

**PRISON SYSTEM OF MICHIGAN:
AN ACCOUNT OF THE PENAL
AND PENITENTIARY SYSTEM AND
INSTITUTIONS OF THE STATE OF
MICHIGAN**

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O. M. BARNES

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PRISON ASSOC. OF N.Y.

NY, 24, 09

PRISON SYSTEM OF MICHIGAN

AN ACCOUNT

OF THE

PENAL AND PENITENTIARY SYSTEM

AND

INSTITUTIONS OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

WITH A CONSIDERATION OF IMPROVEMENTS

By O. M. BARNES,
President of the Joint Prison Boards



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PREFACE.

The occasion which led to the preparation of the following paper was this: The International Prison Commission, an organization composed of representatives from different nations, is engaged in collecting information from the various states and countries as to their prison systems with a view to exhibit the condition of prison systems at the close of the present century. A communication from the American member of the commission, Hon. Samuel J. Burrows of Massachusetts, addressed to the Governor requesting an account of the prison system of Michigan, was referred by his Excellency to me. The first part of this paper contains the account furnished the commissioner. The following extract from his communication will be useful to explain the purpose of the commission and the scope which the account was expected to take.

1. **PENITENTIARY SYSTEM.** What system is used in your State,—the solitary system, the system of progressive classification, the congregate system? If different systems are in use, in what proportion? How are the prisons classified according to the category of prisoners? What is the number of prisons of each class? What was the number of convicts of each class last year?

2. **GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.** Are all the prisons in your State under one central authority? If not, where is the general administration? In any case, what are the results?

3. **DISCIPLINE.** What is the special object of the discipline, to intimidate, or to reform the prisoner? Is there an effort to develop hope in him? Are rewards, or punishments, preferred as means of discipline? What rewards? What punishments?

4. **MORAL AND RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE.** What means of moral influence are employed by the administration? Are voluntary visitors admitted who may try to improve the morals of the prisoner? What are the results?

5. **INSTRUCTION.** How much schooling have the prisoners had at the time of incarceration? What provision is made for instruction during imprisonment? By means of schools, libraries, etc.?

6. **WORK.** Is there any distinction made between penal and industrial work? How is it organized? Is it given to contractors or directed by the administration itself? Which system do you prefer and what are the reasons for your preference? Are the products of the labor enough in all or in some prisons to meet expenses? If not, what is the amount of deficit?

7. **ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL OF PRISONS.** How are prison employees chosen and for how long a time? Is there any political influence in selecting them, and what is the result? What are the qualifications and duties of the employees? Are there special schools to prepare prison employees for their duties? Do you regard such schools as essential to the good administration of a prison?

8. **SANITARY CONDITION OF PRISONS.** Dietary, ventilation, neatness, sickness, mortality.

9. **MORAL REFORM OF CRIMINALS.** Do the prisoners go out of prison better or worse than they were when they came in? What is the number, or the proportion, of recidivists?

10. **SENTENCES.** Is it the usage of your state to repeatedly sentence the same person for trivial faults to short terms of imprisonments? Has the method of simple admonition, probation, conditional sentence for first offence, cumulative and indeterminate sentences, been introduced in your State? What are the effects of these different kinds of sentence in the increase or diminution of crime?

11. **CHARACTER AND CAUSE OF CRIME.** What are the most frequent crimes or misdemeanors in your State? What are the chief causes of them?

PRISON SYSTEM OF MICHIGAN

12. REFORM SCHOOLS FOR JUVENILE OFFENDERS. What is the number, character and general result of these institutions in your State? What is the number of inmates?

13. AID TO DISCHARGED CONVICTS. How many societies have you to look after discharged convicts? What are their duties? What results do they get?

SAMUEL J. BARROWS,
STATE DEPARTMENT,
Washington, D. C.

The second part of the paper is a discussion of improvements in the system and its administration.

FIRST PART.

AN ACCOUNT of the Penal and Penitentiary System and Institutions of the State of Michigan.

I.

OF PUNISHMENT.

