A study of the development of the women's prison association and home, New York City, 1845-1946

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A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WOMEN'S PRISON
ASSOCIATION AND HOME, NEW YORK CITY
1845-1946

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF
SOCIAL WORK IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
CYNTHIA GWENDOLYN PIGGOTT

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The Women's Prison Association and Home is a voluntary organization established to care for released women prisoners, to improve the provision for delinquents and to institute measures for crime prevention. Its chief objectives are to rehabilitate prisoners, to prevent recidivism and to protect society.

Generally, public attitude is unfavorable toward prisoners, and it is difficult for them to secure employment or to be reaccepted by society. The Women's Prison Association and Home has worked to develop broader understanding of the problems of women delinquents and to establish modern standards at female correctional institutions. Its work involves a study of the individual and her social background correlated with medical and psychiatric examinations, psychometric and vocational tests supplemented with information from relatives or friends. On the basis of these data plans for a prisoner may include reconciliation with her family. If this is impossible, the strengthening of other contacts, the services of a psychiatrist over a long period of time where indicated or special training

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2 Henry Elsworth Gregory, "The After Care of Inmates of Prisons and Reformatories." Paper read at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections at Richmond, Virginia, May 12, 1908, p. 4.
3 Hereafter referred to as Association.
for vocational placement may be used.1

The Association works with girls and women from the age of sixteen years and over regardless of race, color, or creed. It cooperates with departments of correction, probation, parole and police and other institutions and social service agencies. The Association's growth is a continuous evolution brought about by persistent effort to fill within the scope of its work the needs of women who have experienced institutional incarceration. After 100 years of accomplishments, there still remains much work to be done to render a real and valuable service to the delinquent woman.2 The friendly interest of the Women's Prison Association is essential for many ex-prisoners who require personal attention and treatment adapted to their individual needs. To such an agency the ex-prisoner can go and receive guidance and personal counseling.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to present the history and growth of the Women's Prison Association and to show the various changes in administrative practices that have taken place during its existence. In addition, the many types of female delinquents it serves and the services available to them will be reviewed. An effort will also be made to evaluate the adequacy of its program in meeting the needs and interests of those persons served.

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1 E. Mebane Hunt, "Can Case Work Help to Empty Our Prisons?", Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the National Prisoner's Aid Association of the American Prison Association at Atlantic City, New Jersey, October 10, 1933, p. 9.

Scope of the Study

This study includes the growth and development of the Women's Prison Association and Home, New York City, from 1845 when it was first organized to September 30, 1946.

Method of Procedure

Data for this study were obtained chiefly from the annual reports of the Association. The statistical data of the Association together with other reading material pertinent to the subject provided additional information. Personal interviews with the Executive Director and other staff members of the agency, personal observation and experience within the agency were of immeasurable help in ascertaining material for this study.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge with deep appreciation all those persons who contributed information and helped in making this study possible. These persons include Miss Dorothy Koelsch, Executive Director of the Association, Mrs. Mary Shaw, Case Worker at the Reformatory for Women at Bedford, New York, and Mrs. Barbara Phillips, Case Worker at the Women's House of Detention, New York, New York.
CHAPTER II

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

Even before there were State Boards of Charities and Correction, there were Prisoners Aid Societies in a few of the states which inspected jails and other prisons, cared for released prisoners and waged campaigns for better prisons and for better treatment of offenders. The Women's Prison Association and Home, one of the forty-two local prisoner's aid associations in the United States and Canada, was founded in 1845 and is notable among the first societies of this kind organized in the United States. At that time it was called the Female Department of the Prison Association of New York with which it was affiliated. The Home for housing female prisoners referred to in its present name, is commonly known as the Isaac T. Hopper Home, so-called for the founder of the Female Department of the Prison Association of New York.

About ten years later the Female Department of the Prison Association became a separate agency, and it then came to be known as the Women's Prison Association and Home. It has been located since 1874 in a private house at 110 Second Avenue, New York City.

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Before the founding of the Prison Association of New York every avenue to suitable employment had been shut for female parolees, and many of them had found their way back within the walls of a prison literally as a place of refuge from utter destitution and starvation. Consequently, the Board of Inspectors of the State Prison at Ossining, New York thought it proper to bring to the attention of interested persons the plight of such women and stated that from experience with prisoners, they frequently gave satisfactory evidence of sincere and earnest desire to reform. However, when these ex-prisoners return to society, they often have difficulty in securing employment and frequently resort to their former anti-social habits. In order to prevent recidivism it was thought best to help the parolee and thus aid society.¹

**Early Development**

Believing that very many prisoners could be prevented from resorting to their former anti-social practices by means of aid, by encouragement and support judiciously applied, the Board of Inspectors at Sing Sing Prison took measures to call a public meeting of the citizens of New York for the purpose of forming a society similar to those which existed in many parts of Europe. The meeting took place on December 6, 1844, at which time a society was organized; a constitution adopted; and the society became known as the Prison Association of New York. Its objectives were as follows:

1. To improve the conditions of persons arrested and detained in prison on suspicion or charge of crime, so as to see that justice was enforced in their cases and to protect them from being exploited in any way.

