Midwest Social Sciences Journal

Volume 22 | Issue 1 Article 14

2019

"But I Only Wanted Them to Conform": A Detailed Look into the Initial Cohort of Girls at the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls between 1873 and 1884

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ABSTRACT

For the past four years, as part of a group of currently and formerly incarcerated scholars, we have researched the "inmates" and staff at the Indiana Women's Prison during the institution's first decade. Then known as the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls, the facility was located near downtown Indianapolis on Randolph and Michigan Street. We focused on a key constituent of the Indiana Reformatory for Women and Girls: the girls themselves, heretofore voiceless and uninvestigated.

Our primary sources include the annual reports of the reformatory and the original registries for the girls during the survey period of 1873–1884. Contemporary news articles revealed in-depth details, particularly regarding an investigation launched in 1881 concerning allegations of severe physical abuse on the part of the staff committed against the women and girls. We have also derived information from books and articles written by traditional and current scholars, which provide background on the reformatory movement in the 19th century, particularly regarding juveniles.

This information allows us to draw a verbal picture of what the average girl looked like coming into and going out of the facility. We give an account of their days, revealing an extremely strict work and education regimen to which they were forced to adhere. They also received

[*] There are so many people to whom we are indebted for their voluntary assistance on this project. Dr. Kelsey Kauffman and Carol Foster for creating the higher-education program and the History Project at our facility, allowing incarcerated women the opportunity to excel and achieve their goals. We would also like to thank our professors Lesley Neff, Meg Galasso, and Elizabeth Nelson for all their time and effort in research and editing. Mary Xiao, Sharon Maes, Catherine Newkirk, and Peper Langhout played a major role in helping us complete this paper. Special thanks to Katherine Tinsley and Peggy Seigel, who ran the Peggy Seigel writing competition for all Indiana undergraduates. Finally, we want to acknowledge our colleagues in the History Project who began and followed through on the history of our prison, paving the way for us.

vocational training in domesticity, which was used, in part, to prepare them for being sent out of the prison via the ticket-of-leave system. We will also expound on the evidence of cruelty and abuse that were disguised as love and reformation.

KEY WORDS Indiana Reformatory; Institution for Women and Girls; Juveniles; Religion; Labor

And if "Reformation" ever comes to any ... [i]t must come under such elevating influences, and conditions of self-respect, self-reliance, honor, love and trust:—penalties, degradation, distrust, disgrace never yet reformed any human being, and the more Reformatory people come to understand and regard that fact the better it will be for their work.

—Clara Barton, second superintendent of the Massachusetts Reformatory for Women (as cited in Freedman 1984:75)

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Sarah Smith, an orphaned native of England, found solace in the Quaker faith, which she joined while still a young girl. At this time, she began to feel a divine calling to reform women and girls living lives of sin. She and fellow Quaker James Smith were married and subsequently immigrated to America, finally settling in Indiana in the 1840s. Once in Indiana, the Smiths formed a lifelong friendship with Charles and Rhoda Coffin, an alliance that would alter the penal system as a whole (Baldwin 2016:2)

The Coffins were a very prominent and affluent Quaker couple from Richmond, Indiana (Baldwin 2016:2). In 1858, they traveled east to prisons in New York, Massachusetts, and Philadelphia, to witness the methods used in reformation efforts by their fellow Quakers. Among the institutions visited by the Coffins was that of Mount Joy in New York state. According to historian Estelle Freedman, "Mount Joy presented a model for American reformers." Mount Joy is known as one of the first institutions in the country to have a "cottage style" housing plan, created with the intention to encourage family-structured living. The Coffins "praised its approximation of family life, the placement of released women in private homes, and particularly the self-respect engendered by the trust placed in upper grade prisoners" (Freedman 1984:50).

Before they had the notion of opening the reformatory, Rhoda Coffin and Sarah Smith each managed their own Home for Friendless Women; Smith's home was located in Indianapolis, and Coffin's home in Richmond, Indiana (Baldwin 2016:2). Our colleague Michelle Jones points out in her article *Failing the Fallen: Sexual and Gendered Violence* that Rhoda Coffin and Sarah Smith's goal was to remake these women in their own image and to teach them to live by established patriarchal social and religious norms (Jones 2016). This ideology can be attributed to the fact that "Quaker women were middle class [and] they believed they were distinctively equipped to aid working class 'unruly' … lost 'wayward' girls" (Jones 2016:5).

The inspiration for the foundation of an independent institution for women came in 1868 when the Coffins visited the Indiana State Prison in Jeffersonville, an institution in which women were held jointly with far more numerous men, as was the norm in state prisons throughout the United States at the time. There, the reformers happened upon a horrific scene of abhorrent sexual abuse of the female inmates (Freedman 1984:60).

The two reforming women immediately spoke to the Indiana General Assembly about the necessity of establishing an institution solely for the protection and reformation of "fallen women" and wayward, orphaned, and incorrigible girls ("Nearing the Close" 1881). On May 13, 1869, their efforts succeeded, and the Indiana legislature passed an act "to establish a female prison and reformatory institution for girls and women, to provide for the organization and government thereof, and making appropriations" (*Laws of the State of Indiana* 1875:73).

A board of managers for the institution was appointed on July 23, 1869 (*First Annual Report* 1871:5). This board of managers, consisting entirely of men, was soon accompanied by a board of visitors, whose responsibilities were to inspect the affairs of management and the condition of inmates (*Second Annual Report* 1874:8). Finally, on June 12, 1873, Sarah Smith was appointed superintendent (*Second Annual Report* 1874:8). The reformatory officially opened on September 9, 1873 (*Second Annual Report* 1874:8), and on September 12, two girls were brought from the Jeffersonville County jail "as they could be more profitably employed clearing the rubbish from the new building" (*Second Annual Report* 1874:15). Twenty-one additional girls, along with the female inmates transferred from Jeffersonville, were soon after committed that first year (*Second Annual Report* 1874:16). To save state funding, the institution was built with separate wings, with the east wing for women and the west wing for girls (*First Annual Report* 1871:8).

Smith was not pleased; she wrote, "We had visited several model prisons in England, and when we returned we found that the construction of the prison was not such as we should have desired, for there was only one cell for the punishment of prisoners" ("The Reformatory: Mrs. Sarah Jane Smith" 1881). Freedman points out, "The Indiana ... [prison] ignored the call for 'family style designs.' ... Punishment cells, sometimes in the basement, revealed the expectation that intransigent prisoners would be beyond the reach of moral suasion" (Freedman 1984:70). Further evidence of the intent to favor punishment as a form of reformation was revealed, in the third annual report for the year ending 1874, when appropriations were made in April for the construction of a dungeon (*Third Annual Report* 1875:7).

The impractical configuration of the building to be used to house both women and girls became most evident in the reports of 1878–1879. Despite a system in place that allowed certain girls to leave the reformatory on a conditional-release program called ticket of leave, in which they would go to work in people's homes as low-cost domestic labor in the wake of the Civil War, in 1878, the board of managers explained that they were still having "to release the girls more rapidly than was good for them or for the best interest of the state because we do not have enough money or room for them" (*Seventh Annual Report* 1878:7). They initially asked for the appropriations to simply add on to the reformatory side, in order to expand capacity. No such monies were given for that

venture, but in 1879, a separate washroom was built to prevent the girls from coming into contact with the women. Coffin and Smith deemed the decision of the board as necessary to keep the impressionable girls, some of whom were merely abandoned orphans and not criminals, from being negatively influenced by the older convicts (*Eighth Annual Report* 1879:8). In fact, in 1881, the chairman of the reformatory investigation committee was of the opinion that

> placing of young children in the same institution and in contact with older girls who have become hardened and degraded by vicious and polluting practices … is to be condemned. And as soon as practical the state should provide an entirely separate home for all children under fourteen … shall not be contaminated by its associations. ("Female Reformatory: Mr. Edwins" 1881)

In 1884, the board of managers also recommended to the legislative authorities to remove the girls to their own school built on a cottage plan (*Thirteenth Annual Report* 1884:10). This removal did not take place until 1907, however.

