

Incarcerated America

A Short History of Prisons and Prison Reform

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What is the purpose of prison?

- Take a minute to consider and write down your thoughts to the question above.
- Be prepared to share your thoughts with the class.

What is the purpose of **prison**?

- Throughout most of history prisons have served two purposes:
 - A place to hold people awaiting trial or execution
 - A place to punish criminals

What is the purpose of prison?

- As time moved on prisons began to serve as a form of **deterrence** – scaring people into not committing crimes.
- Today, many in the US see prisons as a form of **retributive justice**, simply, the punishment of prison fits the crime.

When you are convicted of a crime what are some possible punishments?

- Misdemeanors:
 - **Community Service:**
 - perform a service for a certain amount of time.
 - Usually related to crime committed. For example, cleaning up trash in a park as a punishment for littering.
 - **Probation:**
 - State monitors convicted person through a probation officer.
 - Conditions are attached to probation (employment, regular visits with probation officer, etc.) and if conditions are violated, person can go to jail or prison.
 - **House Arrest:**
 - confined to home and travel is restricted or severely limited.
 - **Boot Camps:**
 - Used primarily for juvenile offenders.
 - Court ordered military style training for a set amount of time.
 - **Jail:**
 - Run by local governments.
 - Hold people awaiting trial and/or people convicted of minor crimes.

When you are convicted of a crime what are some possible punishments?

- Felonies:
 - **Mental Institutions:**
 - People who commit serious crimes, but are judged mentally unsound for prison are sent here.
 - **Prison:**
 - Where people who commit serious crimes are **incarcerated** .
 - Run by state or federal government.
 - This is where convicts serve long term (more than a year) sentences.
 - **Death Penalty:**
 - Reserved for capital crimes: murder, treason, espionage.
 - Person is put to death.
 - Methods: Predominantly lethal injection, but some states allow electrocution, hanging, firing squad, or the gas chamber.

After Leaving Jail or Prison

- **Parole**

- parole is serving the remainder of a sentence outside of prison
- Good conduct while incarcerated does not guarantee that an inmate will be paroled. Other factors that can decide an inmate's parole:
 - Most commonly the establishment of a permanent residence
 - immediate, gainful employment or some other clearly visible means of self-support upon release

Prison Reform

- Prisons have changed over time and the United States has introduced many major prison reforms throughout its history.
- Many of these reforms are still seen in prisons today.
- When you hear the word “prison” what comes to mind?

Walnut Street Jail 1790

- Philadelphia, PA
- 1st American penitentiary – belief that penitence and self examination leads to salvation.
- Reforms:
 - Cell blocks with a central corridor
 - Use of solitary confinement for punishment
 - Use prison to reform people through thought and prayer
 - Segregate prisoners according to age, sex, and type of offenses against them
- Closed in 1835 because of poor conditions.

Auburn Prison 1821

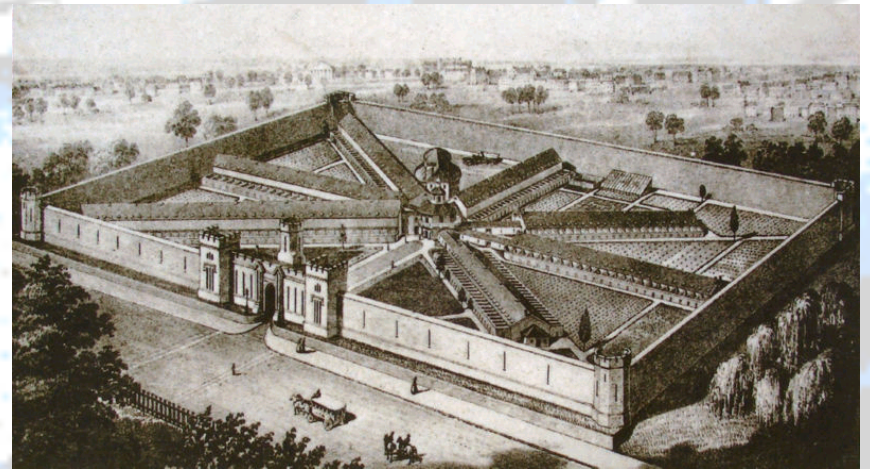
- Auburn, NY
- Reforms called the “Auburn System”:
 - Remove criminal from all contact with corruption through complete silence
 - Severe discipline
 - Convicts worked long hours to help support prison and to remove corrupting influences
 - Striped prison uniform
 - Lockstep as a means of transporting prisoners
- Still an active prison today



Lockstep

Eastern State Penitentiary 1829

- Cherry Hill, Pennsylvania
- Reforms called the “Pennsylvania System”:
 - Emphasized solitary confinement as a way to reform
 - Prisoners had NO contact with each other
 - Wheel design influenced prison architecture
- Closed in 1971 because it became too expensive to maintain



Elmira Reformatory 1876

- Elmira, NY
- Reforms:
 - Classify and segregate prisoners to provide individualized treatment
 - Vocational training – teach prisoners a job skill
 - Rewards for good behavior
 - Parole system
 - Indeterminate or flexible sentences
- Still an active prison today

Leavenworth Prison 1895

- Leavenworth, Kansas
- Reforms:
 - 1st Federal Prison
 - Built after Federal Government outlawed convict leasing for federal prisoners – using prisoners to make goods for companies in exchange for a fee.
 - States refused to house federal prisoners if they couldn't make money off of them, so the Federal Government was forced to build a prison.
 - Eventually, states outlawed convict leasing.
- Still an active prison today



Alcatraz 1933

- San Francisco, CA
- Reforms:
 - Built as a visual deterrent to criminals
 - “Escape Proof”
 - Work awarded with sentence reductions
- Closed in 1963 due to high operating costs



“Tough on Crime Movement”

- This movement began in the early 1970's as a response to rising crime rates.
- By the end of the 1990s, the number of prisoners in the US approached two million, reflecting the greatest use of incarceration of any nation in the world. The enormous public costs of building and maintaining this multibillion-dollar prison complex already was exceeding that of public support for higher education in some states.
- To reduce its prison costs while still resorting to high levels of incarceration, some states in the 1980s and 1990s began to turn to private, for-profit companies to build and operate their correctional institutions. Despite many of the problems associated with **private prisons** —some of them prevalent through imprisonment's painful past—such approaches appeared to be undergoing renewed popularity at the end of the twentieth century.
- The get-tough movement continued to escalate. Harsher mandatory prison sentences, increased use of capital punishment and life without parole, rollbacks of prison education programs and other rehabilitation efforts, as well as the increased development of maximum prisons and control units, all were on the increase.
- All this occurred despite the lack of public faith in prison effectiveness.

Read more: [Prisons: History - The "get Tough" Movement](http://law.jrank.org/pages/1784/Prisons-History-get-tough-movement.html#ixzz0leNJmSwA) <http://law.jrank.org/pages/1784/Prisons-History-get-tough-movement.html#ixzz0leNJmSwA>

Sources

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