2. To attend to the subject of prison discipline generally, including the government and conduct of State, County, and City Prisons—to obtain statistics of crime—and more particularly to enlarge the reformatory influence in our Penitentiary system.

3. To aid discharged prisoners in their efforts at leading honest lives. To prevent these persons from continuing their depredations upon the community, it was intended that a strict scrutiny be had into their characters, and their conduct while in prison and as to those who afford no hopes of reformation, to report their names to the officers of justice, so that they shall be closely watched. As to the others, to aid them in their efforts at reformation by procuring employment for them, and encouraging them to lead honest lives and sin no more.¹

The constitution further stipulated that the female department should consist of those individuals who would carry out the objectives of the society, select an executive committee and maintain particular interest in the welfare of the female prisoners.

A number of women interested in the program of the Association named ten persons as a committee of arrangements to provide for the proper organization of such a department. This committee, after several preliminary meetings and several visits to the various places of detention in the city and the vicinity, called a public meeting of women. The reports of the visiting committees were read in order to give a general idea of the necessity for some action and the probabilities of success.

The difficulty of procuring accommodations in decent families for persons recently discharged from prison proved so great that it became evident that the Female Department could do nothing materially to aid ex-prisoners who were women without a receiving shelter for temporary care until plans could be made for them. From the reports of the group

¹Ibid., pp. 5-7.
which had visited the Penitentiary on Blackwell's Island, New York City, it was pointed out that a temporary home for the discharged female prisoner would aid immeasurably.  

A house was located on Fourth Street in New York City and opened in June, 1845 for the reception of females who would be recommended from the various prisons. Two competent matrons were secured, and a considerable amount of furniture was contributed by benevolent persons. In addition, a committee of women was organized to superintend and manage the Association.

After a long period of joint action, it was believed by all parties that the women could work more effectively as an independent organization. Therefore, in 1854 the Female Department of the Prison Association of New York became known as the Women's Prison Association and Home and was duly incorporated as a separate society. During this same year the Association moved to Tenth Avenue, New York City where it remained until 1874. It has been in operation at its present address on Second Avenue since that date to the present. The Home is a distinctive feature of the Association, and for all work in relation to its clients, the protective name Isaac T. Hopper Home is used.

Growth and Program

During the years that followed, the Association had a difficult

1 Ibid., pp. 8-13.
2 Ibid., p. 127.
3 Hereafter referred to as "Home."
4 The Women's Prison Association and Home, op. cit., p. 3.
task in obtaining financial assistance in order to keep its doors open for the reception of female delinquents. Not only was there the financial problem but also a continual struggle for reforms and better conditions in jails and prisons for women prisoners. To this end, many bills were introduced into the New York State Legislature, and the Association is responsible for many of the improvements made for female delinquents.

After a house was obtained in 1845, females from Sing Sing Prison, the city jail, and the Federal Penitentiary at Blackwell's Island were accommodated. Some of these women remained in the Home for only a single night; others, for a longer period depending upon their circumstances. From the very beginning, the Association made known that it was not only a place of succor but a reformatory institution. Industry was believed to be a potent instrument in its program for reform.

Many of the women receiving shelter in the home were excellent in the various departments of household labor; while others, less robust, were skillful as seamstresses. All of the clothing worn by the women while in residence was made by them, and all repairing and mending was done by them. Women, especially in the sewing department, went to families by the week or month, returning each Saturday evening to the Home and resumed their work on Monday. They were entitled to their earnings with the exception of the sum of fifty cents which was given to the Association as compensation for some accommodations on week-ends. This was done primarily

1 The Prison Association of New York, op. cit., p. 57.
2 Ibid., p. 11.
to help the women assume responsibility for themselves and their expenses.¹

The women who were domestics were obliged to remain in the Home for one month in order that the workers might study and know them as individuals. During this time, they were given an opportunity to work by the day. In such cases their earnings were paid to the Home and in exchange they received full maintenance. After a month's probationary period in the Home, employment was secured for them on trial basis of a month. At the end of this time, the month's earnings were paid directly to the employed women. If, however, they left before the end of the month, their wages were considered revenue for the Home.

A school was maintained at the Home, and in some cases, children of the women were also sheltered and educated. They were taught reading, writing and arithmetic, and to these lessons were added religious and moral instruction.² Sunday religious services were attended regularly with great interest. A city missionary officiated in the morning, and an interested religious friend served in the evening. A Bible class or some suitable reading was permitted in the afternoon.³

In general, the women remained at the Home not less than three months and no longer than was considered essential for their best interests. Recreation in the Home was greatly limited as the emphasis was on reform, and it was believed, at that time, that industry and religion were the chief tools of rehabilitation. Places of employment were found for those

²Ibid.
women who were eligible for placement, and the incurable or irreclaimable were discussed and returned to state institutions. The Home has no legal power, however, to detain the women, and many of them left without returning or communicating with the Association.