COUNTIES AND COSTS

With the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls open, the call went out to all the counties across the state, entreating them to send their girls, whether criminal or simply friendless. In 1874, because of the low number of girls in the facility, the high maintenance costs of the institution raised serious concerns. To boost the number of residents, the board of managers discussed the possibility of recruiting more girls from other counties: "It is to be hoped that the different counties will … avail themselves of the advantages of the institution by committing … the girls which are to be found in every community who need and are entitled to such guardianship" (*Second Annual Report* 1874:27). They went on to explain:

> It is believed that the people as yet, do not generally understand that a girl need not be an offender against the penal laws of the State to justify her committal ... that vagrancy, or incorrigible, or vicious conduct on the part of the girl … or her parent or guardian, is incapable or unwilling to … care over her; or that she is destitute … or that she is in danger of being brought up to lead an idle or vicious life, will justify her committal. (*Second Annual Report* 1874:27)

According to the annual reports, in conjunction with the official registry, 64 counties consigned 580 of their most neglected and wayward girls from 1873 through 1884.

Marion County sent the most girls during this period, with 150. Allen, Vigo, and Wayne followed as top contributing counties, with 36, 35, and 34 girls, respectively.

During the fiscal years of 1873–1884, the cost of feeding, clothing, and housing the girls fluctuated between $136.00 and $200.00. These estimates were calculated each year by the institution's steward (Sarah Smith's husband) and were reported to the state. The counties were responsible for and billed by the state treasurer for exactly half of the expense per girl they had committed for every year of her stay, and the state paid the other half (*Third Annual Report* 1875:12). The average yearly cost per county was $232.92. Table 1 shows an itemized account of the cost per girl per year as designated by the institution, the yearly amount owed by each county to the state, as well as their totals from 1873 to 1884 and the total number of girls that each county sent to the institution, for a grand total of $101,087.29.

Table 1. Itemized Annual Account and Eleven-Year Total by County, 1873–1884

	Sept. 1873–Nov. 1874	Dec. 1874–Nov. 1875	Dec. 1875–Nov. 1876	Dec. 1876–Nov. 1877	Dec. 1877–Nov. 1878	Dec. 1878–Nov. 1879	Dec. 1879–Nov. 1880	Dec. 1880–Oct. 1881	Nov. 1881–Oct. 1882	Nov. 1882–Oct. 1883	Nov. 1883–Oct. 1884	TOTAL	TOTAL # OF GIRLS 1873–1884
COST PER ANNUM PER GIRL	$200.00	$182.00	$182.00	$146.00	$146.00	$146.00	$117.47	$126.00	$136.00	$147.35	$136.00		
Allen	$116.50	$407.25	$217.00	$196.69	$453.25	$863.77	$435.25	$551.24	$488.19	$619.38	$625.67	$4,974.19	36
Bartholomew	$192.05	$153.25	$91.00		$109.50	$73.00	$219.50	$147.00	$149.97	$273.88	$148.75	$1,557.90	10
Blackford				$36.50	$91.25	$146.00	$113.65	$57.75	$107.38	$102.00	$18.40	$672.93	3
Boone							$15.75	$57.75	$65.50	$68.00	$68.00	$275.00	1
Cass		$45.50	$79.62	$91.25	$157.90	$290.48	$153.75	$173.25	$145.00	$91.80	$68.00	$1,296.55	6
Clark										$68.00	$68.00	$136.00	1
Clay					$33.45	$73.00	$141.00	$57.75	$31.50			$336.70	1
Clinton			$42.00	$73.00	$73.00					$103.42	$136.00	$427.42	3
Daviess			$109.37	$219.00	$194.66	$164.25	$141.00	$57.75	$99.50	$68.00	$47.35	$1,100.88	5
Decatur		$183.25		$401.50	$334.58	$320.42	$225.00	$267.87	$558.68	$529.84	$403.72	$3,224.86	17
Dearborn						$146.00	$168.88	$170.25	$168.33	$102.00	$63.46	$818.92	5
Dekalb			$91.00	$73.00	$36.50				$56.00	$68.00	$68.00	$392.50	2
Delaware			$451.50					$38.50	$65.50	$93.50	$178.47	$827.47	3
Elkhart			$159.25	$328.50	$368.04	$351.80	$222.25	$176.75	$207.87	$163.35	$162.42	$2,140.23	10
Fayette								$47.25	$103.85	$107.67	$99.15	$357.92	3
Floyd	$115.95	$91.00	$61.25		$104.30	$219.00	$204.00	$89.25	$78.62	$68.00	$76.50	$1,107.87	6
Fountain							$37.58	$57.75	$129.25	$76.50	$68.00	$369.08	2
Fulton			$45.50	$73.00	$73.00	$73.00	$68.00	$31.50				$364.00	1

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Table 1. Itemized Annual Account and Eleven-Year Total by County, 1873–1884, cont.

	Sept. 1873–Nov. 1874	Dec. 1874–Nov. 1875	Dec. 1875–Nov. 1876	Dec. 1876–Nov. 1877	Dec. 1877–Nov. 1878	Dec. 1878–Nov. 1879	Dec. 1879–Nov. 1880	Dec. 1880–Oct. 1881	Nov. 1881–Oct. 1882	Nov. 1882–Oct. 1883	Nov. 1883–Oct. 1884		
COST PER ANNUM PER GIRL	$200.00	$182.00	$182.00	$146.00	$146.00	$146.00	$117.47	$126.00	$136.00	$147.35	$136.00	**TOTAL**	**TOTAL # OF GIRLS 1873–1884**
Grant	$234.09	$454.75	$379.00	$304.16	$115.58	$36.50					$9.43	$1,533.51	7
Greene				$36.50	$73.00	$69.95			$86.50	$68.00	$75.55	$409.50	4
Hamilton					$73.00	$79.08	$68.00	$57.75	$65.50			$343.33	2
Hendricks			$91.00		$76.00							$167.00	1
Henry			$45.50	$272.75	$257.50	$185.53	$200.41	$147.00	$142.62	$100.12	$255.00	$1,606.43	12
Howard		$45.50	$136.50	$146.00	$197.70	$231.17	$216.18	$400.75	$566.60	$476.00	$388.16	$2,804.56	17
Huntington		$25.75	$91.00	$109.50	$73.00	$36.50		$26.25	$65.50	$68.00	$121.83	$617.33	4
Jackson										$11.35	$76.00	$87.35	2
Jasper			$45.50	$73.00	$73.00	$73.00	$36.50		$17.50	$68.00	$68.00	$454.50	2
Jay	$34.90	$91.00	$91.00	$101.40	$79.08	$66.92				$19.84	$56.66	$540.80	3
Jefferson		$26.25	$91.00	$109.50	$109.50	$73.00	$12.19		$148.08	$340.00	$290.40	$1,199.92	7
Jennings			$45.50	$146.00	$146.00	$146.00	$132.50	$73.50	$69.29			$758.79	3
Johnson	$102.20	$182.00	$311.50	$231.16	$231.17	$182.50	$68.00	$91.00	$31.50		$83.66	$1,514.69	8
Knox										$9.45	$68.00	$77.45	1
Kosciusko	$62.64	$182.00	$273.00	$146.00	$73.00	$81.25	$199.00	$84.00	$65.50	$68.00	$140.10	$1,374.49	12
LaGrange											$96.33	$96.33	2
LaPorte			$91.00	$87.20	$146.00	$167.30	$200.50	$153.00	$129.08	$136.00	$73.66	$1,183.74	5
Madison			$45.50	$73.00	$155.12	$304.70	$374.83	$287.88	$332.43	$317.33	$400.43	$2,291.22	16
Marion	$2,074.64	$3,041.00	$3,606.90	$2,181.54	$2,052.10	$2,531.55	$2,512.01	$1,963.50	$1,858.58	$1,432.90	$1,271.22	$24,525.94	150
Marshall						$33.45	$68.00	$57.75	$256.25	$136.00	$136.00	$687.45	3
Miami	$50.50	$116.25	$68.25	$91.25	$73.00	$73.00	$168.00					$640.25	3
Monroe			$45.50		$73.00	$73.00	$68.00	$57.75			$53.83	$371.08	2
Montgomery				$73.00	$219.00	$200.75	$234.16	$274.75	$395.63	$405.16	$399.89	$2,202.34	16
Morgan				$162.20		$27.37	$68.00	$115.50	$139.75	$204.00	$210.05	$926.87	4
Owens			$28.00	$73.00	$73.00	$73.00	$24.33					$271.33	1
Parke	$108.51	$182.00	$227.50	$121.67	$146.00	$161.20	$153.41	$162.75	$138.87	$102.00	$92.10	$1,596.01	7
Perry	$116.78	$91.00	$91.00	$16.23				$39.37	$65.50	$68.00	$24.10	$511.98	2
Posey											$6.80	$6.80	1
Pulaski			$42.00	$73.00	$73.00	$73.09	$68.00					$329.09	1
Putnam	$22.81	$91.00	$91.00	$73.00	$212.90	$182.50	$148.16	$73.50	$31.50			$926.37	3