Punishments imposed for crime and misdemeanor are fines and imprisonment—one or both. Corporal punishment is not adjudged in this State for any crime. Nor is the death penalty inflicted except for treason, and there has been no trial for treason since the organization of the State. Neither is permanent legal disability imposed as a consequence of conviction. Imprisonment may be for life, and for murder in the first degree may be solitary confinement. In practice solitary confinement is not continued beyond a few months except in extreme cases, because of its injurious effects upon the health and mental capacity of the convict.

II.

THE PRISONS AND OTHER PLACES OF DETENTION AND THEIR SUPERVISION.

Accused persons before conviction and sentence, if not allowed out on bail are confined in the jails awaiting trial. All counties have a county jail. It is in charge of the sheriff of the county. These, besides being places of detention of accused persons awaiting trial, are made use of as places of punishment for minor offenses.

The places provided for the imprisonment of offenders after sentence are:

- First, The State Prison, located at Jackson.
- Second, The branch of the State Prison, located at Marquette.
- Third, The State House of Correction and Reformatory, located at Ionia.
- Fourth, The Detroit House of Correction, located at Detroit.
- Fifth, The Michigan Asylum for Dangerous and Criminal Insane, located at Ionia.
- Sixth, The Industrial School for Boys, located at Lansing.
- Seventh, The Industrial Home for Girls, located at Adrian.

These institutions are each governed by a board of control consisting of three members besides the Governor of the State, who is a member ex officio of each. The members of the board are appointed by the Governor by and with the advice and consent of the senate. The term of office is six years. Of each prison the chief officer is a warden. The chief officer of each of the other institutions is denominated a superintendent. The superintendent of the Asylum for Insane Criminals is a physician and denominated the medical superintendent. The superintendent of the In-

dustrial Home for Girls is a woman and the board of control is composed in part of women. The prisons have their forces of guards, keepers and other officers; the Industrial School for Boys and the Industrial Home for Girls their forces of attendants and teachers, and the Asylum for Insane Criminals its force of attendants. The following table will exhibit the employees of each institution, as shown by the last official report, together with the number of inmates in each:

	Employees	No. of Inmates.
The State Prison	55	852
Branch of Prison at Marquette	24	200
State House of Correction	53	477
Asylum for Dangerous and Oriminal Insane.....	47	240
Detroit House of Correction	45	653
Eighty-eight of whom were females.		
Industrial School for Boys	50	582
Industrial Home for Girls	38	300
Total		3,384

The prison force in all cases includes a deputy warden, a clerk, a physician and a chaplain. The warden of each prison is appointed by its board of control, and so the superintendent of each of the other institutions is appointed by its board. They hold their offices indefinitely. They cannot be removed except for cause, but may be removed at any time for business reasons. (See Secs. 4 and 5, Act 118, Laws 1893.) The subordinate officers of the prison are appointed by the warden subject to the approval of the board, and hold office during the pleasure of the warden and the board, and the same is the case in the prison for criminal insane, and the institutions for juvenile offenders. The superintendent appoints the officers and employees under him or her with the approval of the board, and the tenure is the same.

SUPERVISION.

No central supervision of the penal institutions exists, but the boards of the three prisons meet in joint session every six months to determine the lines of industry to be pursued, and to discuss matters of common interest. Each warden and superintendent makes a monthly statement of the affairs of his institution to its board of control. The boards themselves make a monthly examination, and every two years a full report to the Governor of the State, of the operations and conditions of their respective institutions. These reports are printed and laid before the legislature.

III.

ASSIGNMENT OF OFFENDERS.

The assignment of offenders to the different institutions is substantially the following: On conviction of any of the graver offenses the convict is sent to the State Prison or to the branch of the State Prison. For any of the less grave offenses to the State House of Correction at Ionia,

or to the Detroit House of Correction. On conviction of murder the offender must be sent to the State Prison or to the Branch of the State Prison. Only male convicts are sent to the State House of Correction. Females, if not sent to the State Prison, are sent to the Detroit House of Correction. Murderesses are sent to the State Prison but may be transferred to the Detroit House of Correction. Young offenders under the age of sixteen, if a boy, and seventeen if a girl, on conviction of any offense not punishable by imprisonment for life, unless incorrigible, or unfit from disease for a reformatory, are sent, the one to the Industrial School for Boys, and the other to the Industrial Home for Girls; the boys until they reach the age of seventeen, the girls twenty-one, unless sooner discharged by the board of control.