Occasionally, some of the ladies composing the Executive Committee of the Association visited the various prisons and jails, and in addition, an official prison visitor was appointed by the Association. It was her duty to visit the jails and prisons which incarcerated female delinquents and to report to the Association any prisoners which she thought might benefit from the Association's help. This prison visitor also gave counsel and aid when it was requested and could be given.

By 1850 the need for a larger and better house and more facilities for conducting a variety of pursuits suited to the different abilities and capacities of the women was recognized. The Association had, however, done little towards enlisting public sympathy in its favor or lessening the repugnance which was felt by some of the very name of a female convict. Year after year the Association struggled to obtain sufficient funds to enable them to build a new house which would increase their services to female ex-prisoners from the city authorities and private donations.

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1 The Women's Prison Association and Home, op. cit., p. 3.
The year 1861 proved fruitful in that it was the first year that the Home closed without a single debt except its mortgage, and there had been a fair financial return from the employment of the women. By 1870 the house was paid for although it was still inadequate for its increasing population. In that same year, 408 women were admitted to the Home as compared to 114 women, the average number sheltered for the years 1845 to 1848.

In the spring of 1874, the Association purchased its present building. With this larger building the Association could conduct an industrial department on a larger scale. It, therefore, established a laundry where washing and ironing under the supervision of a competent matron was done at a cheaper rate than the ordinary prices. Moreover, the laundry and sewing department were aids which gave wholesome occupation to a large number of the women.

As a variation from the ordinary routine, weekly entertainments of music and dramatic readings were arranged. The women themselves often participated in this entertainment, while on other occasions, interested persons donated their services to entertain the women.

By 1883 homes of refuge for released prisoners were being established all over the country, and the Women's Prison Association was no longer an experimental institution but securely established as an indispensable

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1 Ibid., (1860), p. 4.
2 Ibid., (1870), p. 11.
3 Ibid., (1875), p. 5.
4 Ibid.
social agency of the city. With the Home running more smoothly now, the Association began to take a more active part in promoting improved conditions for female prisoners. As New York City grew, it became evident that a home larger than anything one private organization could provide where a closer relationship could be maintained with those women needing care should be built; namely, a state reformatory for women.

A bill calling for a state reformatory was presented to the New York Legislature in 1889. It was pointed out that 60 per cent of the women sent to the Penitentiary were under twenty-five years of age and the need for an institution in which to legally detain females from fifteen to thirty years was urgent. In such an institution they would be given instruction and employment as would enable them upon return to the community to earn a livelihood. The Bill, however, passed the Senate and Assembly with one dissenting vote and was subsequently vetoed by the Governor.

Finally on May 17, 1892, the Bill, with the Governor's signature, became a law and $100,000 was appropriated for a State Reformatory for Women at Bedford, New York. Mrs. Abby Gibbons, a daughter of Mr. Isaac T. Hopper, who at that time was president of the Women's Prison Association, was instrumental in getting this Bill before the Legislature. It was the

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1 Ibid., (1883), p. 7.
2 Ibid., (1891), p. 5.
3 Ibid., p. 6.
5 Ibid., (1894), p. 6.

There were three reformatories for women in the United States, one in Massachusetts, in Indiana, and one for delinquent girls at Hudson, New York. See Ibid., (1891), p. 5.
earnest desire and aim of the Women's Prison Association that the city magistrates, whenever it was possible, should commit young women to the Reformatory.

In 1899 the Association sent a bill to the New York State Legislature which aimed to improve the status of the police matron. The bill, which became a law in that same year, placed women on an equal basis with men holding the same position, and the police matron began wearing a uniform and a shield. Although her salary was lower than that of a patrolman's, she began to benefit from the pension fund.

In 1903 the Association was instrumental in securing the enactment of a law providing that children born in the State Prison or taken there during infancy should be removed at the age of two years. It was recommended that these children be placed in the care of relatives or sent to other institutions where they would receive education and industrial training.

All during the early years of the Association's growth most of the women coming to the Home were persons who had been imprisoned for petty offenses, vagrancy and intemperance. The problem of intemperance was the most common and difficult with which to work. It was thought, therefore,

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In April 1901 the Reformatory for Women at Bedford opened formally. By September there were twenty-five women and the staff of officers had been increased. Soon afterwards, a school was opened in the reformatory. The women had graded lessons in sewing, drawing, reading, spelling and English composition. See Ibid., p. 5.
that out-door life would improve the physical condition of the alcoholic, and steady employment would aid stability and restore her self respect. To this end the Association sought to obtain a State Farm. The necessity for the treatment of alcoholism as a disease was demonstrated more clearly each year, and it was recognized that the majority of the women entering the Home were sick.¹

The aim of the Farm Bill presented to the Legislature was as follows:

The objects of such a Farm shall be to secure a State institution for the detention and security of women convicted and sentenced as herein after provided; giving them such industrial occupation as will tend to improve their general physical, mental, and moral welfare; which said industrial occupation shall be carried on in the open air as far as possible except when in the opinion of the Superintendent of the State Prisons it is necessary to provide other occupations.