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Table 1. Itemized Annual Account and Eleven-Year Total by County, 1873–1884, concl.

	Sept. 1873–Nov. 1874	Dec. 1874–Nov. 1875	Dec. 1875–Nov. 1876	Dec. 1876–Nov. 1877	Dec. 1877–Nov. 1878	Dec. 1878–Nov. 1879	Dec. 1879–Nov. 1880	Dec. 1880–Oct. 1881	Nov. 1881–Oct. 1882	Nov. 1882–Oct. 1883	Nov. 1883–Oct. 1884		
COST PER ANNUM PER GIRL	$200.00	$182.00	$182.00	$146.00	$146.00	$146.00	$117.47	$126.00	$136.00	$147.35	$136.00	**TOTAL**	**TOTAL # OF GIRLS 1873–1884**
Rush			$91.00	$82.12	$79.08	$73.00	$68.00	$57.75	$108.25	$136.00	$136.00	$831.20	3
Shelby							$31.50	$82.25	$131.00	$91.80	$68.00	$404.55	2
Steuben									$31.00	$107.66	$204.00	$342.66	3
St. Joseph			$45.50	$73.00	$73.00	$109.50	$99.50	$210.00	$382.33	$374.00	$369.73	$1,736.56	10
Sullivan			$91.00	$73.00	$12.17							$176.17	1
Switzerland						$73.00	$68.00	$57.75	$65.50			$264.25	1
Tippecanoe		$91.00	$91.00	$326.46	$495.80	$629.61	$622.50	$485.63	$543.10	$498.67	$585.99	$4,369.76	26
Tipton								$57.75	$65.50	$110.50	$132.20	$365.95	2
Vanderburgh	$359.76	$1,372.25	$1,425.50	$993.62	$793.88		$233.66	$283.50	$265.33	$155.83		$5,883.33	30
Vigo	$584.37	$975.25	$1,091.90	$1,055.45	$568.77	$514.55	$426.00	$215.25	$319.52	$280.50	$249.33	$6,280.89	35
Wabash	$37.36	$91.00	$136.50	$146.00	$146.00	$109.50	$68.00	$15.75				$750.11	2
Warrick								$57.75	$31.50		$75.72	$164.97	3
Wayne	$1,133.57	$1,473.00	$1,410.50	$1,052.39	$814.13	$625.57	$540.41	$397.50	$324.90	$306.00	$283.33	$8,361.30	34
Wells									$7.80	$68.00	$68.00	$143.80	1
White							$52.80	$57.75	$31.50			$142.05	1
Whitely				$63.87	$73.00	$36.50			$8.75	$114.75	$136.00	$432.87	3

Note: Each county was responsible for paying the state half of the cost per girl per annum while the girls were wards of the reformatory.

Initially, the law (Section 19) mandated that only girls under the age of 15 were able to be committed to the facility. After a trip to the institution by the board of visitors, whose responsibilities were to conduct inspections on behalf of the board of managers, a suggestion was made to change the law because of concerns over shortage of funding to support the facility (*Second Annual Report* 1874:16). The board of visitors suggested to the legislature that the law be amended, as well as the law requiring the discharge age of 18. They proposed instead that the law allow admittance of girls up to 18 years of age and change the discharge age to 21, thereby extending each girl's labor production by three years (*Second Annual Report* 1874:28).

Smith's continued concern for the loss of profit was made clear in her suggestion "that the age of ten is quite too young, unless guilty of a crime. A necessity is felt … for some better means of giving them regular, useful and profitable employment than our present arrangement will admit of" (*Fifth Annual Report*, 1877:23). Smith declared that

she had opened this reform school to help *all* friendless girls, but apparently, she meant only the ones she could profitably employ.

THE AVERAGE GIRL

The registries were initially designed to capture a wealth of information about each incoming girl: name, age, parentage, county and crime of conviction, dates received and discharged, education (reading), education (writing), health, capacity, nativity, former surroundings, and remarks. Intake staff faithfully recorded this information for the first three years, September 1873–December 1876. Over the following four years, the staff were selective in the data they recorded, including only the name, county and crime of conviction, dates received and discharged, nativity, and remarks. Interestingly, at the end of 1881, following the investigation, all details were again recorded efficiently. With the given data from 1873 to 1876 and from 1881 to 1884, we intend to illustrate the personal characteristics of the girls held in the institution during the first decade of the facility.

Figure 1. Admission of Girls Entering the Indiana reformatory Institution for Women and Girls per Year, 1873–1884

YEAR	ADMISSION
Y-1873	26
Y-1874	82
Y-1875	60
Y-1876	51
Y-1877	40
Y-1878	47
Y-1879	47
Y-1880	44
Y-1881	50
Y-1882	49
Y-1883	37
Y-1884	41