The board is authorized to discharge these juvenile offenders before the expiration of their terms if they have become reformed. The theory in regard to them is that training, education and discipline are the means most effectual to protect society and save the offender. The law provides that they "shall be kept disciplined, instructed, employed and governed" until they be reformed and discharged or until they arrive at the age prescribed for release. (How. Stat. Sec. 9819.) These institutions for juvenile offenders combine the characteristics of the home, the school and the place of correction. If the person be so vicious and incorrigible as to be unfit for these institutions and yet be within the ages named, the sentence is to the penal institution indicated by the sex, age and crime.

Juvenile disorderlies and truant boys of both sexes are committed to these homes for detention, discipline and schooling, but only when suitable private homes cannot be obtained for them, and until such homes can be arranged for them.

These institutions are not surrounded by walls as the prisons are, nor are the windows grated. The inmates are classified and assigned to different dormitories, each of which is under the care of a teacher or matron, or both. All the inmates attend the schools.

Industries suited to the sex and condition of the inmates are taught in these institutions for juvenile offenders. Each institution has a farm and garden connected with it: The Industrial School for Boys, its shops; the Industrial Home for Girls, its work-rooms also. It must be admitted that the title "Industrial School" does not indicate the purpose of the institution but only one of its methods. It was instituted and is maintained for the detention, correction, discipline and instruction of young offenders. Its original title was "House of Correction." It continues to be a place of actual detention, discipline and correction. General education and instruction in industries are the most conspicuous means employed. Some have questioned the propriety of dropping the more deterrent name and substituting in its place the present one on the ground that this impairs the deterrent influence of the institution.

IV.

SPECIAL PROVISIONS REGARDING JUVENILE OFFENDERS.

There exists in each county of the State an agent of the Board of Corrections and Charities appointed by the Governor. When a complaint is made to a magistrate against a juvenile offender for an offense, not pun-

ishable by imprisonment for life, this agent is notified before further proceedings. He examines the case as well as the parentage and circumstances of the accused, and advises with the magistrate. The accused may be returned to parents, guardian or friends, or, on proof of the offense charged, bound out to some suitable person, or discharged on suspended sentence, or fined, or sent to the Industrial School if a boy, to the Industrial Home if a girl, as the character of the accused and the nature of the offense may seem to require. If the offense charged be disorderly conduct (and this includes truancy), and the offender between the ages of eight and fourteen, it is the duty of the magistrate, if it be the first offense, to suspend sentence. As a conviction impairs self-respect and is an obstacle to success in life, if there is reason to believe that the accused will be deterred from further offense by admonition, and the offense be minor, some magistrates do not proceed to a conviction, but give the person accused an opportunity to save himself from the stigma of a conviction by thereafter observing the law.

This course in the hands of discreet magistrates is attended with good results. There were 1,185 arrests of juvenile offenders during the year last reported; 558 of those arrested were returned to parents or discharged; 176 released on suspended sentence; 117 fined; 274 committed to the Industrial School or Home.

V.

PLACING BOYS AND GIRLS IN PRIVATE FAMILIES.

The inmates of the Industrial Home for Girls and the Industrial School for Boys are put out in private families whenever in the judgment of the board of managers on the recommendation of the superintendent this course is best for the inmate and the State. If the inmate's parents or guardian be suitable custodians he may be returned to them or him in such case. In practice those committed to these institutions remain therein only about one-half of their term on an average. Those out on parole and in families remain in charge of the institution till the end of the term for which they were committed unless sooner discharged by the board on reformation. The superintendents keep watch over them and those who have them in their families, and may take them back into the institution at any time the superintendent deems this course the best. A life in a suitable family is deemed better than a too prolonged detention in the public institution. For the purpose of such supervision of the inmates out in families, the superintendent or some suitable officer visits these boys and girls as often as is deemed necessary and so does the agent of the Board of Corrections and Charities. And they and the families that have them are required to report from time to time, by which means the superintendent is kept informed. At the close of the last biennial period, June 30, 1898, there were out on leave or in families from the Industrial School 272 boys, and from the Industrial Home 108 girls, still in charge of these institutions.