It was believed that here was a way at last where women misdemeanants could have a chance to reform permanently because they would be placed out of the way of temptation.² On April 20, 1908, the State Legislature passed the Bill providing for a State Farm ³ for women misdemeanants over the age of thirty years.

In 1920 the Association proposed in the legislature, a bill to consolidate the State Prison for Women with the State Reformatories. It

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The Farm located at Valatie, New York, was opened October 1913. In 1918, it was closed because of the insufficient numbers. The State Department of Health secured it as a loan to be used as an institution for the segregation and care of persons afflicted with venereal diseases. April 1919, it then began to be used to accommodate male prisoners and officers working on the Farm. See Ibid., (1920), pp. 23-27.
also took an active part in framing and promoting the passage of the bill to establish a division for mentally defective delinquents at the State Reformatory for Women at Bedford, New York.\(^1\)

It was decided by the Association in the fall of 1920 not to take an active part in new legislation but to keep a close watch on all bills under consideration at Albany, New York, which concerned women prisoners.\(^2\) Since the Association had agitated for ten years for a House of Detention, interest was still active for the erection of this institution and the foundations for such a building were laid in 1924. This building was divided into a detention prison plus a hospital for those retained in custody. The new building symbolized a new era in penology for the country's largest city.\(^3\)

Many of the girls coming into the Home shortly after World War I were a younger group and were from correctional and mental defective institutions. In order to give more personal attention to these girls, many of whom were coming to the Home from the State School for Mental Defectives and to learn more of the needs of delinquent females for whom inadequate provision was made, a field secretary was engaged by the Association. In addition, a teacher was secured from the Board of Education to provide profitable occupation for some evenings and mental tests were applied in order to learn more of what might be expected from the individual girls in the positions that were found for them. Many visits were made to houses where the girls worked or to their own homes.

\(^1\) *Ibid.*, (1931), p. 34.


In the spring of 1921, it became evident to the Association that a reorganization was essential, and it was decided to renovate the house. These improvements in the Home were completed in October 1921, and with these changes, the policies and procedures of the Association were also modified. ¹

CHAPTER III

CHANGES IN ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES

Policies and Procedures

From the year 1874, when the Association became a separate organization, a record with some data on each woman was kept at the Home, and personal interest in her was shown during her stay. After a woman left the Home, she often communicated with the Association by letter and kept the agency informed of her situation.¹

In 1876 a generous contributor made the following comment:

Since I have seen something through the State Charities Aid Association of the pauper life on Blackwell's Island and elsewhere, I have had a more profound respect for such faithful persevering, quiet work as yours, with individual cases. We shall never succeed in reforming, or helping much or wisely, people "en masse" or by the machinery of our societies. It is after all what we do for A and B and C as individuals as our human kind; our brothers and sisters in the Lord's eyes, no doubt fallen though they be, which avails.²

From this statement it is evident that in those early years, case work approach was to some degree a part of the practice and thinking of the Association. More constructive methods in prison work were spreading slowly, and the public was beginning to recognize that the wise treatment of criminals would help promote the welfare of the community.

Even though some data were kept on the women in the early years, the chief emphasis during that time was on custodial care and reformation through work and religion. It was not until shortly after World

War I with the employment of field secretaries by the Association that more emphasis was placed on treatment. These secretaries visited and gave counsel to the women after they left the Home.

By 1925 a different type of client sought services at the Home, and the need for trained workers was obvious. As a result, the Association changed its administrative practices. Likewise the increased study of delinquents influenced the need of rehabilitation programs for them.1 Individual work with delinquent women had developed in the Women's Prison Association as in other social welfare organizations, and some individual approach with them was undertaken on a larger scale. As a result the members of the Association thought it best to emphasize case work with the women more so than custodial care which heretofore had been its chief concern.

With the full acceptance of case work as a method of dealing with delinquents the Association in 1925 replaced the resident matrons with an executive secretary and field secretaries.2 By 1929 the professional staff consisted of a case supervisor, a resident case worker and medical advisor which supplemented the staff of field secretaries and court worker. In addition, a fellowship for a Negro woman student was maintained for four years at the New York School of Social Work, and a student training program with this school was instituted in the Association.

The clients coming to the Home at this time received emergency shelter for a temporary period only, and children were no longer retained with

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2 Ibid., p. 3.
their mothers. Only a small number of women were accepted for care at a time, and they were placed on jobs as soon as possible. Those who needed a meal or a chance to rest were also welcomed.¹

Contact was still maintained with the women in the courts and prisons, and cooperation with parole and probation officers to secure employment and shelter for the women was carried on. Case records were kept on all the clients receiving services regardless of the length of stay. Temporary financial aid, personal counsel and all types of constructive contacts were made for the women in order that they might become desirable citizens and self-sufficient as soon as possible. More participation on the part of the client regarding her own problem was encouraged, as the aim was to help her help herself.