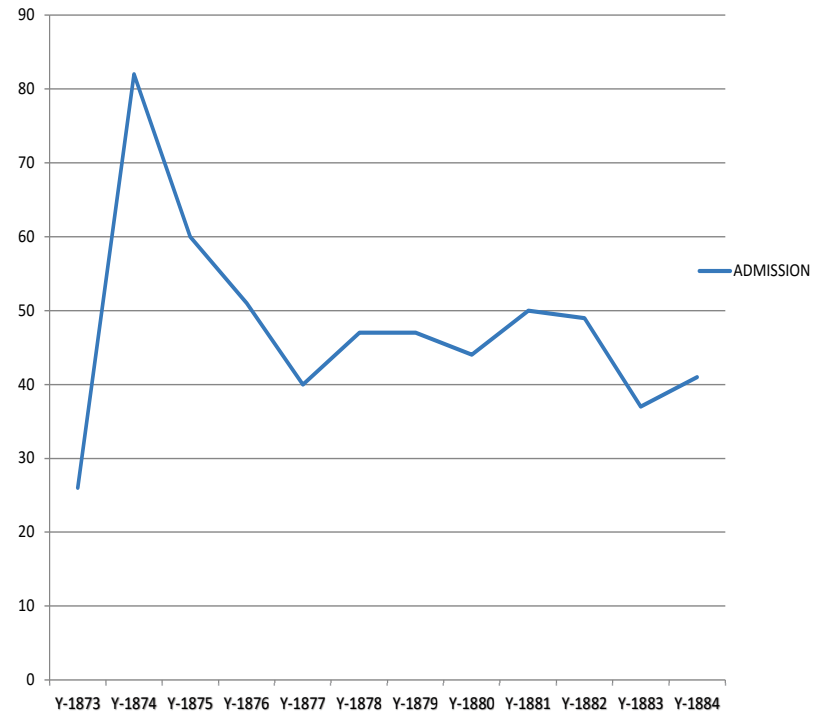
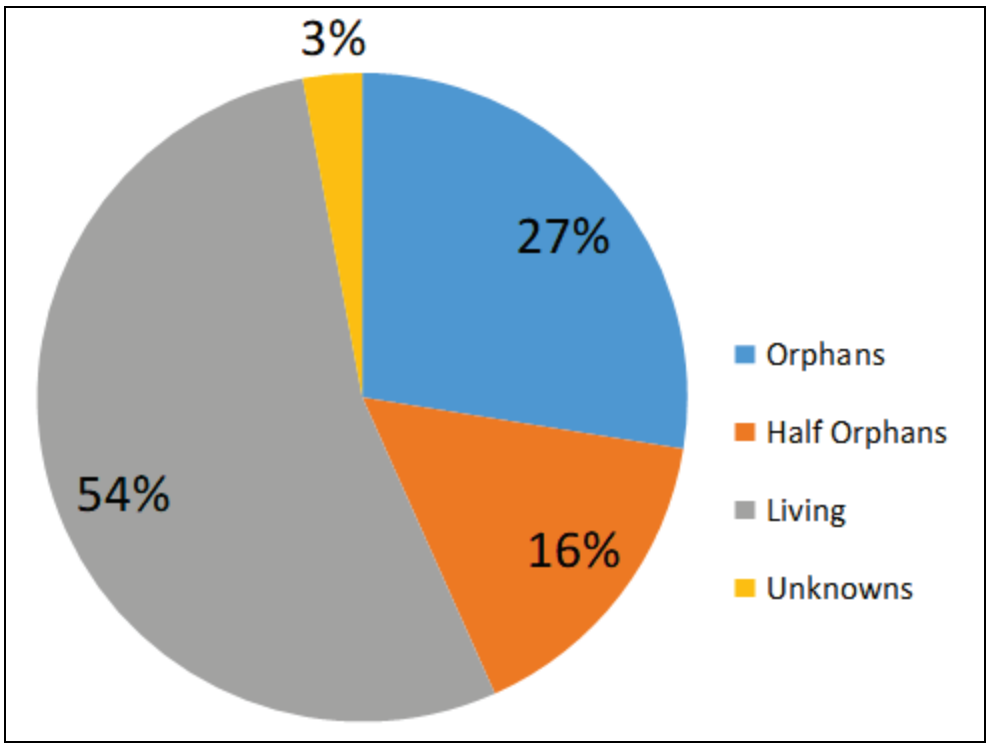


Figure 1 illustrates the number of admissions per year for 1873–1884. During the institution's first year, 21 girls were committed to the facility. This number more than tripled in the following year, with 82 girls entering the facility, followed by a slight drop to 60 girls in 1875. Over the next nine years, the numbers stayed relatively consistent, averaging 45 girls per year. Between 1873 and 1880, a law prohibited girls older than 15 from being sent to the reformatory department (*Second Annual Report* 1874:16). A few girls over 16 were sent to the reformatory, but because of the discharge law, their stay at the institution was brief. Once the law changed, the reformatory could begin to receive girls over the age of 15; this then widened the range to include girls from 2 to 17 years of age, with an average age of 14 ("Official Registry" 1873–1884).

Figure 2. Parentage of Girls Entering the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls, 1873–1877, 1881–1884



"Parentage" is one of the categories that staff reliably recorded for the first 254 girls and then again for the last 133 of the survey period. Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of children with and without parents. Looking at just those two subsets, we find that 103 were listed as orphans, with an additional 59 as half orphans. The registry showed 201 girls with one or both living parents, but in some cases, subjective comments were included concerning the character of the parents: 36 of the records listed the parents as "bad" or the equivalent, such as "depraved," "intemperate," "deranged," "cruel," and

so on. Additionally, 17 of the mothers were listed as prostitutes ("Official Registry" 1873–1884).

These extra notes on the character of the girls' parents seem to communicate an assumption that the girls were raised with negative influences, justifying their committal. In a few cases, the parents were listed as Catholic, but none of the other entries noted any type of religious preference, which can lead us to presume that this isolation was done deliberately. These identifiers were subjective and provided an unfavorable narrative of the girls' home lives. Moreover, the results contributed to further justification for the establishment of the reformatory system.

A lack of education was often used as an argument for reformation, yet the results displayed in Figure 3 regarding the girls' abilities to write and read, and their "capacity," contradict this claim. The registry reveals that 242 (69 percent) of the girls had an intellectual level of "average," and the data show a 1 percent difference between the girls with above-average and below-average intelligence levels. Furthermore, 59 percent of girls had basic or above-average reading skills, and another 65 percent demonstrated basic or above-average writing skills. These findings challenge the idea that girls' low education levels necessitated reform. This information is in complete contrast with what Sarah Smith claimed—"Few come to us who have received even a common school education, proving the long admitted theory, 'Ignorance is the mother of vice'" (*Eighth Annual Report* 1879:13).

Figure 3A. Assessments of Girls Entering the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls, 1873–1877, 1881–1884: Ability to Write.

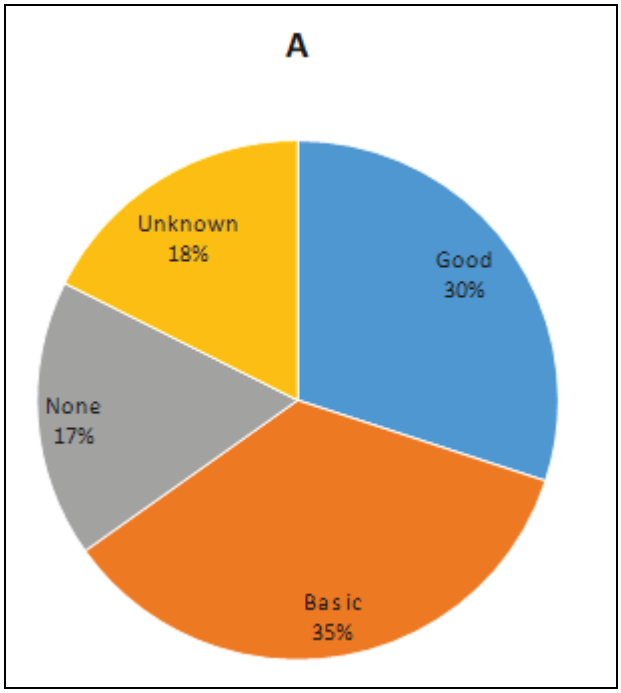


Figure 3B. Assessments of Girls Entering the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls, 1873–1877, 1881–1884: Ability to Read.

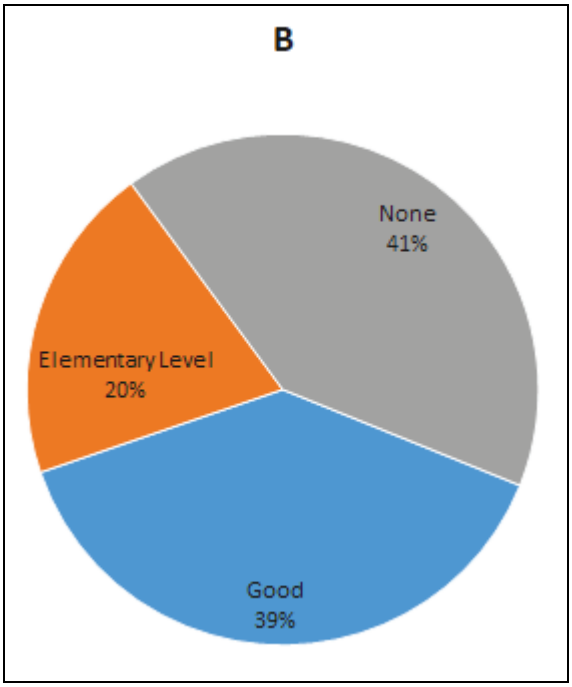


Figure 3C. Assessments of Girls Entering the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls, 1873–1877, 1881–1884: Intelligence Capacity.

