, 1962).

Rothman, David J. The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic (Boston, 1971).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.