Management

A voluntary unpaid Board known as a Board of Directors of the Women's Prison Association dates its existence back to 1854. Due to the influence of its early organizers, the president and vice-president are called first and second director respectively. In addition, there are a secretary, a treasurer and an executive committee composed of twenty-four persons, one-third of whom are elected each year at the annual meeting for a term of three years. All of the officers are elected annually from the executive committee.

It is the duty of this committee to manage the affairs of the Association and to render an account at each scheduled meeting. It also approves the salaries and appointment of members to the staff. The first

¹Ibid., (1933), pp. 6-11.
director presides at all meetings of the committee, and in case of her absence, the second director, secretary or treasurer presides.

The secretary keeps a record of all the business transacted by the Association and issues notices of meetings of the executive committee. She presents a monthly report of the general activities and prepares the annual report of the Association. In addition custody of all the records and the seal of the Association which is affixed to documents whenever required by the executive committee is entrusted to her.

The treasurer retains the funds of the Association which are deposited with such depository as may be designated by the executive committee. She receives and disburses, under the direction of the executive committee, all appropriations belonging to the Association and presents a monthly report to the committee. An annual account of the Association is prepared by her and before an annual meeting, her account is audited by responsible auditors or accountants appointed by the executive committee.

The Board also maintains the following standing committees; namely, finance, case, house, purchasing and appeals. The committees serve for one year and are appointed each year at the annual meeting by the executive committee which also makes appointments to fill any vacancies. Each committee consists of such number of persons as are designated by the executive committee.

The duties of the finance committee are many. It approves a budget of all expenses of the Association, and it also has, subject to the direction and control of the executive committee, the general care and management of all investments of the Association. Moreover, it is authorized to make any and all purchases and sales of any securities among
such investments which it may deem to be for the best interests of the Association. Any two members of the finance committee may execute orders for the purchase and sale of any such securities. All such transactions must be reported to the executive committee at the next meeting following their execution, and the purchase and sale of securities as is from time to time given to it by the executive committee.

All phases of the cases being handled by the Association and matters of policy concerning them are considered by the case committee. In addition, the house purchasing committee assumes responsibility for the condition, equipment and running of the house and all expenses connected with it. Matters concerning appeals for contributions to the work of the Association are handled by a special appeal group, and legal advice and consultation is obtained from an advisory board composed of three lawyers. ¹

Financial Arrangements

The Association has been practically self-supporting since the year 1884 when it received its last appropriation from the City of New York. In its early years, as previously mentioned, the women who were sent out into families by the week or month and returned to the Home over the week-ends contributed fifty cents a week as compensation for washing and Sunday board. This small sum helped in some measure with the financial expenses of the agency. Money received from the general public in return for laundry done by the women was also a source of revenue.

Most of the finances are obtained, however, through donations,

¹Ibid., (1942), pp. 21-23.
subscriptions, membership, gifts and legacies. Annual members are all those persons who pay five dollars per year and subscribers who give from five to twenty-five dollars yearly. During the Association's development it received several large gifts of money and twenty legacies. Not only were donations given in money but also in kind.¹

The Association at present receives a large portion of its income from bequests, endowments and legacies which yield a large sum of interest yearly. As a result of appeals, six to eight of which are made each year, individual donations are still given, and at times, grants are received from some foundations. In 1938 the agency was approved and put on the eligible list of the Greater New York Fund.² From this source the income of the Association is also supplemented.

Staff and Professional Personnel

A staff of trained and experienced personnel is maintained by the Association. The following group presents all those persons employed the year ending September 1946. The executive director is the administrator of the agency and supervises the entire staff. She is also an after-care representative on the classification committee of the House of Detention. This committee meets weekly to discuss all delinquent women who will be incarcerated for a period of six months or more. When these women are ready for release, the executive director often refers some of them to the Association for shelter or help in getting a job and other services.³

¹Ibid., (1905), p. 5.
³Statement by Miss Dorothy Koelsch, Executive Director, Women's Prison Association and Home, New York, personal interview, September 10, 1947.
Moreover, three full-time case workers offer services to the women who are referred to the agency. In 1943 these workers began to operate on a rotating late shift one night per week so that clients employed during the day could receive services after working hours.

An extra-mural program operates and is conducted by a court worker. In 1946 the Association engaged the services of a full-time worker to function in the social service unit of the Women's Court where first offenders might have an interview, receive help from a person who is not connected with the court prior to arraignment, and be given attention both during remand to the House of Detention and after sentence. In addition, an after-care worker at the House of Detention has been employed since 1939 and is partly paid by the City of New York and partly by the Women's Prison Association and Home. She supervises women imprisoned in the House of Detention for six months or more, works with their families, makes referrals to other agencies when the women are to be released and has charge of the educational program at the House of Detention.