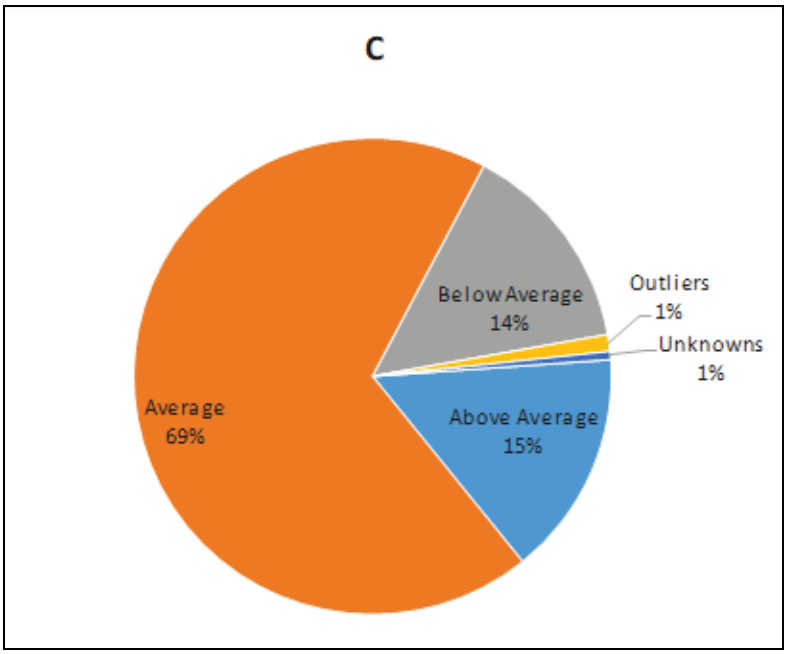
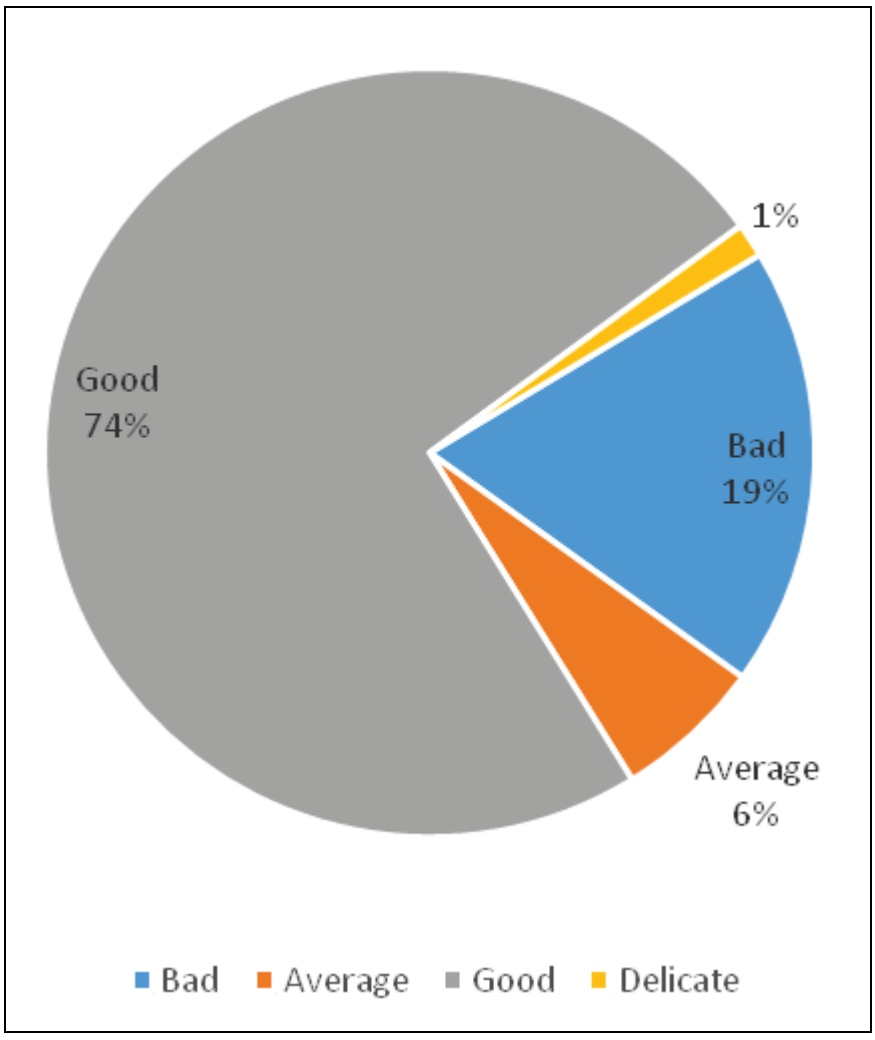


Figure 4 shows the health of the girls for the two subsets with completed data ranging for 1873–1876 and 1881–1884. The records show that 259 girls (73 percent) came into the facility with "good" health and another 22 (9 percent) came in with "average" health. For the category of "bad health," 65 girls (18 percent) were listed. Additionally, several girls were listed as "delicate" ("Official Registry" 1873–1884), which we can assume meant "pregnant," based on the vernacular of the time. This could be an explanation for the seven babies that were alleged in the 1881 investigation to have been born on the reformatory side ("The Reformatory: Mrs. Sarah Jane Smith" 1881), though neither Superintendent Smith nor Dr. Theophilus Parvin, the institution's physician, mentioned any births on the reformatory side in any annual report.

Figure 4. Health on Admission of Girls Entering the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls, 1873–1877, 1881–1884



In the "former surroundings" and "remarks" sections, we found a few interesting cases. For instance, Mary Foley, 14 at the age of entrance, spent roughly four years in the institution before being sent out on a ticket of leave on April 5, 1886, to work for the Budd family ("Official Registry" 1873–1884). In a newspaper article from the *Indianapolis News* on September 29, 1886, we learned that Mary Foley, with listed age as 20 rather than 18, was in a tragic fire that severely scorched and burned her body. She had been holding a baby while standing next to a stove in the Budd home when her clothing ignited. She thought to save the baby by tossing it to the side before running outside and falling to the ground. The injuries from the fire led to her death a few days later. Both the age and position given for Mary in the newspaper article contradict what we know about her from the registry, further illuminating the imprecision of the record keeping at the reformatory ("A Girl Frightfully Burned" 1886).

In yet another example of such inconsistencies, 15-year-old Mary Mathingly was said to have "attempted to poison a family of five" despite never having been convicted of committing any crimes ("Official Registry" 1873–1884). Anna Merrick, 12, was said in the registry to have "cut the throat of a horse in revenge for a kitten's death," although she also had not been convicted of committing any crime. Both Mary Mathingly and Anna Merrick call into question the relevance of the information in those specific categories; their reputations as ill-fit or unstable were apparently considered sufficient for and relevant to committal.