Similarly, an after-care worker has been in residence in the State Prison for Women at Bedford, New York but under the auspices of the Association since 1940. This worker corresponds with social agencies in more distant places with reference to helping with the various problems, visit relatives, confers with agencies about the care of children, obtains

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1 Workers are employed by the Association under this program but do not work directly in the agency setting.


the women's clothing which have been left in lodging houses, secures references from former employers, prepares the family to accept the woman on her release, and performs other duties. The field assignments of this worker are carried out in New York City where she spends a part of each week.¹

All women sheltered in the Home are examined by a physician who visits the agency once a week. Other clients, who are no longer receiving shelter from the Home, may also request a physical examination if necessary. If additional care and follow-up is needed, the physician refers the client to a hospital or clinic. The medical advisor also consults with the case workers regarding certain clients and gives health lectures at various times to all of the case work staff. The Association maintains a psychiatrist whose services are available on all who aids the case workers in their treatment plans and if long time treatment is indicated, refers the client to the proper facility.

The services of eight volunteers are available and are as follows: a consulting psychologist who was formerly a field work student at the agency and still renders services when requested. All types of psychological tests are given to the clients at the request of the case work staff and if necessary, referrals are made to other agencies. Two librarians from the New York Public Library give their services one evening each week when various books are discussed and loane to the women for a limited period. Two volunteers from Pratt Institute, Statement by Mrs. Mary Shaw, Case Worker, Reformatory for Women, Bedford, New York, personal interview, July 18, 1947.
Brooklyn, New York hold weekly classes in art each week, and a member of the Musician's Emergency Fund lends her services one evening weekly to entertain the women with singing and playing the piano. Two additional volunteers maintain contacts with former clients who are committed to such institutions as State Mental Hospitals, City Home for the Aged, Schools for the Mentally Deficient and other places. They also meet women who are returning from prison at the transportation points and, in some cases, chaperon them to their destinations. One of these volunteers also holds a weekly sewing class in the Home.

The Association has two full-time clerical workers, one part-time worker and an auditor who visits the agency once a month to make up the annual income. The regular agency staff includes an office manager who is also the bookkeeper, a switchboard operator and an ediphone operator. In addition there are two full-time hostesses who reside at the Home. They have general supervision over the dormitories and prepare the meals for clients receiving shelter. A part-time worker cleans the offices and dormitories daily, and another worker is responsible for the care of the exterior and the heating system.
CHAPTER IV

PROGRAM OF THE ASSOCIATION

The program of the Women's Prison Association and Home is adapted to meet the needs of all clients referred for help. Regardless of race, color, creed, or type of past delinquency, no one is ever turned away without the agency's planning for the next step. Since it is the chief purpose of the Association to rehabilitate the ex-prisoner and to prevent her from returning to her former life, not only are case work services offered, but also services of a recreational, educational and vocational nature. Although the chief approach is case work, the techniques of group work are also employed to some degree. This is achieved through educational and recreational clubs and classes which are available to all those clients who wish to participate.

Types of Persons Served

All females from the age of sixteen years are served by the Association. They are referred to the agency chiefly by probation and parole officers connected with various New York city and state courts. Many of these women are also referred from prisons directly or from public or private agencies. Most of the clients under the care of the Association are on probation or parole while a few have received suspended sentences. They are further classified as to whether they are correctional or preventive cases. The preventive cases are differentiated from the correctional in that they have not had a court experience, but have been, in most cases, referred to the agency by the Police or Juvenile Aid Bureau.1

1Statement by Miss Dorothy Koelsch, op. cit.
From the tables presented, it appears that the types of persons served by the Women's Prison Association and Home vary just as greatly as do their many problems. Table 1 shows the number of clients within the five classifications who were referred to the Association for the period 1945-1946.

**TABLE 1**
CLASSIFICATION OF CASES OF THE WOMEN'S PRISON ASSOCIATION AND HOME, NEW YORK CITY, FISCAL YEAR 1945-1946

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctional</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventive</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parole</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended Sentences</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The offenses for which these women and girls had been sentenced ranged from that of prostitution to those of lesser frequency such as drug addiction, manslaughter and arson. Table 2 points out the number of active old and new cases according to charges known to the Association for the year 1946. Primary behavior misconduct centering around some neurotic and personal conflict seemed most prevalent in the charges made against these offenders.

While the great majority of clients who received help from the Association had only a grammar school education, there are a large number who in spite of their conflict with society had obtained schooling on a
secondary level. The various educational categories of those persons who received help from the Association during the fiscal year 1945-1946 is given in Table 3.

**TABLE 2**

**TYPES OF CHARGES OF CASES KNOWN FOR 1945-1946**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charges</th>
<th>Old</th>
<th>New</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weyward Minor</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Larceny</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Charges</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty Larceny</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorderly Conduct</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgery</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoplifting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manslaughter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without Home</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intoxication</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3**

**EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN HANDLED DURING 1945-1946**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Status</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Services Available

Each client is carefully studied to learn her needs and to help her work out the best plan for a satisfactory social adjustment. This involves ascertaining as much of her social history as possible, making referrals for medical, psychiatric and psychological tests and getting in touch with relatives or friends. As much of the client's story as she wishes to tell is heard and with her permission, the case worker writes to or visits her family or friends. This sometimes results in a reconciliation. The immediate plan may be employment for the client, readjustment with her family, mental or physical care or further training. Whatever the plan, the client is often able to work out her own program satisfactorily after receiving help from the agency.

Many of the women come to the agency for help, after being incarcerated, as a result of the Executive Director's weekly visit to the House of Detention. Other referrals are also made to the agency by the after-care worker at the House of Detention and the worker at the State Prison at Bedford, New York. Even while the women are in prison many services can be rendered for them, as helping them to make plans for their children or relatives during their commitment, getting in touch with their families, or merely taking care of the numerous personal details that might otherwise be left unattended to such as storing clothing or furniture in the Home's storeroom, discontinuing rent, gas or electric. Unless their needs are learned while they are still in prison, the released prisoners often come out without prospective shelter or employment, and if they are unable

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to secure work at once or are without resources, they resume former practices resulting in repeated incarceration.

Each individual has her problems and the Association tries to meet them in a personal understanding way. In addition to personal counsel, the Association gives temporary financial assistance to many of its clients. This financial assistance may be granted on a loan basis or as a gift for recreational, educational or various other purposes.

When young girls coming from other states or cities are arrested and brought before the courts, it is often the preference of the Judge to return them to their own homes. This is especially true rather than to commit them in cases where the women are first offenders. Therefore, the Association receives emergency calls from the courts concerning these girls and is asked to furnish transportation to their respective homes which may be in distant states. It is also often necessary to shelter them for a few days at the Home while the case worker considers their needs and makes arrangements for them.

Emergency or temporary shelter in the dormitories of the Home for a period not longer than two weeks is given to clients when the need arises. The Association offers this service for a number of women which is usually not in excess of ten at any one time. It is better for the women to participate in active life without delay and it is inadvisable for them to remain in the Home for an indefinite period. After plans have been

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1 Ibid., p. 7.
2 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
formulated, most of the women and girls retain a friendly and intimate relationship with the Association. They drop in for an evening meal, or come to rest or to stay for a few days between jobs. For many of them, it is the only home they have. ¹

While residing in the Home, each client receives free of charge three well-balanced meals each day. These meals, as mentioned previously, are prepared by the two hostesses. If necessary, referrals are made to other shelters for some of the women.

The Association keeps some new clothing which may be purchased by the client or supplies her with used clothing which has been contributed to the Home. Toilet articles are also provided for the women receiving shelter, and in addition to the women and girls who live temporarily at the Home, many others come in regularly each week and do their laundry when their own jobs or living arrangements do not afford this necessity.

It is astonishing that many women need medical care after they come out of prison. The neglect of symptoms of ill health often lead to serious conditions. The Association's medical adviser makes weekly visits to the Home where she sees not only the women and girls who are receiving shelter at the time but also others who have been placed on jobs by the agency and are under its supervision. Medical examinations are made by the physician and referrals for further treatment, surgery or more extensive examinations are given. The results of these referrals are followed up and the client is encouraged to return to the agency so that the Association can help her with her medical plans and care. ²

¹Ibid., p. 11.
²Ibid., p. 12.
The type of service given by the physician involves minor treatment, advice about diet and personal health, and counsel and reassurance concerning the importance of symptoms which cause a client to worry. Interpretation to the case work staff of the patient's condition by a physician who is a member of the staff and a consultant assures the cooperation of the patient because there is collaborative planning.1

As previously stated, the Association maintains a psychologist and a psychiatrist whose services are available on call. In addition, referrals are made to Bellevue Hospital, New York City, and other agencies offering these services. Close cooperation with a particular agency to which a client is referred by the Association is maintained.

Perhaps the major portion of a case worker's time is devoted to planning with a client for jobs and seeking employment opportunities for her. The majority of the clients are unskilled, and with the stigma of prison attached to them, it is difficult for them to secure placement. Besides this, they are often undependable and change jobs frequently. The Association, nevertheless, works diligently to fit the individual into the right place and, by understanding and encouragement, tries to help her keep her employment. Positions are obtained through newspapers, employment and social agencies and personal contacts of the Association. In some instances, vocational guidance is provided through other agencies, and a client is given maintenance by the Association while training is pursued.

Adequacy of Program

Most of the programs of the Women's Prison Association and Home may

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1Ibid., (1940), p. 5.
be classified as both educational and recreational. They are adapted to meet the needs and interests of the participants, and no one is forced to take part. The schedule of the program for the fiscal year ending 1946 was as follows: Once each week the New York Public Library sends a representative to conduct Book Club as the women and girls have named it. For many of them, it is the first time they have heard of the opportunities offered by a library, or have been introduced to good books, magazines, plays and the like. They participate in reading plays, stories and poems and in bringing in and discussing articles. The librarian leaves books at the agency for them to read and sometimes they ask for books. During the year, two students from Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York, a vocational school, held a weekly class in finger painting, drawing, clay modeling and ceramics. One of the volunteers of the agency holds a weekly sewing class where all interested may attend. The girls and women are taught how to make all types of useful and lovely articles. From the Musician's Emergency Fund, a volunteer comes each week to conduct a Club for individual and group singing. The participants in the group are also entertained by this volunteer who is an accomplished vocalist and pianist. Twice a year the Association sponsors theatre parties which are thoroughly enjoyed by all those who attend. Every Christmas a huge party is given for the women and girls active with the agency. Singing, games, refreshment and the receiving of gifts occupy this particular entire evening. Museum trips are planned from time to time and during the summer months small groups occasionally go on picnics, boat rides and the like.