We found an anomaly in the case of the Mackey sisters, who both died in the institution, almost exactly two years apart. The sisters—Rachel, 9, and Narcissa, 1—both arrived on February 28, 1874; they were colored orphans from Wayne County, and neither was charged with any crime. The older sister, Narcissa, died on May 11, 1875, of "pulmonary tuberculosis" (*Fourth Annual Report* 1875:23). Her sister, Rachel, died of "pulmonary consumption" in May of 1877 (*Sixth Annual Report* 1878:24). Both of the girls' records reflected good health upon their entry to the institution, but Dr. Parvin stated in the annual report that the illness had been passed on from their mother (*Fourth Annual Report* 1875:23). The sisters were recorded as having good health at their intake, however, and it seems implausible that the girls entered the facility with a disease of this caliber without it being recognized by staff upon examination.

Despite these uncommon cases, we are still able to construct a composite image of the average girl detained at the institution. We can deduce that she would have been 14 years of age, white, and from a home with at least one living parent. This girl would be of average to above-average intellect, with good health. She would not have committed or been charged with any crime. The average girl would have spent between two and four years in the reformatory, being molded into the Quakers' ideological image of the good girl through religious practice and education while being economically exploited through the ticket-of-leave system.

LABOR VS. EDUCATION

A great irony emerges upon investigation of the vocational training offered to the young girls in the reformatory. Well-educated, career-driven, and politically motivated women

were teaching girls the importance of economic independence exclusively by way of the domestic arts, the exact opposite of the idea of femininity they themselves subscribed to, while offering minimal education. Furthermore, as Freedman points out, the girls earned meager salaries in tedious positions such as those of domestic servants, laundresses, and unskilled factory workers (Freedman, 1984:42).

Michelle Jones cites Rhoda Coffin as she explains the reformatory's goals as "religious indoctrination, basic education, training in women's domestic skills and labors, all through an education of the mind as a means of controlling behavior" (Jones 2016:8). The officials obviously placed high value on the use of forced labor, for reasons not necessarily in the best interest of the poor children who suffered said drudgery, but for power, control, and profit. At no point throughout the first 11 years of annual reports is this fact hidden.

The plans to exploit the girls' labor are stated from the very first annual report: "Plans of labor, in addition to systematic education will be adopted, with the purchase of suitable materials for work, so that the industry of the inmates may produce the best results practical, in aid of the funds of the institution" (*First Annual Report* 1871:12). Using the girls as unpaid employees (slave labor?) of the institution they were compelled to live in was a method of ensuring that investors profited, and that Smith and Coffin maintained control over the girls and attained power and prestige for being women able to most economically and efficiently operate the first institution of its kind. The grave injustice in this scenario is that these children were promised love and reformation, only to be considered and treated as no more than dispensable servants, as supported in the 1876 Board of Managers section of the annual report: "It can hardly be expected that the majority will ever reach very high positions in social life, but all can be taught to make themselves useful in some appropriate sphere. We regard knowledge of cooking, house-keeping, sewing, washing, ironing, mending, etc., as indispensable for all" (*Fifth Annual Report* 1877:14).

Again in the sixth annual report, the board of managers reiterated their opinion of the capabilities of the girls: "Idleness is one of the most fruitful sources of crime, and laziness its twin sister. … Constant employment is therefore an absolute necessity, that they may be taught the means of earning an honest livelihood: … a number of those who have left are making good and reliable house servants" (*Sixth Annual Report* 1878:7). Perhaps the most blatant boasting of this indentured servitude was stated by the board in 1884: "We would call attention to the fact that no money is expended in wages for servants. All the work is performed by the inmates" (*Thirteenth Annual Report* 1884:11). In its 1877 report, the board referred to the girls as servants when the reformatory purchased cows "furnishing useful employment for the older girls and increasing their efficiency as servants" (*Sixth Annual Report* 1878:7).

In selecting remunerative work for the girls, the board made a list of requirements: "Work must be such that she may continue at it when discharged … work that must not degrade the woman … work that will not interfere with the *honest [*emphasis added] working women of Indianapolis … work must be profitable to the institution" (*Fifth Annual Report* 1877:15). It was apparent that these girls did, in fact, realize they were considered servants and felt that the work they were being subjected to

was degrading. Their feelings found expression in the following quotes from Smith and Coffin, respectively: "We find … no work more beneficial than … household duties. Many of them have the false idea that it is 'degrading,' that by following some trade they can dress better" (*Eighth Annual Report* 1879:12) and "Great care is taken to infuse into them a pride in, and a love for labor, instead of the feeling that labor is derogatory to a woman" (*Ninth Annual Report* 1881:8). Clearly, these girls had more faith in their abilities and held higher aspirations for themselves and their futures than the state of Indiana did.

Interestingly enough, the girls' staunchest advocate for their most beneficial future came not from the women sworn specifically to uphold those very interests but from a man. Dr. Parvin first appealed on behalf of the girls in 1874, stating:

> Among the children in the reform department there will be found some possessing a natural talent, a special fitness or aptitude for modes of industry that are more productive, receiving higher remuneration than sewing, knitting, washing, ironing, and chair work. Might not the state … go a step farther by giving those who manifest undoubted talent … commencement in education for such work? Book keeping, music teaching, telegraphing, drawing and painting, picture coloring and engraving. ... There are children here whose talents if properly cultivated could be rendered independent of all aid here-after, and capable of lucrative work. (*Third Annual Report* 1875:30–31)

He even went a step further in his 1876 report to the governor, offering himself as the girls' instructor (*Fifth Annual Report* 1877:48). It was to no avail; his ideas fell on deaf ears, and the machinations of the institution continued on with business as usual. The board's response to his requests were "We do not aim to give the pupils in the Reform School a finished education" (*Seventh Annual Report* 1878:9) and "A common, plain education only is given. No attempt is made in higher branches" (*Eleventh Annual Report* 1882:17). Their unwillingness to educate these children in anything but domesticity reveals their true intentions of making servants rather than reformed young women who might have prosperous futures.

The reports examined for this study consistently specify that both the superintendent and the board of managers were committed to provide a mix of education and vocational training throughout the day by claiming that the girls "were taught half of the day … the other half devoted to … household duties in rotation" (*Second Annual Report* 1874:16); however, this assertion is contradicted in the reports that actually break down the girls' day, in which only three hours were allotted to school; six hours to work; five hours for meals, recreation, and religious exercises; and ten hours for sleep (*Eighth Annual Report* 1879:45). This remained the schedule until 1884, when work changed from six to seven hours, cutting back an hour from meals, recreation, and religious exercises (*Thirteenth Annual Report* 1884:64). The annual reports provide a concise

description of the six hours per day dedicated to work, while offering us a better view of how they intended to reinforce the prescribed gender roles in society through domesticity:

> The girls are engaged in cane seating chairs, laundry work, knitting, sewing and obtaining a general knowledge of house-work. … We believe it more important and economical to train them in various kinds of housewifery. By this means we are able to dispose of them to better advantage, and with more hope of permanent reformation. (*Eighth Annual Report* 1879:10)

Of these, laundry was considered the most practical and remunerative to the reformatory. It was also a favorite tool used in the control of the girls, as it "subdues the excitability of the system, and makes submission easier," according to Coffin (*Ninth Annual Report* 1881:8).

Laundry rooms, originally located in the reformatory basement, were small and "kept damp" by the miasmic "steam from the boiling soap-suds," posing a serious health hazard to the girls, yet the board's *main* concern was not of health but rather to expand the size of the operation and put more girls to work. The board asked the state for appropriations to build a separate, larger laundry room outside because "washing is by far the most profitable business" (*Seventh Annual Report* 1878:14). Once the new laundry rooms were built in 1880, the number of girls working there more than doubled (*Eleventh Annual Report* 1882:11).