\[1\text{Ibid., p. 6.}\]
In addition to these principal activities of the Association, other community resources are used, and referrals are made for educational and recreational purposes. On evenings when no special club or class is in session, the girls and women usually amuse themselves by playing cards or other games, singing or merely conversing. On the whole, the total program of the Women's Prison Association and Home is somewhat inadequate during the summer months as compared with the winter months. Most of the activities mentioned are non-existent during the summer, and the program is at a standstill. The number of volunteers are few and, as a result, the number of activities limited.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

In the olden times, prisons were established with the idea of punishment, but as man became more humanitarian toward his fellowmen, the treatment of prisoners became more humane. Man was motivated gradually to give protection to released prisoners, and to rehabilitate, if possible, female prisoners. The Women's Prison Association and Home sprang from such humane interests.

This Association dates its existence from a meeting held in New York City in 1845 when a group of public-spirited citizens gathered together for the express purpose of assisting the city in caring for a very large number of released prisoners and to improve the condition of prisons and prisoners. Originally affiliated with the Prison Association of New York, the Women's Prison Association and Home became an independent organization in 1854 and was incorporated as a separate society.

While the City of New York aided the Association financially for a short time, it was dependent for the most part upon private contributions. The problem of limited finances together with the unfavorable attitude the general public had toward female prisoners proved a great obstacle in the early years of the Association's growth. Nevertheless, the Association managed to overcome these obstacles and has always kept its


2 Ibid., (1877), p. 5.
doors open to the ex-female prisoner.

Not only did the Association struggle to help females receiving shelter in the Home, but it also promoted all types of reforms, laws and new buildings for the female prisoner. The present House of Detention in New York City and the State Reformatory at Bedford, New York are examples of the Association's efforts for social treatment of the incarcerated woman.

A great change in the Association's administrative policy occurred in 1935 when there was a different type of client coming to the Home, and the need for trained workers was obvious. Heretofore, two resident matrons had been in charge of the Home, and an older type of client had been receiving assistance. With these changes, trained case workers were employed and only a few clients, not exceeding ten, were sheltered in the Home for a limited period of two weeks. At present, none of the agency's staff, except the two hostesses who prepare the meals for the clients receiving shelter, are residents in the Home.

The Board of Directors of the Association, a voluntary unpaid board dates its existence back to 1854 when the Association became a separate agency. A highly active Board, it works diligently in shaping the policies and practices of the Association. Private contributions, interest from legacies and endowments together with funds received from the Greater New York Fund since 1938 maintain the agency financially.

All women and girls from sixteen years referred to the agency receive help, irrespective of race, color, creed or nature of past delinquency. Cooperation with probation and parole departments, juvenile aid bureaus and all other social agencies is maintained in an effort to help the client
make the best kind of social adjustment. To this end, the agency makes
available many services to serve the client. Not only are case work services
given but also psychological, psychiatric, medical, shelter, vocational
guidance and employment. In addition to these services the agency provides
a recreational and educational program for the women and girls. Clubs,
classes, group parties and trips are the basis of the Association's program.

Conclusion

Many of the Association's clients make satisfactory adjustments beyond
all expectations. Some succeed for awhile and then return for assistance.
It is the agency's experience that it is able to do some constructive work
even with those who fail repeatedly. This constitutes a saving of public
funds and makes a contribution to the welfare of the entire community and
society.¹

Although the agency program is limited and almost curtailed for the
most part during the summer months, this inadequacy can be attributed
and a decrease in the number of volunteers. More efficient planning,
however, could be done in this area as prisoners are in need of this type
of assistance during all periods of the year. While the Association does
much constructive work for the ex-prisoner, greater efforts could also be
spent in working toward the prevention of crime.

There is no question that the Association has made gains during the
years of its growth and has always worked in the best interests of the
female delinquent. This work never ceases, and the Association continues
to participate in various programs regarding the care of delinquents, to

send representatives to conferences, to visit prisons, city courts and hospitals, to finance special projects, and to participate in committee meetings for the study of and planning for the delinquent groups.
CHART I

ORGANIZATIONAL SET-UP OF THE WOMEN'S PRISON ASSOCIATION AND HOME

Executive Committee
of the Board

Advisory
Advisory
Board

Officers of
the Board

Committees

Appeals
Case

Finance
House and
Purchasing

Executive
Director

Agency Staff

Household Clerical Medical Advisor Case Workers Extra Mural Case Workers Consulting Psychiatrist Volunteers Maintenance
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