Not even the smallest child was unburdened of this labor. Financial gain superseded any consideration of the children's ages, health, or physical capabilities while the structured work schedules were prepared. Evidence of the intensive labor exploitation is revealed through Sarah Smith's own words: "Our labors though arduous, are not, and we fear never can be, remunerative; … our girls are but children, with seeds of disease in most of them—the fruits of parental vices and transgressions, rendering them physically weak" (*Seventh Annual Report* 1878:19). These *physically weak* children, as young as three years, worked "cane-seating chairs" and turned out 4,500 of the chairs in 1884 alone (*Thirteenth Annual Report* 1884:65). Other girls were "profitably employed" in sewing and repairing all the clothes for the institution, as well as the clothes of other facilities (*Thirteenth Annual Report* 1884:64). To get an idea of what was expected of them per day, consider that the total number of tailored pieces they put out for the year 1876 was 3,384, for 1878 was 2,808 pieces, and for 1884 was 3,122 pieces (*Fifth Annual Report* 1877:26–27; *Seventh Annual Report* 1878:22; *Thirteenth Annual Report* 1884:65).

In 1874, the board adopted the ticket-of-leave system (*Third Annual Report* 1875:13), an early form of parole/work release. Smith gave certain inmates the opportunity to leave the reformatory to work in a community member's home as a domestic servant (*Third Annual Report* 1875:13). Still, there were stipulations for this conditional release. To be granted the privilege of their "freedom," girls sent to work outside the prison were required to cook well, bake the best sort of bread, make a dress, and do laundry in the new style (*Fifth Annual Report* 1877:17).

If the registry is accurate, 226 girls went out at one point or another on ticket of leave during the 10-year period under consideration ("Official Registry" 1873–1884). One of these young girls, whose identity was withheld in the newspapers, had reportedly been sent to work in a former Civil War general's home. In 1878, the girl returned to the reformatory in "delicate" condition. According to the periodical *The People,* one of the lady managers visited the general's home to confront him about putting her ward in this condition and demanded that he pay recompense for the unborn child. After listening to the lady's demands, the general asked her how much it would take to keep the matter quiet. The general then accused the manager of blackmail, claiming to have witnesses. Not surprisingly, the general denied and was considered innocent of these scandalous charges by the author of the newspaper ("What Is Supposed to Have Been" 1881).

Later in the 1881 investigation, the general was called as a witness by the chairman of the investigating committee. The general was allowed a twenty-minute private audience with the committee, prosecutors, and lawyers and was permitted to leave afterward without ever giving a public statement (The Reformatory: An Investigation 1881). Many questions were left unanswered because of the lack of further information.

The board's thirteenth annual report notes, "63 girls are out on ticket of leave … in various parts of the state. … This system we consider one of the largest factors in working out reformation" (1884:10). We were unable to find in any of our sources whether the homes hosting the girls paid either them or the reformatory for their services; however, it is clear that the institution was the one financially profiting in this collaboration. With the girl still considered a ward of the reformatory while on a ticket of leave, the county from whence she came was still responsible for the payment of its yearly portion of her housing costs (*Third Annual Report* 1875:12). With a girl gone, her bed was empty and able to be filled by a new commitment (Freedman 1984:94). This is double the payment for half the expense.

RELIGION

Though a great deal of time and emphasis were placed on education and domesticity, religion was at the root of Smith's and Coffin's ideology for reformation, "that with love, education, training, and spiritual development, these girls could be reformed into noble women, able to be what God created them to be: 'wives, mothers, and educators of children'" (*Fourth Annual Report* 1875:27). Smith goes on to say, "We willingly admit that it is no light task to take the ungovernable and vicious from a life of idleness and crime, and by firmness and Christian kindness, make them obedient and industrious, restoring the victims of neglect to virtue and usefulness" (*Third Annual Report* 1875:17). Religious services were an integral cog in the reformatory system's process of changing these young girls into *true* women. The importance of religion is shown by the board's decision to refuse reformation to those unwilling to embrace the faith. In one instance, Amelia Stout, a girl from Marion County who was younger than 16 years of age, arrived at the institution on May 15, 1876, only to be "liberated by the board on account of poor faith on October 6, 1876" ("Official Registry" 1873–1884).

The girls were required to attend morning and evening Bible studies, as well as Sabbath services, which were led by the men from the Young Men's Christian Association, mainly Dr. Wood and Mr. Wilson Marrow. Smith reports, "Our Sabbaths are blessed days—the morning reading, the Sabbath school, in which we use the International lesson leaf, the afternoon service, evening reading and singing, leave an impression on the heart that is seldom eradicated" ("Official Registry" 1873–1884). Marrow is said to have "labored faithfully to teach them that Jesus is the friend of the fallen and the outcast and richly has the blessing rested on his labors" (*Fourth Annual Report* 1875:11). His time with the girls was spent reminding them of the good things of home: innocence, a mother's love, support and guidance, as well as missed opportunities, which caused the girls to desire better lives and to be thankful for his teaching (*Fourth Annual Report* 1875:11).

Smith and Coffin continually expressed their appreciation for the men who held services in the facility. In one report, Smith writes, "The Young Men's Christian Association; ... express themselves highly gratified at the apparent change from week to week in the family; and we feel that it is a problem no longer unsolved 'that the power of kindness' with the religion of Jesus is sufficient to subdue the most hardened" (*Second Annual Report* 1874:16). The praise of the men and the services held reflect a great satisfaction with the program they had in place for these girls. It was clear from the earlier annual reports that Smith felt that the good Lord would surely bless this system and felt it a necessity in restoring these women to the favor of the Lord:

> A prisoner may learn the important lesson of self-control, virtue, honesty and industry and altogether repentance, which will bring her back to the Father's fold ... [illegible]. Heaven rejoices at the scene, surely it ought to claim our care on earth. It is not expected that all will be reclaimed, but we confidently believe that a large proportion will be restored to society, who, I am glad to state, have become aroused to the fact it is just as necessary to reclaim a prisoner as to punish, for 'tis but a few years in most cases ere they are again thrown in our midst. (*Third Annual Report* 1875:16)

These reports all have one thing in common: They are centered on Smith's beliefs that with God's love and training, girls could and would be reformed, as long as they conformed to the structure placed on them. The girls who were reported as rebellious or unruly were simply beyond help in their eyes. The reports highlighted only good results, however, leaving out any negative response to this system. It is hard to gauge accurate results of the religious programming without complete details of both successes and failures. This is not the only area of confusion concerning details in the reports. Another area of confusion is found in the punishment rendered to the girls in the spirit of reform, highlighted in the investigation of 1881.

PUNISHMENT AND RESISTANCE

In February of 1881, an investigation was launched in response to serious allegations of abuse by staff and of economic exploitation within the walls of the reformatory, calling into question the methods and integrity of the reform system. A committee was selected to conduct interviews to determine whether the treatment of inmates fell within the acceptable guidelines of punishment ("Nearing the Close" 1881). During the investigation, Sarah Smith was accused of "uncommon cruelty" toward the girls and women of the institution ("The Female Reformatory" 1881). Previous employees, eyewitnesses, and some of the inmates themselves came forward with stories of abuse. In several weeks of candid testimony, much was revealed about the institution's scandalous happenings, which was splashed across the papers.

Among the witnesses called to testify was Mrs. Charlotte Brown, a woman who lived near the reformatory. Brown had Jennie Solomon, out on a ticket of leave, living with her. Brown stated that Solomon had gotten "saucy" with her and she had subsequently reported Solomon's insubordination. Getting "saucy," or smarting off, was seen as unacceptable and was punishable by violence. Smith had quickly requested Solomon to be seen, and upon Solomon's return to Brown's residence, Brown reported, Solomon had "marks on her face and eyebrow" ("Christian Punishment" 1881). We can assume that this display of corporal punishment was mild in comparison to what the girls endured within the confines of the walls, where outsiders were unable to bear witness.

The more extreme forms of punishment are further highlighted in a separate testimony. Miss Elizabeth Shaw, a former housekeeper for the reformatory, stated that "for small offenses … [the girls] had to stand in their rooms perhaps behind the door until they asked for forgiveness" ("Nearing the Close" 1881). Shaw admitted, "I seen Mrs. Smith turn the hose on some … [and vocalized that] … I have often thought that some of them were not punished half as much as they should have been" ("Nearing the Close" 1881:9). There is no clarification as to whether the hose was used for the "small offenses" or if those children had committed "large offenses" worthy of further punishment. Mrs. Shaw's very own testimony shows the general consensus that this type of psychological, physical, and emotional abuse was an acceptable form of punishment for wayward children.

In addition to taking testimony from witnesses, the investigators spoke with some of the girls who experienced the abuse. Ida Haines and Ida Harris were among those who came forward as victims. Haines, 15, had spent two years at the institution, and she reported that during her time at the institution, she was "punished a dozen or more times," including being "slapped in the face … being made to strip … [and] having [her] head put under faucets of cold water" until she could no longer breathe ("The Ducking Tub" 1881).

Harris's statement was similar in nature to Haines's, even though the two were held in different departments of the reformatory. Harris claimed "that she had cold water thrown over her for getting 'saucy,' and that afterward she was 'stamped' on." Her statement paints a picture of her being thrown to the ground, soaked in water, and kicked, or "stamped" on, while she was down. If that wasn't cruel enough, she went on to report that she had been "ducked and beat," and when she tried to get away, "they got me down

and beat me." Afterward, Harris was sent to the insane asylum, although (as the registry remarks state) she was not insane ("The Ducking Tub" 1881). It raises the question: Did the punishment administered cause her to go insane?

The most revealing and shocking testimony of corporal punishment came from Smith herself. The *Sentinel* reported Smith as saying,

> I have punished …with the cold water process. The first time was done to the two girls who attempted to burn the building. … They were shut up in their cells and fed on bread and water for two days. … I discovered that a general practice of self-abuse was going on among the girls. I could not stop it by any other mode of punishment than by using cold water. I never allowed them to remain in the tubs for more than 3 or 4 minutes. ("Nearing the Close" 1881)

Her statements are a powerful testament of the value, or lack thereof, placed on incarcerated girls, when someone can feel comfortable admitting to such vulgar abuses of power without fear of consequences. She went on to admit:

> Small girls were whipped with a slipper. I have slapped them in the face … held them by their hair. … I did get the McIntyre girl on the floor … until she confessed the wrong in disobeying. … I turned the hose on Ida Harris. … The fire hose at one time turned on Mattie Scott. … Sallie Maxwell was punished by having the hose turned on her. … Sallie was whipped because she would not mind. There has been but fourteen cases where the bathtub was used in the seven years. … I never kept any in the tub more than 5 minutes. ("Nearing the Close" 1881)

These techniques are used today in torturing prisoners of war as a way to break them down mentally in order to get them to conform. It is clear that was exactly what Smith hoped would happen in these cases as well, and if the girls didn't conform, they could be shipped to an institution for the insane, either as a means of disposal or because of a mental break. It appears, based on her attempt to assure investigators of the girls' minimal time in the tubs, that Mrs. Smith at the very least recognized the dangers of keeping children in freezing water for long periods of time, though there is no way to be certain about the validity of the times she stated, or about any other testimony, given the inconsistencies in her own statements.

In response to allegations, Smith admitted there had, in fact, been a baby found in the cesspool on the reformatory grounds, but she stated that the baby's mother was not an inmate at the institution. We were unable to locate any further information about the baby, reaffirming our thought that much was left undocumented, and leaving us to wonder how many murky details were suppressed.

Though Smith was willing to admit to certain punishments, there were some acts for which she would not take responsibility: "I positively deny ever having bumped the heads of any of the inmates against the wall. … I never caused the deafness of Lizzie Cash [Elizabeth Cash]. She was always a little deaf. … Mr. Barrett, the night watchman, never had anything to do with the girls in the water-closets" ("Nearing the Close" 1881). Perhaps the latter were acts that would threaten her position and the functionality of the reformatory as a whole, whereas the former were justifiable in the spirit of reform. She said, "I simply wanted to have them … *conform* to the rules. Our lives have been threatened. … The board of visitors, with the exception of Mrs. Coffin was not of impression that the punishment was too severe" ("Nearing the Close" 1881). Despite Smith's testimony, she and the reformatory were exonerated of any wrongdoing by the committee through their reports in the *Indianapolis Journal,* in which Chairman Edwins stated, "The charges … are not sustained by the evidence. … The discipline of the institution is maintained … by kindness and appeals to the moral sense of the inmates. … Punishment has been severe, but … necessary [and] has not been out of proportion to the offense" ("The Female Reformatory: Mr. Edwins" 1881). Despite the bold admissions of abuse, the committee went as far as to "commend the Board of Managers of the institution and the Superintendent for the wisdom and vigor for which they have conducted its affairs" ("Female Reformatory: Mr. Edwins" 1881).

The inmates, defeated by the victory of the reformatory, were compelled to continue their previous modes of resistance, including running away and setting fires to the building. According to the second through thirteenth annual reports (1874–1884), 50 girls ran away during the 10-year survey period, suggesting that the oppressive circumstances at the reformatory were too distressing for some. It's unclear whether the investigation or the aftermath took a toll on Smith and Coffin. Coffin sent her resignation to the governor that same year, and Mrs. Hendricks supplanted Rhoda Coffin as president of the board of visitors ("The Female Reformatory: Mrs. Rhoda M. Coffin" 1881). Smith and Dr. Parvin followed shortly after Coffin, both resigning in 1883. Smith's final report stated, "Declining health of myself and husband compels me to sever my connection with the work so long the delight of my life" (*Twelfth Annual Report* 1884:15).

CONCLUSION

It was our initial intention to seek out qualitative and quantitative values of the reformatory in its beginning stages; however, our research unveiled the furtherance of an already corrupt capitalist system. We found that from the onset, economic exploitation was set into the laws governing the institution: Section 29 states, "The Superintendent of said Institution shall have power to place any girl committed to the Reformatory Department thereof at any employment for *account* of the Institution"(*Revised Statutes* 1888). The ticket-of-leave system was implemented a year later. We were unable to find any written documentation of monetary gain from the system during that period, though we have discovered detailed financial records containing the amount paid for each child's services during the 1910s–1940s ("State Agent's Notebooks" N.d.).

Smith is quoted as saying, "Our motto had been, 'if you don't work, you shall not eat.' Some of them would not work, and the only way to make them work is by punishment or fear of punishment" ("Nearing the Close" 1881). Any attempt to stand against this system led to physical and psychological abuse, indicative of corporal punishment. Smith understood very well that the system, by design, would hold the girls psychologically hostage, as she avowed, "Our 'ticket-of-leave' system has proved invaluable, giving us greater power over the girls on their first entering service, and the knowledge that a failure will bring them back to the institution makes them more anxious to succeed" (*Eighth Annual Report* 1879:12).

The notion of reform for unruly children was conceptualized long before Sarah Smith and Rhoda Coffin began their quest to open the reformatory. In that period of time, love, religion, and vocational training were presented as an antidote for bad behavior, while economic exploitation was the true intent. Through deep political ties, Smith and Coffin were able to procure support for opening and running an institution that reinforced gendered roles in a deeply patriarchal society where women should be seen and not heard, and certainly not running an institution. It is our thought that these women were used as the face of safety for women and girls following the abuses that occurred at Jeffersonville. Our research allowed us to make a vague connection between money, politicians, and the institution. In Smith and Coffin's desperate attempts to be seen as equals in the world of reform, they forgot the oppression they had suffered themselves and were willing to oppress girls of the lower class through exploitation and force.

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